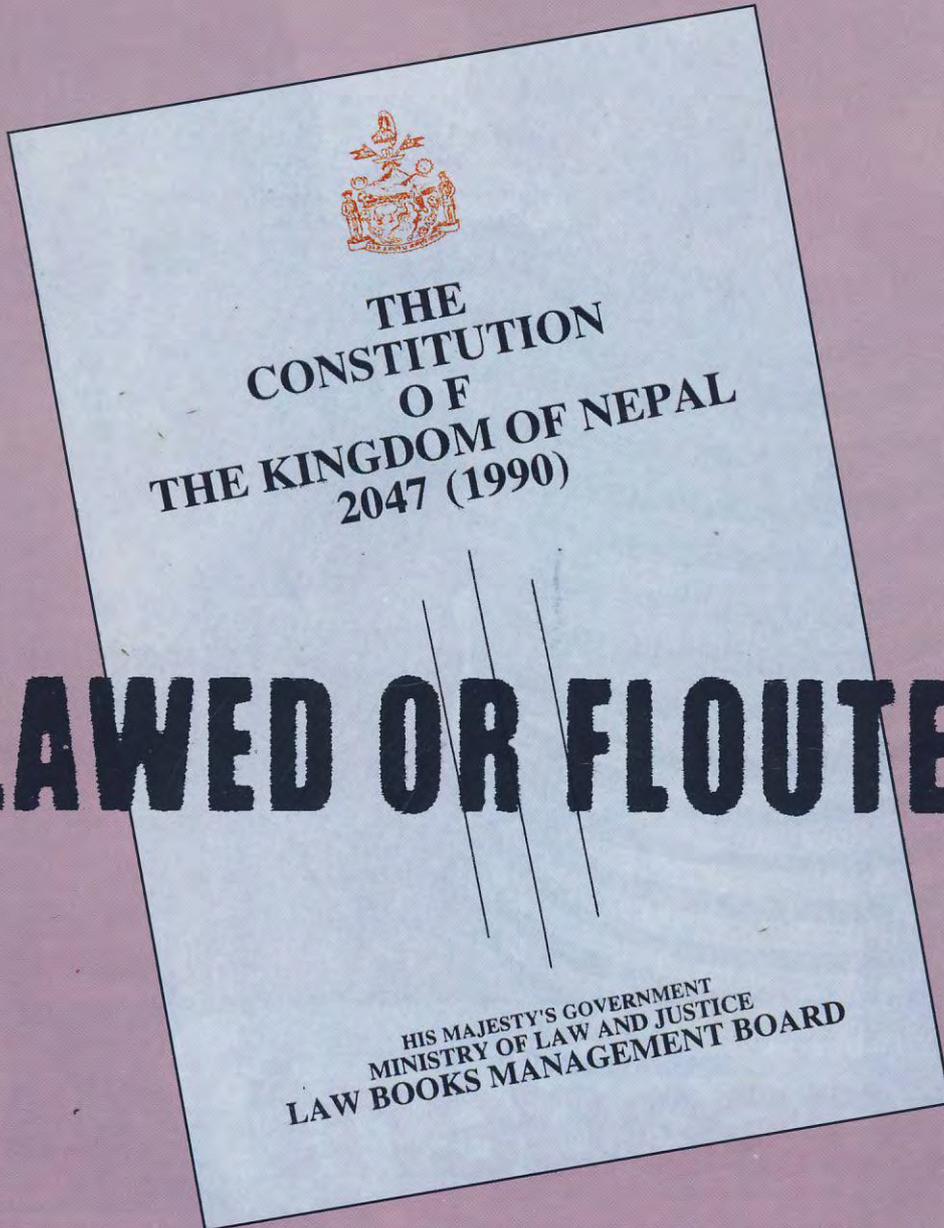
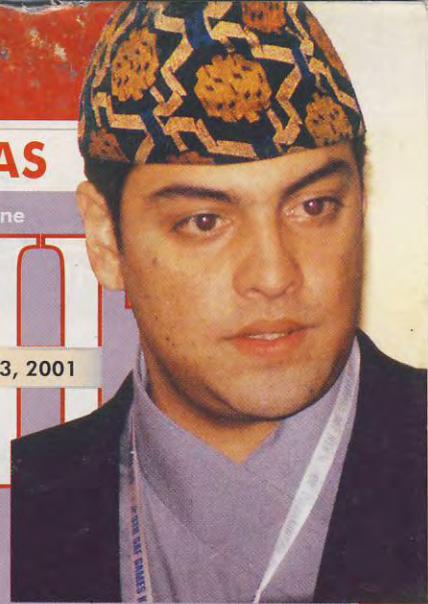


SPECIAL REPORT ON CROWN PRINCE PARAS

The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

Nov. 9-23, 2001



HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT
MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE
LAW BOOKS MANAGEMENT BOARD

FLAWED OR FLOUTED?

- NEPAL-INDIA TRADE TALKS
- A TALE OF TWO NEPALIS
- SUPERSTAR HITS KATHMANDU
- THE STATE OF WORLD POPULATION REPORT 2001

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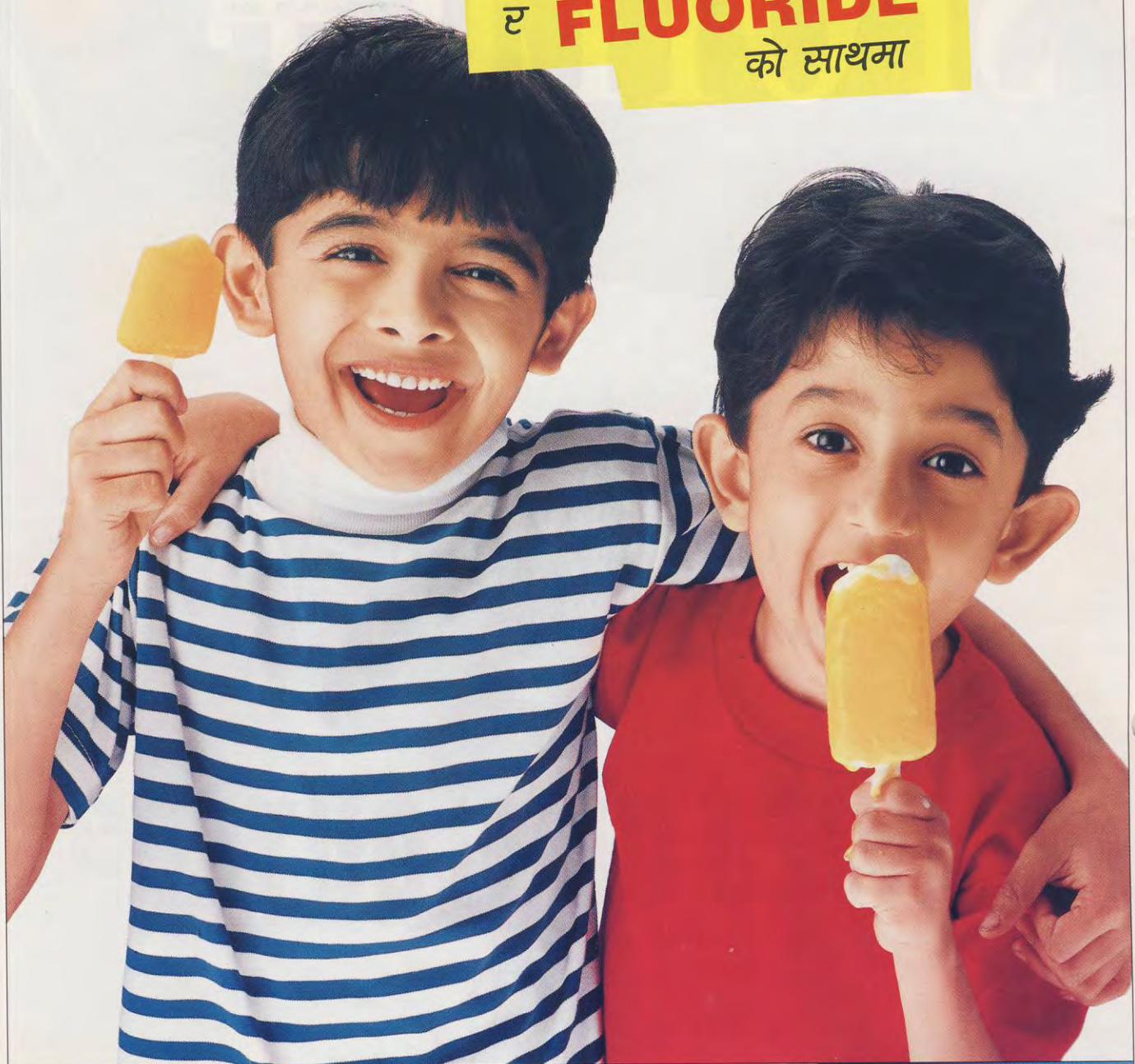
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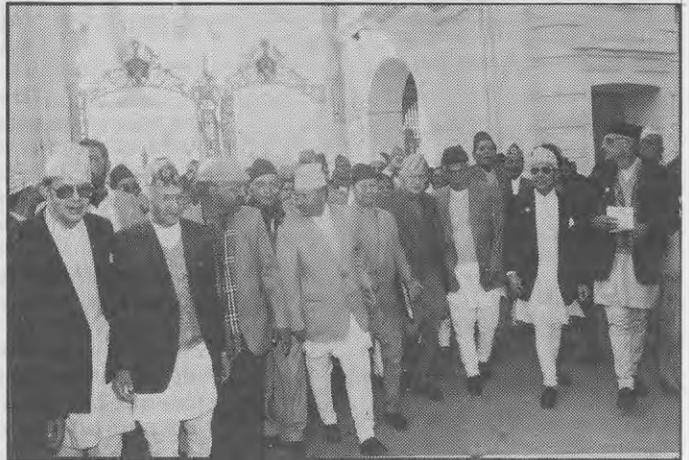


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Cover Story : Flawed Or Flouted?

As the constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 enters its twelfth year, the order it envisaged is yet to materialize

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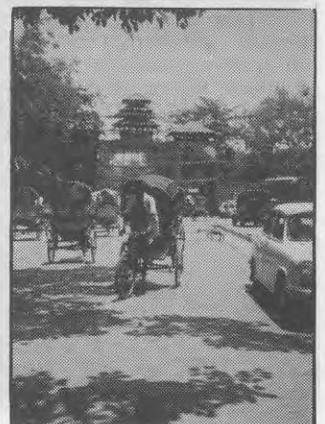
CROWN PRINCE PARAS SHAH : Continuity And Stability
King Gyanendra proclaims Prince Paras as Crown Prince in accordance with the constitution and Royal traditions

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NEPAL-INDIA TRADE TALKS: Coming Closer?

The officials of the two countries are yet to hammer out the solution even as the bilateral trade treaty has less than a month to expire

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The terrorist activities of the Maoists in Nepal have not abated. At a time when the whole world is getting united to fight terrorism in whatever form or shape it might be, that the Nepalese Maoists should be receiving almost red carpet treatment in neighboring India is, indeed, very perplexing. This clearly goes to prove the doubts lurking at the back of overwhelming Nepalese minds that the Nepalese Maoists are not only enjoying safe haven in India but are being supplied with ample money and hardware. Despite the facts that Indian foreign minister Jaswant Singh called the Nepalese Maoists 'terrorists' and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee very recently said in Moscow that even the politicians who use arms must be branded as terrorists and there should be no "double standard" regarding terrorism, why they themselves are helping the Nepalese terrorists is beyond human comprehension. The Nepalese are wondering whether the Indian Prime Minister's pleas to the Russian President not to apply double standard to terrorism apply to Nepal also. We would like to take this opportunity to humbly remind the Indian Prime Minister that Nepal is also suffering from terrorism and expects friendly India not to encourage or abet the terrorists in their anti-state activities against Nepal. It does not behove a big country like India to resort to such nefarious activities like helping the Nepalese terrorists who are trying to destabilise political situation in the friendly small neighboring country. Moreover, the whole world is watching events even in this region and they are not blind to happenings. Unless India mends her behavior and bars the Nepalese Maoists crossing over to their territory it would be difficult for her to impress the world that she is sincerely committed to fighting terrorism and thus weaken her own pleas for international help. The Indian media have consistently continued to portray Nepal in a bad light. A recent publication in a leading daily has spared no efforts to mislead the world by printing imaginary news that the Maoists control one third of the Kingdom. Since the subservient governments in Nepal in the last decade could not go against their mentors, they cannot do anything to counteract such baseless and detrimental publicity against Nepal relentlessly being carried out by powerful Indian media. Sher Bahadur Deuba, who came to power with the sole mandate to curb Maoist terrorism is now focusing his whole attention on how to stick on to the chair of authority. Whether he will be able to solve the nagging problem time only will prove. But, there is a strong belief that as long India does not desist from helping the Nepalese Maoists, the problem would not be solved.

* * *

As expected the latest round of trade talks held recently in Kathmandu between the two friendly neighbors have again failed to break the stalemate. And now the Indians have invited the Nepalese to visit Delhi for another round of talks. That trade problems between two traditional friendly countries should take such long and arduous talks for resolution are quite significant. Nepal, ever since it established political relationship with independent India in 1947, has always suffered from very sharp adverse balance of trade. The trade treaty signed between the two countries in 1996 is due to expire soon. This treaty has boosted Nepal's exports to India to some extent, even though it has not contributed to narrow the gap of the adverse balance. India's objections to the surge in Nepalese exports have brought to light the hidden intents of the Indian establishment towards Nepal's overall economic development. As statistics go, Nepalese exports to India, howsoever big are just like a drop in the ocean. How can they hurt Indian economy? Such lame excuses only help to expose India's over all attitude towards Nepal. Since Nepalese politicians in power cannot pluck the courage to take a tougher stance against Indian authorities, the Nepalese bureaucrats should take it on their shoulders to protect our nation's interests. Rather than given in to Indian hegemonistic pressures, the patriotic Nepalese officialdom must be prepared to face the repeat of 1989 situation when India had imposed economic blockade against Nepal. It is time when Nepal's nationalist forces have to seriously think about reassessing Nepal's relations with India on all fronts. Since the Indians want to renew the treaty or bring some substantive amendments in the protocol, we must have some patience and wait to see what the Indians have up in their sleeves. Anyway, Nepalese bureaucracy should not give in tamely as they used to do in the past.

* * *

The long awaited announcement that Prime Paras would become the heir apparent The Crown Prince of Nepal— has come at a very opportune time. King Gyanendra's choice of the day to make that important announcement has been widely appreciated by the overwhelming people of Nepal. It is the most important and auspicious day in the calendar of a Nepali — victory day — victory of good over evil. With this announcement Crown Prince Paras must become a totally changed personality whose main focus should now be riveted only on the well being of Nepali people and Nepal. Crown Prince Paras has no option but to rise to the occasion and justify the responsibility that has been devolved on his shoulders by the hidden hands of Destiny. There is no reason whatsoever to doubt that Crown Prince Paras is sure to pass the test with flying colors. Those few loudmouthed politicians who have the temerity to arraign the royalties have forgotten what they were a few years back and what they are now. Perhaps they are also oblivious of the fact that the days are not far off when patriotic forces will take them to task for all of their crimes they have committed against Nepal and the Nepalese people. Be that as it may, we would like to take this opportunity to express our heartiest congratulations to Crown Prince Paras and exhort him to actively share the miseries of his poor people and contribute all his efforts to alleviate them. ■



Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



No Less Crowd

Despite the economic slowdown, the crowds in places like the New Road and other important thoroughfares of Kathmandu were undiminished ("Troubled Times", SPOTLIGHT, October 19). The Nepalese people do not lack in spirit. They are always ready to greet festivals like Dashain and Tihar. Definitely, the country has witnessed a series of negative events in the last year, but life has to go on. And Nepalis deserve praise for holding themselves together through these troubled times.

Kiran Mainali
Ghatteklua

Emptying Pockets

Like you indicated in the cover story ("Troubled Times", SPOTLIGHT, October 19), the average Nepali is suffering

from a very bad economic crisis. With pockets running empty and preoccupation with various tensions, it is a crime to expect them to observe their festivals with zeal. The lack of enthusiasm among Nepalese witnessed this Dashain is the result of these very things. May the Almighty bestow happiness and prosperity on the lives of Nepalis.

Sudesh Gurung
Sanepa

No More Down

In his interview, Bhaskar Rajkarnicar has aptly described the condition of Nepal by saying that the country has come to the lowest level and has no place to go down further. ("Troubled Times", SPOTLIGHT, October 19). Definitely, the only way for the country is up. Hopefully, the time will come soon when the

Boost The Economy

Apropos the cover story "Troubled Times" (SPOTLIGHT, October 19), it is clear that the country is passing through a very difficult period financially as well as sociologically. While the social wounds would take time to heal, the economic ones need immediate attention. The government should bring out plans and policies to give a new impetus to the sagging economy. Otherwise, the downward spiral would push the country into unimaginable problems.

Ritesh Bista
Bishalnagar

country will start moving up. With the ongoing government-Maoist dialogue, people are beginning to see a silver lining in the dark cloud. They must resolve their differences through dialogue and give people a respite from the present mess.

Hari Narayan Jha
New Baneshwor

Safe Landing

From his revolutionary decision of land reforms, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba seems to have made a safe landing ("Unreal Estate", SPOTLIGHT, October 19). Despite stiff opposition against the lowering of the land ceiling, the government passed the bill that was beginning to create rifts within even the ruling party. Especially, the MPs from the Terai had threatened to take strict measures to register their

disagreement with the move to reform lands.

Sailesh Thapa
Saddobato

Obstructing Innovation

The facility of Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) has come as a blessing for average people who cannot afford thousands of rupees in telephone bill merely to talk with their families and friends overseas. Shyam Agrawal (SPOTLIGHT, October 19) has rightly pointed that there is no harm in legalizing VOIP or internet telephony when it can provide people with cheaper international calls. Indeed, it is nonsense to be obstructing innovation in the technology. No one has the right to deny people the service of technological innovations just because it may mean loss to some organization.

Seema Aryal
Maharajgunj

Sorry State

Apropos the interview with Auditor-General Bishnu Bahadur K.C. (SPOTLIGHT, October 19), it is regrettable that the government has not strictly adhered to financial discipline. Despite regular reports of dismal state of affairs by the Auditor-General, the authorities have not made moves to restore sanity in the financial sector. The outstanding advances running into billions stand testimony to the nonchalance of the government. What is the Public Accounts Committee doing to press the government into fulfilling the recommendations made by the AG report? People have the right to know what is going on.

Dipesh Tamrakar
Mangal Bazaar

NOTICE: The next issue of SPOTLIGHT will come out on November 23, 2001, after the Deepawali Holidays.

'Ready To Action Operation' Launched

At a time when the fate of the third round of talks between the government and the Maoist rebels remains uncertain, a joint team of army and police have started operations against the insurgents in their strongholds, Naya Sadak, a tabloid daily, reported Friday, quoting security sources. Code-named 'Ready to Action Operation,' the initiative aims at controlling Maoists' activities in their strongholds, including Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan and Jajarkot districts. A military officer said the operation, as part of the Integrated Security and Development Program, aims at destroying the Maoists' backbone. The role of the army is only that of a 'back force,' he said. Sources claimed that the security personnel deployed in the area have been authorized to use force if the rebels refused to surrender their arms.

The Maoist leadership, too, has devised a new strategy to counter a possible government offensive, the news report said. Meanwhile, Rajdhani daily reported that the government is providing new equipment and advanced technology to the Royal Nepalese Army in order to strengthen its operational capabilities. In a written response tabled at the House of Representatives, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, who also holds the defense portfolio, did not provide details. In his statement, Deuba said the 47,000-strong army has been using 11 types of weapons. *Compiled from reports Nov. 2.*

Nepal-Bhutan Officials To Meet

A Nepal-Bhutan secretary-level meeting is to begin from Tuesday, November 6, in Kathmandu, a Foreign Ministry official said. According to a ministry spokesman, the meeting will focus on the basis for categorization of refugees, harmonization of the task and the position of both sides on the verification process. Should the verification of refugees at Khudunabari camp in Jhapa be completed within November, the refu-

gees could be repatriated to their homeland by the end of the year. The verification at Khudunabari has been continuing since the 11th Nepal-Bhutan ministerial meeting held at Thimpu decided to simplify the verification process, vest the joint verification team with necessary powers and add one member each to the Nepali and Bhutanese verification teams. *RSS news agency reports.*

Nepal For Simplified WTO Procedures

Nepal has adopted a one-point agenda for the upcoming fourth ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to press for simplification in procedures for the accession of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to the multilateral body. The meeting is to be held at Doha in Qatar from November 9 to 12. Nepal, which will be

taking part in the meeting as an observer, has been waiting for its turn to become a full-fledged member in the 142-member body. During the five minutes allocated for the Nepalese delegation, the country will support a fast track process' to induct new members to the world body and later monitor them to see if they have abided by the WTO rules on the basis of negotiations, said Prachanda Man Shrestha, joint secretary at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies. He said that on other issues, Nepal would raise its voice in unison with other LDCs and SAARC countries. Nepal had initiated the process to become a WTO member in 1998. *Kantipur daily reports.*

200 Health Centers Leaking

Most of the 215 Primary Health Centers under the Population and Family

SAARC SUMMIT In The Offing

Nepal starts preparing for the January summit

By A CORRESPONDENT

Though the dates for the 11th Summit are yet to be announced formally, Nepal has started preparing for the same. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, who also holds foreign portfolio, asked senior officials to make necessary preparations for the Summit scheduled to be held in the Nepali capital early next year by forming a time-bound schedule. Kathmandu residents still recall the cleanliness drive launched in the city when Nepal hosted the third SAARC summit in 1987.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Laxman Kadirgamar has confirmed that the 11th SAARC Summit would be held in Kathmandu on January 4-6, reports said. The summit, due to be held in Kathmandu in late 1999, had been postponed after India refused to share platform with the Pakistani military ruler who had taken reins after a military coup earlier the same year. The Hindu, a leading Indian daily, reported that Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf could hold a bilateral meeting at the sidelines of the SAARC summit in Kathmandu.

Some of the issues likely to be discussed during the forthcoming summit include endorsement of a social charter and establishment of South Asia Free Trade Area.

Meanwhile, Nepal-Bhutan Secretary level meeting kicked off in Kathmandu Tuesday to discuss categorization and possible repatriation of Bhutanese refugees whose verification has already been done. Foreign Secretary Narayan Shumsher Thapa and his Bhutanese counterpart, Ugyen Tshering, are leading their respective delegations.

Health project have started leaking within a year of their construction, a newspaper report said. The government constructed these centers with a loan assistance amounting to over Rs 1.6 billion from the World Bank. The centers at Gaushala in Mahottari district, at Yedukuha in Dhanusha district and at Bhiman in Sindhuli district are leaking, the report said.

Technicians in the project said the quality of the buildings is poor as the contractor saved up to 50 percent out of the total allocated budget. But official reports claimed that 90 percent of the total loan assistance had been spent on the project. Chief of the Family Health Project, Dr. Pushkal Bharati, admitted that the quality of construction was sub-standard. He said the buildings should be maintained by using the earnest money deposited by the contractor with the government. *Kantipur, Oct. 29.*

Big Industries Default On Loans

Some 33 big industrial houses have defaulted on loans worth over Rs 6 billion from the country's oldest commercial bank, Nepal Bank Limited (NBL), a newspaper report said. According to the report, the list of defaulters includes big business houses such as the Golchha Group, Amatya Group, Sitaram Gokul Mills, Sita Hotel, Nepal Coal Limited and Siddhartha Hospital. A report prepared by the Nepal Rastra Bank said that the NBL had bad loans worth Rs 4 billion in principal and Rs 620 million in interests by the end of the year 1998-99. "The bank would head toward collapse if its management did not make effort to recover the loans," the report cautioned. According to the report, dues from the Golchha Group to the NBL stand at Rs 1.30 billion.

The Amatya Group owes Rs 1.10 billion, while the Jyoti Spinning Mills is to pay back Rs 820 million. Hotel Oriental owes Rs 170 million. NBL General Manager Bhava Nath Upadhyay said the bank had initiated tough legal measures to recover the loans. The report was pub-

lished as the process to hand over the management of the bank to a foreign group is under way. *Rajdhani Oct. 30.*

Maoists Abduct 13 People

Maoist rebels have abducted 13 people, including the headmaster of a local school, Mohan Bahadur Pain, from Khamlalung VDC on Friday night in the eastern hilly district of Tehrathum, a daily reported Monday. The Maoist act came in retaliation for the resistance to Maoist atrocities mounted by local villagers on the eve of Dashain festival, police said.

In a separate incident, seven people were injured when Maoist rebels opened fire indiscriminately at devotees who had gathered to worship Goddess Kanakasundari in the remote mid-western district of Jumla last Thursday. The conflict erupted after the rebels barred local people from worshipping and threw away the idol of the goddess. *Himalaya Times Oct. 29.*

Emergency Operation Center Launched

The Emergency Operation Center (EOC) of the United Nations and UN Disaster Response Preparation Plan has been launched in Kathmandu. Premier Sher Bahadur Deuba inaugurated the Center Wednesday. According to Dr. Henning Karcher, resident coordinator of the UN system in Nepal, eight inter-agency cluster groups have been established to work in areas of critical importance including search and rescue, assessment, food and water and communications under the EOC. The EOC has been established keeping in mind the prediction of the possibility of a major earthquake, which, experts say, might occur anytime in the Himalayan belt. Similarly, the newly unveiled UN plan aims at ensuring human survival and well being, particularly that of the most vulnerable group. It is estimated that 40,000 people would die and 95,000 more would be injured if an earthquake of the magnitude of the Great Earthquake of 1934 hit the capital anytime. *Leading dailies report.*

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King Gyanendra receiving credentials from Ambassador of Russian Federation

IN A MESSAGE TO THE NATION ON BADA DASHAIN, KING Gyanendra has urged political parties, civil servants, eminent persons along with all other citizens to be sensitive to the fact that solutions to the problems confronting the nation must be addressed from within the constitution's framework. "We must remain alert and united, otherwise the possibility of our unity, religious tolerance and social harmony being undermined will always exist," His Majesty said. The royal message is being seen as meaningful in the context of the six-year-old violent 'people's war' launched by the Maoist rebels with a view to dismantling the country's democratic constitution and turning Nepal into a 'people's republic.'

SIX PEOPLE WERE KILLED AND FOUR OTHERS WERE injured when a tiger that came out of the Royal Chitwan National Park attacked the people in adjoining area of Nawalparasi district within the last week. According to a news bulletin over the state-owned Radio Nepal Tuesday morning, the Home Ministry has ordered the immediate killing of the man-eater. Local people are living in fear as the 'big cat' is yet to be caught, reports said.

THE KALI GANDAKI A HYDROPOWER PROJECT IS NEAR-ing completion. Almost 96 percent of the construction work of the project, located in the western district of Syangja, has been completed, official media reports said. The project launched in 1997 was scheduled to be completed by the end of December 2000. But due to technical difficulties, it will be completed toward the end of 2001 and the trial generation of power is scheduled in the beginning of 2002. The state-owned Nepal Electricity Authority is implementing the 144-MW project with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank and Japan Overseas Development Fund.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS SET UP A HIGH-LEVEL TASK force to deal with possible anthrax bacteria attacks in the Himalayan kingdom, reports said. The task force, led by Minister of State for Science and Technology Bhakta Bahadur Balayar, met Thursday to chart out strategies to meet with any activities of bio-terror. Acting director general at the Department of Health Services Dr. Mahendra Bista, said the task force would work as a watchdog and prepare policies to handle such attacks. There have been no reports of anthrax bacteria mailed to Nepal, but authorities said they have provided masks and gloves to employees at the General Post Office at Sundhara as a precautionary measure.

FOUR PEOPLE DIED WHEN A BOAT OVERCROWDED WITH people capsized in the Jogbuda River at Dodhara VDC, which lies on the Nepal-India border. According to police, the dead include three local

women and an Indian national. Witnesses said around three dozen people were on the boat. The Jogbuda River was swollen as the canal water in the adjoining Nepal-India border had been directed to the Nepalese side. The flow of water from the canal was stopped for four hours Saturday by the Indian authorities to facilitate search operations.

WORLD PEACE STUPA, REPORTEDLY THE BIGGEST STUPA in the world, has been unveiled at Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha. Built by the Japan-based Nipponzan Myohoji in the Navagram area as part of the Lumbini master plan, the pagoda is 41.5 meters high. The Japanese Buddhist organization has constructed 73 pagodas in eight countries. Former prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala unveiled the stupa amid a religious ceremony in Lumbini Saturday.

THE NEPAL STOCK EXCHANGE (NEPSE) INDEX, THAT represents the confidence of investors, showed a small increment of five points last week. According to NEPSE, the index rose by 4.73 points from 285.25 points while opening on Tuesday to 289.98 points while closing on Friday. During the last week before Dashain, the index had shown a marginal fall of 0.85 points. Last week, 38,776 share units valued at Rs 10.91 million were traded in 370 transactions. In the weekly trade before Dashain, 13,975 share units valued at Rs 7.11 million were traded in 286 transactions. In terms of transaction number, Nepal Merchant Banking and Finance Limited topped the list with nine transactions. Nepal Share Markets Limited, however, ranked first in terms of value of transaction and the number of shares traded. A total of 21,500 units of the banks' shares worth Rs 3.87 million were traded.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO PROVIDE 30 PER-cent concession in the annual road permit tax to passenger buses, mini-buses and minibuses providing 33 percent concession in bus fare to students, according to the Department of Transport Management, RSS news agency reported. The government decision comes after violent protests by pro-left student organizations demanding up to 50 percent concession in public transport for students. Compiled from reports.

A SILENT GREEN REVOLUTION IS GOING ON IN THE EAST-ern hilly district of Dhankuta. According to Kantipur daily, farmers sell fresh vegetables worth Rs 250 million a year out of the district. The District Agriculture Office of Dhankuta said vegetables grown in the district are sold in the adjoining districts as well as in India and Bangladesh. Some 25 multipurpose centers collect vegetables produced by nearly 1,000 families over 980 hectares. These centers sell vegetables worth more than Rs 120 million. The district's farmers are earning up to Rs 500,000 a year, the report said.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE WELFARE OF MENTALLY Retarded (AWMR), Nepal, the only national NGO that works for the cause of people with mental disabilities, has decided to observe Asoj 2 as Intellectually Disabled Day every year starting this year. The association organized rallies, sports and lecture programs to celebrate the day with the slogan "Let's raise our voice for equal opportunities for the mentally retarded". According to the institution, there are up to 1.5 million mentally retarded people in the country and the institution has been helping 4,000 of them. It has opened 33 schools in 22 districts, various resource centers and family counseling services to help them. "Mainly the association has been engaged in sensitizing the general people about the issues and challenges mentally retarded people face," said Sharada Man Shrestha, secretary of AWMR. The association organized a major program on Asoj 21 in Kathmandu with the objective of raising awareness about the conditions of mentally retarded people in the country. Hundreds of mentally retarded students took part in the program, which was held for the first time in the country. The association is also the immediate past president of the Asian Federation for the Mentally Retarded and member of Inclusion International. ■

“Depending on the circumstances, an all-party or national government can be formed. The constitution does not pose an obstacle to this.”

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, talking to reporters, in Kantipur.

* * *

“I am not optimistic about the progress of the dialogue. In fact, I have greater doubts today that the dialogue will deliver positive results.”

Girija Prasad Koirala, former prime minister and president of the ruling Nepali Congress party, casting doubts on the ongoing government-Maoist dialogue, in Spacetime daily.

* * *

“Now, come back with the whole gang.”

K.P. Oli, senior leader of Unified Marxist Leninist, asking Bamdev Gautam, general secretary of the Marxist Leninist party he formed after splitting from the UML, to come back to the fold, while seeing off Gautam, who attended the UML tea reception for the first time since the split, in Gorkhapatra.

* * *

“PM Deuba is busy saving his chair. The government has ignored its primary duty of providing law and order in the country.”

Iswor Pokharel, senior leader of the



main opposition UML, in Spacetime daily.

* * *

“Among the Congress leaders, some say the Maoist problem is terrorism while others say it is a political one. There is no clear view of the party.”

Khum Bahadur Khadka, Home Minister and central leader of Nepali Con-

gress, urging his party come up with an official viewpoint on the Maoist problem, in Himalaya Times.

* * *

“I am not in the mood to stand again. I want the leadership to go to young people now. I will work to ensure that.”

Gajendra Narayan Singh, president of the Nepal Sadbhavana Party, saying he will not stand for the post of party president in the forthcoming general convention of the party, in Kantipur.

* * *

“The characters of King are slowly emerging in the Crown Prince.”

Ashok Nath Tiwari, a royal-nominated MP at the Upper House, in Jana Bhawana.

* * *

“I like gundruk (traditional fermented spinach) better than meat in Dashain.”

Sharmila Malla, actress, saying that she prefers eating vegetable in Dashain, when most Nepalis celebrate by eating meat, in Gorkhapatra.

* * *



Deuba's Jumbo Challenge

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has acknowledged that he does not know how to fly a Twin Otter. But many people are wondering how safely he would be able to pilot his 41-member mini-



Deuba : Defending his cabinet

jumbo cabinet. During his first prime ministerial tenure six years ago, Deuba had formed a cabinet comprising 47 members of the hung parliament. Known as a soft-spoken and easy-going politician within his party and outside, Deuba has always taken extra care not to antagonize friends. Accordingly, Deuba has experimented with different ways of steering his mini-jumbo jet in keeping with the wishes and expectations of key cabinet colleagues. Deuba's ability to strike compromises may be his political trademark, but he probably remember all too well how during the turbulence of his last tenure he was forced to crash-land his carrier by rivals within his own party.

PM's Compulsions

Although the meeting was called 'Dashain Bhetghat', the intentions of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's spin-doctors seemed to encompass much more than exchanging festival greetings. In his hour-long interaction with journal-

ists, Deuba spoke of his compulsions in constituting a big cabinet. Interestingly, some of his newly inducted ministers were defending the prime minister, saying that Sherbahadur Dai had saved millions of rupees by keeping the cabinet small against all the pressures he was facing. It all depends on how you look at things.

Who Holds Power?

Some powerful members of the Nepali Congress strongly believe they are elected to parliament to become ministers. Now they have begun pressing additional demands, including inducting their supporters in the council of ministers. In such a competitive environment, holding the reins in Singha Durbar seems to have become a very difficult task. Even after including 41 ministers in his government, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is yet to stabilize himself in power. Khum Bahadur Khadka, Bal Bahadur K.C. and Bijaya Kumar Gacchedar were among the key ministers who presented separate lists of candidates for inclusion in the cabinet. You must have guessed. Instead of going to Deuba, MPs are these days knocking the doors of Khadka, K.C and Gacchedar.

Political Meetings

Many people generally tend to stay away from tea parties organized by political parties for fear of being branded as loyalists of any particular group. Nevertheless, the Dashain tea party seems to be an appropriate occasion for politicians to show their hospitality. Until five years ago, Dashain tea



Leaders in tea-reception : Informal talk

parties were a Congress prerogative. The main opposition CPN-UML has followed the practice amid the hot competition among the country's two major political forces to attract the people. Although the Nepali Congress pioneered the tradition, the UML organized this year's tea party earlier. Whatever the exact number of people at the UML party, our communist leaders have already expressed satis-

faction that the turnout was better than expected.

UML Caterers

The CPN-UML has proved that it is not only a political party but also a corporate organization with all attendant facilities. From getting food items to preparing dishes UML leaders exercise complete mastery over the process. At a time when all the other major political parties take the services of catering firms, the UML formed its own group to serve guests. This may be the reason why UML leaders were more worried about the quality of the food than about welcoming their guests. ■

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WORLD POPULATION REPORT 2001

Call For Global Action

The demographic, social and economic indicators published by UNFPA underscore Nepal's need to make sincere efforts to manage population growth

By KESHAB POUDEL

At a time when under-5 infant mortality, total fertility, literacy rate and government investment in the health and education sectors remain dismal, managing the population in the coming decade would undoubtedly be a difficult task.

Although Nepal has made certain progress in health, education and infrastructure development, it is too little and too late. Population growth will severely affect all ecosystems and will damage the natural

the country is already facing several problems in diverse areas, the existing infrastructure will become less capable of fulfilling the basic needs of the people.

Among the eight countries of South and Central Asia, Nepal is in a slightly better position in terms of annual population growth compared to Afghanistan, Bhutan and Pakistan. According to the State of World Population 2001 published by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), average population growth rate between 2000-2005 will be 2.3 percent.



Nepalese women and children : No succor

environment through global warming and loss of biological diversity, among other things.

A growing population will put greater pressure on natural resources, including forest, water resources and land. A huge amount of food and more energy will be required to sustain people's livelihood. This means the challenge of sustainable management of natural resources will become more daunting.

If the current growth rate of 2.3 percent continues, the projected number of Nepalis by the year 2050 will reach 52.4 million. As

In South and Central Asia, Sri Lanka has the lowest growth rate of 0.9 percent followed, by Iran (1.4 percent) and India (1.5 percent). Afghanistan has highest growth rate of 3.6 percent followed by Bhutan (2.6 percent). Nepal has the second highest urban population growth rate. The population fertility rate in is 4.48 in Nepal, which is fourth highest.

"The progress in the population program will depend on success in ensuring women's right to education and health, including reproductive health and ending ab-

solute poverty," said J. Bill Musoke, UNFPA representative to Nepal. "UNFPA is supporting many programs in close cooperation with government ministries and other line agencies."

According to the State of World Population 2001, global population will grow by 50 percent, from 6.1 billion in mid-2001 to 9.3 billion by 2050. All of the projected growth will take place in today's developing countries. The 49 least developed countries, including Nepal, already straining to provide basic social services to their people, will nearly triple in size from, 668 million to 1.86 billion people.

The percentage of birth with skilled attendants revealed the poor health infrastructures in the country. In average numbers, only nine out of 100 births were managed by skilled attendants. In Sri Lanka, 94 births were managed by skilled attendants. The percentage in other countries of South Asia is much higher. GNP per capita of Nepal is \$1,280 which is the second lowest in the region after Bhutan. Central government education and health expenditure of Nepal is quite satisfactory. Under 5-mortality rate is still higher in the area.

Population and the environment are closely related but the links between them are complex and depend on specific circumstances. The UNFPA this year chose the issue of population and environmental change, underlining these critical links.

As long as Nepal fails to make steady progress in reducing the size of its population, the country would have to confront many problems in the areas of development, health, education and sanitation sector. "Nepal is characterized by a high population growth. It is also among the poorest countries of the world, with an estimated 42 percent of the population living under the poverty line. Other characteristics associated with Nepal are high mortality rates as compared to Nepal's neighbors," said UNFPA Representative Musoke.

The social, demographic and economic indicators released by the State of World Population 2001 show that Nepal would have to face serious environmental and other problems due to unmanageable population growth. Time, however, has not run out. Nepal needs to ensure that the people have full access to reproductive health services. This would be far less costly in the long run than the environmental consequences of a ballooning population. ■



Crown Prince Paras and Crown Princess Himani : Symbol of continuity

CROWN PRINCE PARAS

Continuity And Stability

King Gyanendra declares Prince Paras Shah as Crown Prince in accordance with the traditions of the monarchy

By KESHAB POUDEL

Five months after ascending the throne and after much debate and consultations, King Gyanendra proclaimed his only son, Paras Shah, and daughter-in-law, Himani, crown prince and crown princess of the Kingdom of Nepal in accordance with the constitution and the Royal Succession to Throne Act 1988.

Although a small group of politicians, including main opposition CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, hinted at the need to democratize the institution of monarchy in their response to the royal palace announcement, a large segment of the population accepted the decision as normal and in conformity with royal tradition.

His Majesty has announced the decision in normal circumstances and in accordance with the constitution and Royal Succession to Throne Act. However, some politicians showed their lack of understanding of constitutional and royal traditions by trying to push the stable and strong institution of monarchy into another controversy.

For the last five months, a group of

politicians and intellectuals from the ruling and opposition parties raised questions about the Royal Succession to Throne Act, urging the need for democratization of the processes relating to the monarchy. Their real aim was to sow confusion in the aftermath of the tragedy that struck Narayanhity Palace on June 1.

"Before such an announcement is made, the King needs to consult parliament and consider the will of the people," said Narahari Acharya, member of the Nepali Congress Central Committee, who resigned as party spokesman in June after his controversial views on the Succession to Throne Act was disowned by party general secretary Sushil Koirala and others.

CPN-UML general secretary Nepal toed Acharya's line. "There is a need for transparency and democratization in the institution of monarchy," he said.

The demand of the two leaders representing the ruling and opposition parties surprised many, especially since neither group has been particularly cognizant of the importance of making its activities and decision-making process transparent or democratic. "How can a communist leader de-

mand democracy and transparency when he doesn't bother to disclose the proceedings of the standing committee meeting of his own party?" asked a political analyst. "It is shameful to even have to listen to words like democracy and transparency coming from political parties with undemocratic credentials."

Born in December 30, 1971, Crown Prince Paras completed his education at Sillar International University in the United Kingdom. He married Crown Princess Himani Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah in January 27, 2000. Born in India, Himani is the daughter of Rao Raja Vickram Singh of Rajasthan, India.

Crown Prince Paras is said to have a keen interest in the areas of environmental protection and sports. As chairman of the Central Zoo, the Crown Prince has made a major contribution to improve the physical and other facilities in the Jawalakhel zoo.

As the monarchy took a vital step towards ensuring the stability of the institution, some political parties and vested interest groups are trying to drag the King's legal and constitutional decision into controversy. Elements opposed to the rule of law and the letter and spirit of the constitution are pressing unnecessary demands to harass and weaken the traditional institution of monarchy.

"Those raising needless questions about the King's decision are serving the interests of elements that do not want a strong monarchy and political stability in the country," said a political analyst on condition of anonymity. "Couldn't these leaders find any other issue to discuss?"

Others cite the ignorance of the political leadership of the nature and functioning of the monarchy. As a traditional institution, the monarchy does not contest elections or go in for popular politics. Unlike political parties, the institution of monarchy is based on its own traditions, practices, custom and usage.

According to the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 and Royal Succession to Throne Act, the law, custom and usage relating to the succession to the throne provide the basis for any declaration on succession in the royal family. Precedence was applied in proclaiming Prince Paras, the only son of King Gyanendra and the closest male relative of the monarch, as

Crown Prince. The proclamation, made on the auspicious occasion of Vijaya Dashami, was a regular procedure.

The institution of the king, as both a juristic and natural person, provides both for continuity of traditional practices and for change to reflect modernity. Constitutional experts argue that the king as the theme of continuity and change cuts across all aspects of Nepalese life, its people, its history, the arts, architecture, culture, beliefs, language and literature.

Article 27 (1) of Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990 says His Majesty mean His Majesty the King for the time being a descendant of King Prithvi Narayan Shah the Great and adherent of Aryan culture and the Hindu religion.

From these constitutional provisions and terms of Royal Succession to Throne Act 1988, which replaced the Act of 1958, lays down the conditions for such announcement. Apart from constitutional and legal underpinnings, the legitimacy and continuity of the monarchy is also based on unwritten norms and values which have their roots in tradition, custom, religion and Hindu scripture. As the only son of King Gyanendra, Prince Paras was the natural heir apparent.

Monarchies and hereditary heads of states in both eastern and western societies have always claimed to have their roots in religion and divinity, and that legacy is maintained by modern monarchies as well. King Gyanendra's proclamation also rooted in such tradition.

The identification of His Majesty with culture and religion, therefore, is limited to legitimizing the continuity of monarchy and to reinforcing the grounds of acceptability even in the modern era in which the advances of republicans threaten the foundations of hereditary institutions. In the Nepalese context, there is no alternative to the institution of monarchy in terms of uniting the various ethnic groups of Nepal.

Crown Prince Paras has been the subject of controversy because of some unfortunate events surrounding his youthful past. However, there is an established system of justice to find whether someone is guilty or

innocent. The wild allegations against Prince Paras were clearly part of an effort from some quarters to tarnish the image of the monarchy.

An academic commentator has summed up the relevance of the monarchy in modern Nepal: At least for today's Nepal, a monarch can do more good than harm. Nepalese national unity or identity will be in danger if we put the constitutional monarchy in controversy.

According to Clause 5 of the Royal Succession to Throne to Act 1988, the reigning king names his son as crown prince, the successor to the throne. According Clause 5.1 King Gyanendra proclaimed Prince Paras as crown prince, a fact that already existed when His Majesty ascended the throne. The

until a son is born, but only when the throne is vacant, the heir apparent is not yet born, and no other male member in the order of succession is in existence.

If the crown prince does something against the royal custom and norms, then he could be deprived of the right to succeed to the throne. This conditions and qualification is stipulated in Clause 8 of the same act. This phenomenon is not something new. In the case of then-prince Dharendra, the late King Birendra simply followed the constitution and the act.

Article 28 (2) of the constitution empowers the King to make changes in the order of succession through enactment, amendment and repeal of the laws relating to the succession to the throne. By virtue of

this power, His Majesty may bring about changes in the Royal Succession Act itself or introduce changes in the existing order of succession within the framework of the existing Act as such. The present Royal Succession Act also lays down the circumstances in which descendants or heirs to the throne lose the rights of royal succession.

A heir to the throne lose the right of royal succession on the following grounds: abdication, relinquishment of the Hindu religion, acquisition of citizenship of other country, performance of an act against the interest of the nation, the crown or the royal family,

conclusion of a marriage against the custom and usage of the royal family, performance of an act against royal family, performance of an act against royal customs and usage and removal of membership of the royal family for violation of the royal code of conduct.

King Gyanendra's proclamation of Prince Paras as crown prince has paved the way for continuity of the institution of monarchy. The responsibilities on Crown Prince Paras's shoulders are immense. He has to prove his capability to work in accordance with the traditions and glory of an institution that is more than 200 years old. Nepal's monarchy has taken a significant step toward stability and continuity when the people are looking up to the institution for strength and succor during these turbulent times. ■



Crown Prince with Crown Princess at a temple at Bhaktapur : Learning tradition

announcement on Vijaya Dashami was the formalization of the existing fact.

In the prevailing condition, the King could not have done otherwise. According to the Royal Succession to Throne Act, the order of succession entitles the oldest son born from the formally married wife and the person designated as Her Majesty the Queen to be the crown prince and later to succeed the throne as His Majesty the King.

The refusal or failure of the oldest son to become King shall enable the oldest son of the crown prince to succeed to the throne. The sister of the crown prince has no right to inherit the throne. Only male members of the royal family are entitled to be placed in the order of succession (except in a special situation when a queen is permitted to sit on the throne for a period of two months, or

BRITISH GURKHAS

Changing Order

Following their withdrawal from Hong Kong in 1997, soldiers working in the British Gurkhas have seen remarkable changes in the United Kingdom

By KESHAB POUDEL reporting in London and Doha

Biswo Mohan Thapa, 26, and Man Bahadur Gurung, 22 (original names withheld upon request), were among more than 50 Nepalis flying by Qatar Airways Flight 350 from Doha to Kathmandu recently. Thapa, a resident of the remote eastern Nepalese district of Panchthar, and Gurung, a native of Syangja district in Western Nepal, share a common physical structure. But that where the similarity ends.

Thapa, who went to the tiny oil-rich sheikhdom of Qatar in the Persian Gulf three years ago to work as a foreman at the State Electricity Company, faced many difficulties before returning to Nepal. He put in long hours in the harsh desert climate to save the equivalent of Rs 300,000. Like many other Nepalis who go to the region for employment, Thapa had paid Rs. 150,000 to join the Qatari company with virtually no legal agreement concerning his terms and conditions of work.

Gurung, a rifleman at the British Gurkha regiment, has a completely different story to tell as he alone brings in Rs. 500,000 as his savings. He was flying from the 2nd Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles Shorncliffe, United Kingdom. Gurung, who joined the Gurkha regiment of the British Army three years ago, was returning to Nepal on a five-month paid leave.

Unlike Thapa, Gurung is fully protected by an agreement between the two countries and receives all facilities in par with the British soldiers in the service. "After my final selection at the British Gurkha Camp in Pokhara, I was asked to leave some of my belongings, including clothes, before leaving for the Training Wing of the Brigade of Gurkhas in Catterick UK," said Gurung. He said he had not felt homesick because he spoke with and wrote to family members regularly.

Working Abroad : The environment within which the British Gurkhas work is very homely. Soldiers are allowed to practice their cultural and religious traditions within their

battalions. The family members of the Gurkha soldiers who live in the battalion residences offer an opportunity for soldiers to interact in a uniquely Nepali way. All the accommodation is exactly the same as their British counterparts.

"We hardly felt any homesickness while working in the battalion, as we organized regular meetings and interaction programs within our battalion," said Major (QGO) Damar Ghale of the Queen Gurkha Engineers in Invicta Park Barracks, Maidstone.

On the four-hour Doha-Kathmandu Qatar Airways flight, one found two distinct groups of Nepali passengers. The majority of the Nepali passengers, returning from Gulf coun-



Gurkha family in UK : Home away from home

tries, were desperate to see their country and family members.

"We were stacked into common premises and were not allowed to use the phone frequently," said Subarna Shrestha, a residence of Baglung in western Nepal, who was returning from a sheep farm in Saudi Arabia. "We were not allowed to celebrate our festivals and other religious practices. It is true that we can make ten times more money than we could ever do in Nepal, but there are clear difficulties in working in the desert. None of us have our families with us"

With their blue blazer and green necktie, Gurkha soldiers are clearly distinguishable from the other passengers, most of whom wore jeans and other informal dress, carrying a couple of heavy suitcases filled with readymade garments and some electronic appliances.

"If I find a job in Nepal, I will not return

to the Gulf," said Thapa who recalled the shock he felt when a colleague died from heat stroke. "If there is an accident, no one is there to protect us," said Thapa.

Competition among Nepali youths to get jobs in foreign lands is very high. With the number of unemployed youths growing each year, the headlong rush to go abroad for better prospects is bound to continue. Competition to get into the British Army is fierce because of the prestige and monetary benefits in the service. But less than 5% of Nepalis working abroad join the British Army.

Going abroad for employment in places other than the British or India armies is a recent phenomenon. Nepali workers have found places in the labour market of Gulf countries only recently. The process of overseas employment in a legal and organized way started following the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990. In recent years, there have been frequent reports of Nepalis entering other countries illegally. Many illegal workers from Nepal have been detained in Malaysia, Taiwan and other countries.

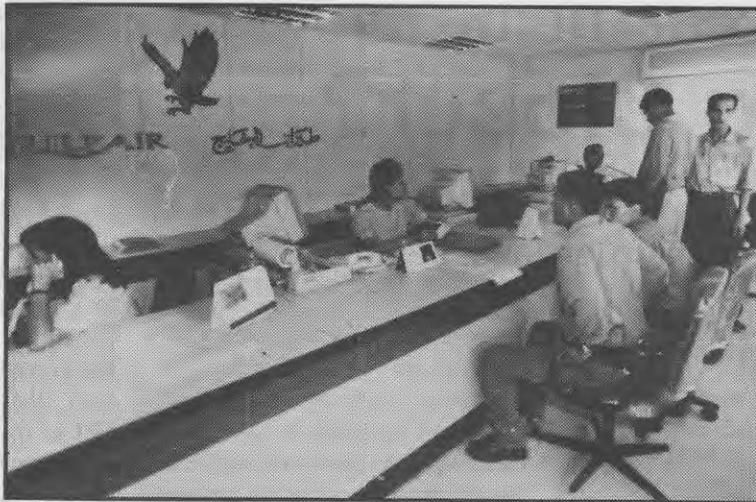
The Gurkha Brigade of the British Army is the only foreign-employment sector that is governed by an agreement between governments, popularly known as Tripartite Agreement signed by Nepal, United Kingdom and India. The terms and conditions of the Gurkha servicemen are fixed under the agreement. The agreement, which is binding on the signatories, is recognized by the United Nations.

Following the transfer of Hong Kong to the Peoples Republic of China in 1997, the role of Nepalis working in the Gurkha Brigade of British Army has also undergone a marked transformation. They are posted to camps in the United Kingdom and the Southeast Asian nation of Brunei. Under the British government's current plans for the regular armed forces, the Brigade is established at 3,500 servicemen stationed predominantly in the United Kingdom.

"The Gurkha Brigade, together with their British counterparts, has been heavily committed to operations, most significantly in the Balkans, East Timor and Sierra Leone," said Major (QGO) Sonam Tshering Sherpa, based at Brigade of Gurkhas Headquarters in Netheravon. "The Gurkhas are on operations in Kosovo and Bosnia right now. Our Gurkha soldiers are working under different commands, including in 36 Engineers Regiment, Logistic Regiment, Signals regiment and other infantry battalions."

After they were shifted from Hong Kong to the United Kingdom, Gurkha soldiers have received greater exposure to western culture. The Gurkhas working in the logistics, signals and engineering fields get more benefits, as they have to work with their British counterparts in the battalion.

"Our boys have proved their efficiency and capability in handling most modern and sophisticated equipment along with the British soldiers," said Major (QGO) Chitraj Limbu at the Queen's Own Gurkhas Logistic Regiment, Colchester.



Nepalese going to the gulf : Future uncertain

The Gurkha soldiers, too, have to develop their efficiency as they receive all kinds of facilities at par with British counterparts while in service. "If the Nepalese government plans to exploit the exposure and skills acquired by the Gurkha soldiers in the British Army, the country will gain immensely," said Major (QGO) Damar Ghale. "Mostly, the soldiers retire at the age of 35-45, so their skills can be helpful in the process of nation building."

The families of British Gurkha personnel transferred to the United Kingdom have received greater opportunities as well. Most family members of Gurkha servicemen are also working. In accordance with British government rules, they are making 7 pounds sterling an hour. Their children benefit from the free school education in the United Kingdom.

"Take-home pay is equal among Gurkhas and British soldiers but we get accommodation and food free of charge," said Capt. (QGO) Bishnukumar Pun. "Postings in the UK gives our family tremendous opportunities for exposure." He added "We work with British soldiers as

colleagues and get the same pay."

Almost all family members of Gurkha soldiers living in the United Kingdom are busy, as there is a high demand for their services. "Nepalese women have proved that they are loyal, honest and hard-working people. This is the reason why many Britons prefer to employ these women," said Major Tekbahadur Gurung MBE - himself commissioned from Sandhurst and who commands the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst's Demonstration Company.

Along with monetary benefits, the exposure Gurkha soldiers and their family members receive in the United Kingdom would help to bring much-needed change in Nepalese society, which is itself in the process of mod-

ernization. The experiences of qualified and trained soldiers and western-educated children will be a boon for Nepal in its quest for transformation.

Shortcomings : To be sure, not everything is right among the Gurkhas. Soldiers below staff sergeant rank have a few grievances in terms of benefits and other facilities.

They want to bring along family members like their senior NCOs and officers do. According to existing rules, those below staff sergeant rank are not allowed to bring family members for more than three years during their 18-year job period.

"If we were allowed to bring our families like others are, our work efficiency would also improve," said one soldier. "In fact, this is a very discriminatory practice in the service. Long periods of separation from the family members sometimes ruins the family. But we knew these conditions when we joined"

Soldiers who are on the verge of retirement have many dilemmas. Growing violence and the deteriorating law-and-order situation in Nepal worries them much. The concern of soldiers is understandable, as they are working in a high-risk field and are sad that their own country faces such violence. With the world once again in the midst of a global war on terrorism and the proliferation of regional conflicts, soldiers are bracing for difficult times.

The Future : At a time when the British government has started recruiting soldiers from other Commonwealth countries like Fiji, the monopoly of the Gurkha soldiers, earned through decades of trustworthiness, is being challenged. If the cost of recruiting Gurkha soldiers goes up in terms of individual investment, Nepalis may lose the outstanding opportunity they are getting in the United Kingdom. Immigration and litigation cases concerning Nepalis also seem to be irritating British de-

fense officials. One of the challenges before the Gurkhas is to retain their reputation for honesty and hard work among the British people and to convince policy makers in London about the perceived shortcomings in the service.

A large number of British Gurkha servicemen are very sincere and concerned about maintaining their dignity and prestige through hard work and efforts need to be made to satisfy disgruntled voices. But one soldier said "We have an excellent deal, and if it needs to be changed we must do this diplomatically. We find the actions of some

organisations which have achieved nothing for us - embarrassing and wrong."

The History : For nearly two centuries, the Brigade of Gurkhas in the British Army has remained the source of foreign employment for Nepalis. After India gained independence in 1947, the 10 Gurkha regiments were split between the Indian and British armies. The 2nd, 6th, 7th and 10th Gurkha Rifles were among those transferred to the British Army. Today there are two battalions of infantry and 3 other regiments (logistic, engineer and signals)..

Britain began recruiting Gurkhas after the Anglo-Nepali war of 1814-16. Between 1815 and 1857, Gurkha battalions were involved in a number of campaigns. But it was after the Indian Army mutiny in 1857 that Gurkhas secured a place of pride among the British people and in the permanent order of battle of the old Indian army.

Conclusion : Joining the British Gurkhas has always been viewed as a privilege by many Nepalis and the knowledge, skills and exposure they acquired during the service has been immensely valuable in the process of national development. Nepali rural society, where most of the recruits come from, has benefited enormously from the British Gurkhas. Equally important for Nepal is their contribution to replenishing foreign currency reserves. Nepal gains about £60,000,000 a year from this valuable connection. The Gurkhas have proved that they can work in any geographical conditions with all kinds of people.

The quest of Nepalis for employment abroad has increased many fold. Until suitable alternative are available in the country, it is in everybody's interest to maintain this special opportunity for employment with the British Army. And our people get an excellent deal - look at Biswo Mohan Thapa's tale! ■

NEPAL-INDIA TRADE TALKS

Coming Closer?

With the treaty set to expire in a month, Nepalese and Indian officials try to narrow down their differences

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

There are some signs of positive developments, finally. The two-day joint secretary level talks between Nepalese and Indian officials concluded in the Nepalese capital Sunday with both sides agreeing to continue talks on renewing the five-year-old bilateral trade treaty. Leader of the Nepalese delegation, Purushottam Ojha, said the talks were positive as both sides came closer toward narrowing their differences on the renewal of the treaty that expires on December 5.

The talks mainly zeroed in on such topics as certificate of origin, value addition and export surge. Ojha said various modalities were discussed, including adopting the recommendations of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and Confederation of Indian

Industry (CII).

In August, India formally notified Nepal that it wanted to review certain provisions in the treaty, saying that a surge in exports of about half a dozen items from Nepal had hurt India's industries. The Nepalese side maintained that it would like to see the renewal of the treaty without major changes. The treaty provides duty-free access to Nepalese manufactured products in the Indian market, except those in the negative list (tobacco, liquor and perfumes).

The secretaries of the Commerce Ministries from Nepal and India have met twice in the Nepalese and Indian capitals over the last four months but have failed to come to a common platform. Indian industries have been complaining about a 'surge' in the export of five items — polyester yarn, vegetable ghee, copper wire, zinc oxide and G. I. pipes — from Nepal. Indian officials had proposed that Nepali products

should have at least 30 percent local value addition before they were exported to India. Nepalese officials argued that such provision would be against the spirit of the 1996 Treaty of Trade. But during the recent talks, Nepali officials agreed to consider the Indian proposal.

Officials here say exports from Nepal

were a meager 2 to 2.5 percent of the total imports of the said items in the huge Indian market. The new provision would further curtail Nepalese exports, thereby widening the already huge trade gap, they said.

Last year, Nepal exported goods worth over Rs 27 billion to India while imports amounted to nearly Rs 47 billion, leading to a trade deficit of nearly Rs 20 billion. "Both of us will lose if the deadlock continues. Obviously, Nepal will lose more," said Ravi Bhakta Shrestha, president of the FNCCI (See Box)

More than 44 percent of Nepal's total export is consumed by India, whereas a little more than 35 percent of total Nepalese imports comes from India. The five items

'India Should Show Magnanimity'

— RAVI BHAKTA SHRESTHA

The apex Nepalese private-sector body, the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) is busy trying to resolve trade dispute between Nepal and India for the last several months. FNCCI President RAVI BHAKTA SHRESTHA spoke to SPOTLIGHT briefly on Sunday after the official-level talks were over. Excerpts:

There is only a month left before the treaty expires, but there are no signs of consensus. How do you see this?

We are very worried. We should lose no more time. We should have done our homework in time. But that could not happen. At least there should have been some indication toward which direction we are moving. I have heard that the joint secretary level meeting has ended without any concrete decision. Now, I would like to say that the two governments should listen to the joint recommendations made by the FNCCI and CII (Confederation of Indian Industry) after detailed homework.

What are the major points of those recommendations?

Number one, we have said that the 1996 treaty should be renewed automatically and problems, if any, should be resolved through letter of exchange. We have agreed that there should be value addition of 30 percent. It is because there can't be any industry without value addition. As far as the issue of surge is concerned, we have proposed that the Joint Economic Council (JEC) should be asked to define surge, which will then be recommended to the government. The definition of manufacturing process, value addition should be made by the technical committees under the Department of Industry of Nepal and that they should not be altered for one year.

Who will lose from this deadlock?

Both countries will lose. Obviously, Nepal will lose more. In 1996, the JEC had been set up and the provision of duty free exports from Nepal to India was agreed as per our recommendations. After the treaty, Nepalese exports to India have increased and so have imports from India. Last year, Nepal's exports to India stood at Rs 27 billion whereas imports from Nepal stood at around Rs 44 billion. There is still a trade deficit of around 18 billion. To bridge this trade gap and for the industrial development of Nepal, India should show magnanimity toward Nepal. I don't see any possibility of deadlock. I again urge both the governments to endorse the joint recommendations submitted by us.

objected by Indian industries constitute nearly 20 percent of Nepal's total exports to India.

Experts say the treaty can be implemented only in an environment of mutual trust and confidence. They, however, smell rat in the changing Indian proposals during the negotiations from most-favored nation treatment to value addition to putting Nepali export items in the negative list. It seems the real Indian agenda is different than what they are proposing, said Dr. Bhuvan Bajracharya, an economist who is following the bilateral talks.

The 1991 treaty required Nepal to value add at least 50 percent in its export items to enjoy duty-free access in the Indian market. The 1996 treaty, considered a milestone in Nepal-India relations, however, removed such restrictions. The treaty is considered instrumental in attracting Indian and foreign investment in Nepal over the last five years.

"India is a natural partner for the economic and industrial development of Nepal," Binod Chaudhary, a leading industrialist and former president of FNCCI told Himalaya Times daily. "For us, India is a huge and very important market. When we start looking into the broader and extensive issues between the two countries, small hitches will disappear automatically."

But critics say a somewhat rigid attitude on the part of India, as manifested in the case of Kodak, has raised suspicions about the implementation of the treaty. Some Indian states have already introduced anti-dumping and luxury duties on a number of Nepalese products.

Meanwhile, reports said the External Affairs Ministry of India has indicated that political compulsions should also be taken into consideration during the review of the 1996 treaty. "Nepal should not move away politically from India as this will result in proximity with China," The Economic Times, a leading Indian daily, reported referring to the concerns of the South Block officials. For Nepal, more than using political cards, trying to take Indian establishment and industry into confidence will help much, say analysts. The WTO commerce ministerial level meeting in Doha, Qatar later this week will give Nepali officials one such opportunity. ■

DEUBA CABINET

Survival Instincts

Premier Deuba forms a 41-member cabinet to survive the 'number's game'

On the last day of the 20th session of the Parliament (October 19), Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has expanded his 13-member by more than three times pushing the total number of his cabinet colleagues to 41. He has inducted five new ministers, 16 ministers of state and seven assistant ministers in his three-month-old cabinet. Premier Deuba still holds key portfolios of Defense and Foreign Affairs with himself. Earlier, Deuba had set a record by constituting a 48-member cabinet while heading a three-party coalition in 1996-97 that lasted for 18 months only. Deuba needs support of 57 NC lawmakers (out of 113) to remain in power. Whether the 'jumbo cabinet' will prolong his government's tenure, only time will tell.

New Faces in the Deuba Cabinet

Ministers:

Purna Bahadur Khadka- Industry, Commerce and Supplies,
Rishikesh Gautam- Minister without portfolio, Prime Minister's Office,
Rajendra Kharel- Women, Children and Social Welfare,
Khem Raj Bhatta 'Mayalu'- General Administration,
Narendra Bikram Nemwang- Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

Ministers of State:

Bhakta Bahadur Balayar- Science and Technology,
Ram Janam Chaudhari- Land Reforms and Management,
Devendra Raj Kandel- Home Affairs,
Duryodhan Singh Chaudhari- Local Development,
Surendra Hamal- Forest and Soil Conservation,
Shiva Raj Joshi- Labor and Transport Management,
Narayan Sharma Poudel- Water Resources,
Arjun Jung Bahadur Singh- Foreign Affairs,
Laxman Prasad Mehata- Agriculture and Cooperatives,
Ms. Sushila Swanr- Women, Children and Social Welfare,
Hari Narayan Chaudhari- Information and Communications,
Narayan Prasad Saud- Education and Sports,
Keshab Thapa- Physical Planning and Construction,
Sarbadhan Rai- Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation,
Mohan Bahadur Basnet- Health,
Bharat Kumar Shah- Finance.

Assistant Ministers:

Prakash Bahadur Gurung- Industry, Commerce and Supplies,
Dilli Raj Sharma- Land Reforms and Management,
Nagendra Kumar Raya- Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs,
Sabitri Bogati Pathak- Physical Planning and Construction,
Dil Bahadur Lama- General Administration,
Birendra Kumr Kanaudia- Water Resources,
Ajay Kumar Chaurasiya- Local Development. (end)

CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ideals

And

Reality

Eleven years after the promulgation of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990, the country is yet to achieve the system and society the basic law visualized. The dangerous vacuum created in the course of drawing up the new constitution after scrapping the old one still rocks the minds of the people. That gap helped to pave the way for endemic political instability and confusion. At a time when a group of politicians and intellectuals, dejected, rejected and sidelined by mainstream politics, have joined the bandwagon to destroy constitutional traditions and practices, a painful phase of chaos and confusion seems likely. If those supposed to execute and uphold constitutional authority do not set and follow traditions, no constitution can hope to achieve its vision. The harsh reality is that a constitution cannot deliver a ready-made model for success.

By KESHAB POUDEL

A short sight-seeing trip to Buckingham Palace, Constitution Hall, Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey in central London provides glimpses of monuments to Britons' centuries-long struggle to arrive at the resilient political order they have today. Nepal may not have to spend such a long time to make its democratic institutions work.

However, it definitely needs patience to develop the traditions required to run institutions as envisaged by the constitution.

Strangely, politicians and intellectuals who have had wide exposure to western liberal democracy and knowledge about the lengthy and painful process of social and political transformation are in forefront of criticizing the constitutional and political processes practiced in the country and are asking for immediate results. Is this igno-

rance or dishonesty on their part?

When the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal was promulgated by late King Birendra in 1990, barely three months after the drafting process started, it was regarded as a sacred written document. Despite the main opposition CPN-UML's "critical support", the constitution received firm popular backing. However, this sense of unanimity did not last long. Politicians rejected, dejected and sidelined by mainstream politics started



The framers of constitution : Have they fulfilled their responsibility?

attacking the new constitution, inexorably pushing it toward greater controversy.

Every constitution contains certain ambiguities and confusion during its early phases. It has to undergo several processes before establishing itself as an all-acceptable document. "The constitution is an intentionally incomplete, often deliberately indeterminate structure for the participatory evolution of political ideals and governmental practices," says Laurence H. Tribe, a world-renowned constitutional expert.

Innocent and illiterate rural people representing more than 98 percent of the population do not know what is really happening, much less what has gone wrong with the constitution. However, the impatience of two percent of urban intellectuals, who have enjoyed all kinds of benefits, is posing a threat to the 11-year-old constitution.

The attack on the constitution injects a sense of instability in the social and political processes. The two senior leaders of the ruling Nepali Congress, former prime ministers Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Girija Prasad Koirala, have been defending the constitution, but their voices are yet to be heeded within their own party. The Maoist party waging a so-called "people's war" has called for scrapping the constitution. If there is a fault somewhere, where does it lie in the constitution or among those who are entrusted with implementing its provisions?

What Amendment? : The CPN-UML,

which is vocal in demanding amendments to the constitution, has not clearly pointed out which articles it wants changed. Moreover, it has not publicly explained its reasons for demanding those changes. Where have the reservations the party expressed in 1990 gone? Are UML leaders planning to reintroduce their reservations or have they abandoned them altogether? Nobody understands the rationale behind the UML's demand, especially at a time when the Maoists have already made clear that they would not accept anything less than a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution.

The constitution itself has laid down clear procedures for amendments. Furthermore, the basic law is being amended through the process of judicial review by the Supreme Court in an evolutionary manner. "We are demanding the amendment to the constitution to solve the Maoist and other problems," UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal told journalists at a tea party organized by his party recently.

A section of Nepali Congress leaders led by central committee member Narhari Acharya is also toying with the idea of the main opposition party. But this group, too, remains unclear about what it wants to change in the constitution. "If all political parties demand an amendment, we are also ready to discuss it," says Acharya. "Since the constitution has clearly made provisions for the amendment, there is no need to worry about

such demands."

A constitution is a document that can be written in a compact form like ours or left in scattered ordinary rules and conventions like in the United Kingdom. In any case, it forms the basis of the legal order of the state. But a constitution is also a power-map tracing the normative relationship between the government and the citizens. The constitution, as far as it is concerned with power, is as much the concern of the political scientist as of the constitutional lawyer. On the ideological front, the constitution can be the most democratic or the most authoritarian. But in actual terms, it is the action of the people that determines the result of the constitutional process.

A comparatively less liberal constitution can bring good results provided those implementing and interpreting its provisions are capable and operate democratically. A person lacking traditions of liberalism may implement or interpret a liberal constitution in highly authoritarian way.

"The country needs changes in the behavior of political leaders and other senior officials, not a constitutional amendment," says senior advocate Mukunda Regmi, one of the members of the panel that drafted the basic law. "As long as the conduct and culture of our society remains entrenched in the past, it is impossible to realize the democratic vision envisaged by the constitution."

If the people involved in implementing the constitution perform their roles boldly and honestly, even a conservative constitution can be transformed into a vibrant custodian of liberalism. Had the first written Constitution of Nepal 1949 been implemented and practiced according to its spirit, the country might have embraced a democratic system a long time ago. Faith, determination and commitment are required to make a constitution function in accordance with its objectives. Most importantly, the leaders and the people need to adhere to democratic principles and practices.

"The fact that the constitution is democratic around the world today does not in itself ensure the stability, consolidation, or perfection of our democratic systems," writes Patricio Aylwin, Chile's first democratically elected president, in the "Journal of Democracy" (Volume 9, Number 3 July 1998). "In many countries, and especially in Latin America, democracy suffers from serious weakness and faces troubling threats. These



Mass rally : High expectation

weakness or dangers fall into three categories that I shall term institutional, cultural, and structural.

"At the institutional level, it is clear that the formal juridical institutions of our democracies are imperfect. The rule of law does not prevail everywhere in its totality, and many countries lack balance among the branches of government. Cultural shortcomings are the cause for even greater concern. To what am I referring? First, I have in mind the absence of democratic traditions. In many of our countries, democracy does not have many strong adherents; it is somewhat artificial, weak and formal."

Where Lies the Fault? : Past experiments have shown that the constitution cannot function in the absence of institutions and dedicated and committed leadership. In the case of Nepal, modern institutions like the judiciary, legislature and executive are in existence, but those who lead them are yet to cultivate a constitutional culture.

Both the Constitution of Nepal 1962 and the current constitution have produced relatively the same kind of results in terms of actual execution. In some cases relating to the judiciary and legislature, restrictive constitutions have produced decisions that are more liberal. On the other hand, judges have tended to provide restrictive interpretations under the liberal constitution.

All five constitution experimented in Nepal over the last five decades were written

with the good intention of delivering justice, developing democratic institutions and ensuring all-round development of the country. Unfortunately, the first four constitutions failed because of the failure of those executing their provisions. The present constitution is also facing similar problems.

American politicians and intellectuals have hardly challenged the fundamental issues of their constitution. In its 200-year history, the document has been transformed systematically through various interpretations by the court. When the constitution was drafted, it divided the population into slave and citizens. Later, the same constitution abolished slavery retaining its original structures.

In the United States, hardly anyone follows violent means to amend the constitution. Instead, people build pressure through the media and other channels. This resilience on the part of those executing the American constitution has left the document as a vital source of inspiration to freedom-loving people around the world.

The United Kingdom does not have a written constitution. Tradition and practices developed over the centuries have made it impeccable. After the beginning of the process of judicial review in 1960, British legal interpretations are much better than those found under written constitutions.

The Indian Constitution, too, sets similar practices. It is through judicial interpreta-

tion that the political process becomes more stabilized. Prime minister Indira Gandhi imposed the Emergency between 1975 and 1977 through an amendment to the constitution. But it was the courts that protected the fundamental rights of the people.

Nepal, too, has experimented with good constitutions but they were replaced one after another. Because of the failure and ignorance of those entrusted with upholding it and the growing tendency of political violence, no one seems to have patience for sustained practice. Had the 1962 constitution been allowed to be implemented and interpreted in keeping with its letter and spirit, it could have evolved into a democratic constitution. However, regular intervention and wrong interpretations weakened it. In 1990, then-prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai proved that the constitution could produce remarkable results if it were allowed to function properly.

If current trends continue, the existing constitution will become ineffectual whatever the underlining democratic ideals and spirit it embodies. The constitution is described as a document of faith, commitment and trust. "If you propose to embark upon amending the constitution when there is mistrust among the actors everywhere, there is a danger of destroying very fundamentals of the constitutional values," says Attorney-General Badri Bahadur Karki.

The 1962 constitution was amended three times with an aim to open up the prevailing national order, but the result was exactly the opposite. Instead of challenging the present constitution, political leaders and intellectuals must show patience and courage for its vitality to permeate all levels of society.

"Nepal's experience has shown that a constitution cannot escape the threat of destruction if it cannot be changed in accordance with the changing times," writes eminent constitutional lawyer Ganesh Raj Sharma in an article in the 2055 Baisakh issue of *Kanoon* magazine. The present constitution, which came after a major upheaval, will also face similar problems."

Constitution after Violence : All four of Nepal's previous constitutions were disbanded through pressure of political violence. It seems that Nepalis have not cultivated the patience for the long process democratic transformation inevitably requires.

As the 1962 constitution was replaced

by the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990 through street violence, the existing constitution is also under similar threat. If violence set the standards for replacing the constitution, no constitution will survive for long. "We have changed four constitutions through unconstitutional and violent ways. Now let's start a fresh beginning to challenge the constitution through the peaceful process of convention and practice," says an analyst.

"If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form but also in content, what must do? The first thing in my judgement, we must do is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives," said Dr. B.R Ambedkar, who is regarded as the father of the Indian constitution.

"It means that we must abandon the bold methods of revolution. It means that we must abandon the method of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and Satyagraha. Where there was no way left for constitutional methods for achieving social and economic objectives, there was a great deal of justification for unconstitutional methods. But where constitutional methods are open, there can be no justification for these unconstitutional methods. These methods are nothing but the grammar of anarchy and sooner they are abandoned, the better for us."

Where is the Consensus? : The most stable countries are those that enjoy highest degree of consensus in matters of fundamental importance. In Nepal, there is a very low degree of unanimity among the major political parties and intellectuals on the constitution. Consequently, many important topics fall prey to constant disagreement, which eventually weakens democracy.

Experience has shown that a nation is most stable and governable when its level of societal consensus is as solid and broad as possible. The situation in Nepal is different as the struggles for political power are intense and confrontation between government and opposition extreme. Abuse of authority and corruption is somehow associated with a culture that regards certain abuse as natural and that consequently discredits and weakens democratic institutions. There is a tendency in every section of society to misuse authority. This cultural tendency may have its roots in traditions.

Another drawback is the control and manipulation of information by monopolistic groups that control the news media. Pub-

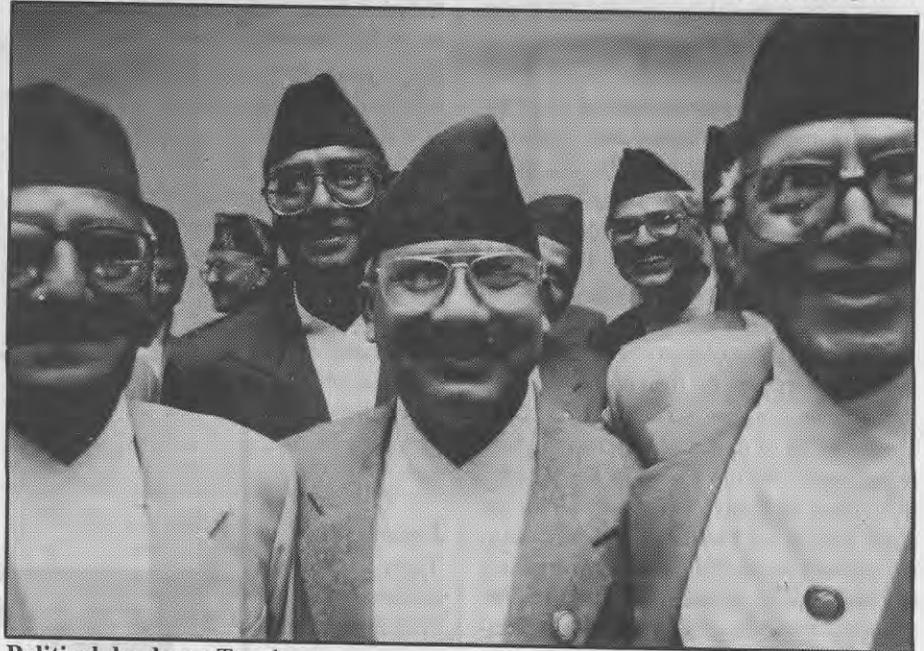
lic opinion in the country is not always sufficiently informed, since information is manipulated to a great extent.

The apathy and frustration among intellectuals who spare their time in discrediting the political process and political leadership, indifference toward and even rejection of the state, and deterioration of the institution of civil society are detrimental to constitutional growth. Besides, the formal and constitutional institutions themselves are incapable of delivering the results. Nepalis boast of the country's long-standing democratic traditions. In fact, however, the tradition is not as strong as we had expected. The fragility of national consensus only tends to limit the ambit for confrontation.

The broad consensus that existed during the time of the framing of the constitution is gradually fading away because those expected to uphold the institutions proved inca-

Nepalese history when society is deeply divided. If the constitution is opened for amendments, it will be like opening a Pandora's box. The constitution upholds essential qualities of all human beings, demands respect for human rights and endorses the sovereign right of all peoples to govern themselves. This is possible because various struggles the country has waged in the last five decades were struggles for democratic constitutions. History has taught Nepal solemn declarations. Unfortunately, democratic values have often been ignored or abused.

The constitutional history of Nepal is a saga of the struggle to achieve and restore a perfect utopian democracy, which could accommodate all intellectuals and politicians. But there is a need to have a popular basis to accommodate them. Politicians and intellectuals have to respect established procedures and rule of law to secure political power.



Political leaders : Tough act

pable of visualizing the system envisaged by the basic law. The political elite tends to start from scratch, rejecting all that went before and rebuilding from the ground up. Each incoming government receives a bequest.

"Have we wasted all these year in terms of constitutional development or learned some lessons to lay down certain ground rules? Whether we like it or not, we have certainly learned certain lessons and ground rules, but they are too little," says Attorney-General Karki.

This is one of the crucial times in

Sadly, few have the patience to wait.

Whose Demand? : Most of the people who are demanding a constitutional amendment have either lost the elections or do not see the possibility of winning elections. From former speaker Daman Nath Dhungana, CPN-ML leader Bam Dev Gautam, independent communist leader Padma Ratna Tuladhar to former minister Nilamber Acharya and Congress Central Committee member Narahari Acharya, all of them were sidelined in the elections. The leaders of CPN-UML leaders are the exception.

No constitution can offer an easy and ready-made package to build institutions and leadership. There are certain conventions and practices that need to be followed to develop a strong and effective system. In a country with a low per-capita income, large illiteracy and feudal- and agriculture-based society, it is not easier to instil democratic behavior.

Acquiring political power through popular means is difficult. Intellectuals always find the opportunity to enjoy power at the time of political crisis and anarchy. Once the constitution starts to function properly and matures, it automatically discards all opportunistic elements.

The main question today is not a new constitution or amendment but to develop the system visualized by the constitution. The Supreme Court, for instance, has unlimited authority to protect the right of individual and interpret the constitution. It can declare the law null and voids if it is against the spirit of the constitution. Nepal's Supreme Court is as powerful as the Supreme Court of the United States and House of Lords of the United Kingdom. However, our Supreme Court has inherited a different character.

Failure of Institutions : The performance of the executive, judiciary and legislature is woefully short of expectation. The Supreme Court, too, has not been able to play the role envisaged by the constitution. Although politicians and other authorities have abided by all of its decisions, including the reinstatement of the House of Representatives, there are many grievances over the top court's decisions. From the Tanakpur case to the controversial Citizenship Amendment bill and certain clauses of Labor Act, the Supreme Court has taken some bold decisions.

However, in a major constitutional case, the Supreme Court tried to escape from controversy by resorting to ambiguity. In the dispute between the Attorney-General and Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) over the final constitutional right to take decision on prosecution, the apex court refrained from upholding the clear constitutional rights of Attorney-General.

In such a situation of ambiguity, the CIAA is now encroaching upon the rights of the individual by evolving into a tyrannical institution, denying the right of access to

judicial authority. Had the apex court interpreted the constitution correctly when it had the opportunity, it would have prevented the rise of tyrannical institutions. Under protection from the court's verdict, a handful of people in the CIAA has pressed a bill in parliament that would allow the commission to take action against judges.

In some cases, the powerful court is far behind the court under the previous constitution. The interpretation on habeas corpus taken by then Supreme Court judge Nayan Bahadur Khatri on Yagya Murti Banjade case is still regarded as a landmark decision.

The apex court, under the leadership of Hari Prasad Pradhan in the 1950s, provided a similar shining example. Although its authority has been widened and infrastructure is much better, in a recent case relating to the CIAA's detention of a former general manager of Nepal Bank Ltd Sher Bahadur Thapa, the court failed to deliver immediate justice under habeas corpus. Even during the Panchayat days, there was a tendency to escape from fulfilling responsibility.

As institutions required to implement the constitution are yet to evolve, obstructing the current constitution would bring more chaos and push country into prolonged course of political instability. Experience has shown that a new constitution can be written, amended and changed but it does not matter as long as the pace of social and economic transformation fails to pick up.

Growth of Leadership :

There is crisis of leadership in all branches of the state. Lack of leadership in the political level is particularly serious. Nepal's political leadership is urban and a majority of decisive voters live in rural areas. There is a vast gap in terms of economic development, literacy, and health between rural and urban ar-

reas. Benefits are concentrated around the leadership. This is a character common to all countries with traditional and rural societies.

Leadership in the rural areas is flowering at the grass-roots level. The young and new leaders are coming through the 4,000 Village Development Committees and 40 municipalities. Interestingly, political instability at the center has not affected the growth of leadership at lower rungs of society. The local leaders have proved their capability to run grass-roots organization more effectively.

The maturity of leadership at the center was hampered following the interpretation of the constitution by the Supreme Court in 1995. It clipped the wings of the prime minister by restricting his right to dissolve the house. The weakened prime minister, in turn, has led to atrophy in government.

This is the right time to take stock of our achievements and failures. If we have failed, then who is to be blamed? In terms of our achievements, who helped us to get there and at what cost? Nepal is in the process of developing infrastructure and institutions like a free press, independent judiciary and growing middle class aware of their rights and responsibilities. This process should be allowed to mature unhindered. Ultimately, the success of the constitution rests on the foundation of the country's constitutional culture. ■

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WARRIORS OF DAWN

Health Alert

New research shows that heavy exercise may cause too much pain for no real gain

By AKSHAY SHARMA

Kathmandu at dawn is a showcase of joggers of all ages huffing and puffing to maintain their weight and waistlines at healthy levels. But recent studies suggest that going those extra miles may be too hard on your heart if you haven't trained properly.

Two studies in the October 17 issue of the *American Journal of Cardiology* show that marathon runners may be setting themselves up for a heart attack. "My concern is for people who exercise thinking 'more is better,'" says researcher Dr. Arthur Siegel, director of internal medicine at McLean Hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts.

Dr. Siegel and his colleagues looked at 55 finishers of the 100th to 105th Boston Marathons who were otherwise healthy and with an average age of 47. They found that compared to their blood tests before the race, within four hours after the race, they had elevated levels of blood clotting factors that are known to set the stage for a heart attack.

Does that mean we should stop running? "No, not at all. But it does mean we need to understand more about marathon training and how the human body reacts to stress," says Asok Rokaya of the Guru-Kul Club in Putali Sadak. "Coupled with poor or improper training, it could lead to consequences much more serious than the usual running injuries."

Despite these abnormal blood factors, none of the runners collapsed or experienced any heart problems during or after the races. Expert believes this is because another trigger, such as a heart rhythm problem, is needed to actually bring on a heart attack.

"The benefits of an active lifestyle are tremendous," says Kalish Thapa, executive director of the Nepal Medical Athletic Association. "But Dr. Siegel's work shows that marathoning may have its risks. If your goal is to improve your health, go for a run but perhaps don't train for a marathon."

"Your bursts of high-energy athletic activity aren't doing you much good if they are followed by a return to the bed during the rest of the week," says a sign at a gym



Runners : Health is wealth

in Dilli Bazar. New research using biological measures of energy expenditure bear out what common sense should have told you already.

"Regular, moderate exercise is healthier than isolated bouts of intense, exercise followed by a return to couch-potato lifestyle," according to Dr. Klaas R. Westerterp, of the department of human biology at Maastricht University in the Netherlands.

"To change a sedentary lifestyle into a more physically active one does not necessarily imply sport participation," Dr. Westerterp advises. Instead, he suggests these simple steps: "Incorporate physical activity like walking in your daily routine.

Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk to the local shop instead of taking the car."

In the study, Westerterp measured total energy expenditure in 30 non-obese adults over a two-week period. Biological measures of energy expenditure were taken utilizing "doubly labeled water" — a method in which researchers examine urine samples from people who have drunk water containing heavy isotopes of oxygen and hydrogen.

The disappearance of the radioactive oxygen and hydrogen in the urine serves as an approximate measure of the amount of energy used by the body, according to Dr. Westerterp. The study volunteers participated in three categories of activity over the two-week period: low, moderate, and intense. Results showed that only moderate exercise influenced the overall physical

activity level. But no relationship was seen between the level of overall physical activity and time spent on high-intensity activity alone, according to the report in the March 29 edition of *Nature*.

In another study, Dr. Westerterp has shown that individuals who alternate high-energy and next-to-no energy activities may not lose any more weight than people who diet but do no exercise at all.

Experts who reviewed the report agree, in general, with the recommendation. "I like the idea

that moderate physical activity is best," says Dhanesh Gurung of the Universal Gym at Jyatha, a non-profit research group focusing on behavior and health in Kathmandu. "We preach moderate physical activity. Often, it's the most that many people can do, it decreases the risk of injury, and all the data supports it."

But Gurung drew attention to the fact that the people who took part in the study spent between four and five hours a day in their exercise regimens — an amount of time that is likely to be unrealistic for many. So while an overall fitness program incorporating daily moderate exercise is optimal, the weekend warrior shouldn't necessarily hang up his cleats. ■

ANTHRAX SCARE Closer To Home

The anthrax terror that gripped the United States after the September 11 terrorist attacks has made its way to our neighborhood

By AKSHAY SHARMA

When 18-year-old Bhupal Karki of Baglung on November 4 opened a letter that had no address of the person who mailed it from the United States and fainted, he was taken to hospital and given antibiotics and two bottles of saline.

"I had a terrible headache after I opened the letter. Everything spun around me and I blacked out," Bhupal told Kantipur daily. Although doctors were not able to identify what had happened to Bhupal, some experts claimed the anthrax terror had arrived in Nepal, too.

Since the September 11 attacks in New York City and Washington DC, Nepalis have been witnessing strange scenarios on the international arena. For many, the globalization of the anthrax scare had become only a matter of time. There have been reports of anthrax-laced letters arriving in Pakistan and India.

Dr Mahendra Bahadur Bista, acting director-general of the Department of Health Services, held a meeting on October 31 to discuss the possibility of anthrax attacks in Nepal. "The government is quite serious and has formed a high-level task force to combat the possible harm from anthrax," he said. "We have directed the National Public Health Laboratory, Central Veterinary Laboratory, and the forensic lab of the Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (Ronast) to continue check ups."

People can catch anthrax from infected animals or contaminated animal products. Most natural infection comes from skin contact. In the past, industrial wool sorters were at high risk of infection. You can also get anthrax infection from eating raw or too-rare meat, but this is uncommon. Even more uncommon —

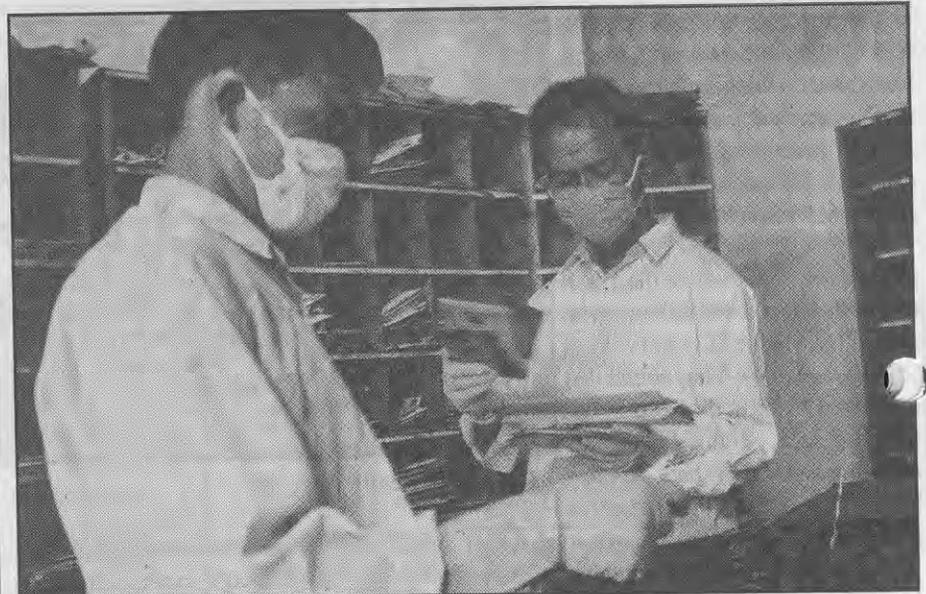
but by far most deadly — is anthrax caught by inhaling spores. Until last month, there hadn't been a case of inhalation anthrax in the United States since 1978.

Dr Vijay Sharma, who has studied the disease, puts matters into perspective. "Anthrax is an animal disease that has been around for tens of thousands of years. Rarely does anthrax cause serious disease in humans," he says. The germ is a bacterium called *Bacillus anthrax* is that 'seeds'

anthrax for people who have been exposed to the type of bacteria."

Anthrax is not contagious, which means it does not pass from one person to another. So there is no reason for people to take antibiotics out of fear of contracting the disease. Moreover, it is not recommended to take these antibiotics continually because it could lead to development of resistance. The only role for them is to be administered if somebody is known to have been exposed to anthrax during a biological release.

In many ways, it sounds like you can't really protect yourself enough. I think it is wise to compare this to a terrorist attack — there is very little we can do," says Dr Boria. "As a citizen, I would prepare my house and family just as I would for any other natural disaster, such as have water, flashlights, and common



Nepalese postal workers : Sense of insecurity

itself by forming long-lasting spores. These spores can survive in the environment for a long time."

The obvious question raised after weeks of news overload is: what can you do to protect yourself from anthrax and other forms of bio-terrorism? The antibiotic Cipro (ciprofloxacin) has been noted as a defense against anthrax. Dr Luciana Boria of the Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense, says, "We know that ciprofloxacin is an effective antibiotic in that it prevents the progression of inhaled

sense things in place."

When anthrax spores get inside the body, they grow rapidly. The germs themselves can cause dangerous infections. Far more dangerous is a substance they produce in the body — anthrax toxin — that helps the bug survive by killing off cells of the immune system. This toxin is so deadly that it can kill even after the infection is controlled.

The symptoms of anthrax infection depend on how a person catches the disease. All forms of anthrax, if diagnosed

early enough, can be cured by prompt antibiotic treatment. However, some anthrax strains developed as biological weapons are resistant to many drugs. Skin infection starts with an itchy bump like a mosquito bite. After a day or two, it forms a small liquid-filled sac. This sac then becomes a painless ulcer with an area of black, dead tissue in the middle. Antibiotic treatment cures this infection. Untreated, it kills about one in five people. The signs of intestinal infection are nausea, loss of appetite, and vomiting. This is followed by severe abdominal pain, vomiting of blood, and severe diarrhoea. Untreated intestinal anthrax is deadly between 25 and 60 percent of the time.

Inhalation anthrax, the most deadly form of the disease, begins with the same symptoms as the flu, including fever, muscle aches, and fatigue. As early as a day after these symptoms appear or but up to weeks later — the symptoms suddenly become much more severe, usually with breathing problems and shock. This form of the disease is often fatal.

"The early symptoms of inhalation anthrax are the same as those of a mild case of flu," Dr. Sharma says. "Treatment to prevent anthrax begins only after a person has had a suspected exposure. There is no quick test that can show whether a person has been exposed to anthrax. If a cold or flu suddenly gets much worse — especially with a severe headache — seek immediate medical attention."

A coherent response, he says, can begin only when anthrax infection has been identified. "This is now much more likely since the US Centers for Disease Control began a program to help public-health laboratories rapidly identify germs that might be used in biological warfare or terrorism. Early treatment is essential. Natural strains of anthrax may be resistant to many antibiotics, but most are sensitive to penicillin. Either of two antibiotics is recommended: doxycycline and ciprofloxacin."

Because anthrax spores can stay hidden in the lungs for a long time, antibiotic treatment should continue for 60 days. There are reports that some forms of anthrax created as biological weapons are resistant to these drugs, but there is no hard evidence that this is true. In fact, the

strains of anthrax in this outbreak appear to be fully sensitive to the antibiotics used to treat this bacterium.

One thing medical experts have been emphasizing is that people should not stockpile antibiotics. Antibiotic treatment should not be started unless public health authorities have warned of an anthrax outbreak, and even then, these drugs can have serious side effects for some people.

Unless you've been exposed to anthrax, there's no reason to suspect that those cold symptoms you are having are anything but that — a common cold. Antibiotics won't help if you have a cold or the flu. So if you start taking antibiotics — and then stop when the threat has passed — you are letting other germs in your body develop resistance to these important drugs. Then the medicine might not work when you really need it. Furthermore, antibiotics can be dangerous to some people, and must be used as directed. These important medicines should only be used with medical supervision. The odds of a bad reaction are small, but they are much greater than the odds of an anthrax attack.

Only treatment with antibiotics can keep an exposed person from developing anthrax. Anthrax vaccine is a series of six shots over the course of a year with yearly booster shots is not recommended for or available to the public. New treatments and vaccines are under development.

Human anthrax is a rare disease. There were only 18 cases of inhalation anthrax in the United States from 1900 through 1978. There were 224 US cases of skin infection between 1944 and 1994. However, the African nation of Zimbabwe experienced a terrible epidemic of skin anthrax with more than 10,000 cases between 1979 and 1985. Gastrointestinal anthrax is very rarely reported.

What makes anthrax such a scary germ is that it travels in the form of spores. These nearly lifeless seeds hide inside a hard shell and can't be hurt by freezing cold or boiling heat. They wait for the right conditions to bloom into deadly bacteria. The recent anthrax attacks have everybody's nerves on edge.

Far-flung remote places like Baglung are not equipped to handle the anthrax trouble. However, the government has

mobilized its resources in recent days. Personnel at the capital's General Post Office, who handle over 60,000 letters and packages each day, have been equipped with masks and surgical gloves. The Ministries of Health, Communication, Home, Agriculture, Science and Technology, Ronast, and the chiefs of police, the Postal Services Department, and the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division have decided to stay on full alert. ■

DOMESTIC AVIATION Under Pressure

Although many international airlines suffered heavy losses in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, Nepal's private airlines are now feeling the heat. In the current tourism season, Flight Care Aviation became first airline to shut down.

Launched with two Y12 Chinese shuttle aircraft, the airline has closed its service from last month. As tourism arrivals continue to decline, other private airlines are also said to be in a critical condition. Shangri-La Air, which was at the point of bankruptcy, is said to be stabilizing after it handed over two of its Beach aircraft to Necon Air.

Competition among operators to claim their share the limited tourism market was already growing tough. Some airlines are trying to survive the turbulence by rescheduling their flights and reducing internal costs. However, it is too early to predict their future.

"We have been facing a difficult situation over the last two years," said an airline operator on condition of anonymity. "Some airlines are already planning to merge in order to survive."

After the closure of Flight Care, nobody knows which airline will be the next to go bankrupt, especially in a situation when there is no one to bail it out. ■

GENSYM 2001

Overcoming Difficulties

A private college takes the initiative to provide practical solutions to geo-technical and environmental problems

By A CORRESPONDENT

With the objective of providing practical solutions to some of the geo-technical and environmental problems confronted by the country, an international symposium on "Geo-technical and Environment Challenges in Mountainous Terrain" 6 GENSYM 2001 was organized on November 6-7, 2001 in Kathmandu.

The symposium was organized by Nepal Engineering College (NEC) — the first engineering college established in the private sector in Nepal in 1994 — in association with Ehime University, Japan. "It was organized primarily to address soil-and water-related concerns," said Prof. A.S.R. Rao of the NEC, who was the convenor of the symposium. Over 100 delegates from Nepal, Japan, India, China

and Sri Lanka participated in the symposium, he said. Two keynote addresses by Prof. A. Sridharan of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and Prof. Norio Yagi of Ehime University, Japan were presented. Four special presentations were made by various professors. Prithvi Raj Ligal, vice chairman of the National Planning Commission inaugurated the symposium.

ing problems similar to those of Nepal. Japan also possesses some of the best technologies in the world for overcoming soil disasters.

A considerable part of the landmass in Nepal is mountainous terrain, which makes the country especially vulnerable to soil- and water-related disasters such as landslides, slope collapses, debris flows and mudflows together with associated environment problems such as soil erosion, deforestation and land degradation.

The occurrence of several landslides in places like Krishnabhir on the Prithvi Highway during the last monsoon caused a great loss to the economy, as it resulted in a protracted blockade of the national highway. Added were inconveniences to the public. Despite the terrible toll such events can extract, they seem to be recurring each year. Whatever action is being taken is like fighting fires after they have raged.

Protective measures, on the other hand, can save not only millions of rupees but also precious lives. The NEC has been providing a forum for researchers, professionals and managers to share their expertise and experience in areas of topical interest. In 1999, the college had organized CACE-1999 — a successful conference attended by a large number of engineers and architects from SAARC countries.

Floods and landslides are the two most dreadful incidents that kill hundreds, sometime thousands, of Nepalis each year. Yet, the government's response in preventing the loss of human lives and property has been abysmally inadequate. Regular interactions and seminars are important, as they help the authorities in drawing up appropriate strategies.

Scout Salutation

Nepal Scout Kathmandu District Welfare Fund organized a "Greeting Exchange Programme-2058" last week at the premises of Nobel Academy Higher Secondary School on the auspicious occasion of Vijaya Dashami and Deepawali. Special guest of the programme, the prominent educationist and chairman of Nepal Scout National Advisory Council Dr Trailokya Na-



Upreti : Spirit of scout

Upreti, said, "The unsteady environment that has appeared in the world after September 11, 2001 should be urgently corrected in order to maintain global peace and stability." He added that Scouts are well placed to spread the message of international brotherhood and sisterhood. Deputy Chief Commissioner of Nepal Scout, National Headquarters, Puspalata Bhattarai, said, "The youth need to move ahead by drawing inspiration from their elders for dynamic scouting." International Commissioner Rabin Prasad Pandey said, "On the basis of the fundamental principles of scouting, good citizens can be prepared."

Member of Nepal Scout National Advisory Council, Professor Govinda Narayan Jyapoo, Commissioner for National Public Relation Ram Gopal Karmacharya, and Secretary of Nepal Scout Kathmandu District Welfare Fund Shivaram Aryal also expressed their views. The programme was chaired by Anita Manandhar, chairperson of Nepal Scout, Kathmandu District Welfare Fund. Vice-Chairman Rabin Dahal welcomed the guests and highlighted the activities carried out by the fund.

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The involvement of the Japanese university was significant considering that Japan itself is a mountainous country, fac-

SUPERSTAR

Shades Amid Shines

Bhuwan KC polishes his film-making with another crowd-puller, though shades of imitation haunts his latest silver-screen venture

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

He literally made crores with "Crorepati" and followed his film-making passion with "Nepalibabu". Now he is at it again. "Superstar" — Bhuwan KC's latest venture has hit the screens in Kathmandu.

A pleasant triangular love story with shades of urban-rural divide, "Superstar", however, is another example of the lack of creativity that has been the hallmark of Nepalese film-makers.

A blatant imitation of Bollywood blockbuster "Rangeela", the film, however, somehow manages to enthrall the audience because of its star cast and music.

Manjari, played by Sushmita KC, is a simple village girl who passes her time playing with a lamb. With both parents dead, Manjari lives with her ever-so-yielding brother and callous sister-in-law. She is tormented regularly in the house while her brother keeps mum.

A lamb-loving sweet girl is loved by another orphaned village boy, played by Dilip Rayamajhi. A secret admirer, Dilip nurtures his love within his own self.

Things come to the worst when her sister-in-law fixes her marriage with a one-eyed, over 60, village landlord for a couple of thousands of rupees. The naive girl revolts, runs away from the wedding venue. With nowhere to go, she decides to end her life.

Expectedly, she is saved at the eleventh hour by none other than Suraj KC, the versatile superstar (in the film), played by Bhuwan KC. He happens to be outing in the village taking a break from his tightshooting schedule. He reprimands Manjari and hands her over to Dilip who

was also running after to save her.

Dilip soothes Manjari and takes her to his home where the landlord comes barging in and demands back his "bride". A few punches and kicks later, Dilip and Manjari escape the village and come to Kathmandu.

Again, in the city they bump into Suraj KC. While Dilip lives with an old woman, who mistakes him for her long



Bhuwan and Sushmita : Pair of success

dead son, Manjari is given shelter at KC's bungalow.

Meanwhile, Suraj KC is suffering from his own personal misery. His wife, played by model-turned-actress Sumi Khadka, had abandoned him under pressure from her politician mother and fed up with his busy schedules.

One thing leads to another and Manjari is offered main role in the film Superstar, in which Suraj is the hero. On the other hand, Dilip gets a job of spot boy. Beaming with the success of his dream girl, Dilip continues to nurse dreams of his marriage with Manjari despite the fact that she has become rich

and respected actress and no longer remains the same old country girl.

Suraj KC, on the other hand, frustrated with attempts to reconcile with his wife, begins to develop liking towards Manjari. But then, he learns about Dilip's dream.

In the meantime, Manjari's brother and sister-in-law come to Kathmandu and start living with her. The sister-in-law suspecting Dilip's dream, does everything to create a rift between the two. Dilip is heart-broken when Manjari subtly hints of denying his love under pressure from her sister-in-law. He decides to return to village. But, sanity finally sets in and Manjari laments her decision. She searches for Dilip in vain.

However, like all heroes do, Suraj arranges a reunion between the two in the end of the film and also announces his plan of abandoning his career in film, aimed at getting back his estranged wife's love. It works, his wife returns to his fold and even allows him to work again. All is well that ends well.

Bhuwan KC plays a mature role of a superstar. He has really come of age as an actor since his "Juni" days. In recent years, KC has taken to film-making as well — and with much success.

"Due to my previous successful films, audience expected quality film from my side. The initial public response to Superstar has been quite positive," said KC, in Gorkhapatra. Kajal Films, KC's production banner, is known for its extravagant spending, by Nepali standards, on making films.

Despite the tag of being copycat, Superstar does have its strong points, as well. The technical quality is fairly good. The music scored by young musician Sachin Singh has been liked by public. As a director, Anish Koirala shows sparks of brilliance.

Sushmita deftly fits into both the rural as well as urban character. Dilip, as usual, shows great promise as a young actor. All in all, Superstar is a well-made film but because its storyline is so obviously familiar, it is bound to attract criticism. How the public accepts it is a matter that will unfold in days to come. ■

BOOK Politics Unusual

A caricature of contemporary politics, Manjushree Thapa's story line also draws the contours of a fresh framework for discussion

By A CORRESPONDENT

The space between those who believe democracy has degenerated beyond redemption and those who want to believe that the quest for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is eternal is filled with spirited discussions on a vast array of political possibilities. In "The Tutor of History", a fictionalized account of an election campaign in a constituency in Tanahun district, Manjushree Thapa has woven a splendid tale of how the spirit and energy of multiparty politics has seeped into the lowest levels of Nepalese society.

Public cynicism with leaders, politics based on patronage and family ties, caste and class barriers and the distance between capital-based political bosses and district-level power brokers, among other things, are mirrored in fine detail. The gripping saga is peppered with gross political intrigues and gory campaign tricks that go into the selection of leaders. The hypocrisy of politicians is often rivaled by that of the people. If you are among those who believe an election result is determined more by cash and conspiracy than by the actual choice of the people, you can see in all vividness how the process is played out.

Humiliation, wretchedness and limitations fostered by tradition convulse the story amid undercurrents of discrimination and alienation based on caste, creed, religion and sex. By bringing to life a new party that believes there still is hope for the spirit that guided the 1990 people's movement, Thapa throws up a possibility that has found little discussion amid the clamour created by the Maoists insurgents and hard-line monarchists.

Nayan Raj Dahal, a former movie star whose celluloid roles have given him the halo of an uncompromising revolutionary, is the candidate of the Nepal People's Party. His message — "[T]he 1990 constitution

only laid the grounds for democracy. We have yet to spread social values, build institutions and systems which actualize democratic ideals. First we have to rescue party politics from those who use it to fulfil their greed." — evokes much attention and, often, empathy.

Giridhar Adhikari, the district president of the People's Party, feels a sense of betrayal at having been denied the party ticket he felt was his due. He spends a life that alternates between extended bouts of intoxicated stupor and fitful but energetic commitment to the party's cause. Nayan Raj's celebrity status obviously makes him the center of attraction. His affable speech, approachable demeanor and professed commitment to public service convert some and force many to reconsider their notion of politicians. Binita, the socially ostracized widow of Nayan Raj's brother, finds her teashop suddenly thrust into the center of the campaign. Om Gurung, a former British Gurkhas serviceman who runs a school and works for the party, and Rishi Parajuli, a former leftist activist turned history tutor who returns to politics with a palpable sense of ambivalence, add to the powerful cast.

Thapa's easy pace and smooth flow make "The Tutor of History" an irresistible saga of contemporary Nepal where it is often difficult to separate politics from the personal. The 442-page novel is a telling caricature of what passes for governance by consent in

Nepal. More importantly, however, the book provides a fervent plea to hold on to one's hope in a system the country could be worse off by abandoning. The people are thus caught in a dilemma. Experience has taught them not to take the candidate for his word. Instinct cautions them against harboring a cynicism that seeks to paint all politicians in the same brush. The book begins with the irony of how a person who played a key role in thwarting the pro-democracy student movement of 1979 is entrusted with conducting free and fair multiparty elections a decade later. It ends with the implication that such incongruities in themselves need not impede democratic growth.

Nayan Raj's battle cry provides some reassurance to today's alienated public. Is there a possibility for the emergence of another party professing to advance the people's cause that doesn't eventually succumb to the politics-as-usual addiction? "The Tutor of History" certainly provides the outline of what could be the manifesto of such a party. After all they have been through, can Nepalis take people like Nayan Raj at face value? It's a risk those who believe in democracy have to take. Is it a gamble worth taking? That's a decision Nepalis would have to make for themselves. Where this work of fiction helps is in providing readers a framework for thought in the process of making such decisions.

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By M.S.KHOKNA



TRANSITION

APPOINTED: **Dr. I. P. Singh**, as the new ambassador of India to Nepal.

Dr. Sridhar Khatri, professor of Political Science at Tribhuvan University, as executive director of the Institute of Foreign Affairs, a semi-autonomous think tank of the Ministry of For-

eign Affairs. Prof. Khatri succeeds **Dr. Mohan Prasad Lohani**.

NAMED: **Yuba Raj Pandey** and **Niranjana Baral**, as the spokesperson at the Ministry of Education and Sports, and Industry, Commerce and Supplies respectively, by the government.

AWARDED: **Krishna Bhakta Shrestha**, poet, with

the Devkota Kavya Samman, by the Laxmi Prasad Devkota Academy.

Media Point, a private institution involved in providing training to aspiring journalists, with this year's Bhusan Journalism Award, by the Kamana Publication Group.

HOSPITALIZED: **Ajay Kumar Chaurasiya**, Assistant Minister for the Local

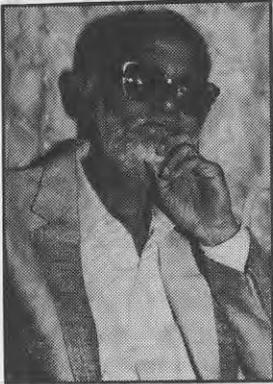
Development, after suffering from food-poisoning.

RESIGNED: **Krishna Narayan Palikhey**, deputy mayor of Dharan municipality, from his post, alleging corruption in municipality's activities.

ELECTED: **Dr. Bhaskar Sharma**, as the President of the Nepal Doctors Association. ■

'The Govt. Must Act Tough Against The Maoists'

— SUSHIL KOIRALA



General secretary of the ruling Nepali Congress, SUSHIL KOIRALA is in the news for demanding that the government declare the Maoists as terrorists. Koirala, who contested against Sher

Bahadur Deuba in the NC parliamentary party election but lost with a respectable number of votes, is cheered as well as despised by many within the ruling party and outside. A close confidante of party president Girija Prasad Koirala, junior Koirala spoke to BHAGIRATH YOGI Sunday. Excerpts:

How do you see the upsurge in Maoist activities on the eve of the third round of talks?

There had been an understanding (between the government and Maoists) during the first round of talks to stop activities, including act of terror, extortion, murder and harassing people's representatives. But the Maoists have not reciprocated the goodwill of the government. The same issues were also raised during the second round of talks. Now the talks must be led to a logical end. The government has released people from detention and withdrawn cases from court. But the Maoists are continuing to terrorize people. (They must understand that) it takes two to tango.

What would be the impact of the resurgence of violence on the ongoing peace talks?

There has been an all-party consensus that there cannot be any compromise against the country's constitution, including constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. So, the Maoists should state clearly what they want. It seems they just want to gain time and strengthen themselves. Of late, people have also started resisting the Maoists. In districts like Parsa, Nuwakot, Syangja and my own district

Banke, people have started resisting Maoist atrocities. All major political parties have denounced the Maoists' violent activities. Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh recently termed the Nepalese Maoists as terrorists. He has also offered cooperation to our government and His Majesty the King to curb these terrorist activities. Chief Minister of West Bengal state of India has started cracking down against the hideouts of Nepalese Maoists. Moreover, there is an international wave against terrorism. At such a time, the government should deal with the insurgency with a firm hand. You cannot have such a congenial environment forever. The government has nearly 50,000 Royal Nepalese Army soldiers and a 60,000-strong police force (both civil and armed) at its disposal. But a few thousand armed Maoists are spreading terror across the country. The government must exhibit sensitivity and mobilize the army to protect the lives and property of the people. If we don't stop the Maoist terror now, I fear for the very existence of our country.

After the Holeri incident, how optimistic are you that the army would cooperate with the government?

The Holeri incident was unfortunate. Recently, there were reports that army and police jointly surrounded a Maoist training camp at the forest of Pundrung in Gorkha district. But they were stopped from swinging into action. If this is true, this is the greatest weakness of the government. When the army was recalled (after failing to rescue abducted policemen) from Rolpa district, it was a matter of great shame for the people, government and monarchy. At a time when the Royal Nepalese Army is playing a peace-keeping role successfully around the world, why should not it play the same role within the country? The army should be mobilized in accordance with constitutional provisions. The government must give a sense of security and protection to the people.

In Nepalgunj, you demanded that the Maoists be declared as terrorists. Wouldn't such a move disturb the ongoing peace process?

The Nepali Congress had termed the activities of Maoists as terrorists about a

year back. Even then, our party hasn't backed out from trying to resolve the problem (of insurgency) through talks. Former prime ministers Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Girija Prasad Koirala and the present Deuba government have all taken such measures as releasing prisoners and making public the names of detained persons in order to create a congenial environment for talks. But the Maoists have been putting new demands one after another. In fact, Maoists are not a political force. No political force would indulge in murder, violence and terror as they are doing now. When I was in Bhagalpur jail of India (in the seventies), I asked the Indian Naxalites (radical Maoists) why they were unleashing terror in the name of revolution. They said they wanted to destroy all the existing institutions in the society. A new society, Ram Rajya, will emerge out of that, they said. Here too, the Maoists are an aimless group. All the bandits, thugs and thieves have joined their bandwagon. They haven't denounced loot, extortion and terror being spread in the name of Maoism. It is yet to be known who is directing them. But it is clear that the Maoists have come up as part of a conspiracy to finish democracy (in Nepal).

How would you judge the performance of the Deuba government in its first 100 days?

I do not want to comment on that. I had advised Mr. Deuba to consider image (of individuals) and size while expanding the cabinet. There have been strong reactions to the new cabinet from within the party and outside. It is unclear what led the premier (to form such a cabinet) at a time when there is full support of the (ruling) party to the government.

Is it true that efforts are under way from within the party to unseat the Deuba government?

At no cost should there be any effort to destabilize the government from the (ruling) party. I am always against factionalism within the party and government and bargaining for power by cobbling together factions. I will continue my fight against corruption and criminalization of politics within the party and in national politics. ■

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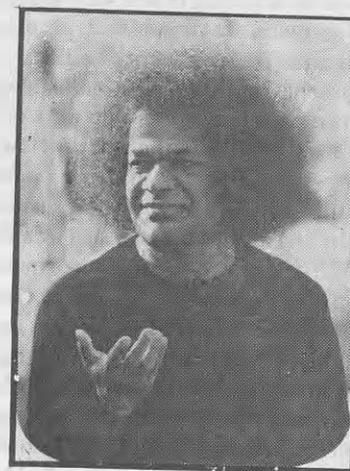
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(Source : Super Star Video, New Road)



“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

Role Of United Nations In Disaster Preparedness In Nepal

By Dr. HENNING KARCHER

Peace in its comprehensive form, as formulated by the Charter of the United Nations means Freedom from Want and Fear. The human condition being what it is total freedom from want and fear will never be possible. By their very nature human beings will always be frail and vulnerable, will always have to anticipate that disaster strikes be it manmade, as for example on September 11 in New York, or driven by natural forces, as the major earthquake that hit Gujarat in neighbouring India earlier this year.

The role of United Nations in the broader context of its mandate to promote freedom from want and fear in the world, is to create awareness and support preparedness thereby reducing the impact of disaster when it strikes. Contrary to manmade disasters that are always fraud with a high degree of unpredictability, natural disasters do follow predictable patterns enabling society to prepare itself and take preventive action to an amazingly high degree.

In disaster preparedness, as in many other areas of life, the challenge lies less in the acquiring of new knowledge than in applying in a consistent manner what we know already, translating our knowledge into a consistent, effective pattern of action.

Much research has been done on earthquakes and there is virtually a consensus among scientists who work on the subject that a major earthquake will hit Nepal within the next few years and could indeed hit tomorrow. Being a relatively young mountain range the Himalayas are still rising as a result of the Indian tectonic plate pushing itself under and against the Eurasian tectonic plate creating tension which sooner or later will result in major tremors and damage. Every year, more than a thousand earthquakes of various magnitudes ranging from 2 to 5 on the Richter scale occur in the country.

The 1934 earthquake caused over 8000 deaths. Were a similar earthquake to happen tomorrow, 40,000 people would die and 95,000 would be injured. More than 60 percent of all houses would be destroyed, many beyond repair, leaving 600,000 to 900,000 residents homeless. Fires would break out on a large scale. Most water supply pipes would be disrupted. Hospitals would be hopelessly overburdened, access to the airport would be blocked for many days. Weeks could pass until equipment would arrive to dig out people from under the rubble too late for most. In the meantime the lucky ones who would have survived the collapse of their houses or whose houses would still be standing would be desperate for food and water as well as shelter and blankets depending on the season.

The overall responsibility for disaster preparedness lies, of course, in the hands of the government and all the United Nations can do is to facilitate and provide support to what has to be a process led by the national authorities.

Creating awareness among government officials and strengthening their knowledge and expertise in dealing with disasters has by necessity to be a key point of entry and departure for everything else to follow. Over recent weeks and months, training courses have been held for a total of over 50 key Government officials in virtually all relevant Ministries and organizations with the assistance of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). As a

consequence, there is now a critical mass of trained and aware civil servants who are ready and motivated to take the next steps on the part of the Government to enhance preparedness.

Of all the measures that have to be taken, none is probably more important than the observation and indeed enforcement of building codes. It is not earthquakes that kill people but buildings that collapse from earthquakes. Buildings will collapse if they are not designed to withstand earthquakes, if they exceed the permitted number of floors. Unfortunately, one does not have to go far to see numerous violations of the existing codes.

Whatever action the government takes in this regard, predictable damage will in any event be enormous requiring coordinated relief and in all probability external support. Experience from Kobe to Gujarat from Taiwan to Turkey shows that uncoordinated external assistance can do more harm than good clogging airports and access roads, thus preventing the arrival of assistance that is really needed.

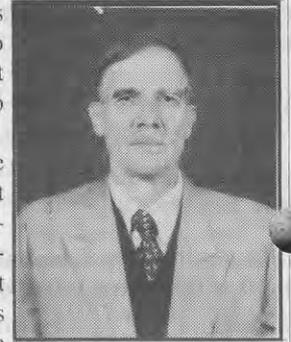
The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), built in 2001 in the compound of the UN House will play a major helpful role in case of a disaster. Totally earthquake resistant and provided with the latest communications equipment, the centre will be manned with a professional team capable to quickly assess needs and communicate these on a regular and sustained basis to the outside world.

Eight interagency cluster groups have been established to work in the following areas of critical importance: Search and Rescue, Assessment, Food and Water, Communications, Logistics and Shelter, Wardens, Health, and Awareness and Training.

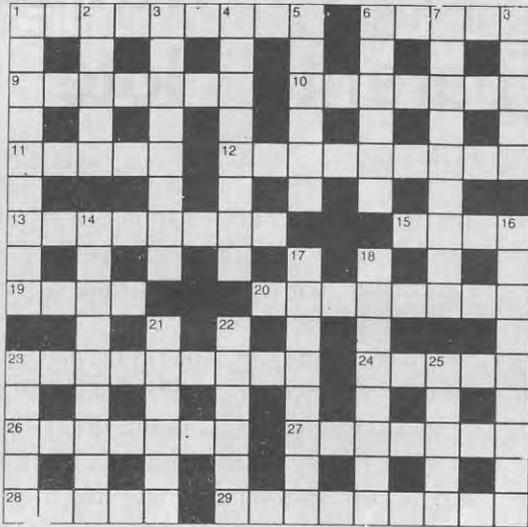
Following the 1993 floods and landslides, the government and the United Nations jointly established three Sectoral Working Groups to facilitate cooperation among three critically important players: the Government, the UN system and the wider community of donors. Dealing with Health, Logistics and Food and Agriculture these working groups have been lately reactivated and initiated preparations of their own operational plans. Fashioned to some extent after the UN Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan these individual cluster plans will go a long way in preparing for a coordinated response.

An old Chinese saying draws attention to the fact that a journey of 1,000 miles begins with the first step. Through the formulation of the Disaster Response Plan and the building of the Emergency Operations Centre initial steps have been taken. The UN system in Nepal looks forward to taking many more steps jointly with the government and the wider community of donors. ■

(This article is based on a speech by Dr. Henning Karcher, Resident Coordinator of the UN Systems in Nepal, delivered on the occasion of the 56th celebration of UN Day)



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. Abigail's dismal day off (5,4)
6. Matches containing sulphur in bunches of five (5)
9. Open cart covered by elegant umbrella (7)
10. Lash out, left locked inside plant (7)
11. Joint given to one about to leave (5)
12. Familiar US stars, including outstanding diver (3,6)
13. Pre-arranged drill without approval, among rocky bens (8)
15. It's no more than a drop of water (4)
18. Noisily opening carriage (4)
21. Resumed, given international honours again (8)
23. Invoice timber for hoarding (9)
24. Stalks maiden on trail (5)
26. Capture in sudden attack (7)
27. Leather case in rambling hostelry, not closed (7)
28. Outcome of a word in confidence on'es given away (9)

DOWN

1. One leaving papers around found a *Listener* under bed (9)
2. Under protest, bishop has to stand down (5)
3. Second team cap or lid (5-3)
4. Did Babel spread improvised words? (8)
5. Condescend to accept direction in project (6)
6. Write up tablet if needing stimulus (6)
7. Tip to get rid of old car (5,4)
8. A bit of Asparagus — mint may be added (5)
14. Picture, even so, is not wholly devoid of animation (5-4)
16. Fatty type of make MOH ponder (9)
17. Try graphite first for slugs (4,4)
18. Graduate composer getting up function (8)
21. A bishop, by roman law, has to recant (6)
22. Brownie's eccentric cycle (6)
23. Support for anecdotes taken from Xenophon's history (5)
25. Extremist, having given up painting, left university (5)

ACROSS : 1. Lady's maid 6. Fists 9. Tumbrel 10. Splurge 11. Elbow 12. Big dipper 13. Bespoken 15. Mere 19. Gait 20. Recapped 23. Billboard 24. Haulm 26. Seizure 27. Holster 28. Sieve 29. Aftermath

DOWN : 1. Litterbug 2. Demob 3. Screw-top 4. Adlibbed 5. Design 6. Fillip 7. Scrap heap 8. Spear 14. Still life 16. Endomorph 17. Leadshot 18. Bachelor 21. Abjure 22. Camera 23. Basis 25. Ultra

SOLUTION

BRIDGE

NORTH 5-5
 ♠ K 8 6
 ♥ 8 6 5
 ♦ K 6 4
 ♣ Q 9 3 2

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

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

Vulnerable: North-South
 Dealer: West

The bidding:
 West North East South
 Pass Pass Pass 1 ♠
 Pass 2 ♠ Pass 4 ♠
 All pass

Opening lead: Heart queen

"You pay a great deal too dear for what's given freely."

— SHAKESPEARE

When declarer gives you an opportunity to score a small trump, should you grab it while you can? Be careful. Not many declarers are certified members of the Philanthropic Trick-Donating Society.

West leads his heart queen to East's ace, and East returns a heart to South's king. After South cashes the ace and king of trumps, he leaves a trump at large to begin the diamonds. He cashes dummy's diamond king and leads another diamond. Should East ruff with his "useless" trump jack?

If he does, he is betting South has forgotten to draw East's last rump. If East accepts South's gift and ruffs with his trump jack, South enjoys an easy time. He cashes his diamond ace and ruffs a diamond with dummy's last trump, limiting his losses to only a heart, a club and the diamond ruff.

It's a different story if East is suspicious and refuses to ruff. After East discards, what can South do? If he cashes his ace and concedes a diamond, West will cash his club ace and lead a fourth diamond for East to ruff. And if South finishes in diamonds, the onetrick set arrives even sooner.

Ruffing one of declarer's winners is a good strategy; ruffing one of his losers is usually worth nothing. ■

Butwal Power Company Privatization With The 'Uparanta' Note

By SB PUN

The mandarins at the Privatization Cell of the Ministry of Finance (MOF) have recently decided to go for Round Four of the privatization match for the Butwal Power Company. Round Three's heavy slugging bout between the Norwegian Interkraft and the British/American Independent Power Company (IPC) have brought out cries of foul play from both the players.

After disqualifying IPC for reasons that are being debated, the MOF mandarins opened up the lone financial package of Interkraft that offered Rupees 73 crores. This same company had quoted Rupees 68 crores in the previous round. It decided to up this figure by a mere five crores despite having the "take or pay" power purchase agreements with NEA for the 12 Mw Jhimruk and 5 Mw Andhi Khola, the main flagships of BPC. The mandarins rejected the bid as being too low and decided to go for the fourth round.

This clearly indicates that the Nepalese disinvestment is indeed in dire distress. Whatever may be the reasons, lack of political will or the lack of transparency etc., our disinvestment process badly needs a shot in the arm. P Chidambaran, the former Finance Minister of India, suggested that the government of India form an independent Disinvestment Commission. He based his conclusion on the following strong logic: the government cannot be its own adviser, it is sensible for the political executive to keep some distance between the government and the actual disinvestment process and dealing with the Hinduja and the Dhoots is not at all easy even in the best of circumstances.

Our MOF mandarins should learn a thing or two from this indisputable Chidambaran logic. It is not only the likes of the Hinduja and the Dhoots that our mandarins at MOF must have rubbed shoulders with but also faced the full armoury of the new "commercial diplomacy" displayed by the concerned Kathmandu-based foreign diplomats. Isn't it high time that our political executives devise mechanisms to insulate themselves from such "bhoots"? The government of India recently decided to sale off its ten large government-owned hotels so that the money so accrued will be used to buy planes for the Air India fleet. This is a very sound logic indeed.

In our case, where exactly is the money collected from the sale of BPC destined for? Or for that matter where exactly

did the money collected from the privatization of fifteen government owned organizations end up in? These are some valid questions that the MOF mandarins need to answer to the Nepalese public.

BPC, in my view, is one of the prestigious family silverwares of our government. This family silverware must not to be sold away for any token value to any Tom, Dick and Harry as we do in the case of dire family distress. The best way to maximize this bid value is, of course, to attract the maximum number of bidders.

Sadly, this has not been the case as the three rounds of bidding have always ended up with the Norwegian Viking and the Anglo-Saxon, the traditional warriors from times immemorial. Could we demur that the qualification tag of the 30 Megawatt hydro experience to run the 17 Megawatt plants was instrumental for this low turnout? And to maximize the number of bidders how much exercises have we undertaken to make the bidding process totally transparent and thus instill the all important confidence in the would-be bidders? This is something that the MOF mandarins should be working on from day one of the Round Three cancellation.

Without further ado, I would like to conclude my note on BPC privatization with the following wise words of Prithvi Narayan Shah in his famous Dibya Upadesh:

Uparanta, Do not let the merchants of India come up from the border. If the merchants of India come to our country, they will leave the people poor. Forbid the use of cloth made in India. Show samples to those who know how to make our cloth. Teach them and begin to make clothing. If this is done, our money will not go abroad. These were words uttered over two hundred and twenty five years ago when the then East India Company came to trade but later had no qualms in using their swords.

These are words that should always reverberate in the rooms of the Privatization Cell of the Ministry of Finance. The stress then was the transfer of new technology to the locals themselves so that the money does not flow out of the country. The stress now, in the context of liberalization and globalization, should principally remain the same. ■

(Mr. Pun spent over three decades working the Nepalese power sector)

FEEL THE RHYTHM

Wherever you are

BY APPOINTMENT TO THE ROYAL DANISH COURT
TUBORG BEER





- BLACKJACK
- PONTOON
- ROULETTE
- BACCARAT
- CRAPS
- BEAT THE DEALER
- MARRIAGE
- FLUSH
- KITTY
- SLOT MACHINES

WISH YOU WERE HERE

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 E-mail: rdt@mos.com.np

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 Durbar Marg, Kathmandu
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 Fax: 977-1-225228
 E-mail: casanna@mos.com.np

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 New Baneshwor
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 E-mail: everest@mos.com.np

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 Casino Royale
 Hotel Yak & Yeti
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