



## DOG'S LIFE

10



12

## Gadgets and gizmos



Saving Faith 17

Art review 19

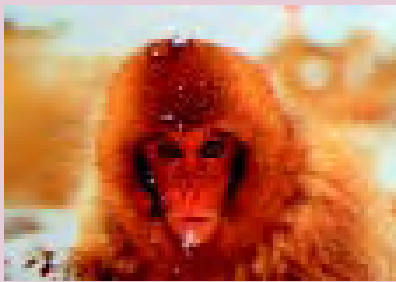
Under My Hat 20

## EXCLUSIVE

## Cabinet makers

OK, breathe easy. The impending reshuffle has been pushed to next week pending a meeting of the Nepali Congress party's central working committee on Sunday. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala is waiting for a list of ministerial candidates from the ceremonial dissident, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. Koirala is said to want to make the changes right away since he does not want those who get the sack to have a sad Tihar. Kisunji's priority: to force Koirala to agree to using the 1995 Congress membership list in next year's party election, which they hope will favour Kisunji's protégé, Sher Bahadur Deuba. Only then will the two sit down and shortlist ministerial candidates. Our forecast: no changes before midweek next week.

## Monkeying



If you have been thinking birds delayed your flight at Kathmandu, you could be wrong. Our investigation shows Kathmandu airport, besides being a bird sanctuary is also a haven for monkeys, dogs, cows and even commuters taking shortcuts across the runway. Birds just came to eat earthworms on the runway, and Dasain leftovers all over the city. Airport managers blame trash dumped all over the Valley, but themselves dispose of airline garbage 100 metres from the runway's edge. pg...4

## NOTICE

Starting this week, Nepali Times will be published every Friday. This change was necessitated by readers' demand for weekend reading. We wish you all a Happy Tihar. —Editor

BINOD BHATTARAI

**O**n 1 November the independent Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) will auction off a business licence to set up the country's first private cell-phone network that could finally bring consumers cheaper and more efficient mobiles. Six companies have pre-qualified for the final round of bidding: among them are joint ventures with one Turkish, one Singaporean, and four Indian partners.

The Khetan Group is teaming up with India's Modi Telestra (MTL) and is also backing Turkey's Rumeli Telekom. Nepal Venture P Ltd (backed by the promoters of the Nepal Industrial and Commercial Bank) is going along with India's United Telecom, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited.

Four Nepali business houses (ICTC, the Jyoti Group, the Golchha Group, and Continental Trading) are behind India's Bharati Telecom. The Mercantile Group is working with India's BPL Broadband Networks. A company by the name of Nepal Holiday is bidding with Singapore's Millicom International Cellular (Asia) P Ltd. Whoever wins the bid will have to begin service within nine months.

The auction is straightforward—there is theoretically no chance for underhand deals by ministers and no backroom negotiations. This also means consumers don't pay for political corruption and commissions on equipment supplies, all of which are usually passed on to consumers and contribute to unnaturally high tariffs and other inefficiencies.

All eyes are on the NTA auction. How properly it is handled will be seen as a pointer to future privatisation schemes of the entire telecom sector. Licensing of mobile telephone service using the GSM-900 technology is part of the government's efforts to privatise and deregulate service sectors.

The government-run Nepal Telecommunication Corporation (NTC) still laps up all bilateral loans for rural telephony. Earlier this month it received a Belgian government loan for a village phone network for an initiative similar to the upcoming NTA auction. Such bilateral deals are the least transparent, and, say development experts, provide wide opportunities for graft and come tied with equipment purchase and consultation contract

UPWARDLY  
MOBILE

Nepal is about to auction off its first private mobile telephone licence. Nepalis finally have a chance to get cheap and efficient cell-phones. Or do they?

guarantees. In the case of the Belgian loan Alcatelbell would be the most likely supplier. Interestingly, the Prime Minister visited the Alcatel headquarters in Antwerp on his way to the UN millennium summit last month.

It took the NTA nine months to get to the financial bidding stage. But despite prolonged delays—which even led some multilateral lenders to threaten to put potential projects on the back-burner—participating businesses have few complaints. “The road from here is more important, we don't know how level the playing field is going to be,” said one.

The message of the mobile licensing experience is that despite endemic corruption, Nepal can make fair and transparent decisions when there is a straightforward law and professionals with integrity—not politicians—are in charge of decision-making. “Generally, the government has been cooperative,” says Bhup Raj Pandey, NTA Chairman. His job has not been easy because the autonomous body's transparent methods have forced greedy politicians to salivate on the sidelines.

Pandey told us there were times when interference and pressures to bend rules got so intense that he nearly resigned. “I've told myself that as long as I'm here I will go only by the telecom policy and law,” he said. “I may still have the draft of my resignation letter somewhere with me.”

NTA's transparency is in sharp contrast to what goes on at its parent ministry. A classic example is of FM radio licensing in which the ministry has made numerous ad hoc decisions

and emerged unscathed—unnoticed even by agencies like parliament's public spending watchdog.

The Ministry of Information and Communication has had occasional bouts of honesty, but even these are suspect, such as its recent advertisement seeking proposals from companies wanting to launch terrestrial television. The notice appeared in the government's English daily on 1-3 October and gave interested parties just 35 days to submit applications accompanied with detailed project studies, including network, construction, financing and programming policy and plans. With two weeks off for Dasain, this was suspiciously short notice for such a large and complicated bidding. One source told us: “How could you expect anyone to prepare a proposal for a \$50-60 million project within two weeks?” When we last checked with the ministry on Monday, there hadn't been a single application.

An NTA notice seeking proposals for a rural telecom network in east Nepal that appeared in the papers the same week was in sharp contrast to the Ministry's advertisement. The NTA posted the entire tender document on its website, with a clear explanation of how the licensing process works: the plan is to award the contract to the company seeking the lowest subsidies.

The frightening part of the current bidding process is that even after the results of the 1 November auction are announced, the winner will still have to deal with the Ministry. “We'll have to go there for frequency allocations and other support,” rues one businessman.

The minimum the bidders can quote for the licence is Rs 20 million and the minimum for renewal after 10 years is Rs 18 million. (The licence can be renewed for a total of 25 years.) The licensee will also have to pay a 4 percent royalty on turnover and another 2 percent as contribution to the Rural Telecommunication Development Fund. There is also an annual frequency fee in addition to all customs duties and associated taxes, payable after actual commissioning of the service.

So far so good, but what remains to be seen is how the NTA and the government work to create fair competition when the really big reforms get underway—breaking the NTC into smaller companies that provide different services, and maintaining separate accounts to prevent it from cross-subsidising tariffs. ♦

**Economic Sense**  
**Artha Beed**  
page 8

MIN BAJRACHARYA

NEPALI TIMES AD







## MEN IN GREEN ... MEN IN BLUE

After Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala evidently played political brinkmanship with His Majesty at Nagarjun just before Dasain, the Royal Nepal Army seems to have finally been persuaded to lend a hand in countering the Maoist insurgency. Koirala sacrificed his Home Minister, Home Secretary and Chief of Police—evidently a small price to pay to have the army partially deployed at 16 district headquarters.

The reluctant generals and lay folk of whatever ideological bent need to understand that the democratically elected government of the day has the right to decide what to do with the army. If we are a democracy, this point is non-negotiable. The army brass was out of line when it let it be known that the soldiers could be deployed only on the basis of an all-party consensus, a clear attempt at political meddling and a challenge to the authority and legitimacy of a duly constituted democratic government.

As is clear from the limited mobilisation of army personnel on the ground, the release of semi-automatic weapons to the police as promised, and from the statements of Defence Minister Mahesh Acharya, the military seems to have come around. The issue of who

the army should be answerable to is now a matter of public debate thanks to vibrant media coverage of the issue before Dasain. The army (even if reluctantly) submitting to the government's command has averted a near-constitutional crisis. It is now time to look at the problem that lies at the root of this power play: the Maoist insurgency.

Just the threat of bringing the *sipahis* out of the barracks had a dramatic effect. Everyone is now racing to talk to the Maoists. Sher Bahadur Deuba says he beat everyone to it by talking with some mysterious Maoist at an undisclosed location. Comrade Madhav Kumar Nepal of the UML has offered his good offices, and the maverick leftist Padma Ratna

Tuladhar seems willing to work to get the Maoists to the table. There is, suddenly, a whiff of reconciliation in the autumn air. Let the possibilities not be dashed this time—the country is teetering on the edge.

While the threat of using the Men in Green was a legitimate tool for Singha Durbar, it is the Men in Blue who have the long-term responsibility of keeping the peace. It is now clear that it was state terrorism unleashed by the police in 1997-98 in Rukum, Rolpa and Jajarkot that lit the spark for an expanding insurgency. But a disciplined, motivated police force will be a requirement of any government, even one run by Maoists. For all their initial excesses, the policemen have in the last couple of years been at the receiving end of the gun, grenade and pipe bomb. They have been no match for motivated militants using guerrilla warfare. The rest of the country looked askance as they were massacred inside their *chaukis*.

Unlike the Royal Nepal Army, the Nepal Police (which is not prefixed with a 'Royal') is relatively more heterogeneous—even a Madhesi once reached the rank of Deputy Inspector General. A look at the surnames of the 12 policemen killed in Dunai proves the point: hills and plains were tragically well-represented. With chronic corruption, brazen indiscipline, ad hocism among senior officers, and political interference from a succession of parties, the Nepal Police has a long way to go to reform itself. It is fashionable in the Valley's chattering classes to deride the police, but the fact is that it has only been the Boys in Blue who have been at the frontline. The political class deserted the Maoist-affected districts long ago, the Valley's academia and intellectuals have so far refused to come down from their privileged perches, and the army has remained preoccupied with Lebanon and Fulpati. It was the lowest rungs of the police that have died by the hundred.

As Nepali society surges ahead (as it must), the challenges faced by the police will become more complex. White-collar crimes, armed rebellion from dissatisfied groups, the question of honouring human rights at all times, all of these will require a very high degree of professional ability. A vigilant public, alert media and active judiciary will be needed to make the Nepal Police fulfil its motto of "Truth, Service, Security."

Sure, we can get the army to restore peace, but in future it is the police which will have the responsibility of keeping that peace secure. For that, our men in blue uniform need to be made more capable, committed and motivated. There is no harm in waving a khukuri when circumstances so demand. The real challenge lies in sheathing it at the right time.



## VIEWPOINT

by JOHN CHILD

## STATE OF THE STATE

by CK LAL

## Comrade Nepal pedals to work

Petrol had only two uses in my village: as fuel for a Chinese lighter, or as balm for aching muscles after a hard day's work.

What a relief it was to see pictures of opposition leader Madhav Kumar Nepal cycling out from Singha Durbar. For the people of his constituency in Rautahat district, bicycles, together with rickshaws and ox-carts, are the main modes of transport. But I was dismayed to discover that it was just a protest prank: Comrade Nepal will not be bicycling to work every day. A day later the UML Secretary General was being chauffeured to work in a black limousine.

Every time petroleum prices go up, symbolism takes over the streets of Kathmandu. There are rallies with empty jerry cans, traffic is held up, *bandhs* are enforced, protest letters are handed over, the prime minister and his cabinet colleagues are burnt in effigy with much fanfare for the benefit of press photographers. Consumer activists issue angry statements. And then things get back to normal throughout the kingdom. People have come to take fuel price hikes as a fact of life. And protests are a diversion to be tolerated as a diversion from the dull routine of everyday life. Three-wheelers drive past seeking to rouse the people, but few bother even to listen.

Why don't Nepalis care too much about fuel prices? A facile answer is: fatalism. That vapid sense of apathy that afflicts us all. Prices are beyond our control, so we accept them. Decades under dictatorship has further ingrained this fatalism into the Nepali psyche. The sense of hope that you can effect a change is missing.

But the sense of resignation of a sullen population is not the real reason for this lack of interest. More important are the sources of energy used in Nepal. Total energy consumption in the country was about 292 million GJ in 1995/1996. Nearly 90 percent of it came from biomass sources such as fuelwood (80 percent), animal dung (6 percent)—another reason to keep worshipping our cows and bulls) and agricultural residue (4 percent). Only about one percent of it was electricity, notwithstanding all the hydropower hype. The rest, namely about 9 percent

of total energy consumption, was met by fossil fuels.

The price of fossil fuel affects us all in one way or another: the newsprint on which you are reading these words is transported laboriously up from Birgunj in smoke-belching diesel trucks. But the impact of a hike in diesel (or even kerosene) prices on a subsistence farmer in Rumjatar is marginal. Despite the claim that kerosene is a poor man's fuel and needs state subsidy, the fact remains that it is only the urban-dwellers and a section of rural elite who rely on fossil fuels for their daily needs. For the rest, kerosene is something you need to fuel your *tuki* in the hills or *dibiya* in the tarai and if it's not available, or too expensive, you blow it off and go to bed early. No big deal.

When Rajiv Gandhi imposed an undeclared economic blockade on Nepal in 1989, he had expected us go down on our knees and say we're sorry, please send us our kerosene. Well, guess what, Nepalis held out for more than a year. The reason was that most Nepalis didn't use fossil fuels. For the urban users, the government flew in kerosene from Dhaka in Royal Nepal Airlines jets converted into tankers.

As for petrol, it had only two uses in my village in those days—either you needed it for your Chinese lighter, or to apply upon your body when your muscles ached from a hard day's work in the fields.

The Nepali elite which depends on petroleum products is a small and pampered group and does not make a hue and cry over fuel price hike for two reasons: the cost of fuel constitutes only a small portion of their total household expense, the rich are also aware that a government (or any government of a Third World country) can do little about fuel price hikes.

It's people like me in the middle class who are hurt most. The 7 percent rise in bus fare and the increase in kerosene prices hits us badly. The poor may manage with their three-litre quota of subsidised kerosene—if they can afford to buy even that much. My peers in the middle class will probably brand me a traitor for saying this, but protests over the fuel price hike should be held outside the OPEC headquarters in Vienna, not in Kathmandu. The Marxist-Leninists should call an Austria-wide bandh, burn the effigy of Hugo Chavez, the Venezuelan OPEC Rambo. He has more to do with the rise of kerosene prices than Girija Prasad Koirala.

The lesson for Nepal and the world is to lessen our dependence on fossil

fuels. If only the country's transportation and diesel cartels would let go of their iron grip on state policy, we should be using this opportunity to look at a fast east-west electric railway along the tarai, connected to the hills with cargo cable car systems. All powered by the energy of our flowing rivers and not the liquefied remains of prehistoric rainforests.

The government certainly needs to do much more than it is presently doing to keep a check on spiralling prices. The opposition can help by not bringing the economy to a halt by planning bandhs. As it is, prices are on fire. Protests simply end up adding scarce fuel to the inferno. Cool it comrades, and make riding bicycles to work an enduring habit. It's good for the economy, and even better for the environment.



# On the path of the Shining Path

Ten years ago, Peru went though a Maoist insurgency eerily similar to what is happening in Nepal today. What then can we learn from the Sendero Luminoso?

Except perhaps for the fact that Nepal is landlocked, Peru and Nepal have uncannily similar geo-cultural and socio-economic characteristics. Both are rugged mountainous countries, have large rural populations subjugated by small ruling elites, both have widening rich-poor and city-village gaps, both have a history of communist parties that reflect fissions in the international communist revolutionary movement.

Probably because of these similarities, the rapid growth of the Shining Path in Peru and Maoism in Nepal have parallels. The Communist Party of Peru (Partido Comunista del Peru) launched an armed struggle in May 1980 on the eve of Peru's first national elections after 17 years of autocratic military rule. The guerrillas went by the name of Sendero Luminoso ("Shining Path") and by the time the insurgency fizzled out 11 years later, 27,000 Peruvians were dead and property worth \$20 billion had been damaged—one-fourth of Peru's GNP.

Launched by a few thousand students and peasants in the remote Ayacucho region of the Peruvian altiplano, it grew into a strong rural movement in 10 short, but brutal, years. The Senderista relied exclusively on domestic supply of arms caches captured in raids on ill-defended police posts, weapons taken from people targeted for action or otherwise, and massive thefts of dynamite from the many mines that dot the Andes.

Ayacucho was chosen for the indigenous ethnicity of the inhabitants, and the historical neglect of this remote plateau by the central government in Lima despite rhetoric of resource distribution and development.

The continuing poverty and marginal status of Ayacucho when compared to Peru as a whole in 1981 was significant. The leader of the 6,000-strong Senderista army was Abimael Guzman Reynoso, who went by the nom de guerre "Comrade Gonzalo". He built up the movement systematically after he joined the faculty of Ayacucho's university of San Cristobal de Huamanga in 1962. The Senderista deepened their understanding of the ideological underpinnings of revolution through intense study groups and expanded contacts with the peasants of Ayacucho.

The story of the origin and expansion of Maoism in Nepal has a lot of parallels with the Sendero Luminoso. It is not a coincidence that when in November 1993 Comrade Gonzalo was finally caught and paraded before the media inside what looked like a lion's cage in Lima, half the way across the world in Kathmandu the streets were full of graffiti that read: "Free Comrade Gonzalo".

Borrowing from the Senderistas, Nepali Maoists also chose the remote and neglected central west region. The districts of Rukum, Rolpa, Jajarkot and Salyan were bypassed by the mainstream of national development despite foreign-aided development projects. Access had always been a problem in this roadless region, and entrenched feudalism meant that although the peasants may have been docile, they really had nothing to lose. Like the Senderistas, our home-grown Maoists have dedicated a significant amount of time and effort to building ties with the rural population and winning their confidence willingly or by

coercion. Indeed, the rise of the Sendero Luminoso and the Nepali Maoists reveal astounding similarities:

- Strong, dominant leadership. In Peru by an individual, and in Nepal by a secretive group of die-hard intellectual revolutionaries.
- The leaders and their immediate followers all came from an academic milieu. In Nepal's case, from universities in India.
- Both used a remote province rather than a national capital as incubators for revolution.
- Both movements chose a setting in which a rigid, orthodox, Maoist ideology could be developed and inculcated for more than a decade.
- With an explicit commitment to assist the local population, both movements aimed for social transformations with a high proportion of female cadre.
- Both Ayacucho and central Nepal saw steadily declining central government expenditure, except for education.
- Defective or non-existent central government, rampant corruption, and ineffective development had made peasants in both countries worse off.
- A continuous rhetoric of reform by a newly-democratic government that was not accompanied by action to uplift the quality of life of the local population.

The rise of the Maoists in Nepal is even more impressive than that of the Senderistas. Its growth in the past four-and-half years has happened despite, and in a sense because of, Kathmandu's efforts to control them. Today, six districts are effectively under Maoist

control, in another 15 districts the Maoists have more influence than the government. They have captured police weapons, and like Senderistas they have also looted explosives from road-building projects and quarries. The number of sympathisers, followers and armed cadre is expanding rapidly despite official propaganda of voluntary surrenders by Maoists. The resources available to the Maoists has taken a quantum leap after recent heists from banks and a spurt in "tax collection" forced out of the business sector.

Whatever the underlying causes of social discontent in the various insurgency affected regions of Nepal and Peru, there had in the past been no anti-government opposition in these areas. This clearly indicates that this insurgency is not a spontaneous uprising by an outraged constituency protesting its dissatisfaction over non-development and neglect, but rather the result of a rural population which could easily be convinced that armed struggle was the only way. The most important concerns of the villagers are basic social justice, honest government and opportunities for personal development. If any government fails to deliver at least a hope, the result will be revolt.

In an eerie parallel to Dunai, Peru also saw a dangerous military-police rivalry, which culminated in March 1989 when the military failed to rescue a besieged police post at Uchiza and the police suffered massive casualties. This directly forced the Peruvian government to commit the armed forces for the first time to dedicated counter-insurgency duties.



Comrade Gonzalo being paraded before the media, November 1993.

Comrade Gonzalo was finally caught by the Peruvian security forces, but Ayacucho still simmers menacingly.

After the Dunai fiasco, there has been a vigorous national debate about deployment of the army in anti-Maoist duty. The government appears to have taken a decision to commit the Royal Nepal Army to secure 16 district headquarters by using small detachments of troops. Sound military wisdom dictates that force, when used, must clinch the issue.

The piecemeal use of the army seldom achieves results, it only gives the insurgents an excellent opportunity to gauge the overall strength and weaknesses of their ultimate adversary. Any over-reaction by the army either due to casualties or due to sheer frustration will give the Maoists the publicity they are seeking to discredit the army's image. As incidents mount, they will have a tangible negative impact on the morale and discipline of the troops.

The sophisticated social-

political organisation of both the Senderistas and the Nepali Maoists have provided opportunities for broad peasant participation, social mobility and status achievement. To be effective, the government's campaign to control the insurgency must be multi-dimensional. Max G Manwaring in his book *Uncomfortable Wars* maintains that legitimacy is the most important single dimension in a war against subversion.

The thrust of a revolutionary movement relies on addressing political, social and economic grievances. This is the essential nature of the threat from an insurgency, and it is here that a response must begin. Any effort that fails to understand this and responds only militarily is most likely to fail. ♦

*(Gyan Jung Thapa, recently retired as a colonel from the Royal Nepal Army, has a Masters degree from the US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.)*

## LETTERS

### PARANOIA?

CK Lal in 'State of paranoia' (#12) seems to say three things: that we should hang in shame for our social ills, that we were wrong to show nationalism in the web and that we weren't clever enough to use the BBC debate effectively. Needless to say, all three are wrong.

First, no country hangs itself for its social problems, the country works toward solving them. Second, the outpouring in the web is right, because such responses are needed to counter increasing Indian propaganda. No matter where one is living, Nepalis take pride in being Nepali. Finally, these responses have been effective as evidenced by the BBC's retraction and apology.

Even more pitiful was Mr Lal's misunderstanding of the answers given by Nepalis around the globe. The answers were quite simple—that Nepal

will not be better off under the Indian umbrella, because many states under the Indian umbrella are still far worse than Nepal, that the country will survive because it has survived so for many centuries, and that it should, because we take pride in our country's existence.

Sameer Shrestha  
Kathmandu

CK Lal deserves thanks for 'State of paranoia' (#12), he stands alone in the media hysteria to question the overreaction on the part of the government to a debate that (however the question may have been formulated) in the end turned out to be of utmost benefit to Nepal and Nepalis.

J Gurung  
Pokhara

A quiz doing the rounds of crazy Katmandu. If a half-drunk bully gets hold of your wife's hands at a party, do you:

1. Use the null hypotheses
  2. Pretend the bully doesn't exist
  3. Blame your measly salary and your lousy house
  4. Call for a general debate
- Shouldn't there have been a fifth and more natural choice: "firmly push the bully away and ask questions later"? Mr Lal, please advise.

Bibhuti Man Singh.  
Kathmandu

On the delightfully provocative debate on whether Nepal should come under an Indian security umbrella (#12). Surely, with an avowedly Hindu government now ruling India, and Nepal being the only Hindu kingdom in the world this union should be the other way round? In other words, shouldn't India secede and join Nepal?

PKS Iyer  
London

### SILVER LINING

There may be a silver lining in the Maoist movement. Everybody will agree that: the government is completely dysfunctional, politicians from all parties are corrupt, the judiciary is not providing justice and are corrupt, the bureaucrats are corrupt and do not allow Nepalis to prosper, the police are corrupt and are unable to perform their duties, besides the protection of some forest, occasional road building and flood relief, the army

has no role and is just a big drain, the economy has gone into the hands of foreigners, the national banks are in chaos, even the royalty is not serving the interest of the country.

I doubt that the Maoists will do any better, but at least they are giving everything a thorough shaking up which this country badly needs.

Rajendra Khadga  
Kathmandu

### LET'S CHAT

Thanks for "Let's have a chat" by Gaurav Upadhaya (#11). He has overlooked the "pre-historic" days of internet chats. Nepalsearch.com chat was the pioneer web-based chat site, but a lot of

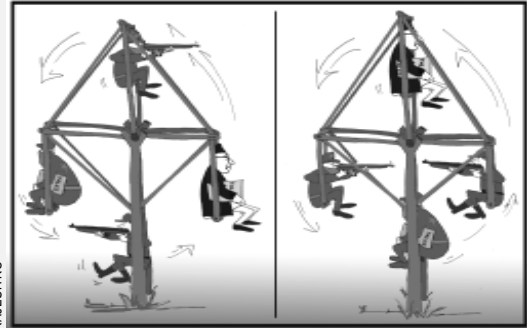
us were chatting away on the internet long before that on IRC (Internet Relay Chat).

The "nepal" room of IRC was a popular internet stop for lot of Nepali college students studying in the US, the Philippines, Australia, and Canada. It was a virtual place to meet fellow Nepalis, share news from Nepal, and/or just do plain guff-gaff. IRC has now lost its popularity, but it was/is still technically superior to some text-based web chats.

Sagun Karmacharya  
Minneapolis, USA

In "Let's have a chat" you say that econepal.com is a teen site since its **ch@tmandu** is popular among young people. But it is more than just a teen site—it has Nepal's largest search engine, travel info for tourists, people search, etc. It was also the first site to introduce Java chat.

Kewal  
(econepal.com chatter)





# “Airport closed, monkeys on

The real problem is with the dogs, monkeys, and cows that roam the runway at Nepal’s only international airport. And the humans who can’t seem to do anything about them.



HEMLATA RAI

• 11 October. A delayed early morning Royal Nepal Airlines flight from New Delhi is one minute from touchdown. Air traffic control sends out a warning: “Caution, cow on the runway. Request your intention?” The pilot is livid. “What am I supposed to do? Get it out of there!”

• 17 October. A Royal Bhutan flight to Paro is at the end of the runway, waiting for takeoff clearance. “Stand-by for takeoff,” says the tower. “Four dogs on taxiway three.”

• 17 October. A week after its flight to Lhasa hit a bird on takeoff, China Southwest Airlines’ flight 407 is on approach. Tower comes on: “Airport closed, monkeys on the runway.” CSA 407 holds for 10 minutes before the monkeys are chased back to Pashupati.

What is surprising about these three incidents this week is not that they happened—pilots have stopped being surprised at the diversity of fauna that Kathmandu airport seems capable of throwing up—but that they were happening when the entire tourism industry was going bananas about bird danger.

It now emerges that the near-accident on 29 September

that triggered the whole bird strike scare had nothing to do with birds at all. The Royal Nepal Airlines flight RA 409 to Hong Kong had just started its takeoff run when the right engine failed with a big bang. The pilots brought the plane to a halt on the runway. The engine was a write-off, the plane was grounded for 10 days and the airline suffered colossal losses. Engineers were intrigued by the fact that there were no tell-tale signs of a bird strike: no blood,

clues about what caused the failure.

To be sure, the bird danger at Kathmandu airport is real. And the reasons for that have little to do with airport management. When an overcrowded, dirty city is encroaching on the airport perimeter, when the whole Valley is a garbage dump, when the entrails and femurs of water buffaloes sacrificed during Dasain litter the runway threshold, there is no point blaming the airport. Where we

can blame the airport management is for its inability to prevent higher mammals from entering the perimeter, for allowing trash accumulation that attracts them, for being unable to deal with debris that present hazards of foreign

objects being ingested into engines, and for not coping with the expansion of domestic airline traffic.

The equipment is state-of-the-art. All-glass cockpits, fly-by-wire airliners, 50-km radius radar surveillance, but the state-



NO FEATHERS: The inside of the Boeing 757 engine and the chewed up metal.

no feathers, beaks or talons embedded in the fan blades. In fact, the inside of the engine nacelle had been ripped open, the titanium alloy fan blades warped and what looked like rivet punctures. Insurance inspectors are now looking for

of-the-airport is 19th century: perimeter fences with large gaping holes, shortcuts for humans to cross the runway, uniformed guards with airguns, and a management record that reflects the country’s sorry state. An airport that is valued by its rulers more as a smugglers’ den, a conduit for contraband than as the mainstay of the economy because it is the only entry point for tourists, indicates wrong priorities right at the top. One disillusioned tourism entrepreneur told us: “You can’t make a quick buck chasing dogs off the apron. So how do you expect the airport to get its act together, they have a completely different preoccupation.”

One misty morning last week, the airport’s two jeeps were busy deploying staff to sweep up earthworms that were erupting out of the ground and slithering along the side of the runways. This is one of those years that earthworms all over Central Nepal have gone crazy—they are emerging from the soil by the trillions. On the hills of the Valley rim, they cascade down the slopes escaping a high water table caused by the prolonged monsoon. Dried by

## VILLAGE VOICE

by MADHUKAR UPADHYA

# Milk and Maoists

There are many Nepals. The Nepal of Kathmandu Valley, the Nepal of the district headquarters, and the Nepal of areas like Ikudol.

These rugged mountains south of Kathmandu Valley are so far, and yet so near. From the ridge, you can see the city of Kathmandu to the north, to the south are areas so remote they could be in Jumla. This area has always been bypassed by development. Forty years ago, there was hope that

the Tika Bhairab highway to Hetauda would change things, but Nepal’s first experiment with democracy was dismantled in 1960, and with it this incredibly quick shortcut from the capital to the tarai was abandoned.

The Mahabharat Lekh here shows a unique economic

descent as one travels from North to South. It’s called the “milk gradient”—people closer to Kathmandu can sell milk at the nearest roadhead, and they live a visibly better life. Those who can’t walk to Bhatte Danda in a few hours before the milk goes bad have to boil the milk down to *khuwa*, which fetches less money than fresh milk. But even *khuwa* goes bad in a week, so beyond the *khuwa* area is the *ghew* region. *Ghew* is an even lower-return commodity, and it is more energy and time-intensive. So the *ghew* farmers are poorer still. The effect of all this is here for us to see: the farmers get poorer and poorer, and hills get more and more denuded as you travel south.

What lies beyond the *ghew*, you may ask. Well, that’s where the Maoists are. They thrive in remote areas that are dirt poor because of government apathy, and hopelessness. So it is at this

tri-junction of Kabhre, southern Lalitpur and Makwanpur where you feel so far away from Kathmandu you could be in Timbuktu. This is the face of the real Nepal that is yet to awaken. Peasants here have nothing to sell because they don’t even grow enough to feed their families. Despite some health care support provided by missionaries over the years, infant mortality rates are double the national average, illiteracy is three times higher.

Four years ago, villagers here used to talk about Maoists like they talked about wild animals that come at night. They had heard of them, but no one seemed to have actually seen them. There were stories about how an old village headman was beheaded, or how a landowner was looted, how ownership papers from the agriculture bank were burned to free villagers from debt. Local government officials were helpless, the few police in remote posts were hunted looks. Stories about Maoists had a Robin Hood quality, the stuff of legend.

Meanwhile development extension workers carried on their work and reported progress to their headquarters as they have done for the past 40 years. Everyone here knows about who actually benefited from all the

aid. There is no sign of the poorest farmers becoming any more self-reliant, of having improved their lives even slightly. Gradually, the areas “affected by Maoists” grew beyond the *ghew* region to the *khuwa* region and even to the milk region. Last year, Maoists attacked a police post near Bhatte Danda—the nearest area of Maoist activity to the capital. Villagers liked the slogans and took the path of violently liberating themselves because no one else ever offered them any hope. There are many Nepals. The Nepal of Kathmandu Valley, the Nepal of the district headquarters, and the Nepal of areas like Ikudol. The development *wallahs* tried “extension” activities in the 1970s, tried “trickle down” and “peoples’ participation” in the 1980s, and now we are trying out “participatory approach” in “sustainable human development” with experts from within the country and abroad. We have used just about every development model to bring changes in the Nepals of Ikudol. But all it did was kill off the little self-help there was around here, the donor-driven and Kathmandu-centric dependency took care of that.

One effective effort to break the “milk gradient” in Ikudol was a cargo ropeway to bring

fresh milk to the Kathmandu market. This would have allowed family dairies as far beyond as south of the Bagmati River in Makwanpur to benefit from higher income. Better economic status would have opened up possibilities for development activities, and perhaps made extreme political ideologies less palatable. Because of mismanaged development efforts and lack of a clear understanding of this development model using a new transport system, the cablecar has nearly ground to a halt. Here was one effort that could have proved how giving farmers access to market can dramatically improve their lives.

The Maoist ideology is no doubt misguided. But what we could not achieve in 40 years, the Maoists may have done in four short years: mobilised peoples’ participation, empowered women to join their ranks. Why did development fail, and what is it that they are doing right? ♦

(Madhukar Upadhyaya worked on a rural development project in southern Lalitpur District between 1986-98)



The bucolic view south from Bukhel with the hills of the khuwa region in the backdrop.

# the runway...

the sun, they die en masse, rotting and decaying along village trails. The airport also has a worm problem, and the raptors have a feeding frenzy. A dozen sweepers and some birdguards will not solve the problem worms. And the long-term bird meance from the city needs a national campaign.

“The airport’s bird problem is an extension of the city’s urban waste mis-management,” says Explore Nepal’s Bharat Basnet, who has been spearheading environmental activism in Kathmandu starting with diesel tempos. By coincidence, two of the bird-hits last week involved Lauda Air, the Austrian charter airline Basnet is the representative for. “Kathmandu is like an open garbage disposal site that is sure to attract the birds,” he tells journalists on a conducted bird-watching tour of the airport this week, showing the danger posed by birds of prey soaring above the runway just as the airport’s traffic peak was getting underway. But ironically, while the airport’s efforts to scare away the kites seemed to be working somewhat, it was the dogs and monkeys that started creating havoc.

Environmentalists blame dumping of garbage on the Bagmati River on the northern side of the runway. It is true that this is sacrilege, and a



serious pollution threat for groundwater through leaching, but activists have been going a bit overboard in blaming the river landfill for the bird hazard. All the three bird strikes this month happened at the southern end of the airport, or on the runway itself.

Eager to be seen doing something, the government, after a meeting held at the Local Development Ministry on 13 October, banned dumping of food waste and animal carcasses and prohibited animal slaughter at Jorpati, Gothatar and Mulpani Village Development Committees.

➔ see p. 18



*Kathmandu airport (left) showing urban congestion and numbers marking where following pictures were taken:*

1. Kites take flight as an airliner comes in for a landing over the southern end of the runway adjoining a settlement at Koteswor. Children play and cattle graze among the runway approach lights.
2. ‘No Trespassing’ gate does not seem to deter dogs who can’t read the sign and easily slip in through the gap.
3. Another gate leading to Koteswor which was padlocked unconvincingly last week when the birdstrike fear was at its height.
4. Water buffalo femurs lie bleaching in the drain while a bird guard watches from the edge of the runway runway above.



# Guns and peace

## After Dasain, it is back to square one on the Maoist front.

Peacemaker Sher Bahadur Deuba, whose term in the peacemaking committee expired on 15 October, dramatically revealed that he had had a meeting with a Maoist, but did not say where, when or with whom. Maoist General Secretary Prachanda confirmed the meeting, and reiterated his demand: make public the whereabouts of Dinesh Sharma, a central Maoist leader and others, free them, end “state terrorism”, and create an environment for the talks.

All political parties except the ruling Nepali Congress agree that the insurgency should be resolved through dialogue. The main opposition Communist Party of Nepal (UML) has even volunteered to mediate, while a faction within the ruling party advocates a two-pronged approach—beef up the police and rope in the army, but keep the door open for talks.

A series of “all-party” meetings held in the aftermath of the Maoist attack on Dunai in late September has led nowhere. Having failed to get the army to help in Dunai, the government managed to trigger a national debate and station troops in 16 district headquarters. The army went grudgingly, barely concealing its unhappiness.

Many of these districts now have strategic defence plans prepared by a ‘security committee’ convened by the chief district officers (CDOs). The head of the local army unit is an invited member of the committee. But confusion is rife. “It is not clear if the army will go into the jungles and/or patrol alongside police,” a government source told us. The operational modality and the chain of command remain unclear.

“This is a case of the tail wagging the dog,” one army officer told us. “The rules of engagement are unclear, and it could be a very messy situation if the army is attacked.” It appears that the army is going along, getting the government to pay for deployment, while



Royal Nepal Army: not just ceremonial?

not promising anything. Meanwhile the army has still not handed over all semi-automatic rifles that the government has paid it to deliver to a paramilitary police force.

Caught between the Maoists, opposition parties and opponents within his own ruling party, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has been lurching from one crisis to another. He is now thinking of transferring peacemaking responsibilities from Deuba to the Human Rights Commission. He also added an extra head in the National Defence Council, Mahesh Acharya, by giving him the defence ministry portfolio in addition to his duties as finance minister. The NDC is made up of the prime minister, defence minister and army chief and can recommend decisions like army deployment to the king who is the supreme commander of the armed forces.

The army is learnt to have a list of demands in return for the partial deployment in the 16 districts. These reportedly include an unwillingness to acknowledge the CDO’s command, and getting the government to restrict media reporting on Maoist activities. ♦

## Insurgency stats

Nepal’s five-year-old Maoist insurgency has left 1,465 dead till Monday, according to statistics released by the police. The dead include 981 “insurgents”, 232 policemen and 252 civilians. According to the police, Maoists have so far looted Rs 352.5 million, attacked and damaged 21 projects undertaken with foreign aid, 172 government and quasi-government offices and 21 telecommunication centres. The Maoists have also set fire to 94 police posts. The police claim to have captured over 1,500 muzzle-loaders, 52 twelve-bore rifles, 146 home-made pistols and 472 kgs of gelatine, in addition to other types of explosives and fuses. The report also said that the police had released 4,150 suspected rebels after investigations and pressed charges against 1,643.

## Nepalis help Nepal

A Belarus-based Nepali businessman has donated \$2,000 to a charity set up by UK-based Nepalis that supports small projects in Nepal. Upendra Mahato, Honorary Consul of Belarus to Nepal, and a leading businessman in the former Soviet Republic, says he donated because he was impressed by the campaign initiated by HELP NEPAL Network (HeNN), whose goal it is to raise money from individual Nepalis abroad for small, doable projects in Nepal.

Mahato has also agreed to work as Chief Co-ordinator of the group’s campaign—now underway in 10 countries—in the former Soviet republics. HeNN chairperson Rabindra Mishra, who is based in London, says that Nepal has relied too much on foreign aid and it is time that Nepalis around the world do as much as they can for Nepal.

The money donated by Mahato is to be used to complete the registration of HELP NEPAL Network as a charity. Last year HeNN provided £700 for the construction of a library at Sarswati High School in Dunai, Dolpo. Using the seed grant the locals added a floor to the school building for a science laboratory. (For details see the URL: [www.helpnepal.co.uk](http://www.helpnepal.co.uk)).

## Forum against tourism in Nepal

A little-known group, the International Nepal Solidarity Forum (INSOF), says it has begun a campaign to discourage tourists from visiting Nepal. The group says its aim is to strangle an income source which it claims is used by government to pay for atrocities (against the Maoists). The Germany-based group—which believes the Maoist insurgency is a necessity—is co-ordinated by one Janak Sharma and claims to have a committee of seven backing the campaign: two Nepalis, two Germans, one Iranian, one Turk and one Peruvian. (<http://www.humanrights.de/n/nepal>)

## Nepal-India water meet

India is to help Nepal build embankments along Rapti as a response to the inundation caused in Nepal by an Indian embankment along the border upstream of the Laxmanpur barrage near Nepalgunj. This was agreed upon at a meeting of water resource secretaries of the two countries who met in Kathmandu 1-3 October.

It was also decided to have an Indian team of experts conduct studies for a medium-sized hydro-project that both countries have been talking about for some time now. The water resources secretaries also set the end of 2001 as deadline for the preparation of the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the Pancheshwor Multipurpose Project, which has remained on paper even after ratification of the Mahakali Treaty in 1996.

Also on the agenda was the Sapta Kosi High Dam, wherein both sides agreed to speed up work to prepare DPRs for the dam project and the Kosi-Kamala Multipurpose Project by year-end 2001. The two countries also agreed to form a joint flood forecasting committee that would have a plan before the next monsoon floods. A press release issued at the end of the meeting said India was also contemplating an increase in power exchange between the two countries from the existing 50MW to 150MW.

## New Chief of Police



Pradip Sumsher Rana has taken over as the country’s new police chief. He was formally handed over the insignia of office on 13 October by out-going Inspector General of Police Achyut Krishna Kharel. Kharel had gone on an extended two-month leave on 3 October—five months before he was due to retire—in the aftermath of the Maoist massacre of 14 policemen in Dolpo late last month.

New IGP Rana (53) has outlined four priorities: to modernise and train the police force, improve work habits, control corruption and end favouritism. He has also promised to ensure that the police do not violate human rights and there is “better co-ordination” between the work of the army and the police.

# Oil in troubled waters

Editorial in *The Himalaya Times*, 15 October

No sooner had the holidays ended than the government increased the prices of all petroleum products by 17 to 100 percent. The people and businessmen had anticipated that prices would go up after the holidays, and had therefore started buying and stocking up. Dealers in petroleum products had started hoarding, and consumers had to stand in long lines to get their supplies, and now after the prices have been hiked, they have to shell out more money. It seems that the burden always falls on the ordinary people.

The Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) increased the price of all petroleum products, stating that this was necessary as prices in the international market had increased substantially. The price of kerosene, an essential commodity for the poor people, has increased cent percent. Prices in the international markets are shooting through the roof, and this is going to adversely affect all the poor countries in the world. Last week, India increased the prices of petroleum products, and if Nepal had not followed suit, then most of the products from Nepal would have gone to India. Now the poor have no other option but to bear with the price rise.

The government has agreed to provide subsidised kerosene to the poor, but details have not been presented clearly. Questions such as the size of the family, how much is required for each family per month, and the case of single residents in the capital staying in rented accommodations etc, have so far not been answered. Black marketeers and hoarders will try and fudge answers to these questions, and this will lead to the abuse of the ration cards that the government plans to introduce soon. If the government does not do its homework properly, the only people who will profit from the rise will be black marketeers and hoarders.

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 15 October

It was wrong and unnecessary to hike the price of petroleum products all of a sudden. The rise in the price of petroleum products in the international market, the rise in prices of these products in India and the depreciation of the Nepali currency against the US dollar, are reasons given by the Nepal Oil Corporation for raising the price of petroleum products in the country. This is going to affect the development of the country. The rise in the price of fuel is going to affect the production and transportation of agricultural and industrial products. The ration card system is going to be introduced soon. Therefore the government should have thought of other ways of overcoming this problem instead of going in for a price hike.

Just before the hike, the NOC had repeatedly stated that prices would not rise, but all of a sudden it went on to announce the hike. This means that it was lying to the people, for which its reputation has taken a beating. People will not believe anything it says now.

There is unrest, and trouble is brewing in West Asia and Latin America, and these are the reasons for prices going up. Once peace returns, it is expected that the price of petroleum products will decrease and stabilise. The NOC should have studied the situation and explained it to the public. The lack of an explanation is going to lead people to not believe the reasons given by the NOC for raising prices.

The price of fuel in India has increased. One of the reasons given is that this has been done in order to stop smuggling of petroleum products from Nepal to India. This is a very stupid argument. To stop smuggling, the government should have taken strict measures, and not hold the nation hostage and increased prices. This is a wrong step. Yes, the Nepali rupee is depreciating against the dollar, but the hike in prices could have been carried out in a more systematic manner and slowly, instead of doing it in a haphazard and sudden manner. None of the reasons presented by the government in the present situation are justified or plausible. Raising prices right in the middle of the festive season is not correct. The main reasons for the rise in prices are inefficiency, leakage, and the mismanagement of the NOC. The NOC is inefficient and corrupt, and its management is weak.

The government, instead of raising prices drastically, should have studied other options and taken the people into confidence. The government should go for liberalisation in the sale and distribution of petroleum products, and should not be dependent on other nations. Conditions should be created to liberalise this sector, and to correct the ills of the NOC.

The decision to raise prices is not justified. The lies presented by the officials of the NOC will not be forgiven, and it was a mistake to increase the price of petroleum products so drastically.

## RNAC to lease Lauda Air plane

*Saptahik*, 13 October

A day before Dasain, the cabinet decided to lease a plane from Lauda Air. It was not a unanimous decision, but one that came because of pressure from the minister for civil aviation. In the process, many rules and regulations were broken or completely bypassed.

The aircraft in question is 12 years

concerned citizen, the wronged person or one who just does not want his identity to be known. But the courts do not give importance to the findings of the CIAA, as it seeks the identity of the petitioner. Since the petitioner is not identified, the accused simply walks away free.

In the 1997 gold case which was filed against the then director general of taxation, Lok Man Singh Karki, the courts tied up the case in so much legalese that the case became untenable and was



*Madhav Kumar Nepal defies fossil fuels and pedals out of Singha Durbar after presenting his protest against the fuel price hike to the prime minister.*

old. The corporation is paying an advance of USD 1 million to Lauda Air without any bank guarantee. RNAC wanted to pay the advance on the very day of the cabinet decision, but since the paperwork could not be completed, it is expected to pay when the banks open for business after the holidays.

As matters stand, the rules, regulations and directives have not been followed, or have been broken. According to regulations RNAC should not lease any plane that is more than five years old, should not pay any advance without a bank guarantee, and a tender should always be called for while leasing a plane. None of these directives were followed in the present case.

The acquisition of a plane without calling for tenders, without a bank guarantee and one that is more than five years old, shows that the minister for civil aviation Minister is not working for the benefit of RNAC or the country. The only beneficiary in the present deal seems to be the minister himself, and the amount of commission that he will be making is a matter of conjecture.

## CIAA woes

*Kantipur Koseli*, 14 October

Since the advent of democracy, a total of 60 cases have been filed by the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) with the courts. Out of these, verdicts on 30 have already been passed, and the CIAA has not been successful in any one of these cases. Twenty cases were easily dismissed and in the remaining 10 cases, according to a CIAA member, the small fry were caught while the big fish got away. This means that all who were thought to be corrupt were actually given a clean chit by the courts.

Former agriculture minister Padma Sunder Lawati had three cases filed against him, and the total amount involved was almost Rs 43 million. The case against him stated that there were irregularities in the purchase of fertiliser from India and Lawati was responsible. Nothing happened to him, the courts proved him innocent and set him free.

The CIAA acts only after a notice, news or petition has been filed before it. It then studies the case, and if convinced that corruption has indeed taken place, it files a case in the courts. The person filing the petition does not have to reveal himself and can state that he is either a

dismissed. The return of gold worth Rs 7.3 million, forgery, and outright abuse of power were the charges, but nothing came of it.

Another interesting case was that of contaminated milk powder. The then chairman of the Dairy Development Corporation (DDC), Devendra Jha, was the accused. It was stated that in the purchase of 415 tonnes of milk from Daly Foods, India, DDC had committed irregularities to the tune of almost Rs 47 million. DDC could not even get 100 tonnes of powder milk that the Indian company had earlier promised to supply.

Before the deal was signed, two officers were sent to India to find and report on the actual status of Daly Foods. They reported that the company had not been in production for the previous five months, the factory and its premises were in unhygienic environs, no records of production and standards were available, and that the company had only 120 tonnes in stock. Despite being aware of this, Jha still gave that company permission to supply milk powder.

In yet another case, that of the adoption of two children by a Spanish couple, files were hidden, new files created, accusations and counter accusations filed, the home secretary removed, and the case was turned on its head and tied up in legal words and statements. The end result was that the home secretary who was removed is now back in his post, the adopting parents did not get proper justice, and the case left to die a natural death.

Another case of blatant misuse of power was at the time of the vote of no-confidence against the then prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. Five ministers were sent to Bangkok at state expense. The state had given them \$2000 each. Last year, the CIAA had sent a letter to the cabinet asking it to desist from such practices. The monitoring body has since stated that as the incident took place more than four years ago, it would not be worthwhile to file a case. Bhatta was the chief of the CIAA at that time. Incidentally the CIAA is still fighting cases that are more than 10 years old.

## Maoists in Satra Saya

*Naya Sadak*, 16 October

Every evening, Maoist rebels descend into Satra Saya Bazar (Lamjung district) to buy their grocery. The administration, police and local people all know about

this. The Maoists come, do their shopping, and then vanish into their hideouts in the thick jungle by the Kirunge river. The villagers are afraid to venture into this jungle.

Two years ago, the rebels were chased away by the local people when they were trying to loot a bank, which has since been shifted to Besishahar after the incident. According to a local teacher, the shifting of the bank has created problems for the people.

The only news these locals get is through the radio, and alarm sets in when clashes between the police and the rebels are reported. Recently, such a clash took place here, terrifying the villagers. They could not see anything in the darkness, but could hear the sound of gunfire loud and clear. The locals believe that the Maoists will not harm ordinary people but are still afraid when they hear the sound of firearms. Meanwhile, there are others taking advantage of the situation and looting people in the name of the Maoists.

Another Maoist hideout is the jungle area between Puranakot and Gaunsahar. In the afternoons, it is reported that the rebels come to the banks of the local river to wash themselves, with a lot of them carrying arms and ammunition. The villagers have since stopped taking their cattle there for grazing.

Since the rebels frisk people in these areas, teachers who had to collect their salaries before Dasain were forced to take a circuitous route to the district headquarters. Recently, the rebels visited a local school and asked the students and teachers not to sing the national anthem, and threatened to tear up their Sanskrit books.

## People for peace, security

*Gorkhapatra*, 15 October

There is tremendous pressure public on MPs to bring about peace, security and stability in the country. The mobilisation of the army in the Maoist-affected areas has not been made official, and even MPs do not seem to know anything about the matter. An MP from one of the most affected areas, Salyan, Prakash Jwala, said that village development is now secondary to the issue of ensuring peace and security to the people. They want peace and security first, and are even prepared to hand back the Rs 500,000 granted to each village for its development. Development is seen as secondary to peace at the present moment. People are being tortured and are suffering immensely at the hands of the rebels, and this has got to be taken care of first.

Lekhnath Acharya, MP from Rolpa, said that the government can take back the development budget, but it should at the very least maintain peace and order in the country. He said the people are suffering, and have no other demand except that of law and order. The rebels are looting the people of their money and food, and the government should do something about this, urged the MP. MP Pari Thapa said that the people are being looted of their money and food grains, and this must be stopped. All that the people want is peace and order, and only then can development take place. The government has to create an atmosphere for this, said the MP. He further said the people at present are caught between the excesses of the rebels and the police.

For his part, MP Jwala said that the government must not deploy the army in haste. He stated that he did not know if the army was already deployed, and felt that this should have been the last resort.

MP Acharya thought the best way to stop this crisis should be through dialogue. He said that the Maoists were ready for a dialogue and the government should hold talks with them. The deployment of the army, according to him, was just a rumour.



*Nepal Samacharpatra*, 15 October



# We wanna go to America

**Hundreds of Nepali women are waiting to join their husbands in the United States. The humiliation of visa procedures has made many of them give up hopes of a normal married life.**



**DURGA POKHAREL** . . . . .  
I don't even wish it on my enemies to marry Nepali men who come from America," says a Kathmandu woman who got married recently, but couldn't get a US visa to join her husband despite repeated tries. Intelligent, smart and skilled, she married a Nepali who came from the USA seeking a bride here. A few days after the wedding, the man went back to America, and the woman feels lost and is suffering separation anxiety.

The story of many women who marry Nepali men staying in the United States is the same: a few questions are asked because an eligible bachelor living in America is a temptation for many parents who want their daughters married off. Parents forego the ritual of checking the man's antecedents, and brides accept the offer blindly in the hope of making it to the land of opportunity.

I personally know 14 married Nepali men living together in the same place in America, and all of their wives are still in Nepal. Many of them wished to take their wives along, but

couple green cards. But after three visits to the American embassy, she still hasn't got her visa. The first time she took her husband's letter and details of his bank holdings there. She felt that the embassy people sounded positive, although they asked her to come back with her bank balance and property statements. With help from her father-in-law, Samjhana returned to the embassy armed with everything that the embassy had asked for. This time the visa officer said her husband's letter was old and that she must get a new one. She got that too, and went again. This time they were straight, and blunt: "You will not return. We won't give you a visa."

Samjhana is a post-graduate student at the Padmakanya Campus as well as coordinator of the Amnesty International chapter of the college. She doesn't want to go to America and lose herself there. She only wants to stay in America for a while, look around, understand the country and return. But the embassy denied her a visa three times after making her run around for paperwork. Feeling humiliated, she says:

tion, she doesn't even bother to try. She says all she wants to do is stay there for six months or so, see what it's like, and return to her Tribhuvan University job. The daughter of a renowned Nepali professor, Buna says: "We are not pleading for mercy. I only want to join my husband and see what it's like with him."

Sushila Gyawali's husband has been in America for the last one and a half years. Here, she runs her husband's printing press. She too wants to join her husband and see what this place America is all about. Her husband has promised to send the necessary papers. Although afraid that her press work might suffer, it is the fear of being rejected that has kept her from even filling out the visa forms. Says Sushila: "We can have fun here. There is no way we are going to live there. My husband will be back in a few years. If there was a guarantee of getting a visa I might have thought about going there for a few months even if I had to leave the children here. But there is no guarantee. I do not wish to be humiliated by the embassy."

Only three women out of the 14 I know have consented to their names being published, but the story of the rest is painfully similar. Some husbands went there as students, some now have green cards and are working there, and some are in the process of getting it. Most of them can take care of their families. When their spouses are denied a visa, it is a huge embarrassment for the husbands. What will the in-laws and relatives think? What trauma must a newly-wed couple bear when they cannot live together after getting married, and how is a wife to bear the nagging suspicion of society that her husband has abandoned her.

The American Embassy may have its own criteria for granting a visa, but they seem to treat all applications with suspicion. Could it be that the wrong people are getting visas, and the right ones are not because of this tendency to treat everybody as guilty until proven innocent? There are examples of Nepalis living illegally in America who work at slaughter houses, skinning cattle and pigs, and who come here and take Nepali women back as their brides. These men

boast that even if they are working in positions most Americans wouldn't think about as a job, they can come to Nepal and take educated high-class brides. When these girls go over and realise that they have been fooled, they run away with other men and some end up working as domestics. There are only a few really strong women who dare to fight back and maintain their dignity. Consider these real-life stories:  
• A man who had been living in America for a long time married the very young daughter of a rich and famous businessman in Kathmandu. After a few days of enjoying life he went back, and the wife waited anxiously for years so that she could go and live with her husband. She hasn't heard a word from him since he left Nepal.

• The same man's elder brother came to Nepal posing as a doctor, married a young girl and took her to America to live with him. But when his bride discovered the truth she divorced him and is now living there doing odd jobs.  
• Another of Kathmandu's rich and famous families married off their educated daughter to an uneducated man who actually worked as a security guard in America. When the bride went to America she was forced to share a room with three other men besides her husband. With her husband out working 18 hours a day, she got lonely and returned to Nepal.  
• In bigger US cities there are up to 14 Nepali men living

illegally and sharing one room. One Nepali woman who couldn't live with her husband in a cramped shared room ran off with a man who lived alone. There are many Nepali women who find themselves in a similar situation after reaching America and so elope with Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, or elderly Americans.

Nepalis should be warned about men who live illegally in America and come here to get married, lying about their work and their lives. Parents ought to thoroughly check the

antecedents of these men before giving their daughters in marriage to them. Women must be cautious and not just blinded with the dream of going abroad. For the American Embassy visa section, a piece of advice: a few cases of visa abuse does not mean that everybody who wants to go to America will never come back. Countless well-intentioned Nepalis have now been humiliated, permanently turned off, and their lives ruined. ♦

*(Adapted from Himal Khabarpatrika.)*



Samjhana



Buna

because the American Embassy denied them a visa they have not been together since their wedding day. For some the wait has lasted ten years.

Samjhana is one of them. A few years ago, her husband had gone to America on a programme and had returned after it was over. Since he had a multiple entry visa, he went back again. Since then, she has been trying to join her husband with help from an American businessman who is trying to get the

"It is not good to humiliate Nepalis in such a manner. I don't want to go to America now. Why go to a place where there are people like this?"

Buna Ghimire teaches at Tribhuvan University. Three years ago her husband, who has a post-graduate degree and is pursuing further studies, went to America. He has sent her the papers necessary for Buna to join him, but she doesn't even want to go to the embassy because she knows women like her have been denied a visa. Fearing humilia-

**YOUR CONFIRMATION FOR  
GENUINE CITIZEN WATCH IS  
AN INT'L GUARANTEE  
CARD & A VAT BILL**

Whenever you buy genuine CITIZEN Watch you will receive AN INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEE CARD and a VAT BILL.

**CITIZEN**  
Citizen Showroom and Service Centre  
**TIME POINT**  
1st Fl Ratna Plaza, Dharmapath, Kathmandu, Tel : 222818

Authorised Retailers

BHATBHATENI DEPARTMENT STORE, Bhatbhateni  
SULUX CENTRE, Khichapokhari / Bishal Bazar / Bluebird  
SHARMA IMPEX, New Road  
ANKIT STORE, Bishal Bazar

"Where the mind is without fear  
And the head is held high..."

**THE HIMALAYAS**  
Our home. Our Work. Our Passion.

**Friends in High Places**  
Trekking, Rafting, Culture, Wildlife

**Friends in High Places PO Box 12117 Kathmandu, Nepal**  
Tel: 533-258 Fax: 534-376 email: fihp@mos.com.np www.fihp.com  
For adventure call: 98102-5070, 98102-4843

BIZ NEWS

Diesel, kerosene dearer

Following the increase in petrol and diesel prices in India, Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) has revised the prices of petroleum products on 14 October. The price hike was steepest for kerosene (100%) from Rs13 to Rs26 per litre, while diesel grew by roughly 20 percent, from Rs23 to Rs27.5. The price of petrol rose 17.5 percent from Rs40 to Rs47.5 per litre and the price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) increased 19 percent per cylinder—from Rs465 to Rs550.

The government has made arrangements to subsidise kerosene for the poor—mainly for lighting in the villages—by keeping the price of a rationed 3 litres at Rs15.50. This kerosene is to be distributed through the local administration offices. Diesel continues to be subsidised.

The price rise was imminent following increasing global oil prices, which remain high despite an increase in production by oil producing countries and efforts of large industrialised countries to augment market supply by using their reserve stocks. The international price of oil has hovered around \$35 per barrel, up from roughly \$20 a barrel a year ago. NOC says diesel was available at US \$195 and kerosene at \$225 per metric ton last year. The prices for the same are \$350 and \$380 this year.

The increase in prices of petroleum products will kick start inflation, which has remained in single digits, because of increased transport costs. NOC said keeping prices at old levels could result in losses of up to Rs3.5 billion. Under the new price regime, NOC's losses per litre of diesel and rationed kerosene are Rs4.5 and Rs9.75 respectively. Likewise the loss per LPG cylinder is Rs100, down from Rs187.

Strikes mar economic performance

The Central Bank has cited the July-August work disruption in financial institutions as reason for low revenue collection and decline in government spending. Revenue collection declined by 24.1 percent to Rs1845.1(??), compared to the 8.3 percent increase recorded in the first month of the last fiscal year. Likewise, government spending, which should have increased significantly because of the early approval of the budget, went down by 7.5 percent to Rs1.64 billion. Last year, the disbursements had increased by about 30 percent. Both regular and development spending have recorded a decline of 38 and 66 percent respectively. The bank also reported a robust foreign exchange reserve, which increased by 23 percent to Rs95 billion, 86 percent of it in convertible currency.

The monthly reports of the central bank serve as a barometer of the economic health of the country. Of late, however, the reports have been appearing after considerable delay—the one issued on 3 October was two months late.

Bertolli in Nepal

Bertolli, the global market leader in olive oil sales, has begun organised marketing and distribution in Nepal. Last week the company appointed Nepal Overseas Marketing Company—which represents some well known brands such as Gillette, Johnson & Johnson and Procter & Gamble—as sole agent for selling and distributing Bertolli oils.

The Italian company, established 135 years ago, makes three types of olive oils: Classico, Extra Virgin and Extra Light. The company plans to first market Classico in 100ml, 250 ml, 500ml and 1 litre packs, and then move on to the “extras.”

Brazilian aircraft for Yeti

The first of two Brazilian aircraft ordered by Yeti Airlines has arrived to join its fleet of 4 Twin Otters, according to a company press release. The 30-seater EMB 120 aircraft will be used to expand Yeti's services to major airports along the trunk routes—Biratnagar, Nepalgunj and Bhairawa. The EMB 120 will also be operated on the mountain flights.

The EMBs are manufactured by Embraer Aircraft Corporation, the world's fourth largest maker of aeroplanes. Yeti says the EMB 120s are among the most reliable aircraft now in commercial operation.

Radisson shares

The Oriental Hotel Ltd., managed by the Radisson group, is allotting shares to the general public. The hotel had initially offered 1.25 million shares (value Rs100 each) and later increased the offer to 1.5 million.

There were 95,000 applicants for 9.8 million shares of which 32,000 applicants are to receive about 1.4 million shares. The remainder is to be distributed among employees.

Belgian Aid for NTC

Belgium will provide financial assistance of Rs548.5 million (Euros 8,496,977 ) for the purchase and installation of 150,000 telephone lines under the Sixth Telecommunications Project to be executed by the Nepal Telecommunications Corporation, the Finance Ministry said.

The interest free loan is repayable over 30 years with a 10 year grace period. Finance Secretary Dr. Bimal Koirala and Belgian Ambassador Guy Trouveroy signed the loan agreement on 4 October.

Fourth Singapore Airlines Flight

Singapore Airlines began operating its fourth flight linking Kathmandu and Singapore on 2 October. The airline will now fly non-stop between Kathmandu and the Island Republic on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

The airlines which began operating flights to Nepal 13 years ago connects 70 cities in 39 countries from Singapore's Changi Airport.

ECONOMIC SENSE

by ARTHA BEED



Nepal’s “1.6 economy”

Every time New Delhi sneezes, Nepal gets the flu.

How long are we going to be a one-point-six economy? For as long as anyone can remember the Nepali rupee has been pegged at 1.6 to one Indian rupee. The outcome is that every time New Delhi sneezes, Nepal gets the flu.

And so it was with the oil price hike last week. Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) got together with the oil dealers and gave Nepalis a lovely Dasain gift. No petrol to carry that *khasi* in the motorcycle, and no kerosene to fry the khasi's innards.

The prices of both oil products had increased in India, and we were just waiting to follow suit. The dealers were hoarding, while NOC was passing the buck saying, “We’ve been moving supplies”. What on earth was happening? We found out soon enough. No sooner was Dasain over than Nepalis got a triple whammy from NOC: kerosene prices up by 100 percent, petrol by 17.5 percent and diesel by 19.5 percent. Now we are all waiting for the effect on inflation. Usually, the first aftershocks of a 20 percent increase in fuel prices translates into a 1.5 percent increase in the inflation rate, and this is followed by a delayed increase that can go up to five percent.

Nepal’s inflation rate, which had remained in single digits will now grow. Just wait and see, in six months’ time the Finance Ministry will be blaming it all on the oil price hike—“reasons beyond our control”. We will make more speeches on oil conservation and some committee will be formed to undertake a study.

Back to the one-point-six syndrome. It affects everything in Nepal, not just fuel prices. When Nepal’s foreign currency holdings are robust why on earth do we have to devalue our rupee and make imports costlier? It would be interesting to find out who or what has determined that the appropriate exchange rate with the Indian rupee is 1.6, and fixed it there for eternity. Which economist on either side of the border can substantiate a calculation that shows that the currency rate has to remain at this level? If the balance of payments situation between Nepal and India changes, it should be allowed to affect the exchange rate. I have a sneaking suspicion 1.6 has been set by our lords and masters, the politicians, and the economists in our central bank obediently taken it as a given.

Why else should we stick to this arbitrary ratio that seems to have been set by some astrologer? No Nepali government in historical memory has ever raised this issue with India. Why not?

As a matter of fact, current trends in Nepal’s exports, balance of payments and the country’s economic position vis-a-vis dollar reserves, suggest that the exchange rate with the Indian rupee would be more realistic at 1.3. If the exchange rate comes down to 1.3 oil product prices can remain the same, the dollar can depreciate against the Nepali rupee, the purchasing power will increase, the real GDP growth rate will improve—all leading to a stronger Nepali economy? Anyone who doesn’t want the Nepali rupee to improve, raise your hand. Who in Nepal should have a problem with an improvement in the Nepali economy?

Our economic pundits need to urgently question the unquestionable: why 1.6? It’s time we got rid of this irrational fixed rate regime once and for all. It would resolve a lot of problems that plague Nepal: sugar prices, oil prices, vegetable prices, and even labour rates. It will improve the competitive advantage of the Nepali economy, won’t it? Write to me and let me know your views. ♦

*Readers can post their views and discuss issues at arthabeed@yahoo.com*

Grindlays Gazette

INTEREST RATE UPDATE

NEPALI RUPEE	CURRENT%	PREVIOUS%
Call Money Avg.	5.15	4.70
39 Days t/bill	3.95	-
91 Days t/bill	5.17	5.18
365 Days t/bill	6.1	6.16
Repo rate	5.67	5.68

The average rate of 91 days T/Bill rate remained almost unchanged despite lower market liquidity amongst banks. RBB and NBL were seen less interested at this weeks T/Bill bidding while ADB was seen aggressive this week. The average T/bill rate is expected to improve in the coming weeks if most Govt-run banks don't show aggression. Expected range for coming weeks 5.20 to 5.40.

FOREIGN CURRENCY : Interest rates

	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY	CHF
LENDING	9.50	6.25	6.00	1.50	5.13
LIBOR (1M)	6.62	4.82	6.05	0.33	3.25

BANK RATES(DEPO/LENDING)	Mkt Hi/Lo	Mkt Avg
S/A NPR	6.0/3.5	5.30
F/D 1 YR	7.5/6.0	6.81
OVERDRAFT	15.5/12.5	13.54
TERM LOAN	14.5/13.0	13.49
IMPORT LN	13.0/10.5	11.52
EXPORT LN	13.0/10.0	10.96
MISC LOAN	17.5/13.5	15.13

CURRENCY UPDATE

AG/USD	CURRENT *	WK/AGO	%CHG
OIL(Barrel )	33.96	31.21	+ 8.81
GOLD(Ounce)	271.80	274.00	- 0.80
GOLD ( NPR *	7130	7185	- 0.77
EUR	0.8515	0.8820	- 3.46
GBP	1.4469	1.4634	- 1.13
JPY	108.16	107.80	+ 0.33
CHF	1.7744	1.7240	+ 2.92
AUD	0.5226	0.5445	- 4.02
INR	46.30	46.02	+ 0.61

\*Currency bid prices at 5.15 p.m. on 2/10 - Source Reuters

**Oil:** Crude oil prices fell \$2 barrel, to settle near \$33 on hopes that the summit between Israeli and Palestinian leader would ease tensions in the region. Oil prices have also come under pressure as Saudi Arabia hinted over the weekend that OPEC might soon pump more crude to calm markets.

**Currencies:** The Euro fell to nearly all-time lows against the dollar after Europe's top central banker seemed to play down chances of further central bank intervention. Recent steep declines in the US equity markets have helped to underpin the Euro against the dollar somewhat, but traders said the anemic single currency continued to suffer from a lack of confidence.

**INDIAN RUPEE OUTLOOK :**  
The Indian currency ended at 46.31/32 per dollar on Monday. The Indian rupee weakened on dollar demand from foreign funds and on demand from state-run banks. In coming days Oil prices, the Euro's movement against the dollar and a forthcoming overseas deposit issue are expected to give direction to the Indian rupee.

StandardChartered

INTERNATIONAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR NEPALI TIMES

	6 months	1 year
SAARC countries	US\$25	US\$48
Other countries	US\$40	US\$75

marketing@nepalitimes.com



**After the successful Annapurna Area Conservation Project, it is now the turn of the Kangchendzonga region to be the next ecotourism model.**

The Nepal Tourism Board and WWF Nepal are drawing up a "tourism plan" for KCAP. But it may be a good idea to go there before it is implemented, and the whole world discovers Nepal's unspoilt eastern paradise. ♦

**“The project has been a boon to us. It has brought hope to our**

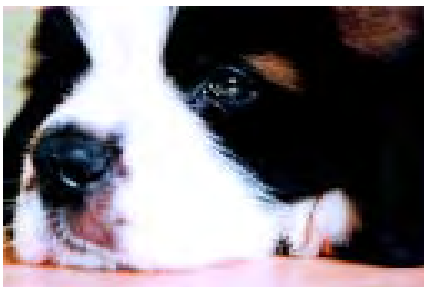
**A joint feasibility was conducted by the Department of**

# mirinda

**Anil Bhawan, Kamaladi, Kathmandu, Nepal**  
**Phone: 00977-1-243649, Fax: 00977-1-220161**  
**E-mail: [deep@enet.com.np](mailto:deep@enet.com.np)**



# Dog's best friend?



When one social carnivore reneges on the contract and neglects the other, it is the end of a beautiful relationship and the beginning of a problem.

Nepal now boasts more than 40, and that totals 5,000 individual dogs with blue blood.

No one quite seems to know why, but it appears that the St Bernard is the hot favourite. This Alpine animal, bred and developed by Bernadine monks in the French Alps and famed for rescuing snowbound mountain travellers, is being imported into Nepal from the Central Asian republic of Uzbekistan via Delhi. Each pup costs Rs 35,000. "We are expecting more St. Bernard pups. The demand for this breed is increasing in Kathmandu despite its high price," says Suresh Shah, owner of Mount Everest Kennel Club (MEKC) in Baneshwor. "The popularity of a breed depends on the hype that surrounds it, but there is also a growing interest and awareness about dog keeping." Shah sold eight St Bernard pups in the previous month alone. None of them, we are told, are being used to rescue trekkers stuck in blizzards in the high Himalaya with miniature brandy barrels in their collars.

The valley has also seen a growing number of kennel clubs, some nascent animals rights activism, and isolated community efforts at managing mongrels. There are around 15 kennel clubs and close to 50 specialist vets in Kathmandu. The Mt. Everest Kennel Club alone has 13,000 dogs registered under it, and there are more who avail of their services but are not registered.

Apart from the growing popularity of the St. Bernard, the Tibetan Mastiff (*Bhote Kukur*), remains the dog of choice, followed by the German Shepherd, Labrador, Japanese Spitz, and smaller breeds like the Tibetan Spaniel, Tibetan Terrier and Lhasa Apso. The Himalayan Kennel Club at Maitighar sells up to 50 pups a month of various breeds. The increasing popularity also has to do with the recent initiative by the Kathmandu

Municipality and various kennel clubs, of which the MEKC remains on the frontline, to carry out registration of pet dogs, keep records, provide medical examination on house calls, and also sell a wide variety of breeds.

That is how the canine upper crust lives, but for the rest of the dog proletariat, life on the streets is a grind. They have frequent bruising fights with neighbourhood toughies, they have to keep a look out for speeding trucks and motorcycles, sadistic-minded dog-hating humans who like to beat them with sticks, *Kukur Tihar* notwithstanding, and battle all manner of afflictions like scabies, worms and distemper.

Animal lovers are trying some

told us. She takes time off to talk to her dogs in Nepali when it gets lonely in the studio. Apart from the dogs, Jan has adopted two cats which live in harmony with the dogs.

Many, many others are not so lucky. On the streets, mongrels befriend street children, rummage the trash piles together, sleep on the streets, follow them about and sometimes receive good care from the vagabond bunch as well. "We cannot feed them but it's good to have them around," says a 10-year-old child who lives on the sidewalks of Thamel. He strokes his group's mascot, Tiger, and says he is most worried about the municipality's dog squad which goes on periodic extermination sprees.



Magnificent street-smart Mongrel on a restaurant lookout, Thamel. St Bernard pup (top), Lhasa Apso cross (right) and an alert litter of German Shepherd pups (below).

**SALIL SUBEDI**  
The nation will go to its dogs next week. On *Kukur Tihar* (26 October) every Nepali dog will have its day, every bitch hers. It is that time of year when they are worshipped and called upon to keep the god of death, *Yamaraj*, away. Dogs are gods for one day. For the rest of the year, they will be for the most part mistreated, kicked, chased, abandoned. It is a dog's life. We will let sleeping mutts lie: these mangy, flea-ridden, sick, rabid and prolific breeders. Well, now that D-day is here, we can lavish some attention on our best friends.

The number of strays in Kathmandu and their general condition is a worry and is becoming increasingly hard to ignore. Right now, they are celebrating the annual canine mating season with characteristic gusto and ensuring another generation of dogs for the future. However, there are changes afoot in the demographics of dogs in Kathmandu Valley. And this is a trend towards a gentrification of the human-canine relationship. Suddenly, dogs are status symbol. So the next time you run into a St. Bernard on a walk in Sanepa, don't be too surprised. This

high-caste import is an accessory of social status. Exotic breeds with good bloodlines grace the increasing numbers of villas in the valley's upmarket residential neighbourhoods of Dhapasi, Bhaisepati, Godavari and Dhum Barahi. If you have a Land Cruiser in the garage, then you must have the latest model Rottweiler in the dog house. Of the 200 breeds recognised by the Kennel Club of Great Britain,



conscience rousing. Jan Salter, the British artist who has lived and painted in Nepal for 30 years, is one concerned animal lover. She has taken strays off the mean streets and given them a home in her home. Some of the dogs she adopted earlier died in road accidents. Now, she's got four ex-strays that she keeps safely inside a closed compound. "I just happened to meet all of them at different times on the street. I brought home those that looked friendly and gave them good treatment. Now they give me good company," Jan

It is a knee-jerk response and goes into high gear when complaints from the public gets out of hand or when there is a rabies scare. The municipality's dog-killers operate by night and leave poisoned food about for the strays to eat. Then, in a pre-dawn swoop, the dead dogs are taken to the green belt along the Ring Road on the city rim and buried before the neighbour-hood awakes. "What can we do? People are selfish. They turn a dog loose on the streets but when it gets poisoned they are angry and ask us why we poisoned a pet. We are thus forced to carry out our operations in the dark," a municipality worker told us from atop a garbage collection truck.







**Name:** Labrador  
**Origin:** Great Britain  
**Source for import:** India  
**Life expectancy:** 12-14 years  
**Height range:** 20-22 in  
**Price:** Rs 12,000  
**Characteristics:** Can adapt well, needs daily exercise, loves water, calm, intelligent and friendly.  
**Useful for:** Companionship, gun dog, field trials, assistance dog



**Name:** St Bernard  
**Origin:** Switzerland  
**Source for import:** Uzbekistan  
**Life expectancy:** 11 years  
**Height range:** 24-28in  
**Price:** Rs 35,000  
**Characteristics:** Impressive muscular giant, lazy, gentle but unsuitable for most forms of indoor living.  
**Useful for:** Companionship



**Name:** German Shepherd (Alsatian)  
**Origin:** Germany  
**Source of import:** India  
**Life expectancy:** 12-13 years  
**Height range:** 22-26 in  
**Price:** Rs 10-12,000  
**Characteristics:** Intelligent, adapts well, requires daily exercise.  
**Useful for:** Companionship, security, assistance



**Name:** Tibetan Mastiff (*Bhote kukur*)  
**Origin:** Karakoram Range  
**Source:** Northern Nepal and Tibetan plateau  
**Life expectancy:** 12-14 years  
**Height range:** 24-28 in  
**Price:** Rs 4-8000  
**Characteristics:** Adapts well, outdoorsy, doesn't like hot and humid conditions, cannot be trained easily  
**Useful for:** Companionship, excellent guard dog



**Name:** Nepali Mongrel (*Bhusiya kukur*)  
**Origin:** Local  
**Source:** Neighbourhoods  
**Life expectancy:** 12-13 years (high mortality rate due to neglect)  
**Height range:** 12-22 in  
**Price:** Free distribution  
**Characteristics:** Hardy, can't trace its family tree, ghetto dweller, guards its alley, high breeding rates, extremely loyal and friendly, no airs, but shows racist tendencies.  
**Useful for:** Neighbourhood watch, scavenging

The newest hazard for dogs is the runway at Kathmandu airport, fifteen runway dogs have been killed in the past week by the panicky airport authorities after complaints from pilots. No one seems to have thought of closing off the holes in the fence from which the dogs sneak in to seek mates, or to sniff around discarded airline food.

Community efforts at managing the dog population have been isolated. In Patan Dhoka, the MEKC and volunteers of the local Shanti Yuva Club work with the help of the strays' local benefactors, who help lure the dogs and muzzle them while the dog is vaccinated for rabies, treated for skin disorders or given a temporary contraceptive shot. MEKC has not been able to carry out permanent sterilisations due to the lack of post-operative care facilities.

Any dog on the streets of Kathmandu is called a *bhusiya kukur* (mongrel) regardless of its breed. What people don't realise is that most of the mongrels on the streets and foraging the rubbish heaps may have some blue blood—we have sometimes observed scraggly looking second-generation Labrador, Tibetan mastiff even German shepherds. Some even argue that the *bhusiya* itself is now a unique breed in itself. A breed apart, as it were.

There are superstitions linked to dogs. Nepal's believe that the cry of a bitch during the mating season is a bad omen and that they are possessed by a witch. Residents also complain of having to put up with the rag tag choir of barking and yelping dogs throughout the night. Some expats in Nepal have undergone nervous breakdowns because of sustained lack of sleep caused by all-night barking.

Shah blames the selfishness of locals who mistreat dogs. "First of all, where do these dogs come from? People themselves let them

loose on the streets either after the dog gets sick, or if it happens to be a female or bears frequent litter. The owner could have sterilised the animal, or not kept it at all," he says. "The problem of stray dogs is due to the ignorance of dog owners. Pet dogs should be tagged

and those on the streets should be taken care of. Poisoning won't help. The owners who have the habit of letting their dogs out on the street have to be educated first." Jayanarayan Singh, 70, founder of the first kennel club in Nepal—the Nepal Kennel

Club—lives with two Tibetan Mastiffs and two German Shepherds for company. "There are people who ill-treat their dogs, leave them to a servant's care, chain them, lock them in a kennel the whole day... these people should not even think of keeping

a pet. It is criminal to keep a dog if you can't spend time with it," he says. Instead of complaining about dogs in the neighbourhood creating a nuisance and just feeling sorry at the sight of a sick or wounded animal, it would help to complement efforts at manag-

ing the dog population by controlling their numbers and keeping them healthy. And let us begin on 26 October by making a *Kukur Tihar* Resolution to give our dogs decent lives in their present incarnation. After all, isn't that what friends are for? ♦

premium  
whiskey



# COMING SOON

**CLAUDIA EHRESTEIN IN TOKYO.** Japan's electronic industry gathers once a year to show off its wares. Last week at CEATEC 2000, 100 manufacturers from the entertainment and communications



branches displayed their latest products and gave the public a taste of what is to come. If the current trend is anything to go by, it is bound to be smaller, more colourful and more fun than all that has gone before.

This is true most of all of products aimed at younger consumers. Sharp's Zaurus concept, for example, is targeting children, adolescents and students. The Zaurus aims to transform a palmtop into a "mobile brain", giving users access to educational programmes and games while on the move. Mobile phones are smaller, brighter and more practical. It is now possible to send encoded music from one mobile to another, as Sanyo demonstrates with its new J91

## GADGETS, GIZMOS, AND TOYS GALORE

model. Meanwhile, Panasonic's third generation IMT-2000 W-CDMA boasts an integrated, ultra-compact digital camera capable of sending live pictures by e-mail—instant holiday snaps. Businesspeople can use this device as a portable picturephone. Due for a spring release in Japan, European markets will have to wait another

*Holographic display of your body's performance while you exercise with this Dataview. Lets you watch television while you monitor your own heartbeat while on the treadmill! Price: \$170.*

year—assuming the network can provide sufficient transmission capacity.

It is clear that mobile phones are developing into multimedia tools. Key to this development are the ever-increasing transmission speeds for voice, text, images and video. The phone is destined eventually to replace the PC as the chief means of accessing the internet, to the extent that it will be soon be possible to check the contents of the fridge at home while out shopping in the supermarket.

In Japan, the age of the PC-free internet has long since dawned, with the super-quick "i-mode protocol" by the

Japanese mobile communications giant NTT DoCoMo. One benefit of the new technology is progress in the care of the chronically ill. Several Japanese clinics will monitor the health of outpatients via the internet and a mobile phone. The necessary monitoring devices are already available.

According to the head of Panasonic, Kunio Nakamura, hardware manufacturers and service providers will be forced to cooperate more closely. Every second Japanese now owns a mobile phone, that figure rises to 80 percent for the 20 to 40 age category. In no other country of the world are there as many elderly citizens as in Japan, and mobiles are being designed with these people in mind.

The new monitor on offer from Sony is both practical and of a handy size. The IDT-LF1 can be lifted out of its base and placed anywhere in the home. A radio transmitter ensures the user can watch television or surf the internet in the kitchen, basement or children's play room. The monitor is also capable of retrieving data from a Memory Stick.

The Memory Stick (manufactured by Sony) and the SD Card (made by competitors Panasonic and Toshiba, among others) are truly wonders of modern multiple technologies. The tiny chip can store music,

text and images and is compatible with cameras, video recorders and sound systems. The cards can be played in cordless, battery-powered, futuristic head-phones. Panasonic has taken the concept a step further with the design of a wrist-mounted player in the form of an oversize watch.

The size and clarity of plasma screens—produced among others by Hitachi—make a tempting package. The flat-screen televisions remain expensive on account of the high production costs. A 60-inch, 16:9 plasma model from Panasonic—the TH 42 PM—retails at \$13,160 dollars. The design of the screen incorporates one of Panasonic's latest inventions—asymmetrical cell structure. The blue bars have been made slightly broader to assist the eye, which finds blue light relatively difficult to absorb. Red bars, on the other hand, are more easily detected and thus appear slightly narrower.

The practical upshot of the new technology is a fur-ther advance in picture quality. *(Die Welt)*



*Here is Sony's latest Information Window, with even bigger screen so you can watch Internet television. This is the cutting edge of convergence.*



*Here is the latest voice recognition software for Apple owners from IBM-- 45 minutes and \$110 to train your computer to recognise your voice!*

## MOBILE AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Sticking finger in ear to listen and speak into a wristwatch. Hearing voices inside your head? Don't be alarmed. You'll probably be wearing the mobile phone that allows you to take calls by sticking your finger in your ear. Prototypes have worked well and soon the days of the mobile phone pest on a train or bus will be gone. Instead, commuters will get annoyed as people jam their fingers firmly inside their ears and shout into their wrists.

The phone, dubbed Whisper by the Japanese firm that invented it, is worn like a watch. It consists of a receiver that converts audio signals into vibrations. The caller's voice travels through the hand, into the fingers and out into the ear canal. You talk back via a microphone in the phone's wristband.

There is no keypad. Incoming calls are signalled by a gentle vibration and you answer the phone by tapping your thumb and index finger together. To dial and use other functions you tap your fingers, in different rhythms. Or you can use voice commands similar to those in use on many mobiles.

Masaaki Fukumoto, a senior research engineer at Tokyo-based NTT DoCoMo, got the idea for his finger phone during a conference on wearable computers in 1997. Though demonstrations have worked well, Fukumoto believes most people are reluctant to "wear" computers and the phone may be ahead of its time. *(The Observer)*



*The latest Motorola watch phone comes with headset and microphone.*

## FREE AS AIR

Here comes the broadband wireless internet Using an aerial, a lightning conductor, a floppy disk and a microwave transceiver little bigger than a credit card, a pair of techies are hoping to beat the world's big telecommunication companies and launch the first broadband wireless internet in the UK. James Stevens and Julian Priest of Consume.net represent a growing group of people who believe that the internet should be owned by its users and as free as the air we breathe.

They say the Net is too valuable a thing to be owned by small groups of organisations: the big telecommunications companies.

The current economic and regulatory framework is too slow, they say, expensive and the cause of what is now being called the "digital divide".

The scheme will be piloted later this month in Shoreditch, east London. It involves the creation of a "data cloud"—a wireless internet network distributed through the radio spectrum. The technology is already commercially available and, as long as the network is used for non-commercial basis, no licences will be needed, say the pair. Stevens says: "We have already established three sites for antennas or nodes—which are omnidirectional send and receive stations. Once people have the wireless cards in their laptops they will be able to connect with our networks." These first three nodes, adds Stevens, are enough to generate a data cloud.

The right cards for laptops are called 802.11 or wireless Ethernet and are available from companies like Lucent Technologies for as little as \$217.

Of course, the pair cannot build a network on their own. So last month they invited others to participate in its building and design. These include the chief executive of a leading UK internet service provider (ISP) and several high-end technologists. Already, another node is being developed in north London, and Medium Rare is building its own at London Bridge.

The initial nodes will rely on connections to the "outside" internet—which will still have to be paid for. But the pair see no



*MOTIONMEDIA Motion Media mm225 videophone will revolutionise the phone call. Linked to your cable line, you can even watch movies on it. Price: \$ 2,800.*

## E-BOOK THRILLERS

Turn page at touch of screen At the Frankfurt Book Fair this week, the best original e-book will get an award. Publishers and agents at the show already have 500,000



*Finally, a viceocassette-size laptop that comes with remote control, 350k pixel camera. Can be used as videophone, VCD player, video screen or mobile! \$3,500*

reasons to be interested in e-books: that's how many downloaded Stephen King's novel, *Riding The Bullet*, in its first two days online this summer. Many didn't pay, and lots didn't read it, but King showed that e-books can reach a mass market. By delivering text direct to the reader's computer screen, the e-book could slash production and distribution costs, and allow creators to deal directly with their audience, bypassing conventional publishers and retailers. But it also raises the spectre of mass piracy. Phil Rance, founder and managing director of Online Originals, a London-based e-book publisher, sums it up: "No one wants Napster to happen to books."

At the moment, most publishers would like to limit the use of e-books to the person who bought them, or to the computer used to download them. According to Terry Robinson, business manager for Adobe's e-paper group. "If you've cracked the digital rights aspect, you've cracked the market," he says.

Andrew Rosenheim, managing director of the UK's Penguin Press and acting head of the company's digital media operations, believes that if the market is going to take off, it won't be due to sales to dedicated e-book readers. "I think it's going to happen in handhelds," he says. "Convergence is happening. People aren't going to want to carry a mobile phone and an e-book and a laptop computer. They'll want something that will do everything and read."

That is the way Microsoft is heading with its PocketPC software, which is used by the Hewlett-Packard Jornada, Casio Cassiopeia and Compaq iPaq palmtop computers. The PocketPC (Windows CE 3) software includes electronic organiser functions, email and web browsing programs, an MP3 player, and Microsoft Reader e-book software. And millions more are already reading documents on Palm and Psion handheld though—worryingly for the industry—

generally not in copy-protected formats. Probably no one will pay up to \$700 for a Palm, a Psion or a PocketPC just to read books on a small screen. However, millions buying handheld computers to organise their lives will want to use the same device for other purposes, and e-books are another application.

At Penguin, Rosenheim thinks it will be three to five years before the e-book market becomes viable. "In terms of it becoming roughly equivalent to print sales, I do think that will happen, but in 20-25 years," he says. "New generations, younger people without the traditional attachment to print, will find the shift easier to make...they won't have an inherent resistance to that."

Web addresses  
Frankfurt E-book Awards [www.iebaf.org](http://www.iebaf.org)  
Online Originals  
[www.onlineoriginals.com](http://www.onlineoriginals.com)  
University of Virginia Etext Center <http://etext.virginia.edu>  
ebooks Books for PDAs  
[www.memoware.com](http://www.memoware.com)  
Barnes & Noble eBookstore  
[ebooks.barnesandnoble.com](http://ebooks.barnesandnoble.com) Tome Raider [www.tomeraider.com](http://www.tomeraider.com)  
*(The Guardian)*



*Virgin Samsung phone comes with 32MB of memory and its own music manager software. Price: \$500*

reason why the network cannot stand alone once it has grown big enough. The data cloud, they say, is not the internet for free, but the internet in return for participation. It was because of this desire that they got fed up waiting for the big telcos to get their wireless networks together. Also, the government's auction of bandwidth has driven the price up to a point where the chances of a fast cheap public access network emerging are virtually nil. At no point do they ever mention the desire to make any money from Consume - they operate as a strictly non-profit making organisation. *(The Guardian)*



# Arms race in full swing

Going nuclear was supposed to cut spending on conventional arms. But India and Pakistan are buying more weapons even though they can ill afford it.

**RANJIT DEVRAJ** IN NEW DELHI

India's order for \$3 billion worth of Russian arms, during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit, shows that having nuclear weapons has not increased security in South Asia. India and Pakistan partly justified their nuclear tests in May 1998 by arguing that this would reduce spending on conventional arms, which neither South Asian rival, burdened by mass poverty, can afford. "History shows that going nuclear has never reduced military budgets for conventional arms," said Achin Vanaik, leading Indian anti-nuclear weapon activist. The 50-year-old Kashmir dispute has led to two wars between the neighbours and a bloody undeclared conflict last year. India's latest weapons purchases, concluded during Putin's four-day visit, which ended Thursday, are bound to trigger a like response by a Pakistan anxious to maintain military parity, says Vanaik.

Vanaik says the purchases are in keeping with an ambitious policy of militarisation advocated by the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is the lead partner in India's ruling coalition. He pointed to the purchases, which cover the aircraft carrier, *Admiral Gorshkov*, 150 Sukhoi-30 MK1 fighters and 310 T-90 tanks with licenses for local manufacture of the planes and tanks. India also recently

concluded a deal to buy Hawk-110 advanced jet trainers and plans to augment its air force, which already has 800 jet fighters, with Mirage-2000 H combat aircraft.

However, the New Delhi-based Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), a government think-tank, considers the defence upgradation as long due and inevitable in the light of many deficiencies in India's defence preparedness. IDSA director, Jasjit Singh, thinks that India's current six billion-dollar arms shopping list is modest. "We have been on a modernisation holiday for more than a decade," he says.

The shortcomings in India's armed might were revealed by last year's Kargil conflict, say those who advocate stepped up defence spending. Heavy artillery and air power were used as India fought off an armed

intrusion, backed by Pakistan's military across the Line of Control (LoC), which runs through divided Kashmir. Singh considers the purchases from Moscow, India's traditional defence partner from the Cold War days, to be a good bargain. "Where can you get a fighter of the SU-30MK1 class at \$35 million a piece? It is worth at least \$75 million," he says.

The fact that the Chinese are already producing them under licence should, according to Singh, be reason enough for India, to do likewise. India's defence establishment considers China, with which it fought a bloody border war in 1962, to be a greater threat than Pakistan. Singh considers the *Admiral Gorshkov* to be a stop-gap arrangement until India can build its own "air defence ship."

Significantly, the Russians have agreed to lease four T-22 Backfire Bombers, that Moscow was earlier shirking from doing, because this was believed to be in violation of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). According to Singh,

India will have to depend on cheap arms purchases for some time because its plan to build its own Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) has been excessively delayed.

Singh thinks that Pakistan's air force, with its US-built F-16 aircraft, has an edge. "What we are buying now should be effective for the next 20 years," he said. However, critics of South Asian arms purchases say the two nations with mass poverty, cannot afford to spend scarce funds this way. Among the staunchest critics of the South Asian arms race was Mahbub ul Haq, former Pakistani finance minister and author of the U.N. Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report. "When India bought four Sukhoi 30 aircraft in 1996 at \$1.8 billion, it denied 35 million children an education and 140 million children, health care," he had said. "Similarly, Pakistan's 1995 purchase of Agustus 90-B submarines at \$1 billion dollars, denied 12 million children drinking water for a year (while) 56 million people were denied health services," Haq said.

However, this argument has been challenged by political analysts like Kanti Bajpai of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), who argues that national security is an essential condition for development. ♦ *(IPS)*



# Singapore Girl on spending spree

What makes Singapore Airlines the superpower of world aviation? It is the corporate tiger lurking beneath the smiling Singapore Girl image.

SINGAPORE - Singapore Airlines has again flexed the muscles behind the smiling image of its Singapore Girl brand with a \$8.6 billion order for the monster European-made Airbus A3XX that made both Airbus and Boeing wince.

Airbus winced because it won. The European consortium must now deliver on costly promises made to a fierce and fickle customer. Boeing winced because the party's over for its 31-year-old cash cow, the 747 jumbo jet. But how is it that the flag carrier for a nation with only four million people is the airline that has effectively decided whether Europe or America builds the next 'very big' thing in flight?

Singapore Airlines was courted by both the Europeans' Airbus Industries and Boeing for an order for a VLA, or Very Large Airliner, able to bring more passengers per flight to congested airports like Tokyo's Narita, London's Heathrow and Los Angeles International.

Both plane makers treated the order as make or break for their designs. The European consortium proposed an all new airliner, fatter than anything built for airline service but capable of using existing terminals. The Americans came up with a 'stretched' jumbo jet, with an upper deck extending almost all the way to the tail.

"We knew we had to plan for growth," said Singapore Airlines CEO, Cheong Choong Kong, "and we also knew that it was going to very hard to get more slots. There was only ever going to be one winner, and the Airbus proposal was superior in terms of technology, price and environmental impact." Such is the clout of the Singapore girl that her decision means that growth from major airports beyond 2006 will be met by all-new designs like the A3XX carrying 550 or more passengers.

Singapore Airlines positively goaded the big two into the contest, and has been daring them to build a Very Large Airliner since 1992,

after it analysed future limits on growth and decided congestion at airports and in the sky were even bigger problems than restrictive aviation treaties between countries. The airline has levered a unique combination of strengths that are sometimes found singly but never collectively in any other national carrier. It is debt free, has a mountain of loose cash, enjoys a strategic location at the crossroads of SE Asia, at Singapore's Changi Airport, and has established a high quality, globally recognised brand.

Singapore Airlines has not only been shopping for new aircraft, but also airlines. In less than a year it has bought 49 percent of British entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic Airways, and 25 percent of Ansett Australia and Air New Zealand.

Cheong always smiles, but says nothing, when asked about persistent speculation on a takeover of all or part of British Airways. But if Airbus fails to make the planes so quiet they can use Heathrow Airport under strict new noise rules, or if the planes do not fly at least 1000 km further than a 747-400 with a full complement of 550 passengers, Singapore Airlines says the deal for the 3XX is off. Singapore Airlines has been the bluntest of airlines in its acceptance or rejection of jets.

This may explain Airbus CEO Noel Forgeard's last words to reporters as he headed back to his headquarters at Toulouse, in south west France, with the consortium's biggest win under his belt: "We have a lot of promises to keep." ♦ *(The Observer)*



## Goa closes hippie flea market

Twenty-five years ago Anjuna Beach was at the heart of Goa, one of the world's great hippie capitals, up there with Kathmandu, Bali and Ibiza. And when western travellers in Goa finally ran out of money, as they invariably did, it was to Anjuna's celebrated flea market they would turn to sell their guitars and well-thumbed copies of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* so they could carry on partying. Eventually all the hippies went home. But their entrepreneurial spirit lived on and the market continued to flourish - until last week, when Goa's newly puritanical authorities decided to close it down. The state's chief minister, Francisco Sardinha, announced last week that the market in north Goa, where vendors sell Indian kitsch, Tibetan brassware, old motorcycles and techno music tapes, was a haven for drugs and was therefore earning the former Portuguese colony a bad name. "I won't tolerate drugs. I don't want that culture here," he said. "I want things to be more organised." The decision came hard on the heels of an earlier order banning the playing of loud music after 10pm. Goa's traditional rave scene—full moon and acid parties up and down the coast—was badly hit. Some tourist managers have reported a falling off of visitors. *(The Guardian)*

## Japanese less fit

TOKYO - Japanese youths are under-exercised and becoming overweight because they spend too much time playing video games, the education ministry warned yesterday. In an annual report on the country's fitness, it noted that the average 19-year-old male student now takes six minutes and 38 seconds to run 1,500 m—34 seconds slower than in 1979—while the average female equivalent spends an extra 0.36 seconds sprinting 50 metres.

Each year, schools throughout Japan carry out extensive tests to measure how fast students can run, how far they can jump and throw a ball. For most of the postwar period, the results suggested that physical health had improved along with growing affluence. But although Japan now has the world's second-biggest economy, the past decade has marked a steady slide in fitness that the ministry says does not bode well for the future health of the country. It blames the fall on an increasingly reclusive lifestyle.

"Children spend more time on video games and other activities that keep them indoors, which has reduced their physical abilities and endurance," the report said. This is not the only worry for Japan. Earlier this year the health ministry warned that male teenagers were becoming more prone to obesity, while the obsession with dieting had pushed up the number of underweight females. *(The Guardian)*

## Malaysia is piracy hub

KUALA LUMPUR - Malaysia is the fourth-biggest producer and user of pirated goods in Asia after Vietnam, China and Indonesia. Malaysia is fast becoming a major centre for copyright piracy in Southeast Asia because many syndicates from Hong Kong and Macau have shifted production bases to the country, an official said. Malaysian government statistics showed that Malaysia had an 85 percent rate of pirated items, such as computer software, films and musical products, found in the market. Vietnam had a 100 percent rate, while China and Indonesia were rated 90 percent each on the quantity and availability of pirated items sold to consumers. "We are just ahead of India (with) 80 percent," said M. Gunaselan, an assistant director with the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry. "Two out of every three copyright materials in the market here are said to be pirated ones," he said. Gunaselan estimated that the film industry lost \$611 million to piracy in Malaysia last year. *(dpa)*

## Vulture decline affects Parsi tradition

BOMBAY - From the outside, the Tower of Silence at the top of Bombay's prestigious Malabar Hill appears unremarkable. The only hint of what goes on inside are the vultures that perch on top of the whitewashed outer walls. Inside the secret complex, surrounding a Roman-style amphitheatre, banyan and casarina trees flourish in the tropical sun. And there are, of course, the dead—two or three corpses most days, exposed to the elements and left for vultures to pick clean. But this ancient, ecologically impeccable method of disposing of the dead, practised by India's Parsi community for hundreds of years, is under threat. The problem is not with the method but the vultures. Over the last three or four years India's vulture population has suffered a dramatic and mysterious decline. They are, literally, falling off their perches. In some areas the vulture has vanished, with extinction possibly only five years away.

Parsis fled Persia 1,200 years ago and believe earth and fire to be sacred. Cremation or burial is regarded as an offence to the elements. And their ritual has deep emotional significance. Parsis have become India's most affluent and distinguished group. There were never very many—76,000 on current estimates, with 55,000 in Bombay. Many of India's most prosperous industrialists, including the Tata family, are Parsi. But many of the young have left for North America, with those who remain increasingly aged and infirm.

Khojeste P. Mistree, of the Parsis' ruling body, the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (Council), said: "We do still have vultures flying into the Tower of Silence. But it would be wrong of me to tell you there is no problem." He said that when the system worked well there were between 60 and 100 birds at the Tower. *(The Observer)*

## COMMENTARY

by EDUARDO GALEANO

# The merchants of poverty

MONTEVIDEO - Twins don't need a mirror: when one looks at the other he sees himself. Joseph Stiglitz was vice president of the World Bank until early this year. In April, as a farewell, he published in *The New Republic* magazine a merciless portrait of an all-powerful global organisation. But it wasn't the World Bank, whose summits he had attended, it was the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

This portrait, however, turned out to be an involuntary self-portrait as well. And if God and the Virgin Mary so will it, the vice-president of the IMF will offer us when he retires, a true profile of the World Bank, which will be identical to its twin—"because what's the same is the same, and identical too," in the words of the anonymous philosopher who frequents the cafes of my neighbourhood. The universal financial dictatorship operates as two but the two are one, according to the mystery of the Holy Duo.

The portrait painted by Stiglitz resembles the work of any of the thousands of protest artists that have raised hell in Seattle, Washington, and Prague. The Prague World Bank-IMF summit was planned years ago as a celebration of the miracle that the gospel of the free world and the catechism of the free market had saved the countries of Eastern Europe.

But it wasn't the boisterous and troublesome party-crashers that spoiled the festivities; the nature of the 'miracle' itself had more to do with it. Stiglitz writes: "The rapid privatisation urged upon Moscow by the IMF and the US Treasury Depart-

ment had allowed a small group of oligarchs to gain control of state assets... While the government lacked the money to pay pensioners, the oligarchs were sending money obtained by stripping assets and selling the country's precious national resources into Cypriot and Swiss bank accounts... Only 2 percent of the population had lived in poverty even at the end of the dismal Soviet period, but 'reform' saw poverty rates soar to almost 50 percent, with more than half of Russia's children living below the poverty line."

A cartoon by the French satirist Plantu published in *Le Monde* shows an almond-eyed taxi driver picking up a passenger who happens to be an expert from the IMF. The driver asks, "Do you come to Asia very often?"

"No, but I'll show you where to go."

Stiglitz puts it another way: "When the IMF decides to assist a country, it dispatches a 'mission' of economists. These economists frequently lack extensive experience in the country; they are more likely to have firsthand knowledge of its five-star hotels than of the villages that dot the countryside." He continues: "I heard stories of one unfortunate incident when team members copied large parts of the text for one country's report and transferred them wholesale to another. They might have gotten away with it, except that the 'search and replace' function on the word processor didn't work properly, leaving the original country's name in a few places. Oops."

## The World Bank expresses its love for the poor by multiplying them, says Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano.



In addition to having been until recently vice president of the World Bank, Stiglitz was also its chief economist. It is clear he was more careful with the computers when drafting the individualised assembly-line projects for each country.

Egypt suffered only seven plagues, but that was long before globalisation. The calamities of today's world are designed and implemented on a universal scale. Stiglitz writes: "The IMF likes to go about its business without outsiders asking too many questions. In theory, the fund supports democratic institutions in the nations it assists. In practice, it undermines the democratic process by imposing policies."

He predicts the explosions of protest: "They'll say the IMF is arrogant. They'll say the IMF doesn't really listen to the developing countries it is

supposed to help. They'll say the IMF is secretive and insulated from democratic accountability. They'll say the IMF's 'remedies' often make things worse... And they'll have a point."

They will say the same thing of the World Bank, and they'll be right about that too. But the president of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, doesn't get it: "It is demoralising to see that there is a mobilisation for social justice when you think that's what you are doing every day. There is no organisation on earth that is doing more for the poor than we do."

And how does the World Bank express its love for the poor? The same way its twin does: by multiplying them. ♦ (IPS)

*Eduardo Galeano is a Uruguayan journalist and author of Memories of Fire and The Open Veins of Latin America.*

## UNHCR on lookout for new boss

GENEVA - The post of UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the head of an agency which works with 22m refugees throughout the world, is due to be filled by the end of the month. The International Council of Voluntary Organisations (ICVO), which represents most of the non-governmental aid organisations, is critical of the secrecy of the search. Frances Stevenson, head of programmes for Medecins sans Frontieres, a member of the ICVO, said this week: "There is no transparency at all. It is not clear who is being considered."

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan declined to name the candidates he was considering. "This is not a public election. We have organised a long search. In fact, some of the candidates were not even candidates - they had to be approached."

The confirmed candidates, either self-declared or mentioned by their governments, include: Bernard Kouchner, head of the UN administration in Kosovo, a former French health minister, and former head of Medecins sans Frontieres; Emma Bonino, former EU commissioner for humanitarian affairs. Other candidates include current assistant high commissioner Soren Jessen-Petersen; and Jan Pronk, a Dutch minister. The incumbent, Sadako Ogata, of Japan, is retiring. (*The Guardian*)

## 826 million hungry: FAO

ROME - Some 826 million people around the world still do not get enough to eat in a time of unprecedented plenty, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said this week as it celebrated World Food Day 2000. The Rome-based United Nations agency made a pledge for "A Millennium Free from Hunger".

The celebration, which also marks the anniversary of the founding of the FAO, seeks to draw attention to the problem of chronic food insecurity in the world. In a statement, the FAO said there has been "no improvement since last count in the rate of decline of the number of undernourished in the world." (dpa)

## Palestinians reacting to poverty

JERUSALEM - Growing poverty in Palestinian areas is feeding the violence, politicians and academics say. Disputes over freedom of travel, land and water have exacerbated economic decline. Palestinians claimed yesterday that there would be no threat of a return to war had the economic disparity between the two sides been tackled. The number of Palestinians below the poverty line is estimated to have risen from 20.1 per cent in 1997 to 23.3 per cent the following year. Dr Jad Isaac, the director of the Applied Research Institute in Jerusalem, said: "For peace to be sustainable there should be equality in distribution of resources." Israelis had access to 2 billion cubic m of water compared to the Palestinians' 232 million cubic m.

An Israeli spokesman said water was an issue but one to be discussed as part of the peace process. He attributed some of the Palestinian problems to the way Arafat runs the Palestinian Authority, with a high level of public money spent on the police and other public servants. Corruption in the Palestinian Authority is also blamed for mismanagement. (*The Guardian*)

## Israel and Palestine



# Now it's a holy war

## Violence in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel has transformed a territorial conflict into a jihad

MICHAEL JANSEN IN NICOSIA

For the past century, the struggle between native Palestinians and immigrant Israelis has been over land. While there have been occasional spats at religious sites the dispute remained essentially territorial, nationalist and secular.

In contrast, this conflagration was sparked by the incursion by Likud leader Ariel Sharon into the sacred precincts of the compound housing al-Aqsa mosque on Mount Moriah in East Jerusalem. The Palestinian reaction was extreme because Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak had, for the first time, put forward a demand for Israeli sovereignty over the compound, which Jews revere as the Temple Mount. His demand, made at the July talks at Camp David in the US, was angrily rejected by the Palestinians and contributed to the so-far unbreakable deadlock in the negotiations.

The combination of nationalist and religious elements makes the Aqsa Uprising different from, and more dangerous than, the stream of violence

which has gone before.

Palestinians today reject both the peace process, which has failed to end the Israeli occupation, and the occupation itself. In 1987 when the original *Intifada* (uprising) erupted there was no peace process. The *Intifada* was a revolt against the regime Israel imposed when it captured these territories in 1967.

Protesters challenged Israeli control of every aspect of Palestinian life, expropriation of Palestinian land, bulldozing of Palestinian homes, exploitation of cheap Palestinian labour and rapid expansion of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land.

Palestinians felt they had no option but violence. The *Intifada* ended when the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat signed the First Oslo Accord in September 1993. But Palestinians are now worse off, economically and politically, than before Oslo. Israel remains in occupation of 60 percent of Gaza, 80 percent of the West Bank and all of Palestinian East Jerusalem.

Barak, elected in May 1999 on a peace platform, has not implemented outstanding provisions of the Oslo accords. For Palestinians, the peace process is dead—the only option is *Intifada*. Moreover, for the first time Palestinian citizens of Israel have joined the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank to protest Israeli rule.

Israel's Palestinian citizens, who number 1.15 million and comprise one-sixth of the population of the Jewish state, are no longer prepared to suffer land expropriations and house demolitions, under-funded municipalities and schools, high unemployment and discrimination.

Consequently Israel is challenged on three fronts: Gaza, the West Bank and Palestinian population centres within Israel. Grassroots activists linked by Arafat's *Fateh* movement both organised and took part in protests. During the first *Intifada*, they acted with Arafat's blessing. Today Arafat could do nothing to stop or prevent the protests.

And this *Intifada* is not only a "Rising of the Stones" as was the

original *Intifada*. While the majority of Palestinian protesters were unarmed or armed only with stones and slings, a significant number had guns and pistols.

Palestinian policemen, angered by Israel's disproportionate use of firepower, joined in street battles with heavily armed Israeli troops. If the Palestinian police had not reacted, they would have been accused of collaborating with Israel. Many ordinary Palestinians already suspect that the Palestine Authority, with its 17 security agencies, is just another Israeli instrument of control.

Finally, the *al-Aqsa Intifada* has mobilised support for the Palestinians across the Arab and Muslim worlds where there had been little interest in the ups and downs of Palestinian-Israeli peacemaking. A rift between the Palestinians and the Gulf states, caused by Palestinian support for Iraq during the Kuwait crisis of 1990, has been healed. Iran has regained a central role by calling for a high-level meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. Half a dozen Arab leaders agree that an urgent Arab summit must be convened, the first since 1996. Now the battle cry is "Al-Aqsa in danger," converting the Arab-Israeli political dispute into a Holy War between Muslims and Jews supported by what are seen as Western Christian powers. ♦ (*Genini News*)



# Insanely dangerous man



Davo Karnicar skies down Everest and into history books.

**T**riumphing over extreme cold, treacherous ice and people dismissing him as mad, Slovenian Davo Karnicar (pronounced “kar-nee-char”) on 7 October became the first person to ski non-stop down Mount Everest. The 38-year-old Karnicar emerged exhausted but exhilarated in his base camp after five hours of skiing which is a world record for the fastest-ever descent of Everest.

At one stage he had to speed over stretches of ice that collapsed and broke underneath him and could have sent him tumbling into the deep crevasses that dot the mountain. “I feel only absolute happiness and absolute fatigue,” he said after his successful run landed him in the record books and notched another in a series of bizarre firsts for conquerors of Everest that already includes launching a paraglider from the 8,850-metre summit. The descent by the father of three had been seen by many as insanely dangerous. The Darwin Awards website, which documents and applauds foolhardy deaths, called the

descent “madness”. However, the only body to make news on 7 October was a corpse of an unknown mountaineer which Karnicar zipped past as he descended, one of an estimated 120 cadavers thought to litter the slopes. For Karnicar it was a reminder of the potential perils of his sport, but it did not stop him. “This mountain is always full of surprises, seeing a dead man out there was a really shocking experience,” he said.

Thanks to strategically placed cameras on the mountain and one attached to his safety helmet, hundreds of thousands of people in more than 70 countries witnessed his descent on the internet. At one stage Karnicar prompted deep concern after he failed to radio in to his support team just before he negotiated a notorious outcrop called the Hillary Step. But it was just the extreme weather hampering the operation of his radio batteries.

In fact conditions were so severe that he abandoned plans to rest on the summit before attempting to descend. Instead,

suffering from fatigue, as soon as he reached the top he put on his skis and flung himself back down the mountain. Karnicar has already skied down Mont Blanc, the Matterhorn, the Eiger and Annapurna, but Everest was the last great challenge. “My next goal is to ski down Mt Elburz in the Caucasus,” Karnicar told us Tuesday on return to Kathmandu. “Once I get sponsors, I want to ski all seven summits within a year.”

Tackling Everest had already cost Karnica two fingers in 1996 when a failed attempt saw him get frostbite as a fierce storm lashed the peak. Karnicar comes from an illustrious skiing family in Slovenia and took part in his first Himalayan skiing expedition in 1989. He says: “I have captured my dream, I’m very happy. Extreme skiing, is my sport, my thinking and life itself.” Now, the Slovenian wants to open a ski school in the Khumbu. “I want Nepali children to enjoy the joys of skiing just as I did. Who knows, there may be a great hidden talent in Nepal.” ♦

# Expedition locates crash below Dhaulagiri

**F**orty years after it crashed on Dhampus Pass below Mt Dhaulagiri, the wreckage of a Pilatus Porter aircraft has been examined by a search expedition, reviving hopes that this legendary aircraft that holds the world record for the highest-ever landing by a fixed wing plane may fly again one day. The 22-member expedition consisting of Pilatus Porter enthusiasts and mountaineers from Austria, Germany and Switzerland took six days to reach the crash site at 5,200 m from Jomsom earlier this month.

“We have tried to bring down everything that can still be used in rebuilding the plane,” said expedition leader and pilot Leo Caminada, holding a yellow-painted section of the fuselage bearing the word ‘Pilatus’.

The yellow plane which was called ‘Yeti’ has been hit by several avalanches over the years and was blown off by high winds to lie about 100 m from the place where it smashed into a hidden rock while landing on the snowy pass on 5 May, 1960. By sad coincidence, one of the pilots on that last flight, Emil Wick, (featured in Nepali Times # 9) died this month in Zurich just as the expedition was getting underway.

“It is a pity that Emil didn’t live to see us rescue his plane. We have brought down the plane’s soul and we will build a new Yeti around it,” Caminada told us before leaving for Switzerland last week. Pilatus Porter enthusiasts have set up the Porter Vintage Association to raise money to bring back other parts of the plane and build an exact replica in time to fly at the Swiss Expo 2002. For the moment, the wreckage lies on Dhampus Pass adorned with colourful prayer flags.

‘Yeti’, with its call sign HB-FAN, was the first prototype of the Porter ever built at the Pilatus factory near Rigi in Switzerland in 1959. The plane was an immediate hit, much-praised for its excellent handling and short take-off and landing capabilities that made it ideal for mountain flying. ‘Yeti’ flew extensively

in Nepal, and was ferrying supplies from Pokhara to Dhaulagiri for a Swiss expedition on the mountain when it crashed.

The Porter Vintage Association hopes to fly the new ‘Yeti’ back to Nepal when it is rebuilt, but will need special permission to overfly the same route as the original plane through Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The rest of the wreckage may be lodged at the Mountaineering Museum that is going to be opened in Pokhara in 2002. ♦



Caminada with wreckage at 5,200 m below Dhaulagiri. In the post-monsoon, Dhampus Pass is devoid of snow.

HERE AND THERE

by DANIEL LAK

# The unbearable sweetness of being

The assumption that all village life is poverty, and candy is welcome relief for the downtrodden, is it not akin to the whole attitude behind foreign aid?

.....

“*Goray mithai, goray mithai.*” I was walking through a village in the Kali Gandaki gorge, and the crystal clear voices of the children brought joy to my heart. At first. You see, as I still struggle with Nepali, I assumed the tots were calling out a greeting to the sweet foreigner in their midst. My spirits soared like the Himalayan heights around me. There was a spring in my step.

Then around the corner, dreadful reality intervened. A group of German tourists—trekkers I deduced from the pastel Gore-Tex space suits they wore—were standing surrounded by children.

The kids chanted the same mantra that had so buoyed my tired feet, with a slight edge of hysteria. My fellow foreigners from the continent of Europe were distributing the “mithai”, along with car window stickers saying “Stuttgart Airport” and a host of other trinkets. Trade goods, they used to call them. I’m surprised they weren’t carrying beads and mirrors to exchange for gold and animal skins. Feathers

too, especially red ones—the natives love the red ones. I felt my *goray* face turn red with anger as the tourists took turns taking pictures of themselves in a sea of frenzied children. I willed myself to be calm, then adopted what I hope was a cynically polite tone of inquiry. “And just what do you think you’re doing,” I asked, “handing out sweets to children who have no access to dental care? Do you think these people are poor, deserving savages who crave your gobbets of civilization?”

My continental co-trekkers were aghast at this outburst from what was clearly a madman, and one with an American accent to boot. They know well in Europe that fanaticism and the New World go together well. So they wisely ignored me, put away the trade goods and shuffled off down the trail—leaving me surrounded by glaring young children, all aware that my sanctimonious words had cost them a mouthful of mithai. Oops. But that set me to thinking, as I beat my retreat. This assumption by foreign visitors that all village life is poverty and even a

few pens are a welcome relief for the downtrodden young, is it not akin to the whole attitude behind foreign aid? Whoa boy, you’re on dangerous ground, said the wiser half of me but the thoughts, unhindered by wisdom, kept coming.

Has a half century of foreign aid helped Nepal, or any other country, to change meaningfully the lives of its neediest and most deprived citizens? My years in Pakistan were marked by an annual ritual, the presentation of the budget in Parliament. An earnest and no doubt competent Finance Minister would try to explain how a country that generated relatively little in public revenue could spend almost all it took in on defence and debt servicing. The latter, I assume was to keep the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund happy. Pesky little fripperies like health and education, they were covered by grants and soft loans (more debt) from those same multilaterals and nice nations like Canada

or Sweden.

So we helped the generals accumulate arms and wealth by funding social programmes over which we had no control and which seldom, if ever, reached those who needed them. Phrase it like that to an official or a diplomat and they looked as if you were something unpleasant stuck to their shoe. But they didn’t deny it.

My German friends in the Kali Gandaki valley (and every other pen or candy distributing foreign visitor) were simply apeing the behaviour of the great and the good. They were handing out tid-bits, willy-nilly, to assuage a conscience just a little troubled by their own wealth and wasteful consumption. Or so said the cynical me that day between Marpha and Tukuche. Oh no, replied the waning idealist, doing something, anything, is better than nothing and those kids did enjoy their sweets. Even if it rotted their teeth.

I haven’t really made up my mind yet about the big picture. But I know which way I am leaning. And it isn’t towards a pocket full of sweets on my next trek. ♦

*(Daniel Lak is a journalist specialising on South Asia based in Kathmandu.)*



# ANFA offside

The captains of Nepali sport have never learnt to play straight.

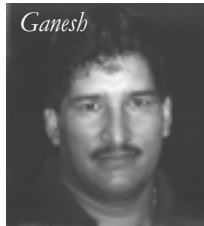
**ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY**

The petty battles that sports managers fight in public has always made better copy than the performance of athletes and players. Not long after the much-criticised Sydney junket by the sporting authorities, the All Nepal Football Association (ANFA), the body that manages the country's football scene, is mired in a controversy that seems likely to drag on for some time.

It started two years ago, when the National Sports Council (NSC) prepared a draft charter and circulated it among various sporting associations asking that it be adopted for their governance. For its part, ANFA was also asked to submit its financial records for the last five years (although the Association, under the

has not complied so far).

Things took a turn some months back when Geeta Rana, head of the Women's Football Committee and a nominated member of the ANFA, filed a case with the Lalitpur Appellate Court, arguing that the proposed election to the national executive of ANFA was illegal since it was



Ganesh



Geeta

against the NSC strictures. The Court then ordered both NSC and ANFA to withhold any structural changes pending a final decision.

It was business as usual—until Thapa's term ended on 12 October. The NSC formed a new ad hoc committee to run

ANFA under Geeta Rana on 14 October. Thapa responded by holding elections as provided by ANFA's old statute on 16 October, in which he and his executive committee were elected unopposed, a repeat of five years ago.

This in effect meant there are two ANFA committees. The NSC declared Thapa's election illegal, saying that it had to form the ad hoc committee as Ganesh Thapa's term had expired. Meanwhile, Thapa too filed a petition with the Appellate Court asking that that Rana's appointment be voided.

The reasons for the fight over control of the country's richest sporting body is clear. Not only will the winner determine who gets to go on junkets but will also control the reportedly huge but undisclosed amounts that come in as funds from various international bodies such as FIFA, the Asian Football

Confederation, the Kuwait Football Federation and the Japanese Football Association.

Adding a further twist to the controversy was the presence of the Vice-President of the Asian Football Confederation, Manilal Fernando, in Kathmandu as election observer for FIFA. Fernando saw the drama up close and has said he would report the proceedings to FIFA. Publicly, Fernando seems to be on Thapa's side. "Football is a poor man's game in Nepal and Ganesh Thapa has been able to bring in a large amount of money for the game," he told the press. "He was even successful in bringing the (million-dollar) Goal Project to Nepal, ahead of the rest of South Asia."

Controversy is not new to the country's sporting sector, but this time the battle may have gone a bit too far: with two parallel bodies claiming legitimacy. Whatever the outcome of this tussle, it is evident that the captains of Nepali sport may never learn to play straight. And football management certainly needs a major overhaul because this is one sport that Nepalis are truly keen on. ♦

## Athens 'ready' for 2004

**SYDNEY** - As fireworks exploded all around her and the most successful games ever came to a close, the woman charged with staging the next one was still doing her best to reassure us that Athens could match Australia. "We invited the Olympics to come back home," said Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki, the head of the Athens organising committee. "We promised to provide the best environment for the games. We will keep our word."

But after three years of delays, Athens has fallen so far behind in Olympic preparations that serious questions are being raised within the International Olympic Committee (IOC) about whether the 2004 games should be moved. The biggest concern has been over construction. Athens claims 70 percent of the sports venues are in place—but they claimed that three years ago. Completing the other 30 percent, including the Olympic village, remains a problem. In Sydney, there has already been talk behind the scenes of who might stage the games should Athens not be able to. "There is no plan B," said Francois Carrard, the director general of the IOC. "The IOC is absolutely committed to seeing an excellent games in Athens."

Last March, the IOC president, Juan Antonio Samaranch, described Athens as facing the worst crisis in his 20-year term. He said Athens was stuck on the "amber light" and slipping towards the "red light" danger zone. All sides agree that significant progress has been made since the appointment of Angelopoulos-Daskalaki, a 45-year-old former MP and wife of the wealthy shipping magnate Theodore Angelopoulos. She has brought in her own team and begun cutting through the bureaucratic tangle, while Prime Minister Costas Simitis has assumed governmental responsibility for the games. The Athens organising committee has a budget of \$1.7 billion, while the government has committed a total of \$3.2 billion to games-related projects. (*The Guardian*)

## Men throw better than women

It did not look that way when British athlete Denise Lewis demonstrated her skill with shot and javelin to win gold in the Olympic heptathlon last month but US researchers say they have discovered an innate difference in men's and women's throwing ability—a difference that does not exist in monkeys.

There is a narrow base to the experiment at the US national institute of child health and human development, given such an inflammatory conclusion. Twenty-five human volunteers and 17 capuchin monkeys threw balls or stones into buckets three or six metres away. The results, reported in *New Scientist* magazine, found men 32 percent more accurate than women. Female monkeys, however, were no less accurate than male monkeys. The researchers' aim was to explore human evolution but their finding adds to the debate on whether gender differences are innate or learned.

Some will argue that boys get taught and peer pressured into honing throwing skills. But Rachael Heyhoe Flint, former captain of the England women's cricket team, thought the difference was natural. "If you went into a playground with eight- or nine-year-old children, half boys and half girls, the boys just naturally know how to throw," she said. "There is a physical coordination that the majority of males have over the majority of females. It is very peculiar." (*The Guardian*)

# Genetically modified athletes

One way to pass drug tests in the next Olympics would be to genetically-engineer athletes with made-to-order muscles.

**GAVIN EVANS IN LONDON**

They say no one remembers who came fourth. Well, no one except the British that is — for the eloquence of one athlete who came fourth, marathon man Jon Brown. Six months ago his marathon time of 2:11:17 minutes on a flat course like at Sydney would not have brought the runner within seven seconds of a bronze medal. It would have been a whole minute short of gold. Surprising it may have been but Brown, not previously a top-20 marathon man, left no doubt about the cause — the absence of drugs.

"It was probably the first marathon I've done on a level playing field," he said. "Now with the new test I feel I can be more competitive."

The new test he was referring to was for erythropoietin (EPO), a drug used by endurance athletes because it boosts the oxygen content of the blood. It is widely believed to be behind the sub-2:07 min timing routinely scored in the world's leading marathons. It was taken as an article of faith in running circles that some of the world's leading marathon runners — with Spanish and Portuguese men most commonly cited — were EPO cheats. The evidence from Sydney suggests that new urine and blood tests, even though unable to test for long-term abuse, were sufficient to scare off the Europeans.

It was hard not to notice that several favourites were running at least 10 minutes slower than their best. And let's not forget the Chinese. Desperate to shore up their credentials for the 2008 Olympics, they effectively traded running and swimming golds for brownie points by leaving home 27 hopefuls who failed internal EPO blood tests. This meant there would be no repeat of the superhuman times secured earlier in the decade by Chinese distance runners.

Instead, it was back to business as usual. So, Ethiopia's Derartu Tulu sprinted the last 600 meters to secure victory in the 10,000m just as she did in 1992. She was aided in her task by Britain's Paula Radcliffe, who led from the front, allowing Tulu to break the Olympic record. Radcliffe herself finished fourth.

In the past Radcliffe, who runs with a red ribbon as part of her campaign for more effective blood testing, has said she suspected that several of the athletes who routinely broke records were cheating. This time she seemed more trusting. "We now have blood tests and we're doing better. Improving the tests is very important to me," she said, but added for good measure: "The blood tests are not effective enough."

International athletics can cope with sluggish times in distance running, events the Americans tend to ignore. Rather trickier would be a return to, say, 10-second plus winning times for the 100-metre sprint. Alternatively it could not cope with the equivalent of a Tour de France crackdown on elite track stars.

Several drug testing experts say, off the record, that they suspect this was the real reason why the International Olympic Committee backed off at the last minute from introducing blood-testing for the modern



elixir of power-based performance — synthetic human growth hormone (HGH). The IOC's climbdown occurred despite their sponsorship of a British-led medical team that was on the verge of perfecting a viable test for Sydney. Some Olympic athletes continue to use anabolic steroids (usually flushed out with diuretics — a form of laxative that are also banned). At least 13 athletes were busted for these drugs in Sydney. There have also been widespread allegations of cover-ups of positive steroid tests, particularly by USA Track and Field, the national governing body for American athletics.

That is why Carl Lewis — probably one of the few elite sprinters from his era who ran clean — decided to boycott the athletics part of the Games. The steroid busts for the likes of American shot-putter C.J. Hunter — the husband of sprinter Marion Jones — and a bunch of East Europeans disguise the more routine abuse of HGH and its companion, insulin growth factor (IGF1). Without the introduction of blood tests for these drugs, the only way of catching a cheat is the red-handed route, as happened to Sergei Voynov, the Uzbekistan coach, who tried to sneak 15 phials of HGH into Sydney. Anyone more sensible can cheat with impunity. It therefore came as no great surprise to find sprint times keeping pace with those of past Olympics and world championships.

The exception was the men's 200 meters where the absence of star sprinters Michael Johnson and Maurice Green assured a slow time. So to the future. The International Olympic Committee's straight talking medical director Dr Patrick Schamasch, asked whether HGH tests would be in place for Athens, was admirably frank in his reply: "I hope so, but my fear is that it will take much longer." He went on to add that within a few years there may be new headaches — "like gene therapy" — keeping the cheats ahead of the catchers. The idea is that genetic engineering can be put to use in a variety of ways to boost performance, producing higher output of natural hormones for instance, and perhaps even through building specific muscles. See you in Athens. ♦ (*Gemini News*)

## I Love Lalitpur

**W E K**  
कार्तिक ३ - ९ गते      October 19 - 25

● १०० मुन्ना बढी पलन तथा नेपालको राष्ट्रियताको रक्षा २०५५/५६/५७/५८ तथा बाणेश्वरी उपनगर

● राटन राती बजार (Ratan Night Market) कार्तिक ३ - ९, बाणेश्वरी, साँझ ५ - ९ बजे सम्म

● विहारको रंगित बाझमा किनमेलको रमाइला ● लिपिकारी बिर्सिभिसिनामी राती बाझ २ मसोरखार

● मंगलबजार साप्ताहिक बजार: कार्तिक ३ - ९ गते, मंगलबजार, पल्लेक दिन साँझ ४ बजे

● विगत खेल ● बाइकला प्रदर्शनी ● साप्ताहिक कार्यक्रम ● अन्य सहित

● नेपाली कृषि: भब्य: कार्तिक ३, ४, ५ गते, (Patun Museum Café, Patun Darbar Square)

● सम्पत्ति: राटन मञ्चकम बजार, खेल: ३, ४, ५ गते

● छिडार पजार (Tihar Fun Fair): कार्तिक ३ - ९, बाणेश्वरी

● राम्राम बजारको किनमेलको बजार ● पल्लेक बजार ● विगत खेल

● बाल प्रतियोगिता तथा अन्य कार्यक्रम

सहयोग

आयोजक

DE-LUXE RADIO SERVICE

ROYAL STAG

TUBORG BEER

TIR5

Tours Taps Road Service



## SAVING FAITH

by DESMOND DOIG

# A living monument to a glorious past

Long before he died in 1992, Dwarika Das Shrestha spoke to Desmond Doig who wrote this profile of a resort that has over the years become a tourist attraction in its own right.



remember being horrified to see people stripping old doors and windows of their calving, to make modern ones. They were chiselling away centuries of priceless art. So I gave them new wood in exchange for the old and they were very happy. That's how the whole thing happened. You know, people were so unthinking, they were

was not yet done, when in 1980, it won for DD the prestigious PATA Heritage and Conservation award. In a few weeks time it played host to delegates of the Pacific Area Travel Association, Tourism and Conservation Convention, when they come by in their time machine.

That should be the happy ending to a success story, but it isn't. DD still dreams and it seems much work is yet to be done. "I want to create. I don't want to go on holding a corpse because it is my dad or mother. No. I want to burn the corpse and start again. Create, or recreate heritage so that my son will benefit and carry on with our traditions. I dedicate this to all those who care. I'm not taking it away with me. I cannot rebuild all Kathmandu but let this be a small nucleus for a new beginning." Obviously DD means what he says. He has designed his own furniture employing traditional motifs; the *patra*, used in the workshop of Vishnu; the Khadga, Durga's sword, and the elephant head of Ganesh. He restores old chests to become tables, makes writing desks from old paving stones, and mirrors from old window frames. Already there is a small amphitheatre for traditional dances and music. "I'll improve it. Advise me. Help me. Find me people who are interested. Let me tell them about what I have in mind. Let me wake them up, inspire them. There is so much yet to do."

selling their old windows—the country's heritage—for as little as thirty rupees each. My *mali* brought me two from the historic city of Kirtipur. He said there were many more. No one wanted them. They were being burnt as fire wood and on funeral pyres. I wept."

That was in 1955. With no clear idea then of what he would do with them, DD began collecting the abandoned doors and windows of an outmoded age. "Slowly a passion developed. I spread my search all over the valley and as my collection grew, so did the idea of building a living monument. It was a dream. If I could influence the youth of my country, I could save the ruins of our culture—the dead body of my mother." First there was the land planted with fruit trees. Then a small house, just enough for DD, his wife and growing family.

Tentatively, he erected a chalet-type lodge that seemed forgetful of his dream and his treasures. "It was a mistake, it will go," DD says. Then slowly, so that the swift rumour of Kathmandu hardly took notice, DD began building his dream house with the help of few friendly architects. It

don't you?"—is best described as neo-Newari: a clever blend of new design and technique embodying centuries' old masterpieces of carved wood. So the facade, because it has been built with the old, polished brick and is embellished with a thirteenth-century door, windows and carved struts supporting the tiled roof, represents the beginning of the Malla style. I wonder aloud if the second floor balconies are not a little modern in their uncarved simplicity and Dwarika Das hurries me into a workshop where a treasure trove of old bits and pieces of carved wood are being painstakingly fitted together. Where sections are missing, exact copies are made. "Here," he says, holding up a length of elegant carving. "Pieces like these will cover the balcony railing and those rows of new bricks that look objectionable among the old. They provide the required strength below the heavy windows. But they'll be camouflaged—there, like that there." True, there is a window set in ancient brick that shows no trace of its transplanting. This is part of the magic of Dwarika's Village Hotel. Though comfortably modern where its amenities are concerned, it has a feel of age, a double-take look of having weathered the centuries. Even its interiors are liberally decorated with old works of art like a carved and gilded Rana ceiling. Painted glass doors from Victorian England, a wooden window of exceptional beauty from a sixteenth-century nobleman's house; terracotta plaques signifying achievement and failure, joy and sorrow hope and despair, life and death. Interpret them as you will.

Conservation, not in the language of museums, but in every day usage, is a long-standing dream of Dwarika Das "It's my life," he says, his eyelids almost closing with memory. "I

*The hotel with its new wing, added since this piece was written in 1983. Since Dwarika Shrestha's death, the hotel is run by his wife and daughter.*

There is nothing like it elsewhere. Nowhere, except in some ancient courtyard of Kathmandu, or Patan or Bhaktapur, or in a once prosperous village time forgot. And then, the similarity is only in style: the elegant proportions, the handsome extravagance of wood carving, the rosy sheen of old brick set one upon the other without pointing, the aura of antiquity. Mr Dwarika Das Shrestha gestures towards the facade and whispers "thirteenth century", which means the early Malla period. He talks soothingly and softly in the manner people effect in museums and cathedrals "Look at the door from here," he says, selecting a spot under tall fruit trees, and I imagine it leads to a secret shrine. The beautifully carved window screens might hide ladies of a long-ago court, lovers assassins of a distant past, or the merely curious of another age. Wait and some sloe-eyed Juliet will appear on a carved balcony. More likely than not, she will have blue-rinsed hair and deliver her famous lines in one of several languages your Romeo might not understand. For, this is no palace, or stately home on the hill of thirty-two butterflies—or is it thirty-two dolls?—as the area is known. It is a small, very personalised hotel still in the process of being completed. "It will be nothing when I've finished. Here, where this lawn is now, will be a concealed courtyard. Along that wall, and over there among those trees will be wings embodying the styles of different centuries. These large, spirally carved stones are pieces of a serpent pedestal. I'll erect it somewhere—perhaps there. And all those beautiful pillars and windows and doors will be absorbed in the new buildings. No two of them are the same. That's the beauty and wonder of them."

We pause on a platform of ancient paving stones to admire what Mr Shrestha or DD as his friends call him, has already accomplished. The three storey building, raised lovingly among old trees—"I hate cutting trees,

## NEPALITERATURE

by MANJUSHREE THAPA

## MANJUL'S LITERARY CROSSROADS



Drop in anytime to visit the poet Manjul, and you're likely to find a lively discussion on literature taking place in his sitting room. Located smack on the way everywhere (on Putali Sadak), Manjul's flat is like a Kathmandu version of Gertrude Stein's legendary Paris apartment—a crossroads where artists and literati of wide-ranging interests can meet. This flat is where I met almost all the Nepali writers I've ever met: Dinesh Adhikary, Manu Brajaki, Bhagirathi Shrestha, Shailendra Sakar, Abhi Subedi, Yuyutsu RD Sharma, Sulochana Manandhar, Usha Sherchan, Aavaas. I've come to rely on casually dropping by for tea and learning, from someone as erudite as Bharat Bhattarai, some spectacular quirk of Nepali language and literature. I've heard heated debates here, caught the latest rumours, met well-placed editors, and gotten carried away by Manjul's infectious enthusiasm to commit to do work for which I have no time. Even when Manjul is out, his flat beckons: After serving tea, Susmita Nepal, Manjul's wife, will toss aside her docile front and reveal her sharp novelist's mind.

When, in the social maelstrom of his flat, does Manjul get a chance to write? For write he does, and prolifically. In the past few years, he has published *Village Poems* (translated by Maya Watson), *Mrityu Kabita*, and *Siddhicharanharu*, and he's currently putting together several translations, collaborations, and collections of new poems. His poetic impulse clearly flourishes in hectic settings.

Manjul's *Mrityu Kabita* (Death Poems) received two awards this year—among them, the prestigious Sajha Puraskar. A collection of 108 variations on the theme of death, this collection made a decisive break with the poet's past. Gone is the political commentary of Manjul's early communist songs and poems. The romantic lyricism of his early work remains; his fondness for nature, and his flare for personification and metaphorical language remains. But in *Mrityu Kabita*, his concerns become philosophical, and his forms surreal. The first poem translated below exemplifies Manjul's shift to markedly un-communistic investigations into mystery and enigma:

### Death Poem 4

Death  
comes to me  
in the dark of the night  
and plays a flute  
beneath the flowering plant

Touching this weeping life  
with warm hands  
with cool caresses  
death  
offers the brightness of the sun's dazzling rays  
in the dark of the night

The next poem has an equally private tone:

### Death Poem 35

Like a finger jabbing at water  
death  
writes the name of life

Cold or hot for the duration of the touch  
After the touch has ended  
neither the mark of the finger remains  
nor the ease or pain  
of the finger's jab

Like a finger jabbing at water  
death  
writes the name of life

Manjul did, at first, attract the ire of his comrades by moving towards such "bourgeois" expressions. The poet, though, was clearly seeking a more subjective language than the one allowed by Nepal's Marxist-Leninist aesthetics. *Mrityu Kabita* can be read, in fact, as a willfully lit funeral pyre for Manjul's own early work as a party propagandist.

In some works following *Mrityu Kabita*, Manjul has returned to social issues—but as an individual speaking directly to the people, without party controls. With more and more of Nepal's communist writers taking the path to this same crossroads, Manjul has become an emblematic figure of Nepal's progressive writings, refusing a language which irreconcilably splits personal and political, and private and public forms of expression. ♦



MIN BAJRAKHARA

ABOUT TOWN

FILMS

Nepali

Basanti – Plaza 2

Dhukdhuki - Bishwo Jyoti (221837), Goon (Kha) (520668), Krishna (470090), Prithvi (online booking), Nava Durga (online booking), Ganga Chalcitra

Mailee - Goon (Ga) (520668), Ranjana (221191)

Hindi

Aaghaz - Tara (476092)

Dhai Akshar Prem Ke - Metro, Gopi (470090)

Fiza - Radha

Jis Desh Mein Ganga Rehta Hai - Kumari (414932), Goon (Ka)

Jurassic Park - Padma

Khauff - Ashok

Shikari - Plaza I, Shivdarshan

Online bookings at <www.nepalshop.com>

Foreign

Red River Valley – Chinese version of the Tibetans' suffering. Dir: Feng Xiaoning, Chinese with English subtitles. 16 mm. Presented by the newly-formed Kathmandu Film Archives, in association with the Godavari Alumni Association and Martin Chautari. Venue, GAA hall, Thamel, 5:30 pm, Friday 20 October. Fee not exceeding Rs 30 might be charged.

MUSIC

Dance and Trance

Dance to music featuring everything from Latin to Techno. The party has three segments. Act I by Mainstream maestro DJ Raju spinning the best of Latin music. Session begins 8pm. Act II, DJ Neil–renowned for wild trance playing havoc in the courtyard. Session begins 10 pm. Act III, DJ Dx - 'artcore Drum 'n' Bass, soundz from IBIZA, redefining techno and sounds from the deepest Asian underground. Session begins 11:30 pm. 20 October, Baber Mahal Revisited. Rs 500 (3 drinks included).

Jazz-Live jazz by Cadenza at Upstairs Restaurant, Lazimpat. Every Saturday 7:30-10:00 pm.

Rock and blues-Robin n' Looza playing their selection of rock, blues, soul and Nepali numbers every Friday night at The Bamboo Club, Thamel.

EXHIBITIONS

Painting-Two Austrian artists, Czeslavia Pruscha (woodcut printing on Nepali paper) and Johann Schmied (paintings on paper) present works done in Nepal. Exhibition dates: 20-26 October 2000. Patan Museum. 10.30 am -5.30 pm. A Patan Museum project. 521492, 526271

Art works-An exhibition by three Finnish women artists Marjo Yli-Antola, Umppa Niinivaara & Marita Mikkonen. Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. 11 am-6 pm. 411122.

Adventure Sports


Mountain Bike Championship. An International Class Mountain Bike Championship in three phases. 11 November, Saturday. Registration open till event eve. Surf www.bikingnepal.com or contact Peter Stewart, Race Director at Himalayan Mountain Bikes, Thamel. 427427

FESTIVAL

Tihar, the festival of lights and fire-crackers. This five-day-long colourful festival starts 25 October, Kaag Tihar, when crows are offered food in the belief that they will always bring good news to the family. The next day is Kukur Tihar, dogs day. Dogs are supposed to guard people from evil and death, and are honoured for their dedication. The third day is Laxmi Puja or Gai Tihar, when the cow, a representation of Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, is worshipped. This is also the day of dipawali, when every household light traditional lamps (diyo) or candles to invite the goddess home. Next is the day of the bull, the vehicle of the goddess, also celebrated likewise. Evenings are fun for kids who go about singing bhaili and deusi songs, giving blessings and collecting money and food in a late night door-to-door celebration. The last day of Tihar is Bhai Tika, when sisters pray for the long life and prosperity of their brothers and worship them ritually.

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com

The early bird gets the plane



Is it a bird, is it a plane...? Explore Nepal's Bharat Basnet takes journalists on a bird-watching expedition to the airport.

→ from p. 5 The airport management has a perfect excuse. Says General Manager of Tribhuvan International Airport, Rajesh Raj Dali: “Unless the garbage of the whole valley is well managed, TIA alone would not be able to shoo away the menacing birds. The use of garbage as landfill material on the Gokarna-Jorpati road is an additional problem. The bird hazard will continue unless there is a total end to unscientific garbage dumping and open animal slaughter for meat.” Although Dali blames the city, the airport’s own trash with airline styrofoam, plastic wrappings and food waste is dumped 100 metres away, near the fire station. Crows flap about.

There are plenty of holes in the fence through which neighbourhood dogs can enter the runway. The airport’s guards says they have killed 17 dogs in the past two weeks, but no one seems to have bothered about the holes in the fence, so more dogs keep coming in.

**Kathmandu residents who couldn't be bothered to clean up their own backyards are unlikely to suddenly become upright and clean citizens in the national interest to protect the tourism industry.**

The airport authorities have been trying to relocate the Koteswor township for the past 25 years. But like a lot of other plans, no one seems to have the political will or the energy to take the final step. “We were paid compensation to leave our land here 12 years ago,” says Radha Rimal, a local resident doing her wash at the family well as a jet takes off overhead. “But they didn’t do anything to actually move us out, so we are still here.”

Meanwhile, tourism authorities and the airlines have given the airport an ultimatum: “Get the animals out, or we get out.” With the buck being passed around, the ad hoc short-term strictness, and the lack of action to address long-term problems of urban congestion, it is evident that this story will be with us for many years to come. ♦

NEPALI WEATHER

SUN

MON

TUE

WED

As this great sequence of satellite pictures shows, the nasty cyclonic storm in the Bay of Bengal was heading north when it split in two, and hit Andhra Pradesh. Its massive sucking action did affect us—bringing cooler, cleaner northwesterly winds. (Dasain last week was unseasonably warm and hazy because of the southerly winds blowing in from the Gangetic plains.) The northwesterlies are here to stay which means spectacular mountain views even from Kathmandu, and crisp autumn air. A wide westerly front that moved into the Pamir earlier this week has evaporated and will not affect us. But there is another one just behind that may bring scattered clouds over the weekend. As morning mist lingers longer, Kathmandu Valley minima will hit 10 degrees.

KATHMANDU

Fri

Sat

Sun

Mon

Tus

27-13

27-12

26-12


26-12

26-10

QUICKWORD 2

by Cross Eyes

WIN A 100 HOUR INFOCOM MILLENNIUM CD



MILLENNIUM CD

The most convenient and economic way to surf the internet

Terms and conditions

1 The contest is open to everyone, except employees of Himalmedia Pvt Ltd and Infocom Pvt Ltd.

2 In case of more than one correct entry, the winner will be decided by lucky draw.

3 Entries have to reach Himalmedia, by 5 pm, 24 Oct, Tuesday.

4 The winner will be announced in the coming issue.

5 The prize has to be collected from Himalmedia within a week of the announcement. Please come with an ID.

Across

1 Oh, so slow in Norway (4)

5 Test this time zone (3)

8 Volume (3)

11 Italian waters (4)

12 I knew an antelope (3)

13 Legal piece of cake (4)

14 Put away (4)

15 What greases OPEC (3)

16 Ow! It's due. (4)

17 A severe Mehta (5)

19 Feel sorry for (4)

21 State Bank of Ecuador? (3)

22 Yay! I'm happy and talkative (5)

24 Part of ticket to twitch (3)

27 Jumpy at the brink (4)

28 Demonstrations in Brazil (4)

30 Migrant passes GRE (6)

33 Least common arrest (6)

34 Take last dance and go (4)

35 Drown in basin (4)

36 Incomplete bark (3)

37 ..... Sinclair (5)

39 Admission and fear (3)

42 Star emperor (4)

43 Harnesses may be yellow! (5)

45 Against an aunty (4)

48 Just a ... (3)

50 True bravery (4)

51 Overthrow (4)

52 Drain the tree (3)

53 Story (4)

54 Almost here (3)

55 Big bird (3)

56 That finishes it (4)

Down

1 Vows with swearwords? (5)

2 Young pigeon who's a scab? (5)

3 Lucrative bread (5)

4 Stately trees (4)

5 George's self-obsession (3)

6 Scissorhand's nickname? (6)

7 Putli may like this flower (5)

8 Swear with one down (3)

9 Raw mineral (3)

10 Private, but partly (3)

13 Boy with it (3)

18 Full of water, us? (7)

20 The rex's reign? (7)

23 Guage how old I am (3)

24 Follow line with foot? (3)

25 It is (3)

26 Middle of 5 across (3)

27 Make mine sunny side up (3)

29 Anger Mike's Dad (3)

30 When Spanish rebels arrive (3)

31 Deface Ram (3)

32 Sign with this (3)

33 Pio in this city (3)

35 Brook before it becomes main (6)

38 Out-of-date (5)

39 Send Ron to Ohio (5)

40 Strangely wired (5)

41 Test for Painter Richard? (5)

44 Look through goggles? (4)

45 Pilot with great cards (3)

46 Goes with neither (3)

47 Before Wed (3)

49 Computer part for you (3)

NAME

LAST

FIRST

INITIAL

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

COUNTRY


Out of 17 correct entries the lucky winner is **Tamendra Thapa**

INFOCOM Online

To send in your entries, please fill in the details below and fax to 977-1-521013, or email to crossword@himalmedia.com. Entries can be dropped off at Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur.

Name.....

Ph.....email.....



HOT CARIBBEAN EVENING

Galaxy Discotheque presents The Spirit of the Caribbean A musical evening set to the exotic rhythms of the Caribbean music.

• Free welcome drink

• Top dancing, heart-pounding party, prizes by the Galaxy discoteque and DJ from India

• On the spot door prizes

• Top Indian models serving you

• Grand prizes for the best dancer(s)

All these and more to make it a night to remember! Looking for a right one? Miss it and all that you'll get is to read news releases about it!

20th October, Friday 8 PM onwards Galaxy Discotheque, The Everest Hotel.

Entry Fee

Couples Rs. 1199

Single


Gents Rs. 999

Ladies Rs. 599

Tamara Regency

ROYAL NAG

INDIAN TRADITION




The Everest Hotel

KATHMANDU

COMING TO THE NEW GALAXY THE NIGHT AFTER YOUR NIGHT.

AFTER THE TREMENDOUS CHILLI NITE.





HAPPENINGS



Krishna Prasad Bhattarai poses for our photographer during the Congress Tea Party on 12 October at the International Convention Centre, while in the background Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala confers with British Ambassador Ronald Nash and (right) the Australian Ambassador, Crispin Conroy.



Meanwhile at the tea party hosted by the opposition Unified Marxist-Leninists, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai cracks another joke, much to the merriment of (from l to r) UML's Jhalanath Khanal and Madhav Kumar Nepal and Omkar Shrestha of the Nepali Congress.



"Sustainable Development of Natural and Human Resources for a Better Quality of Life in South Asia" was the ambitious title of an international conference sponsored by the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, the Department of Geography of the University of Mainz, and the Austrian group, ECOHimal at Dhulikhel on 14 October. Participants pose for a group picture.



Model Monica Chand chats with customers in Kathmandu while visiting a retail outlet to promote the Nepal Lever product, Fair and Lovely cream.

ART REVIEW

By WAYNE AMTZIS

# Good Finnish, in Nepal

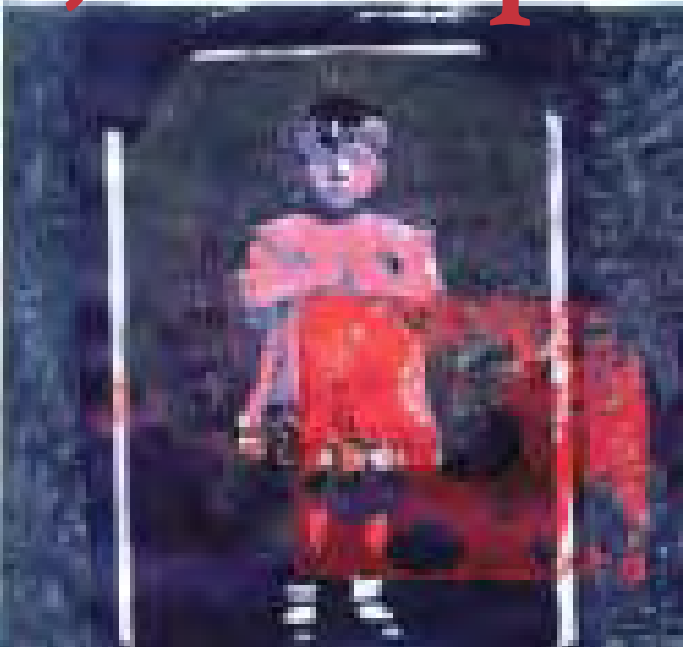
An exhibition of contemporary art from Finland and a performance of Nepali classical music and dance at Baber Mahal Revisited.

From 14th to 30th October, the work of three women artists from Finland: printmakers, Marjo Yli-Antola and Marita Mikkonen and sculptress Umpa Niinivaara, will be exhibited at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. The opening of the exhibition on the full moon of October was followed by a performance of Nepalese classical music and dance in the open court of Baber Mahal Revisited. The performance, arranged by Infinity International, attempted to recall that of court musicians and dancers of the Rana period.

The high whitewashed walls of Mul Chowk provided the perfect backdrop, with only the anachronism of microphones and the hurried pace of the presentation to remind one of place and time. It was with Suresh Misra's performance of Radha, however, that the power of illusion took hold as the stately male dancer took on varied female moods and emotions with his exquisite hand gestures and intensity of embodiment of Radha's desire, frustration and anger with her lover, Krishna. Homnath Upadhaya's group also provided accomplished performances with the modulated, emphatic and sure voice of Gurudev Kamanth echoing in the courtyard and the clear pitched flute of Sushiv Bishwaakarma rising above. At the Siddhartha Gallery, three Finnish artists complement and play off each other

much like that of tabla, violin and flute. Marjo Yli-Antola and Marita Mikkonen are printmakers. Marjo's hand and eye rely upon photos and portraiture to centre her work,

*'A girl', serigraphy watercolour by Marjo Yli-Antola (top), and a visitor checks out 'Odorus', an aluminium cast sculpture installation by Umpa Niinivaara.*



while Marita draws her figures with the ease of a child and the sureness of an illustrator of children's books. Marjo asks that we take on the inner disposition of the women and men she depicts; Marita's animals possess an assurance of form and yet an disarming presence. Both use the print media to advantage, Marjo

scratching the surface of her prints or washing out the eyes of her studies or dappling a face with light. Though the torsos are akimbo or at ease, something is not revealed, or what is revealed is that there is an inwardness we cannot get at. With Marita's series *Raven*, each print replicates the other:

the same dark bird poised above an ink scratched nest presents a variety of moods dependent on the colouring or lack of colour in the print.

When we finally notice the aluminium casts designed by Umpa Niinivaara, hanging from the ceiling on a far wall, we are pleasantly surprised. Her pods, her larvae, heavy, yet cool to the touch, reflecting the available light of the gallery, seem lifelike yet resistant to life—or is it death they are resistant to? One almost expects their ribbed encrusted forms to morph into an exquisite creature of light or that the occupant that has emerged from the open faced sleeping bag is lurking in the room.

With anticipation one moves to the second floor of the gallery to encounter more of Umpa Niinivaara's work. The disappointment one has in finding that these three metal castings are all we have to appreciate is short lived. A full range of prints by Marjo Yli-Antola and Marita Mikkonen deepen our understanding of their work. Marita offers us her menagerie of animals, Marjo her portraits. Only now sticks and roots seem to draw the dreaming woman back to the earth. And the animals want in their own way to be encountered, to be seen as they are. ♦

nepal dist



# Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

As Dasains go, this year's festive season had a somewhat somnolent quality. Many of us logged 18 hours of sleep a day, waking up only to gnaw at an uneaten mountain goat, belching frequently in a loud and carefree manner, chewing the cud by re-eating juicy morsels of aforementioned ex-goat picked out from between molars, plopping paans in the mouth, pocketing *marriage* winnings, turning over, and going back to sleep. I know what you're muttering, you're muttering: how is all this different from a non-Dasain day in the Ministry of Labour's Department of Sloth and Lethargy? Good question. In fact, one expert who has closely researched the circadian rhythms of an average adult male in this country points out that our sleeping patterns are essentially the same, Dasain or no Dasain. As citizens of a landlocked Himalayan kingdom that has never ever in its entire history been colonised by aliens from the Planet Hoth, we have all had a nice long vacation and now, fully rested, we can once more plunge headfirst into the task of nation-building and send protest notes to all foreign radio stations, television quiz shows and religious organisations wearing khaki shorts which deign to cast aspersions on our extra-territorial mega-sovereignty, that Nepal takes a dim view of such



## Between Dasain and Tihar

dorks. The contrite responses are commensurate with the stature, respect and, yes, even fear that Nepal commands in the international community. First to wave the white flag was the BBC. The British broadcasting cowards sent His Majesty's Government a letter of capitulation calling for a ces-sation of hostilities, unilateral withdrawal of all its forces from within a 10,000 km radius of Makwanpur Gadi, and the payment of an annual reparation of an amount equalling, but not exceeding, 25 percent of the UK's gross domestic product.

The next to get down on his knees and beg for mercy was Amitabh Bachchan. The answer to a question in KBC last week in which Nepal's august Lower House was called the Rastriya Panchayat amounted to contempt of parliament because it advocated a return to autocracy. Mr Bachchan has now promised to travel to Nepal at his earliest opportunity in the coming decades to conduct a training seminar for our politicians to refine their skills in becoming crorepatitis even more rapidly than they are becoming crorepatitis now.

And the third request for pardon came from the RSS which clarified that the external boundaries of India as depicted on a map in its official mouth organ was neither correct, nor authentic. The map's intention was to show that it is actually India that is under Nepal's umbrella and the entire subcontinent is a part of Nepal's Great Hindu Empire.

With these major victories and another national holiday around the corner, we can all go back to belching frequently in a loud and carefree manner. ♦

# Ambassador vodka

Grindlays							
DAILY SHARE PRICE INDEX							
01/10	0.74	0.37	0.40	0.22	0.37	0.04	53.85
02/10	0.65	0.31	0.56	0.33	0.18	0.02	44.46
03/10	0.65	0.37	0.57	0.28	0.14	0.05	46.30
04/10	0.25	0.28	0.40	0.30	0.42	0.21	11.82
05/10	0.41	0.43	0.52	0.22	0.12	0.03	58.00
06/10	0.76	0.38	0.63	0.24	0.20	0.03	79.25
07/10	0.65	0.38	0.54	0.33	0.18	0.08	73.50

All prices are in US dollars, collected from informal sources, and are only indicative.

### NEPALI SOCIETY

## Life after *Caravan*



With the astounding success of his film, *Caravan*, you'd have expected Eric Valli to have at least a chip on his shoulder. But when we met Eric during his brief visit to Kathmandu last week there was no sign of it. Still the same intensely romantic artist and adventurer we met on his first visit to Nepal in the 1970s when he fell in love with the country and stayed on. He is elated about the 11-week box office run of *Caravan* in Kathmandu and the acclaim that the film received here. "That is my biggest reward, that Nepalis liked the film," he

says. "Nepal taught me about true courage, dignity, tolerance."

As a Nepal-France entry, *Caravan* was nominated for best foreign language film at the Oscars, but lost out to Pedro Almodovar's *All About My Mother*. However, the film was voted best film at Banff, Juny's Choice at Locarno, and for Best Music in Toronto. It is the second most successful film at the box office in France this year (where it was renamed *Himalaya*), and the number one



film in Switzerland. For those who missed seeing this epic story of a yak salt caravan, the film will be screened at the first Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival in the first week of December.

Eric grew up as a cabinet-maker in France, and was never formally trained in anything. "No one taught me to be a photographer, a director, or a cameraman. Basically I am a story-teller," he says. "And I have found that a feature film is the best way to re-create reality."

His latest work with Debra Kellner is the photo-essay of the Rana Tharu on the September cover of *National Geographic* magazine. A book version called *Jungle Princess* will be released in April 2001. Eric first shot to fame with his dramatic story of the Gurung honey-hunters of the Annapurnas which was printed in *National Geographic*. Eric has other projects up his sleeves, but he is secretive about them. Even so, you can be sure that like the Rana Tharu, the salt caravans of Dolpo, or the honey-hunters they will be about societies and traditional ways of life that are in fragile transition as they are overwhelmed by the mainstream. Eric Valli has always given us one last glimpse before they disappear.

m a y o