

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

One year young

The *Nepali Times* is one year old with this issue. In that short time it has truly become Nepal's top newspaper. We said last year we would aspire to be a reflection of our times, a journal to record the life and times of Nepalis in the decades ahead. A newspaper needs a set of values. In a society cursed with extreme inequality, some of those values are fairly obvious: to speak for the last, the lost and the least. And we have to say it in English so that the concerns of those who matter can be read by those who chatter. We have been fair and independent. We have striven for the truth.

Thanks to you, our loyal readers, we have today reached a circulation of 15,000. Our Internet edition gets 6,000 hits a day from almost the entire Nepali diaspora. Thank you for appreciating us, for all the valuable feedback, for making this an interactive project and keeping us on our toes. Thanks also to our well-wishers in the business community, who have trusted our reach and influence.

We, the publishers of *Nepali Times*, *Himal Khabarpatrika*, *Wave* and *Himal South Asian* hope to build on this partnership.

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EXIT

After vacillating for months and after surviving one crisis after another, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala finally decided to step down Thursday. It took the combined effort of powerful dissidents within his own party, the opposition led by the UML, and the Maoists to bring him down after more than six months of trying. The reason they wanted him out: Koirala was getting just too powerful.

To be sure, Koirala failed in all three of the tasks he had given himself when he toppled Krishna Prasad Bhattarai in March 2000: streamline governance, control corruption and

Koirala is out of sight, but not out of mind

resolve the Maoist insurgency.

"He had made up his mind to leave long ago, but he was waiting for the right moment," a senior Nepali Congress minister told us. That moment was the brouhaha over Koirala's off-the-cuff speech at the FNCCI meeting on Tuesday in which he said in Nepali: "Today, Nepal has reached a stage where it could become a playground for foreign powers...let's not be forced to seek foreign help to solve our problems just because we can't do it ourselves."

By itself the remark needn't have been so contentious, but the opposition seized on it. Even the RPP and Sadbhavana, which have often sided with Koirala during his hour of need, joined the opposition in parliament.

Having finally succeeded to get the army out to rescue police in Rolpa, Koirala was buoyant last week, and thought he could hang on a little longer. Impatient with a boss who wouldn't step down, Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel quit last week. Poudel will now be among the wannabes along with Sher Bahadur Deuba and foreign minister Chakra Bastola. Even Krishna Prasad Bhattarai thinks he can do a hat-trick.

The parliamentary party will now meet to elect a new prime minister who will need at least 57 votes. The paradox is that Koirala was the only one who could muster and keep the magic 57 through thick and thin. Even though he is no longer prime minister, as party president, Koirala will still be kingmaker.

Still quiet on the western front

BINOD BHATTARAI

The heavy-lift Mi-17 helicopter packed with commandos in full battle gear from the Royal Nepal Army's elite Bhairabnath Battalion descended through monsoon clouds over the village of Karche in Rolpa last Friday. What the pilot did not know was that he was coming in to land smack in the middle of what appeared to be a Maoist victory parade.

The Maoists were as startled as the commandos. As they clambered off the hovering helicopters, rebels started shooting, seriously wounding the co-pilot and two others and damaging the aircraft. After a tense stand-off and the arrival of army reinforcements, the Maoists withdrew into their nearby holdout. They had been preparing for a celebration during which the 69 policemen captured the previous day at Holeri would be paraded, and possibly the Maoist "regional peoples' government" declared. To boost the morale of their cadre, hundreds of Maoist militia from surrounding districts had also been brought in to Nuwagaon and Karche.

Deployed for the first time on a search and rescue mission, the Army had thought this would be a quick commando action against the estimated 400 rebels who had captured the police. But on landing at Karche they found themselves facing armed Maoists double that number, and villagers largely sympathetic to Maoists. Heavy monsoon rains ruled out air support, and the only supply route was the road to Dang which is vulnerable to ambushes.

"The army exercised tremendous restraint. First by not blazing away with their machine guns when the helicopter was attacked, and later by not attacking the base in force," retired Lt Gen Krishna Narayan

Singh Thapa told us (see p.7). In hindsight, the restraint could also have been military common sense. They didn't want a messy firefight in hostile terrain, bad weather, uncertain supply lines and the possibility of hundreds of civilian casualties. The Maoists reportedly used villagers and captured policemen as human shields during the early days of the standoff.

The first-ever encounter between the Army and rebels in Nepal's six-year insurgency has therefore settled down to a classic siege. The Maoists are extirpating militia and weapons out of their base in small groups under cover of darkness through secret jungle paths, while the army is waiting for a break in the weather to fly in reinforcements to tighten the noose.



But for how much longer?

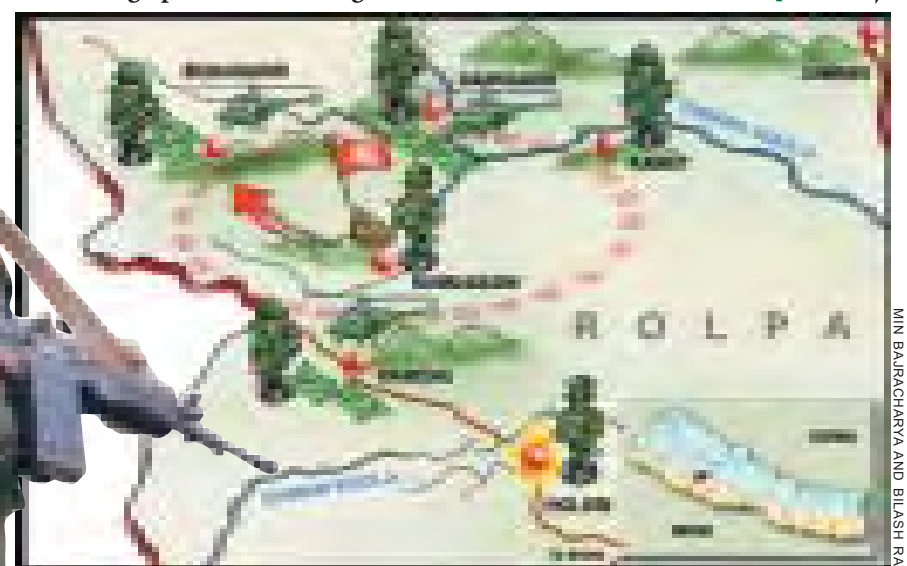
An official news blackout was declared by executive order, so the ground situation remains murky. The information in this article has been collected from a dozen sources close to the security forces, government and Maoists. The Home Ministry issues terse, short statements daily, and the Maoists have countered with their own propaganda. Since journalists have not been allowed in, most Nepalis must choose between the official account of a disciplined army trying to avoid casualties and the Maoists' account that the army is at their mercy and has been "advised" to desert.

By the middle of this week, the army strength had neared 2,000 troops deployed into the surrounding hills, and those in Nuwagaon had been shifted to a more strategic position near Budagaon.

Officials say the army is tightening its siege from three garrisons in Karche, Gairagaon and Jugad (see map) and troops are already guarding strategic entry and exit points in the neighbouring districts of Salyan and Dang.

A senior police source told us the Maoist gathering at Karche-Nuwagaon may have been a big meeting to declare a regional government. "We think at least seven senior leaders may have been present in the village," he said, among them: Ram Bahadur Thapa (Comrade Badal, an explosives expert) Poshta Bahadur Bogati (seniormost Maoist leader in the west), Krishna Bahadur Mahara (former Rolpa MP), Comrade Ananta (political commissar) and Comrade Pasang (head of the People's Army).

See p. 7 ➡



MINI BAJRACHARYA AND BILASH RAI



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STATE OF THE STATE

by CK LAL

Work in progress



MOVING WITH THE TIMES

Day by day, week by week, a year has passed since we started on this project. The idea was to chronicle, analyse and explain the enigma wrapped in a riddle that is Nepal—sometimes even to ourselves. And what a roller-coaster it has been. The news has been flying thick and fast: not a week has gone by without some dramatic event or other shaking the nation. News is the adrenaline of media but sometimes, as Nepalis, we wish the past 52 weeks hadn't been so newsy.

From Maoist massacres, hotel and school strikes, bandhs, Hrithik Roshan riots to a chronic display of political myopia. And then, just when we thought things couldn't get any worse—the royal massacre. The events brought out the best and the worst in Nepalis. We showed how easily we can be swayed by rumours, how gullible we are to political manipulation, how cynical and jaded we have become as a society. But we also showed fortitude, patience, dignity and faith in ourselves at a time of an unimaginable national calamity. Conclusion: Nepalis still don't have the leaders we deserve.

But time does not wait, the story moves on. This week to the rugged and remote hills of Rolpa where a potential turning point in the Maoist insurgency is murkily playing itself out. There is now no doubt that the nation's priority is to come to grips with this crisis because of its implication on development, on governance, on the future of democracy and press freedom, and indeed on the future independence of this nation itself.

There are lessons for us in media from all that has happened since 1 June. Our scriptures say there is only one truth, but it has many faces. A mere listing of facts does not necessarily bring us closer to the truth. In fact, facts often distort reality. Facts, if they are selective, can lie. Silence, too, is a lie when the truth needs to be told. We also learnt that a press freedom guaranteed by the constitution doesn't mean much if it is taken to mean the freedom to deliberately propagate untruth, to self-censor, or to ignore that freedom. The press can only be as independent as it wants to be. But you don't counter lies by jailing liars, you tell the people the truth.

We in the media often blind the public with journalism that focuses exclusively on the operational strategy of politics. We hesitate to take a step back and see it as a power-game. We see politics as an end in itself, as if it will make any difference at all that one crook resigns and is replaced by another crook. Politics should be about effective management of the machinery of government, allowing resources to be invested to guarantee more decent lives for Nepalis. Politics is just a mechanism to find out who can do that most honestly and efficiently.

A public conditioned by media's obsession with politics alone becomes jaded, and is not interested in the truth. Soon it only seeks the information that feeds its own prejudice. And when the truth becomes an official secret, the public has no recourse but to resort to rumour. On this week that we complete our first year of publication, we reassert our commitment to professional and independent journalism. We will use our freedom to be fair.

**Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.**

-WB Yeats

from a base-camp named hope, this column started as a trek. After a year of great tribulation, it appears as if the journey is yet to begin. The country is still in the valley of despair. These are trying times, there is gloom. But press ahead we must. Time does not stand still, and turning back is not an option.

The first serious national issue that I had to confront on this page last year was the Citizenship Bill. It is an indication of

uncertainty in the country that the question of statelessness of Nepalis of tarai origin is yet to be resolved. The Citizenship Bill has done the rounds of both houses of parliament, several ministries

of the government, and the advisory bench of the Supreme Court. However, its fate still hangs in the balance inside the royal palace.

The Bill brought out the paranoia of sections of society to the surface. The fear of being deluged with the population overflow of the Indian plains is so strong in the psyche of our elite that even champions of human rights willingly sow the seeds of communal hatred by dangerous harangues on the "risks of *Fijikaran*". We learnt that it is a small step from protecting human rights to a chauvinistic fear of being outnumbered.

Time may heal the wounds of riots that ensued over Hrithik Roshan, but its scar will remain forever with all those madhesis who had to face the wrath of enraged crowds on the streets of insanity in December. All my dreams of peace died in that harsh winter of hatred.

A mob is just that—a mob. Composed of individuals who have very little self-esteem and perceive low personal risks, a

mob protests, pillories or even lynches its hate-objects. But surely you would expect the educated elite to be different? In the first few days of Hrithik Roshan episode, we saw all-pervasive prejudice of the most primitive kind in the minds of the Kathmandu elite. Writers, professionals, journalists and academics celebrated the "spontaneous outpouring of patriotism" as the country burnt in the self-destructive fire of rage over a rumour.

Afraid to face the real devil of escalating Maoist violence, media deluded itself by railing at the ruling party and its leaders. Nauseating dissection of vulgar airline leasing deals drove the aware away from the stink of mainstream politics. This had the unintended effect of glamourising the extremists. Sanitised reports of hacks back from guided tours of insurgent held areas (as well as eulogised publication of written interviews) made Maoists look like angels on the verge of delivering utopia on a platter.

Ravishing reports about thousands of villagers attending Maoist camps didn't reveal the bodies behind the head-count, and the blood didn't show in the cold words of menacing dimensions screaming from the op-ed pages of national dailies. The nation had lapsed into a state of dementia. When Maoists went on killing sprees, massacring policemen like Dasain goats, Kathmandu's insular elite pretended not to notice. It blithely continued to pursue the resignation of the prime minister instead.

In a society rotten to the core, the Narayanhiti carnage was waiting to happen. Along with the king and his immediate family, the beliefs and value systems of Nepali society crumbled in the 1 June murders. The mass grief that followed was as much due to the death of faith as the demise of an idolised royal family.

All this while, Maoists had

been waiting in the wings—daggers drawn—to take advantage of the numbness that comes with intense pain. Slandering the king, vilifying the prime minister and instigating the army to mutiny were all clearly intended to create confusion. And then came the panic caused by banner-bombs randomly hung at crowded public places. Leftist intellectuals lapped up Maoist propaganda about regicide and served up their bluff as the hidden truth. With society in disarray, insurgents could have got away with murder, and they nearly did. Even after the merciless mass murder of nearly 50 policemen and abduction of another 70, the Valley's prevaricators were still debating whether or not to mobilise the army.

At times like this, the biggest challenge is to save one's sanity. Writing commentary becomes a test of tenacity. It is even more complex when a weekly column has to gather available facts and sharpen the truth with a point of view. The purpose of commentary is to transform the reader from a passive consumer of facts to an active analyser, and thus enrich public debate. The balance is reached by sharing editorial space with other points of view.

Commentators can't be fence-sitters. They are there to administer controlled doses of ideological tonic so that they persuade and prod the pace of change in society. Reporters hold the mirror to society, but it's the job of a commentator to lift society by the scruff of its neck and force it to examine its reflection. It is a thankless job because punditry is by definition preachy.

It has been a year full of the crises of a society in turmoil. But then the construction of an inclusive Nepali identity is still underway. Modern Nepali society is still a work in progress. This is the chaos of a construction site.

"When written in Chinese," said John F. Kennedy in a stirring speech in 1959, "the word crisis is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity." Dangers we have faced with great fortitude, and survived. It is opportunity now. The summit is in sight. ♦



Sorry, Comrade, this is not Marxism

The kind of society that Comrade Bhattarai envisages in Nepal post-revolution does not need a destructive peoples' war.

Comrade Dr Baburam Bhattarai in his written interview in this paper (#51) has laid out the Maoist party line on important issues like the human casualties of the peoples' war, the new-born republic, human rights under the New Democracy. Allow me to respond to some of his points.

Ever since Maoists stormed the police post and looted the local bank in Dunai last year, those in power in Kathmandu have felt the growing power of the peoples' war. Since then, the Maoists have killed hundreds more policemen, looted police armouries, overrun the sub-periphery, and held sway over the people still there. They have used force and fear to curb social evils like alcoholism, gambling, instituted peoples' courts, and tried to redistribute land. They have involved women and indigenous groups in the struggle and tried to empower them.

After the royal massacre two months ago, Dr Bhattarai's party has seized on popular shock and dissatisfaction and the government's own confusion and indecisiveness to declare that the Peoples' Republic of Nepal has been born, that the revolution would achieve its success sooner than expected. How logical is this? Does Marxism accept such a hasty conclusion? Certainly, the Maoists have extended their organisational reach in the past six years. The political, ideological and cultural bankruptcy of the parliamentary parties, entrenched social inequities, have pushed disaffected Nepali youths into the Maoist fold. But how political is this sudden surge of support? Is there an ideological underpinning? How disciplined is it? Is the support sustainable? Can the leadership cope with the future demands of an impatient people who have been promised utopia?

It is traditional in Nepal's left to be attracted to the most extreme and polarised views, and then to split due to personality differences. Such rigid either/or political structures can be easily put together, and equally easily demolished. But does Marxism recognise such instant and ephemeral power?

The Nepali Congress (NC) and the Unified Marxist-Leninists (UML) are the two best organised political entities in Nepal today. They may be wallowing in despair and apathy, but they have an organisational presence in every village and their support among mature Nepalis has not waned. Then there is the monarchy. We can only guess at the popularity (or lack thereof) of the monarchy among the youth, but the bigger political parties have already pledged to support the continuity of the constitutional monarchy. Proof is the waning discontent since King Gyanendra's ascension to the throne, in which the bigger parliamentary parties played a moderating role. True, the parties are raising questions about the palace's power, the rules of succession, and there is disagreement within

quietly just hand over power to him. And he is will talk only if they are willing to do so. This defies logic. Can victory over a civilian police constitute a total victory of the peoples' war? By painting itself into a corner, the Maoists have shown they are not interested in compromise. It is total power, or nothing. This will take the party and the nation away from socio-economic and cultural transformation to direct confrontation. How can such a strategy, which alienates sympathetic forces who do not want full-scale war, be considered even remotely Marxist?

In his interview, Dr Bhattarai states that millions may die in a genuine revolution. What is a genuine revolution? The kind of revolution the Maoists are waging was successful only in China. But the reason for that victory was the

genuine communists were needlessly killed? The foundations of socialism do not become stronger because they are laid on mounds of corpses. Dr Bhattarai's party uses human shields in its attacks on police posts, isn't this an example of sacrificing the people for the peoples' war? Is this the ethics of armed struggle or the Geneva Convention he often appeals to? Did Mao ever use such tactics? No. Shouldn't our aim be to convince the masses that communists are not cruel and blood-thirsty, but are more humane and creative? Instead of trying to compete with the French Revolution in body count, shouldn't we be trying to find less violent and brutal methods of social transformation? Dr Bhattarai couldn't be more removed from Marxist thought.

By talking about "construction after destruction" the leaders of Nepal's peoples' war are bending Marxism to make it a theory of destruction rather than a creative scientific theory. Nepal's socio-economic conditions are

now in the WTO, allowing it to benefit from trade with Europe and the US. The world has changed, comrades, but your minds have not. Modern Marxists have to reconstruct what Marx wrote for his time. A weakness of Marxist constructions to date, however, have been their insufficient cognition of the dialectical relationship between two parts of the capitalist universe: the metropolis and the Third World. Just look at the how the proletarian revolution has fared in the metropolises, and in the longevity and integrity of revolutions in the Third World.

Let's be clear about this: the kind of society that Dr Bhattarai envisages in Nepal post-revolution does not need a peoples' war. Political pluralism offers space and is a viable alternative: it would guarantee human rights (not just political, but economic and social rights) and a capitalist mode of production. Most Nepalis would vote with the left if it was united. The constitutional path still provides



the parties about the role of the constitutional monarchy, but not about the need for a constitutional monarch.

For his part, Dr Bhattarai maintains that the Nepali monarchy has "collapsed under its own weight and under the pressure of imperialist and expansionist forces..." How valid is this? How strategic and Marxist is it to casually brush aside the objective reality of a potent force and declare it impotent? Ignoring the unity of all parliamentary parties behind the constitutional monarchy and exaggerating its own organisational capacity, Dr Bhattarai claims: "Our openly stated goal is total state power for the oppressed masses. Nothing more, nothing less."

What he is trying to say is that the parliamentary parties and the palace should

split between forces of international imperialism during World War II, with Japan and Germany on one side, and the US and Britain on the other, with the Soviet Union supporting the Chinese revolution. Today, international imperialism is a monolithic entity lead by the US. International financial capital is helping imperialism take root in the farthest corners of the world. Instead of the international proletariat uniting, it is international capitalists who are uniting. After the failure of the Shining Path in Peru, what direction is the revolution going to take in Nepal? While experimenting with revolution, how can Marxist theory ever be used to justify a million deaths? What are the comrades trying to do: repeat the Indonesian, Thai, Malaysian and Cambodian revolutions where thousands of

no more dominated by a semi-feudal, semi-colonial production relationship in agriculture, industry and trade as Dr Bhattarai argues. Nepali society is now economically linked by trade and investments with the outside world—and not just with the US and India. Nepali household economies are run to a large extent from remittances provided by a globalised labour force in the Gulf, Japan and south-east Asia. This money already exceeds the government's revenues. These jobs will be jeopardised when employers in the Gulf and elsewhere are spooked by reports of an escalating war and that Nepali workers could be militants.

What the comrades should be thinking is how can we use these global changes to the country's benefit. Mao Zedong's own China is

opportunities for peaceful transformation, land reform, addressing social justice and inequity, and even changes in the constitution itself. In fact many of the parliamentary parties are also seeking constitutional reform.

Dr Bhattarai: you don't need violence and killings to achieve your revolution. We have now become a part of the changing means of production in the global economy. Isolation will not develop this nation, it will lead us to destitution. That is why, comrade, I cannot accept a revolution built on the corpses of millions, and if that is your New Democracy then I'm sorry to say it has drifted a long way away from Marxist doctrine. ♦

Hari Roka is an independent left analyst.

LETTERS

BABURAM BHATTARAI

Thanks to you, Baburam Bhattarai comes across as a coherent and rational person to explain the policies of the NCP(M) (#51). However, the fact remains that the Maoists have been behaving in an almost criminal manner in recent times. Your questions to Mr Bhattarai were rather lenient. He should have been asked why he and Mr Dahal should not face charges of crimes against humanity, for conspiring to kill, or not taking adequate steps to prevent indiscriminate killings of innocent policemen even after their surrender. You left it to Mr Bhattarai to put forth his own agenda. He even boasted that under the Maoists, Nepalis will enjoy unprecedented democratic privileges. What a load of rubbish.

Suresh K Kifle
Manchester, UK

going to do it? By a strategy of grab-and-loom? By the massacre of innocent people who find themselves in a situation they have not created for themselves but which they have been forced into? By threats that instil fear rather than support? No matter how well the supporters of this so-called "People's Movement" may be able to justify their actions, the hard truth is: this is a very

noble cause gone astray because the end does not justify the means. And that, I feel, is the greatest tragedy of all.

axe07_99@yahoo.com

Baburam Bhattarai's flaccid logic and fossilised dialectic is a throwback to the 1970s, I have now lost the little faith I had that the Maoists were up to something good to create a New Democracy in Nepal. With jargon that thick it sounds like the New Peoples' Army goes to the Himalaya. What is he trying to do, spoof the Sendero Luminoso? The interview is proof of just how hardline and out of touch the comrades are. They will never learn from history. The Nepali

people are going to be let down one more time.

(Name withheld on request)
Manila, Philippines

As a frequent visitor to Nepal over the past 23 years, I have viewed with alarm the deepening political crisis. It seems to me that the CPN (Maoist) are politically more mature than many of the mainstream political parties in at least having an agenda to which they have adhered. But some of Baburam Bhattarai's statements in your paper (#51) are extreme. I particularly find their attempts to internationalise and politicise the most tragic deaths of His late Majesty King Birendra and his family distasteful and unpatriotic, and find their disregard for human life nothing short of criminal. However, without at least attempting to open a dialogue, the government is condemning the Nepali people to a long, protracted and bloody civil war and possibly inviting foreign intervention which can only result in a loss of sovereignty. King Birendra could see this and had the foresight to establish his own channel of communication with the Maoists. What more fitting tribute could the government and people of Nepal give their late King than to take this example and expand it to avert an

impending national catastrophe?

Andrew Duncan
Nairobi, Kenya

The problems in your young democracy are related to the lack of political knowledge on the part of both the leadership and the people. Particularly, I am really concerned about the growing violence caused by Maoists. It is an illusion that things can be negotiated. Revolutionaries, moved by ideology, will not stop before they will consummate the revolution. But knowledge of what communism really is can help to resist their propaganda. August 31 marks the 21st anniversary of the end of prolonged strikes in the Gdansk Shipyard which resulted in the forming of Solidarity in Poland. The presence of the theoretical concepts of Marxist-Leninist philosophy was the source of injustice in Poland.

Dr W J Korab-Karpowicz
Department of International Relations
Bilkent Universi, Poland

Given the dire situation the country is, civil society should not shy away from saying enough is enough. Political squabbling should be stopped and a national consensus reached on the present crisis. Let's move ahead with this five-

point check-list:

- A national comprehensive programme to deal with the Maoist movement that includes time-bound negotiations, or even the declaration of emergency if necessary
- Improving the law and order situation by active community vigilance.
- Agreement by political parties not to resort to bandhs for a few years.
- Equal status to underprivileged castes actively enforced country-wide.
- The Anti-corruption Bill, and Political Party Bill pending in the Parliament to be discussed and passed soonest.

Himalaya S Rana
Kathmandu

justifying Paras's actions and vindicating him. I did not expect such a ridiculous and preposterous article in Nepali Times.

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RIGHTS AND WRONGS

Human rights activists have been raising a hue and cry over the Public Security Regulation (Letters, #51). They fail to understand that the public is fed up of having its human rights violated by political parties who force bandhs and strikes on us. Do Padma Ratna Tuladhar and Daman Dhungana think they are the only ones who have human rights? Don't involve us in your politics.

Dil Prasad
Pokhara

DESMOND DOIG

It has been a pleasure to read Desmond Doig once again in your paper ("Saving Faith"). For those of us who are from Calcutta, Desmond Doig holds a special place in our hearts. But I do wonder how many of your readers have heard of Doig or know about him. My generation does but you may like to consider doing a piece on Doig. He gave a lot to Nepal and to Kathmandu. Like he gave a lot to Calcutta, to Delhi, to Bhutan, and to me and my generation.

Amit Dasgupta
Bansbari

Negative attitude towards



Sunita, with her seven-year-old daughter.



A man from Kailali with full-blown AIDS with his four-year-old son and five-month old daughter.

The battle against HIV in western Nepal is waged in isolation of larger development processes. Children and women are the hardest hit.

HEMLATA RAI IN KAILALI
Sunita, the widow of a migrant worker from Doti district, lives in a rented one-room, disgraced and friendless. She is waiting to die. When we met Sunita last month, she had not eaten for three days. She had a terrible stomach ache and had lost her eyesight a few weeks before. But more than her fast-deteriorating health, Sunita worries about the future of her children. She lost her husband and two children to AIDS, and health workers doubt if she will live for much longer. "I don't know what will happen to my children when I go," she sobbed. In a country where there is no social security

net and social organisations are reluctant to provide care or support to orphans, Sunita's worry is not unusual. School is a fantasy for her four surviving children, aged seven, eight, 11 and 14. Sunita is desperately poor. "I am dying without even being able to repay the loan I took to buy a shroud for my husband two years ago," she says. Here in Kailali district, HIV/AIDS is a taboo topic, and largely regarded as a disease that kills only "bad" people. The government's National Centre for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC) and about two dozen national and international organisations are working with different, specifically targeted groups—

migrant workers, sex workers, intravenous drug users, rickshaw pullers and truck drivers. But many worry that such undertakings, which cost millions of rupees, are doing more harm than good. Their approach appears to be reinforcing the misconception that only people belonging to certain specified categories are in danger of contracting HIV. Infected people are reluctant to seek medical help because of the stigma that continues to be attached to the disease, and communities are find it hard to accept that any one of them could be in danger of contracting the virus. Such attitudes affect women and children the most. Under its

new community mobilisation programme, the Kailali District Red Cross office estimates that one in 32 wives of migrant workers from the district could be HIV-positive. That figure could shoot up if more comprehensive studies are conducted and reluctant wives are persuaded to volunteer for tests. Red Cross data shows that sexually transmitted disease (STD) prevalence in the district is a fairly high eight percent. Save the Children UK, which runs a community mobilisation programme in Achham to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, has recorded over 160 HIV/AIDS-related deaths in the district. The family structure the deceased men

were supporting is alarming. All were married and on an adult woman here has four children on average. As for children, there are no reliable statistics or even estimates of how many are affected by HIV/AIDS. Children of the sick have not been tested and there are no training or awareness programmes on how to take precautions. All families with identified AIDS deaths in Kailali related to us stories of younger children in their families dying. None of them was tested for HIV. And no one has the time to think about the care of AIDS orphans. Prakash, also of Kailali, has seen HIV change his life

dramatically. Both his parents are bedridden, and now the 14-year-old school dropout must not only care for them, but also feed his five younger siblings. His elder brother Hari, 15, has already migrated to India, following his father's footsteps. He will have access to a larger job market—and to the country with the largest absolute number of HIV-infected persons in the world. Medical prescriptions for Hari and Prakash's father state clearly that he is HIV-positive. Their mother, however, has not been tested, as the family is too poor to afford the Rs 34 bus fare she needs to travel to the nearest hospital in Dhangadi. In the house next to theirs, Man

HERE AND THERE by DANIEL LAK

Nepal is on its own

The worsening problems of one little Himalayan country don't mean a hill of beans in this crazy world.



TORONTO - Here on the far side of the world, they're not talking about Nepal anymore. They were, at the time of the palace massacre. It was a global soap opera with a bloody finish, and that was that. But now, as the kingdom's rough patches get rougher, no one knows, or cares, about the place. In Canada's largest and richest city, all is gloom and doom. I daresay Nepal would welcome the opportunity to get depressed about something so seemingly trivial: Toronto's failure, for the second time in a row, to convince the world's sporting elite to stage the Olympics here. It was a jolly little romp, the attempt to get the games. Toronto and the Canadian taxpayer reportedly coughed up \$78 million, putting together a bid, winning and dining International Olympic Committee members and generally lobbying like mad. All the while ignoring the steady momentum that was building behind Beijing. Toronto folk deceived themselves into a future full of sport and significance, even better than the magnificent Sydney games last year. There were laughable moments. Toronto's brash and sometimes unwisely outspoken mayor put his foot in it. He told a reporter that he was looking forward to a trip to Africa although his wife wasn't. "She has visions of us simmering in a cauldron of boiling water while the natives dance around, getting ready to eat us," he said. On the surface, it's a racist statement or at least a perpetuation of a ridiculous stereotype and it may have helped more than a few developing countries decide not to back the Canadians. I prefer to believe that the mayor meant no harm but must really work on getting his sense of humour in step with the times. Far more pernicious was the Toronto media's subtle racism in their one-dimensional view of China as opponent for the Games. Now understand that all—or nearly all—is fair in the tussle for the right to host the Olympics. I have no personal problem with talk of human rights records and air pollution in Beijing, as ways of leveraging your own bid. But the liberal elite in Canada is often insufferably smug in its political correctness and quickness to spot racism in

others. Those highly tuned discrimination detectors were switched off during the Games debate. With few exceptions, Canadian journalists painted China as a monolith of worker ants, dutifully following their leaders and waving red flags in unison every time a show of strength was necessary. Even the celebrations in Beijing, which I saw as a generation of young Chinese ecstatic that their country was getting some international recognition, were, it was reported, staged, mannered, slightly stiff and stilted. There was no reporting from the white-hot business capital, Shanghai, little effort to talk to youth or Chinese athletes, no perspective on how China is changing under immense social and economic pressure. And none of this is to say that human rights and liberal values don't matter; they do, but every picture has a thousand stories, to paraphrase an old Chinese proverb. Canada is also threatening to increase its foreign aid budget. I say threatening because my views on the topic of promiscuous development spending by rich countries are well known to readers of this column. If the Canadian Prime Minister were to ask my opinion of his plan to improve his country's reputation with higher aid budgets, I'd offer one or two thoughts. Send fewer "experts" to developing countries, to live their lives at the expense of the taxpayer and the locals. Listen to the aid recipients before showering them with promises, aforesaid experts and projects that benefit a tiny slice of the population, usually already at the top of the social ladder. But he hasn't asked, so I haven't told him. One thing that's clear to me, here in the materially rich West, is that the worsening problems of one little Himalayan country don't mean a hill of beans in this crazy world, not to those who live here, in great comfort and general ignorance. Aid spending, global soap operas and occasionally overbearing neighbours aside, Nepal is on its own. Which isn't a bad place to start... ♦



extramarital sex. Virtually all knew of condom use as a preventive measure against HIV infection, but only a third used them regularly, and another third, occasionally. A quarter of those surveyed, mainly the unmarried young men, said condoms were simply not available.

It is obvious that all the good intentions and action plans will be useless if public attitudes do not change. As the government heads towards the end of its "Strategic Plan for HIV and AIDS in Nepal 1997-2001", the bureaucracy remains insensitive. Stigmatisation and victimisation are rampant, even among AIDS control officials. A government representative on the Kailali District HIV/AIDS Co-ordination Committee suggested to us that "exposing" people identified as HIV-positive, calling them "bad social elements" and cautioning the community to "keep away" would be the best way to prevent the spread of the virus. Some local governments have tried to include communities and people with HIV/AIDS in their fight against the virus, but they seem to have virtually no access to the policy-making level in the central government. ♦

A 1991 study conducted by the Resource Centre for Primary Health Care (RECPHEC) in the nine districts where the UNDP-funded Participatory Planning and Management of HIV/AIDS programme is implemented, revealed that 20 percent of young people, across class and caste lines, engaged in premarital sex and eight percent in

Apex College



Women are dying in the far-west



Kamala in Doti Hospital, slowly recovering

The woman was more worried about an unborn grandson than the life of her own daughter.

DOTI - March 2001. I am in Doti district, one of the most remote areas of Nepal, about 700 km west of the capital. I am coordinating a health programme organised by GTZ, the German international development organisation. We are running a special gynaecological camp in the Doti district hospital, designed especially for women of the far-western region.

A woman is brought in. Her brother carried her to the hospital, and her mother and two small children accompany them. Her name is Kamala. The family reports that seven days ago, Kamala had a spontaneous abortion. She has been bleeding continuously since then. Kamala is pale as a sheet. She

cannot even open her eyes.

A senior gynaecologist examines her and says, "She has lost a lot of blood and has an infection. We need to transfuse blood immediately, but it is not possible here. It would be best if we send her to another hospital where transfusion facilities are available." We research the cost of an ambulance and discover it will be around Rs 1,700. We discuss this with Kamala's brother and mother. They answer, "We do not have money to take her to the hospital. If you can treat her here, please do so. Otherwise, she will die here and we will not blame anyone."

We doctors talk among ourselves and decide that we will

collect the money and hire an ambulance to take her to the closest hospital—a seven-hour drive away. But after assessing the patient's condition again, the gynaecologist, Dr Veena Rani Shrivastav says, "Even if we could arrange the money and ambulance, it is not advisable to send her to Dhangadi hospital as she is really in very serious condition. It would be better if we could do the surgery right away."

So Kamala does not go to Dhangadi Hospital. She is not operated on that night either, as the lights in the hospital are out. We pray that she survives the night. In the morning, we are happy to see that she is still alive. Dr Shrivastav says, "Now I will operate on her. I know it is a risk, but if all of you support me, I am ready to take the risk."

Time passes. At ten in the morning, I asked Dr Shrivastav about Kamala's condition. She replies, sounding very sad: "I have not operated on her because her mother did not allow me." I was surprised and angry.

I go to find Kamala's mother; she is feeding her two grandchildren rice and salt. I ask her, in a mixture of local dialect and Nepali, "Why did not you allow the doctor to operate on Kamala?" The old woman looks at me with sad eyes and starts crying. "I do not know what to do," she says, "Kamala's husband is not here. She has five girls and only one son. If you will operate, you will take out her uterus and she will have no more children. Her husband will be very angry with me and will leave Kamala."

I am confused. I wonder why she needs more children, after six. Then, with a shudder, I understand what this woman means. She is saying "children," but she does not mean children, she means sons. How pathetic it is to hear such logic! The old woman was more worried about an unborn grandson than life of her own daughter. I collect myself and explain to her that we will not take out the uterus and that after she heals, Kamala can have as many children as she wants.

Then, local health workers explain to the family the surgery in their local dialect. Finally, the mother is convinced that her daughter will be able to bear more children (sons). She says, "Do as you like, but please save my girl." Within half-an-hour, Kamala is undergoing the surgery she needs. Though very weak, she is finally out of danger and we are happy. We congratulate Dr Shrivastav, who took a great risk to save Kamala's life.

This is only one of the many sad stories of women in the remote areas of far-western Nepal. Even though all over Nepal a woman's status is much less than a man's—in all matters, familial, social, cultural, political and legal—in the far-western regions, it is even worse. A woman's life is valuable only if she gives birth to sons and is fit for arduous work. Many times she has to give up her life to make her family and society happy. At others, she sacrifices her happiness and health to the will of others.

The human development index (HDI) in Nepal is one of the worst in the world and the far-western region has the lowest HDI in Nepal. Although no one is actually healthy here, the burden of disease tends to be heavier for women, because of lack of access to health care. Not only because there are fewer health personnel and fewer health posts and hospitals, but also because they face traditional taboos based on cultural practices and religious beliefs. In Achham, where the female literacy rate is only nine percent (according to government statistics, which generally try to paint a rosy picture), a woman's life are valued less than that of a mule. From the very day she learns to



Women line up for the health camp in Doti

walk, a woman in Achham—as in most far-western regions—starts to work. She will work until the last day of her life. Women here are lucky if they do not die in labour or from postpartum complications, or due domestic violence and countless other preventable reasons.

In many regions in the far-west, women must go to a cowshed or to an outside room, called a *chaupati* (usually a small bare room with no windows), for labour and delivery, and during menstruation. When she has her period, a woman is "polluted" and must isolate herself. Because of such "pollution", she must also stay in the cowshed for 11 days after delivering a child. Even if she suffering from heavy bleeding or infection she is not touched or treated, and many times, simply dies. Her death is not recorded and the government does not know that a woman has had a maternal death.

We were told many sad events, recounting times when women died in the *chaupati* because of health problems just because no one dared touch a polluted woman. After spending three weeks in Doti and Achham, and discussing with women about their lives, I started

questioning who is to blame for women's appalling status.

When I discussed the harmful cultural practices of keeping women in *chaupati* and in cowsheds with local political leaders and health workers, I asked them if their wives also follow this practice. They all answered, "Oh yes, they do! We know that it is not a good practice but if our wives do not follow these rituals, we will be ostracised by society. People will stop coming to us." So no political parties, no government employees and no health workers have come forward to talk openly against this practice.

How long will the mothers, daughters and granddaughters of far-western Nepal continue to die and suffer in the name of culture, religion and social norms? We in Kathmandu talk a lot about safe motherhood and make grand plans and programmes to reduce the country's maternal mortality rate by half in the next five years. We give presentations in regional and national workshops, but we never think about the fact that motherhood can never be safe if womanhood remains in danger. ♦

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“Negotiate from a position of strength...”

I don't blame anyone for being confused about the ground reality in Rolpa. You hear the army has been deployed, yet it is not taking action as many expect it to. It is the duty of civil authorities to provide internal security. If the situation escalates and they cannot address it, they may request army help. Such operations

involve minimum use of force. The army hasn't been deployed to hunt Maoists. Their mandate is to free the 69 hostages and disarm the Maoists. They are trying to block escape routes. The Maoists are using human shields, a very tactical move. The army seems under

tremendous pressure to exercise restraint. Using force they can finish such operations in hours, but that could lead to high casualties. With the blockade, the rebels could run short of basic supplies. This will put pressure on them to negotiate, while we are in a position of strength. I don't think they are prepared to take on the Royal Nepal Army. The government has to tighten security in other Maoist areas,

The army doesn't want to massacre fellow Nepalis.

so the rebels don't have a free hand, and focus on development. It should carefully coordinate security work by forming a coordinating council, with more administrative, information-sharing roles.

The government does not have a paramilitary so it has to rely on the army. The National Security Council spells out the task and commanders decide operational modalities. I don't think there is any confusion about who deploys the army, the elected government or the monarch. The prime minister chairs the security council, and it recommends deployment. In a constitutional monarchy, the king ratifies decisions of the council of ministers. In our case, our politicians failed to carry out

their responsibility because they lacked moral strength. That is the only confusion—otherwise things are absolutely clear. Personally, I would have preferred to use the army when the police failed and needed help a long time ago. If that had happened, the situation would have been different by now.

There is no doubt about it: the action in Rolpa is justified. The Maoists have to realise they cannot have a clear run anymore. It is time to talk with them, since the issues they raise are of national importance: poverty, illiteracy, unemployment. The present polity is corrupt and mismanaged, and that has exacerbated the situation and

fed the insurgency. If we blame the democracy of the last 12 years for doing nothing, the blame for five years goes to the Maoists.

The Maoists seem to have committed, educated leaders. They would be much more effective working under the constitutional framework, they could even change the constitution. The didn't need violence to get what they want.

Wars are fought to bring peace. We need peace for development. Even the Maoists would need peace if they were in charge, and needed to rebuild the country. We should begin negotiating now because even if the army is able to, it wouldn't want to massacre fellow Nepalis. ♦

MIN. BAIRACHARYA

The Army's Mi-17 takes off from Dang for Nuwagaon on Tuesday.

From p.1 ➡ STANDOFF

Most military analysts we talked to said it would be logical for the rebels to try to slip out of the net, and this would be fairly easy to do. “You need a soldier every five yards to make it airtight, and the Maoists know this terrain very well, it is one of their main bases,” said one retired army major. Military officials admit some Maoists may have slipped away, but add that the majority are still around “hiding behind the women and children”. The army has superior firepower, training and air support, which could be decisive if it comes to a confrontation. “Even if they have escaped they cannot get too far,” a military source told us. “We have a mission to accomplish and until then, we will remain around.”

Seven human rights activists reached Nuwagaon on Wednesday to try to broker the release of the hostages. They were given 48 hours for the visit. The team had the government's nod and also word of safe-passage from the Maoists. A failed attempt by them would justify use of force by the government.

The new home minister, Chakra Prasad Bastola denies that there is any confusion between the army and the government on chain of command and rules of engagement. “We have given them a clear mandate: free the hostages and disarm the Maoists.” The army brass is said to be giving nearly daily briefings to the prime minister, the home minister and the defence minister. The prime minister was said to be in close touch with the king on the issue until he resigned Thursday.

As the stand-off continued, the government in Kathmandu looked shaky once more as pressure on Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to resign mounted from the opposition and dissidents within his own party. The Maoists added their bit: Chairman Prachanda wrote Wednesday in *Kanipur* that there would be no talks until the prime minister stepped down.

Many in Kathmandu would have been hoping that once the army moved into Rolpa it would quickly decimate the Maoist force at Nuwagaon and rescue the hostages. But the military's involvement has many ramifications. The army's own image is at stake, so it cannot conduct its first operation without a clean and clear-cut victory with minimum casualties. The army cannot let Rolpa degenerate into a messy Vietnam-type guerrilla war with civilian casualties. “If the army came out of this with its tail between its legs, that would be the final disaster, and a windfall for the Maoists,” said one military source.

The Maoists don't have it much easier. Since the start of their peoples' war, the rebels have been on a roll. Especially in the past two years, they haven't really had an enemy and have resorted to butchering policemen who have no will to fight. “For the first time, they are worried,” says one leftist analyst close to the Maoist hierarchy. And this worry shows in the softening of their stance on talks, and the dramatic turnaround in the way they have dropped all mention of King Gyanendra from their slogans and statements. After the army went into action in Rolpa, there has not been a single mention of the ubiquitous “fascist Gyanendra Shah-Girija Koirala clique”. The entire focus of their attack has now shifted to Koirala, in part to satisfy the Maoists' own cadre

and to help hasten the prime minister's departure. And now, they won't even have him.

In the short term, the Maoist strategy could be to prevent the further deployment of the army at all costs. They are cosy up to the king and possibly even talking to his emissaries, while maintaining the propaganda war to demoralise the army over Rolpa so that the generals will think twice before committing themselves to another adventure. “They know that a search and rescue can easily be turned into a search and destroy,” said an army source. For the moment, Maoists will continue attacks on police posts and government targets in other parts of the country, but they will try to minimise the casualties so as not to provoke army retaliation.

For the moment, though, police morale which had hit rock bottom is beginning to recover. The government called all senior police officers to Kathmandu earlier this week for a meeting to rally the force, but without better weapons and support it is unlikely the police is going to be a serious deterrent. The government is hoping that its Integrated Security and Development Package (ISDP) which has been extended to four more districts (Dailekh, Dang, Surkhet and Dolakha), bringing the new count to 11, and a new paramilitary force will provide the necessary backup.

What the military brass will not say, and what is increasingly evident, is that unless the politicians in Kathmandu stop bickering and muster the political will to reach a consensus and deal with the Maoist crisis, the army cannot really do much more than it already is. ♦

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BIZ NEWS

Public enemies

Nepal's public corporations have become a permanent drain on the economy. Most of them only have balance sheets which show losses, and many have not audited their books since the early 1990s. The situation of most is so bad that even privatising them is no longer an option, especially because of the cost of employee payoffs that need to made should the corporations be privatised. The annual review of the performance of public enterprises, published by the Ministry of Finance, tells the rest of the dismal story:

- Total number of enterprises: 43; government has updated statistics for only 39
- Total investment (shares and loans) up to 1999/00: Rs 71.24 billion
- Investment (shares) up to 1999/00: Rs 19.94 billion
- Investment (loans) up to 1999/00: Rs 53.29 billion
- Total earnings in 1999/00: Rs 357 million, or 1.9 percent of investment.
- Net profit in 1999/00: Rs 2.39 billion (25 percent lower than the year before)
- Total employees: 47,178, an average of 1,210 per organisation.
- The most bloated enterprises: Nepal Electricity Authority 9,289 staff; Rastriya Baniija Bank, 5,809; Nepal Telecommunication Corporation, 4,674; and Agricultural Development Bank, 4,628.

The estimates for 2000/01 are not very encouraging either: even monopolies like the Nepal Oil Corporation and Nepal Television (which the government helped to borrow money from NTC to set up satellite broadcasting) are expected to have operational losses. The only companies expected to do reasonably well are the Citizens Investment Trust, the Janakpur Cigarette Factory, the Nepal Stock Exchange and the NTC. The Ministry of Finance's review has all this data, but leaves the basic question untouched—why have the corporations at all?

Electricity and gas, which comprise about two percent of the GDP, emerged as the highest growth sectors in fiscal 2000/01. The growth in this group was over 19 percent and the trend is expected to remain bullish as new hydro-projects begin to supply to the central grid. Of the projects under construction, the 144MW Kali Gandaki project is expected to come on line later this year.

Meantime the Khimti I Hydropower Project (KHP) completed its first year of operation on 11 July. The KHP (60MW), the first private investment in hydro, is a project of Himal Power Ltd (HPL), a Norwegian-Nepali undertaking, which has a 20-year Power Purchase Agreement with the NEA. Butwal Power Compnay is the Nepali investor in the project.

Khimti sells electricity to the NEA at a little over 6 US cents (about Rs 4.5 ca) per kW, among the best prices a private company gets in Nepal, for all electricity generated—including flood energy during the monsoons. HPL says the high cost is because of its cost of funds—almost 70 percent on loan. The NEA says Khimti got a “good deal” because it came at a time where there were no other means to meet the increasing demands after the World Bank cancelled the controversial Arun-3, the only project under development before Khimti came along.



Hydro growth

ECONOMIC SENSE

by ARTHA BEED



Why the euphoria?

It is too early to get excited about the budget.

The Beed has been asked by many readers to explain the euphoria—quite different from one's own reaction—in the business community regarding this year's budget. Our trade bodies are showering praise on the Finance Minister. Readers of last week's column will not be surprised that the Beed differs. At the risk of sounding like a repetitive naysayer, I offer a cautionary word to the wise.

One of the major items in the budget that has been commended is the government's interest in rehabilitating sick industries. Yes, the provision *sounds* good. And no, we cannot *know* that it is good until the process is set in motion. The formation of a committee will be the first of many formalities. Then we will have to set out what constitutes a sick industry, what criteria a company will have to meet, and what the screening process will entail.

The government says it will offer rehabilitation loans at a rather tempting 7.5 percent. As in the case of all subsidies, there will doubtless be a couple of percent that will have to be doled out to ensure the file-shifting mechanism works satisfactorily. And there will be many perfectly healthy industries and business people playing sick. The Beed fears this grand plan will be just another money-spinner for the insidious politician-bureaucrat-businessman nexus.

The government's record of

creating funds is hardly encouraging. The Power Development Fund has not kicked in even five years after its ambitious conception; many labour-related welfare funds have not found administrators. Such examples abound.

Business is also feeling optimistic because the sanction limit for foreign investment per joint venture that the Director General of the Department of Industries (DOI) is allowed to approve has been raised. The new



limit of Rs 1 billion—double the old amount—may seem exciting, but it is interesting to know how such moves play out in reality. Last year two multinational companies went berserk trying to get their joint ventures through. Though the formalities at the DOI were complete, the ministry withheld approval at the behest of a couple of domestic players. It took the companies a year to run around all possible government agencies and finally get their ventures approved.

Similarly, the hype about the technology park is old—five years old.

I see no point applauding until it is completed. Handing out subsidies through the Agricultural Development Bank on interest rates for tea growers is great—so long as people who really need the subsidised loans get them.

Analysing the various trade bodies' reactions to the budget over the last five or six years, one trend is clear. We support any budget that cushions and protects domestic industries and touts the promise of subsidies. Our notion of doing business is latching on to profits and pushing losses back to the government. The Hotel Association of Nepal's request to the government to lower interest rates for the industry is a perfect example of this attitude.

This Beed wonders how trade bodies can push for subsidies and protectionism on the one hand and on the other ask the government to liberalise, liberalise, liberalise. What is the difference, ultimately, between State-Owned Enterprises and the private sector if the government is made to fund the losses of both?

I say again: the credibility of the government is at a low and most changes it promises have to be brought about through legislation. Just ask how many undisrupted sessions of parliament we have had recently, how many laws our representatives have enacted. ♦

Readers can post their views at arthabeed@yahoo.com

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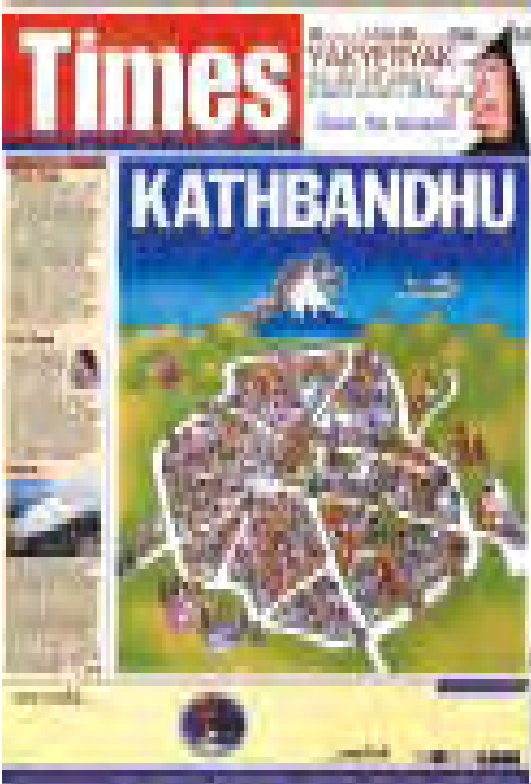
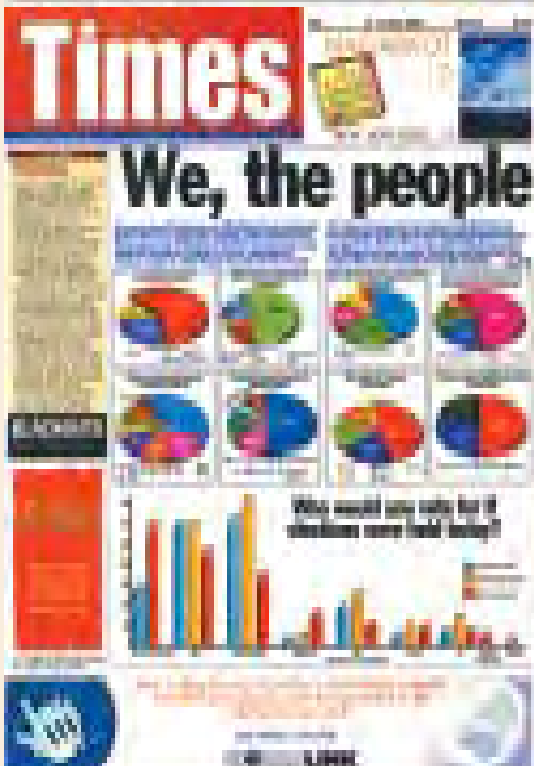
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Sometimes, appearance is about more than a pretty face: the Toyota building

RAMYATA LIMBU

Incongruous. Soulless. Ugly. Cement nightmare, concrete jungle, architectural disaster. It is easy to describe walking through the streets of Kathmandu in these gloomy, disjointed phrases. The experience, after all, is much like that—without continuity, and with much to offend even the most accommodating aesthete. Even recognising that things, including our built environment, change and that restoration is not and cannot always be an option, there are few glimmers of hope for the future of our cityscape. And yet. And yet. There is one route people are starting to go down, whether in

building new structures or taking a fresh look at existing constructions—façading. This is, quite simply, putting a face to a building that is not structurally required. This can, of course, often be disastrous, like the incomprehensible practice of Doric columns on Maharajgunj mansions, or even worse, the faux lattice windows on the RNAC building. Such insults to the urban dweller’s intelligence are why the entire practice gets such a bad rap. But it isn’t all bad, if you think about it. Obviously it is impossible to tear down buildings that offend, and the convenience of modern design is undeniable, especially in larger office spaces. This is where facading steps in—to restore some traditional beauty and harmony to the architecture of the city without sacrificing convenience, having to spending obscene amounts on structural changes, or simply hoping against hope that somehow your new building will have an interesting, appropriate and attractive modern front. An unlikely candidate for a traditional façade with intricately designed oil bricks is a symbol of all that is sleek, modern, and industrial, the Tin Kune Toyota building. It is possible to take an ugly cement block designed to be a

garment factory and turn it into a semi-elegant and modern structure that respects traditional Newari architecture. Industrialist Gajananda Vaidya wanted to ensure that while the building has all the modern amenities a business house requires, it would have a markedly traditional exterior. “They’re doing it in Japan, Korea, in England, maintaining old façades. You can’t be modern without maintaining your culture,” says Vaidya. Despite the extra time and money his project requires, Toyota hopes to not only impress foreign clients, but also set an example for other business houses. The building will have a traditional brick exterior that experiments with textures and patterns, and be interspersed with simple, attractive wooden windows. Inside the Toyota building are all the trappings of a modern structure—well-lit office space, lobbies spacious enough to withstand the foot traffic of a large organisation, functional cubicles. Façading is catching on as increasing numbers of hotels, private homes, and business houses realise the need to be modern without giving up tradition. Most new hotels like Dwarika’s, the Hyatt, the Phulbari in Pokhara are designed with traditional looks,

but owners of hotels built in the 1970s with just concrete and glass have realised that putting a new traditional Nepali exterior adds economic and aesthetic value to their property. One of the people who make such work possible is Tirtha Lal Maharjan. Friends and relatives thought he was wasting his resources when, in 1980, he decided to set up a business manufacturing traditional bricks. “They thought I was crazy investing in a business that had little scope, in trying to revive a technology that was ancient and outdated and that people weren’t interested in anymore,” says Maharjan, proprietor of Om Shree Machhindra Nath Brick Industries in Dadikot, Thimi. But Tirtha persisted and today, with his brothers Hira Kaji and Bikki Maharjan, he runs a brisk brick manufacturing business. “People have had to eat their words,” smiles Tirtha. He is now hard pressed to keep up with orders of *dacchin appa*, the traditional Nepali bricks, that, together with the *jhingati* or local clay tiles, and wooden lattice windows make up Kathmandu Valley’s traditional look. It wasn’t always so rosy, though. “Initially, when people

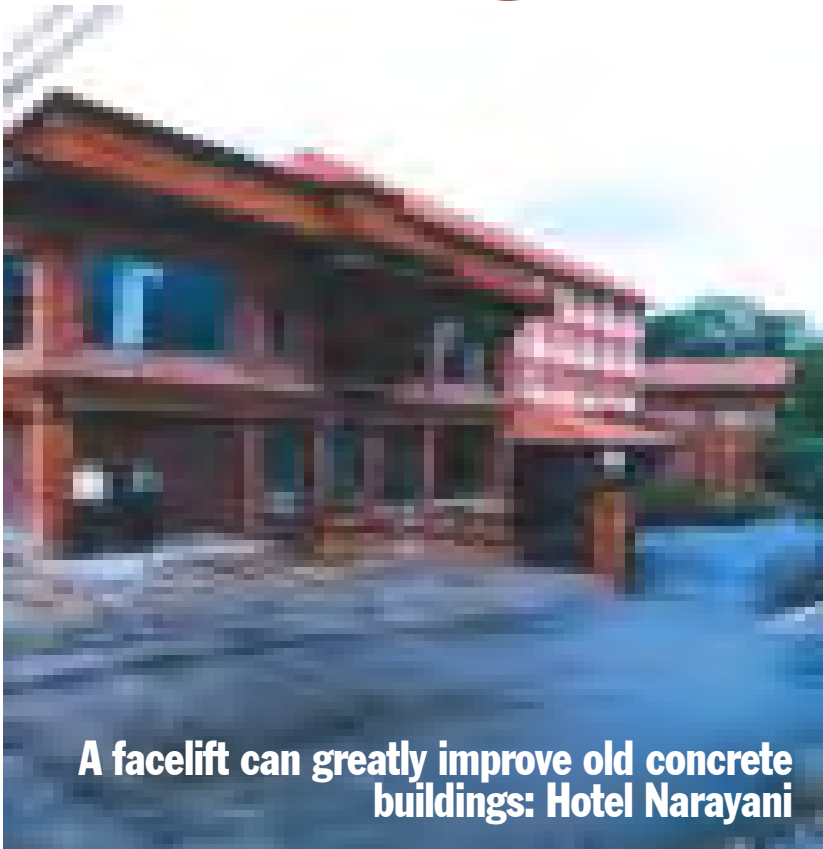


weren’t so keen on *dacchin appa* and plaster and cement were in, I tried to encourage prospective clients to use traditional material by accepting payment in instalments,” says Tirtha. Although he comes from a farming family in Patan, Tirtha was with the Archaeology Department for 15 years before he quit in 1991. He had a sinking

Shangrila

Pepsi

Valley's new façade fad



A facelift can greatly improve old concrete buildings: Hotel Narayani

MIN. BAHUGUNA

feeling about the Valley's fast-disappearing heritage. Pragmatic as he is, he understood that people outside the field of conservation would realise that they, too, could contribute to preserving the city's old flavour if the raw materials to do so were more easily available. Conversely, it would start making better business sense to produce those materials once the sphere and appeal of traditional façades broadened.

And so, with his brothers Tirtha Maharjan combed the Valley, looking for artisans who knew the trade, learning more about it and recording the many patterns the bricks come in. "Some senior people at the Department of Archaeology were extremely encouraging and told me it would pay off one day. Others like John Sanday taught me the technology," Tirtha recalls. He experimented with designs and brick-burning techniques. Today his firm offers 300 varieties of bricks, plain and ornate, ranging from Rs 6 to Rs 150 and they are used in most new buildings coming up in Kathmandu

with traditional façades. "Initially such work may cost more and take longer to build, but in the long term it is more economical—it's more weather resistant, you don't need to repaint the building and maintenance costs are lower."

Most of the hotels or houses he's supplied bricks to have a four-inch façade covering the original structure. Laying the bricks itself is painstaking and delicate work, and Maharjan also supplies trained stone masons to lay a solid, uniform foundation before they lay the bricks.

When Dwarika's Hotel, Maharjan's first big client, drew artistic acclaim after its completion, he was immensely satisfied. Dwarika's Hotel is much more than its façade, but even just its appearance is a superb example of what commitment to continuing traditional practices can achieve. Says Tirtha: "Dwarika Das carefully collected traditional pieces over a period of time. He also ensured that I always had an order of bricks so I wouldn't get discouraged and fold up

the business."

Making the bricks is a delicate process. The handmade bricks are pressed, dried and burnt, individually wrapped in straw. 75 out of 100 bricks survive the entire process intact. "The bricks, built according to Malla period technology, are not of a uniform size. The varnished surface makes them water resistant, cool in the summer and warm in the winter," says engineer Laxman Kisiju, chief of planning with the Bhaktapur Municipality.

Kisiju and other municipality officials are trying to encourage locals to build façades in the core city areas by offering subsidies on wood, tiles and brick. Since the municipality started the subsidy programme as an experiment, ten families have applied for subsidies. This year, the municipality is offering 75 percent subsidy on wood and 100 percent on tiles and brick. Says Kisiju:

"Bhaktapur is a largely agricultural area, so people probably still don't know about the subsidies. Also, they might be thinking the municipality expects them to repay the amount. But we're hoping it will catch on."

Recognised as one of the world's ancient cities, and lauded as a brilliant example of architectural conservation by UNESCO, Bhaktapur wants to make the most of its cultural cache, and tourism is the town's best bet. The municipality uses funds from the local development tax, internal resources and tourist entry fees to provide the subsidies. Architects estimate that a small house in the core city area would cost Rs 300,000-400,000 to build and a traditional brick façade would add another Rs 130,000. "You can't enforce legislation without offering some kind of alternative or incentive," says Kisiju. Up to a third of the houses in Bhaktapur's city core now have cement exteriors, and the municipality hopes to provide incentives for them to add a brick façade so the

buildings blend with the surroundings.

The husband-wife architect's team of Chandra Lekha Kayastha have designed numerous structures over the past 25 years: corporate offices, government and private buildings ranging in style from postmodern, to neo-classical, and now, traditional. The firm designed the Kathmandu Tourism Service Centre in Bhrikuti Mandap. "If *dacchin appa* had been more easily available then, we would have probably used it for the exterior of the building," says Kayastha. Her firm is currently working with Maharjan and his team of artisans to cover the old concrete at the Narayani Hotel in Pulchowk with a traditional façade.

Kayastha herself would like to see form and content being more complementary. "Façading should not just be an afterthought, or an add-on," she says. "While traditional structures are appropriate for tourism purposes, they might not



SAIL SHREI

Sometimes, a building's worth is the sum of its bricks: Tirtha and Hira Kaji Maharjan

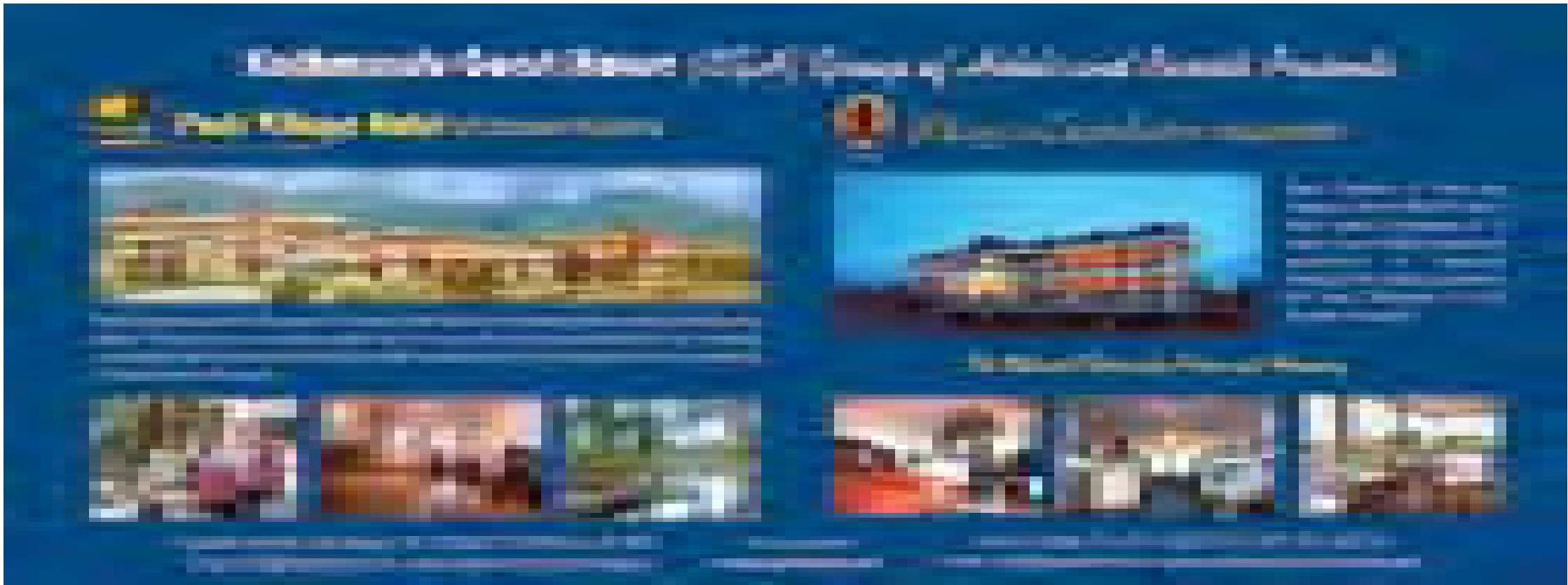
be as practical in terms of how space is used, lighting, and other modern requirements."

Critics might argue that façading is an eyewash, because it does not actually preserve traditional architecture, only a few building techniques. Strictly speaking, this is true. But it has its uses, one of which is giving the city a new vocabulary of built space. A modern building, with or without a traditional façade, has clearly recognisable modern contours, but is out of place in inner city Kathmandu, Patan or Bhaktapur. Put a traditional face on it, and suddenly the structure has continuity, its appearance acts as a bridge between the past and the present, and quietly schools us in new ways of

conceiving and defining "traditional" and "modern".

Few modern buildings in the Valley can hope to match the Rastriya Banijya Bank building—its playfulness sends up the ponderousness most of us imagine lies behind the gates of Singha Darbar, and although cheeky, it is an appropriately placed symbol for Nepal's new, mercantile culture. It has lots of steel, and large glass windows, but its red brick exterior places it in a certain context—though only tenuously connected to traditional Valley construction, it is nevertheless a reminder of it. In the absence of more such innovative design, façading is as good as it is going to get. ♦

Hattiban resort



By the wayside on the information highway

Women Internet users in Pakistan are few, despite an aggressive IT policy.

for instance, eight Internet shops have opened in the last two years.

A national survey, reported in the newspaper *The News* on 11 June, says that there are some 450,000 Internet users throughout Pakistan. The average number of users for large Internet Service Providers (ISPs) is about 25,000-35,000 whereas the number for smaller ISPs ranges between 2,000-4,000.

Peshawar has five ISPs. According to a rough estimate the city of 1.7 million locals and more than 500,000 Afghans (NWFP borders Afghanistan) has around 12,000 Internet users. This is far less than other major cities of Pakistan. Still there has been a 20 percent increase in the number of ISP customers over the last one year.

This explosion in the popularity of the Internet stems from the ruling military regime's pursuit of an aggressive IT policy. Since taking power in October 1999, General Pervez Musharraf has adopted an IT policy aimed at boosting Pakistan's economic modernisation and creating an exportable software industry.

But Peshawar lags behind the rest of the country—it has fewer Internet users because of comparatively less computer usage, fewer business and job opportunities and high computer

prices. Still, a large number of the city's youth spend many hours in Internet cafes losing themselves in the cyber world and chatting. An hour of Internet use in a cafe costs PRs 20-25 (around 35 US cents).

But for women, who form nearly 50 percent of the population, the Internet still remains a forbidden fruit. "Women are more likely than men to lack basic literacy and computer skills which would enable them to take advantage of the new global communication opportunities," states the UN publication *The World's Women 2000*. It points out that women comprise 64 percent of illiterate adults globally while girls make up two-thirds of the school-age children in the developing world without access to basic education.

In Peshawar the number of women users are few and far between. Shaukat Habib, executive director of NetZone, a local ISP, said, "Female Internet account holders are next to nil. Most women don't have their own net accounts. They normally use their brothers' or some other relative's." Zahid Mehmood, owner of GenerationX, the biggest Internet cafe in Khyber Super Market, added, "We get 50 to 60 regular customers daily and women form only three to four percent of them."

“Few girls come to the cafes because they are shy and don’t feel secure,” said Benish Masood, a university student who occasionally visits an Internet shop. She believes more girls will visit cyber cafes if separate facilities are set up for them. Saima Shaheen, who teaches computer science at a private institute, points out that the male-female gap is true not only of Internet surfing, but also of computer usage. “This is so because there are few opportunities for working women.”

Analyses of new media suggest that the content is male dominated. The representations are “frequently sexualised and often sexist,” says the UN report. This is backed up on the streets of Peshawar. “Generally Internet clubs are looked upon as an indecent place where spoiled brats go for cheap entertainment and watch pornography. This keeps girls away,” says Tariq Khattak, an Internet club owner.

Country-wide, no more than 10 percent of computer users are women, the survey in *The News* said. The UN study warns that lack of access to these new technologies may broaden existing gaps between women and men, in different areas of the world and among different social groups. ♦ (GEMINI)

NADEEM YAQUB
IN PESHAWAR

Sitting in a dimly lit wooden cabin Halla Kakar taps away on the computer keyboard, busily dispatching e-mails to her friends and relatives. A college student, Kakar is allowed by her parents to visit a neighbourhood Internet cafe to use the computer—but only when her younger brother

can accompany her. Kakar visits the Internet cafe every other day. Still when she spends more than an hour at a time, her father walks up to the cafe to see if everything is all right.

Welcome to Peshawar, capital of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP). In this conservative and male-dominated society Kakar's father belongs to the educated minority.

Most others struggle to keep pace with the changing times, reflected in the growing popularity of the Internet among young people.

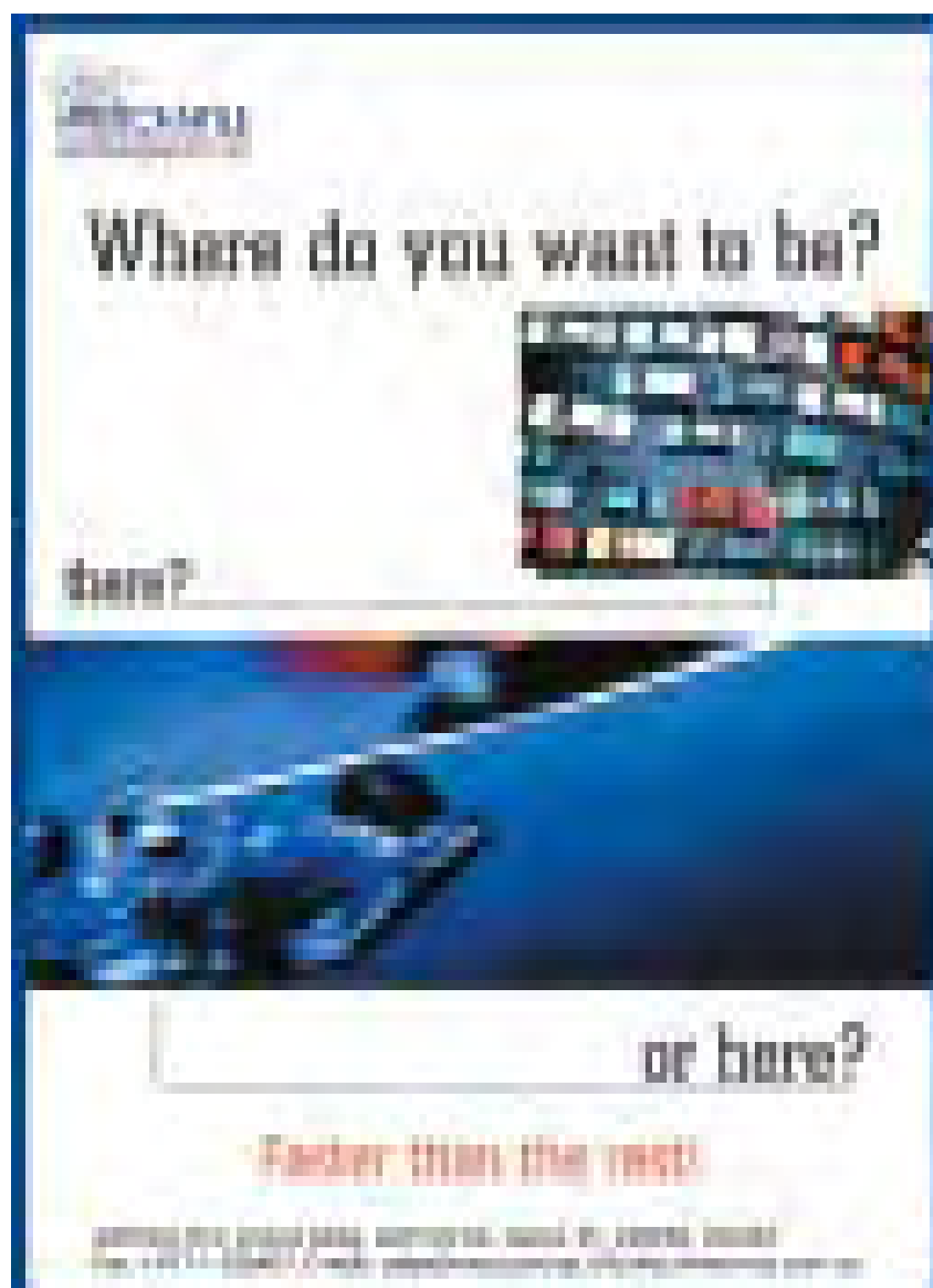
Peshawar has undergone a major Information Technology (IT) revolution in the last few years. Dozens of Internet clubs have sprung up in every nook and cranny. In Khyber Super Market, a newly established residential area,

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ANALYSIS

by VACLAV HAVEL

Know thyself, Russia



Lenin may be dead, but Soviet mentality lives on.

Peace, partnership, and cooperation are imaginable only among people and nations who know who they are. If I do not know who I am, who I want to be, what I want to achieve, where I begin and where I end, my relations with my neighbours and the rest of the world, will inevitably be tense, suspicious and burdened by an inferiority complex that may be hidden behind pompous bravado. Distrust of oneself and uncertainty about one's identity generate distrust, imputation of evil intentions to others and, eventually, an aggressiveness that may result in forcing one's domination upon them.

This is, unfortunately, a fair description of what underlies the relationship between NATO and the Russian Federation. Unlike Mexico, Sweden or Austria, which aren't members of NATO but have common borders with it, Russia—larger and more powerful than all the Alliance's other neighbours combined—is consistently disquieted by NATO's

presence and displeased at seeing it enlarge eastwards. One reason is the persistence of the inert Soviet mode of thinking, where NATO was portrayed by the totalitarian regime and its media as the Soviet Union's arch-enemy. To a certain extent, this was valid: Although NATO harboured no aggressive intentions—and was unwilling even to help European countries invaded militarily by their Soviet "ally"—it was open about its aim to contain communism and its perception of the Soviet Union as its strategic adversary.

The situation is completely different now. The Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact are gone, and NATO's objectives are different—it even desires partnership with Russia. But Russia appears to fail to understand or take notice of this. This can change only if Russia's new ruling forces opt for realism, not populism; nurture common sense, not nationalist passions; look for friends rather than enemies; and build an open

For good, friendly coexistence, candour is essential.

democratic society rather than cling to Soviet-era resentments.

The possibility of change lies in Russia's identity, its self-understanding. Despite Russia's remarkable progress towards democracy and a market economy, it is still grappling with a problem that has burdened it for most of its history—where it begins and ends; what belongs to its domain and what is beyond it; where it should exercise influence and from what point it cannot legitimately do so. Russia compensates for this lack of self-confidence, this uncertainty about its identity and boundaries with imperialist rhetoric and nationalist bombast. We know it from people like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, but it appears in a more cultured form on a much wider scale. I find it absurd that such a large and powerful country should be alarmed by three small democratic republics on its border—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—joining a regional grouping it does not control. It is meaningless to insist on a cordon sanitaire when transcontinental missiles could destroy Moscow from Nevada, New York from the Urals, in minutes.

My thinking does not emanate from aversion to Russia or any feeling of superiority—or from fear of how Russia might respond to NATO's further enlargement. I am simply trying to call things by their right names and express my concern for good, friendly coexistence. Is

friendship imaginable without candour? Unlike many Western politicians who insincerely placate Russia, supposedly in the interests of peace and friendship, I believe friendship with Russia is served best if we act towards it as equals and tell the truth to its face, unpleasant as this may be. It is my profound conviction that Russia does not deserve to be treated like a leper, an invalid or a child who requires special treatment and whose whims, no matter how dangerous, must be understood and tolerated. Such an attitude strengthens Russian misconceptions and leads Western statesmen toward hopeless and unseemly compromises.

Russia has a new quest to discern its true self, to define its position in today's world, to determine its very mode of existence. This may take long. But that is no reason to tiptoe around it. All the world's regions have problems—Russia with self-understanding; Africa with poverty, famine and tribal wars; the West with whether it will allow the civilisation it gave, and sometimes imposed on, this planet to destroy itself or to find in the depths of its knowledge and conscience a renewed sense of responsibility. We are not in a position to reproach one another or be less than frank with each other. Russia needs and deserves no less. ♦ (Project Syndicate)

Vaclav Havel is President of the Czech Republic.



COMMENT

by JOSEPH STIGLITZ

An agenda for G-7



This month, leaders from the G-7 will assemble in Genoa, concerned about the slowing global economy. They will commend America's Federal Reserve for taking forceful action to fight this, and avoid mentioning its responsibility for the downturn. They will hint at expansionary action in Europe, but won't tread on the European Central Bank's toes. Japan will renew its commitment to structural reforms, and though these commitments will now have more credibility, all the leaders will slide over the negative short-run consequences of these reforms, especially if done quickly and forcefully.

Short-run concerns should not distract the G-7 from long-term issues. Coordinating economic policies between north and south is the most important—this is not a short slowdown, but a long-term crisis. But first let me first say bravo for the debt relief provided to more than 20 countries at last year's G-7 meeting. It has paid off handsomely. For years the IMF dragged its feet on debt relief. Last year's work will make a difference in the lives of millions.

Many countries still need debt relief. The world's rich countries need to keep up the pressure. Equally important are deserving countries that do not meet the current standards for relief. Should Indonesia, say, get relief only if its income keeps falling? Surely, the IMF bears some blame for Indonesia's predicament. IMF policies pushed Indonesia into depression. A misguided attempt to restructure the financial system led to a run on banks. Cutbacks in food subsidies led to riots. Capital market liberalisation exposed the country to the volatility of short-term capital. Often lender and borrower are equally to blame: who bears the losses from a water project halted when it was discovered to affect a rare toad? The poor borrowing country, or the lender who failed to conduct an environment impact assessment beforehand? Framing a sound debt relief policy is difficult, but essential.

The global trading system is also in trouble. Free trade is preached as gospel, but rich countries don't hear their own message: their markets remain closed to many developing country exports; they subsidise agriculture massively, making it impossible for developing countries to compete. G-7's message seems to be *Do as we say, not as we do*. Special economic interests reign supreme, putting aside the careful balancing that marks economic and social policy in successful democracies. The 1994 Uruguay Round, for example, established an intellectual

property regime that put the interests of producers ahead of users, including those in the developing world. Pharmaceutical companies insisted on their "rights" even if this condemned poor AIDS victims. Civil society won here, but the intellectual property regime remains unchanged. Other battles loom. Some new trade and investment agreements propose to go further, allowing domestic laws, whatever their merits, to be set aside to promote international flows of goods and services. Under such a regime, attempts to protect children from tobacco, even with mild measures like restricting advertising, could be struck down!

The irony is that while the G-7 pushes the trade agenda too far in some dimensions, they don't push it far enough in others. Here is something rich countries could do overnight: open markets completely, immediately to all goods and services (except guns) from the world's poorest countries. Of course, there will be some initial costs, but the world's richest economies are strong enough to adapt. G-7 countries will benefit in the long run, and they will undermine the charge of hypocrisy levelled at them by developing countries. In multilateral economic institutions, some voices are heard louder than others. So: democratise the IMF and World Bank where special interests and those of rich countries are dominant. Within G-7 countries, when economic matters are debated, not just finance ministries and central bankers speak. Labour, commerce, consumers are also heard. The multilateral economic organisations must also hear from all concerned parties. Most G-7 leaders are committed at home to balancing

an overbearing state and laissez faire economics. The multilateral economic organisations often depart from democratic principles—in allocating voting rights, in representation, and in the lack of transparency that pervades much of what they do. Yet they freely interfere with democratic processes within countries they are supposedly trying to help. We all have much to lose if the G-7 fails to address these issues, because these problems will determine the future of the global economy. ♦ (Project Syndicate)

Joseph Stiglitz, professor of economics at Stanford University is a former Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers to U.S. President William J. Clinton and Chief Economist and Senior Vice President of the World Bank.



The G-7 summit needs move on debt relief, and making itself more democratic.



Domino effect

UNITED NATIONS - A slowdown in the US and Japan is threatening the fragile economies of Africa, Asia and Latin America, a new UN report warns. The study says US import demand, which grew at a double-digit pace over the past few years, registered a significant decline in the first quarter of 2001. "As a result, many economies that have close trade connections to the United States, such as those in the Americas and Southeast Asia, face a slowdown in their export demand," says the report, *The World Economy in 2001*. US growth rates are expected to decline from 5.0 percent in 2000 to 1.9 percent in 2001, and Japanese economic growth is expected to slow from 1.7 percent in 2000 to 0.7 percent this year. But both economies should recover somewhat next year, says the report. The impact is already being felt. Export growth in leading Asian economies, including Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Thailand, Taiwan, and South Korea, has fallen from a combined average of more than 20 percent in the first half of 2000, to the single digits in the first quarter of this year. Industrial production has stalled, particularly in areas related to information technology. "Lower stock market prices, rising unemployment in manufacturing, and weakening consumer confidence are expected to curb private consumption in many Asian countries," the report says. The only exceptions in Asia are China and India—with outlook for both countries remaining positive. Economic growth in Western Asia, fuelled by rising oil prices in 2000, is expected to slow down in 2001, because of sluggish global demand, much of it from the US. (IPS)



Donor-aided projects, like this one in Bangladesh, could be in trouble.

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Can Koizumi save Japan?



Even "bold" reforms are unlikely to work, and in any case will be unpopular.

Japan poses the great threat to world financial stability. Again, its economy is in recession, its budget deficit huge, and public debts worse than any other country. With over-regulation unchecked and the private sector mired in debt, entrepreneurship can't be relied upon to stimulate change. If Japan were an emerging economy we'd be looking for collapse and the IMF to move in. But Japan is no Argentina or Turkey, it is the world's third largest economy. Why aren't we more alarmed? There remains a belief that the impressive Japan of the past 50 years cannot be a basket-case. It may be troubled, like IBM once was. America was dysfunctional in the early 1980s, but cured its ills to boom in the 90s. A comeback is certain with the right measures.

Can Japan's popular, reform-minded new prime minister Junichiro Koizumi turn things around? Can he

improve public finance, clean up the private financial infrastructure and open up the supply side? If he can, Japan can rely on its human capital and high adaptability to get out of trouble. But these are difficult tasks to tackle in an economy mired in recession and a political establishment adamantly opposed to reform.

Koizumi is running on high octane. He has wide popular support and the central scenario is that tightening the budget during a recession will slow (but not arrest) the growth of debt relative to GDP and that other reforms will help create an improved business environment.

Koizumi recognises that in a recession economy these steps are difficult and risky. He says that if Japan's economy deteriorates sharply, in part due to his reform measures and budget cuts, he will take "bold flexible measures." The trouble is, there are

no such measures available.

A big depreciation of the Yen would stimulate trade, but because Japan is a very closed economy (like Europe and the US), it will also quickly incite bond and stock market crises, raising interest rates and causing Japanese finances to deteriorate even more. Private investor/business confidence might fall with the prospect of inflation, as might consumption. A devaluation strategy will be a huge blunder. That seems to be the Bank of Japan's view, which is fortunate for the rest of the world, because corrective measures would be taken quickly if Koizumi's reforms cause recession to plummet into depression.

What other flexible measures might there be? Massive public works programmes, but that is good for jobs, not the budget. In any case, it is unlikely that Koizumi will get the chance to pursue the five or 10 year reform program necessary to return the Japanese economy to normal growth. Koizumi's political mandate is not enough, and public enthusiasm for his programme has failed to recognise that, at the start, it will deliver higher unemployment and no growth. Investment in businesses that create new jobs comes much later. America went through a lot of pain in the 1980s, and only in the 1990s did the new jobs of the new economy start showing up. We are seeing this pattern in Japanese corporations that have started restructuring but continue to retrench on investment. Opening up the economy will make the

recession worse, crimping Koizumi's popularity.

What can stabilise public debt? Japan's budget needs to shift to debt reduction by 10 percent of GDP—in a recession economy! What would be the impact of cleaning up the balance sheets of Japanese banks? Estimates suggest a one or two percent extra dip in growth rate with no certainty that higher growth will ever follow. These are not politically successful measures. Far more likely than Koizumi undertaking sustained bold action, we will see a master at communications and marginal reformer shift money from construction (the sector supporting Koizumi's political adversaries) to high tech, where all Japan places its hopes. Much financial restructuring will only involve moving the furniture—shifting responsibility for debts from one institution to another. As for the Yen, we will see weakness but barring world economic problems, not collapse any time soon. So no big boost will come from exports.

Japan will likely remain a great risk for the world economy. It will take a few years to reach a frightening level of crisis, but Japan seems determined to get there. There won't be growth and Japan's finances will keep deteriorating from today's levels, in which government paper has junk bond status. ♦ (Project Syndicate)

Rudi Dornbusch is Ford Professor of economics at MIT and a former chief economic advisor to both the World Bank and IMF.

ANALYSIS

by MUSHAHID HUSSAIN

Talking through the deadlock

ISLAMABAD - In the most media hyped summit in recent sub-continental memory, and the most televised, Pakistan and India came close, but remained far apart on the formulation and the path to pursue on an agreed bilateral roadmap to normalisation and resolution of the contentious Kashmir dispute.

The summit seasawed, starting with optimism, turning into realism and ending on a pessimistic note. In the end, both sides agreed to disagree. The muted blame-game and the relative absence of a shrill "war of words" that normally follows such an impasse underscores a mutual desire to continue the dialogue, and not turn a deadlock into a point of no return. On Sunday, 15 July, Day One of the summit, Pakistan responded to a comment by Indian Minister for Information and Broadcasting Sushma Swaraj, who omitted reference to Kashmir while listing the issues being discussed at the summit. Pakistan responded with its standard formulation about the centrality of Kashmir to any enduring settlement between the two countries. On Day Two, Gen Musharraf held a televised breakfast meeting with Indian editors, where he reiterated Pakistan's point on Kashmir as the "core" question, and criticised the Indian Information Minister for her statement. Eight hours later, the Indians came out with their formulation of Prime Minister Vajpayee's opening summit statement, a checklist of issues India sees as "outstanding".

Musharraf, military man-turned-politician, and Vajpayee, poet-turned-politician, struck up a good rapport during their six hours of one-on-one talks. Pakistan accused the Indians of going back on their committed draft at least three times, and the Indians accused the Pakistanis of not accepting their formulation on "cross border terrorism." But despite this, neither side wishes to call the summit a "failure", implying a desire to keep talking. Going by official statements on both sides, there are areas on which there is apparent convergence—whether the situation is an "issue, problem or dispute", whether it is a "core or central" or plain "issue", whether Kashmir is the principal roadblock to any normalisation of relations. This issue will have to be addressed from whatever angles, but it is the main marker on any future roadmap to peace. And, above, all, the acceptance by Vajpayee of Gen Musharraf's invitation to visit



The summit may not have been successful, but India and Pakistan want to continue dialogue

dialogue? If they could not "reconcile basic approaches to bilateral relations", why didn't they agree to do what the Americans and the Chinese did when they faced a similar situation during President Richard Nixon's historic journey to China in 1972? Despite their fundamental disagreement on Taiwan, they decided to draft a joint communiqué with each side setting out its respective formulation, instead of trying to force an agreement on semantics while differing on substance.

For the future, there will be intense media speculation and scrutiny of every move in the summit, and everyone is aware that the stakes are high, with both being nuclear powers. As for Kashmir, on Day Two of the summit, 90 people were killed in fighting there, illustrative of a conflict that has a dangerous capacity to escalate with a high human cost and dangers for regional peace. Pressure from the world community will be on both sides to continue the dialogue and ensure that the impasse does not lead to renewal of tensions.

The best part of the summit has been its transparency and openness with the highest ever number of Pakistani media (over 100) and over 50 academics and activists visiting. This, plus the fact that through television, millions of people on both sides of the border were able to see each other's points of view, debate and discuss these, and have a kind of human interaction on the summit's sidelines, is unique for the people of these two adversarial neighbours. ♦ (IPS)

Mushahid Hussain was Minister for Information in Nawaz Sharif's government

Pakistan on the first day of the summit still stands, and both sides say the two leaders will meet before year-end.

Some unanswered questions remain. The Pakistanis initially accused the Indian "bureaucracy" of undermining the agreement said to be arrived at between Vajpayee and Musharraf in their one-on-one talks. That sounds inexplicable, because such decisions are taken at the highest political level and bureaucrats only implement what their leaders tell them to do, they can't reverse decisions. And if the talks were such a big "failure", why would Vajpayee still agree to go to Islamabad in the next few months or the two sides agree to carry on the

A weak constitution

COLOMBO - Government and opposition in Sri Lanka are battling for the hearts and minds of voters ahead of a snap referendum called on 21 August by President Chandrika Kumaratunga to see if the people want a new constitution. Last week, Kumaratunga and her ruling People's Alliance (PA) faced a possible no-confidence motion. Her response: suspend parliament until September and call for the referendum. This is only the second time Sri Lanka's parliament has been prorogued and a referendum called. Analysts say the move is undemocratic, designed to buy the PA government time. Next month's referendum question—"Are you in agreement with the proposal that the country needs a new constitution which is nationally important and an essential requirement?"—has stumped the opposition, which must exhort people to answer "yes", same as the government, as the need for a new constitution is undisputed. Amendments needed include scrapping the executive presidency with its unlimited powers and decentralising power to the provinces—satisfying minority Tamil demands for regional autonomy.

This is a blow to already-faltering business, and the business community has called for a joint government of national unity for three years. Economic growth in the first quarter of the year fell sharply to 1.3 percent from 6.6 percent in the same period last year, dampened by a recession in the US, Sri Lanka's main market for garment exports, and falling remittances from Sri Lankan workers in the Middle East due to exchange fluctuations. Meanwhile, the Norwegian-backed peace process is on the backburner for the second time in eight months with the government preoccupied elsewhere. (IPS)

Dangerous dissent

PENANG - Malaysia has made it clear it will not tolerate dissent, especially criticism of its harsh Internal Security Act (ISA). This month nine student activists, including the president of the University of Malaya's Student Representative Council, and seven student activists protesting the ISA at Kuala Lumpur's National Mosque, were arrested under the act, which permits indefinite detention without trial. The last major ISA swoop against university students and staff was in the 1970s, when jailed ex-deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim was a student leader. The hard-line Education Minister at the time: current Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. In 1975, the government introduced amendments to the Universities and University Colleges Act to curb political activity on campus. The resultant decline in political consciousness continued until Anwar's dramatic ouster and imprisonment in September 1998, which unleashed "reformasi", a clamour for wide-ranging reforms.

Mahathir profiles student activists as typically ethnic Malay. But there is a growing number of Chinese student activists, which analysts say is different from the pre-reformasi era. The ethnic polarisation between Malay and non-Malay groups on campus remains, but student bodies representing them are now more willing to cooperate as seen in recent protests.

Toh Kin Woon, head of the Penang state's education portfolio is worried about the arrests. "If students cannot have independent minds, it is a cause for concern," he says. Toh recalls that student leaders—some in government now—in the 1960s and early 1970s enjoyed a lot more freedom, and believes the biggest culprit is the University and University Colleges Act, which he feels has to be reviewed or done away with. (IPS)



Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir

VACANCY

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Maoist frontal organisations

Saptahik Janadesh, 10 July

...The Maoist party has provided guidance to many organisations working alongside the revolution. It is the policy of the party to organise people in such organisations. In this respect, especially in the western parts of the country, different such groups have been formed. Organised groups will be the main source of strength in the people's war ...

In the background of the historic peoples' revolution, the most striking progress has been the growth of women's organisations, and awareness of their strengths. Half the population, always discriminated against on the basis of gender and class, is slowly revolting. They are raising their voice and this has jolted the ruling class and other exploiters. This has given a boost to the revolution. Their courage, sacrifice and bravery are commendable and have ensured the revolution will be successful. Women have had to face more problems than men and, despite being exploited by men, have proved to be very courageous and strong. They have raised the prestige of women throughout the country... History has shown that the key to any successful revolution lies with the women of that society. According to Marxist principles, this is a measure of the increasing awareness of the proletariat, and the party will take direction from it. It is the party's policy to recognise that it is women who will uproot all the ills of



society and will help in the formation of a republic. Another important factor that will give the party direction will be an analysis of Nepali history, which has to be blended with Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theories. Such a history will be the basis of policies for the development and upliftment of different castes and classes.

Development of the exploited classes is a central feature of party policy, so that they can utilise their rights to the maximum, are empowered and never again exploited. This policy makes clear the objectives of our party. The coming together of the exploited and their empowerment will greatly raise their status. Under the leadership of the party, various organisations have been formed to this end—this has greatly aided the revolution and will definitely benefit people who will help in the development of the new republic.

It is party policy to give equal thought to the different platforms of students, labourers, intellectuals, teachers, etc. As in all revolutions, here too students have played a major role. The party wants to tap in to their resources for helping the revolution. They, too, are essential to take the revolution to the national level. They bring new thought, energy and powers of reasoning. Their recent bandh closed down all educational institutions for a week shows the power they wield. Also, they are the reserve forces of the revolution, and its future leaders. That is why our party has special policies for them. They have a historic role to play in strengthening bonds with the farmers too.

The party is forming policies whereby unionised workers will come forward to help in the class struggle and help bring about a true workers' revolution. Once the workers get together, there will be a complete union of the farmers and the factory workers, which will unleash their true powers. As it does with the students, the party will also work to unite these workers and fight for their wellbeing.

Cultural organisations are another vital pillar of the party... Depending on the requirements of the revolution, the party will pay special attention to these various other bodies and see that they grow properly...

King's businesses

Budhabar Saptahik, 11 July

The Koirala government, it seems, is unsuccessful in protecting the various industries the present monarch owns or holds shares in. In the build up to the bandh called by the Maoists earlier this month, it appears they targeted factories owned by His Majesty. This is the first time the Maoists have targeted any facility owned by royalty. Why are they doing this now?

According to sources, the factory of Surya Tobacco in Bara, in which His Majesty owns shares, was attacked a few days ago—the Maoists lobbed a pressure cooker bomb on the premises. Luckily, it did not cause a lot of damage. The company has not released an account of the damage.

After setting off the bomb, the Maoists manhandled a security guard, and took away his communication set. Surprisingly, they have not yet taken responsibility for the event. A few days later, the Maoists exploded a bomb on the premises of Sipradi Trading. His Majesty owns a certain percentage of this company too. The Maoists attacked the company's premises in Satungal and set afire some buses imported from India for the Armed Police Force. Four were damaged. Sipradi has not released a statement on damage done. A statement released by the company recently said His Majesty does not own shares in the company, either directly or indirectly.

New Guns

Jana Aastha National Weekly, 11 July

Last week the new king gave permission for the G-36 gun to be imported for the army. The weapon has been at the centre of controversy and His Late Majesty Birendra had not appeared to be in its favour. In the first stage 5,000 guns will be imported. The total cost will be about Rs 380 million. A single gun costs \$800. There are other cheaper and more efficient weapons on the market, but the G-36 is still being given preference. This has raised a lot of questions and controversy is now synonymous with the G-36. The army's Commander in Chief, Prajvala Rana, recently returned from a trip abroad, reportedly for the gun deal. Many feel the British-German G-36 is not the right weapon for this country. A section of the army is also rumoured to be unhappy about this decision.

NC wrangles

Tarun National Weekly, 9 July

Sources say the prime minister had nothing to contribute to the 14-point programme he recently made public. The architects of the "grand design" were Pradeep Nepal, Sushil Koirala and Mohan Chapagain.

Pradeep Nepal has sullied his leader Madhav Kumar Nepal's name and disgraced his party. It is known that Koirala and Pradeep used to meet in the house of the controversial Upper House MP Mohan Chapagain, a royal nominee. In helping Prime



Minister Koirala, Pradeep Nepal is directly helping the Maoists. The word in political circles is that Pradeep was involved in drafting the 14-point agenda. UML heavy weights, KP Oli, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Subhas Nemwang were also in direct contact with the prime minister and helping him out. Clever Pradeep drafted a 14-point programme acceptable to all political parties. A serious problem has arisen within the UML because of this.

The role played by Chapagain is worth noting. The Maoists are bent upon countering all moves of His Majesty and the prime minister. They have said repeatedly that the royal palace massacre was a joint plan of the prime minister and the new king. Koirala and Chapagain are equally responsible for sullyng the reputation of the new king. The monarch and the monarchy can only be stronger if it punishes the corrupt prime minister.

Narahari's exit

Ghatana Ra Bichar, 11 July

Another person who has detached himself from the Koirala family in the past decade is Narahari Acharya. A teacher before he joined politics, Acharya was a Koirala-follower and supporter from the day he became involved with the Nepali Congress.

The two were quite close. Acharya put in his papers after Sushil Koirala went public opposing his views on the issue of the royal heir apparent. Acharya had through a newspaper made his party's opinion public. It is known that Prime Minister Koirala does not like a person who thinks independently, is clever, capable and intelligent. Acharya was a victim of this. The party now accepts Koirala's position.

The credit for bringing Acharya into the limelight goes to Ganesh Man Singh, who made sure he was made a member of the Upper House in 1990, although Acharya preferred the company of Koirala. Sushil Koirala did not like this. Congress leaders have repeatedly said that Sushil does not like anyone else getting too close to the prime minister. Sushil had been trying for a long time to get rid of Acharya and this was his chance. Earlier, a follower of Sushil, Gopal Rai, publicly humiliated Acharya at the prime minister's residence.

Mobiles, briefcases

Drishhti Weekly, 10 July

It has been known for a long, long time that Nepal Bank and the Rastriya Bank are rotten to the core. Now this has more support—Nepal Bank's mobile phone scandal and the Rastriya Bank's briefcase fracas.

Sources say that at an April 1999 meeting, the board of directors of Nepal Bank decided that the bank would pay a minimum monthly charge for mobile phones used by its directors. Now it comes out that the bank has been footing the entire bill of all the directors. Bank sources say the bills of Sushil Pant and Ram Babu Pant easily exceed Rs 10,000 per month. The bills of other members, including Bhawani Devi Sharma, are in excess of Rs 5,000 per month.

Managing director of Rastriya Baniya Bank Anant Ram Parajuli is raising hell on his turf. He recently made the bank buy him a Rs 22,000 briefcase for personal use. Employees still line up to eye his very expensive briefcase every time he passes by. There's more, say our sources. Parajuli last week tried to bully the bank chairman Punya Prasad Dahal into buying him a luxurious new vehicle, but Dahal put him in his place. Dahal told Parajuli that he himself was satisfied driving a cheap vehicle and there was no reason for Parajuli to be dissatisfied with the vehicle he was using, which in any case was much more expensive than Dahal's.

Punish Baburam, Prachanda

Jana Aastha National Weekly, 11 July

After the 1 June incident, Prachanda and Baburam in their numerous and separate statements praised King Birendra to the heavens. They said he was liberal and understanding, had a positive opinion of the peoples' war and stood his ground against Indian forces. This is all fine, but that is exactly the opposite of what they said about him at their second national convention a few months ago.

The convention's documents were recently made public and though they do not directly accuse the late King Birendra of being India's stooge, they place the 1989 agreement at the same level as the 1950 agreement, in which India played a major role.

Is this comparison apt? If they think both agreements are similar, why are they saying Birendra never bowed down to Indian imperialists, but to the wishes of the Nepali people? They should clarify this.

Similarly, Baburam said in a recent statement that there were only three nationalist monarchs in the history of modern Nepal, Prithivi Narayan, Mahendra and Birendra. This too, is against the official party statement of the second national convention. Bhattarai says that although Mahendra was dictatorial, he took many steps that proved that he was a true nationalist. Meanwhile, the statements of the second convention say that Mahendra was not a nationalist at all. That statement further argues that Mahendra was the chief architect of the 1960 coup and he concentrated all power in his hands. He took the help of the landed gentry and forced the nation to accept the Panchayat regime. How could the incident of 1 June change the Maoist analysis of Mahendra at the second convention? How could a person, who was called an anti-nationalist before 1 June, now become a nationalist?

According to regulations passed by the second convention, a person who acts or thinks against the official party line can be demoted, sent for re-education, expelled from the party or have any punishment meted out to him that the party thinks fit. It is clear that both Prachanda and Baburam have gone against the official party line. People are curious to know whether any action will be taken against them or not.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Establishing state power is a lengthy and arduous process. The momentary and attention-grabbing activities of the Maoists are not sufficient to establish a people's state.

- Bam Dev Gautam, CPN (ML) General Secretary in *Jana Astha Weekly*, 18 July.



"Welcome, Civil War"

Budhabar Saptahik, 18 July, Budhbar

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to Nepali Times
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Cronje campaign gathers momentum



Hansie Cronje is doing all he can to persuade the South African cricket board and public that he should be allowed back, at least as a public cricketing figure.

that so far-reaching is his ban that it prevents any of his attempt to rehabilitate himself by, for example, coaching schoolchildren or club cricketers.

Cronje claims while he has tried to negotiate with the UCB, this door has been shut in his face, leaving him no option other than litigation. Whether this is actually the case is debatable, but his position has not been harmed by the public statements of UCB president Percy Sonn who at one point said that Cronje should not even be allowed to play beach cricket.

The merits of Cronje's legal challenge are also a matter for debate, but it has emerged that within certain sections of the UCB there is concern that the ban will not hold up in court. At least part of the challenge will focus on the fact that Cronje was not allowed the opportunity to make representations in mitigation, as opposed to the procedure adopted when Herschelle Gibbs and Henry Williams were banned for six months for their parts in the affair. Indeed, the ban was rushed through by the UCB's general council last year at a time when the then managing director of the organisation, Ali Bacher, was out of the country.

If Cronje's ban is overturned on a technicality, the UCB will find itself trapped between a rock and a hard place. If it seeks to reimpose the ban by following more appropriate procedures, a substantial section of the South African public will see it as both incompetent and mean-spirited. If

can ill-afford to further alienate a South African public which has grown to sympathise with Cronje's plight.

As it looks at the moment, the UCB will be damned if it does something about Cronje, and damned if it doesn't. ♦

Hansie Cronje's bid to rehabilitate himself, at least in the eyes of the South African public, gathered pace last week as indications of a carefully plotted strategy to diminish the effects of his life ban from cricket continued to emerge, reports the cricket website cricinfo.com.

Cronje was banned for life by South Africa's United Cricket Board (UCB) last year after admitting to accepting money from bookmakers and offering inducements to his team mates to underperform.

He intends to challenge the ban in court in September and, in what seems an attempt to whip up sympathy ahead of the legal

battle, Cronje has started to re-emerge in public life with increasing frequency.

He has spoken at functions organised by the Charles Glass Society, an organisation with close ties to Castle Lager, the official sponsors of the South African Test side; he has written a column for Jonty Rhodes' website; and last Monday, he consented to a radio interview in which he expressed contrition and remorse for his actions.

His lawyer, Leslie Sackstein, has made it known that even if the court challenge is successful, Cronje has no intention of trying to play for the country. The thrust of Cronje's argument is

it softens its position on Cronje, it could incur the wrath of the International Cricket Council (ICC).

If truth be told, though, the ICC's attempts to fight match-fixing are now viewed with increasing scepticism, if not outright cynicism, in South Africa. The failure of the ICC's anti-corruption commissioner to come up with a single concrete case of corruption since his appointment has left many in South Africa convinced that Cronje has been made a handy scapegoat. The view is that Cronje has been punished for confessing his misdeeds while the denials of a host of former Test captains have simply been accepted with very little argument.

To a very great extent the Cronje case has become a battle of perceptions and public relations. And in this regard Cronje and his legal advisers seem to be well ahead of the UCB which, as far as can be ascertained, has been caught completely flat-footed by this turn of events.

With South Africa preparing itself for a major summer—tours by India and Australia, and a tour to Australia over Christmas and the New Year—the UCB

Radisson

Stretching a point

Since it apparently does not affect body shape, flexibility is often a forgotten element of fitness. But it is as important as aerobic efficiency and strength. Flexibility is measure by the range of motion (ROM) of your joints. Athletes focus on ROM to enhance their performance, but it is important for all of us, simply so we can perform daily tasks efficiently. People of all ages can retain a high degree of flexibility provided they exercise and stretch regularly.

The first step towards increasing flexibility is relaxing. Muscular tension is not conducive to effective stretching. Get into a comfortable stretching position and relax. Breathe deeply and stretch a little farther, but stay relaxed. When the stretch becomes a strain, ease up. You should hold each stretch for 20 seconds. Muscles respond best when a slow gentle pressure is applied at an elevated tissue temperature. This is why it is best to warm up and then stretch. It is also important to work the muscle through the complete range of movement, especially when weight training.

Many aches and pains are caused by muscular tension and can be eased by greater flexibility. Improved posture and symmetry also play an important role in preventing backaches, muscle soreness and injury.



Sanjiv S Soreng
Manager, Clark Hatch Fitness Centre
Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu

Lord of the rings

Juan Antonio Samaranch has been accused of interfering in the International Olympic Committee's presidential campaign by losing candidate Kim Un-yong, says South Korea's national news agency, Yonhap. Un-yong went public with his allegations last week after a meeting with reporters in Moscow.

Belgium's Jacques Rogge won the race to replace Samaranch, and Kim is alleged to have announced that the campaign was less than fair. "Samaranch systematically blocked my campaign," he reportedly said. "On the eve of the election day, he leaked a groundless allegation against me." Kim apparently also accused Samaranch of plotting to extend his power and influence into Rogge's presidency. "I felt helpless because Samaranch lopsidedly supported Rogge to make him president," the agency reported Kim as saying.

Kim, a South Korean, was embroiled in controversy 24 hours before the vote when it was reported that he had promised members at least \$50,000 a year in Olympic-related expenses if he were elected president. The IOC ethics commission dismissed the case after Kim denied the reports—but the damage had been done. "Samaranch called IOC members, who were friendly to me, to his room yesterday and today to persuade them not to support me," Kim

allegedly told reporters.

Even in retirement, Samaranch, as honorary president for life, will attempt to wield his influence at IOC executive committee meetings, he said. "It is quite clear that Samaranch will try to administer IOC affairs from behind the veil. He backed Rogge in order to continue to control the IOC even after stepping down as president." However, Dick Pound, another losing candidate from Canada, dismissed such fears. "There's an expression that says there's nothing as past as a past president," Pound said.

Kim said his campaign was hurt when Beijing won the 2008 Games last Friday and "European IOC members spread an opinion that Asia should not walk away with two victories." In an analysis of the IOC election on Tuesday, the Yonhap agency said that, with Kim's defeat, "the IOC's Eurocentric and white-dominated fortress proved to be impregnable." South Korea's mass-circulation *Dong A Ilbo* newspaper said in a commentary that Kim lost the election because he could not overcome "the hurdles of racism and Samaranch." The daily *Chosun Ilbo* also said Kim failed because he could not demolish the "wall of racism."

Rogge won the election to succeed Samaranch with 59 votes. Kim finished runner-up with 23 votes, ahead of Pound with 22. Hungarian Pal Schmitt was fourth with six and American Anita DeFrantz was eliminated in the first round. ♦



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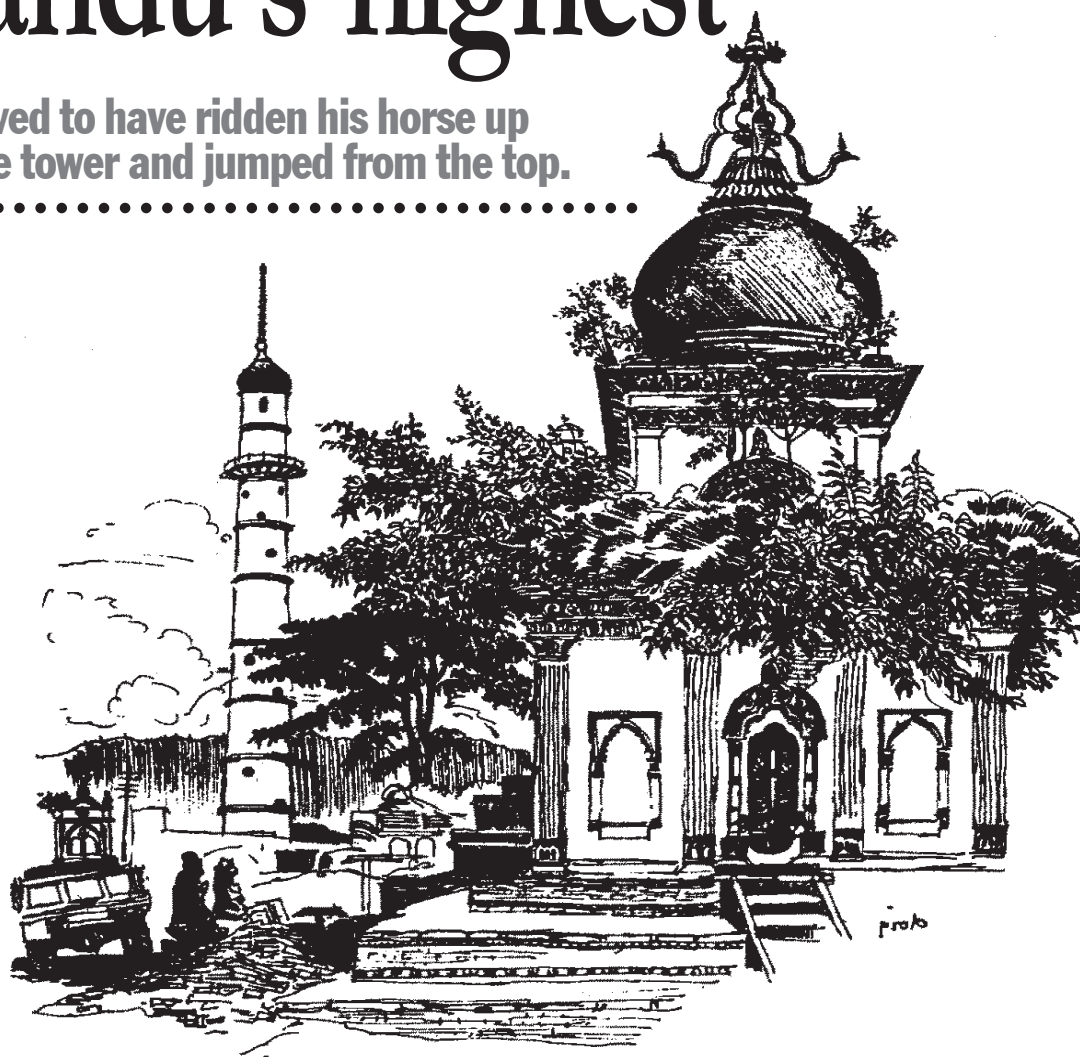
Kathmandu's highest

Jung Bahadur, is believed to have ridden his horse up the narrow steps of the tower and jumped from the top.

described in an early guide book as 'Bhim Sen's greatest erection,' a nine-storied minaret with an imposing gilded finial is Kathmandu's most prominent landmark. It was built in 1832 by one of Nepal's greatest soldier statesman, Bhim Sen Thapa, who virtually ruled Nepal as prime minister, when he was shamefully killed by his enemies at court, who had much to revenge. The British resident in Nepal, Brian Hodgson, wrote to the governor general in India, Lord Moira, "thus has perished the great and able statesman who for more than thirty years had ruled this kingdom with more than regal sway."

The tower apparently was built to serve as a lookout post and from which buglers sounded alarms. But I wonder if Bhim Sen Thapa, who commanded his Nepali forces most valiantly against those of Sir David Ochterlony in the 1814-16 Gurkha Wars, wasn't simply building a triumphal folly on Kathmandu's parade ground, Tundikhel, just as a similar minaret was erected on Calcutta's Maidan in honour of Sir Ochterlony.

One of Bhim Sen's illustrious descendants, the first Rana prime minister Jung Bahadur, is believed to have ridden his horse up the narrow steps of the tower and jumped from the top. The horse died but Jung



Bahadur survived. An old Nepali professor friend of mine assured me that Jung Bahadur used an umbrella.

Almost immediately below Bhim Sen's tower which is surrounded by a pseudo-Gothic screen, is an ancient sunken public bath fed by clear water from carved fountains. The place is always crowded. Where the abundant water comes from or where it goes is unknown; my professor insisted it came from 'the holy mountains.' This is one of Kathmandu's few public springs still in use. All over the Valley, beautifully carved stone and gilded fountains are dry because apparently the underground water level has dropped.

My sketch of the minar, known as the Bhim Sen Stumbha or Dharahara, shows a temple to the god Mahadeva which Bhim Sen apparently had built. As I sketched the Muslim-inspired dome, over which writhe the four golden and plumed serpents, a small boy told

me how once he and his mother came at dawn to wash in a nearby tank. Suddenly, bright blue flames flared from the serpents' mouths, causing them to run for their lives. "Several people have seen the fires," he said.

In the three years since I first sketched the temple, it has grown a fair forest below its dome and modern construction has encroached to within feet of it. Lorries park among adoring images of Hanuman and Bhairab. Where a wing of Bhim Sen's palace once stood are now piles of rubble. It is rumoured that a new five-star hotel, named after a famous British prime minister, will one day occupy the spot. What is left of the palace, once known as Bagh Mahal, and later Hari Bhavan, is occupied by an Indian mission. Interestingly, the name Bagh Mahal commemorates the time when cages of lions stood by the gates to the palace.

I was once shown around the now demolished wing of the palace by a young man who claimed to be

a member of the occupying family. We entered a small gate, walked through a crumbling courtyard and groped our way down a maze of narrow, low passageways that led to a gallery overlooking what had once been a large lily pond surrounded by rose gardens. Close to where we stood, the gallery descended in a brief stairway leading to a closed door. "This is where they brought the prisoners," explained my host, "and behind there is where they were executed."

I never discovered who the prisoners were or why they were executed because the young man with a distinct touch of the morbid had other horrors to unfold. "Up there," he said, pointing to a window in a tower, "was where Bhim Sen was imprisoned and driven to suicide. His tormentors told him that his wife was being made to walk the streets of Kathmandu, stark naked. In great anguish, he broke a window pane and slashed his wrists." History says he used a *khukri* conveniently left in the room by his guards.

Plunging me into another, older courtyard which was built about a shrine, my guide told me how an unidentified prince had himself shut in the temple to meditate. Before the heavy doors were closed behind him the prince cautioned his wife that he was not to be disturbed for a certain number of days and not at all if she found proof of his having achieved eternal bliss. When she returned at the stipulated time there was no answer to her calls, but from under the door was a trickle of blood. When the door was opened, the horrified Rani and her retinue found only the idol wet with blood. This small courtyard has been left standing and because of its sanctity will probably be spared.

When all else is swept away, one hopes the handsome minaret will remain as a monument to a great, if ruthlessly ambitious man. ♦

(Excerpted with permission from In the Kingdom of the Gods, Harper Collins, 1994.)

NEPALITERATURE

by MANJUSHREE THAPA

Toya Gurung's TAUT AND HALLUCINATORY VOICE



Poet and Member of the Royal Nepal Academy Toya Gurung adopts a taut, hallucinatory language to spin out poems that suggest rather than tell, evoke rather than explain. Some of her most bracing work comes in the form of long poems—like the wildly experimental poem *Chha* or her book-length poem *Dhoopi*. In these she is less restrained by the narrative drive,

and more uninhibited in playing with collage and pastiche forms. Her tone is often wry, playful, and ironic, unlike much of Nepal's poetry, which tends towards being emotionally wrought.

The first poem translated below contains some of the freshest and most energetic aspects of Gurung's style. It takes on a small scene—a girl and boy playing on a rooftop—and shows us something of the quirky character of the human heart.

AFTERNOON

Lines of warmth and heat
city roofs—roofs city the sun-roof atop roof after roof
only roofs
if a tile loosens the boy will fall the girl will fall
Warm afternoon
as though there's nothing in the sky but sky to bother them
The art of directing traffic with one child, with the other
a drama of blowing a whistle mid-street

Then again on that roof an exhibition of judo and karate
what will happen if a foot slips
the basket of dried grains steps on the ledge what will happen
if with that basket a foot slips

Then without a word he lays a wooden pillow
she lies to one side and the other checks her pulse
looks for her veins—makes to place an injection with a needle
tapping and rubbing the vein
and lying on his arms raises her

And again another drama begins
dozing off sleepily he falls flat on the roof
screaming, the girl aims at the stomach and butt
and kicks him with her feet

In a recent interview on Radio Sagarmatha, Gurung mentioned that poetry is not merely the expression of emotions; the poet must also reflect his or her times through poetry. In keeping with this statement, Gurung's poems do take on larger social themes, often indirectly, and sometimes, as below, more directly.

HISTORY CAN'T LAST IN THIS COUNTRY

One is obliged to call them peace-seekers
though one may not wish to
What meaning does a watch have for those
who wander the city to sell freshly made curd
who walk loaded down with *khapan* baskets
who arrive with *ainselu* and *kaaphal* berries
who have never seen more than one city
who carry fresh mushrooms and bamboo shoots
who bear gifts for highly esteemed dignitaries

What meaning does a watch have for those
who throng to watch traditional festivals
and who come to stage such spectacles

New years greetings to all
to statues
to dharahara tower
to the golden taps at sundhaara
to ghantaaghar's clock tower
to trees that have fallen on the old *khari* tree
to Asan, Indrachowk, Patan and Bhadgaon
to all the valley
to vast plains outside
to hills
to snow mountains
to sky
to earth

Yet
the sound of the mid-day cannon couldn't act as a greeting for you
You couldn't become history
For some reason history won't be able to last any more in this country

These and others of Toya Gurung's poems can be read in her poetry collections Dewal Ghumepachhi.

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ABOUT TOWN

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EATING OUT

- ❖ **Peking Duck** And other Chinese delicacies by Chef Tiyong Fan from China. Tien Shan Chinese restaurant. Hotel Shangri La. 412999
- ❖ **Breakfast with birds** Lunch with butterflies, dinner with fireflies. Traditional Nepali, Indian and Chinese cuisine. Farm House Café in the Park Village Hotel, Buddhanilkantha. 373935
- ❖ **Barbecue at the Ropes** Barbecue for lunch and dinner. Over 20 dishes to choose from, view of the Himalayas. The Sky Terrace, Hotel Everest. Reservations recommended. 488100
- ❖ **Curry Factory** Veg and non-veg curries. Dessert of the day. Rice, naan, salads, and one draft beer or soft drink free. Special rates for vegetarians, groups. 7pm-10.30pm. 15-22 July. The Fun Café, Radisson Hotel 411818
- ❖ **Friday night Sekuwa** (BBQ) Appetisers, momos, salads, main courses and desserts, one complimentary beer. Rs 699 per head. Throughout the monsoon at Dwarika's Hotel. 479488
- ❖ **Weekend swimming and lunch** Family of four—Rs 900. Aroma Sports centre, Sanepa. 521516, 98103-0859
- ❖ **Rox Restaurant and Bar** Family-style dining, cocktails, desserts, music. Happy Hour 6pm-9pm. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234
- ❖ **LaSoon Restaurant and Vinotheque** Lunch, tea and dinner with European and American food, fine wines. Pulchowk. 535290
- ❖ **Wet and Wild Summer** Swimming in a cool pool and a buffet lunch. Saturdays at Godavari Village Resort. Adults Rs 600, children Rs 350. Taxes extra. 560675, 560775
- ❖ **Mango Tango** Exotic mangoes desserts Hotel de l' Annapurna. All food and beverage outlets.
- ❖ **Exotic Nepali Food.** Mongolian Restaurant and Bar. Exotic Nepali food, dhindo, gundruk, good family environment. Putalisadak, 425454
- ❖ **Saturday splash** Swimming and brunch. The Cafe & Poolside, 11am onwards. Rs 555, Rs 299 for children under three ft. Everest Hotel. 488100



MUSIC

- ❖ **For The Love of Rock!** Re-scheduled 2 July concert. Old tickets still valid. 25 percent discount on tickets bought at Suwal, New Road and Lazimpat before 15 July. Scout Headquarters, Lainchaur. 3pm, 21 July, Rs 200.
- ❖ **Himalatte Café** Live acoustic music by Dinesh Rai and Deependra every Friday, 7.30pm-10pm. Free. Thamel. 262526
- ❖ **The Upstairs Jazz Bar** Cadenza plays every Saturday night. 7.30pm-10pm. Rs 200

EVENTS

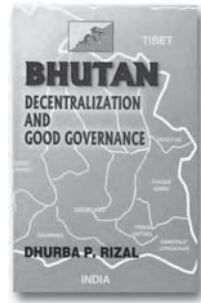
- ❖ **Dwarika's Anytime Escape** Overnight accommodation with afternoon tea, cocktail, six-course dinner, breakfast, massage and yoga. \$130 per couple. Dwarika's Hotel. 479488.
- ❖ **Contemporary Jazz Dance** Classes at the Alliance Française by Meghana Thapa. Thrice weekly. Alliance Française. 241163, 242832
- ❖ **Weekly cocktail, monthly beer** Buy one get one free. The Radisson Corner Bar. 411818
- ❖ **Club Oasis** Tennis on Astroturf courts, a spa treat or a workout in the city's best gym. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu
- ❖ **August Affair in Pokhara** Two-night weekend package includes meals, live music, extra bed for children under 12 years, meals, airport transfers. Mango festival. Hotel Shangri La, Pokhara. 412999
- ❖ **Nagarkot Escape** Weekends in cottages, views of valleys and forests. Special rates for Nepalis and resident expats. Hotel Keyman Chautari. keyman@wlink.com.np. 436850, 423128

MEETING

- ❖ **Friends of the Bagmati River** Monday, 16 July, 3pm at Dwarika's Hotel. New membership is open to all. 479488
- ❖ **Medical Camp** Second free St. Xavier's School medical camp. Interested medical alumni welcome to volunteer. 28 July 10am-5pm, St. Xavier's Godavari. Dr KD Joshi. 527262

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

BOOKWORM

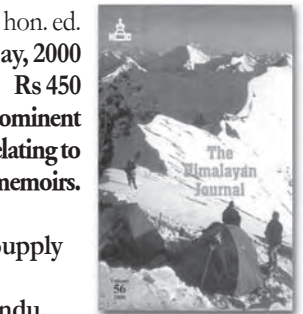


Bhutan: Decentralization and Good Governance Dhurba P Rizal
Adroit Publishers, New Delhi, 2001

Rs 280

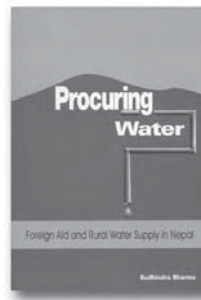
An analysis of the various dimensions of decentralisation from Shabdrung Thuchen Nawang Namgyal until today. The study delves into the pseudo-efforts of the king and ruling elite to make the system appear democratic to outsiders, especially donors.

The Himalayan Journal Harish Kapadia, hon. ed.
The Himalayan Club, Bombay, 2000



Rs 450

Essays on the world of climbing, skiing, mountaineering training, and its prominent figures and expeditions. Also included are expedition notes and book reviews relating to all matters Himalayan, including politics, climbing, tourism, culture and memoirs.



Procuring Water: Foreign Aid and Rural Water Supply in Nepal Sudhindra Sharma

Nepal Water Conservation Foundation, Kathmandu, 2001

Rs 400

What is the provision of water by the state all about? Although the official reason for involvement in water supply and sanitation is to ensure adequate supply, sanitation coverage and service levels, this book argues that in the hills and the tarai, the rationale for external support is different from the established convention.

The Tibetans: A Struggle to Survive Steve Lehman and Robbie Barnett
Virgin Books, London, 1999

Rs 1,800

Lehman's photographs capture the splendour and ruin of contemporary Tibet from 1987 to 1997. Barnett's essay provides historical and political perspective. Jampal Tsering, a prominent grassroots independence activist offers a first-hand account of key events in Tibet's pro-independence movement.



Courtesy Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 227711, mandala@ccsl.com.np

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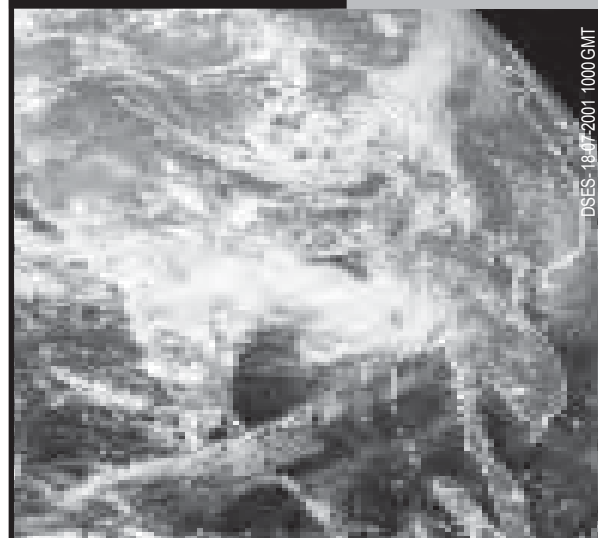
YAK YETI YAK

by MIKU



NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



The present low pressure belt along the northern Ganga plain is favourable for the monsoon to pick up and rebuild its flagging strength. The satellite image taken Wednesday evening shows a stormy Bay of Bengal indicating additional supply of moisture-rich winds which will head our way next week. Because the low pressure trough is shifting eastward from its location around eastern Uttar Pradesh last week, central and eastern Nepal will receive concentrated rainfall while showers will be sporadic in the west. Last weekend's monsoon wave dropped rain to semi-parched paddy fields—especially in the tarai and inner tarai. The next wave may not be as favourable to northwestern Nepal. The humid and warm climate will continue with daily variation of temperature of up to 10°C in Kathmandu.

KATHMANDU

| Fri | Sat | Sun | Mon | Tue |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | | | |
| 30-20 | 30-21 | 28-19 | 29-20 | 28-20 |

BBC on FM 102.4

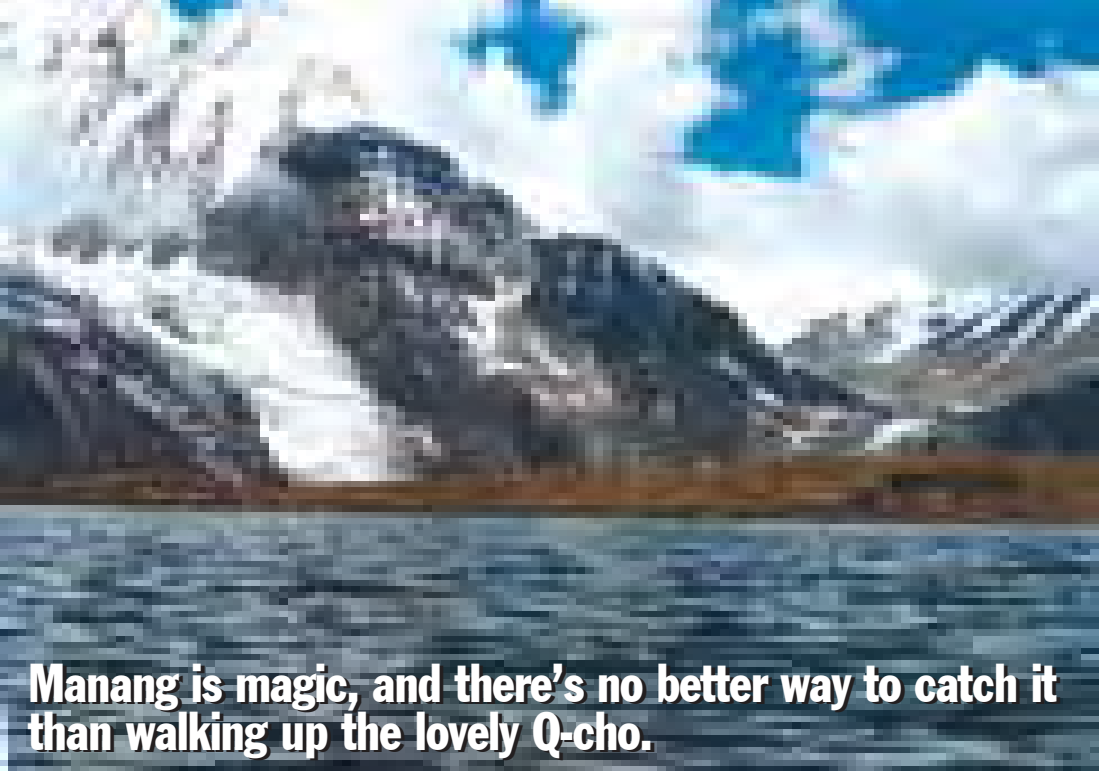
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| Sat | 0615-0645 | BBC Science in Action |
| Sun | 0615-0645 | BBC Agenda |
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OFF THE BEATEN TREK



SALIL SUBEDI

Manang is magic, and there's no better way to catch it than walking up the lovely Q-cho.

SALIL SUBEDI

Early morning climbs up Q-cho are enchanting. It is a magical combination—the light morning breeze, fresh dew on the grass and the sight of Lamjung, Annapurna I, IV and III, Tilicho, Gangapurna's glacier and heart-shaped lake, peaks glistening across the Marsyangdi gorge on the southern side of Manang. On the north are Pisang, Thorong and Chulu (I and II). And under the snow line of the mountains are evergreen pine forests, home to finches and pheasants.

The Q-cho, at 4,200m, a good 1,500m lower than the lower trekking peaks, is on the north-east side, a gradual three-hour ascent from the villages of Bhraga or Manang. Starting from Manang village, an easy twenty-

minute climb gets you to a small shrine perched on a hillock. Love-stricken couples are known to make offerings here before eloping. If you really want to get away from it all, the real climb begins here. The trail winds slowly up through a deserted village with ruins of stone houses. Along the way, you encounter shepherds huddled behind small rocks, making fires and cooking as their Tibetan Mastiffs glide around majestically. We surprised a little pup into barking violently.

The climb is gradual, sure, but the track never levels off. Still, don't worry about getting tired—the landscape is rejuvenating, and inspiring. During this time of the year, there is a riot of yellow, violet and red Himalayan flowers, blooming as if tomorrow

didn't matter. There are birds on the wing and blue sheep, yaks and horses dotting the mountain slopes. A pair of Himalayan falcon and their hatchlings allowed us to stop and stare at their nest, tucked away in a small bush. The high altitude slopes above the trails are also migrating routes of snow leopards.

If there is one feature of the walking that stands out, it is the soft grassy trail that yields as you tread on it, cushioning your every step. An early start ensures less time under the scorching sun. But eventually, the hills appear, one by one, and walking

can become a game of catch with the sun. You climb facing north, and behind you the mountains on the south keep changing colour. And that's the charm of it—when you break to rest, you see the amazing swiftness with which the climatic conditions and views change at this altitude.

As you near the peak, clouds start to curtain the peaks. The view is still remarkable. It is essential to camp on Q-cho, somewhere near the lake preferably, if you want to see a breathtakingly crystal morning. But if you are a good trekker, no worries—start from Manang at five in the morning. We did at six, and there were still wonderful views aplenty.

The northern flank of Q-cho also has a rather curious feature. About two-and-a-half hours up, you come across a small lake, a pond almost, about 150m wide, with the curious name of The Sister of Q-cho. If it is too shallow for your taste, well, its big sister is just a quarter of a km away. Residents of the area say the little lake was formed when the larger one burst.

Every summer, young and old visit this holy lake in the belief that during this time one can see the



SALIL SUBEDI

palace of the gods inside the lakes. The catch is, you have to gaze at it upside down. Many claim to have actually seen this underwater wonderworld. And if you lie with your head sloping down, southwards... well, there's certainly something in the story. The Annapurna range appears to simply grow out of the lake, and on a calm day, the water is like finest silvered glass. No wonder that many believe prayers and offerings made to Q-cho are always rewarded.

Q-cho is one of the many gems of Manang. Here you can contemplate everything your heart desires. The sounds of the place never intrude, but only enhance the

trance-like state it is so easy to achieve here—yak bells, sometimes the distant fluttering and splashing of migrating ducks, and Pegasus-like white horses appearing suddenly out of nowhere to drink from the lake.

It is only while descending that you realise how high you've come. The villages of Bhraga, Manang and Tenki look like miniature models.

It is nice that hardly any trekkers come here, but this is the best way to understand the lay of the land and also to acclimatise before attempting the Thorong-La. And then there is the tranquil lake of magic to transport you anywhere in the universe.

Go here. The spirits will bless you. I know, I felt it. ♦

HAPPENINGS



PRADEEP SHRESTHA

SLC RESULTS: Police baton charge students waiting outside the Gorkhapatra office on 16 July for a copy of the paper containing their school exam results. Only 31 percent of the more than 200,000 students who took the test passed.



BANGDEL'S PROTEGES: Artist Lain Singh Bangdel casts an approving eye at the work of participants at the "Mother Needs You" childrens' painting competition organised by the Green Team of the Soaltee Crown Plaza on 17 July.



MIN BAIRAGHARVA

YOUNG HANDS: Children pushing a rickshaw delivering a steel gate along the main street in Gorahi in Dang District on 17 July.

Duracell



Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Get rich quick

Some good news at last: Nepal has leap-frogged by 15 points in international poverty rankings. Instead of being the 144th poorest country in the world, we have now zoomed to 129th, leaving laggards like Burkina Faso, Chad and Guinea Bissau trailing far, far behind. This is indeed a remarkable achievement, and full credit must go jointly to the total hands-off policy towards governance of the ruling party, and the extremely effective standstill policy of the opposition.



It is a matter of simple arithmetic: the rate at which we are moving up UNDP's poverty ladder, Nepal will catch up with Nauru in the next five years, max. In fact, the observant among you will have already noticed signs of our new-found prosperity. Notice the new multimillion rupee welcome arch to the fair city of Patan at Bagmati Pool which has been under construction now for the past four months. Notice the ambitious southbound Tundikhel perimeter road, which one day, when construction finally winds down in the middle of the next century, will be an eight-lane highway. Look at the oodles of gadgets you can win by simply purchasing a packet of Buy-Buy instant noodles.

There is so much cash lying around in Nepal that the country has become a magnet for reputed global investment bankers and mutual fund managers who want to advise us on a sound investment portfolio in international equity markets. But these are fly-by-nights. Don't believe them. Put your trust instead in gentlemen of honour like Mr John Okon, Manager of the Orient Bank of Nigeria, Lagos, who has just sent us an attractive investment offer: he will deposit \$12 million immediately to our secret bank account anywhere in the world, no questions asked. If your first instinct is: "Where do I sign?" your first instinct is right on. When you get an offer like this, you take it and run. Mr Okon reminds us gently that we may first need to deposit a nominal amount of, say, \$100,000 in the Orient Bank of Nigeria as earnest money—peanuts compared to the prospect of swimming in 12 million cool smackeroots.

Investment bankers like Mr Okon tried hard to convince businessmen in Thailand, Malaysia and Taiwan about what a foolproof way to get rich—quick!—this was. But he found them cautious and unwilling to take risks. So he has moved to Nepal where he has come across a fine can-do attitude of entrepreneurship, a heartening spirit of capitalist enterprise and a willingness to believe there are plenty of free lunches in the universe. Nepali investors have needed no convincing, they know a good deal when it is staring at them in the face.

The other get-rich-quick plan offering Nepalis fabulous earning potentials is the lucrative Pyramid Scheme. After its spectacular success in Albania, where pyramid investors turned the once destitute Stalinist economy into an even more destitute capitalist country with no economy, the scheme has at last been introduced to Nepal. About time, too, that the world noticed the investment potential that is Nepal's emerging market. With the pyramid scheme, Nepalis now have a foolproof opportunity to double their investment, all you need, to start with, is to recruit three other suckers like you and get your money back!

Now that the Nigerians and Albanians are here, our economy is headed towards boom time. It is only a question of time before Nepal overtakes Luxembourg in the UNDP's Development Index. ♦

NEPALI SOCIETY

A voice of Nepal

Reader in Nepali and Himalayan Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, Michael Hutt's phone often rings with queries about the country. "Every year, a foreign journalist discovers the Kumari," says Hutt, referring to the most-often asked question. His advice to interested individuals—read The Cult of Kumari, by Michael Allen. "I doubt if they do, though." Others want to know about mahouts. "I've sat on an elephant. I know what the back of an elephant looks like. But that's about it," says Hutt who first arrived in Nepal as a raw and romantic 20-year-old in 1978.

Then a student of modern Hindi literature at the SOAS, he was looking for traditional Nepali handmade paper to write on, and decided he liked Nepal

better. Fortunately, Hutt does know people who know more about mahouts. Adds the British academic on a more serious note, "Sometimes it's a big responsibility. People expect you to know things you don't. What worries me is that I'm not Nepali."

That didn't keep Hutt from writing his 1984 doctoral dissertation on the history of Nepali and how it became the national language (later published as Nepali: A National Language and its Literature), or from putting together Himalayan Voices in the summer of 1988. An anthology of translations of Nepali poems and short stories, the book is aimed at people who know of Nepal but not much about the country's literature, and features works of mainstream Nepali litterateurs.

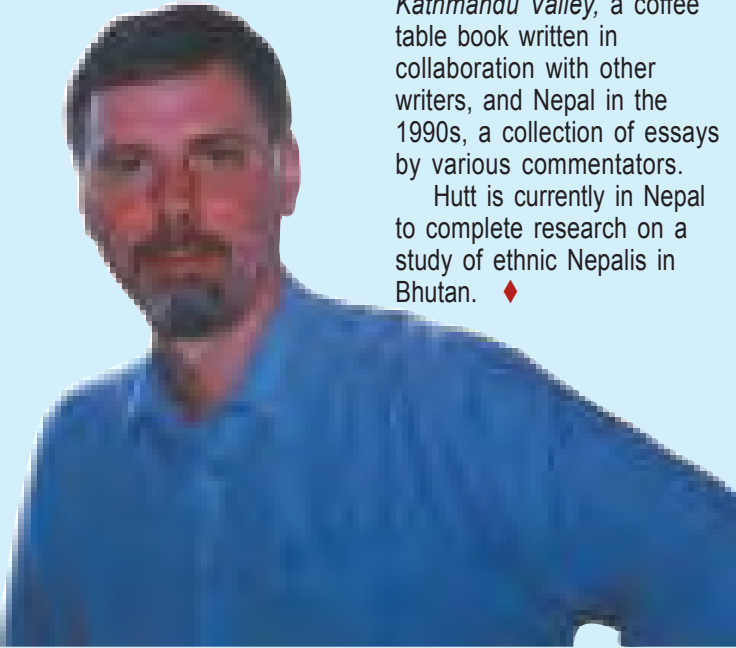
"Though it does include Parijat, it doesn't hold enough on progressive writers," says Hutt. Looking back, he says,

he sees himself as a fairly naïve, youngish, foreigner not quite aware of the factions, allegiances, and social undercurrents that marked the Panchayat era. "The literature then was quite stark, really," says Hutt. "But it was important because what poets

couldn't say straight, they could say in an inventive and allegorical way."

As a spin-off of Himalayan Voices, Hutt published a modern literary reader for advanced Nepali learners. Other publications include *Art and Architecture of Kathmandu Valley*, a coffee table book written in collaboration with other writers, and Nepal in the 1990s, a collection of essays by various commentators.

Hutt is currently in Nepal to complete research on a study of ethnic Nepalis in Bhutan. ♦



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Times

Under My Hat

Kunda Dixit



Thompson