



14 - 20 September 2001



20 pages

REVOLUTIONARY JOURNEYS

his was our royal massacre," wrote one American diplomat who had served in Kathmandu, linking the sense of shock and dismay that overtook the United States on Monday morning.

Sunu Pratap KC, an IT specialist, was near the Pentagon across the Potomac River in Washington DC when the airliner ploughed into the uilding. "I was in middle of a meeting two blocks away from the White House when it happened and our building was evacuated mmediately," he told us. "It was very scary, like a Hollywood movie. There were secret service personnel and FBI all over, and F-16s were flying above."

As we go to press, we have no word of Nepalis caught in the carnage at the World Trade Center. At least a dozen Nepalis work in the Twin Towers and surrounding area, and it is possible that a few may have perished. Mrs Kamal Karki, who worked in one of the two buildings, was saved because she had taken leave that day. Sharmila Mahat, who also worked in World Trade Center, arrived late and so survived

At one level, there was uncanny resemblance in the bewildering acts of terror that struck Kathmandu on 1 June and the Eastern Seaboard on 11 September. The sheer volume of killings was made possible by modern technology. In Naravanhiti, it was the terrible power of automatic weapons able to spray a oomful of royalty. In New York City, and before stunned viewers worldwide, it was the ability of suicidially-minded extremists to convert sleek commercial airliners into deadly guided missiles.

Unlike earlier times, New York City is now home to thousands of the Nepali diaspora Bond traders on Wall Street to doctors and

> $\Delta PC$ CONTRACTOR .

SHOULD SHOW THE Commence of the latest

\* Day of the Control of the Con-

Michigan States



students, United Nations employees and visa overstavers all work and survive in the refuse of the most cosmopolitan city in the world. Many work in news-stands in lower Manhattan

Nepalis are still new migrants in New York City, and by and large still at the base of the conomic ladder. This may have been a saving grace: the "demography" of New York skyscrapers is such that the more important your company, the higher you are. And the more important you are within your company the further up is your office. It took senior executives up to an hour to run down the fire escapes at the World Trade Centres, those on the lower floors were out in minutes.

Shock and grief is already giving way to anger. There are references to Pearl Harbor, and Americans consider themselves at war. But with whom? This is the work of a faceless and disenfranchised community, one so aggrieved and hopeless that it combines all its ingenuity ınd anger into a meticulously calculated carnage designed for maximum casualties and magnification by global media. These are the people economic globalisation and a fiercely unilateral America have left out. America can only tackle global terrorism targeted at itself by being more inclusive and less exclusive.

And you won't stop these people with a missile

defence shield. They may be in the cities with biological and chemical suitcase bombs next. while America's orbital eyes look down for infra-red signals of a missile launch from a rogue state".

Richard Falk, a political scientist at Princeton, told students Tuesday: "The thinking is to find the perpetrators and engage in a military response and feel that that solves something. But there needs to be an understanding of why this kind of suicidal violence could be undertaken against our country. As grief is overtaken by anger, President

George W Bush promises to "hunt down" the perpetrators and Colin Powell announces preparations for "war". We are looking at a world that will be a changed place in the days to come—whether it is a cruise missile attack on Afghanistan, or surgical strikes done at Washington's behest by proxies. Within the United States there is already

backlash against Arab-looking and Muslim communities. To many untutored Americans made ignorant of the world by an insular nedia and education, the distinction between a South Asian and an Arab too is not all that clear. (On the streets, American Sikhs are being heckled.) And let us remember that some of the "wheat-coloured" Nepalis making

ip a growing part of that immigrani population are also vulnerable.

11 September 2001 will also impact Nepali society and economy. It will be harder to enter the United States as the doors of Fortress America close further. Tourism will be hurt as Americans keep away, and others avoid hotspots in Asia. The Thais are already predicting a 15 percent drop in tourism earnings for the rest of the year, and India will be hit. Nepal's tourism, just barely beginning to pick up after the royal massacre and news of political instability,

All over the world, the horrific audacity of the act of mass terror holds within it the seeds of further terror. It is an example for others who may just be individually mad, or instilled with the fire of certitude that makes them destroyers and mass murderers of innocents. South Asia has seen enough carnage, and Nepal itself is not the Shangri La it was.

will be affected

Ashok Gurung is a development specialist who works in mid-town Manhattan. He writes: "We are still in total disbelief. While our immediate family and friends are safe, we are saddened by the enormity of the loss and the impact of this unbelievable devastation."



# The world's resist reliable UPS for PCs & Servers. Despite a last product for period and product and providing transfer. A typo has cost a Norwegian-Nepali joint-venture for RINOD RHATTARAL School Street

I is one more episode in Nepal's privatisation saga: there is going to be a fourth retender for the handover of Butwal informed the Power Company, a deal seen by donors and foreign investors Privatisation Cell as a bell-weather for Nepal's seriousness about inviting private in writing," says

business.

The difficial reason this time is a typographical error. And Round Four of the bidding promises to be different from those before because one of the two rival groups bidding for the hydropower company, Norway's Intervart, has decided it is fed in Nepal. "Verbally,

hydroporet company. Norwisy's Intellivant, has except in a way.
Firance Minister Fam Sharan Mahat and Minister for Water
Firance Minister Fam Sharan Mahat and Minister for Water
Resources Bijay aCarchhedra suggested that the money
offered in the last round was not enough and that Internal's bid
control to the state of the state and on financial grounds. A mistake is a mistake and the committee decided it could not be allowed."

The mistake: in the bond where bidders had to mention the

number of shares about a dozen times, Interkraft slipped up. It put down Rs 7,292,932 once and the accurate Rs 6,292,932 in every other instance. Interkraft Nepal had tendered one joint bid, the only one to reach the final financial round ("BPC's ation saga," #57). The Norwegians and its Nepali back say the government has tested its patience enough. "We discovered the typo in the bid about a week after

to consider the proposal of Mahat and Gachchedar for re-tendering on 10 September. On the same day Pradhan and his group wrote in offering to review their offer (price) as circum-stances had changed since they put in their bid. The same letter says the group hoped it would be given an opportunity to negotiate with government before the final decision was taken— as had been done in the past. That did not happen and by late evening Monday, it was final; there was to be a re-tender,

Interkraft and its Nenali nartners suspect there is more to the BPC privatisation process than meets the eye. For instance, they say, why was the "mistake" initially ignored and later used as the reason for disqualification on a technicality?

"We've decided not to re-bid, because now we have begun to think they want something we cannot give," Pradhan told us. One of his partners added: "They may as well set a floor price this time so those who don't want to pay as much will not waste

Interkraft and its partners had offered Rs730 million for BPC, cash down. The rival Chaudhary Group, which did not make it past the technical evaluation, later made it public that it had offered Rs820 million—70 percent cash, the rest payable within two years, secured by pledging 50 percent of shares acquired in the purchase. The Group was said to have been involved in behind-the-scenes lobbying to prevent Interkraft

from getting BPC.

BPC is now back on the privatisation list, but still ahead of about 12 other planned divestments. Background work on the 12 has been completed and the privatisation cell for each can be readied to accept tenders with three months' notice, should the government recommend it. We asked Douglas Clarke, adviser to the Privatisation Cell in the Ministry of Finance, to comment on the BPC developments. "In my opinion a total re-tender is

unwise," was all he would say.

The government's privatisation efforts are backed by
Norway and Britain's Department for International Development (DfID) which has spent £2.6 million on it in the past four years Britain's Independent Power Company which sent in a joint bid with the Chaudhary Group in the previous round was noncommittal this time.

Whatever the outcome of the BPC drama the government will have a lot of explaining to do at negotiations for the next phase of privatisation support which began last week.

### EVERY FRIDAY AND TURSDAY TO LONDON



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# CRYING WOLF BEFORE MAO'S TIGER

While the terrorist attacks on American civilian targets confound the mind, the Maoist problem back in our Himalavan mid-hills will not go away. The uncontrolled situation of the past week may be a harbinge of the days to come, when no one is in charge and citizens are left to fend for themselves. Certainly, the Maoists are not showing the forbear ance for a party that seeks a negotiated solution-mass meetings calling for uprising, and rejection of the system of government at hand, radical slogans and all-out extortion, which has let go of all semblance of propriety. In the middle of all this, the government is nowhere to be seen, while the Prime Minister is seen everywhere, spending hours at length at seminars of feminism in South Asia and book launches. The Royal Palace seems confident it can handle the situation if the country goes over the brink, but does not seem in any hurry to make the army respond to the developing situation. Human rights activists of a particular shade of pale, meanwhile, are mum about Maoist activities, but alltoo-ready to condemn a non-existent government for trying to derail talks following stray incidents of firings by the army. A national farce is what they seem to think human rights activism is , and it is doubtful that they will be around to tackle the human rights situation when it truly begins to deteriorate—either under an authoritarian monarchy or a Maoist dictatorship.

Faced with an inactive Deuba, a fire-breathing Prachanda and holdyour-fire King, the public in parts has taken it upon itself to respond to the Maoists. It is an escalating trend-villagers in widely separated regions are reacting against the Maoists cadre at the local level. While some may see a positive development in this, vigilantism is the proof of the absence of the state, where societal complaints are tackled violently and without recourse to the government administration, the courts, village leadership or community elders. Also, it often tends to be part of the destabilising endgame in societies, the moment before everything goes completely out of hand and it is every individual for himself. This is also the moment when the thugs come out of the woodwork to take advantage of the situation, goons masquerading as Maoists or anti-Maoists, Much more importantly, in Nepal, with its enormous diversity in population (which the Maoists do not seem to have understood—see their nuritanical edict on alcohol) the reaction against Maoists can often pit community against community. This is partly what happened in Parsa, where some people capitalised on the brewing hill-plains disenchantment (about the citizenship bill, land reform, extortion of plainsmen by overwhelmingly parbate Maobadi) to

attack the settlement of a certain community. This kind of collective pratikar, or violent reaction can also ignite elsewhere in the country between different communities. Unless the Maoists manage to find themselves a safe landing in mainstream society, we could, very soon, be playing with communal

In the absence of such a safe landing, chances are there will be not so much a Maoist war as a plethora of actions, by the police, the army, the Maoists, the public,

National energy will be frittered away on an unprecedented scale. And it will end, if our audaciously supine, tragically silent parliament and its members fail to act, with an authoritarian putsch of one kind of another. When that happens is when we will really need human rights activists. But will they be there? Not likely. It is easy to be active today, pontificating against an un-reactive and humiliated government. If there is a takeover, it will soon be clear what activism means, more than it was in the Panchavat era or in the intervening years of democracy. That is when the unsullied members of the Kathmandu intelligentsia will have to stand up courageously for human rights, press freedom, and the right to gather and engage openly in politics. Do not expect those who raise their fists at the Maoists in greeting rather than defiance today to mediate their safe landing or stand up for a plural society when the

time comes to fight for it. Perhaps it is time to take away the term 'human rights activist' from the many Nepalis who wear this signifier on their lapels. Like 'environmentalist', another misused term, 'human rights activists' is what others call you because of courage shown in the face of personal harm. It is not a name you unilaterally commandeer for your use, or simply to register an NGO that will work for—take your pick—child rights, women's rights, refugee rights, prisoner rights. 'Human rights

activist' is a term you have to earn. When things start to go down, the real human rights activists will arise. As for the rest, if they cry wolf too often they might not recognise the authoritarian tiger at the door.



# An unstable tripod M

# The Maoists, the palace and the Indian connection make for treacherous, confusing realpolitik.

army dithered-leading to the resignation of

Girija Prasad Koirala the next morning.

blame on the person of the late or present

different kettle of fish altogether. Back in

1981, BP Koirala enunciated the difference

between the institution of kingship and the

palace establishment in an interview to the

Amrita Bazaar Patrika: "The palace is a bizarre

affair. It isn't a monolith, so to speak. There is

the king and there are also other lobbies in the

powers also have their own spokesmen in the

mportant in a unipolar world, but there are

always aspiring regional powers who want to flex their muscles. And, within the palace, it is

clear that the apparatchiks are very much there

from earlier times, and the days when they

wielded absolute power in the name of the

Panchavati monarch must seem once more

tantalisingly close to the grasp.
While an alliance between the palace and

the southern power may seem too far-fetched.

coincidence of interest that comes about as a

result of the instability brought about by the

Maoist conflagration. Girija Koirala's fears, at

the very least, need to be seen as more than the

rantings of a politician out of a job. And

perhaps then we can see what he is pointing

at—the extraordinary degree of complacency

vis-à-vis the Maoist insurgency shown by the

it is not unlikely that there is a momentary

palace. I shall not be surprised if the big

palace." 'Big powers' have become less

While it would be sacrilegious to lay

king, the establishment called the 'palace' is a

irija Prasad Koirala has once again caused a tempest in the caused a tempest in the teacup that is Kathmandu high-society. The Nepali elite takes pride in its double-standards: while whispering about the links between India, the palace and the Maoist insurgency is de rigueur at private gatherings, you aren't supposed to voice such concerns within the earshot of the hoi polloi. So it is not what Girijababu said that has raised hackles, but the when, where and how of his statements. By thinking aloud in public, he has questioned the political

correctness of the capital's establishment. You don't have to be a James Bond to figure out that the Maoist insurgency depends on supply-lines from India, Earlier reports that Comrade Prachanda had travelled to London on an Indian passport remain unconfirmed. out the fact that he holds court in Siliguri has been verified by a bevy of leftist leaders who travelled to the Chicken Neck for an audience with him just a few weeks ago. Certainly, the Maoists have bases and safe houses south of

the border, and training camps to boot. It would be being grossly disrespectful to the hawk-eyed Indian intelligence units to allege that they have been unaware of plots being hatched right under their noses against the very system of government of a friendly neighbouring country. Direct complicity of the Indian government is not established, and may be too much to claim, but there is no doubt that Indian intelligence agencies have been looking away as the Maoists have gone about procuring weapons in the arms bazaars of

Bihar, UP and West Bengal. Similarly, King Birendra may not have had a "working unity" with the Maoists as Dr Baburam Bhattarai claims, but you do not need another Sherlock Holmes to understand that the palace has played a hand in preventing the army from mobilising against the insur-

gents, disallowing Singha Darbar the kind of potential power every government needs when confronted with an insurgency. No thanks to Naravanhiti, the Nepal Police must be the only civilian nolice in the world to have fought an organised insurgency entirely on its own, without so much as moral support from the Royal

By asserting to Krishna Prasad Bhattarai that the Royal Nepal Army was his own to employ, King Birendra cut the prime minister o the sovereign people to size, and boosted the morale of the likes of Ram Bahadur Thapa, alias

Comrade Badal, commandante of the Indian establishment and the palace together. "people's army". When Maoist insurgent Meanwhile, how is it that the Maoists have not went on a rampage in Dunai, Royal Nepal attracted a critical reference from either source Army soldiers in nearby harracks heard the when even stray remarks by senile Nepali carnage but did not lift a finger. When Holer Congress leaders creates flutters within ode indicated a sudden turnaround with Naravanhiti and the mouthpieces of the the deployment of the military and a first-Indian embassy. time show of force by the government, the

Perhaps all this hair-splitting is quite unnecessary. When the two most important politicos of the country—the chairperson of the ruling party and the chief of the main opposition in parliament—agree on as important an issue as the nature of the threa facing the nation and democracy – and the possible role of the palace and India in that regard — no further proof may be said to be needed Comrade Madhay Kumar Nepal and Girija Prasad Koirala together vindicate those who believe in some Indian and palace involvement in coddling the Maoists. And when the Maoists publicly profess their opposition to both India and the palace, the eem to protest too loudly.

And therein lies another lesson for Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba: the key to solving the Maoist problem lies in balancing the interests of South Block and Narayanhiti without compromising the aspirations of common Nenalis Nobodydoubts the nationalist credentials of the Maoist rank and file, but the leadership of insurgencies are prone to being manipulated by those who provide them systemance and shelter Meanwhile in a society like ours, prime ministers antago nise the powerful palace establishment at

Let us wish Deuba well, because we either sink or swim depending on how the Maoist insurgency comes to an end. Nepal is once in one of those quagmires of history when all forces opposed to democracy are aligned against the sovereignty and integrity of the

country. The palpable fear that Nepali on the trail has its reasons. A question mark hang over the very survival of Nepa since the promulgation of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990. It might have had a wanting, but it is the kind of society to lead us into the future. Let India understand the need to mactively support Nepali nocracy, and let the palace know that in pandering to the Maniete it playe with a fire that will engulf itself

# Fighting an invisible enemy

WASHINGTON - Tuesday's devastating and astonishingly well-coordinated attacks on the World Trade Center towers in New York and on the Pentagon outside of Washington plunged the nation into a warlike struggle against an enemy that will be hard to identify with certainty and hard to punish with precision.

The whole nation—to a degree the whole world-shook as hijacked airliners plunged into buildings that symbolise the financial and military might of the United States. The sense of security and selfconfidence that Americans take as their birthright suffered a grievous blow. Recovery will be slow and the aftershocks will be nearly as bad, as hundreds and possibly thousands of people discover that friends or relatives died awful fiery deaths.

As Washington struggled to regain a sense of equilibrium, with warplanes and heavily armed helicopters crossing overhead, present and past national security officials debated the possibility of a Congressional declaration of warbut against whom, and in what exact circumstances? Warships were manoeuvring to protect New York and Washington. The North American Air Defense Command, which had seemed to many a relic of the cold war, adopted a posture of heightened alert and suddenly seemed relevant

At the height of the Cuban missile crisis, when the sense of danger was just as palpable, John F Kennedy stayed in Washington, but President Bush only flew back to Washington Tuesday night escorted by F-15 and F-16 fighters Leaders of both parties closed ranks behind him and in a brief, earnest televised speech, he said the day had taken "thousands of lives" and generated "a quiet, unyielding anger" in the nation. He promised that those who harboured terrorists would be treated as harshly as the terrorists themselves

For Bush the attacks constituted a threat and an opportunity. A minority president just a few months into his term. and derided by many as intellectually inadequate, he is likely to be judged in the months ahead on whether he can take command. Will be prove to be a Jimmy Carter, whose presidency was poisoned by his inability to resolve the Iranian hostage crisis? Or will he enhance his reputation, as Ronald Reagan did after the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger and as Bill Clinton did after the Oklahoma City bombing?

Samuel Popkin, a political scientist at the University of California at San Diego. who worked in the presidential campaign of Al Gore, said: "Many Americans have come to consider politics irrelevant in recent years. Now politicians matter again, and the president, in his role as commander in chief, becomes our focal point." In a statement made at an air hase in Louisiana. Bush said that "the resolve of our great nation is being tested" and pledged to meet it. Arizona's Senator John McCain, Bush's sometime Republican rival, said he was confident the culprits would be caught and severely punished and that the president would ensure something like this will never happen again." These comments set the bar perhaps too high.

The public will rise to the challenge;

many in the buildings hit reacted with almost supernatural calm. But Bush alone must decide how to retaliate and against whom, and he will be operating in a murky area. "We're better than we used to be at monitoring terrorist activities, but today makes it obvious we are not nearly good enough," a senior intelligence official conceded. Preventing another attack will be very difficult and while identifying malefactors after an arrack is relatively easier, experts caution against assuming, for example, that the attacks were the handiwork of Osama bin Laden. Even if Washington concludes that

terrorist group was responsible, devising an appropriate response will present complications. For one, bombs and rockets tend to kill the innocent and the guilty. Some strategists suggest that Bush might mount a ground attack on bin Laden's headquarters, believed to be somewhere in Afghanistan, much as Woodrow Wilson sent American troops into Mexico before World War I to capture Pancho Villa dead or alive. But they did not get him. And Afghanistan has proved resistant, throughout its history, to foreign forces trying to

his organisation or some other foreign

If the US develops solid evidence that any country aided the perpetrators of the attacks, said Richard C Holbrooke, ambassador to the UN under the Clinton administration, a declaration of war against that country might be appropriate and retaliation should certainly be undertaken. Another consideration is the attitude of the Middle Eastern oil states to any retaliatory attack by the US, which remains uncertain. Many Americans, particularly those old enough to remember 7 December, 1941, compared

operate there.

today's events to the Japanese attack on decisions take chances, even to fly from Pearl Harbor. This was Pearl Harbor redux without the face of an enemy. In this anomalous situation, Bush is likely to avail himself fully of the knowledge. experience and prestige of his secretary state, retired Gen Colin Powell. The president "needs Colin like he's never needed him before," an administration official said.

It appears possible that the attacks will undercut Bush's campaign for a missile defence shield by suggesting that such a shield would concentrate American resources on seeking protection against the wrong kind of threat. People who wish the US ill "don't need missiles to do this country harm," Professor Popkin argued, "and we saw that clearly this morning." Or, the attacks might persuade the American public that everything possible should be done to protect the nation. It will be up to Bush to make that case. If he makes it well, it will be harder for the Democrats to mount a partisan assault on his plan.

It will be up to him as well, perhaps even more important, to keep the country from entering a kind of psychic bomb shelter, reluctant to make

one city to another. One of the most important contributions to Londoners morale during the Battle of Britain was made by King George VI, who calmly toured the city despite the blitz.

Inevitably, the attacks will make daily life in the US complicated. Security will be tightened and airpor checks will be stricter. It will be harde to get about. At past moments of national tension, like the Cold War, civil liberties have come under pressure Senator Joseph R Biden, a Democrat. warned that "if we alter our basic freedoms, our civil liberties, change the way we function as a democratic society then we will have lost the war before it has begun in earnest."

And what of the nation's economy, the main preoccupation of much of the nation Although the stock market remained closed Tuesday, Karen P Hughes, Bush's counsellor, was at pains to state that the rest of the economic system functioned normally. But it was by no definition a normal day, and sooner or later its hellish events are bound to affect the economy in some way-probably not for the better.

secretive ways and corruption

within, its extra-constitutional

nexus with the army, its dirty

intriques, What about Kot Parba

and Bhandarkhal Parba, or the

sad end of Bhimsen Thapa? The

palace failed to maintain

transparency through

undoubtedly the messiest

enisode in modern-day Nepal.

Some of this can be attributed to

shock, given the scale of tragedy

But it is never too late to rectify

mistakes. Let me add that Nepal

Times has often hurried to paint

the palace in a positive light. That

is partly understandable, given

the volatile political situation, but i

Akhilesh Upadhvav

New York University

is as important to tell the other

side of the story.



# Dazed tourists walk past the billowing smoke from the Pen

# President Bush alone must decide how to retaliate and against whom, and he will be operating in a murky area.

# **LETTERS**

malevolent to suggest that King CK Lal's "The power of one" Gyanendra's accession to the (#58) is poor analysis spiced up throne "has not been in the norma with convoluted thinking and course of male primogeniture." double entendre. In his remarks Primogeniture orders succession on the 1816 Treaty of Sugauli Lal to the throne, without restricting it does injustice to Amar Sen to the first born. And finally, I al's Thana, Bhim Sen Thana, and understanding of the constitution Damodar Pande, among many and constitutional monarchy is others, who did not need Shah also incomplete. The king is "to kings to tell them what was in the preserve and protect the Nepali interest. Lal also suggests Constitution by keeping in view the best interests and welfare of the threat of a re-assertive monarchy makes the resumption the people of Nepal" (Article 27.2 of conflict more menacing than of the Constitution). There should even a breakdown of be no doubt where the residual government-Magist talks power of the state lies in times of Perhaps the perception of this political breakdown.

"threat" might just help the

Maoists focus on making the talks

successful. Further, it is silly and

Mithun Jung Naxal, Kathmandu

CK Lal's "Chicken neck" (#57) is sensational. He has aptly pointed out our drawbacks. It is hecause of our inabilit to retain talent and intellect from fleeing our country and our contempt of government service that we are facing a severe shortage of

Regarding the comments made by an Indian diplomat, let me just say that during the four years I studied in India I came across this attitude often: "We Indians are doing you Nepalis a favour by recruiting you soldiers in our army." But can you blame them if we work there as chowkidars and domestics? And whose nurnose do Gorkhas in the Indian Army serve? We have to find more honourable alternatives for Nepalis.

I look forward to Fridays when I can read the new contents of Nepali Times on your Internet edition, CK Lal's "Tunak Tunak... (#56) was wow... finally there is light at the end of the tunnel. Read this and get enlightened. Mr Lal has put in words what I have felt all along about every incident concerning India always bringing a backlash of anti-India slogans. We have no one to blame but ourselves for every trade treaty that has "suckers" written all ove it. You know why? Because we elected these fools. Patriotism is fine and dandy but if you really want to send a statement, level

the playing field. Empowerment comes from within when you take stens to better yourself so others take note. No one will treat us with respect unless we treat ourselves with respect first. Kanchan Adhikary

VIOLENCE

Reading Dr Aruna Upretv's description of her brave work in western Nepal, ("Women are dving in the far-west." #52) I am rustrated. How could humankind feel such self-hatred as to despise the womb, the origin of our own continuity? Where would all the violence of this world be without such hatred? How such self- loathing came to masquerade as the fickle wisdom of religion is perhaps the greatest spiritual mystery of them all. And t is not just the religions of farwestern Nepal that are party to such farces. Gloria Steinem says progressives have to stop worrving about "being called biased or godless for opposing politics that are disquised as religion." Dr Uprety is in the graces of any self-respecting

forms of life. Lozana Sherna

Speaking of violence against women, ("Silent state violence," #55), what about the sexual advances made on women who travel by night buses? I speak from my experiences when travelling between Kathmandu and Kakarvitta. Once when I was repeatedly harassed by a drunk nan, no Nepali brother came orward to help me. The Indian ousinessman who switched seats with me was a godsend. I know I am not alone-this has happened o every woman I have spoken to Years later. I still hate thinking about those incidents. This is how women are respected and helned

in Nenal.

WHODIINIT

In "Naranyanhiti whodunit Who

cares?" (#58) Kanak Dixit sounds

preachy in his attack against the

press and intellectuals. He fails to

point out that it is the palace and

ne government that continues to

fail the people. Mr Dixit ignores a

long history of the palace's own

### TALE-BAN.COM

Daniel Lak's "Tale-Ban.com" (#58) was an eye-opener, but perhaps hiased Afrihanistan may have entered the Dark Ages, but that might be because they were contemptuous of people who came with bread in one hand and a Bible in another.

Dino Shrestha



HEMLATA RAI hhatiya VDC's Ward Eight in Parbat has nobody to represent it at the Village Development Committee. The ward president and vice president both work abroad. In recent years Chhativa, like most other parts of Nepal, has witnessed an exodus of able-hodied men

HERE AND THERE

"With my academic qualifications. I will never be able get a job that pays enough to sustain my family. Otherwise, who ould think about going abroad," said Chhatra Bahadur Pun, vice president of Ward Fight, as he was waiting to board a plane for Malaysia. Pun has 12 years of formal education and he worked his

family's field before being elected to the ward office.

Nepal earns a huge amount in the form of remittances from citizens working abroad, but there are also thousands of Nepalis cheated of their inheritance and land-holdings, lured by the prospect of employment overseas. An

abroad, in debt and unsure of their rights, they work in some pretty appalling conditions. Khabarpatrika last year estimated

hat remittances from abroad earn Nepal about Rs 75 billion annually-more than tourism, foreign aid and exports put together. However, there is no data available bout how this is split up between the different kinds of workers or luck. The ineptitude in the Department of Labour, inefficient how much of it is taken as 'commis sion' by the agents. Most importantly, there is no data on the mplementation of laws concerning actual number of Nepali workers workers' rights, and double-dealing abroad. The labour department private manpower agents all maximise the risks. Unskilled under the Ministry of Labour and Transportation Management, is vorkers who want to go to Persian upposed to monitor the foreign Gulf countries and south-east Asian ountries such as Malaysia suffer mployment sector, but officials could not even tell us how much as he most. aspiring worker pays an employment agency for placement. onducted a study last year which

found that economically and Given the widespread up- and underemployment here, it is not surprising that people want to go abroad. More youth are educated and on the lookout for white-colla jobs, but the job creation potential is negligible in this sector. There are around 300,000 new people on the iob market every year, and only a scant 10 percent can be accommo of their families, their educational dated in the formal sector. Data for the Ninth Plan says that while unemployment is at five percent, underemployment stands at a whopping 47 percent. The Plan has other alarming details—unemployment is highest in the 15-25 age

People seeking foreign employ-ment can be cheated twice—within The Nepal Labour Force Survey he country and when they reach 1998/99 includes household work heir destination. The deception like fetching water and collecting oegins as soon as a person indicates firewood under the purview of nis interest in foreign employment work, which brings the overall The village moneylender is often unemployment down to two the first to benefit, as employment percent. And yet even in this survey. agencies require applicants to pay

unemployment is highest in the the entire amount involved in nost productive 15-25 age-group. Young people—especially young men—are being pushed to the edge. Despite publicised incidents of fraud and deception by igents, they are overwhelmingly

sing family property to try their

Sociologist Ganesh Gurung

ducationally disadvantaged group

untries for employment, followed

ov south-east Asian countries like

Malaysia. Such workers' decision to

countries usually tends to depend

on the socio-economic conditions

xisting support networks and the

rounds tend to head farther afield,

enerally head to Persian Gulf

eek emplovment in particular

tatus, access to information,

country's proximity to Nepal.

Those with more well-off back-

o Japan, Korea and the West.

them—often at 60 percent per annum. And, since the supply of workers is contracted and subo smaller agencies to individual brokers in the countriside a Ballav Bhattarai, who went on a

lamaging the social fabric of this ountry Say a hill lad takes on a loan of Rs 80,000 at 60 percent nterest from his village moneylender to pay an agent to secure a three-year job assignment in Malaysia Even if he saves substan tially through that period, he still oses. If one is to the believe wspaper advertisements, a literate Nepali worker without any previous experience or knowledge, can get a ob in Malaysia that pays RM 475 (NRs 9,500) per month, of which RM 100 will be deducted in tax. If this worker lives on the barest ninimum, eating noodle soup once

seeking and securing a job in one go, before the process is started. Applicants want the money esperately, and moneylenders in the informal sector will give it to contracted in so many layers, from verseas agencies to Nepali agency worker could end up paying double the actual cost of the process. At very layer, the agencies add on a comfortable margin for themselves ormer labour secretary Damaru study tour last year to the Persian Gulf estimates that for a job which should cost Rs 50,000 to organise. gullible, helpless and desperate

orker ends up paying Rs 80,000-

This makes for many sad

individual stories, but it is also

90.000

took to get a foreign job. The other trap—the bigger one—for workers abroad is the difference between what the employment agencies promise and the actual work conditions they are faced with. Worried and depressed by the prospect of losing their investment and the loss of face, these youths often work in inhumar conditions, just to be able to return having at least broken even. Perhaps because of this, the death rate among the Nepali workers in the Gulf is shockingly high. The Bhattarai report says that in three years between 1997-2000, 400 hundred young Nepalis in these countries died in accidents or

workers in one room, he will be able to save about Rs 5,000 a

month. Which means he needs to

climbed to Rs 144,000.

works for 16 months to return the

Although the government

from the few opportunities presented to Nepalis. A study

conducted in Labachok VDC in

mmitted suicide. In January 2001 alone the bodies of 14 dead workers were flown to

1 1 7 1 1 X

principal, Rs 80,000, by which time The government promises to his debt with the interest will have make the foreign employment a secure option for the poor. In 1998, then prime minister Girija recognises that foreign employme Prasad Koirala said he would appoint labour attachés in is a strategy to address national poverty, the poor do not benefit countries with over 5,000 Nepali workers, to look after their interests. This never materialised. Promoting foreign employment Kaski in 1999 by Jaganath Adhikari, a opportunities is a major compo nent of Nepal's economic Pokhara-based researcher, found that the poorest 40 percent of the village diplomacy, but proposals like could not possibly benefit from foreign Koirala's have always come to employment because they could not naught. A proposed labour raise Rs 60,000, the minimum cash it agreement with Qatar has been under discussion since 1998, but no substantial progressed has been made. The 1998/99 budget speech proposed that 200 Nepalis each rom the 205 electoral constituen cies would be employed overseas via a government agency. In

> eekers. Neither of these promises as materialised. After the governments in the Gulf allowed individuals to hire foreign workers two years ago, the demand in these countries for unskilled workers has risen sharply, Since Bangladesh,

October 1999, the government

announced that it would establish

'foreign employment bank' to

provide credit to overseas iob

Pakistan and India, which used to he the main sources of chean. foreign labour, do not send workers there anymore, Nepal has become the new resource. Nepali

agents also want to make bigger profits, and supplying workers to meet this demand has become an attractive option. And they do not stop at anything. There have been a number of incidents in which unskilled Nepali workers are sent to the Gulf under demand letters for skilled or semi-skilled workers received through legitimate channels. Once there, these workers, unsure of their legal position and rights, cannot refuse the work that is asked of them. Damaru Ballave Bhattarai confirms this: "Smuggling of workers into the Gulf is going on unchecked, Nepalis are being lured into Hari Bahadur Sunuwar, who

cannot read English, said his agent promised that that his monthly salary would be RM 475 for work at a construction site in Malaysia, but the paper he was handed before he checked in for his flight at the Tribhuvan International Airport says clearly that he will be paid the Malaysian equivalent of \$3 per day—about Rs 6.000 a nonth if he works for 26 days.

Sunuwar's case is not only a breach of the understanding between him and his employment agency, but also violates the 1985 Foreign Employment Act (FEA) that prohibits workers from going-or being sent-abroad for under \$125 per month. The FEA is violated at every stage in such employment processes.

Fraud in foreign employment flourished in the 15 years between 1985 and 1999, because the FEA was not supported by a strong regulation, Before the Foreign Employment Regulation was enacted in 1999, the Act operated on the basis of policy direction, notifications and oral orders from the Department of Labour, all of which created confusion and ambiguities. The Regulation has strict provisions that allow the government to conduct investiga tions into and even disqualify agencies that violate the law, the problem is still in the implementation side

Binod Kumar Bhattarai member-secretary of the Employ ment Promotion Commission, says he knows why this happens. "The political patronage given to culprits and the involvement of labour officials hampers the implementation most," he says. In Nepal, employment is a political issue. MPs time and again confes openly that they are under great pressure to provide employment to their constituents. So as the foreign employment sector has grown, many of these 'representatives of the people' got involved in the business themselves or bought favours during the elections. In the still-confused bureaucracy of the agencies meant to guard the nterests of workers abroad\_the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management and the Department of Labour-the conflict of interest is open. The present labour minister. Palten Gurung, has a brother, Tek Bahadur Gurung, who runs an employment agency called Himalayan Manpower Agency. The under-secretary for labour, Dev Ratna Tamrakar, is himself one of the main accused in a fraud scandal involving Samihana Overseas Services las year, where 228 people say they were cheated

# Budhathoki murder

Police are looking for a member of the Bhutan Revolutionary Free Students' Force, a youth organisation that has claimed responsibility for the killing of RK Budhathoki, a prominent leader of the Bhutanese refugees in exile in Nepal.

Budhathoki, the first president of the Bhutan Peoples Party (BPP) was hacked to death in Damak, Jhapa on Sunday. He succumbed to serious neck injuries from a khukuri and died at Amda hospital in Damak Rudhathoki was attacked by about half-a-dozen young men a the BPP's youth wing office where he was attending a meeting. Police have arrested three people who were at that meeting and are on the look out for six other suspects who are absconding.

Budhathoki, who is survived by his wife and three children, left Bhutan in 1989 and settled down in Birtamod, Jhapa from where he continued to raise his voice for democracy in Bhutan. He was among those refugee leaders credited with lobbying for raising awareness about the plight of nearly 100,000 Bhutanese refugees living in seven camps in Nepal.

"Though, we've lost an important member of the movement, we wi not end our struggle," says SB Subba, president of the Bhutan Refugees Repatriation Representative Committee, "There's a certain amount of insecurity prevailing at the moment, but the situation in the camps is peaceful."

# Fr Charles Law SJ

22 September 1931—9 September 2001 Fr Charles A Law, Jesuit educator, noted poet and social worker, passed away last Sunday evening Fr I aw came to Negal in 1958, when he worked briefly at the newly-established St Xavier's School in Godavari, before heading to Kurseong in India to study theology. After his ordination to Catholic priesthood in 1964, he

returned to Nepal to teach at St Xavier's School, Jawalakhel where h was the mainstay of the science program for nearly 25 years. Although he spent the most time in Kathmandu, Fr Law was passionately interested in rural Negal. He spent six months at a school in Dolakha and four years teaching science in a high school in Parbat district. Fr Law was instrumental in founding St Xavier's College and was principal of its Intermediate in Science program. Under his initiative, the first bachelor's degree programme in social work was started in August 1996, and he was head of that department until he was named superior of the Jesuit Training Centre in Kupondole until a few months ago. Fr Law was also a noted poet and his work in English written in Nepal reflects his deep commitment to justice and his concern for the poor and the disadvantaged.

# Expect the worst

Here's something to worry about. A report by the Japan International Co-operative Agency (JICA) says over 20 percent houses in Kathmandu Valley will be destroyed if an earthquake of the same intensity-8.4 on the Richter scale-as that in 1934, hits the region again. JICA prepared the report at the request of the Home Gh

Ministry, which wanted to assess possible damage to prepare ways to minimise the impact. The final report is due next year, According to JICA's early findings about 54 025 houses will be completely damaged and another 74.927 of the total 2.56 million houses in the Valley will be slightly affected. It also predicts that Bhaktapur will suffer the heavies damage and could lose 27 percent of its buildings. Kathmandu and Lalitour are predicted to lose 20 percent each. Damage of that scale could leave over 17,000 dead and over 50,000 seriously injured. And after the quake will come disease, which could prove even deadlier.

# Power thieves

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) is in a fix. It hasn't been able to collect dues amounting to Rs 2 billion. And it is not people like you and us that are not paying their bills. The defaulters are the government and local government institutions who owe NEA almost all of that money, the private sector and individual subscribers owe the rest. Government corporations owe the NEA about Rs 220 million and the home ministry alone owes the utility some Rs 40 million. It is a Catch-22 situation for NEA officials: donors say there will be no money until the authority can prove that its bills are paid, and the largest defaulter of them all is the government, which has to approve all NEA loans.

Finally children from the carpet industry have a chance to go to school—thanks to a committee of carpet industry owners, labourers and the Central Carpet Industries Association (CCIA). So far 1,279 children between the ages of two and five have benefited from eight non-formal education centres managed by the committee with support from GTZ (the German technical co-operation agency). Of the children enrolled at these centres, about 400 have gone on to local public and private schools. Set up between 1999 and 2000, the eight centres in Kathmandu, Sindhunalchowk, Kirtinur and Doti Valley aim to provide children of weavers a right environment for early childhood development and ensure they don't enter the labour market too early.

# **Borderlands**

NEPALGANJ: In this border town, huddled along a road and an invisible line through lush green paddy fields and stands of sal and flame of the forest trees, I feel more at home than in many other parts of the subcontinent. This is a feeling that has nothing to do with aesthetics, good restaurants or in either direction. nightlife. But it has everything to do with the presence of the border. Now before ultra nationalists leap to conclusions (a-ha, told you he was soft on Nong Khai, Thailand, India), let me say it is the border itself that intrigues and pleases me, the terrain around it, and the people who make their livings along the frontier

Nepalganj may not be pretty, but it's full of life and dynamism. Fortunes can be made here, and lost. Ever more opulent mosques are popping up, and the Muslim property dealer or merchant who builds them tial sprawling home, well within range of the azaan. Aficionados of Newari architecture, and I am one, will find little to please them in the style of construction. It is largely of a type known in Delhi as Punjabi Baroque, balconies and bedrooms galore, crenelated walls and terraces, suburban sprawl at its finest. But what I admire is the border-driven energy that generated the wealth behind the construction

I've been drawn to frontier areas for as long as I can remember. A still distinct impression from childhood is the delicious trepidation of crossing from Canada to the United States and making much of the differences from one side to the next. Canada has parlayed its proximity with the world's greatest economy into a pretty successful project. Call it, if you like, border management. A big, sometimes implacably uncaring or unfathomable neighbour, but keep the goods, services and tourists flowing and everything is all right.

So in wanderings ever since, I've gone to the borderlands, even if I didn't have to, to marvel and wonder. Some favourites spring to mind. At On the frontier, hearts and minds are different from those in the hinterlands



on the Mekong River. vou boarded a rickets wooden boat, and balancing luggage on your knees as the long tailed engine churned across to Laos. Behind you, a classic frontier town slipped into the mier Nong Khai was the haven of dreams for Laotians and their Thai side. It thronged with heer hars. brothels, dodgy smuggling and people selling ever more ambitious dreams in

Bangkok. The town was an island of relative prosperity in the poorest part of Thailand and the unfathomable poverty of Laos. At night, you could hear the splashes of illegal boats and swimmers, braving the currents and the cops for a taste of prosperity.

Between Singapore and the old pirate capital of Tanjung Pinang in

Indonesia, an ultra modern hydrofoil takes from the consumerist paradise of the Lion City to genteel and picturesque decline. Buccaneerng isn't what it used to be, but smuggling hopeful workers to Singapore isn't a bad substitute. It is a rough business and only the strong survive. Indonesians travel thousands of kilometres and spend their life savings to get to Tanjung Pinang. Usually they fail to realise even a sliver of their reams. But the first glimpse of the frontier, on land or water, fills them with unrealistic hope so they carry one.

Anyone who travels, by necessity or for fun, will tell you that borders are a state of mind, not lines drawn by colonial pens or bureaucrats at and a state of minn, not miss that with your old a place. It isn't true to say, as the Western guidebooks do, that places like Nepalganj are "more Indian" or "less Nepalja." What they are is the frontier where hearts and minds are different from those in the hinterlands in either direction, where people are tougher, less lawabiding, often friendlier and usually wealthier. Those who advocate, in Delhi and Kathmandu, re-imposing tight restrictions on the border should bear all this mind. Open frontiers bother officialdom but generate wealth; closed borders enrich smugglers. Ask the Indians and the Pakistanis how successful they have been on keeping their frontier shut to terrorism, spying, contraband and divided families. Only the



spring this year, in contrast, it

xperience in expedition

push to rationalise

back to 1949. The last major

nountaineering activities was in

1978, when peaks were opened in

different seasons to accommodate

more expeditions on particularly

eaks were reserved for strictly

Nepali or joint expeditions, and

trekking peaks" to support the

activities of the Nepal Mountain

8 peaks were designated

popular mountains, unclimbed

rganised 24 expeditions to Tibet

# **Mountaineering expeditions are** on a downturn, and not only because of political instability.

ministry say they are trying. "The regulations have been reviewed and should be out soon," says Karki "They focus on the welfare of climbing staff from porters to high-altitude Sherpas, and ensure that teams have to endure less rec tape. They also address the concept of climbing season," he

When the Destination Nepal 2002-2003 Campaign will coincide with the 50th anniversary of the ascent of Everest and two International Years—of the Mountain and of Eco-tourism, it would be an ideal time to open up new peaks and destinations.

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation is trying to convince the Home and Defence ministries to abandon their three-decade-old policy and open prohibited areas on Nepal's northern border and also some 60 new peaks. After the Sino-Indian war in 1962, Nepal closed her

| Everest and made a traverse of the Tibetan flank and P2 (6,251 m) in the Manaslu region was climbed for the first by the Ukranian team that made the first scent of Manaslu's South East Face. This autumn, a six-member Japanese expedition will be attempting Hungchi (7,036 m) in Solukhumbu, while a British duo will try the north face of Tengkangpoche (6,500 m), a much sought-after peak. The peaks opened this year are just a raction of the list of over 60 peaks the department has ubmitted to the Home and Defence Ministries for perusal. Of the 160 peaks open for climbing, 140 are over 6,000 m. This mean: that just over 10 percent of the 1.314 peaks over 6.000 m are pen to climbers.

Gurung is quick to point out that the peaks selected are concentrated in the east and middle region of the country

## RAMYATA LIMBU

will be quiet at Everest Base Camp this fall. For he popular season for Everest, a the first time in nearly to decades there is no autumn expedition from the south side or the world's highest mountain. So is the lure of Everest

fading?
"I don't think so," says Ganesh Raj Karki, undersecretar at the trekking and mountaineering section of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation. "I think a lot of teams are saving their funds and energies for 2003, the 50th anniversary of the first summit of Everest.

Karki does, however, ac knowledge that all around this is one of the lowest climbing seasons he has seen in a long time. The Tourism Departmen has permitted 22 expeditions to climb 15 mountains around the country, about one-third the number that usually comes to scale Nepal's peaks from 1 September through 15 November

But Karki remains optimistic. "We expect the number to increase to 45 by the end of the season," he says. But even that number falls short of the average 60-65 expeditions that climb in

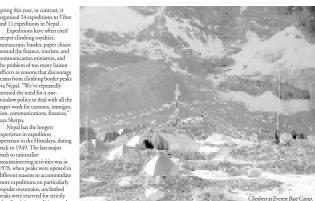
the Nepali Himalaya every fall. Despite the fact that spring is

nd 11 expeditions in Nepal. Expeditions have often cited arge commercial expeditions fee their chances of negotiating the teeper climbing royalties, treacherous Khumbu Ice Fall and ureaucratic hassles, paper chases reaching the summit with the aid round the finance tourism and of ropes fixed by climbing Sherpas communication ministries, and are better, trekking professionals the problem of too many liaison feel the decrease in the overall officers as reasons that discourage number of expeditions is a cause teams from climbing border peaks via Nepal. "We've repeatedly for concern. "If the trend contin ues the next season, the Ministry stressed the need for a oneshould seriously rethink its vindow policy to deal with all the nountaineering policies," says paper work for customs, immigra-Ang Tshering Sherpa, chariman and managing director of Asian tion, communications, finances, avs Sherpa. Trekking, one of Nepal's fore-Nepal has the longest

Ŝherpa's concern is justifiable As of this week, there are 20 expeditions climbing Cho Oyu vi Tibet, with a few more likely to 'That's the total number of expeditions climbing in Nepal, says Sherpa, whose company is the general sales agent for the China Tibet Mountaineering Association. This fall Asian Trekking is organising two of the four expeditions to Everest, six expeditions to Cho Ovu, and

most trekking and expedition

eering Association (NMA) three to Xixapangma-all via Tibet. In Nepal, it is organising iust one expedition to Pumori. In nothing except a steep hike in



996 in the royalty charged by HMG to climb Everest. "While the cost of expeditions in Tibet and Nepal add up to about the same for other mountains, there's vast difference in the case of Everest," says Sherpa. An Everes xpedition via Tibet, including oyalty, can be organised for 70,000, which is what a seven nember expedition via Nepal avs in rovalties alone.

Climbers are also exploring ther areas in the region, mainly Pakistan, where a number of inclimbed peaks offer new challenges Apart from having a fair share of eight thousanders, since Pakistan is a late starter, expeditions are cheaper there. I is also closer to Europe and the US, from where many climbers ome from, "But even many lapanese, avid climbers, are ooking at Pakistan." says Tash Jangbu Sherpa president of the

While this year's political urmoil mav be why some teams ancelled or postponed, most expedition leaders and climbers spoke with say Nepal needs to pruce up its act. Officials at the

northern borders as a security recaution. China on the other and, opened its borders in the arly 70s and went all out to draw mountaineers and climbers o the region by adopting a iberal tourism policy and setting in tourism infrastructure. Dr Harka Gurung, geogra-

her and former tourism minis-

er, has been saying for the last lecade that Nepal needs to ope prohibited areas and promote inexplored peaks. Based on ecommendations made by the Central Department of Geography and approved by the Home Ministry and the Defence Ministry, the mountaineering ection of the tourism epartment opened nine new eaks in spring this year. But, ays Gurung, "opening up new eaks is not a deliberate policy of the ministry, it is more a esponse to external pressure, the emands of the international limbing and trekking

ommunity. Lhotse Middle (8,413 m) in olukhumbu was climbed that ery season by a Russian team that went up to the South Col of

areas that already benefit from rekking and tourism, unlike the elatively unexplored west. This high disparity in the numbers of expeditions by area and by peak ads to overcrowding in some places. None of the 18 trekking beaks operated by the Nepal Mountaineering Association are in the western region. To decrease the regional disparity Gurung suggests that setting higher royalties for crowded peaks and for the high season and less for distant peaks and low season will lead to regional dispersal and seasonal diffusion

be highly comforting to our unfairly of climbing activities. In the past two decades, over 2,000 mountaineering expeditions visited Nepal nearly 60 percent of them came with diverse pursuits of perversion. in the autumn. Forty-eight teams visited in 1979, and wenty years later this had gone variations of the attorney-client privilege up to 141. Royalties had also increased almost forty-fold. and eerie interpretations of contempt Many say that at least 50 clauses. Take into account the threepercent of the revenue generated percent margin of error customary in such surveys and you will realise that politicians rom mountaineering and climbing activities should be actually might be the least corrupt Nepalis iven back to these mountain in public service today. ommunities

23.2 million Nepalis

The early results of the 2001 census: our population is growing and moving.

bigger counts in urban areas. In only

outnumber men, and even these are

municipalities close to larger urban

Putali Bazar and Waling of Syangja,

There are also fewer men in border

Mahendranagar and Dhagadi in the

Similarly, the male population is also

found to be concentrated in the more

west and Bhadrapur in the east.

fertile and affluent sections of the

tarai, and in the eastern and central

development regions where opportu

nities for employment and personal advancement are available.

Such high mobility among youth

affects development attempts in a very

direct way. As the productive section

of the population homes in on affluen

areas, more backward regions are left

with the responsibility of investing in

contribute too much to such efforts

The infertile mountain regions are

population. The tarai—only 23

percent of Nepal's land—has 48.5

percent of the population and is under

tremendous pressure to accommodate

home to a meagre seven percent of th

education and healthcare. but left

with a population that cannot

towns across from India like

Prithnarayan Nagar of Gorkha,

NATION

HEMLATA RAI population is higher, men add up to ne guessing game is over— Nepal's population is just over 23.2 million, says the Nepal Census on Population and Housing 2001. Other than that, the prelimi nary report mostly reconfirms what we'd suspected—that despite governmental and non-government fforts, the population is growing too fast and will double in 31 years at the current growth rate of 2.27.

There are some surprises, though. The population has grown by 25,000 less than anticipated based on the 1991 census—there are only some 525 000 new Nepalis because the growth rate has actually come down: little from 2,38. There is no official data yet on the composition of the population by age, which makes it difficult to guess at what rate Nepal's population will grow in the

years to come. Still, there is enough in the report to make some educated guesses at how the composition and distribution of Nepal's population will change over the next decade. There will be fewer males in the productive age-group This is mainly because the already high mobility in this segment of the population will only increase as we men continue to move within Nepa and abroad in search of employment and personal advancement. This is why, although the overall female

18 of the 58 municipalities do women mountains and the tarai could have disastrous environmental and developmental consequences. Already areas or those that have been seriousl land in the tarai is decreasing in affected by the Maoist insurgency, like fertility due to over-farming, and land Kamalami of Sindhuli, Bidur Nagar o Nuwakot or Panauti of Kavre district

e concept of equal development fails—it drives these people away from where they are needed," said Dr Ram Hari Aryal, a demographer. And so planners are faced with a paradox: ung, able men do not stay in their native regions because of the slow pace of development, but to speed up ositive change precisely this segmen of the population is a vital resource.

Migration to cities is also highalmost 15 percent of Nepal lives in its 58 municipalities. Kathmandu tops the list with five percent growth er the last decade. The least developed far-western region is a home to only 9.5 percent of the population, about one-fourth the mber in the most developed entral development region.

Women, in comparison, mow ound less, and their concentration i less-developed areas means they are denied opportunities for advancement, Only 13 percent of the womer ive in urban areas where the populace as greater access to education, health and other social development

Those who rail against graft need to

tion of population in the mid-hills, the

holdings are being fragmented.
"This is the what happens when



infrastructure. The far-western development region has already seen a narked increase in female-headed households and a considerably higher economic dependence on women The same phenomenon is prevalent, although in less extreme fashion, in the western and mid-western regions while in the more highly developed areas, men outnumber women.

The preliminary report does not ve too much detail about how this imbalance and male migration is affecting Nepal's women, but indications are that in general, wome are not doing too badly—the sex ratio of 0.997 means women are not discriminated too much in terms of health care and nutrition. A clearer

picture will emerge in the final report which for the first time will have data n issues related to women's wnership of land and their ontribution to the economy. (See lso "Women count",#35.)

Other matters to look out for in he final report include some more firsts that will hopefully give a clearer picture of who lives where and does hat, and how migrants assimilate. The 2001 census attempted for the first time to study the social structure of Nepal's populace in terms of thnicity, religion and language. Radha Krichna KC deputy director the Central Bureau of Statistics. eclined to share the findings with us but hinted that the final report migh mark a noticeable increase in the

Buddhists and the use of languages that were left out of previous censuses This is unsurprising, given the efforts of various ianiati groups to educate their members to fill in the forms accurately. ("Janjatis want to stand

up, and be counted", #42.) There's more to come. bu ome things are already clear from he 2001 census: the growth rate of the population and the average ize of households have both come down. But we still have uantity and quality problem vith our population and bringin it down to a manageable size and nix remains a challenge.

Corruption index

fter complaining for years about how corruption has struck deep roots in the country, Nepalis have suddenly realised how they are contributing to the rot. A recent study by a team of local and foreign experts found that 42 percent of Nepalis who deviate from rectitude insist that they are forced to do so by the respect society bestows on the slightest taint of shadiness. (Nepal Samacharpatra, 7

willingly ceded much of their privacy. Nevertheless, a couple of questions are in September 2001) order. Does the fact that politicians are For today's much-maligned political directly accountable to the people mean aristocracy in particular, the study is the they should be judged by a higher standard of integrity? Should the model year of their best thing that has happened since the collapse of the panchayat edifice in 1990. Prados and the up-to-the-minute value of Some people have finally put the human their property come under greater public turpitude index in its true perspective. The scrutiny than, say, those of prime ministerial experts ranked development workers and hangers-on? Moreover, why have our politicians—a classification that itself must custodians of transparency put a 1990 cutoff date on political probity, as if the age of besmirched leaders-sixth on its list of partylessness was sparklingly stainless? And seven most corrupt categories of officiallet's not ignore the other side of the coin. dom. Revenue officers, CDOs and LDOs, For every unprincipled politician we catch, there are others who are noted for their ministry secretaries and departmental heads police, and licence-granting officials appear hard graft in their constituencies. to be far more proficient in and preoccupied representatives make money and flaunt it Moreover politicians are just one percent they have the right to register their age point ahead of members of judicial service, who enjoy the protection of endless

displeasure in the next election. (That would be a double whammy for graftstricken politicians, since much of their illgotten resources is invested in getting reelected, a certifiably high-risk venture during these precarious times.) Given the popularity of public interest litigation in the ountry today, we may soon see a spurt of class-action suits for breach of trust against our leaders. But what remedies do the

If people don't like the way their

it does force us to ponder for a while and

reset our ethical compass. By deciding to

enter the public domain, politicians have

be a little more empathetic. people have in dealing with those reeking on the higher rungs of crookedness, apart from corruption cases the defendants goon to win on appeal nine times out of 10

> anyway? This leads us to the next myth that needs to be urgently demolished: the supremacy of the elected politician over the appointed administrator. When former me minister Girija Prasad Koirala was forced to choose between his water resources minister and the new secretary he desnatched to the ministry without bothering to inform his cabinet colleague couple of months ago, Koirala didn't take too long to decide who was expendable. If there ever was a case for holding politicians primarily responsible for corrupting the system, the revelation that there are five worse offenders out there running a parallel economy with greased palms should suffice to revise the parameters of the discussions

The study conducted under an Asian Development Bank-funded administrative reform programme, has been submitted to the Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) ostensibly to sensitise the watchdog to the cultural dynamics of the decadence. The report should be enough to electrify our commissioners, who have demonstrated the intensity of their abhorrence of corruption by demanding Re 50 million each in deposits at the oddest of



hours from two senior RNAC officials in the Lauda Air case, to show where the muck stops. Another set of findings, however, may inspire the CIAA to offer graft suspects a fairer hearing in the future. A third of those questioned for the study said they indulged in corrupt activities to make ends meet, while 16 percent said they dirtied their hands to get rich quick. Nine percent said they engaged in under-the-table dealings to

fund their children's education Now, aren't these perfectly noble motives? How fair would it be to expect public servants to serve society on a digestive system that growls with hunger every few hours? All those living in our free market system and watching satellite television have the right to want to becom crorepatis, don't they? Wouldn't it be utterly callous to ask Nepali parents. already confounded by seven-day schoo

shutdowns over fee structures and the syllabus, to quit hoping for the best education money can buy?

In an economy where traditional safety nets are being systematically ripped apart by politically driven combatants and subsidyslashing conditionalities attached to macro economic stabilisation programmes, personal initiative must step into the space vacated by the state. Under any endsjustificathe means standard resultion for our flourishing tribe of bribe-seekers would instantly transform into an outpouring of public commiseration. However, our failure to see in our public officials a reflection of our stained social and cultural standards, stands in the way of an upsurge of unadul terated compassion. It's perhaps because of this absence of empathy that the louder we rail against corruption, the more

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# Radio Sagarmatha

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Friendly skies

Nepal's first private airline has decided to tie up with a newcomer, Shangrila Air, in an attempt cut costs. Narayan S Pun, Managing Director of Necon Air told us that the two companies have agreed to the tieup "in principle" and are now working on the modalities, including approval by banks and government. Nepal's domestic aviation—a showcase of private initiative until some years ago—has been riddled by undercutting while the market has not expanded. Fares which have not changed for the past eight years, despite increases in aviation fuel prices, up by almost 70 percent, and steadily increasing insurance premiums. "I realised the only way we could stay in business was to consolidate and cut costs," says Pun. "Now other airlines are also thinking this is the way to go."

Nepal's largest distillery has offered 1.73 million shares (par value Rs 100) to the public. The issue will serve as barometer of the public's mood to invest because the issue comes smack in the middle of efforts by Maoist women to ban alcohol consumption and sales, and pro-Maoist trade unions that have also recently begun to stir. Himalayan Distillery is licensed to produce 20,000 litres of alcohol everyday and the company says it will be producing high-quality branded products for export to India. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. It says it already has marketing agreements with some of the world's most famous brands—Seagram, Chivas Regal and Royal Salute, among others. The company produces Royal Stag and Imperial Blue, two well-known brands. Himalayan Distillery says that based on Rs 50.2 million sales of four brands in the last four months of 2000-01, it aims at selling six brands to earn Rs 340 million in fiscal 2001/02. The company's authorised capital is Rs 900 million of which Rs 413 million is to be issued. Of the issued capital, promoters have retained 58 percent.

# **Tumbling revenues**

Nepal Telecommunications Corporation (NTC) says its earnings from international telephone calls have fallen substantially, especially after satellite communication users and service providers were licensed. The NTC's in-coming calls up to July 2001 were down by over 50 percent compared to the 303 million calls it routed in the same period last year. The corporation says its revenue from international calls this year could be eroded by as much as Rs 70 million, and it wants the Nepal Telecommunications Authority to investigate and take action against the V-SAT (very small aperture satellite) service providers that have been re-routing the in-coming calls. The NTC says Internet Service Providers with V-SAT licenses now have the technology to re-direct calls through their computers rather than the gateway provided by the NTC.



## Tourism lows

Tourism is going through a third consecutive slump in arrivals. It was down by 56 percent in June, 29 percent in July and 26 percent last month-which has dragged the cumulative eight-month arrival of tourists by air by almost seven percent to 200,208. The arrivals in August were 18,383, including 3,650 Indians. Nepal's tourism was just beginning to recover from the post-December 1999 hijack slump in Indian arrivals before the royal massacre, after which the numbers tumbled by almost 72 percent.

Everest Bank Limited is to begin distributing the bonus shares it had promised its shareholders at the general meeting last November. The issue had been held up over a central bank directive that required Everest Bank to first comply by a capital adequacy requirement. The bank now says it has met the canital adequacy needs, and will no ahead with the share allotment



There is yet another Chinese motorcycle in town: this one is Lifan, a product of the Chongging Lifarn and Hongda company. Annapurna Associates markets three models, which it says comply with the Euro II emission standards. The bikes are hip. but not cheap-the price ranges between Rs 102,500 and Rs

This contraption is supposed to tell you when to switch your water-pump on and off. Marketed by Spectrum Merchandise, Nepal, the Aqua Systems water level monitor/indicator tells you when your overhead tank needs a refill or when it is about to overflow. The company is marketing the product as something that helps you conserve water and keep power bills low.

## Trade round up

Nepal's exports grew by almost 15 percent in fiscal year 2000/01 to hit Rs 57.24 billion, up from the Rs 49.82 million in 1999/00. Imports grew by 4.5 percent to Rs 113.4 billion in 2000/01, up from Rs 108.5 billion the previous year. By mid-July the trade deficit had narrowed by 4.3 percent to reach Rs 56.14 billion. Exports to India grew by almost 29 percent reaching Rs 27.3 billion in mid-July 2000.

Topping the exports to India was vegetable ghiu, whose sales rose by 30 percent to Rs 3.56 billion. Pashmina sales to India stood at number two: Rs 2.73 billion. The export of copper wire grew by an astronomical 230 percent to Rs 2.08 billion, while toothpaste exports dropped by about 10 percent to Rs

Among overseas exports, carpets were down by about 13 percent to Rs 8.59 billion. Nepal exported Rs 4.12 billion worth of pashmina overseas during 2000-01, a drop from the over Rs 6.5 billion high in 1999. The export of readymade garments slumped by about six percent to Rs 13.12 billion and the industry says next year could be worse, especially because extortion and disturbances caused by the Maoists has dampened all initiatives. The industry estimates that political uncertainty last year cost Nepal about six billion rupees in lost orders. The Garment Association of Nepal says the roughly Rs 6 billion industry (investment-wise) employs about 200,000 people and the downturn in production will affect not only the employees, but also the banks, which have invested over Rs 3 billion in the industry.

# Taxing issues 🔏

abiding citizens are the ones who

anger employees in taxation

denartments, since they don't

contribute to the collectors persona

kittys. No wonder then that jobs in

tax departments are treated a as plum

posts and the object of many political

machinations Or that there is a new

profession in this country, that of

tax-pimp," a person who strikes

collectors, whose mantra is: the more

changes, no tax law in the nation car

The Beed must also laugh hitter

increase collections substantially

have turned the lax taxation

complicated the more diverse the

avenues for graft. Until all this

deals between tax payers and

# Going down to basics: why income tax?

Act has been tabled in parliament. Lawmakers, insurprisingly, are finding they mus tax their brains to understand this new piece of legislation. The government calls it the most comprehensive such proposal it has lesigned, the business community simply calls it complex. And as verywhere, the taxman and the axpayer are at loggerheads.

There has been much description of the features of the Act in the oress, so your Beed thought it vas time for a look at basics: what is the rationale behind the ncome tax? What kind of sense does it make in the Nepali

At issue is not really the tatute, but the intentions of the eople drafting it who know full ell that the real value of such a w lies in its implementation. When discussions were going on about eilings on wealth and land, the Beed ad opined that if the existing tax laws ere to be implemented correctly. hey would constitute an automatic eiling on wealth. The provisions of he law right now include penalising people whose assets are lisproportionate to their wealth, bu he government has never been able o implement it right.

Income tax in Nepal has been axman's delight—as filling of nersonal coffers is encouraged over stuffing state coffers. Individuals and advantage. Their profits do not come businesses that have been regular tax through operations, but more through payers and adhering to transparency "creative tax planning"—in a word, evasion. There is a strong lobby in the have never been rewarded. There is a surprise in the list of tax payersbusiness community that does not many companies that run large ads are want transparent laws for fear of simply not on it. In fact, many Nepali becoming uncompetitive. And finally, the makers of the numourists like to joke that law

statute need to be careful. After all, even four years after being passed, the problems with VAT laws have still not been ironed out. The arguments for and against are worthy of a seminar, but the basic question

needs to be asked: can all such collections not be brought under the ambit of VAT? Do we really need to bother ourselves with Income Tax that contributes a mere two nercent our GDP and which costs he administration of the ountry who knows how much

We must find alternative ways of ensuring revenues for the government, rather than continue providing additional income to the corrupt. The "experts" we have what works in Nepal and what does not is debatable. So a word from this Beed to the wise: The laws you make are for Nepalis, so make sure the vehicles you design to take Nepal forward are built for the road.

Readers can post their views at



September 15 - Saturday - Academy Hall - Kathmandy - 5 pm

September 22 - Saturday - City Hall - Pokhara - 5 pm

Ticket rates: Rs. 200. 400. 700. 1000 Available at:

In Kathmandu - Tik N Tok. Suwal and Nanglo outlets. Bhatbhateni Supermarket.

Academy Hall Gate (on the concert day) In Pokhara - City Hall Gate (on the concert day)

14-20 SEPTEMBER 2001 NEPALI TIMES NEPALI ECONOMY

# **Leave Royal Nepal alone**

## BINOD BHATTARAI

he timing could have been better, and it shouldn't have been done with the threat of bankruptcy hanging overhead. But other than that, Royal Nepal Airlines has made what is probably one of its wisest decisions in recent times by scrapping its flights to With its medium-range

narrow-hody 757s, Royal Nepal

Airlines was badly over-extended flying to Frankfurt, Paris and London. When it bought the brand new 757s in 1985, flying them on long-haul intercontithe plan. But those were days when it was the only airline flying direct to Nepal from Europe and made a profit, especially when it was serviced by an Airbus 310 leased from Hapag Llvod. The initial cash flow generated by European flights helped pay off the loans for the 757s.

But bad planning, question able appointments of general sales agents and mismanagement ensured that the airline actually lost money even if the flights were full—due to overheads for crew ayovers in Frankfurt and Dubai and the huge cuts for agents commissions and freehies

The plan then was to develop Royal Nepal into a strong regional airline flying profitable short routes, picking up passengers on code-sharing arrangements with bigger international airlines from hubs in Bangkok Singapore, Hong Kong and Dubai as well as service Indian cities with frequent turnarounds. This strategy is still valid today, in fact some argue that is the only way the airline will survive in the short-term. But the airlines' top managers ask: is there the political will not to interfere

"We can't do anything unless the government tells us what to do, or ves us a free hand to do what we hink we should "one senior Royal Nepal executive told us. The result is a badly-ailing airline that is not the priority of its owner, the government, xcept when it can be milked for kickbacks

Cancelling Europe was a difficult decision for Royal Nepal because as Nepal's flag carrier, it also flew to Europe with an implied responsibility of helping boost the nation's image and tourism. But since the slide began in the early 1990s, the airline had actually contributed to harming that image by being what no airline should be: unreliable. inhospitable and rudderless. RNAC had earned the label: "Royal Nepal Always Cancelled"

management and appointments turned the airline into an employ ment agency, giving it one of the highest staff-per-aircraft ratios anywhere in the world and possibly the most de-moralised as well. In fact it is surprising that despite the political excess baggage and all the internal drag, the airline flies at all

# Royal Nepal Airlines had to jettison its Europe routes to keep afloat. But will it be enough?

The mess has accumulated, and | who also runs his own helicopter the airline is trailing a debt of Rs2.5 billion. Even the Nepal Oil Corporation at times refuses to refuel Royal Nepal jets because of a huge backlog of payments. Royal Nepal's share of passengers to and from Nepal has plummeted rom about 54 percent in 1994 to

less than 30 percent. Ironically, jettisoning Europe has not only stayed off the haemmorhage, but also turned the airline into the regional carrier it should have been all along. "We were not making onev even when we were flying full to London and back even in those early days " says Mohan Khanal, Royal Nepal's director of External and Public Affairs. "Our losses in the sector have always been high, even at 90-95 percent occupancy, and this time it iust ecame too difficult to hold out."

Strangely, no one was told how bad things were until about six months ago, when management had just leased a second jet (a widebody 767 from Lauda Air) and was preparing a summer schedule for four iets. But political instability and the royal massacre destroyed what was left of the tourism industry. The books began looking really grim, the Lauda deal was terminated and later, the lease for the China Southwest 757 as well.

Down to its two old workhorses, the airline is pressing the 757s to do 23 regional destination: Shanghai, Hong Kong, Bangkok and India (Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore). From 19 aircraft in 1991, including four jets, today the airline is down to nine aircraft two jets and seven Twin Otters of which four are grounded because

they are cannibalised for parts. Royal Nepal's failure to service assengers on domestic routes has een covered up by private airlines which to a large extent depend on larger planes bringing in more ists. Says Narayan Singh Pun.

Managing Director at Necon Air,

Political interference in top

To be sure, not everything can be blamed on politicians. Royal Nepal's managers have taken the cue from their seniors and have contributed to the rot

service Karnali Air. "A reliable and widely connected national airline is crucial for tourism, which is today our major industry so there are no excuses for cutting

Even today, Royal Nepal's problems are not insurmountable. What it needs is the right environment and the freedom to become more businesslike. "Give us the aircraft we need and let us run a a business, and we can turn the airline around in two years." says a senior airline official. To do that, the first thing would be cut the airline free from political interference. The airline has had 18 bosses in 10 years, and a run down of names of recent directors at the airline tells all: businessmen with conflict of interest, political cronies, and

sidekicks of the powerful. The next step would be to look for joint venture partners, to give the much-needed boost to aff and company morale. And finally what Royal Nepal hadly needs is an injection of cash about Rs3 billion to help it pay back debt and for re-building it tattered image. For the moment. say travel industry insiders. privatisation of Royal Nepal may not be the answer since given the government's recent record of rivatisation, there is sure to be major graft. For the moment, all the airline needs is to be left alone.

"It takes almost a year for our ministry to decide anything," say Pun, also a Nepali Congress MP That is just not how you run an airline." For now no foreign airline would be interested in RNAC and I don't blame them for that." says Pun. The travel industry was livid vhen the airline stopped its Europe flights just as the autumn tourist season was picking up. But Narendra Bajracharya of the Hotel Association of Nepal sees a silver lining: "It makes sense for a company to say it wants to reduce

thinking about how to get the airline back to its feet soon. Bajracharya says Royal Nepal should now turn itself into an effective carrier bringing in tourists from regional hubs. However, the

tourist slump that is expected as a



fallout from the terrorist attacks in the United States this week may hurt prospects all around.





here are three rules of travel in the Maois heartland. Sitting in the safe house, we are briefed

by the leader of the ragtag squadron, a 42-year-old former school principal who speaks fine English. He

goes by the nom de guerre of Sanktimon, after the hero of a cartoon on Indian television. Sanktimon means

I am strong in ideology," offers Sanktimon with a wide

grin. He explains the route we will follow and then the

ules: (1) No taking pictures without permission. (2)

Within hours our photographer Seamus Murphy

No going to the bathroom without a guard. (3) You

will disregard the first rule completely: the second on

must give a speech.

strong man," but it's not for his muscles. "It is because

# A ghostly philosophy"



In the last three months, thousands of words have appeared in the international press about Nepal. After the 1 June massacre, the focus is now the "people's war," NT has been following these stories as they appear and as a service to our readers, we are excerpting sections from a long essay in American Outside magazine's September 2001 issue. The Last Days of the Mountain Kingdom is, in large part, an account of a journey to Rolpa made earlier this year by writer Patrick Symmes and photographer Seamus Murphy. Following is an excerpt:

an exchange of lal salaams, a revolutionary slogan that means "red salute" and is always accompanied by a clenched fist. We quickly march off in single file, crossing more paddies and then heading up through a beech forest onto a switch-backing surface that becomes, eventually, the steepest surface I have ever climbed. Hours later we reach a razor-thin, foggy ridgeline at 5,000 feet. The slopes are stacked with terraces even here, the paddies no wider than a single ox. Nepal's population has tripled since the ]940s, and the relentless search for arable land has increased deforestation and erosion massively while still not producing enough to eat. Exclusively agricultural, western Nepal is nonetheless a net importer of food. Hungry, impoverished peasants are easy recruits to the Maoist cause, with its promise of a government by, for, and of the small farmers.

Sometime after dark, the sky explodes with rain and we tumble into a puny hamlet where dozens of guerrillas wait in huts. These are real Red Army troops, main force soldiers in neat camouflage uniforms. They carry Lee-Enfield .303 rifles relics from World War II but state of the art compared to the

flintlocks carried by our patrol.

In a dark, smoky room we eat with the soldiers, wolfing down rice and lentils with our fingers. Comrade Strong Man won't answer questions about the movement, its ideology, or his own position within the group—"I am just someone," he says, dismissing my questions. The only foreign correspondent they've seen before, he says, was a dyed-in-the-wool communist from The Revolutionary Worker, the weekly newspaper from Chicago, and Strong Man assumes we are here to cheer the revolution on. He is thrilled to host fellow travellers and promises to find two spoons for "the gentlemen comrades" by the next meal. Out here, spoons are still in the future, and metal of any kind is so rare that even ploughshares are made of wood. In the soft light of the cooking fire surrounded by men clutching ancient weapons, we seem to be regressing toward the Bronze Age.

We sleep packed elbow-to-ass amid a dozen snoring guerrillas. At 2am, I am jolted awake by a shower of blows The guerrilla on my left is twitching in the grip of a nightmare. I lie on the stone floor, staring at the ceiling until

5am, and then we are hiking again. In meeting the Maoists, we've achieved exactly what most

visitors to Nepal have been hoping to avoid. Although few foreigners have heard much about the guerillas-thanks to a suppressed local news media and a seeno-evil tourism industry—the two groups are already beginning to meet on the remote mountain paths that they share. Some trekking groups have bumped into Red Army patrols, who have pressed them to "donate" binoculars and sleeping bass to the revolution, but in most incidents the querrillas and hikers have

The real squeeze is happening back in Kathmandu. In March of last year, many foreign-owned businesses were approached by guerrilla representatives demanding money. Speaking on background, to protect his business, the head of one major American trekking company explained it as "a choice between operating here or holding to your ethical standards.' Like several other foreign outfitters, he paid \$1,400 to ensure that the Maoists left his clients alone.

We summit one of Rolpa's infinite peaks, and suddenly we're bolting down on the site of the rally [we hoped we were being taken to]. It is a broad, rounded spur the size of several soccer fields, reaching out over a deep valley. We hike down, pass beneath another Martyrs Arch and find a half-dozen huts and a long schoolhouse—the hamlet of Babhang. A battery-powered public address system is lashed to poles, and a packed-earth platform with chairs awaits the speakers After only a few minutes, there is the sound of chanting in the distance.

They come in village by village, spilling down into the rally with unfeigned hoopla, Sixty from one hamlet, 30 from another, 40 from a third, a stream of desperately poor, excited people waving their fists in the air. The men wear bland homespun skirts or worn-out tracksuits; the women dress in saris of royal blue, emerald green, earthen reds, and otherwordly purples. Within minutes, a second column begins to stream over a high peak in the distance. As they spot the rally site, men discharge their blunderbusses in thundering blasts that echo back and forth in the hills. A third column appears, snaking steadily up from the valley floor, hundreds more carrying banners and blasting off their own

The largest guerrilla rally I've read about featured 700 people; within an hour there are a thousand here, and then twice that, delegations from 52 villages across Rolpa,. They march in crude military lockstep, barefoot or in blown-ou sandals, and arrive chanting call-and-response slogans ("Communist Party of Nepal, I.ONG LIFE!" and "Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, I.ONG LIFE!"). Perhaps 200 Red Army soldiers wait, stonefaced. They've got Enfields-like the canvas sneakers on their feet, captured from the notional police-and wear counterfeit Lowe Alpine backpacks. Comrade Strong Man appears from time to time to shout. "Here are the masses! The masses are coming

Village bands arrive, tooting on horns and hanging drums. A group of black-clad boys dances into the rally, bells jangling on their ankles, and girls from the remotest peaks, who walked three days to get here, giggle and cover their faces at the sight. Every few minutes another black-powder gun detonates, launching a huge doughnut of smoke into the sky.

By noon there are 4,000 people, and still they pour in. A village militia arrives from some other century, clutching bows and carrying quivers of neatly fletched arrows, chanting, "No to feudalism!" Next is an entire girls' soccer team armed with blue tracksuits and muskets. Student groups traipse in with neat flags, and associations of untouchables, and women's groups chanting, "Murder and rape must stop!" The Maoists can sound progressive: They yow not only to fight police corruption, but to punish spousal abuse and hunt down rapists, while recruiting women guerrillas and political cadres. Likewise, they challenge the ancient caste system, which is nothing but racism, and the untouchables are among their most eager recruits.

In midafternoon, with 10,000 peasants packed onto the spur, the propaganda starts. The main event is the declaration of the shadow government in Rolpa and several adjacent districts, and the new leaders of the revolution's first official government are invited to step forward. There are 19 of them. a cross-section of the movement itself—a few tough Magar peasants from Rolpa, much like the attendees at the rally, but also an ambitious student leader from Kathmandu, and several older professional communist politicians. Comrade Strong Man turns out to be Rolpa's new representative of "the intellectuals." Invoking the name of the almighty Prachanda, he delivers a 30-minute speech about the teachings of the leader they follow but never see: after him the new vice-chairman gives a speech. and after him the district's new top man, Chairman Santosh Buddha, gives an amazingly dull, hourlong talk. A typical politician, Buddha is lofty and affected, and seems to have practised looking thoughtful in a mirror.

Despite the sunshine, he preens about in a gret Gore-Tex coat, the only one at the rally. Seamus and I call Chairmen Gore-Tex behind his back.

By first light there is not a single person left on the field. I wander over the barren saddle of the mountains, wondering if the 10,000 chanting peasants were a dream, but the proof is on the ground, the dust still imprinted with the shapes of their missing bodies.

The guerrillas' philosophy too is ghostly. So far we've had a propaganda massage without getting to ask any questions ourselves. Finally, at 10am, with cold clouds blowing in, I am summoned to the schoolhouse, where the entire gang is assembled for a press conference. Gore-Tax, Strong Man, some Maoist schoolteachers, and several vice-flunkies are lined up

I sit on my bench scuff my feet in the dirt and finally ask the question I should have asked the crowd yesterday: How many people must die? The guerrillas like to cite the Shining Path as their fellow travellers in the Maoist cause. I point out that 30,000 people have died in Peru, without a Red victory. If that many people die in Nepal, will the revolution still be justified?

Yes, they all nod immediately. The true face of the revolution at last. "To protect a whole thing," a schoolteacher says," a part can be damaged. It is the rule

Comrade Strong Man elaborates: "A big part of the people here believe it is not necessary to solve Nepal's problems with violence." He brushes aside this natural reluctance. "We clear their mind of this idea," he says. "The people's war

They dismiss offers of peace talks from the government, tricks designed to fool the people, weaken the country, and deliver it to the control of India. Ominously, Gore-Tex vows a "protracted war in rural areas," and "armed... urban rebellion," the first hint of a guerrilla war in Kathmandu.

They descend quickly into jargon. They are for dialectical materialism and against reactionary power. Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution, in which mobs beat "class enemies" through the streets, was good, and will be imitated as soon as they come to power. Colonialism, feudalism, imperialism, capitalism, and revisionism are all bad. Peasants are good and politicians are bad. On this animal farm, four legs are good and two legs are bad.



The Red Army gets festive on the march

14-20 SEPTEMBER 2001 NEPALI TIMES

40 DET THE CLEAR PICTURE HEAR



BRUSSELS - Poul Nielson, a top EU official, is travelling to Afghanistan this week to seek pledges for "unhindered access" to aid

workers operating in the country. Nielson, the EU development and

humanitarian affairs commissioner, said the five-day "humanitarian

mission" will enable him "to learn at first hand about the conditions

them." Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, which has one of the largest

refugee populations in the world, has been hit by a devastating

facing both the victims and the aid workers who are striving to help

drought for the third consecutive year. Nielson said the EU funds 25

NGOs operating in Afghanistan. The EU mission was planned well in advance of the arrest last month of eight foreign aid workers and 16

Afghan nationals employed by Shelter Now International, a German

Christian aid organisation, for allegedly proselytising, Nielson will not

put pressure on the Taliban to release them. "We never enter into the

game of conditionality when discussing humanitarian aid," he said.

But he acknowledged, it would be "unavoidable not to touch on it" in

discussions with the Afghan government and reaffirmed the EU's

Organisaiton Office (ECHO) provided some \$17 million in humanitarian

assistance to Afganistan last year, with support for victims of both

the drought and the conflict, Projects included emergency assistance

persons as well as food security activities in the countryside to halt

UNITED NATIONS - A leading human rights organisation is urging UN

member states to make firm commitments to implement their landmark

1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. "The implementation of

the convention has been very snotty " says. In Recker of New York

based Human Rights Watch, speaking in advance of the UN Special

Session on Children, scheduled for this week. The Special Session,

to be attended by more than 80 world leaders and numerous child

such as shelter, nutrition and medicines to internally displaced

the flow of the population to the cities. (IPS)

A world fit for children

delegates, "should push for the full

implementation of the convention,"

she says. The convention is one of

the most widely endorsed interna-

tional treaties, having been ratified

children remain without access to

by 191 countries. Yet, millions of

opposition to the death penalty. The EU's Humanitarian Aid

"Unhindered access"



### from p. 11

Their policy about foreign tourists is clear: The more,

"Not any foreign person is to be disturbed," Gore-Tex announces, as Strong Man nods. They actually invite trekkers to visit their areas—with permission—because they believe Westerners will be seduced by Maoism and spread the revolution to Europe and America. It's a Red Tourism offensive. "We will inspire them to flourish the same movement in their country!" Strong Man boasts.

Strong Man presents me with several pages ripped from his notebook. This document begins with an error-riddled manifesto-"the CPN (Moist) is guided the ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maosim against the reactionary power of Nepal which is preserved by Indian expansion is and world imperialist" and continues with an executive summary of the press conference, which hears no relation to any of the questions I asked. Howdown facthe Royal Army We will face it with the power of the people Howdoyou forward the production? We forward it with the help of people

We are fighting total war. As we talk, an early tendril of the monsoon seaso blows in, a thick, blasting rain of tropical density and highaltitude chill. We exchange endless good-byes in the dripping hut, while guards are found to escort us out of the

Howdo you bring about indigenous society:

We bring it according to Lenin's ideology.

How do you forward Nesotiation with the sovernment:

In a sopping-wet ceremony, Gore-Tex drops more flowers around our necks and rubs more tikka on our foreheads. He gives all of us, including the Nepali journalists, sealed airmail envelopes. I naively assume that these contain a letter, or a certificate, or some propaganda, and stuff mine into my pocket, ready to get moving. As I walk out the door. I notice that the Chairman's Gore-Tex coat has soaked through completely. It's as fake as he is.

At some point in here I drag the crumbling, soggy envelope from my pants pocket, slide a finger down the seal, and discover that it contains money. Not a letter, not a certificate, not a propaganda flyer, but a bribe. About \$5 worth of rupees. Now I'm as dirty as everyone else in Nepal

Another day of brutal road travel and a prop plane back to Kathmandu. In the terminal, I spot a plastic box for donations to the Red Cross and I shove the remaining rupees, the Maoist bribe money that we didn't spend on

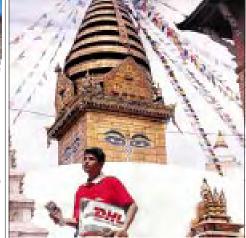
Fantas, through the acrylic slot.

It is likely that the Maoists will be undone by their own quest for ideological purity, by their faith in a violence that, as they themselves admit, is not supported by the Nepali people. The more the Maoists expand, the quicker the people will learn that opposing a corrupt government is not the same as supporting a fanatical insurgency. Nepal can still evade the dark garden of Maoist dreams, but the exceptional kingdom is already losing its distance from the world, becoming instead a troubled, unexceptional place.

In the last days of old Nepal it is lovely to walk the

strike-bound street of Kathmandu or roll about town in rickshas, pausing to watch aimless bands of students and communists march listlessly through the city, lifting their fists, occasionally tossing a brick. There's something wonderfully feeble about the scene. Perhaps the Maoists' grin ferocity will vet founder in the traditional incompetence of Nepali politics. There is always the hope of farce, rather

Patrick Symmes is contributing editor of Outside magazine and author of Chasing Che: A Motorcycle Journey Through the Guevara Legend.

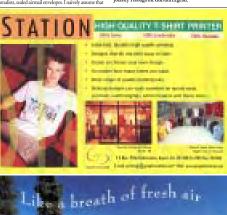


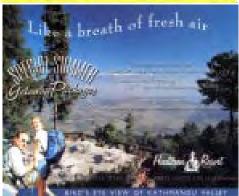
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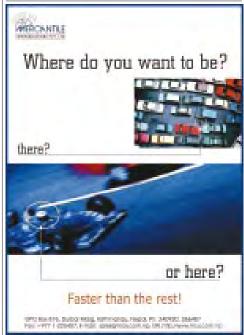
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# **American diplomacy**

ALEXEI ARBATOV

WORLD

nere have been many high-leve Russo-American meeting recently, including talks between the two defence ministers. All have spotlighted the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM). But the consultations, including the planned visit of Vladimir Putin to the US this autumn will never produce practical agreements until there is a solid basis for nevotiations—such as there has been over the past 30 years, including Soviet, Russian deterrence

There is no practical dialogue especially concerning the vital issues of strategic relations, including the ABM Treaty and offensive weapons. The Genoa agreements reached b Presidents Putin and Bush, and the "consultations" that have occurred since have no solid base. Why all this talk about consultations? Because America doesn't intend to hold talks Diplomatic bargaining involves serious discussion, a search for a balance of interests. But in consultations, two sides exchange views without having to

reach an agreement. Consultations could potentially help clarify positions—say, those provisions of the ABM Treaty that do not suit the US. But why should Washington lay its cards face up? The Bush administration is embarrassed by the change in the line-up of forces in the Senate, the allies ask it not to act unilaterally, and it would not be diplomatically wise to break with Russia when US ties with China are difficult. In this situation, "diplomatic dancing" around the issues of offensive and defensive weapons suits the US administration. It allows it to resolve problems with allies and the Senate, convincing both that nothing

US consultations on the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty are aimed at eroding the treaty's authority.

terrible is going on, so it can gradually start doing what it wants.

America is not yet worried by the ssue of deployment of a missile defence system, though it needs to test a wide range of activities prohibited by the ABM Treaty, including mobile, sea, and airlaunched craft, and so on. The ABM Treaty is a hindrance that the US seeks to erode in an atmosphere of mutual assurances and general political declarations. This is why Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld did not reach any agreement during his recent Moscow visit, but only restated the US line about the nuclear threat posed by rogue countries—actually meaning China and its limited number of intercontinental ballistic missiles

In the meantime, the US will tart tests to do away with the ABM Treaty. The 1997 protocol on strategic and theatre ABM systems allows for the US to tests numerous systems at permitted ceilings. It allows the testing of any weapon against targets flying at a speed of below 5 km/sec, and the testing of ground, sea, and air-launched nterceptor missiles. The only limitation is that ground- and airaunched interceptor missiles should fly at no more than 5.5 km/sec, and the permissible speed for sea-based nterceptor missiles is 4.5 km/sec. The US can work with this for

In any case, America will not withdraw from the ABM Treaty in a huff as many people imagine. They

think thar President Bush will say: "We notify all parties to the ABM Treaty that under Article 15 we will cease to regard ourselves as bound by the treaty provisions in six months in view of the appearance of a threat to national interests "This will not take place anytime soon. Instead, America will withdraw from the treaty when i starts deploying its anti-missile system, which will not happen for several years. The treaty will not be killed by one blow, it will be eroded and undermined, until everyone believes it is dead (Project Syndicate)

Alexei Arbatov is deputy chairman of the State Duma Defense Committee of the Russian

school, hundreds of thousands toil as child labourers or are in service as child soldiers. Only Somalia and the US have not ratified the conver tion. Somalia has been struggling to e for over a decade. In the US, political opponents of the convention say children's rights spelled out in the convention undermine parental authority. The convention stipulates, among other things, that every child has the right to life, that countries shall ensure child survival and development, primary education shall be free and compulsory and discipline in school should respect the child's dignity. The convention

Missed opportunity

tanley Fischer's departure as First Deputy Managing Director of the IMF provided an ideal opportunity to re-examine the Fund's "Washington Consensus" which reigned supreme in his reignprivatisation, liberalisation (especially trade liberalisation), and macrostabilisation. But in naming Ann Krueger as his replacement, the IMF has signalled a stubborn adherence to the failed past.

Ann Krueger, a respected professor of economics at Stanford University and former chief economist at the World Bank, has enormous energy, integrity, and commitment to what she believes is good for developing countries. But the policies of the "Washington Consensus" have been an utter failure in promot growth and stability in developing and transition economies. Her area of expertise, trade policy, will hardly help restore the battered credibility of the Fund. Partly Dr Krueger reflects the appointment process itself—a legacy of horse-trading engendered by the posttwar carve-up of the Bretton Woods financial institutions. America names the head of the World Bank, a European leads the IMF, and an American fills the number two spot at the Fund.

Candidates from developing countries—the focus of the IMF's activities— need not apply. No one said: "The IMF is truly international. Let us search for the best person, an expert in macroeconomic policy and monetary economics, especially as they relate to the developing world, who can restore the confidence of the poor in an institution that seems to ignore their concerns." This was an American appointment, and not one subject to US Congress approval. Despite the embarrassment of the appointment of the current IMF Managing Director Horst Kohler, when the Clinton administration heavy-handedly vetoed Europe's first choice for the post, someone with experience in developing countries and a new approach to their problems was neve

seriously considered. America insisted on its supposed entitlement, the IMF acquiesced. Dr Krueger's area of expertise, trade policy, is a structural issue under World Bank's mandate Will the lines of division between the World Bank and the IMF be

blurred further? Renowned monetary economists like Stanley Fischer had difficulty dealing with the intricacies of modern finance. A trade expert may find them even more baffling. The high interest rates the IMF The new second-in-command at the IMF will probably continue the failed experiments of ner predecessor and the fund. .......

destruction of capital and its simplistic prescriptions for capital and financial market liberalisation often resulted in collapsing financial sectors, prohibitively high borrowing costs, widespread social dislocation, and political upheaval.

What went wrong? IMF and World Bank structural adjustment policies, combining trade liberalisation with tight monetary policy, were supposed to redirect resources to more productive uses. In practice, however, when restrictive monetary policy is implemented without developing financial institutions that provide credit to small and/or medium-sized domestic firms, it is impossible to create new jobs and enterprises. In country after country, displaced workers went from low productivity jobs to zero productivity unemployment.

Designing policies for the developing world requires a profound understanding of financial markets and development. Mindless trade liberalisation without the right preconditions is no solution. Nor, judging from the World Bank's practices while Dr Krueger was its chief economist, is there reason to hope for more meaningful participation by developing countries, or genuine debate about alternative strategies. This at a time when leaders of the

developing world are better equipped than ever before to make informed policy decisions sensitive to their local

> The IMF's approach to the developing world is pre-cut from the same neo-liberal cloth as the World Bank's. The IMF needs a new paradigm, not a warmed-over embodiment of a ale and repugnant ideology.

seph Stiglitz was formerly Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers to US President Bill Clinton and Chief Economist and Senior Vice President of the World Bank.

40.0001/sft.BAR ...

also recognises the right of children to be heard in public discourse and policymaking. The US signed the convention in 1995 but the

treaty remains without legal force here because the Senate has not

ratified it. The Special Session will devise a new plan of action. "A

World Fit for Children." to benefit children in the next decade. (IPS



Where the tales are as tall as the mountains

Succulent steaks and burgers bountiful, with a vegetarian variety. The friendliest bar around the most convivial fireplace between Tibet and Timbuctoo



COLOMBO - The working one-year arrangement Sri Lanka's ruling People's Alliance (PA) has with the country's main Marxists, the JVP. won't do much for the economy of this war- and drought-stricken country, say observers. Under the memorandum of understanding (MoU), the JVP promises the government support, and the PA agrees to dissolve parliament within a year and hold national polls under a caretaker regime, among other political and administrative moves. The agreement also outlines steps to halt price increases in essential food items, fuel, electricity, gas and water and put on hold plans to privatise public or social property such as water resources, banks, insurance ventures. But the Jehan Perera of the National Peace Council (NPC), a Norwegian-hacked local peace group, says the battered economy makes it impossible not to raise prices or resort to subsidies. In recent months the economy, devastated by 18 years of insurgency, has taken a further beating through a prolonged drought and a rebel strike on the country's only international airport. Diesel and gas prices have risen by 100 percent in the past 18 months due to rising world prices, triggering price hikes in essential goods. Dr Nadeem UI Haq, IMF representative in Colombo, said good governance should include reducing the budget deficit and proceeding with structural reforms. Sri Lanka received an IMF standby facility of over \$250 million this year to implement key economic reforms including selling off loss-making state enterprises and reducing the budget deficit which has ballooned due to high war

# **Hunger amid plenty**

NEW DELHI - "Our granaries are brimming because people do not have the wherewithal to purchase foodgrain," was how India's blunt-speaking Agriculture Minister Ajit Singh summed it up. No central or state government has been candid about people dying of



starvation even as the grain surplus rises. Media have shown graphic proof of starvation deaths and mass denrivation and India's Supreme Court, acting on a petition by the People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL), a rights group, finally intervened. The court observed that belowpoverty-line (BPL) families were being given 25 kg of grai per month at four cents each when they were entitled to 75 kg at that rate. India's granaries

are bursting with over 60 million tonnes of wheat and rice and the current crop's bumper harvest is expected to take surplus stocks to over 80 million tonnes. There is nowhere to store that much grainsacks are being stacked at airfields, covered under flimsy black plastic sheeting. Vast amounts are reported to have rotted in rainy weather or been eaten by rats. Official apathy prompted the court ask the PUCL to identify officers in each of the affected districts. who have the "spirit inclination and drive" to prevent further starvation deaths. The court has issued notices to seven state governments to report on starvation. None had estimates of BPI figures, but the PUCL told the court that 200 million Indians suffer "chronic hunger." Unoffical sources say that the death toll this year from starvation is in the early hundreds. (IPS)



## CHAYANIT POONYARAT

BANGKOK-Thailand, in its quest for dollars, plans to develop its strength as a tourist destination in ways that worry locals. The government wants to bring more funds into the country, still recovering from the 1997 economic crisis It has considered reversing a logging ban imposed in the late eighties after parts of Thailand suffered devastating floods and mudslides, and lifting a 1998 ban on inland prawn farming, put in place after the practice destroyed 800,000 hectares of mangroves.

It is turning a similar eye to tourism, "Tourism, shrimp farming and logging are all 'slash-and-burn said Anita Pleumarom of the Chiang Mai-based NGO Tourism Investigation and Monitoring Team (TIM-Team). For example, there is talk of transforming Koh Samui, a popular tourist island in southern Thailand. into the centre for tourism in the area. Koh Samui, a 47 sq km island some 640 km from Bangkok, has 38,000 inhabitants-and gets 860,000 visitors annually. Tourism revenues are about \$200 million every year. This year over 900,000 tourists are expected here.

More than 10 million tourists visit Thailand each year, and this is estimated to increase by 10.8 million this year and 11.13 million in 2002. Pradech Phayakvichien, governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), said government wants to "extend tourism seasons to cover the whole year" in Samui, and re-brand it as a 'Luxury Beach Resort'. Though the TAT savs the number of tourists visiting Koh Samui will be limited to 950,000 a year, it wants to expand port facilities to handle a heavier schedule. Special loans will be given to ferry operators to upgrade



Thailand needs to be cautious with tourism projects.

standards, more roads will be built to decongest traffic around beaches, and a marina and cultural centre are in the works. The plan would later extend to other islands in the area. Greater Samui

Activists are urging government to go slow because many Thai communities know the social and environmental price of overdevelopment of tourism. Koh Samui is already grappling with problems like transportation, city planning, pollution and the development of local souvenir products. Many case studies suggest he economic benefits from tourism are highly overrated, and there is simply not enough money for conservation and the improvemen of public services. "Ironically, to se up tourism projects and the required infrastructure, more and

more foreign loans are needed, which add to the financial burden." Pleumarom added. Thailand's public debt stands at \$60 billion, equal to 57 percent of its GDP

There are many lessons about the social and environmental roblems of tourism. All Thai peaches display similar destructiv patterns, say experts-coastlines full of garbage and pollution with xcessive commercial building. Land and goods prices shoot up to unrealistic levels. The TAT recently received letters from ourists complaining the Phi Phi islands area is overcrowded and dirty. They suggested that the number of tourists there be curtailed. Local press reports say ourists are disappointed these

days because authenticity is often

undermined for quick profits. "The government should improve the situation in deteriorating tourist centres, not open up new reas," explained Pleumarom.

But the search continues for ways to boost export earnings and evenues from outside sources. Last month, newspapers reported a new project to make Phuket an outstanding plastic surgery centre so that 'when you think of plastic surgery, think of Phuket.'

And meanwhile in Bangkok's tourist hub Patpong, Thailand's Interior Minister Purachai Piumsoombun has been crusading for a moral "social order" since August. Bars must ston selling alcohol after midnight and close by 2am, in the middle of the peak eriod for business, according to bar owners, 1am to 3am. (IPS

he accelerating integration of international markets for goods, services, ideas, labour and capital brings risks and benefits. Starting in August 1997. Indonesia suffered a sharp, deep set of financial, natural, and political crises. The initial responses to the social consequences of the crises were tenid, localised, but by July 1998 civil disturbances and President Subarto's fall convinced the new government to quickly deploy large-scale safety nets. There are five lessons to be learnt from Indonesia's experience in designing safety nets during a crisis:

Śtarting large programs speedily needs institutional commitment, clear objectives and simple design. Despite a strong commitment to the safety nets as of July 1998, while some programs reached millions within months of the new budget, including a rice subsidy and a scholarship program, other programs could overcome their organisational inertia. One program for urban areas did not

disburse a single rupiah until two years after the crisis began.

The program designed to deliver rice to be sold at subsidised prices was apidly successful because: (1) The logistics agency had the capacity and nthusiasm to deliver foodstuffs nationwide; (2) the program had a clear objective: get rice to those who need it: (3) the program was simple: eligible households got 20 kg a month at 1,000 rupiah per kg. Once the rice was in the villages, however, things were more complex.

Even simple designs need local flexibility. The rice program was theoretically simplicity personified. But though the logistics agency delivered 20 kg of rice per eligible household each month to village authorities, social pressures to distribute the rice more broadly were overwhelming-many villages simply decided to give

This unofficial and hidden local flexibility was not necessarily bad. Locally, it was a political necessity, and the informal flexibility delivered rice to households which would have been unfairly excluded. The lack of flexibility within the official design, however, meant that the program could not be monitored accurately.

No safety net using static administrative targeting saves households from sudden shocks. Standard administrative criteria for targeting poverty programs don't work when dealing with households whose incomes suffer sudden large shocks. Early research on the crisis' impact revealed that over a quarter of those who were "expenditure poor" after the crisis had expenditures more than 50 percent above poverty as little as three months before the crisis! These people are key targets for crisis safety nets, but unlikely to be on any



Swiftly integrating international markets need programs to deal with the social consequences of such linkages.

..... official government lists. Some safety net programs need to use self-selection to reach those shocked by crisis

Some ideas that work well as poverty or development programs fail as crisis safety nets-especially microcredit. Whatever the virtues of development programs, rapid expansion of microcredit as a response to crisis is ill-advised. In a meral crisis, the climate for creating new businesses is appalling. Expansion of redit in an "emergency" fashion undermines the painstaking groundwork uccessful microcredit programs require, and once people realise the credit is really a "transfer," not a "debt," the programs are abused through large-scale allocation of credit to the locally and politically influential.

Keep an eye on ALL expenditures a crisis creates, the worst safety nets may be the biggest spenders. While safety net programs were scrutinised to ensure good design and effective targeting, Indonesia's government spent three times as much on bailing out the financial sector and five times as much on a general subsidy for energy that neither benefited the poor nor the hardest hit households. Whether to spend more on safety net programs depends in part on the alternatives. While governments and donors often jealously guard the funds for safety nets, the much greater sums that are usually in the general budget's fiscal trough are less well protected and often consumed by powerful financial and elite interests. (Project Syndicate)

Surlamo Sumarto is Executive Director, the SMERT Research Institute Jakarta: Lant Pritchett is professor of politics/economics at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

# **Prachanda's family calls**

It is more than 40 years since she took care of baby Chabilal and watched him grow. Today, she knows that Chabilal has become Prachanda. She has heard that he is somewhere that he is well-known and trying to become somehody. But she is still in her village, where Prachanda was born. Meet Devaki Dahal, aunt of Maoist leader

Chairman Prachanda. Devaki, a 72-year-old, still herds the livestock to the grazing grounds in the village of Lewade, Dhikupokhari Village Development Committee-2 in Kaski district. When neople tease her about being Prachanda's "mother," old memories of Chabilal come to her mind-the boy who played in her lap, the one who could shut his eyes and rattle off the scriptures. Devak

recalls Prachanda learning the prayers to

Goddess Durga from his father and uncle because there was no school in the village until

Since Prachanda's mother Devrani Rhawani was sickly Devaki was in charge of his unbringing and looked after him until he was six. Prachanda's family continued to visit Devaki even after they moved to Chitwan in 1962.

"He came here with his wife before the "people's movement" began (in 1996), they even went to see his in-laws in Hemja, Kaski. I haven't been able to meet him since." Recalling the last time Prachanda was in the village. Devaki told Nepal Samacharpatra. "he said, 'aunt, we'll leave everything here and settle down in Chitwan, I'll come to get you. I haven't seen a trace of him after that."

Longing to meet Prachanda Devaki even sent him two letters. But she never received a renly "I have the nerson who came to see me a letter asking him to give it to Prachanda. He said he would. But now the messenger has stopped coming," she says, chin in hand and staring into space. "I wonder if he got the letter. If he did, he should have got in touch. He wouldn't abandon us. Maybe the messenger threw the letter away!"

"Meeting? I don't know whether that will ever happen. I'm quite old. I wish things would work out," says Devaki who's heard of the talks between the government and her dear Prachanda. "If they come to an agreement, there's a chance of seeing him again." There is hope in her voice.

"Who wouldn't appreciate their children's achievements?" asks Devaki, although she's not happy about the killings. "I wish people weren't killed," she says, "If we cry for our sons, others will cry for their sons when they die. Everyone's mortal remains are the same."

After her husband Kul Prasad passed away, Devaki's closest relations are her brotherin-law Mukti Ram (Prachanda's father) and Prachanda. At present, she looks after her inlaws family. Although they try very hard to keep up the family name, the branch of the Dahal family which continues to live in Prachanda's birthplace is often boycotted socially.

Close family members recall some neighbours and distant relatives saying they were the family of a murderer, "When the villages around got their first electric lights, we were not connected. They said they'd give us electricity today tomorrow. Finally our family members raised money and got electricity themselves," says Devaki.

"It hurts to say this, but many of our relatives say we have a murderer in the family. We're isolated as they don't interact with us or talk to us." It is with a heavy heart that Tikaram Dahal recalls taking Prachanda to Chitwan when he was eight. It took eleven days as they herded cattle all the way to Chitwan.

"He's left, gone underground, but people who pass by this village say this is Prachanda's village and shy away from talking with us. Even after his departure, we've heen through a lot of trouble because of Prachanda " says Tikaram

He continues on a more positive note, "We may have borne a lot but he has kept the Dahal family name. If there were peace, we could meet him. May things work out with the government so we can see him, that's all we want."

"If India has deployed its army in its side of the border, we too must use this opportunity to come up with a solution to tackle the problems caused by the open border.

Former foreign minister Shailendra Kumar Upadhyaya in Budhabar Saptahik of 12 September 2001.



Drishti, 11 September.

# Koirala phobia Tarun National Weekly, 3 September

A month after he resigned from the post of prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala has begun meeting some very important, politically active people. Sources tell us that he is very disturbed by the events in parliament and how the role of parliament is being compromised. People have been playing guessing games trying to figure out the notive behind his sudden concern Some say that this he is doing this to finds ways to jab at the (Sher Bahadur) Deuba administration. Koirala has met a lot of people in the past few days, but he is keeping quiet about what is going on behind the scenes.

In the 36 days since Koirala stepped down, he has visited his ometown twice. After returning to the capital, he visited the leaders of different political parties, almost all



of them. The first person he met was Ramesh Nath Pandey, who has always been considered an important political wheeler-dealer. Pandey played a role in ousting Krishna Prasad Bhattarai in March 2000, after which Koirala came to power. Now Koirala wants to trengthen his relation with Pandey Last Wednesday, the two met at Pandey's residence in Bishalnagar and discussed matters concerning government and the state of the nation. Koirala late attended a lunch at Pandey's residence, where he surprised a number of people present, including KP Bhattaraj. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and UML leader Madhav Nepal, with his remarks. Koirala stated that he was meeting political leaders of all hues in an attempt to develop a strategy to isolate the the Maoists.

# Leftists of Nepal. unite

Budhabar Saptahik, 5 September

ब्रह्मचार The central committee of the UML in a meeting last week decided that it had to play a crucia role to ensure implementation of radical land reforms and also take care that the agenda was not hijacked by anyone Madhay Kumar Nepal, Bharat Mohan Adhikari, Amrit Bohara, Ishwor Pokharel and Raghuji Pant attended the meeting and agreed that some understanding/working alliance had to be reached between all left parties. Narayan Man Rijykchhe of the Nepal Majdoor Kisan Party, Siddhi Lal Singh of the Marxist Leninists, Prabhu Narayan Choudhary of the Marxists, Bishnu Bahadur Manandhar of the Samyukta, Pari Thapa of the Jana Morcha, Krishna Das Shrestha of the Marxist



eninist-Maoist party and Amik

neeting. Siddhi Lal Singh of the

ML proposed that all left parties.

come to some understanding and

move forward. The UML leaders

including the Maoists should

said clearly that unless the

Maoists changed their ways it

ogether, let alone form an

the Masal and Ekata Kendra

eeting. The UML has put

ould be impossible to work

nderstanding. Representatives o

Unity Centre) did not attend the

forward a 22-point agenda, which

it says is the only way the country

can be bailed out from the present

risis. The other left parties have

agreed to come up with their own

**Brothers in arms** 

na Ekata, 3 September

The central committee of the

Ekata Kendra (Unity Centre) met

ecently and made the following

The only way to get the

country back on its feet is by

forming an interim government,

constituent assembly and finally, a republic. The party has sugges-

ions and a plan of action for this.

The party feels that govern-

ment-Maoist dialogue should be

the reactionary forces, leftist

parties and the people. This

dialogue has to be used to bring

about fundamental changes in

Nepali society. The Maoists'

stated agenda is identical to ours

Our common position will help

bring about fundamental change

society and therefore these

hree things need to be imple-

fails, then a civil war will break

out, for which the government

policies and behaviour of other

party has grave concerns about the

eft parties, like the UML and the

ML. All left parties should unite

opposition and reactionary forces

his radical eight-point agenda and

land reform program. This is being done to hoodwink the people and

influence the government-Maoist

dialogue. The government

should explain its policies very

clearly. Since these programs nave not been implemented yet,

their effectiveness cannot be

predicted now. The party will

ressure the government to

We regard the Maoists as a

friendly force. They have started

mistakes. Their recent announce

ment concerning the International

to rectify some of their earlier

Communist Movement shows

that the Maoists are moving close

to us. Prachanda has made public

nplement the programs.

Deuba recently announced

and not do anything that will

trengthen the hands of the

will be held responsible. Our

nented immediately. If dialogu

converted into a dialogue between

uggestions.

decisions

Sherchan of the Samyukta Jana

us as a revolutionary communist force. This brotherly feeling has opened many doors for both of us MLs unification

# proposal

## Long term plans The CPN (ML) could no its program of class strugge. Inc party did not develop any policy or framework concerning this. From now on, the party must develop village committees to carry forward the class struggle, and the party's policies and opinions must e based on this philosophy. Armed village committees have to be formed nationally and from this ategory a volunteer force has to

oe formed. Class struggle is a

continuous process and needs to

The left parties must unite to

e sustained

ackle reactionary forces. An alliance must be formed and all left leaders and activists must join Fifty-one percent of the party's central committee should not contest general elections. The general secretary of the central committee and two-thirds of the polithuro must not be allowed to ile candidature in the general election. We must carry out an investigation every year into the illegally acquired wealth is discovered, it must be immediatel nationalised and people found in possession of such wealth must be mmediately expelled from the party. The party will specify an amount within which all of its members must make ends meet Members of the central commitee, elected officials and members nominated to the Rastriya Parishad must be full-time part workers and cannot belong to the ousiness community. All members must work in the areas the party allocates to them, with no compromises. They should all ork for the unity of the Left and the formation of a national government. The army and police must be changed radically to be more democratic and transparent. A high-

vel investigation committee must

be formed to control corruption in

these bodies.

The united party should be a nodel for all others in the country. The party's name should be simply the Nepal Communist Party—no initials a the end. That is, we should have united party. The process of ınification should be similar to that of the Marxists and the MI. in 1990—it should be based on equality and nothing else. All the party's frontal organisations must be treated equally. We need a party campaign and a class campaign to bring about this unification. The new party will have members of both parties. Members of the new party nominated to the Upper House will remain so. Central Committee members of the unified party will be elected by fair means. The unification rocess should move forward and ssues that cannot be resolved easily should be postponed.

# Winner in shock



NEW YORK: I leston Hewitt assoke Hewitt said of the number one last Monday, 10 September, to the ranking, "I'm number three now, it's a realisation that he had achieved one career high, two spots to go. It doesn't of his two life goals and was fast sound like much but it's a big step for sure." Hewitt is fast realising what champions in all sports have long closing in on the other. "It's starting to sink in, that's for sure," the 20year-old said of his US Open victory known—that tasting ultimate victory at a news conference at the Australian like an addictive drug, is a high that consulate. "I'm starting to reflect on ives you wanting more. "I'm on top what it means to be a Grand Slam of the world at the moment, I think champion now and to actually win I'm going to be more hungry. I want the US Open," Hewitt said after his this feeling back," he said, glancing at 7-6, 6-1, 6-1 whipping of 13-time his US Open trophy as if to make sure Grand Slam champion Pete Sampra it was really there. Hewitt was far more alert and earned him his first major title. "Every kid's dream I think is to bright-eyed than countryman Patrick win a Grand Slam, at least one, Rafter had been the day after he won

those goals now and hopefully I can get the next one. Sampras said the Australian possessed the best passing shots. return of serve and court speed he had ever seen-at least on that near-perfect Sunday for the younger than the legal drinking age in New York, and of having his parents voungster from Adelaide. around. "I went and had dinner with

and to be number one player in

the world. I've achieved one of

"I'm getting closer and closer,"

that he was simply too "knackered" to cut loose. "I got a couple of hours (sleep) that was about it. Even when I got home halfway through the night ast night I was still on cloud nine. It was hard to fall asleep," he said. But the usually fiery Australian

was even restrained during the biggest match of his life, showing little of the emonstrative fist-pumping against Sampras that often punctuates his natches. "I really was in shock hose last few games. I had to look up at the scoreboard a couple of times to see if it was match point, ne admitted. He was also shocked that he had earned his first major title at such a young age. "When Darren (Cahill) first took over the coaching of me we sat down and he old me that 'we're going to try and work on your game and hopefully you'll be holding these trophies up vhen you're 24, 25 years old'," he recalled. "Everything's come so quickly. To get in the top 10 as an 8-year-old, to be in the top five as a 19-year-old, to be top three now as a 20-year-old and be holding the US Open trophy, it's just happened o quickly for me," he marvelled.

"I've been looking at this thing all day," he said of the silver US Open chalice. "On this one side ou got all the newest generation's names, Edberg, Sampras, Agassi, Rafter, Safin, now mine's next. On he other side you've got Newcombe, Rosewall, Laver, so nany great players, the list just goes on, McEnroe, Connors, and to have our name alongside these guys on this wonderful trophy, it doesn't get much better," he added.

It is all a far cry from the first ime he won a trophy. "My first trophy was 'most improved' at my local club in Adelaide. I would have een around seven or eight," he said laughing. Hewitt said he was overwhelmed by all the messages of support he had received from back ome, although he called the plans ov Australian tennis officials to declare the day after his victory "hats backwards day" in his bonou (Reuters)

# GREENLINE TOURS PYT. LTD. INTERCITY BUS SERVICE

his first US Open in 1997, Rafter had

obligations with bright red bloodshot

eyes and a grin that never left his face,

having been dragged directly from all-

night celebrations. Hewitt's restrained

celebration by Aussie standards may

have been the result of being a year

turned up for his next day media

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# MI returns

CHICAGO - Michael Jordan all but confirmed to this reporter last week that he would return to play in the NBA and said the world will know for sure in the middle of this week. Asked whether he was definitely coming back, Jordan smiled slyly. A moment later, he looked up and said, "I'm doing it for the love of the game. Nothing else. For the love of the game."

But a statement released from lordan's office didn't confirm anything. "I'm not confirming the report. It is pure speculation," Jordan said in the statement. When informed that it was being reported that he had all but confirmed his return to the NBA, Jordan told the Washington Post: "I didn't say that." Jordan reiterated that he was speaking of his "months of attempting to get into basketball shape," not his definite return.

Jordan, who led the Chicago Bulls to six championships, has worked out all summer preparing for the expected comeback with the Washington Wizards. He is president of basketball operations for the team

and a part owner, meaning he has to divest his ownership under NBA rules before returning to the court.

lordan has tested himself and his name repeatedly in scrimmages against top-calibre NBA players, with league referees officiating. The only question remaining is whether the tendinitis in his right knee would limit his effectiveness, Jordan, however, said the knee was sound.

This would be the second comeback for the 38-year-old Jordan. He stunned the basketball world by retiring in October 1993, saying he had nothing left to prove in basketball and wanted to give baseball a try. He played a season of Double-A ball for the Chicago White Sox team, but returned to the Bulls in March 1995.

In the half-hour conversation on a curb outside his restaurant, Jordan dropped the conditional tense for the first time since acknowledging in April that he was serious about coming back. "I want to play for vears," he said. But Jordan made it clear he wasn't coming back to fulfil any expectations but his own. "Winning isn't always championships. What's wrong with helping kids find their way, teaching them the game." (AP)



# VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Save the Children UK is an international NGO working for children's rights in Nepal and more than sixty other countries.

We are looking for a passionately committed and creative individual for the post of "Program Manager (PM)", to be based in Nepalgunj (with at least 75% field visits to program areas) to lead our HIV/AIDS programs implemented in Mid and Far West Regions.

At the moment, we are working in Achham District, working with 3 local partners in trying to mobilize all the communities of the district in response to the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic and its social implications. Over the last one and half years, more than 700 community people from all walks of life have raised their hand voluntarily to be involved, Communities are analyzing the implications of the epidemic and are planning and implementing activities against AIDS. A social movement has begun from Achham.

We need a PM to further "fuel" this movement against AIDS in Achham and some other districts of the Far West region. As PM you will be responsible for planning, coordinating, monitoring and management of these initiatives. If you can demonstrate most of the

- An understanding of how a social movement can be promoted, how it can achieve result and how it can grow.
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# Translating Bairagi Kainla

traditional chhanda (formed) poetry because that is harder to ranslate than free verse: "You have more freedom when you translate free verse." He may be right. Yet, without even having to bother with such things as rhyme and metre and scansion, translating free verse is hard enough to do. In this week's column, the avaameli or abstract. "dimensionalist" poetry of Bairagi Kainla has kept me especially perplexed, trying to make out dim, dissatisfying forms in the half-light of mixed languages.

There are in the act of translation, three main tasks to attend to: translating the meaning/s (or logic) of the original text, translating its style (or rhetoric), and opting between the different silences that result from each word choice, each comma, exclamation mark and full stop. In abstract verses such as Kainla's "The Mountain." below the meaning of the original text can be obscure at times, filled with innuendoes, subtle connotations, double entendres and the possibility of multiple interpretations. While this abstraction makes for a layered, participatory reading experience in the original language, it guarantees a flattening of meaning in the process of translation; secondary interpretations easily get lost. Similarly, translating the style of such a poem is tricky-for the rhythms and resonance of Nepali language tend not to match those of English. Indeed, "The Mountain" is the most challenging work of Nepali literature I have translated to date. Silence features large in this translation (as in any translated text); and more than anything else. I am reminded of why the critic Jacques Derrida has said that the enterprise of translation is always slated for failure. There is much in literature that simply never translates.

# THE MOUNTAIN

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

1. Even in the house going to the top floor I climb peaks of the high staircase ledge These days I'm always climbing mountains in my dreams which never bow down no matter how many hills and peaks I subdue with the threshold of each step

Oh! The backbones of the Himalayas break

and collapse, retching pools of

nighttime on my street The thundering of echoes slams against the walls of the skyonto the main street, upon a running train In droplets of blood contained by shards of glass instances of lives crushed in separate compartmentson the lines of broken trains From the flames of the raging fires Loather these. I carry these in my pockets and on my shoulders The streets which are exhausted having taken many children to school having taken many sons to the border trenches having returned many fathers from their offices

these streets by now shattered in accidents

ves, all these streets

I carry the comse of life

2. From above my shouldersthe corpse of life putrefying on the density of my love, the blaze of my faith drops in many pieces upon shards of light conveying one boon each these pieces drop with a splash into brightness in each of my steps; on my street! An eve drops: a night ends Another eye drops: another night ends A heel drops: a foot-length piece of the street is filled A hand falls: a bridge is drawn from earth to sky Two hands in embrace dropin an earth of boundless expanses and once again, another time splits open in history Upon the forehead of an opening for everyone's information amid pine needles in letters at the joints of branches time comes rushing over and jots down a few lineswelcome to mountain climbers. to tender heels. Now let each person once again start a separate journey from this opening!

3. Filling the sun into the vast spinning bulb of the third eye holding up the flat sea in both hands standing apart from the calves of the opening from the attacks of sharks and whales from the raids of ocean pirates treasures and rescuing shins and lifting the Govardhan hill on a fingertip from this opening even I these days am always climbing mountains in my dreams these days I'm always climbing mountains in my dreams

A dogged emotion-expressing a stubborn will to overcome arduous albeit unnamed, hurdles-rings clearly through the original Nepali text. There is a powerful mix of panic, resolve and weariness in the narrative voice. The poem's ultimate abstruseness, its openness to varying interpretations and its refusal to offer easy narratives makes it more suited to those with postmodern sensibilities than to those who seek closure in literature.

Kainla's poetry collection Bairagi Kainlaka Kabita can be extremely difficult to find on the market-a baffling fact, given the importance of his contribution to Nepali literature. (He was one of the originators of the 1960's Tesro Avaam movement calling for greater complexity in Nepali literary expression). In recent decades, Kainla has stopped writing actively, choosing instead to promote, through the Royal Nepal Academy the art and literature of Nenal's minority national languages He is himself a translator of the *Mundhum* (origination myth) and other texts in the Limbu language. His original name is Til Bikram Nembang His widely recognised pen name, translated, is far more lyrical, though

# I carry on my shoulders On the Nepali literary scene

Nepali writing in English is looking up. Not so that in Nepali itself

### AJIT RARAI

n its August 1997 issue, Himal South Asian carried a cover story on literary writings in English from the subcontinent. Such writings from Nenal were conspicuously absent. It would be naïve to think that since Himal was "ours," we ought to have been represented. There simply wasn't a corpus then of NLWE to draw on, even if writers like Laxmi Prasad Devkota and Bal Krishna Sama had trans-created their works into English

But if Himal South Asian were to do a similar story now. there would be something to write about. NLWE has started to toddle along, and briskly at that. DB Gurung's Echoes from the Himalayas was published outside of Nepal ("A worldly addition to Nepal's literature," #26. Samrat Upadhyay has gone international with his collection of short stories. Arresting God in Kathmandu, which has received many favourable reviews including in the New York Times. (See "Transcendence in Physicality" and "In Nepal, too, desire defies modern times," #58.) And in October, Manjushree Thapa's novel, The Tutor of History, will hit the news-

In his column in Kantipur, Narayan Dhakal once wrote, referring to Manu Bairaki and his story published in Garima, that we would have our own Gabriel Garcia Marquez had our literary works been translated into English. But there is no Gregory Rebbasa to hoist our would-be Marquezs out of English-language obscurity. Yet, just having a Rabassa does not ensure international recognition. For even the best translator cannot redeem slipshod, unedited writing. Many of our sahityakars don't seem to recognise such things as editing and rewriting, which are admit

tedly ten times more difficult than simply writing. There are exceptions. though—Sama is said to have edited his work extensively. And critic Ramesh Bhattarai tells us that the great aanshu lekhak ("extempore writer" Devkota also started editing his work later in life.

For those who want to write well in Nepali, there are no creative writing schools and no books available that discus the craft of writing and editing, like Arthur Plotnik's The Elements of Editing or John Gardener's The Art of Fiction, A comparison between Samrat Upadhyay and Parashu

Pradhan would not be out of place here because, like Jpadhyay, Pradhan can't resist sex in his stories. Upadhyay's entences says the reviewer in the New York Times, are "deceptively simple." So are Pradhan's, but while Upadhyay's sentences flow with the asymmetry of nature. Pradhan's flow with all the uniformity of a military parade. As a result, the sex in Pradhan's stories verges on an asceticism that does not seem entirely

One crucial factor in this general lack is a solid educational ackground, Unlike Samrat Upadhvav and Maniushree Thapa, most Nepali writers simply don't have it. And then there is the matter of no having access to books and the latest literary trends. This is a subjective opinion, but generally, there seems to a strong link between good reading and good writing.

Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said have talked about the "Empire" and the "Orient" writing back to the "West." Nepal may not have been colonised, but we are enough of the world today, especially its voiceless. underprivileged part, to need to make our voice heard, as other "Orientals (and Africans, South Americans, and Pacific Islanders) are doing.

# Instant history for the uninformed

Some, but not all, pulp fiction quickies have a place in the grieving process. 

f the statue of King Mahendra were to fall off its pedestal on Darbar Marg, four kinds of reactions would greet the mishap. Comrade Baburam Bhattarai and his ilk would see an Indo-American conspiracy behind it. The politicos of Balkhu and Teku would take it as an omen of an impending coup by the palace Royalists would curse the democratic dispensation for the catastrophe. And the rest of us will take it as God's will, skirt the debris, and get on with the routine drudgery of our daily lives. It will be an exceptional person who would go beyond established biases and try to understand the process that resulted in the tumble

Prakash A Raj is not that exceptional person in his book about the royal massacre in Nepal. While he repeats bazaar rumours about the 1 June disaster with apparent relish, he studiously avoids taking a stand or forwarding a point of view. In the time-tested tradition of pop reporting, he reinforces existing prejudices, fans fears about the future, and allows difficult questions to remain unanswered. The author has regurgitated media reports about the massacre in passable prose, and brought out a glossy.

Printed on high-quality art-paper, the book is chock-a-block with colour photographs of the deceased royalty. The text is tourist guidebook prose, laid out in an easy-to-read manner. But frankly, unless you have been away from newspapers and television for the last three months, there is almost nothing nev een the covers. The book lacks even the saving grace of most pulp fictions unputdownable readability. It is trash all right, but a different kind of trash. altogether. It belongs to the genre of that high-low oxymoron—collector's trash

Quickies often get away with unverifiable facts, flights of fancy about conspiracy theories, clumsy writing, and shoddy production, by pandering to the emotions of a population looking for facile explanations for complex catastrophes of history. But they do perform a useful function: quickies make us devour our grief, and help reduce the intensity of pain in the process. One of the reasons the world forgot Lady Di so soon was that an instantaneous anguish followed her death, and Diana memorabilia flooded the market to saturation levels. This yea on 31 August, very few remembered the Mercedes crash in Paris in 1997 which, when it happened, unleashed a global orgy of grief.

With the passage of time perhaps we, too, will get over the inconsolable grief of the horrendous Naravanhiti Massacre. Researchers in future will benefit from the perspective of distance and offer detached analyses. Their eyes unclouded

by the smoke of funeral pyres of national idol future scholars will be better able to pass judgement on a national tragedy of such historic significance. But for now we have to make do with quickies like th ones by Khagendra Sangraula in Nepali and Prakash A Rai in English Neelesh Mishra, the hack who penned the cheapthrills book IC 814 Hiiseleel The Incide Story has come up with one too but that is yet to hit Kathmandu bookstore

There is only one thin worse than reading such books and that is having to eview them, But Prakash A

Rai is one of the very few Nepalis who write books in English. Added to that is his standing in the hierarchy of Kathmandu society. He "comes from the family of Nepal's Royal Preceptors", the back of the book blurb proudly proclaims. What people like him say is still taken seriously in this country. Today is the 155th anniversary of Kot Parba, but a novel written by a descendent of Jang Bahadur with that court massacre as the backdrop is still among the most popular pulp fiction in Nepali. The novel Basanti even made it on celluloid and come a blockbuster by Nepali standards.

That said. I must admit that this book is a useful piece of instant history for nose unaware of Nepali customs and traditions, even though it sometimes confuses the reader with statements like: "In ordinary circumstances, Dipendra ould have performed the last rites of King Birendra" (p 46). Is that true? If that is so, then the Royal Preceptor has clearly changed traditional practices. Normally, the king never dies; hence the crown prince never takes part in the worldly rites of his deceased father—he becomes the king in his stead.

For those familiar with Nepal's history, it would be a revelation that the riter considers Chandra Shamsher the "wisest" of Bir's brothers, not the most unning cruel scheming and paranoid as he is known to have been Nepali readers have to bear with banalities like "Narayan means Vishnu and hiti means vaterspout" because the target buyers of the book are tourists, not us.

Finally, this book once again proves the old belief that a writer ends up aying more about himself than his subject whenever he tries to say something

"Kay Gardeko?": The Royal Massacre in Nepal, Prakash A Raj, Rupa and Co, New Delhi, 2001, ISBN 81-7167-571-9, 111pp, all colour, Rs 200.

### MOVIES

Nepali and Hindi movies online ticket booking at www.nepalshop.com

### FATING OUT

Regal Specialities of Nepal Chef Govind KC's take on Nepal's culinary heritage, with Nepali cultural programme. Until 15 September. Himalchuli Restaurant, Soaltee Crown Plaza. 273999

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Juicy steaks, chilled beer, Mexican cuisine, great breakfasts, sports bar. All week long. Live band Wednesday, Sunday evenings 6.30-10.00. K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 433043 Dinner and concert Dine with Nepali singers Sapna Shree Pariyar and Suresh Manandhar. 8pm-11pm, except Tuesdays, Far Pavilion, The Everest Hotel, 488100

### MUSIC

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Weekends at The Jazz Bar The Jazz Commission on Thursdays, Chris Masand's Latin band on Fridays and on Saturdays An Fainne. 7pm onwards. Shangri-La Hotel Live Acoustic Music Dinesh Rai and Deependra every Friday at the Himalatte Café. 9pm

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6pm-9pm. 491234 Cadenza Saturday evening live jazz at Upstairs, Lazimpat. 7.30pm-10pm. Rs 200

### **EVENTS**

Contemporary jazz dance classes by Meghna Thapa. At Alliance Francaise Sundays and Tuesdays 4.30pm-6.30pm, 241163, 242832. At Banu's, Kamal Pokhari, Wednesdays 6.30pm-8pm, Saturdays 1 30nm 434024 434830

World Tourism Day Bike Relay Biking relays in teams starting from Tridevi Marg, Thamel. Free for all. 27 September. Call Himalayan Mountain Bike 437437 for more details.

September at Shangri-La Swimming and lunch for Rs 600, earn Rs 300. Hotel Shangri-La. 412999

Dwarika's two for one package Two nights accommodation plus afternoon tea, dinner, breakfasts, massage. Cost per couple US\$155nett. Offer valid till end of September. Dwarika's Hotel. 479488

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Nagarkot Escape Weekends in cottages, views of the Himalayas, valleys and forests. Special rates for Nepalis and resident expatriates. Hotel Keyman Chautari, kevman@wlink.com.np 436850

## **EXMINITION**

Charcoal drawings by Chungpo Tsering 14-24 September, 8am-6pm daily. Indigo Gallery, Naxal. 413580

Paintings and sculptures by Batsa Gonal Vaidva and Shashi Shah 14 September-17 October 11am-6pm. 411122 Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. 411122

Tiger Conservation Nanda SJB Rana and Dr Latika Rana, British embassy Hall, Lainchaur. Friday, 14 September, 6pm. Organised by the Nepal Britain Society.

### MARTIN CHAITAR

Current Nepali Politics Pandit: Prof. Dhruba Kumar, CNAS, Kirtipur. Tuesday, 18 September, 5.30 pm, Martin Chautari, Thapathali. For directions ring or email 256239, chautari@mos.com.np. Open to all. Unless otherwise noted, presentations are in Nepali.

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

## NEPALI WEATHER



More rain, as the satellite picture suggests, with its mass of clouds sweeping across the Bay of Bengal and towards the eastern Himalaya. The low-pressure trough that hangs over the Indo-Gangetic plain for most of the monsoon is weakening and noving towards Pakistan, but it is still linked to the low pressure n the coast along the Bay of Bengal. The result is a trough ne, also visible on the picture, which will bring mild rain to nuch of the country. And then, the monsoon will finally retreat or the year. And this means that the mercury, which dipped by our degrees this past week, will once again rise during the day hen the rain starts tapering off.

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allowed to have their way at other

times though, to breed pigeons that

fly better, faster, higher. A young

Bajracharya's pigeons soar across

the sky. There were chances of a

drizzle, but he nicked them out of

their compartments, one by one,

quickly gather momentum, and flutter in space. They start looping

around in circles, higher, and soon

they are making their best moves-

tumbling (kawa khane) and rolling (baji khane). "I don't usually fly

them in rain, but it is good exercise

to do it occasionally," he says,

settling down for the two-hour

wait. "At times," he says, "they're

having such a good time that they

worried. Because there are lethal:

the jamal (falcons) who live in the

heights of Dharahara, Piegons have a

And that is when he starts to ge

Kathmandu—hungry baaj (hawks), or

take ages to come back."

enemies in the skies above

and released them anyway. They

sprouted new feathers.

pigeon is ready to fly after it is about 45 days old, when it has moulted and

It was a hazy day when we saw

# SALIL SUBEDI

ECREATION

very morning, photographer Titendra Bairacharva wakes un to the billing and cooing of the 30 pigeons he keeps on his rooftop in Dilli Bazar. Before anything else, he

checks on his "flying squad." There are over a hundred kabutarbaaj, "pigeon players," in Kathmandu who will now enter their charges in the annual Pigeon Flying Competition that started last year Pigeons are no more the hobby of aristocrats. "Keeping pigeons is like an addiction," says Bajracharya, who in May organised this year's competition. The first competition was organised last October by the 84 members of the Nepal Pigeon Keeper's Association.

Pigeon keepers serious about their birds normally have at least 10 pairs of good fliers. Special birds need

15-degree blind zone at the back, and this is where the cunning predators strike. Gopal Singh, owner of 300 pigeons and winner of second place in the flying contest in May, loses two good fliers a week on average.

His birds are hard to replace because they have been bred over the years in his home. Singh is proudest of his female black-eyed kasni, one of which flew for 8 hours 31 minutes in May, contributing significantly to his win. Competitors fly five pigeons, their collective timing determines the overall winner. The Best Pigeon Award also went to a home-bred blackeved kasni, a male owned by Ratna Kaji Maharjan of Jyatha, which flew for 8 hours 40 minutes.

If you are now inspired to breed pigeons rather than curse their nesting

habits, it is surprisingly cheap to do so-Rs 1,000 a month to feed 200 or so birds. The expensive part is buying your starters—a pair of common varieties like hanse, bhuira, kagaji, kasni, chini, tauke, lalsa, jaagcosts upwards of Rs 2,000. They're relatively maintenance fee, the only thing to watch out for is a disease of the spine that hits without warning

of course, you have to clean up their abundant guano. In return, you get the thrill of seeing these elegant creatures in skilful flight with their air of quiet watchfulness

which some believe is caused by

pesticides in the pigeons' feed. And,

To learn more about the pigeon flying competition visit http:// www.geocities.com/nepal\_pigeon



HIGH-UP CHILDREN: Temba Chiri Sherpa, the youngest-ever Even ummiteer, with delegates at the National Children's Fair organised by the Save the Children Alliance and a consortium of children's organisations in Nepal on Monday, 10 September,



THE FOOTMOBILE: Sudharshan Gautam, who featured in "Look, no hands" (#59), is all smiles, having successfully navigated Kathmandu's crowded treets—with his feet—on Saturday, 8 September.



AYO GORKHALI! Chefs at the Hyatt, ready for the annual Britis Gurkha Ball. The Regency Ballroom is ready too, complete with Union

# INVASION





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Welcome



# Shiba's healing touch

hat Shiba Sharma has done for her Dang district cannot be measured in dollars and has helped this elected village leader come up with different priorities. While VDC chairmen in other villages would go for roads and bridges, Shiba's concerns are day-care programmes for children, or spreading awareness to pig to convince the women in her farmers to control the spread of a deadly encephalitis epidemic.

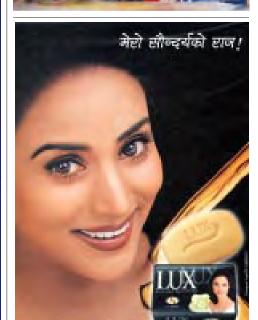
Shiba's medical background makes her passionate about raising the health standards of women and children in this village on the East-West highway. And she build enough schools strongly believes that the first line of defence against communicable diseases is proper information on prevention. Her community has just finished a cam-

village of Sisaniya in got a bright idea: why let the waste go waste? So she has got her own biogas plant at cents. Being a trained nurse home hooked up to the latrine babies, treat children, and so that there is more gas production. Following her example, other village families are following suit. This has reduced their dependence on the surrounding forests, and

> village about health matters: "Women are naturally much more effective in spreading awareness, they take the message to their children and to their husbands." The other aim of this energetic leader is to and upgrade the quality of the education so that children grow up with knowledge that is more relevant to their daily lives. "Educa-

paign to get every villager to tion is no good if you are construct latrines. Then Shiba just cramming all the time from text books to pass exams," she says. Shiba is often called on to deliver even make house calls to tend sick water buffaloes.

With local elections due next year, Shiba is not sure she wants to stand again from her Marxist-Leninist party. "There are some things you can't do as a Shiba finds it much easier VDC chairperson that you can do as a political activist," she says. Like contesting a member of parliament seat, maybe?



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