

Nepal
from
space
8-9



13
POKHARA
MARATHON

EXCLUSIVE

Body count

As the Maoist war entered its seventh year on Wednesday, the number of Nepalis killed is about to cross the 3,000 mark. According to the human rights group, INSEC, 1,045 people have died in just the last three months. Of those killed since 23 November, 769 are said to be Maoists and 129 are security personnel. The rest are ordinary people executed by Maoists or killed during offensives by the security forces. There are no figures for wounded, but the country's few hospitals are filling up (see page 4-5).

Parliament needs to endorse an extension of the emergency by 26 November. In his anniversary press statement faxed to media, Maoist leader Prachanda reiterated that his party is ready for talks, but said it was prepared to keep fighting if need be. "We are not like the Taliban," he said.

Nepal Sale!

With tourism in crisis, the Nepal Tourism Board has started an aggressive push to woo back visitors from India for Destination Nepal Year 2002. Trade reps are in South India this week selling a Nepal package for a giveaway IRS 14,500 for Indians visiting Nepal till 15 April. The money gets an Indian a three-night stay at a five-star hotel, and includes meals, airport transfers and two sight-seeing trips. Catch: tourists must come in groups of at least 15. The NTB worked hard to get hotels, travel agents and Royal Nepal Airlines together on the package. No mean feat. Now, let's keep our fingers crossed.

Times nepalnews.com
Who's Who in Nepal 2002 #21
Prasad Koirala's call for a broad democratic alliance?

Q. Do you agree with former prime minister G.P. Prasad Koirala's call for a broad democratic alliance?

Yes 91.7%
No 22.3%

Total votes: 912

Sending money home

HEMLATA RAI
Tourism and exports are near-collapse, and yet the economy is still afloat. How come? Nepal's working abroad are now sending back a whopping \$850 million a year. Forget foreign aid and exports, forget tourism. It is overseas remittances that are propping up Nepal's economy. The Nepal Rastra Bank's official figure for remittances in the past fiscal year's Rs 22 billion, but a whole lot more—as much as three times—comes into Nepal through the informal *haundi* system and feeds a vast parallel economy that the government seems to have no way of monitoring. Both official and unofficial estimates of overseas remittances have doubled in the past four years. In 1997, British researcher David Seddon and his Nepali colleagues Ganesh Gurung and Jagannath Adhikari estimated that Nepal receives as much as Rs 30 billion from Nepali workers abroad. But two years ago, a *Himal Khabar* article estimate which included informal remittances from Nepalis working in India, put the total at Rs 69 billion. Some later estimates are even higher.

Officially, there are only about 180,000 Nepalis working in south-east Asia, the Gulf countries and South Korea. But the real number is probably double that—and it's not counting the million or so seasonal Nepali workers in India at any given time. All the Labour and Employment Promotion Department, which is supposed to monitor the foreign employment sector, does, is tally the number of people possessed by manpower

Nepali workers remit more money than the country earns from tourism, foreign aid and exports combined.

agencies and come out with an annual total. Other Third World countries export minerals and ore. Nepal has a long history of exporting human beings. Today, Nepalis are going further afield, and into non-traditional jobs as opportunities expand for overseas employment—they are employed as security guards on casino ships in the South China Sea, as guards on oil rigs in Angola, and as hotel managers in China. When Shiva Bahadur Thapa retired from the British Army, he didn't fancy starting a new career or staying idle. So, he got a job in the merchant marine. Shiva's colleagues from the army are security guards on tankers and container ships, thanks to a spurt in pirate attacks in the narrow Malacca Straits. Another foreign worker we spoke to, Sampanna, says when he failed to make it to the final selection of Nepal's national tax law to work in 1999, he headed off to Germany where he uses his skills as a martial arts guru.

Back home, Nepal's tourism is down 50 percent, and the garment, carpet and pashmina industries have laid off an estimated 200,000 workers. More than half the garment workers in Nepal, according to a 1998 study, are in the 20-25 age group and most support families with more than six members. Now without jobs, many will be forced to seek work in the Gulf or Malaysia. With unemployment soaring in virtually every sector, the number of Nepalis

migrating abroad to work will only go up. The government has made it easier for Nepalis to work abroad, but the country still isn't maximising the benefits from its labour export. Many Nepalis are duped and exploited by manpower agencies, who take away a large chunk of the workers' earnings in illegal deposits or commissions, often up to three times the actual cost of a job. A study in Lalchokri Karki district showed that nearly half the people in the village couldn't afford to pay even the minimum Rs 50,000 needed to get a job abroad. The government could stand guarantee to commercial banks for collateral-free loans to foreign job aspirants, just as it could help upgrade the skills of migrant workers from the low-paying manual labour they mostly do now, so they can earn more.

Although promoting foreign employment opportunities is a major component of Nepal's economic diplomacy, the government has failed to act on its own promises. A government delegation led by Labour Minister Palden Gurung last week brought home one assurance: that the government would create more and safe jobs for Nepalis in Malaysia, but he failed to clinch a formal agreement. "Unless foreign employment is regulated, the poorest sections of society will not benefit from it," says Ganesh Gurung of the Nepal Institute of Development Studies, who has

been researching labour migration patterns in Nepal. Most experts agree that overseas employment exacerbates the urban-rural gap, because migrant workers invest their earnings mainly in the towns. Working abroad can only be a stop-gap arrangement until employment opportunities are created locally in rural areas. Says David Seddon: "What is needed is strategic and selective investment to keep workers in Nepal and in the smaller towns in the rural non-farm economy." He adds that the absence of young men means labour shortages, and possibly the decline of agriculture and the rural economy. The chief economist adviser at the Nepal Rastra Bank, Yub Raj Khatriwada, agrees. He told us: "Exporting workers can only be crisis management, not a long-term solution for the national economy." ♦

'Bring Maoists to the mainstream..'

British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs responsible for South Asia, Ben Bradshaw, is visiting Nepal 18-19 February. He will be meeting Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and King Gyanendra. Bradshaw is a former journalist and was the BBC's Berlin correspondent in 1990. Nepal Times asked Bradshaw some questions about his visit, the Maoist insurgency and Gurkha pensions.

What is the main reason for your visit to Nepal?
Britain and Nepal have extremely long-standing ties. The Gurkha relationship, and in particular the exceptionally high standing in which these brave Nepali soldiers are held in the United Kingdom, is an important mainstay. We are both monarchies. The UK is one of Nepal's chief donor partners. The events of 11 September and efforts to combat global terrorism only serve to make the dialogue between our two governments and countries all the more important, and we want to offer our full support to the government of Nepal in its attempts to find a resolution to the insurgency.

Will you be offering any specific advice to the government on the resolution of the Maoist insurgency?
Obviously this will be a key point of interest in the talks I shall be having with political leaders during my visit. We support the democratically-elected government, and recognise the right and obligation of government to provide security to its people. The European Union has condemned the Maoist attacks which brought a violent return to conflict in Nepal, and we have expressed our

concern about possible abuses of human rights in the country, including barbaric acts by the insurgents. We believe that the government went to great lengths to ensure a conducive atmosphere for the three rounds of peace talks last year, and I would encourage both sides to make every effort to achieve a solution which will result in the renunciation of violence and bring the Maoists back into the political mainstream. Only then will Nepal achieve the prosperity which its people deserve.

Some Gurkha ex-servicemen say the issue of pensions exposes the British government's double standards. Do you see this as an ethical issue?
No I do not see this as an ethical issue. It is important to look at the details of pension arrangements. I don't think that most of our pensioners now benefiting from the significant increase in April 2000 oppose them. British Army pensions are complicated and for very good reasons reflect two different systems. One is for Gurkha soldiers and one is for British soldiers. The Gurkha system involves the soldier serving for a minimum of 15 years, with an immediate index-linked pension available on discharge. For British

soldiers to get the same deal they have to serve for 22 years, and then wait until the age of 60 before they benefit from any index-linking. So, on average a Gurkha soldier's pension is paid seven years earlier than that of an equivalent British serviceman. But there is a key point here: the majority of British soldiers leave the Army at about the nine or 12 year point in their service. This results in over 90 percent of British soldiers not qualifying for immediate pensions and having to wait until 60 to claim a preserved pension. If this system was applied to the Brigade of Gurkhas, many Gurkha soldiers would have to wait until the age of 60 before receiving any pension at all. Most would agree that the need for an immediate pension is compelling in Nepal.

Does the British government envisage an increase in the recruitment levels of Gurkha soldiers in future due to shortfalls in enlistment at home?
The Gurkhas are a valuable and integral part of the British Army and will remain so foreseeable. But Gurkhas do not serve in all areas and there is therefore a limit to the extent to which they can be considered interchangeable with British personnel. There are no plans to change current recruitment levels.



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EMERGENCY ROOM

BINOD BHATTARAI

Between the body-bag statistics of the Defence Ministry's daily briefings and reports of ambulances by the Maoists of security forces are thousands of stories of bereaved families, internally displaced refugees, the wounded and maimed.

The statistics are numbing; nearly 3,000 people killed in the past six years of the Maoist war, about 1,050 of them in the past two-and-a-half months of the emergency. But the wounded seem to fall between the cracks—left to recover on their own in the hospitals throughout Nepal. In fact no one is keeping an updated count of the wounded. Ordinary Nepalis caught in the crossfire, recovering not just from the physical trauma but also the mental agony of brutal torture, are beginning to fill up the hospitals.

At the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH) in Kathmandu, the injured are in the orthopaedic ward and new patients arrive everyday in the emergency room.

"This has added tremendous pressure to our already over-crowded orthopaedic ward and the Emergency Room," Dr Mahendra Kumar Nepal, Executive Director of TUTH told us. "The patients require multiple surgery and long rehabilitation. They are all likely to stay for longer periods, and this means we cannot admit other patients."

There have been reports of villagers who have also been caught in the crossfire in attacks by security forces on Maoists, but we could not find any of these at TUTH. A handful of



The trauma centres of Nepal's over-stretched hospitals try to cope with an influx of wounded from the Maoist war.

civilian casualties from military action have been airlifted and are being treated at army hospitals, defence sources say. At any time during the emergency there have been an average of about 15 patients being treated at TUTH, and those present during this week were mainly casualties of attacks by Maoists after the emergency was declared. They are teachers, social workers or political activists and they come from all parliamentary parties: Nepal Congress, UML, ML.

● A 63-year-old social worker and political activist from Bardia has both legs in heavy bandage. Both his shins between fractures were shattered—bits of fragments from all parliamentary parties: Nepal Congress, UML, ML.

● A 63-year-old farmer and political activist from Tanahu has multiple fractures on his

femur and fractures in his right shinbone. He was beaten with rods by attackers, and hacked with a khukuri so that he has lost all his calf muscles in his right leg.

● There is the 32-year-old schoolteacher admitted to TUTH three months ago with multiple fractures in both hands and feet. Maoist attackers beat him till all the bones were shattered. Then they bored a half-inch wide hole into his thigh.

Aside from the wounds, it is the brutality with which the attacks were carried out that is shocking. The patients' eyes show the pain, and such is the fear instilled in them that few wanted to be named. Some didn't even want us to print the name their village for fear that their relatives back home would be harmed.

Human rights activists say what is visible in the hospital wards is just the tip of the iceberg in the casualties of the Maoist

war. These are the lucky few who managed to make it to hospital, there are many others trying best to recover in their home villages, or dying quietly. Sushil Pyakurel of the National Human Rights Commission, says his organisation is trying to tally the numbers of wounded, and admits that most of the information is about victims of Maoist attacks.

"We are trying to find out the situation among those wounded in security force action," he says. The NHRCC had written to the government for information but has not been able to put together the number of wounded.

Because of the nature of the injuries, many of the wounded interviewed will probably never walk, and if they do, will need crutches for life. Shanta Bahadur Bhaurai, a teacher at Chapakot in Syangja, and is one of the few who doesn't mind being named. And he was the luckiest among three teachers

abducted by the Maoists in early November. "I was taken away at around 9PM from my house and beaten with the non-cutting side of an axe," recalls Bhandari from his hospital bed. Then they drilled a hole into his thigh. Doctors have stuck steel pins into what remains of his feet below the knees to align the bones and give them a chance to heal. The other teachers who were abducted, Netra Bhandari and Gurg Bahadur BK, were beaten mercilessly and died of their injuries. Today, Shanta Bahadur, his brother and family live in Kathmandu—part of the growing population of people who have fled from conflict.

According to Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC) statistics, eight teachers and 29 political workers have been killed by Maoists since November, and it appears to be part of their party and after he refused, and stop them from giving information about their whereabouts to the security forces. The attacks have been deliberately brutal, to drive the point home. According to INSEC's tally, 1045 people have been killed between 23 November and 11 February, 816 by the Maoists. Government numbers from 26 November to 4 February put the Maoist death toll at 463, and wounded at 115. The police and army have lost 76 (police 40), and, says the Defence Ministry, 93 soldiers have been wounded.

Amber Bahadur Chauhan, 63, of Gola VDC in Bardia district is a regional member of the Marxist-Leninist party. He was an active social worker who participated in development activities underway in the buffer zone around the Royal Bardia National Park. Chauhan told us Maoists tried to lure him to their party and after he refused,

3,000 new tax payers

When the Voluntary Declaration of Income Scheme (VDIS) ended Tuesday, the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) had more than 3,000 new taxpayers and additional tax revenue of Rs 825 million. On closing day alone property worth Rs 100 million was disclosed and net revenue of Rs 10 million was collected. The VDIS announced by Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat in the budget last July ended on 13 January, but was extended for month "at the request of the business community". The IRD is now all set to take action against those who should have, but did not show up at the tax office. IRD officials say the department's action against defaulters will depend on priority and the information it has gathered, and may even include raids and confiscation of property.

Straying neighbours

India's Uttar Pradesh Forest Department is delighted after six Nepal rhinos that used to stray from their home in Sukhlaphanta Wildlife Reserve have decided to stay on in India. Normally, there wouldn't be such a fuss as rhinos regularly travel to and from forest corridors between the two countries in the tarta. But the itinerant rhinos have confirmed their permanent residency as one female has given birth to a baby. It's a "landmark" event says a *Times of India* report given that the Great Indian Rhinoceros was on the verge of extinction in India, hunted by poachers for the horn, considered an aphrodisiac. In 1984, India launched an ambitious project under which a few rhinos from the resident populace in Assam were released in the Dudhwa National Park in Luckhimpur district of UP. Today, the number in Dudhwa has increased considerably, but the rhinos are kept in a fenced-in area. Which is why the arrival of the visitors from Nepal in the Pilibhit Reserve Forest, which adjoins Sukhlaphanta and is home to other endangered species such as the sloth bear and the swamp deer, is a pleasant surprise.

But not everyone is so sure of the number. "The Indian forestry officials must have counted three rhinos that wander the corridor twice. As far as we know, only three rhinos wander into India, and Nepal rhinos are all radioed and marked, so we know just where they are," says Surya Bahadur Pandey who worked at Sukhlaphanta until a few months ago. Last year, five rhinos were translocated to the reserve in Far West Nepal. There, too, one female has given birth to a calf. Conservationists say they don't mind where the rhinos live, India or Nepal as long as they are conserved.

Close shave

Tara Nath Ranabhat, speaker of the House of Representatives, realised this week that his flippant remarks about women could easily be construed as derogatory. The participants of the Solidarity of Gender Equality conference hooted him out for doing just that. Ranabhat, who began his address to the gathering by challenging the women to "correct their ways" before demanding equality with men, even boasted that he could pass the women rights bill with a mere snap of his fingers, if he wished to. But when the women decided they could take no more and raised the volume of their protests, a visibly embarrassed Ranabhat decided to cut his speech short and sink back to his chair. But that was not all—the angry audience confronted him again at the Royal Nepal Academy, where even the organisers of the conference could not shield him from the humiliating remarks from the crowd.



ALOK THAKUR/ANUPAM/REUTERS

threatened him. He left, and returned only after the emergency was imposed. "We were just completing a bridge," he recalls. "I had asked the attackers to spare an old man. But they beat me up instead." A group of about 50 Maoists dragged him out of his house on 6 February, attacked him with steel rods and khukuris. Doctors are waiting for the flesh wounds to heal before they deal with the bone fractures. A social worker at TUTH told us he has never seen worse cases. "Earlier patients did not have as many wounds, maybe they were trying to kill or just hurt them," he told us. "After the emergency, I have seen patients with bones beaten to pieces."

So far, the government is paying the hospital bills of all Maoist victims. Another inmate is Chitra Raj Bhandari, a farmer and Nepal Congress worker from Tanahun. He was attacked on 23 November, the day the

emergency here, we need medicines and equipment. And we are running out of space in the wards. ♦



HERE AND THERE

by DANIEL LAK

How the chips fall

Can the potato help us predict the unpredictable?

potatoes are alike, at least not outside the cloning laboratory. Nor do they hit the same place on a wall, at the same angle, at the same speed. It's an equilibrium condition—exactly what scientists in physics expect. Similarly, any student of geology will tell you that earthquakes are always different, and they simply cannot be predicted. So too the currents of human history, the stock markets, the course of rivers and so on. Until now, chaos theory has been the only way of looking at this notion of utter unpredictability. Things that are in a state of permanent flux and show no trends towards order or disorder are the model for chaos theory. Our frozen potato men beg to differ.

It's not that they think you can immediately impose order on the naturally disorderly by counting potato shards. But the complicated mathematical formulae that they've devised, after carefully tabulating every little bit of frozen spatul on the laboratory floor, is helping them understand the nature of chaos. It seems that unpredictable systems like this are ubiquitous in geology or human history do follow a pattern. But it's a pattern so complex and almost microscopic, that it is almost imperceptible. All of this is a very early stage, but if the potato people can really help us start predicting the unpredictable, the world as we know it will change beyond belief.

Here in Nepal, we'll be able to plan for major earthquakes. We'll have a window on the swings and roundabouts of the global financial markets, and we may even be able to find out what history has in store. I dare say the Nepal Development Forum might take delivery of some frozen potatoes to help them understand how the vagaries of fortune and finance influence their tasks and cash flow. For it seems to me that the very notion of development, as pursued at the moment, could be wrong. Last month's

human development index, while in many respects a superb piece of work, presented Nepal's efforts to curb poverty as a logical system that would be in equilibrium with the rest of the world. It's a neat package, and the report seemed to argue—would disagree with better governance, social equity and so on. I wonder if the reality isn't completely the opposite.

The potato people would explain to their colleagues in the development business that the condition of society can never be a predictable system, that no matter how many inputs you get right, something else will distort your results. Before now equilibrium thinking started to take hold, this would be a bleak assessment, rightly condemned by those who work to bring dignity and hope to the deprived. Now the science of "ubiquity", it's become known, offers real prospects for understanding, if not a quick fix for deprivation and underdevelopment. Crucially, the patterns of qualitative change in social conditions could just emerge from the statistical noise that exists at the moment.

Theoretical physics has to be wild, driven by forces beyond the fringe, if it is to make new discoveries and offer understanding. There can be no orthodoxy, no conservatism, no mantras or priesthood clinging to ideas. Ubiquity has the potential to make all of our lives more explicable, less blame-ridden. It could transform politics and economics, bring fairness and competence within reach of almost any society.

Or it could simply be a madcap notion that will shatter into smaller bits as it is pieced apart by scientific peer groups and academics. It's time to buy some potatoes. If you can afford them...

Ubiquity: The Science of History... or Why the World Is Simpler Than We Think By Mark Buchanan is published by Phoenix, UK

Announcement

Primary Teacher Training Programme

Rato Banqala School, together with Kathmandu University, Faculty of Education, has been selected to implement a one-year primary teacher certification programme for the District of Nuwakot. The programme is to be held from May 2002 to April 2003. Candidates will be recruited from District of Nuwakot. The programme is to be held from May 2002 to April 2003. Candidates will be recruited from District of Nuwakot. The programme is to be held from May 2002 to April 2003. Candidates will be recruited from District of Nuwakot.

Terms and conditions: Candidates should be graduates with a minimum of 60% marks in the entrance examination. They should be natives of the District of Nuwakot. They should be between 18 and 35 years of age. They should be unmarried and should not be employed elsewhere.

Admission enquiries to: Rato Banqala School, P.O. Box 2002, Paltan Chowk, Lalitpur. Tel: 4343318, 4343443, 5202144. Fax: 5202149.

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SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL



Kindergarten consultations

We need a durable framework for a minority government. It might be a good beginning to set a statutory limit of one prime minister per year, which roughly corresponds to Nepal's record in the last 12 years.

Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala was wondering why it was getting so difficult to ally his broad democratic alliance proposal to his own party, he probably got a good idea last week. The thematic at the central committee meetings clearly show how urgently Koirala needs to get his act together. The ruling party chief should forget about comparing notes with Madhav Kumar Nepal, Surya Bahadur Thapa and Badi Prasad

the second-generation leaders' discussions on critical national issues resembled little more than a kindergarten. Khum Bahadur Deuba, Bijay Kumar Gachhadar, Bal Bahadur KC and Jaya Prakash Gupta who have prospered in the civil camp today. Any rustic Kangresi can figure out by now how easily allegiance to Koirala can be altered into a career-enhancement tool.

The tragedy lies not in the fact that

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BIZ NEWS

Things aren't getting better

The World Bank says Nepal's prospects for an economic recovery in the medium-term (generally a three-year outlook) is bleak due to everything that happened in Nepal in 2001 and of course the global recession after 11 September. The Bank said growth in fiscal 2001/02 would be about 3 percent going by IMF numbers, which don't factor in the escalation of Maoist violence from the end of November, and the anti-terrorism campaign launched by the government including the deployment of the army. The projected earlier revised its economic growth estimate to 2.5 percent, down from the roughly 6 percent projected in the July 2001 budget. Exports are down, as are imports. Ready-made garments have seen hit badly, and because they comprise about 25 percent of total exports, this will hurt every sector of the economy. Another reason for worry is the new WTO trading regime, which comes into effect in 2006. Quotas, a crucial factor in the growth of the garment industry, will be scrapped under the new trading rules. The prospects of a recovery in tourism in the medium-term are also uncertain; it would need extensive—and expensive—promotions to get tourists to come even after the emergency runs its course. As Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat says, any recovery would hinge on the ability of the country to return to normal.

Bad start

Travel, as everyone knows, is in a bad way, but just how bad? January 2002 tourists are down only 13, 576 visitors came to Nepal by air last month, a roughly 50 percent drop compared with the about 25,900 who flew in in January 2001. Third country arrivals (from countries other than India) dropped sharply, by almost 54 percent, and Indian arrivals fell by 24 percent. The Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) blames the slump on the "false perception of travel safety in Nepal", but expects arrivals to improve, especially now that the United States has downgraded its travel advisory for Nepal. The tourism industry is worried that a third consecutive bad year could be the straw that breaks the industry's back. Overall tourists arrivals in 2001 dropped by almost 23 percent, compared with the year before (including arrivals by land), a trend which began with the end-December 1999 hijacking of the Indian Airlines aircraft from Kathmandu, and that worsened with the deteriorating law and order situation in the country and the imposition of the emergency.

Bring in the managers

The Nepal Rastra Bank has formalised a contact with 'Deloitte Touche Tomahatsun (D'TT)' effective 1st March, under which the consulting firm will manage the Reserve Bank of Nepal (RBN) for two years. DTT are to receive a management fee of \$5.75 million in exchange for touching around the RBN, which KPMG auditors said two years ago is technically insolvent. BRS Neupane and Company will be DTT's Nepali partners. The central bank is negotiating the terms of a similar contract with Price Waterhouse Coopers India, which has been selected for taking over the management of the Nepal Bank Limited. The World Bank is giving Nepal almost \$35 million for financial sector reforms, of which handing over the RBN and the NBL on management contracts is a major component.

Instant awards

Nepali instant noodle makers seem to have a word combinations for branding—the new ones don't have those names—but they are getting better at selling. Almost every noodle maker has some sort of giveaway on the cards, whether free packs of noodles or full-scale lottery prizes. Now the makers of Mysore have joined the race. Their prizes include a car every month, in addition to motorbikes, computers and gold.

ECONOMIC SENSE

by ARTHA BEED

Wooing Indians

We sell whitewater rafting and Pashupati in the same package, and wonder why we find no takers.

While holidaying in India a few weeks ago, this Beed missed the symposium on "Prospects and Problems of Tourism Development between Nepal and India" organised by the Hotel Association of Nepal. So, this week, we will ponder on the need to woo the Indian tourist, and ways to do so.



I will admit it. It gets tiresome travelling in India—for no reason other than the two questions every citizen of this kingdom is relentlessly subjected to. "So, tell us about 1 June," and "What's going on with the emergency?" In most part because of the absence of any voice in the Indian media that can claim more than a parachute jumper's familiarity with Nepal, our southern neighbours seem to think this is a country in such external turmoil, that its electricity is switched off a 6PM. No surprise, then, that most well-wishers' attempts are directed at dispelling these absurd doubts, rather than selling Nepal as a tourist destination.

But even assuming we can dispel these doubts, we have to deal with an appalling lack of consensus as to what precise part of our product we need to promote to the Indian market. The whole world is wooing Indian tourists now, and Nepal's image desperately needs to be revamped from the current "honey moon upgrade from Chitwan and Darjeeling" to something a little more current, a little more exciting.

So, what can Nepal offer? Most of the younger Indians who can afford to travel see Nepal as a destination where their grandparents undertook a pilgrimage and their parents went to

those old stand-bys, trekking and climbing an dirt-cheap and a lot more convenient than in Switzerland. It's a surprise our limited marketing savvy, things are getting better, though. The relaxation of the passport requirement for Indian tourists under 18 comes a bit of a relief—after all, people who have passports can change foreign currency, and so would just as well go on cheap packages to south-east Asian countries. The government may not be able to market Nepal, and may have made no use at all of the media frenzy during the SAARC summit, but they've managed to at least get rid of one annoyance. Now it is time for them in the private sector and travel trade organisations to show what they can do. Our experiment in restricting foreign travel agencies from operating in Nepal has gone on long enough, given that our local agencies have not delivered when it comes to selling India in the Indian market. Why not try and lure international agencies who have large operations in India to operate in Nepal. Protectionism may not always be the best weapon.

Readers can post their views at arthabee@yash.com

INTERVIEW

"Tourism promotion must not be Kathmandu-centric..."

- Geeta Jetley, Fulbari Resort and Spa, Pokhara

Nepali Times: How did you land up in Pokhara? Geeta Jetley: Fulbari had placed an ad in India. I thought I should give it a shot. I came just like that on a Friday in September. It had rained for a few days and when it stopped, you could see the mountains. I was walking past the hotel when the cloud cover lifted on a moonlit night. Suddenly, you had Machhapuchhre and the Annapurnas—absolutely ethereal, something picture postcards and movies are made of.

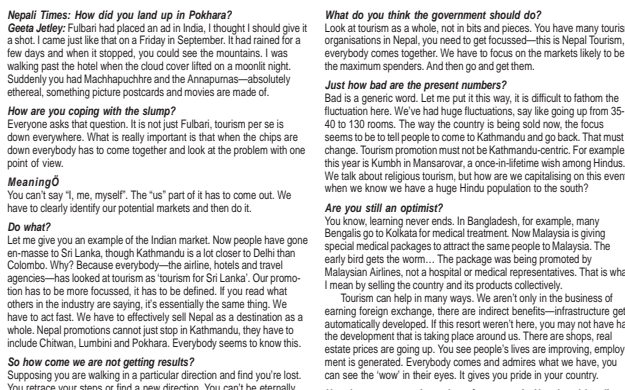
How are you coping with the slump? Everyone asks that question. It is not just Fulbari, tourism per se is down everywhere. What is really important is that when the chips are down everybody has to come together and look at the problem with one point of view.

Meaning? You can't say "I, me, myself". The "us" part of it has to come out. We have to clearly identify our potential markets and then do it.

Do what? Let me give you an example of the Indian market. Now people have gone en-masse to Sri Lanka, though Kathmandu is a lot closer to Delhi than Colombo. Why? Because everybody—the airline, hotels and travel agencies—has looked at tourism as 'tourism for Sri Lanka'. Our promotion has to be more focussed, it has to be defined. If you read what others in the industry are saying, it's essentially the same thing. We have to set fast. We have to effectively sell Nepal as a destination as a whole. Nepal promotions cannot just stop in Kathmandu, they have to include Chitwan, Lumbini and Pokhara. Everybody seems to know this.

So how come we are not getting results? Supposing you are walking in a particular direction and find you're lost. You retrace your steps or find a new direction. You can't be eternally lost. That tourists are not coming is a reality; the more important thing is, what are we doing to change that?

What are you doing? We're talking about Destination Nepal 2002, the International Year of the Mountains and of the Eco-tourism. We're already into this year, and a promotion should have happened at least in the middle of last year. Everyone should have known what we were doing. Still, all is not lost.



Pokhara's most coveted hotel property, Fulbari got a new manager in October. Geeta Jetley brings with her 21 years of hoteliering experience with India's Oberoi and Taj Groups. The 100-acre property includes a spa, a garden and a 105-room resort and collectively employs over 340 people. But the tourism slump has hit the Fulbari hard. Nepali Times caught up with Jetley in Pokhara and tried to find out what can be done.

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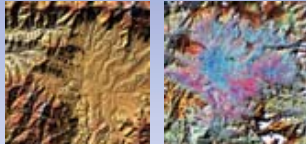
"For Tomorrow with You"—The Creative Financing Alternative

Nepal from space

A gallery of dramatic pictures of Nepal taken from orbit.



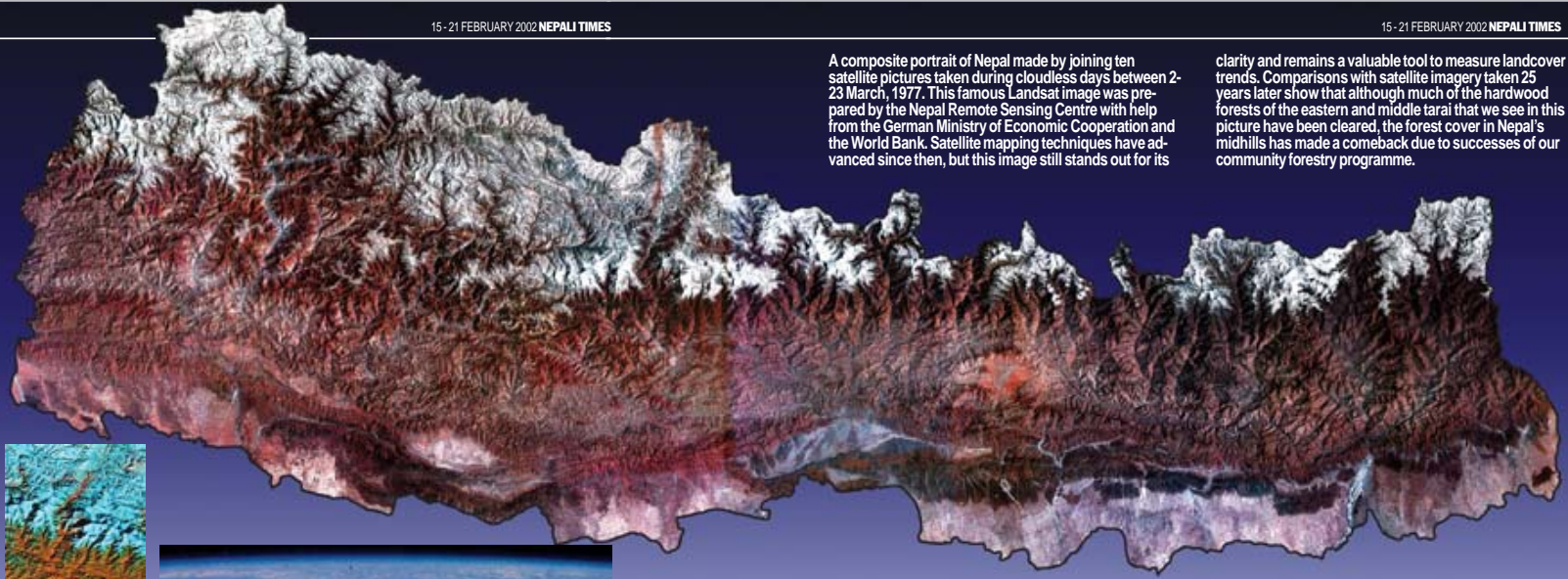
Bhaktapur
The Arniko Highway south of Bhaktapur skirts terraced fields of wheat in this picture taken by a satellite flying 250 km above the earth at about noon in February 1987. The poplar trees cast long shadows.



Kathmandu
Kathmandu Valley's topography is dominated by the former lake-bed and the channels cut by the Bagmati and its tributaries through the alluvium. The lake was formed by the tectonic uplift of the Mahabharat Range at the southern rim of the Valley, and the Bagmati was ultimately able to cut its way through the limestone hills at Chobhar, draining the lake.
These two pictures are an X-SAR digital elevation model (left) and a radar amplitude image (right).



Mt Everest
This spectacular picture looks straight down at Mount Everest. The highest mountain in the world casts the longest shadow. The Rongbuk glacier snakes off to the right into the Tibetan plateau, the narrow cup of the Western Cwm starts at the head of the Khumbu Glacier. The top of Mt Everest is made up of yellowish limestone, meaning that the rocks on the highest point on earth were formed at the bottom of the ocean.



A composite portrait of Nepal made by joining ten satellite pictures taken during cloudless days between 2-23 March, 1977. This famous Landsat image was prepared by the Nepal Remote Sensing Centre with help from the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and the World Bank. Satellite mapping techniques have advanced since then, but this image still stands out for its

clarity and remains a valuable tool to measure landcover trends. Comparisons with satellite imagery taken 25 years later show that although much of the hardwood forests of the eastern and middle tarai that we see in this picture have been cleared, the forest cover in Nepal's midhills has made a comeback due to successes of our community forestry programme.



The Kali Gandaki

The world's deepest gorge from the Landsat Thematic Mapper taken in January 1989. Snow and ice appear as blue while vegetation is green. Rocks are red and clouds white. Most major Himalayan rivers are older than the mountains. The river basins follow the location of the original pre-Himalayan rivers that drained the Tibetan marginal mountains and flowed into the Tethys Sea 75 million years ago. As the mountains rose, the rivers were able to cut through them. This is why the Kali Gandaki, Arun, Bhoté Kosi, Buri Gandaki and the Karnali all have their headwaters beyond the main chain of the Himalaya and have cut stupendous gorges through the rising rock.



The Himalaya

One of the most prominent physical features visible on the surface of the earth from space are the Himalaya. This unique photograph was taken from a space shuttle in 1988 and shows the ochre expanse of the Tibetan plateau on the right, the snow-covered Himalaya stretching diagonally across, and the dark green of the Mahabharat Range on the left. The red circle shows location of Mt Everest and the yellow circle shows Kathmandu.



Dhaulagiri

This is not a picture taken from a jet at 35,000 ft, but a slanting view of the Dhaulagiri range taken by the Expedition 1 crew from the International Space Station using a high-magnification lens. The photograph was taken out of the window of the Space Station from an orbital altitude of 200 nautical miles (370 km). The view is southeast-ward across the southern Tibetan Plateau and Dolpo towards the world's seventh highest mountain, Dhaulagiri, which dominates the horizon. The uplift of the Himalaya continues today at a rate of several millimeters per year, pushed by the continuing collision of the Indian tectonic plate with the Eurasian one that began about 70 million years ago.



Himalayan smoke

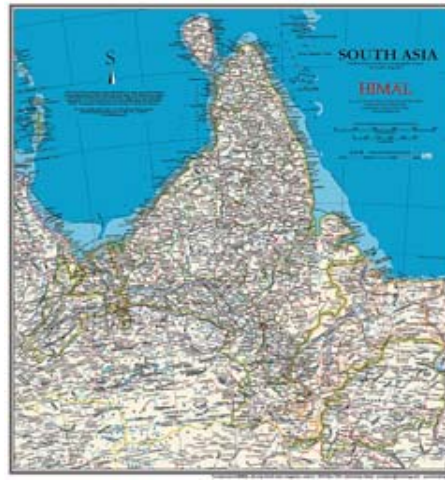
After three years of Himalayan drought, there was a rash of forest fires in the Himalayan midhills from Kashmir to Himachal Pradesh in the spring of 2000. Smoke from the fires, carried by westerly winds right across Nepal, can be clearly seen in this SeaWiFS satellite image. Also seen clearly are the crystal blue lakes dotting the Tibetan Plateau.

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Tempting science

However technically sound they may be, research results produced in secret or for corporate profits are inevitably suspected of bias.

Most academic scientists doubtless hope that formal countermeasures like this will hold back the forces of Mammon. But increased transparency also reveals the blatant instrumentalism that now pervades university research. Demonstrable utility is the over-riding priority. Even governments now fund science primarily for its promise of public or private gain. Yet academic science plays an important 'non-instrumental' role in society. It enriches us spiritually with its trustworthy knowledge about humanity and the world. It warns us of hidden environmental dangers and opens up unexpected paths of technical progress. It brings an element of hard-nosed critical rationality into all social debate, and fosters awareness of uncertainty and change in the professional education of skilled practitioners. Above all, academic scientists are in continual demand as independent experts in public arenas of controversy and decision. In short, university research is the principal intelligence agency of civil society.

It is often supposed that science is able to perform these functions because it is so completely rational and objective. Unfortunately, this supposition is not supported by serious philosophical analysis or sociological observation. In reality, what makes scientific knowledge credible is that it is produced by an open, imaginative, self-critical, disinterested, communal process. It is these institutional characteristics of scientific research that win our worldly-wise trust. People seldom appreciate how deeply these characteristics are woven into the university tradition. For example, lecturers and professors are not tested for their expertise, nor employed to

carry out specific research projects. Nevertheless, customary practices such as 'publish or perish', 'peer review' and academic tenure ensure that they are indeed good scientists. They retain their intellectual autonomy, but could only have won their university posts—and thereby access to research facilities—on the basis of competitive assessments of the originality and promise of their published research.

University research organised in this manner is only one of many possible ways of carrying out 'public science'. The key point is that up to now it has had a discrete non-instrumental role that cannot be performed by 'proprietary science'. However technically sound they may be, research results that have been deliberately produced, in secret, for corporate profits, are inevitably suspected of bias.

By admitting 'conflict of interest', scientists engaged in such research show that they cannot disengage themselves from the worldly agendas of their patrons. Nor can they exemplify to their students the fundamental scientific values of intellectual autonomy and open dissent. No matter how potent and sincere their expertise, it can do little to strengthen civil society or the public good.

Of course the funding discipline raises many political and economic problems. For example, how should governments justify public expenditure on completely useless disciplines such as particle physics and astrophysics? But these problems are not solved by handing them over to 'market forces'. Indeed, it is highly commercialised fields such as biomedicine that the merging of public and proprietary science is most

worrying. This is precisely where societal demands for trustworthy scientific knowledge and non-partisan expertise are most pressing.

The fashionable call for closer union between academia, industry and government ignores a vital element of the scientific enterprise. These great sources of economy and polity will surely grow evolving internally, and interacting exceedingly, beyond anything we can easily foresee. In each sector, the research will be reformed and reconfigured along with the knowledge that it produces. But scientists in all three sectors should fight openly against changes that fail to recognise, celebrate, and fully support the distinctive, and irreplaceable, role of 'public science' in an open, pluralistic society. ♦ (Project Syndicate)

RANJIT DEVRAJ
NEW DELHI—With the prospect of renewed US military presence in Central Asia this week, Russia has revived a three-year-old proposal to rope India and China into a trilateral power axis. When Russian leader Yegorin Primagor first proposed a trilateral axis against a US-centred, unipolar world in December 1998, neither New Delhi nor Beijing were enthusiastic, given mutual suspicions lingering from the Cold War. But Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji's successful India tour in January, followed by the visit of Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, might have advanced the idea to the point where 'working towards informal alliance' is now possible, said a US Indian spokesperson. This is likely happening because all three want to protect their own interests in strategic, fossil-fuel rich Central Asia, rather than counter a unipolar world order. Jean-Pierre Cabestan, director of the Hong Kong-based French Centre for Research on Contemporary China, says, 'The US-led war in Afghanistan has compromised Beijing's fundamental and long-term objectives, increased the say that its Asian rivals [in particular Japan and India] have in regional security issues and weakened its image as a great power,' Cabestan said in a lecture here last month. Cabestan said Beijing has begun to take India more seriously due to its newly overt nuclear policy, its open-door economy and its status as a rival power that could get uncomfortably close to the US. This trend is palpable in New Delhi's loud support for Washington's national missile defence (NMD) programme. Once a Cold War Soviet ally, India is now ruled by a right-wing coalition that is aggressively increasing its contact at all levels with the United States, even seeking support from the US rather than from Russia in containing China. Soon after India's



e-way power

a and China could finally be getting counter US influence in Asia.

at rest in 1998, India's Defence and George Fernandes said China emerged the main threat to India's government vote to then US Sen Bill Clinton to say that (rather than Pakistan) was the main factor in this country's air weapons programme. Clinton pointed out that China is badly worried by the NMD at because it has a limited range of inter-continental ballistic (ICBMs), while Russia continues to have enough warheads to challenge the reliability of the US umbrella. Although relations between India and China have been steadily improving since the landmark 1993 agreement to maintain peace along their common border, there has been a steady proliferation of missile and nuclear power technology from Beijing to Islamabad. Kanti Bajpai, professor of international relations at the Jawahar Nehru University, adds that other areas of conflict include competing interests in Burma, rivalry between the two navies in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. 'They, and Beijing's own recognition of Sikkim as an Indian state,

Russia waded considerable influence in both India and China as a major supplier of military hardware to both countries. India is this week finalising the purchase of an aircraft carrier, nuclear-powered submarines and long-range strategic bombers from Russia as part of a multibillion dollar

According to Raji Narain, a researcher at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), a government-funded think tank, it is important to note that none of these countries had a word from the trilateral axis vote to be seen as a long-term dissident to US policy. On the other hand, he added, the triangle envisaged by them would not likely make the US a natural ally because its very objective is to create a competing centre against the United States. Bajpai said that though the proposal may have helped the potential to build an Asian security system, tackle religious extremism, utilise Central Asian energy resources efficiently and handle better

Washington's missile defence plan, there is at present little purpose of the three turning into strategic partners because of continuing suspicions. ♦ (IPS)

Crony capitalism, American-style

by JOSEPH STIGLITZ

Remember the East Asia crisis? When the US Treasury and the IMF allies blamed that region's problems on crony capitalism, lack of transparency, and poor corporate governance? Countries were told to follow the American model, use American auditing firms, bring in American entrepreneurs to teach them how to run their companies. But the unfurling Enron scandal brings now meaning a favorite American saying 'What goes around comes around.'

Enron used fancy accounting tricks and complicated financial products (derivatives) to mislead investors about its value. It used its money to buy influence and power, shape US energy policy, and avoid regulations. Crony capitalism isn't new; nor is it the province of a single party. Former US Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin reportedly tried to influence the current government to intervene on behalf of Enron in its dispute in India. In office, he had intervened when the supposedly independent board setting accounting standards tried to clean up the accounting of senior executives' share options. Partly due to him, this effort to make corporate accounting transparent was stymied.

America's willingness to provide multi-billion dollar bail-outs to airlines or create carrots to protect its steel and aluminium industries suggests that free market ideology is but a thin guise for old-fashioned corporate welfare: give to those with connections. Enron was not bailed out and the problems were uncovered—some say testimony to the absence of crony capitalism. I believe it is testimony to the importance of a free press, that can curtail abuses. As the press started looking more closely at Enron, the number of members of Congress who had accepted money from Enron became clear. Campaign contributions were not just a matter of public spirit, but an investment.

Many lessons emerge. Some concern policies: the case for campaign finance reform in the US is strengthened, as is the need for stronger laws requiring public disclosure. The Bush administration, for instance, refuses to disclose information to clarify the role of corporate interests in its energy policy. Other lessons concern the economics of information. For markets to work, appropriate signals for efficient resource allocation must be provided, investors must have information. There are inherent conflicts of interest:

owners and managers have a natural incentive to present a picture as rosy as possible. Auditing is intended to put limits on potential abuses. But who audits the auditors?

We rely heavily on incentives. Auditors wish to maintain their reputation. But the interlinking of consulting and auditing practices puts other perverse incentives in place: an incentive to please the clients, who dislike unfavourable reports. Arthur Levitt, former Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, recognised that as many within the audit firm focus on their own short-term interests, the integrity of the audits could be compromised. But auditing firms and their corporate clients routinely attacked his proposal for separating consulting from auditing. What Levitt proposed, and what the Enron debacle shows us clearly, is that incentives matter, but that unfettered markets themselves may not provide the right ones. The new economy and its complicated new financial instruments enhance the problems of reliable accounting frameworks, making it easier to obfuscate. But corporate America turns its back, aided and abetted by crony capitalism, American style.

The central issue is finding the right balance between the government and the market. The status quo will argue that its demise was due to fraud, that we have laws against fraud, and that those who violate these laws should and will bear the consequences. But much of what Enron did was not illegal. Its auditors claim its central practices were within the law; that thousands of firms do the same. They are right. And that's the problem. Investors need assurance that the information received adequately reflects the economic situation of a firm. Within the current regulatory and legal environment, with derivatives and other off-balance-sheet liabilities, there is no way for investors to have that assurance today. We need better standards and stronger laws. While we will never be able to prevent all abuses, we can get the incentives right. ♦ (Project Syndicate)

(Joseph Stiglitz, professor of economics at Columbia University, was formerly Chief Economist and Senior Vice-President of the World Bank.)

Debate flowers in China

BEIJING—A debate over China's national flower is blossoming across the cities of the mainland. Yuppies and intellectuals are arguing, which flower would be the right national symbol for an ascending power, self-conscious of its long history but eager to embrace modernity? It might have been easy for Empress Dowager Cixi (1855-1908) to proclaim the elegant peony blossoms as imperial China's national flower. Not so for the National People's Congress—China's parliament—today. Consensus about China's formal symbol seems to have been buried along with the last remnants of the Qing Dynasty 20 years after it emerged from the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) when breeding flowers for pleasure was forbidden. China has yet to decide on its national flower. 'It is very important... a national flower strongly symbolises what a country is all about,' argues Professor Chen Junyu of the Beijing Forestry University. 'Of about 100 large notions, we are the only one without a national flower.' Chen suggests that the peony and the plum blossom should both be chosen in a 'one country, two flowers' system, echoing the late leader Deng Xiaoping's 'one country, two systems' formula that the mainland put forward in its reunification cause with the former colonial territories of Hong Kong and Macau. Professor Chen says the peony will represent ancient culture while the plum blossom will stand for China after the end of the empire. Significant in Oriental mythology, art and literature, the peony was revered as the King of Flowers in China and, at one time, restricted for the enjoyment of royalty only. The plum blossom, one of the most loved flowers in southern China, was traditionally a symbol of the Kuumintang government, which led China in the early decades of the 20th century before it was defeated by the Communists.

The issue has been debated since 1982, and in 1994, a nationwide campaign mobilised people to vote for their favourite flower as a national symbol. Peony emerged the winner and the Chinese Floral Association proposed it to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, but a decision was put off. And it is only getting harder—partly with the austere habits of the early communist era means Chinese people are beginning to enjoy flower shopping, breeding and gift-giving. China has in recent years become one of its largest flower growing and consuming countries in the world. By the end of 2000, China produced 2.7 billion fresh flowers and its exports abroad hit \$280 million. Tropical orchids, sweet-scented osmanthus, bright azaleas, snow-white lilies and Holland tulips all lay for attention at Beijing's 10-odd flower markets. (IPS)

or back to the peony?

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By exclusive access to profitable new discoveries, they are always in the race for preferential consideration. Valuable gifts may appear to purchase intangible favours. Cash for scientific answers is not as obviously corrupt as cash for parliamentary questions, but smells as nasty. So far, there have been few open scandals. Scientists in both academia and industry can still be trusted to do their work with honesty. In most fields of university research, direct external influences—military and political as well as commercial—are trivial. But a number of worrying cases of falsification or fabrication can be traced back to direct pressures from funding sources. In some disciplines it is becoming difficult to find academic scientists who are not in some way dependent on corporate support. The bodies that fund and publish research are now asking specialists referees and authors to declare all such connections, in case these might seem to affect their scientific judgment. Disclosure of 'conflict of interests' is becoming as mandatory in the world of science as in politics and law.

Call for Registration for First South Asia Water Forum

FOR A FREE INFORMATION BROCHURE ON THE WATER FORUM, CONTACT: Dr. J. L. Srinivasacharya, Director, Centre for Environmental Studies, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, India.

Participatory Category	Registration Fee	
	Individual	Institution
1. Government Officials	US\$ 100	US\$ 500
2. Non-Government Organizations	US\$ 75	US\$ 350
3. Academicians	US\$ 50	US\$ 250
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Dr. J. L. Srinivasacharya
Director
Centre for Environmental Studies
Indian Institute of Technology
Bombay, India

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITION

- ♦ **Prints and paintings** by Uma Shankar Shah, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. Until 15 March, 11AM-6PM.
- ♦ **Discover Japan through contemporary posters** Nepal Art Council, 15-22 February, 10AM-4PM, Embassy of Japan, Nepal Art Council, The Japan Foundation.
- ♦ **Wind of the Spirit** Korean contemporary artists on show at the Nepal Association of Fine Arts Hall, Nawal, 15-21 February, 11AM-6PM, 270447
- ♦ **Spring collection 2002** Watercolour paintings of flowers and botanical art by Neera J.Pradhan. Until 25 February, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, 10AM-6PM, except Saturdays, 522307

EVENTS

- ♦ **Phillips Saturday Bowling** Each Bowler rolls three games, the bowler with highest average score wins Free Phillips systems. Rs 500, 16 February, 12PM onwards, Bowling Boulevard, Kantipath. mg@mail.com.np
- ♦ **Nepali classical dance and folk music** at Hotel Yaju. Dances of Hindu and Buddhist gods Tuesdays and Fridays, 7PM onwards, the Great Pagoda Hall. Ticket and tea Rs 400. Nepali folk tunes Wednesdays and Saturdays, 6.30PM onwards, hotel restaurant. Hotel Yaju, 271545
- ♦ **V-Day isn't over yet** Valentine's celebrations with 1974 AD and buffet dinner. 16 February, Rs 600 per head, La Soon Restaurant and Vinohchee, Pulchowk, 535290

MUSIC

- ♦ **Harmony Evening** of music, painting and sculpture. Rs 250, with refreshments. Artscape Gallery, New Guest House, opposite East Meets West Music Box, Thamel, 256411
- ♦ **Live music** by Catch 22, Tuesday and Friday nights at the 40,000 ½ ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel, 413436

DRINK

- ♦ **Herb vodka, your cocktail recipes** at the Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel, 411818

FOOD

- ♦ **Pasta Pronto** Choose your pasta shape and ingredients to be combined by the chef. Rs 325 vegetarian, Rs 425, non-vegetarian. Until 28 February, Alfresco, Hotel Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 273999
- ♦ **Tibetan Lhosar** 15 February, Stupa View Restaurant, Baudhanath Stupa, 480262
- ♦ **Perfect Symphony** Dark or white chocolate mousse with fresh coffee. The Piano Lounge, Hotel Yaj & Yeti, 248999
- ♦ **Hawkers Centre** Street food cooked right before you, including kathi rolls, fish amrisari, nasi goreng, pav bhaji, noodle soup, desserts. The Café at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 491234
- ♦ **Sandwiches** Over the Rainbow American Dinner has reopened. Fifth Avenue sandwiches, full meals at backpacker prices. Opposite Pilgrims Book House, Thamel, 42651
- ♦ **Chef special luncheons** For office-goers at special rates, 12 noon-3PM daily, Dwarika's Hotel, 479488
- ♦ **Patan Museum Café** Mixed menu, garden seating. Lunch only, 11AM-2PM, 25 percent off with Summit Card, 526271
- ♦ **Singaporean and Malaysian food** Satay, rice, soymilk dishes, curry puffs and more. Between Jawalakhel fire station and St Mary's School, Sing Ma, the Food Court. Foodcourt@wink.com.np, 520004
- ♦ **Winter Specials** Hot mullied wine, ratatouille-filled pancakes, Chicken hoisin. Kilroy's of Kathmandu, Thamel, 250440
- ♦ **Barbecue lunch** with complimentary wine or beer for adults, soft drink for children. Saturdays at the Godavari Village Resort, Rs 650 per head, 560675

GETAWAYS

- ♦ **Taste the difference** Cosy Nepali-style house on an organic farm in Gamcha, south of Thimi. Up to 12 people per person per night including meals. aaa@wink.com.np, 631766
- ♦ **Muktimath Darshan** Two nights/three days on B&B basis with Pokhara/Jomsom/Pokhara flights and airport, resort transfers. Indian nationals Rs 6,999 per head, expts \$250 per head. Jomsom Mountain Resort, salesjgm@mail.com.np or jmt@soi.wink.com.np, 496110
- ♦ **Escape to Nagarkot** Special packages for Nepalis and expats at The Tea House Inn. Singles Rs 800 B&B, couples Rs 1,200 B&B, 410432, 680048
- ♦ **Heritage Package** Two-night package with six-course Nepali dinner, massage, breakfast, \$155 per couple, Dwarika's Hotel, 479488

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



BOOKWORK

- ♦ **The Art of Peace: Nobel Peace Laureates discuss Human Rights, Conflict and Reconciliation** Jeffrey Hopkins, ed. Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York, 2000 Rs 1,845
- ♦ **José Ramos-Horta from East Timor, Betty Williams from Northern Ireland, Rigoberta Menchú Tur from Guatemala, Archbishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa, Oscar Arias Sánchez from Costa Rica, Bobby Müller, co-founder International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Jody Williams from the US, the Dalai Lama from Tibet and Ham Yawngwie from Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma** discuss their views and practical experiences to deal with conflict and human rights violations and effect reconciliation.

An Open Heart: Practising Compassion in Everyday Life The Dalai Lama, ed Nicholas Vreeland Hodder and Stoughton, London, 2001 Rs 575

This volume is aimed at giving the reader a basic understanding of Buddhism and some of the key methods by which Buddhist practitioners have cultivated compassion and wisdom in their lives. One doesn't have to be Buddhist to use these meditation techniques. Meditation can be thought of as a way by which we diminish the force of old thought habits and develop new ones.

♦ **Ultimate Healing: The Power of Compassion** Lama Zopa Rinpoche Wisdom Publications, Boston, Rs 1,365

We experience illness on a physical level, but to be healed, we must understand that true healing begins in our hearts and minds. Lama Zopa Rinpoche helps us recognise the roots of illness and gives us the tools to create our future happiness. He addresses the central role of karma and the mental habits of labelling in causing illness and shows how developing compassion through meditation can eliminate disease.

Kumari Shobha Vijaya Malla, Philip H Pierce, trans. Royal Nepal Academy, Kathmandu, 2001 Rs 117

First published in 1982 in Nepali, this work is a fictional study of the love between a living goddess and an educated youth who falls to be swayed by the belief that she is supposed to bring an early death to her husband. Malla displays his trademark ability to probe into his characters' psychology and probes the disjuncture between tradition and modernity in Kumari worship.

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

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And the winner is...



Masterplan of Ton Cees' award-winning design (above) and perspective (below).

14 leading Nepali architectural firms all focused on providing innovative, quality designs for pretty much the same cost. Cees' project appeared to meet ICIMOD's myriad needs best. "I tried to imagine the mountain farmer constructing project is undertaken, particularly by organisations that hope to be part of the cultural and social fabric of its surroundings. Architects entering the competition had to best interpret ICIMOD's long list of requirements—and stay within the Centre's \$1 million budget for the project." There were lots of specific demands, complex requirements," says Archiplan's Bireesh Shah, one of the three finalists. "The architecture should reflect ICIMOD's development approach and the needs of an institutional building. It was certainly challenging."

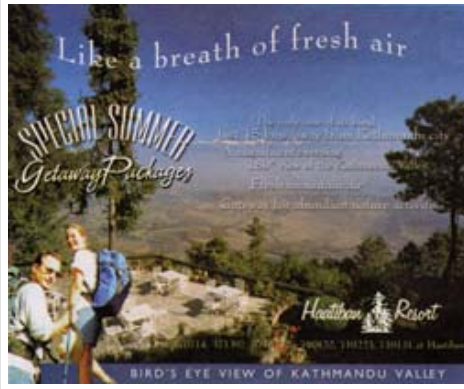
Says Kai Prasad Weis, who tied with Shah for second place, "What's good is that there was a design competition. It was fair and the jury was good." Most participants as well as other architects concur—in a country where few competitions take place, they say, and projects are won on the basis of connections and low costs, rather than the quality of work. ICIMOD's competition could start a trend.

Selected from designs submitted by

RAMYATA LIMBU
 Ton Cees has another feather in his cap. The Kathmandu-based architect's design just won first prize in the design competition held by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, ICIMOD, for its proposed headquarters at Khumaltar, Lalitpur.

"It's about time we have a permanent home of our own," says an ICIMOD official. "And we want the initiation of the building to coincide with the International Year of the Mountain." But ICIMOD didn't just want any old place to call its own. They wanted it to be modern—wind, efficient, and earthquake- and fire-safe, but also show respect for the architectural heritage of their home city. They wanted a building that would reflect their mandate to promote sustainable mountain development, and encourage the transparency and teamwork the Centre strives for.

So what did they do? They held a design contest, as is done so often around the world when a major new



HAPPENINGS



NEPAL PEACE RIDE 2002: Royal Enfield motorcycle enthusiasts on their way to Pokhara from Kathmandu in the two-day motorcycle rally on 9 February.



BALLOON AT SUNRISE: A hot air balloon taking advantage of a glorious Himalayan morning over Kathmandu Valley for a sight-seeing flight on 12 February.

designing Nanglo outlets. The entries were judged by an international jury including Utam Shrestha, president of the Society of Nepalese Architects, D Neeli Gutschow, professor of architecture, Germany, RK Saha, professor of architecture, India, and Don Treese, professor of architecture, USA. The jury then passed on their appraisals to ICIMOD's Board of Governors at their meeting last December. Cees, Shah and Weis all made it to the final round, after which they had some time to refine their designs further. Finally, says Shrestha, who served as coordinator of the competition, "The jury evaluated the plus and minus points of the final designs, and the ICIMOD Board made the final selection on the basis of their requirements." ♦

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Nothing much to report for the coming week. Expect breezy afternoons with clear skies with a gradual increase in maximum temperature, misty mornings clearing by 10am. The westerly that dumped nearly 20 mm of rain in Kathmandu valley on Monday night has now moved on, eastern Nepal will still see some cloud cover while some high altitude cloud will move swiftly across the central Nepal skies as well. A weak westerly front will pass through during the early part of next week but without much precipitation. A massive high pressure area reigns over northern India and the Tibetan plateau and this should keep things quiet for a while.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
20-06	21-05	21-08	22-06	23-04

रङ्गिनी सगरमाथा

Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

The taxman cometh

As conscientious Nepali tax payers, it is deeply satisfying for many of us to see that the government is putting our hard-earned taxes to good use by coming up with creative new ideas for new taxes. In this way, some of us who still have some disposable income will not just be sitting unproductively on our non-performing assets, but will get off our butts.

Still, this is not the time to hem and haw, or for ifs and buts. It is the time for every Nepali of taxable age to ask himself and herself some wrenching questions: is the government doing enough? Is it leaving any stones unturned to enlarge the tax bracket and widen the tax net? My personal feeling (and this is entirely my opinion and does not in any way reflect the opinions, if any, of my present employers, or of the various organisms that I have worked for in the past, and may work for in the future) is that it is not. The government is not doing enough. It is being complacent. It is hesitating to go boldly forth where no government has gone before to come up with new things to tax. At this rate, will it ever meet the Tenth Plan targets for profligacy, waste and revenue leakage?

In the interest of transparency, it is my civic duty at the present juncture to bring to the attention of my esteemed readers that there may be a slight conflict of interest in going any further with this column since the Ministry of Finance, PwT (Ltd) has just hired this scribe (hitherto known as 'yours truly', and hereinafter referred to as 'me') as a consultant to advise the government on a more futuristic tax policy. But in the national interest it is my duty to privately leak to you the salient points of my suggested recommendations to the MoF:

1. **Torture.** The government has stopped short of using this time-tested revenue-raising method on tax dodgers.

This technique, which involves actual physical contact at the sub-cuticular level, between the taxman and the payee has guaranteed efficacy. It is currently being used with excellent results by certain underground parties which shall remain nameless till the state of national emergency is lifted.

2. **Graft Tax.** The Ministry of Finance should immediately set up a Department of Kickbacks where the 10 percent VAT, 2 percent Service Charge and 4 percent National Security Surcharge will be levied on every kickback and be given or received within the kingdom.

3. **Capital Flight Levy.** All monies apprehended at the capital's airport awaiting boarding will be slapped a 50 percent tariff before departure. One-bound flights will be affected, but what the heck, they already are.

4. **Adulteration Tax.** All fuel adulterers throughout the kingdom will have to mandatorily add 5 percent more kerosene to the diesel they sell at gas stations over beyond the present 50 percent adulteration they carry out, and hand over the take to the Nepal Oil Corporation. Revenue thus generated will be used as a Hedge Fund to bail out petrol stations in case adulteration is banned in future.

5. **Sunshine Tax.** It has come to the notice of the Tax Department that wage earners have been sun bathing on the terrace for free. A solar tax has therefore been slapped at a flat rate of Rs 100 per head per hour of sunshine. A Lunar Tax will also be announced soon to tax the income of moonlighters.

The above five bright ideas will put the government in a comfortable position to meet any exigencies by mobilising internal resources, and reduce our dependence on donor support.



NEPALI SOCIETY

Nepalki chhori Helen

If you close your eyes when you speak to Helen Elkland, you could easily imagine you are talking to someone born in Gorkha. And you'd be right.

The 34-year-old Norwegian was born in Ampipal, where her father was a teacher at the famous Lutel School run by the United Mission Nepal. She was born at home, Nepali-style, and was named after a Canadian doctor at the Ampipal Hospital who helped in the delivery. Helen grew up in Gorkha and Kathmandu till she was eleven, and her mother encouraged her to go out and play *guccha* and *luka mari* with her Nepali friends on Ampipal Bhanjyang, *by changa* in Sanepa, munch *makal* and *tisara* with the *didis* who also picked *jumra* from her hair (*jumra* change their colour chameleon-like, so Nepali *jumra* turned blonde in Helen's hair).

It was this total immersion in Nepal that gave Helen her fluent, unaccented Nepali. We have heard a lot of foreigners speak Nepali: British Gurkha officers, Peace Corps volunteers, and Jesuit Priests, but there aren't many with Helen's colloquial smoothness. *"Malai Nepali maya garune mero buwa*



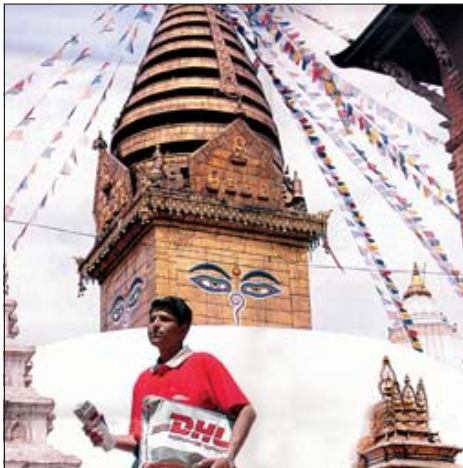
nai ho," Helen says about how her father passed on his love and respect for the Nepali people to her. "He taught us to appreciate what was good in the Nepali way of life, and be a part of the language and the culture."

After going back to Norway at age 11, Helen managed to infect her friends in school with her love for Nepal. They memorised Nepali songs that she sang, and one of Helen's Norwegian friends who has never been to Nepal can sing Narayan Gopal songs by heart to this day.

Helen returned to Nepal in 1994 with her husband Harald, joining the UMN, and both now teach at Mahendra Bhawan School. "I wasn't going to marry anyone who wasn't prepared to return to Nepal with me," she says. And Harald has learnt Nepali as well. "Being married to someone so dedicated to Nepal, you have to," he quips.

Helen sometimes meets Nepalis she grew up with in the most unusual places: like a childhood friend from Sanepa she ran into after 25 years—at Vienna airport. Both recognised each other immediately. Returning to Nepal has given Helen a chance to fulfil her lifelong dream of helping her other motherland. "Nepal is going through a difficult period," she says in flawless Nepali, "but I know first hand about how strong and resilient Nepalis are. We will pull through this."

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