

NEPALI NEWS

World Cup

PREVIEW AND QUIZ

2002

EXCLUSIVE

US \$40 million

Security forces from the US Pacific Command left this week after visiting Rolpa and Goncha to assess military needs. Five earlier missions looked into development. The teams will now put together a support package (\$20 million each for security and development) prior to endorsement by the US Congress. The RNA's shopping list includes assault rifles, armoured M-17 helicopters, fixed wing STOL transport, communication equipment, and night vision aids. Development support will be channelled through USAID and used to rehabilitate hospitals and damaged infrastructure, and launch a



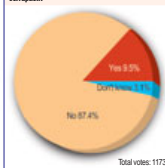
"massive" job campaign in insurgency areas. The US Foreign Military Support Programme delivers hardware directly and does not hand out cash. Sources in New Delhi tell us the US money will be handled by India to buy the helicopters from a former Soviet state for delivery to Nepal. A State Department source, however, ruled out this possibility.

Maolist arsenal

The Royal Nepal Army has inadvertently let out what kind of arms the Maoists have captured from their Gorahi, Mangalen and Satabara raids. The announcement of a bounty for the heads of Maoist leaders also includes rewards for different types of guns. So here is the list of the Maoist arsenal: General Purpose Machine Guns, 41mm rocket launchers, 81mm mortars, Light Machine Guns, Enfield 303 rifles, pistols and revolvers. Our own count puts the total of weapons captured at about 200 SLRs, 12 machine guns, six mortars, as well as rocket launchers and ammunition. (see also p5)

Times nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #31
Q. Will the government serious about controlling corruption?



Weekly Internet Poll #32: See page 10
Q. Will the bombings and attacks on development infrastructure help or harm the Maoist cause?

BINOD BHATTARAI

Five months after the declaration of the state of emergency, the military takeover continues. There is no clear winner, but there is a clear loser: the national economy. Information minister Jaya Prakash Prasad Capra said last week that over a third of the country's 3,900 VDC buildings have been destroyed, 13 districts are without phones, five hydroelectric plants are out of action, and 250 post offices have been destroyed. Telecom infrastructure alone will cost Rs 250 million to replace. Losses to business cannot even be calculated accurately.

But these estimates are already outdated—such is the acceleration of the crisis. This week, Maoists have hit telecom stations putting out four more districts: Okhaldhunga, Khozang, Soklahumbar and parts of Sindhupalchok. The main 12 KV transmission line has been hit in western Nepal, leaving four more districts without power. A Rs 70 million Radio Nepal transmitter in central Nepal was destroyed Tuesday night.

It's hard to detect a rationale for such wanton destruction of national assets. But going by the 9 April interview with Baharam Bhutatar in his party's underground newspaper, the attacks are aimed at pressuring the government to call off the army and agree to talks on the Maoist terms.

The five-day bandh is also a part of that strategy. The Maoist militia has been feeling the heat and been forced to attack soft targets in recent weeks. They need a respite to regroup and remain, and a ceasefire and resumption of talks would be helpful to that end.

This week's strike and unspecified threats of an "indefinite strike" in the future are supposed to force the government to the table. It is now clear that the attacks on infrastructure and VDCs which began in mid-March weren't by local cadre acting on their own, but part of a deliberate plan to bring the government to its knees.

Either way, it is ordinary Nepalis who are directly hit. The five-day strike is estimated to

FREE FALL

Will the parachute open?



cost the economy Rs 5 billion, and the losers are mainly dairy farmers, vegetable vendors, taxi drivers, bus companies, day-labourers, construction workers and the hundreds of thousands who depend on the tourism industry.

Rabi Bikash Shrestha, president of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) has stopped talking about his favourite topic: tax concessions, business incentives, and the investment promotion board. His single obsession now is the security situation. "If things remain the same, the economy is going to fold up in less than six months," he warns.

"This country should be in intensive care, it needs emergency treatment." The gloom and doom is not exaggerated. Trade, tourism, retail sales and transport, all of which were already in crisis are being kicked while already down. All this is having a cascade effect on the rest of the country.

"Distribution is very badly affected, the

first week of the month was a washout," says Sandy Ghose of Nepal Lever, one of the country's largest manufacturing operations. Raw material transport has been hit. And there is no use producing if you cannot send your products to the stores anyway. The entire cycle is disrupted."

Statisticians don't reflect the severity of the crisis yet, but banks are already facing liquidity shortages, even though few are borrowing. This is an indication of capital flight and large withdrawals as people start hoarding cash ahead of any other assets.

FNCCI spokesman Rajendra Khelatan says: "At a time when we should be creating opening, there are layoffs in airlines, hotels and the garment industries." Khelatan blames the crisis on apathy and indifference among politicians, business and civil society.

The mood in the business community has gotten so bad, some have decided that since no one is listening and nothing is

moving, there is no point complaining anymore. "I don't want to talk about it. What's the point?" says a visibly upset Naradana K Basnet, promoter of Himalayan Distillery.

What puzzles many is the paralysis of government—it seems to have given up trying to do its bit. This has convinced industry that no one is in charge. While an aggressive hearts-and-minds programme may have worked five months ago, today there is no government presence in large parts of the country. When asked, ministry officials admit things are bad, but say nothing can be done until the security situation improves.

Still, Finance Minister Pam Sharan Mahat believes the week may be salvagable. "We're not doing well because we cannot de-link the conflict from the economy," he explained to us. "Our economic fundamentals are still sound, and we can have a rapid turnaround if the security situation improves."

And that is the big "if". Lack of full information has made it impossible to make objective assessments about the state of the war. Many, including government, want to believe that the security forces have the upper hand, but the debacles at Acham and Satabara have forced them to reassess. Doubts threaten to Resent last week that the war could drag on for another "five to ten years".

If we are in it for the long haul, then sustaining losses to the economy on this scale will mean that it will collapse before peace is restored. These losses do not take into account the roughly Rs 8 million daily cost of security operations.

presently. The security forces have serious logistical limitations, and have a shopping list that includes 12 helicopters, two fixed wing aircraft, and communications equipment. Mahat doesn't know where he is going to find the money to pay for all this, and the only alternative to financing that is help for hardware from India and the United States. ♦

Taxing time for trekking

The Annapurna and Everest trails benefit, as trekkers pull out of remote areas.

RAMYATA LIMBU

Despite assurances from the Maoist leadership that tourists will not be targeted, recent instances of extortion from mountaineering and trekking groups in Nepal have raised fears that local cadre have their own fund-raising agenda.

Nepal's tourism industry, already hit by a global recession, regional tensions and bandhs in Kathmandu, is expected to be adversely affected as news of the incidents spreads through the Internet.

"Climbers are an adventurous lot, but if you get more incidents of extortion, then people will just go elsewhere," says Tashi Jangbu Sherpa, president of the Nepal Mountaineering Association.

To be sure, there have been stray incidents of Maoists and criminal elements called *Khachadis* robbing tourists in the past three years. But tour guides and their agencies who paid up had

played down the "donations" fearing that the publicity would hurt business. But now the sums demanded have gone up and local companies can no longer absorb the new costs.

Trekkers in Humla were recently forced to pay \$50 each before being allowed to proceed, a trekking group has been forced to pay a Maoist "tax" on the Karangchering trail, rating companies say Maoists now come to camp at night and demand a similar fee. The Jin trail is infested with Maoists, and although trekkers have never been harmed, they have been accosted and asked to pay up. However, no extortion has been reported in popular trekking areas like the Annapurnas and Mt Everest.

Even in Chitwan, there have been incidents where Maoists have paid midnight visits to camps demanding up to Rs 100,000. Later on, tour leaders heard they were local youth pretending to be Maoists.

Go to p5

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OPINION

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One of the things that has changed since 11 September is media handling of the word "terrorist". Even politically correct purists who used to stick strictly to the one-man-to-terrorist-is-another-man's-freedom-fighter claim buckled under the outrage of the attacks. And as country after country joined America's war on terror, our government also found it useful to lump our Maoist comrades into same category.

To be fair, the Indians beat us to it. It was Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh who declared our Maoists "terrorists" last November even before we got around to it. New Delhi's English papers, which were editorialists often reflect the thinking of a certain section of the foreign policy establishment there, backtracked somewhat, however, when they called the "people's war" a "national liberation struggle".

Arbitrary use of the label "terrorist" carries the danger of double standards. We will then tend to tag those opposed to us as terrorists, while those who support (even those who use terrorist tactics) we will call good guys. And what of state-sponsored terrorism, where the armed forces of democratically elected states perpetrate atrocities against civilians? Is a group terrorist only if it is non-governmental, like al-Qaeda or Hamas?

Labels matter. Why else would the White House now insist on calling Palestinians who blow themselves up "homicide bombers"? Because suicide is proof of desperation, and points to grievance and injustice that have become ineluctable. Suicide is also an ultimate act of "martyrdom"—another loaded word.

STATE OF THE STATE

AMUSING OURSELVES TO DEATH

Until 12 years ago, in the black-and-white world of the Panchayat years, it was rare to see what dead Nepal media. We said, give us press freedom, and we'll show you what media can do. The media is now free, but sadly, it has let the country down.

Back in the Neer Shah years when Nepal Television was young, we expected it to learn as it grew. It did learn, but the wrong things. Today, it either has news in officialese or it has crass commercialism of the most vulgar kind. By being a poor imitation of the poorcane news satellite channels, the NTN is in danger of losing its remaining viewers to cable.

The NTN's mediocrity, however, pales into insignificance when we look at the ongoing coverage of the insurgency. Video footage of the aftermath of fighting and the gruesome footage of corpses are

And speaking of martyrs. There used to be a time (remember?) when for decades we in Nepal only had four martyrs—the freedom fighters executed by the Ranas. Their names are burned into our memories from school textbooks. Today, the number of security force personnel who have "attained martyrdom" in six years of conflict is approaching 1,000. The Maoist side is our own growing list of "martyrs", and in Maoist there are "martyr gates" on the approach to every village.

The contest for terminology like "martyrs", "suicide bombers" and "terrorists" shows that this is also a war of words. An attempt to shrug these questions then about whether the frimboombing of Dresden or Tokyo becomes a part of it. That is why this is currently a subject for such heated debate in journalism schools. One particular group called *Minneapolis Against Terrorism* (MAT) has tried to play ombudsman and spot trends in terror-labeling. It has tried to cut through the rhetoric and come out with its own definition, saying: "Calling the targeted killing of innocent civilians anything but terrorism is completely unconscionable." But even this definition has holes, as has been pointed out, since there are several other acts such as the torching of hospitals, schools, milk vans, forestry offices, health centres and agriculture extension offices. The most effective weapon in the Maoists' revolutionary arsenal is fear, and

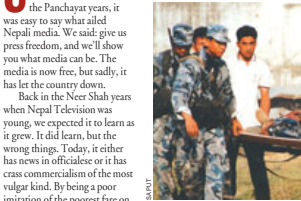
That is probably the moral of the story. Who is terrorist depends on who is talking. As for us, we will go along with "deliberate killing of civilians to achieve political goals" as the most accurate definition. But that leaves out acts such as the torching of hospitals, schools, milk vans, forestry offices, health centres and agriculture extension offices. The most effective weapon in the Maoists' revolutionary arsenal is fear, and

One has to have illusions anymore that the Maoists' ultimate goal is absolute power. They are not in the mood to share power with anyone. And it is clear they will do anything to get there, using the power of terror.



by CK LAL

Media consolidation threatens pluralism.



After the royal massacre, my son was disturbed by the sight on the TV screen of the late king, his mouth agape and eyes flying around him, as if he had difficulty sleeping. Then he asked me: "Where those savage pictures from Sabartha showing decomposing bodies being pulled out of mass graves with pickets. Again, he was deeply disturbed by the coverage of the massacre on TV."

It is tempting here to blame the government ownership of the media for everything. In the matter of liberalisation, it is argued that all this would suddenly be set right with privatisation. Don't be too sure. Our experience with privatised broadcast media is not much better. Private commercial media is often even more insidious in the control of information—it practices what John Pilger calls the "censorship of exclusion".

Its focus on the bottom line and the need to please the advertisers of licenses make it as beholden to the state as the official media. A free media is no longer free when it uses its freedom for partisan exposés or campaigns against political figures who are rivals of its business mentors.

A glaring recent example was the relentless smear campaign against Grijp Prasad Kozal by one company in the same territory is not allowed. Here, in the absence of a strong regulatory entity, how can we trust a private business group with so much power over our lives?

The co-hack presently running the Ministry of Information and Communication must know he is familiar with laws in other countries about media consolidation. He chose to ignore them for reasons we can guess at. This does not bode well neither for democracy nor for a free and pluralistic press. Since the deed has been done, our only hope now is that parliament, the courts, and civil society will realise the enormity of the risks involved.

LETTERS

SOCIAL EVIL
I did a bit of a wink* by Ramyata Limbu (#90) shows this is a prevalent problem here. I myself have been a victim of sexual harassment and know that it is rampant not only in the workplace but also in the student-teacher relationship. It can happen with a university

student like me. It could be worse for younger students. What I have learned from my experience is that no penalty will compensate a woman for the humiliation. Still, why should the criminal assistant get away? We all need to speak out.

Pratebha Tulchur Maharajung



I worked in a tara town for two years, and can relate to both situations described in your coverage of sexual harassment. Before I came to Nepal, I was aware of the discriminatory treatment of women, and I changed many of my daily habits to fit in. With my colleagues and friends, this may have prevented some of the harassment that previous volunteers warned me about, but I did not protect me from the daily hassles that strangers on the street felt was their right to inflict on me. But my first reaction to the harassment from unwanted attention of my body and most of all, overcoming the shame that this attention has caused me to feel. I wish the accompanying photo to your "Teasing tourists" article was to notice the tourists' bare legs and arms. I found myself reacting judgmentally when I see such culturally-inappropriate dress and wonder how tourists can be so unaware of the right to respect their clothing choice. But, although this does contribute to the stereotypes that feed the attitudes that lead to sexual harassment, it is not the root

of the problem, which is the belief of certain men about their right to degrade women, and their subsequent actions to cause intimidation and harm. Sexual harassment will only be successfully addressed by dealing with the harasser, not by blaming ourselves for what we might have done to provoke the situation. The issue is not what women wear—it's what men do. After three years in Nepal, I will miss many things, but I look forward to reclaiming my right to wear the clothing of my choice, feeling, seeing and openly leering at women? What is the Tourism Board going to say—"Strictly respect women" or "You are more likely to get whatever it is that you are after if you dress like a slut than if you are a gentleman?"

Jyoti Thapa Melbourne

As an American citizen, I understand that America, as the only superpower, will receive international criticism from a significant minority no matter what our government's policies are. It also will be the first to acknowledge that many times American policy or its policy seeks primarily to benefit itself both politically and economically. However, CK Lal's "Do our banners yet wog" (#90) is yet another example of the Nepal "elite" blaming everybody else but themselves. The truth is that Nepal

has no one to blame but itself and its socio-market culture for the situation it finds itself in. Primary especially women or family or clan, not the state or the good, is the root cause of the Maoist uprising. This tree and its root have sprung not from abroad, but from the soil of the Nepali mind. The Maoists need to look in the mirror if they want to discover the cause.

S Troutman Kathmandu

While it is not surprising that your readers like Dr Armit Kulkarni's criticism of CK Lal's examination of General Rana's role (Letters, #89), it seems to me that both articles have overlooked a more obvious: Nepal is not a secular state but officially self-proclaims itself to be a Hindu kingdom. It should be noted that the same surprise that the commander-in-chief exhibits his religious affiliation publicly.

Yogendra P. Fekless

viety in Nepal. That distinction has always gone to the successor of the British recruit, the envoy of the Delhi Darbar in Kathmandu.

G Rimal Kathmandu

EGRETS
Interesting piece by Eric Steffens on the Keshar Mahal befitting "The return of the eagles, #90". I hope it will give the restorers of the garden some incentive to accommodate more birds to the same egret, but all the other birds and bats that call the tall trees home. One small correction: your front page picture is of a White Egret, not a Cattle Egret.

Suniti K Thamel

such an outrageous thing to a patient, and my brother lost all the confidence he had mustered. I very well understand that my brother's was a major operation, and the success rate is only around 90 percent even in the U.S. I cannot bring my brother back. But I want to warn the Nepalis not to be misled by the five-star luxury and paraphernalia in Bunnurung. Good hospitals are known for their care and doctors with a soothing touch, healing and not money is important there.

Jyoti P. Khandu Kathmandu

DEMILITATION
Thank you for highlighting Mayor Keshar Shaphin ("M. Establisher", #90). If we had only ten leaders like him, Nepal would be in much better shape.

Kiran Nakarmi Dharmsiri

DESSERT
I chanced upon Kunda Dixit's

Imperialism today is a real tiger with stars and stripes.

Imperialism interferes and fails, interferes again and fails again, again it interferes and fails again, and this is how it invites its own end. That was Mao Zedong. Our comrades have taken that nugget of Maoism to heart, and are convinced that the demise of imperialism is inevitable.

Mao also used to say that imperialism is a paper tiger. But 60 years after Mao's revolution, and especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is clear that imperialism is a real tiger with stars and stripes.

The Maoists interpret the help in the form of hardware and advice from India, Britain and the United States for Nepal's Maoist insurgency operation as the beginning of imperialist "interference." They see the social and economic contradictions within Nepal, in the region, and internationally, as stemming from a classic class war between rich imperialist oppressors and suppressed poor nations.

This explains the thesis of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) that the epicentres of all revolutions originate in countries under the imperialist yoke. What drives the Nepal revolution is the righteously Maoist belief in the doctrine of the cause and in international solidarity among like-minded leftists about the "people's war". Our Maoists are the main actors in this larger global common. South Asia, with its social injustices, exploitation and large masses of disenfranchised, has become the main laboratory to test RIM's thesis that total revolution is the only way out of the present morass in a region with 75 percent of the world's absolute poor.

Imperialism's present incarnation of globalism plays out at different levels. Socio-cultural imperialism not only binds the oppressed down to where they are, but also, through global



carefully and not get us caught up in global rivalries.

The Maoist ideologues have a different perspective on this. Comrade Baburam Bhattarai in a recent issue of this party organ *Jana Awaj* postulates that American interest in helping fight Maoism in Nepal is to align with India in the excitement of the centennial of China. Whether China takes the development in the same vein is another matter. Beijing's geopolitical focus is on its eastern flank—along the South China Sea, Vietnam, Korea, Taiwan and Japan. It does not need the distraction of having to worry about Tibet, Xinjiang, and even Nepal. Chinese officials never refer to our comrades as "Maoists", and have always characterised them a home-grown movement using the name of the Great Helmsman in vain.

Our Maoists seem confident that they are winning this war. But such revolutionary haste can also translate into an open invitation for outside powers to step in. This may not be as far-fetched as we perhaps think: who could have predicted last year that there would be unformed US military in Lebanon? It wouldn't be surprising if the Americans conclude that the Maoists may indeed win unless the Royal Nepal Army is significantly beefed up.

The US and Indian positions on Nepal's Maoists are converging. By their own analysis, the Maoists say India will find more of its natural class allies in the US and the Nepali state. These emerging alignments show that it is only a question of time before

the Indians pull the rug from under the feet of our comrades in Nepal.

The Maoist war has entered a destructive phase, a sign of reckless hubris. The leadership is confident that another ceasefire, during which the group will rearm and retrain, can propel it to victory in Kathmandu. So a five-day bandh is likely to be followed by longer bands to put pressure on the government to agree to a ceasefire and talks. The Maoists need to keep the wheels of their revolutionary juggernaut turning so that they do not lose momentum. A continuing military stalemate will sap their energy. Also, because there is really nothing left to extort in rural areas, the "people's war" is now hurting the very people it was supposed to liberate. There is a real danger of massive disaffection, even within the rank-and-file.

The Maoist leadership therefore has two options: include a mass uprising quickly, or join the parliamentary mainstream. The first path will keep the movement bogged down in a

dead-end insurgency sustained only by a romantic dream of control and public frustration with the elected government goes. They believe that the basis of their victory will be our economic and

social inequalities, which will continue to ensure them more recruits. The factio-oddness of the aimless government in Kathmandu will, on the other hand, only survive if propped up from outside. Even if the parliamentary parties are somewhat deflated in the coming months, there is no guarantee of lasting peace. For that to happen the rules in Kathmandu (whatever they are in the future) will need to think about redressing the entrenched social and economic disparities. ♦

(Prakash Chaturvedi is a former Maoist fighter and commander in the Okhaldhunga.)

Dear Mr Bastoski, (Letters, #89) It is Kunda Dixit's personal choice to wear the hats he wears. If you don't like his hats, or his writing, don't read the column. For me, the first thing I check every morning on the *Nepali Times* website is Under My Hat. It is not the first thing that does not disappoint me when I browse newspapers these days. I hope he never stops.

G Pokharel Tokyo

SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL



In a thorough lookback of Nepal's campaign against corruption, last week will be graded as one of its defining moments. Not because parliament used fast-track provisions to approve legislation providing sharper teeth to the anti-wrangling. Nor because of the inter-parliamentary division triggered by the Upper House's addition of riders in violation of the deal members of the lower chamber thought they already had in concert. The real anti-corruption story was in Birganj, where Surya Nah Udapadhyaya, chief of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority ordered the business community not to offer bribes to politicians or bureaucrats. To be fair to our directly elected representatives, the disqualification stipulation introduced by an Upper House MP who has never contested an election—barring that bocheh led to become head of the chamber a few years ago—could not have escaped

suspicion. Electoral laws already bar individuals convicted of corruption from seeking public office for six years—which normally covers at least two lower House elections. The prohibition would cover up to a decade. If both parliamenters were to vote their full term. By seeking to retract that provision by a year, however, our editor turned legislator was allowing tainted characters to sneak back into public life while the strength of their discipline still retained its sting. The effort of another member of the house of elders, a full-time businessman when the legislature is in session, to shield from scrutiny companies in which the government has less than one-third ownership, raised obvious conflict-of-interest issues. What was glaring, though, was the proposal to exempt non-bribe-intentioned misdeeds as well. This rider would have created new opportunities for the more crafty to plot their moves as the authorities

made their judgment calls. Coming back to Udapadhyaya, he addressed that part of the depravity debate that has agitated Nepal's mood. How could some people be on the take if there was so many others ready to give? Not everyone can match Udapadhyaya's candour. But, then, he is not your ordinary ex-bureaucrat. For someone at the forefront of the traditional convenience-transit-to-right brigade during the 1988-90 war of attrition with India that he lost, you wouldn't have expected Udapadhyaya to end up playing a leading part in drafting the post-embargo constitution. During last year's tussle war between the Attorney General's Office and the CIAA over Indian banknotes that were never legal tender in Nepal, we couldn't quite figure out whose side the Supreme Court had taken. Since the Attorney General recently resigned, it's probably safe to award that victory to the CIAA. Coming from a man with such

Give and take

Getting tough on corruption is good. But who watches the watchdog?

staying power, Udapadhyaya's suggestion to the business community to draw up a code of conduct without involving the judiciary seems so innocuous. Admittedly, you can't expect five firms competing for the same contract to play by the rules when none knows what kind of facilitation expenses the others are ready to bear. The global dimension of this dilemma should prove instructive. After the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development came up with its Convention on Combating Bribery, most western governments are now moved to outlaw such bribery by nationals and companies abroad. But all the smiles are on the faces of Russia's defence industry executives, while their western counterparts are up in arms over the double whammy. First, they lost their tax deductions for expenses incurred while promoting business abroad. Now they have to compete with firms that offer cheaper goods and can fill large gaps.

The point is, the engines of commerce allowed everywhere are unbridled and unchecked. In the last years of the panchayat regime, there was a clear distinction between a commission and a bribe. The tolerance level for the former was greater. Since our current policy presupposes the existence of political parties that rely heavily on contributions, we do not have to accept the virtual impossibility of raising funds without venturing into the realm of shadows. For a lot of Nepalis, the fund-raising tactics of political parties is not the real problem. It is the profligacy of the political class. This intrinsic compulsion of organised politics has undeniably constricted the CIAA's room for manoeuvre. Nevertheless, the commission has succeeded in setting strict standards. Take the lands for investments, for instance. By diverting millions in bonds from two accused at the odd of hours, the CIAA drew scathing criticism for arbitrations. But look at the subtext here. If either man had managed to raise that sum, wouldn't that have been kind of self-exonerating?

Just by drawing up a duly countersigned covenant, our business community will have made a priceless contribution to encouraging private industry to account for its actions. It would no longer be the prime determinants of how much bad money is in circulation at any given moment. Moreover, the agitators would have something on paper to back up any breach-of-trust complaints they might levelly on their fellow members. This arrangement would have to be done in a hush, though. No legislation or regulatory framework should be allowed to outlaw someone's sole act of appreciation. For one thing, we need something of enduring value to remind ourselves of our humanity. If you really have made a distinction for legal amounts, why not also offer some advance payments as gift and after-service transactions as well?

Many people are worried that by granting the CIAA the authority to scrutinise ministerial policy decisions, the new legislation dilutes our grimy democracy. Some have gone to the extent of describing the bills as a negation of the prime goal of the People's Movement of 1990—the supremacy of direct representatives of the people. Will the CIAA commissioners be emboldened to re-write the country's media policy? A lot would probably depend on the personality and peccadilloes of the commissioners. I would caution, though, that those tempted to slip cover-goods on certain stores to dig how censorious the press can become when the new press in the CIAA's abuse of authority. ◆

Standing up to spinal injuries

HEMLATA RAI
A spinal injury changed Nancy Shrestha's life. Once an athlete and very active mom, she now watches every move she makes, even the small ones we take for granted. "Nothing is black and white in spinal injury. Even if your problem is reversible, the process is painful and frustrating," she explains. Still, Nancy is lucky. She drives, works at her trekking office and has a very supportive family.

In Nepal, A disproportionate number of people suffer injuries to the spine from falls endured while collecting fodder, following livestock on cliffs or transporting construction equipment on steeply sloping roads. In the road network, there has been a sharp increase in spinal trauma from road accidents.

Women are the worst-affected. "The underprivileged social status of women is a factor in making them victims of spinal injuries and the trauma that follows—women are given dangerous tasks like collecting fodder from steep tops, and families aren't enthusiastic about providing them treatment," says Pradeep Dhungana, a physiotherapist with the Rytel Centre, Kathmandu. Spinal trauma victims visiting his centre are mostly middle-aged women in the 40s and 50s, normally victims of falls.

Life for survivors, already made difficult by their new impairments, is made worse by the lack of basic knowledge and rehabilitation facilities. Fifteen-year-old Di Maya Tamang of Kavre told us that when her injury resulted in paraparesis, she was taken to her home and left there. "I was having this kind of handicap at such a young age," she said. Di Maya was better off dead.

The Centre, run entirely by qualified Nepali nurses, physiotherapists and health assistants, will have separate male and female wards, a physiotherapy unit and an occupational therapy unit. The Centre has already started with four live-in patients, and will provide rehabilitation care for up to 10 individuals, as well as outpatient support, once it starts operating to full capacity. ◆

A rural lifestyle and difficult terrain together make life difficult for spinal trauma victims and their families. www.himalmag.com/spinalinjury, spinalinjurynepal.com@hotmail.com

BIZ NEWS

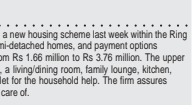
Honda's here

Last week the Sykar Company Ltd, which brings Honda town cars to Nepal, launched its state-of-the-art showroom, sales and spares facility at Dhobighatta. The showroom is the first of its kind in the country to offer live Hondas before buying them. Sykar currently offers four models: Honda City, 1300 cc, manual, full option. Price tag: Rs 2.13 million. Honda Civic, 1500 cc, manual, full option at Rs 2.48 million. Honda Accord, 2000 cc, full option, automatic is going for Rs 3.98 million. Honda CRV, 2000 cc, full option, automatic comes for Rs 3.88 million.



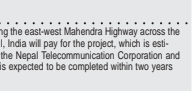
Sunrise Homes

Closed on the heels of other developers, the MS Group launched a new housing scheme last week within the Ring Road in Lalitpur. The housing scheme offers flats as well as semi-detached houses, and payment options including cash down and instalment plans. The prices range from Rs 1.66 million to Rs 3.76 million. The upper end gets you 1,930 sq ft of space divided into three bedrooms, a living/dining room, family lounge, kitchen, pantry enclosure, store, three toilets and a separate room and toilet for the household help. The firm assures buyers that other services like water, electricity, etc will be taken care of.



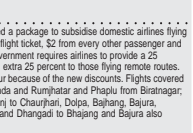
Fibre-optic backbone

Nepal and India have agreed to lay down a fibre-optic cable along the east-west Mahendra Highway across the length of Nepal. Under the agreement, signed on 10 April, India will pay for the project, which is estimated to cost Rs 1.34 billion and will be undertaken jointly by the Nepal Telecommunication Corporation and the Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL), and is expected to be completed within two years after construction begins.



Remote subsidies

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation has approved a package to subsidise domestic flights flying to remote airfields. The plan is to offer a flight ticket, \$2 from every other passenger and two percent from the income of every domestic charter. The government requires airlines to provide a 25 percent discount to local passengers flying main routes, and an extra 25 percent to those flying remote routes. The key is to be used to compensate the losses airlines will incur because of the new discounts. Flights covered by the new rule are Thakurgaon, Bhajpur, Tumlingtar, Landada and Rungtar and Phaplu from Birganj; those flying from Pokhara to Maneri, and those from Nepalgunj to Chhapra, Dhaul, Bajhang, Bajura, Sirokot, Jumla and Salleri. The flights from Surkhet to Jumla, and Dhangadhi to Bhojpur and Bajura also qualify.



Nepali Samsonites

Samsonite Nepal is planning to set up a manufacturing facility in Nepal to serve the Indian market, and take advantage of the free-trade regime the South Asian Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA) promises. The company made the announcement while launching two new products last week, the Crusair, an upright that can be pushed and pulled in three ways and the Filix, which the firm claims is the lightest hard-sided luggage. The company also plans to open a retail franchise showroom on New Road.



INTERVIEW

"We are part of the problem and we are ready to make a difference."

Nepali Times: What is the business environment like right now?
Surya Vaidya: The situation is not good. There is also lack of political commitment of the free-trade regime the South Asian Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA) promises. We tend to wait until the last minute, we make an on-the-spot decision in times of crisis and crisis-solutions are never good over the long run.

How can confidence be restored?
Business now has one concern—peace and security. The FNCCI is worried about the eventual outcome of what is happening now. The army is not doing anybody's favour at the moment. We are not sure how the political parties have the same agenda. The leaders must sit down and produce results. We hear they are talking, but what they are talking about, policies or the national interest? We like to see political leaders come together and say this is our single joint agenda. If that happens, I am sure that 50 percent of the Maoist problem can be solved. The remaining 50 percent can then be taken up. We're unable to say what will happen tomorrow. We've met all political parties, big and small. We said this is a national crisis, if you don't handle it right, nobody knows what will happen in another six months.

So we lack stability and focus?
Yes. There is also no vision and continuity.

How are businesses coping?
The September and the crisis we face are opportunities to reassess—look at what we have done, where we need to go, what the problems are. The FNCCI has begun working to that end. We're trying to create an environment where all say we are business people, we want to run our business, but we also have to think about something back to society. We have formed an ethics committee because the FNCCI thinks business people have to come out and say we are corrupt. But it is the system that has made us do so, because without that you cannot get anything done. I'm talking about corruption at all levels. We accept that we are corrupt, but also say that corruption doesn't begin and end with us. There is another party to it. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has a code of ethics, standards to follow, and the government has to do something similar and ask government for tax-deductions on such contributions. These are very basic issues, but can have a big impact if we begin enforcing them. We will have a roundtable in June and present our assessment on

ECONOMIC SENSE

by ARTHA BEEB

Peace

Talk is cheap. Real peace isn't.

During this Nepal hush the deed noticed vehicles ploughing the streets with their incense placers covered. Some more imaginative riders painted on signs proclaiming their "Freedom to Ride". The drivers did this as insurance against trouble, immoderate and futile, from the organisers of the bands. The authorities, sometimes apathetic, sometimes indifferent, because they wanted vehicles on the streets, regardless of the negative consequences such violations of rules can provide to criminal elements.



In the quest for "normalcy" we've begun to follow simple rules, not caring about the consequences. It is a painful dilemma, but it is right for the moment? The death toll announced by government has been an immense cricket score and, like with cricket scores, people's memories soon only hold on to very large numbers. More Nepalis are dying everyday, no one knows for what and why this has to be. Peace is going fast. More districts are off-line every day, more infrastructure is cut from the telecom network and more transport vehicles are damaged or forced to a halt. The cost of this—no respect for goods and vehicles and lost opportunities—is tremendous. For instance, Sauraha in Chitwan had just started to see some wildlife, but with the telephone system now dead, only during late are now travelling. The insurgency and counter-insurgency measures have hit distribution networks and since it's difficult to move supplies, as well as products, is moving less, as well as afflicting

other direct losses in the process. Finally, after six years of cocktail party chatter that just castigated the government, the police, or both, and sometimes applauded the Maoist, Valley residents are beginning to get what the peace in itself is still perceived as a secure place to live in. In the districts, the general public has begun following the footsteps of their lawmakers and other political leaders who left their villages a long time ago. The people facing the worst of the violence now are those caught in the crossfire who cannot afford to be so safe areas. Political leaders must return to their constituencies and help those left behind resist the Maoist onslaught. There's a plenty of talk about the need for peace and dialogue, but nothing will happen as long as our political scourges see every tragedy as an opportunity to cash in on. Our problems are beyond party politicking, which party should get how many of our political seats, who should be elected, and peace might be government wish, and if—peace comes out. We're moved

Readers can spot their views at artha@hpaah.com

German Technical Cooperation Health Sector Support Programme

Vaidya Announcement for Biomedical Engineer

giz

Application by email to: hr@gtz.de and/or by post to: **GTZ, Postfach 101553, D-53115 Bonn, Germany**

Major Responsibilities include position:

- Carry out national and international medical research and development projects, particularly in the field of medical electronics and medical instrumentation.
- Collect information on medical research and development projects, particularly in the field of medical electronics and medical instrumentation.
- Carry out the national and international medical research and development projects, particularly in the field of medical electronics and medical instrumentation.
- Develop and maintain relationships with hospitals, universities, and other institutions in the field of medical electronics and medical instrumentation.
- Assist in the development of biomedical research and development projects, particularly in the field of medical electronics and medical instrumentation.
- Participate in the development of biomedical research and development projects, particularly in the field of medical electronics and medical instrumentation.

Qualification and Experience:

- Master's degree in Biomedical Engineering or a related field.
- Minimum of 3 years' experience in biomedical research and development.
- Demonstrated ability in establishing and managing a team.
- Demonstrated ability in working and managing in a multicultural environment.

Personal Attributes:

- Strong knowledge of computer software and hardware.
- Excellent English and Nepali language skills.
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills.
- Ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines.
- Good organizational and time management skills.

Salary and conditions will be commensurate to GIZ standards and the locally employed staff.

Interested candidates who meet the above qualifications should apply by email to hr@gtz.de and/or by post to **GTZ, Postfach 101553, D-53115 Bonn, Germany**.

Application deadline: **15th April 2002**.

Interested candidates should also apply to hr@gtz.de for the **Biomedical Engineer** position. Only shortlisted candidates will be invited for an interview. Successful candidates will be invited to apply.

Women candidates are encouraged to apply.



Surya Vaidya is president of the Vaidya's Organisation of Industries and Trading Houses that is largely involved in trading and manufacturing. Nepali Times spoke with Vaidya, who is also a vice president of the FNCCI, about corruption, the investment climate, and the potential for new products from Nepal.

lighter colour. Sixty percent of tea sold as Darjeeling is of the Assam variety. In Nepal we have 90 percent China clone tea, the variety the world is interested in. From that point of view we are a good shade. We have been building nice markets, Germany, Japan and US and the potential is good.

You talk about tea as one would expect you to about Toyota cars. How did the change come about?
Before the 1980s we used to import Toyota cars. Internationally, the ILO has rules on termination of employees. We agree on the need to protect workers' rights, but industry problems also need to be considered, especially in difficult times such as now. We are not sure how the political parties practice based on the Global Compact. We're still working on eliminating the worst forms of child labour from industry in 11 districts.

Would you make new investments now?
Even now I am putting up tea factories in remote areas. But my way of thinking has changed. My first factory was 100 percent family owned. The second project is different. We've given 40 percent shares to local farmers, kept 40 percent and given 20 percent to my buyers. I think we need to change strategy and get people involved.

How is tea doing?
Nepal produces about 10 million kg each year. About 90 percent of that is CTC grown in the tarai. CTC grows have a problem because we haven't been able to fulfil domestic demand locally. Tea coming from India is displacing our products. Our production cost is high, which drives up the final product cost. India has protection in the form of high tariffs and taxes; we need to at least counter the Indian measures, protect our industry. Tea takes five years to begin giving back the hills and three years in the plains. Our farmers have no incentives or subsidies to sustain themselves during that period. Still, we can realise our tremendous potential in if government were to review the tariffs, taxes and domestic incentives. Last year we produced about 700,000 kg of orthodox (hill) tea. This year we should reach about a million kg. By 2005 we may reach 2.5 million kg.

What is the potential for orthodox tea?
Compared to Darjeeling tea we have a better fragrance. There are two types of bushes that produce good tea, the Assam variety, and the China clone. In the hills we use the China bush which has better aroma and

The 2002 FIFA World Cup

TUBORG BEER Starting 31 May, 32 teams will battle it out in Japan and South Korea in what promises to be the closest FIFA World Cup in recent years. **Nepali Times** brings you this intro to the biggest global sporting event of the year.

The Favorites

Argentina

- + Very talented squad with depth and excellent qualifying campaign
- + Lack of a solid central defence

After an emphatic qualifying performance and a convincing 1-0 away win against Germany last week, the Albiceleste have emerged as the biggest favourites to take the World Cup this June. Colombia coach Francisco Maturana said of the then runaway group leaders: "It is all playing against Argentina."

Maturana's assessment is understandable when you consider the likes of Balistreri, Lopez, Veron, Aimar and Zanetti all superstars in their respective clubs. The Argentines have so much talent, they could probably field two teams that would be serious contenders for the title.

The only question is whether they can replicate their past performances in a month's time in Japan and Korea, for a FIFA World Cup-winning coach needs his players to hit form at the same time, and within the same limited time frame. Injuries are another worry, but the sheer depth of this side in attack and defence means the Argentines have almost everything going for them, including the young prodigies, Aimar and Savioia.

Argentina's main weakness, however, lies in defence. Coach Marcelo Belsa needs to decide who is going to partner Roma's Walter Samuel. There is veteran NestorSENSI, who is nearing the end of his career and is not exactly blessed with speed. Roberto Ayala is dominant in the air, but he sometimes commits the mistake of holding onto the ball too often.

Players to watch: *Fabio Aimar, Javier Savioia, Claudio Lopez, Juan Sebastian Veron*

France

- + All-round solid team
- + Out of form goalkeeper Barthez

If Les Bleus can recapture the defensive solidity that won them the World Cup in '98, and break forward with the devastating fluidity that saw them lift the Euro 2000 crown, they will be a difficult side to beat this time round.

Coach Roger Lemerre has it all at his disposal: a solid defence, an inspirational midfield and an efficient attack. Like Argentina, there is an abundance of talent in this team, which has dominated the football world for the last three years. The French have been known for their poise in defence, and that should not change in the finals, with Biverne Lizarazu and Lilian Thuram having been in top form of late.

And then there is Zidane. The Real Madrid star will again be the team's creative lynchpin, and the ferocious skills of Arsenal's Patrick Vieira can be supported by a host of defensive or offensive players as the need arises. The Zidane-Vieira combination means France easily has the most devastating central midfield in the tournament.

While Lemerre faces selection headaches that many of his peers would love to have, the current French side does show a certain weakness in central defence. Laurent Blanc's retirement from the international scene paved the way for his Manchester United teammate Mikael Silvestre to join captain Marcel Desailly in the centre, a pairing that had trouble containing the talents of Raul in Spain's 2-1 victory over France in March last year. Goalkeeper Fabien Barthez has made several heroic mistakes this past season, and may have to be replaced.

Another major blow is the loss of midfielder Robert Pires due to injury. Lemerre should be able to sort these problems out, but does France still have the winning mentality that has brought them glory in the past few years?

Players to watch: *David Trezeguet, Zinedine Zidane, Lilian Thuram, Patrick Vieira*



Brazil
 + On paper, one of the best attacking forces in the tournament, lots of experience
 - Poor qualifying campaign and defence

After being upstaged by bitter South American rivals Argentina, Brazil's play-off to the World Cup this time has been the shakiest and most uncertain ever. But a World Cup without Brazil is unimaginable, and it's impossible to write off the four-time world champions, especially with players like Rivaldo, Ronaldo and Ronaldinho playing together.

During qualification, the team was unrecognisable at times, lacking harmony and quality. Their unstable defence usually let them down, and Brazil is not known for its great goalkeepers either. They pulled themselves through and won enough points to qualify, finally thumping Venezuela 3-0 in the decisive match.

Brazil are Brazil, and will always be favourites especially in the FIFA World Cup, which is their arena. Coach Felipe Scolari possesses a core of experienced players capable of fighting for glory in Korea/China 2002, including Marcos, Cafu, Emerson, Carlos, and of course former World Players of the Year Rivaldo and Ronaldo... but can they perform as a team?

Players to watch: *Rivaldo, Ronaldo, Cafu, Roberto Carlos*

TUBORG WORLD CUP QUIZ

1st Prize
Pentium 4 Computer

2nd Prize
21" Color TV

3rd Prize
GO Volo hi-fi Music System

4th Prize
5 Disc Man

5th Prize
World Cup T-shirt x 200

6th Prize
100 Football

- Name the host nations of the FIFA World Cup 2002.
- How many matches will be played in the World Cup 2002?
- Which player scored highest number of goals in the World Cup 1998?
- Which player will score the highest number of goals in the World Cup 2002?
- Which country will lift the FIFA World Cup trophy in 2002?
- I love Tuborg because...

To win:
 1. Answer all the above questions correctly. (2) Fill in your name, address and other details below

Name: _____ Age: _____
 Address: _____
 Occupation: _____
 Tel: _____ Email: _____

Prizes:
 - Last date of Entry: June 23, 2002
 - Draw will be held on July 10, 2002 at 3 PM at Gorkha Brewery Pvt. Ltd.
 - All correct entries will be eligible for the draw.
 - The Third Prize will go to the first name picked out of the draw.
 - The Second Prize will go to the second name picked out of the draw.
 - The First Prize will go to the first name picked out of the draw.
 - The names of the winners will be announced in the national dailies.
 - The decision of the "Tuborg World Cup Quiz 2002" committee regarding the results will be final and irrevocable.

Drop your entries at following address:
GORKHA BREWERY PVT. LTD.
 Plot No. 10/11, Ring Road, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal.
Tuborg ... Wherever you are.

Match Schedule

1ST STAGE	City	Nepal Time	Match
Friday 31.05.02	Seoul	17:15	France vs Senegal
Saturday 01.06.02	Niigata	12:15	Ireland vs Cameroon
	Ulsan	14:45	Uruguay vs Denmark
	Sapporo	17:15	Germany vs Saudi Arabia
Sunday 02.06.02	Ibaraki	11:15	Argentina vs Nigeria
	Busan	14:45	Brazil vs Paraguay, Africa
	Saitama	15:15	England vs Sweden
	Urawa	17:15	South vs Mexico
Monday 03.06.02	Niigata	12:15	Croatia vs Slovenia
	Ulsan	14:45	Brazil vs Turkey
	Sapporo	17:15	Italy vs Ecuador
Tuesday 04.06.02	Urawa	12:15	China PR vs Costa Rica
	Saitama	14:45	Japan vs Belgium
	Busan	17:15	Korea Republic vs Poland
Wednesday 05.06.02	Kobe	12:15	Russia vs Tunisia
	Ulsan	14:45	USA vs Portugal
	Ibaraki	17:15	Germany vs Ireland
Thursday 06.06.02	Daegu	12:15	Denmark vs Senegal
	Saitama	14:45	Cameroon vs Saudi Arabia
	Busan	17:15	France vs Uruguay
Friday 07.06.02	Kobe	12:15	Sweden vs Nigeria
	Jeonju	14:45	Spain vs Paraguay
	Sapporo	17:15	Argentina vs England
Saturday 08.06.02	Daegu	12:15	South Africa vs Slovenia
	Ibaraki	14:45	Italy vs Croatia
	Seogwipo	17:15	Brazil vs China PR
Sunday 09.06.02	Myeong	12:15	Mexico vs Ecuador
	Incheon	14:45	Japan vs Turkey
	Yokohama	17:15	Japan vs Russia
Monday 10.06.02	Daegu	12:15	Korea Republic vs USA
	Oita	14:45	Tunisia vs Belgium
	Jeonju	17:15	Portugal vs Poland
Tuesday 11.06.02	Incheon	12:15	Denmark vs France
	Suwon	12:15	Senegal vs Uruguay
	Shizuoka	17:15	Cameroon vs Germany
	Yokohama	17:15	Saudi Arabia vs Ireland
Wednesday 12.06.02	Myeong	12:15	Sweden vs Argentina
	Osaka	12:15	Nigeria vs England
	Daegu	17:15	South Africa vs Spain
	Seogwipo	17:15	Slovenia vs Paraguay
Thursday 13.06.02	Suwon	12:15	Rica vs Brazil
	Seoul	12:15	Turkey vs China PR
	Oita	17:15	Mexico vs Italy
	Yokohama	17:15	Ecuador vs Croatia
Friday 14.06.02	Osaka	12:15	Tunisia vs Japan
	Shizuoka	12:15	Belgium vs Russia
	Incheon	17:15	Portugal vs Korea
	Daegu	17:15	Poland vs USA

2ND STAGE

Round of 16

Saturday 15.06.02	Seogwipo	12:15	1* E vs 2* B (1)
	Niigata	17:15	1* A vs 2* F (5)
Sunday 16.06.02	Oita	12:15	1* F vs 2* A (6)
	Suwon	17:15	1* B vs 2* E (2)
Monday 17.06.02	Jeonju	12:15	1* G vs 2* D (3)
	Kobe	17:15	1* C vs 2* H (7)
Tuesday 18.06.02	Myeong	12:15	1* H vs 2* G (4)
	Daegu	17:15	1* D vs 2* G (4)

Quarter Finals

Friday 21.06.02	Shizuoka	12:15	W (5) vs W (7) = (C)
	Ulsan	17:15	W (1) vs W (3) = (A)
Saturday 22.06.02	Urawa	12:15	W (2) vs W (4) = (B)
	Osaka	17:15	W (6) vs W (8) = (D)

Semifinals

Friday 25.06.02	Seoul	17:15	W (A) vs W (B) = (AB)
Wednesday 26.06.02	Saitama	17:15	W (C) vs W (D) = (CD)

Finals

Saturday 29.06.02	Daegu	16:45	L (AB) vs L (CD)
Sunday 30.06.02	Yokohama	16:45	W (AB) vs W (CD)

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
France Senegal Uruguay Denmark	Spain Slovenia Paraguay South Africa	Brazil Turkey China Costa Rica	Korea Poland USA Portugal
Group E	Group F	Group G	Group H
Germany Nigeria Arabia Cameron	Argentina Ecuador England Sweden	Italy Croatia Mexico	Japan Ecuador Russia Tunisia

About the Trophy

The World Cup trophy is 36 cm high, made of solid 18-carat gold and weighs 4.97 kg. The base contains two layers of semi-precious malachite and has room for 17 small cubes bearing the name of the winners—space enough for the World Champions up to the year 2038. The designer of the World Cup trophy, Italian artist Silvio Gazzaniga described his creation. The lines spring out from the base, rising in spirals stretching out to receive the world. From the torse-like dynamic tensions of the compact body of the sculpture rise the figures of two athletes at the stirring moment of victory. The current FIFA World Cup Trophy cannot be won outright, as the regulations state that about 1000 copies of the trophy are made and awarded a replica, gold-plated rather than solid gold.

Italy

- + Vast talent, excellent defence
- Finding the right combination could be a problem, especially in attack

The biggest strength of the Azzurri is undoubtedly their defence. With some of the best defenders in the world—veteran Paolo Maldini, Alessandro Nesta, Fabio Cannavaro and Marco Materazzi—it could very well win the World Cup simply because there would be able to win against them! Their stinginess and defensive pedigree showed in Euro 2000, when they let in only three goals in eight matches.

Italy's other strength is the talent of its squad. However, even choosing the perfect combination could be coach Giovanni Trapattoni's biggest concern. With so many stars to choose from, the right combination will be vital. Certainly a key player for the Azzurri will be Francesco Toti. The Roma maestro was outstanding last year, when his club won the Scudetto. He has the ability to lift the players around him, and his passing and commitment are second to none. If combinations are a major problem for Italy, there could be a better person for the job, as "Trap" is one of the most experienced and successful coaches in football today.

In attack, Christian Vieri appears to be Italy's first-choice striker, but like Michael Owen, the Inter Milan player is very injury-prone. Also in the frame are former Juventus team mates Alessandro Del Piero, Filippo Inzaghi, as well as Roma teammates Vincenzo Montella and Marco Delvecchio.

It is obvious there is a plethora of talent, but will too many possibilities undermine the team's consistency?

Players to watch: *Francesco Toti, Alessandro Del Piero, Vincenzo Montella, Fabio Cannavaro*

England

- + A young and determined squad that keeps improving
- Injury proneness, bad defensive record and likely absence of David Beckham

After a complete revival under Swedish coach Sven-Goran Eriksson, England has gradually emerged as challengers for the title. They have been impressive in qualifying, notably against Germany in Munich where they won 5-1. England may have been thrashing their opponents in the pre-World Cup friendlies, but their defensive shakiness could show against the likes of Argentina and Nigeria, whom they join in Group F.

England is also a young team that seems yet to reach peak form, even with prolific striker Michael Owen scoring very consistently. Another big blow is the injury to David Beckham who may or may not fully recover in time for the tournament. Having said that, England showed how well they can do without him after thumping Paraguay 4-0 in Anfield. England have the skill to have a good run in the World Cup, but their shortcomings may come back to haunt them.

Players to watch: *Michael Owen, David Beckham*

Portugal

- + Very talented midfield led by Figo and Rui Costa, excellent qualifying run
- Finishing has been a problem due to inefficient attack

Portugal have been called the Brazil of Europe, and the current generation of young Portuguese players had a brilliant run in Euro 2000, only to be stopped by Zidane's golden goal penalty in the semi-final. Portugal have been in excellent form over the past few years, and topped their difficult qualifying group which included Ireland and The Netherlands. The latter will not be playing in Japan and Korea after failing to qualify.

Everyone knows what Luis Figo can do—his incredible dribbling and runs can turn any game around. However it is AC Milan's Rui Costa who will be decisive to the Portuguese campaign. Like Figo, Rui Costa has the ability to take an entire game into his own hands and has done so many times with his former club Fiorentina. The question is whether he can perform as consistently for his national side.

Portugal also play arguably the most attractive football of any European side, their fluid midfield passing combination has left most of their opponents out of the game. But the team tends to crowd the midfield at times, and sometimes doesn't use its possession effectively enough—their only major problem is inefficiency in scoring goals despite dominating possession. This could be a cause for concern especially in world class matches where every opportunity counts.

Although Portugal lack the more "complete" squads of their illustrious rivals, their recent performances give you the feeling that they will create a huge impression this year on the world stage.

Players to watch: *Luis Figo, Manuel Rui Costa, Sergio Conceicao*

TUBORG... WHEREVER YOU ARE.

The Case of Myrna Mack

villagers talk of avenging "their land laid to waste." In reporting what she saw and heard, she became an enemy of the state—her work exposed the military's crimes. Mack was the first woman to be named an "internal enemy" on 11 September 1990, as Myrna left her office, two men stabbed her 27 times. Myrna's death was the first of the time, later informed law enforcement authorities that Myrna was "targeted" because intelligence reports indicated that her work posed risks for the counterinsurgency effort.

As chief petitioner in her case, I have sought justice in Guatemala's courts for 12 years. In 1993, as Sergeant Major Mack's death was being investigated, the police investigator was assassinated. Judges have been threatened, witnesses harassed and attempts to discredit me fled in exile. I have been harassed and attempts to discredit me fled in exile.

Responsibility for Myrna's death must be shared by the men in charge of government security in September 2000. My task is to insure that a general and not a clerk is held legally accountable for their roles in the chilling process that led to Myrna's assassination. The Supreme Court ordered an investigation of high military officials to determine their responsibility. A military court issued a warrant for their arrest. In 1999, another judge ordered their trial. In 2000, a third judge ordered the trial, making it possible to last present the evidence against these individuals. This first effort of Guatemala to try

An anthropologist, Myrna studied the Mayans and other indigenous Guatemalans forced to abandon their ancestral homes during the worst years of the civil war. She visited remote areas and heard

To recover from its decades-long insurgency and counter-insurgency Guatemala needs to confront its past.



high military officials has been delayed indefinitely because the defendants' lawyers appealed the case. Achieving even these scores has been difficult: the police investigator was assassinated, judges have been threatened, witnesses harassed and attempts to discredit me fled in exile.

Terminology. So do bureaucratic bottlenecks that provide easy cover for defendants and permit the state to evade responsibility. Evidence and procedural documents key to the legal process are altered, state security is invoked to deny information. Add to this many Guatemalan judges who function as agents of impunity rather than servants of justice, and a legal system that can be manipulated by the defence through frivolous lawsuits. Still, the struggle has political and technical, legal and political aspects, close to hearing in the courts. The exposure has given the Myrna Mack Foundation and other civic efforts the chance to propose ways to modernize

and democratize the justice system. But there are many roadblocks—judicial reform, conceived 10 years ago and strengthened through the peace accords, is sadly still being debated. In name Guatemala is a fledgling democracy. In reality, power continues to reside with the military, high command and political and economic elites. We lack a truly democratic climate where criminal behaviour that the state previously supported is prosecuted. Such an environment needs the political desire to dismantle state control, strong and independent agencies accountable to international human rights conventions, and a commitment to justice. The international community must push Guatemala toward a better, more just future. (Project Syndicate)

Glickson Mack is member of the Center for Justice and International Civil Rights. In 1992, she was awarded the Right Livelihood Award.

by JOSEPH E. STIGLITZ



Lessons

We can't let the US bankrupt the IMF's new bankruptcy policy.

The IMF finally recognizes the failure of its big bailout policies—100 countries in Thailand, Indonesia, Korea, Russia, Brazil, and most recently, Argentina. Big bailouts allowed countries to briefly maintain overvalued exchange rates, which allowed the rich in these countries to get their money out or more favourable terms than they might have otherwise received. That allowed western banks to lend imprudently to get repaid. As overvalued exchange rates—even if maintained for only a short period—further depressed the economy, the country had to repay billions of dollars in IMF loans.

The problem was most evident in the 1998 Russian bailout, where only after the "illusion" —the devaluation of the ruble—did growth resume. The billions lost in Russia quickly wound up in the Swiss and Cyprus bank accounts of Russia's oligarchs. All this was evident when the money was lent in July 1998, but today Russia's people are paying for the IMF's misadventure. Argentina provided the copy for the IMF's big bailout of Russia.

In other words, argued for years a greater reliance on standard agreements, restructuring, and bankruptcy. The IMF has come around, but the conflict of interest should have been clear all along: the IMF, as a major creditor, could not lose the bankruptcy judge. The Fund recently proposed alternative procedures that might deal with the problem, and restructure, the US Treasury immediately threw cold water on the proposal. John Taylor, Undersecretary of Treasury for International Affairs, suggests matters should be left to the market. All that is needed, he suggests, are "collective action" clauses allowing the majority of creditors (supermajority) of a group of bondholders to impose their will on a minority, to prevent scavengers who, in the past, bought up small stakes in a bond issue and used their position to extract large payments.

The IMF, a distinguished macro-economist, has paid little attention to recent developments in economic theory and experiences in economic policy in the arena of bankruptcy. Collective action clauses are important, but not enough. The IMF has advocated the hands-off market-oriented approach to bankruptcy resolution, and that has mostly been a disaster. Korea and Malaysia ignored IMF advice; their governments took an active role and followed extensive restructuring. Those economies recovered fast. Countries that relied on IMF advice did it far too well.

Economic theory holds that there are incentives for most market participants

power sources inconsistent with basic democratic principles. Were America less than pursuing unilateral policies, this might not make much of a difference. But the Bush Administration not only ignores the basic principles of economics, but also those underlying international cooperation. The IMF is trying to create an alternative. The world cannot allow America to veto its efforts. (Project Syndicate)

(Joseph Stiglitz, professor of economics at Columbia University, was formerly chief economist and senior vice-president of the World Bank.)

So you want to go to Canada?

MONTREAL - Think Canada only worth visiting if you're a computer programmer? Think again: Butchers and welders are just two groups that have been admitted into the country recently as one of the richest nations deals with a shortage of blue-collar workers. "We've had a lot of people come in from the trade areas—welders, carpenters, metal finishers, machinists, mechanics," says Gerry Clement, assistant deputy minister of immigration in the western province of Manitoba. "Our major source countries have been traditional areas of immigration, with the Philippines the highest, followed by Germany, the former Yugoslavia, the Ukraine and China." The country has long filled labour shortages with temporary workers who are permitted entry only if they already have a job offer and with the understanding that they cannot apply for permanent residency once here. In 2000, over 70,000 permits were granted to temporary workers. A slight increase over the previous peak a dozen years earlier. Other areas of shortage include construction, engineering, truck transportation and food services and accommodations. (IPS)

Public goods, private providers

GENEVA - The EU has denied that it seeks to privatise all public services, including water, as stated in controversial documents attributed to the bloc that were distributed this week by non-governmental organisations. Internal EU documents, leaked by the NGOs, contain the petition for privatisation that the EU is to present in the negotiations underway at the WTO, say activists. Sources from the WTO and EU denied the documents, but with the caveat that the possibility of such privatisation. Mike Moore, WTO director-general, said it was "simply untrue" that the organisation's General Agreement on Trade in Services would "somehow require developing countries to renounce their rights, including water supply." Anthony Gooch, spokesman for the European Commission's trade division, stated, "We do not intend requesting that public services be done away with." The intent of the EU reportedly entails privatising all postal, financial and banking services, the generation and supply of electricity, tourism and telecommunications. (IPS)

Three-way development

ONCE upon a time, the old diplomatic notion of the Chinese Communist Party that Jiang Zemin brought to the steps down this autumn understood two fundamentals that will shape China's foreign policy in the coming years. Being a critic of US hegemony and the Chinese rush to sustain the country's growing oil and energy needs underpin the two-week tour that took Jiang to Libya, Nigeria and Tunisia and ended this weekend in Iran's capital. With highly-publicised visits in Libya and Iran—

Another man's freedom fighter

CANBERRA - "Anti-terrorism" legislation proposed by the Australian government would undermine international human rights standards and should be rejected, human rights and community groups told a Senate committee inquiring into the draft bill this week. Amnesty International has expressed alarm that the proposed legislation—the Security Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Bill 2002—would undermine international rights standards by reversing the onus of proof to those accused of "terrorism," so that they must prove their innocence, and also removes the right to silence. The Director of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Dennis Richardson, defended the proposed legislation, but agreed when asked if "terrorism" is a value-laden term. The Law Council of Australia, which has submitted a brief of opposition to the committee, described the proposed legislation as "modelled on the British Terrorism Act passed in November 2000—as 'unacceptably broad, imprecise and unwieldy.'" It is particularly critical of actions qualifying as terrorism if they are done with the intention of "obtaining a political, religious or ideological cause." The Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee, which is evenly balanced between government members and members from the opposition Labor and a progressive minor party, is likely to be split on the legislation. (IPS)

Kyoto in trouble again

OTTAWA - The Canadian government is hedging on its commitment to ratify the Kyoto Protocol because the EU proposes Canada demand that it be allowed to cut greenhouse gas emissions less than it originally agreed. Prime Minister Jean Chretien told the Canadian parliament this week that his government will ratify Kyoto "one day" but would not set a date for doing so. The prime minister said that the European Union opposes large credits, and EU environment commissioner Margrethe Wallström said last week that her 15-state community will likely oppose Canada's quest to obtain export credits. An environmental spokesman said that the Canadian government said it believes it still wants to ratify the deal, but wants to be sure that it has the support of business lobbyists and government agencies in energy-producing regions of the country. (IPS)

Oil diplomacy



ANTONETA BEZLOVA NBEILING

China takes on US domination, and finds new sources for oil. Capital from Tripoli to Tehran is China's insatiable thirst for oil. A net importer since 1996, China has been eyeing oil exploration in Nigeria, Tunisia and Libya, while relying on the Middle East to cover half its current oil imports. In Tripoli Jiang attended the signing of an oil pact between China National Petroleum Corporation, state-owned Chinese oil giant, and the Libyan National Oil Company, which opened Libya oil fields to Chinese exploration. Visiting Nigeria—Africa's largest oil producer—Jiang promised a visit from a Chinese trade mission of "hundreds of Chinese businessmen." Already the sixth largest oil producer in the world, Nigeria plans to increase production by 50 percent shortly and still more oil directly to China. Although Jiang's visits were arranged some time ago and carefully scripted, they appear amidst renewed tensions in the Middle East. Violence between Israel and Palestine and its impact on international oil markets and prices have highlighted China's growing reliance on imported oil. Despite inflated prices in the Middle East, last year China imported 21 million tonnes of oil, compared with 36 million tonnes in 1999. With annual economic growth at 7 percent, China's imports are projected to rise to 100 million tonnes by 2010, nearly a third of its projected total demand of 320 million tonnes. This is only one side of Beijing's charm offensive in Africa and the Middle East. Grouching Beijing's statements of friendship signed in

China takes on US domination, and finds new sources for oil.

which the US regards as "toxic nations"—Jiang sent a message that despite its pledge to support the US "against terror", Beijing disagrees with Washington's axis of evil and "toxic nation" foreign policy. Jiang's visits show that China will carry on its own diplomacy and strengthen its traditional good relations with the developing world," says Professor Guo Guanggang, a researcher at the China International Affairs Research Institute. "This is only one side of Beijing's charm offensive in Africa and the Middle East. Grouching Beijing's statements of friendship signed in

east Asian countries," Li Yuhong, head of Sinopec, China's largest oil firm, told the Boao Forum for Asia. South-east Asian oil is safer, but considered inferior in quality to that from the Middle East. Industry watchers also believe China must look for less-explored territories where western oil companies are not firmly established. In Libya, Nigeria and Tunisia, Jiang pledged investment and presented China as a powerfully ally to the Muslim world. The first Chinese leader to visit Libya, Jiang visited the premises where the Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi's daughter and some 3,000 other people were killed during a US bombing raid. "America destroyed houses but it will not succeed in destroying Libyan values and principles," Jiang said. He spoke in North Korea, Oil-free of the isolated Arab world, which Washington has placed on its list of state sponsors of terrorism: "China is against linking the terrorism with a certain nationality or religion." This remarkably distance Beijing from Washington's commitment to fight the axis of evil—in Iraq, Iran and North Korea. Oil-free relations between China and the US are in trouble again because of Washington's increasingly public show of support for Taiwan. Mainland China regards the democratic island of Taiwan as a rebel province, which split from the mainland in 1949. The island is still called for more diversified oil supplies to offset the country's vulnerability to fuel cost fluctuations. "We will have to enhance our oil supply from south-

by JAN KNIPPERS BLACK

Rediscovering "civilisation"

MONTEPEY - Jose "Araucario" Guesma was elected president of East Timor by a landslide last Sunday's elections. With 89 percent of the 378,538 ballots counted, Guesma (see pic), post-guerilla leader-statesman, had about 80 percent of the vote. He will be inaugurated on 20 May, as the UN withdraws from a two-year stint of transitional administration.

But before that, on 1 May, East Timor will declare its independence—for the second time. The first time the island did so, after Portuguese colonisers withdrew in 1974, it was immediately overrun by Indonesian troops. Their occupation until 1999 extinguished a third of the population (from 2 million to 1,2 million), but not the independence movement. In the 1999 UN-sponsored referendum, the East Timorese voted overwhelmingly for independence but Indonesian armed forces and their militia voted with their weapons, leaving thousands dead and hundreds of thousands displaced, and civilian infrastructure in ruins. Merely, elections for a constituent assembly that took place in August 2001 were peaceful, even festive, passing leadership to Fretilin, the party created as representing the independence movement. Emerging from centuries of colonialism and occupation, the East Timorese have been advised by consultants from inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, multinational corporations, and developed states, on how to deal with the challenges of building a new nation.

But most of all, the bill from states where independence is a popular sovereignty is far eroding and where this country's technology camouflages social relations of a much older order. Somewhere along the route to a civilised 21st century we get pulled back into the 19th. The model of equilibrium or social contract achieved in the most advanced European social welfare states, and envisioned since the early 1980s.

Utopias aside, the idea of a social system reliant on and democratic, fair and equitable, and creative and productive, is a pipe dream. We have seen many at local and national levels in the past, and a few—the Scandinavian

countries for example—are still holding on. Many trajectories of long-term global trends suggest that we could eradicate mass poverty and achieve a more hospitable world.

The obstacles to civilisation are not lack of technical or economic know-how. We know how to produce and consume, to regenerate and recycle essential goods. We know how to reduce waste money and spend responsibly. We know how to "develop" human resources development—and how to care for those with special needs. The resources are not lacking; they are maldistributed. The black-hole density of the current concentration of economic power, and the resulting social and political application with which it is continuously re-concentrated, make the political task an awesome one. The process of incorporating or re-incorporating the non-market-oriented economic decision-making that has been called forth, all while the world is mobilised to meet two centuries—organised labour, racial, ethnic, and gender-based political movements, multi-class and multi-cultural politics.

If the bacteria that have developed resistance to antibiotics, the untamed 19th century version of capitalism has returned to more violent form. To limit the mobility of money, globalise the popular imagination, and to make it less vulnerable, people from the subservient potential of some trillion dollars looking around in cyberspace everyday looking for quick and dirty ways to replicate, so-called, new paradigms and more effective strategies and organisations.

Perhaps in this East Timorese have more to teach us in this matter than we do. They have learned that car-abuse and individualism except only a nothing-left-to-lose-kind of freedom; that security can only be collective, and that it ultimately lies in the symbiosis and mutual commitments of a just community. (IPS)

Rent-a-crowd

ISLAMABAD - In the run up to the 30 April referendum on giving Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf five more years in power, the government has been ultra-sensitive to media criticism of Musharraf's plan to stay in office through the vote. Reports have dubbed his rallies "rent-a-crowd" and called the gatherings less than what B-grade political parties can muster. Last Sunday, this tension resulted in police baton-charging journalists during a pro-referendum rally in Faisalabad. The government has been especially irked by an editorial in the English daily The News on Sunday that criticised the use of the 200,000 councillors elected under his plan to establish real democracy by devolving power at the grass roots, the paper said. "Our correspondent's report on how the local body system is being abused to fabricate a victory for President Pervez Musharraf in the referendum is not surprising as it duplicates a tradition in politics that the military regime has sworn to eliminate." The president is expected to win the vote. (IPS)

World's cheapest anti-AIDS drug

BANGKOK - Since the start of this month, a state-run pharmacy in northern Bangkok has seen a two-fold increase in the number of patients seeking and HIV drugs. Close to 20 patients with HIV are purchasing the drugs daily, say sales clerks at this drug store that sells a range of drugs made by the Government Pharmaceutical Organisation (GPO). That is double the number of patients with HIV who submitted doctor's prescriptions for the anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs before. The fact that the state drug-maker is marketing high-quality ARV, sold for about 45 cents per tablet. A month's supply thus costs \$27, as opposed to the \$450 that a month of AIDS drugs produced by international pharmaceutical giants would cost. Besides the price, the new pill is also unique as it contains three separate drugs, all part of the anti-AIDS drug cocktail. Patients can now take one tablet twice a day instead of three tablets twice a day. (IPS)

Rights in Malaysia

PENANG - Activists here fear the imminent leadership changes in Malaysia's Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM) could render the body even more ineffectual. The changes come as detainees under the Internal Security Act (ISA), which allows indefinite detention without trial and has been used several times in the past 12 months, are on hunger strike to press the government to change them in court. Released them. This month the two-year terms of SUHAKAM's inaugural commissioners expire. Mas Haim, chairman of the commission, has declined reappointment. He had taken under fire from rights groups for suggesting that in the aftermath of 9/11 human rights should "take a back seat." Two other commissioners expected to be dropped or to leave service, a former Chief Judge of Malaysia and former University of Malaya law professor, have earned plaudits for working courageously despite difficult constraints. NGOs say the selection committee should comprise parliamentarians of different political affiliations, rights groups and civil society. Suhakam's high point came last year when it produced a scathing inquiry report against police brutality and recommended ending curbs on freedom of assembly. (IPS)

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Media monopoly?

by Gajendra Budathoki

Nepal Samacharpatra, 21 April

The recent government decision to allow Kantipur Publications to operate a national television service has sparked off new debate in Nepal. Kantipur Publications publishes five newspapers and newsmagazines and also operates an FM radio station.

It is internationally mandated that allowing a media house to operate all forms of mass media is dangerous, because that allows it to control information to serve its own interests. In order to avoid this danger, even larger democracies such as the US and the United Kingdom have not permitted a single media organisation to run broadcast as well as print publications.



The UK's Radio Authority and Independent Television Commission also exercises some restrictions in the broadcasting sector. Britain's 1996 broadcasting law restricts an organisation involved in national radio broadcasting from getting involved in television, and vice versa. Similarly, a publication house commanding more than 20 percent of market cannot enter national-level radio and television broadcasting. Companies commanding less than 20 percent of market are allowed to apply for licenses, but permission can only be granted on the basis of public support.

The Nepali government issued a license to Kantipur Publications for terrestrial television broadcasting on 17 April. Kantipur has been publishing newspapers for nine years and since 1998 has been operating Kantipur FM in Kathmandu with its relay transmission centre in Dhanuquata.

In Europe, mass media establishments are not allowed to work in both broadcast and print media so that no individual organisation can "cross subsidise" its products, creating unfair competition or a monopoly. Senior journalist Hiranya Lal Shrestha believes allowing a single establishment in all sectors of mass media could create a monopoly that will have a negative effect on the country's politics and economy. "Allowing a monopoly of a single media house in all sectors of mass media is as dangerous as allowing foreign investment in mass media," claims Surendra Acharya, president of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists. He added, "It is a threat to the whole nation. This could control the process of information dissemination, and manipulate public opinion on various national issues."

Experts believe that the lack of clear legal provisions on foreign investment and whether one media establishment can operate in all kinds of mass media channels is resulting in confusion and that leaves the regulations open to contrasting interpretations to suit individual interests. Some media experts believe that allowing an establishment to enter all sectors of mass media should not be interpreted negatively. Others claim that the issuing of the license constitutes a misuse of authority.

Journalist-turned-parliamentarian Hom Nath Dahal said Europe's *Time* publication is linked with the TV channel CNBC, India's Sahara TV channel and India Today magazine are both involved both in publication and broadcasting. The government's decision must thus not be judged in isolation from international practices.

"The government can be criticised if it allows one party to enter both print media and broadcast and prevents another party from doing the same. But if it selects one particular party from a competitive bid, it should be allowed to do so," said Dahal. However, he also believes that there is a threat of a monopoly if the same party is allowed to be involved in all kinds of mass media.

Kalish Shrestha, managing director of Kantipur Publications claims that the creation of a monopoly is impossible in the present open market economy. "Going against the national interest and creating a monopoly are out of question if an institution is aware, and committed to serving the nation's needs and the interests of the audience," he said.

Minister of Information and Communication, Jaya Prakash Prasad Gupta said the government decision fully complies with the National Broadcasting Act and that the decision was taken in accordance with all legal procedures. "Our concern should be our own needs and our own legal foundation. International practices and legal provisions should only be given secondary consideration," Gupta said.

Praying for peace

Anura Uprety in Rajkhandi, 19 April

From 14 April (Baisakh 1) I have heard of simultaneous pujas being performed in seven Nepali cities. We are supposedly praying that the ongoing war ends, and that peace is restored. Looking at the healthy pundits performing the rites one gets the impression that, if only God etc, the prayers will at least bring the priests peace—All that they get for performing the rites would have come their way without the pujas.

I want to ask the pundits: if praying works, why did they wait so long? They could have started praying back in 1990. They may say there was peace in 1990 and that so there was no need to pray. But then another question arises—what sort of pundits are they if they could not foresee the future? How could they not foresee what our leaders would turn out to be? Now when everything has gone down the drain, they are praying and giving the people false assurance.

If, as the pundits say, we can make peace by praying, here is a request to them. "Oh, ladies and gentlemen, please perform a puja that will end the war in Kathmandu, the RSS, and Radio Nepal were created by government bodies. If not, why is it still mandatory for invited journalists to wear the national dress during state-organised programs? Things have changed somewhat from 12 years ago, when the postings, transfer and even assignments handed to journalists from Kathmandu, the RSS, and Radio Nepal were decided by government bodies. Private sector media is established and is moving forward in a commercially-viable manner.

If we can actually perform rites to bring an end to the war, it is possible our pundits will be invited to Afghanistan, Israel and different countries—Dharmija, Lauda, RNCC, Saha Yazayar, ..."

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to believe and live in a world some 5,000 years old—because if the villagers also become modern, they will stop offering money (at the puja).

Dress Code

After the referendum (11 2002), BP Koirala had to return from the main gate of the royal palace even though he had an official invitation. He didn't have an official grey coat. He had his international image, personality, and nationality and had gone to the palace in national dress, but the colour of his coat was more important than his other qualities. If we could be similar students, as disciplined in our proclaimed aims and their implementation, perhaps Nepal could have gone much further.

Our government bodies still treat journalists and photographers as though they were government or civil servants. If not, why is it still mandatory for invited journalists to wear the national dress during state-organised programs? Things have changed somewhat from 12 years ago, when the postings, transfer and even assignments handed to journalists from Kathmandu, the RSS, and Radio Nepal were decided by government bodies. Private sector media is established and is moving forward in a commercially-viable manner.

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Nobody present was sporting the national dress and yet their nationality or respect for and loyalty towards the monarch were not under suspicion. Why then was it compulsory for photographers to wear the national dress when King Gyanendra laid the foundation stone for the new Parliament in Kathmandu during Prince Paras' program in the Natural History Museum?

Talks, referendum

Interview with Dr Baburam Bhattarai in Jaha Awaj, 9 April

On the possibility of talks and a negotiated settlement:

"Yes, we've always kept the doors open for talks and a peaceful resolution, and we will continue to do so. Remember that we aren't talking only for the sake of talking, but to find a forward-looking political resolution (if it did, it preceded not to). Through all these rounds of talks, it assumed we were ready to surrender under the existing political regime and neither presented an alternative proposal for political resolution nor had the courage to accept our proposal, which led to the breakdown of the talks..."

Forging this bitter truth Sher Bahadur (Deuba) stupidly went on to tell intelligence agencies and radio and our opinion that we were traitors. He lacks intellect. If there is anyone who has a little more grey matter and can understand our forward-looking political solution and wants to take a step towards peace, he is welcome to immediately declare a ceasefire and sit down to talk. Chairman Gomardhi has been a good person. Stop the ringing of bells and the blowing of conch shells! Put out all these incense sticks and lamps! Cast aside this sandalwood and these rice grains! Don't place ugly stains on devotion!

Also the tree to grow Allow people to progress don't pray! Let water flow in the channel Let water flow in Bagmati

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NEPALITERATURE

An environmental journalist of the finest calibre, Kedar Sharma is also a poet—a poet recently returned from a long sabbatical in the world of NGOs and INGOs. (Poetry does not pay rent, after all.) In the long poem below, he speaks against the exploitation of the Bagmati river, whose waters are used, without much hesitation, for sacred rites and sewerage alike. Sharma decodes the hypocrisy of those who hold the waters of Bagmati holy, and he lingers its abuse to the exploitation of Nepali girls who—when revealed—lead the stunted lives of goddesses, or, when degraded, lose their lives servingly men.

From Baghdwar to Chobhar Flows the Bagmati

1 All possibilities at birth all fancies of childhood—all upsurges of adulthood—who can ever say they'll come to pass? Who can foretell where we'll walk where we'll flow whether over the course of a lifetime will expand or wilt? Yet even as it forms a low poolside river advances it moves towards a goal no matter the direction

The river can diverge anywhere it can converge anywhere When allowed to flow freely it displays its own grandeur and much pride in itself Certain things are fixed certain things are unfixed in this is the river's being

A dam detours everything and the river is stilled of force 2 Without anyone noticing, the pooled bothi tree degenerates even as it is daily worshipped Such as hundreds of thousands of parichalkya virgins and navadurga goddesses but diminished lives though they are worshipped tens of times Withered bothi tree Shrivelled life Mastered river

The expansion of the tree the freeston of the flow of the river, they are worshipped after being forced to a halt? Stop the ringing of bells and the blowing of conch shells! Put out all these incense sticks and lamps! Cast aside this sandalwood and these rice grains! Don't place ugly stains on devotion!

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Let water flow in the channel Let water flow in Bagmati

3 It is said a country is neither soil alone nor souls but the soil of the soil, and the soil of souls What then is a river—Water? Or shore? Oh, those who buy and bid dreams of healing Bagmati by piping in water from across the high mountains—speak with your hand placed on your heart speak on the vow that the king be holy standing by the riverside girl speak on the oath of your ancestors' ashes Will anything brought to a temple turn into a deity? Will anyone settled in this land turn into a Nepali? Will anything poured in from the shore turn this river into Bagmati?

4 A girl sold to a whorehouse in Muglan is sent back to the village after contracting AIDS Down a river of tears she flows disgrace revision piety struggle to survive will to live She must survive, so she'll survive as long as her breath remains A river is lifted from the shore and taken to the city There she is played with, made to dance and to give pleasure and when all that can be tasted is tasted and polluted she is chased back to the shore Down a river of her own tears flows Bagmati disgrace revision piety struggle to survive will to live She must flow, so she'll flow as long as a trickle remains

5 Banished from the city the freed, infected, wounded water reaches Bagmati's shores and mourns and hauling the city's much-moulded corpse moves forward like a funeral procession The city is elated it sees itself purified the city is eager it sees itself vitalised but the death rites for its values are being performed always, always in Bagmati Yet the river is silent Keep going, keep going It has no choice

6 A silet war rages between a city with countless prospects and a river that has no choice Let's see who'll survive till the end

8 People can always float for the shallow daisy bridges if not ride boats, ride ships People will cross water by any means But if by chance a river flows into a current of people gets immersed in the ocean of a city it can't breathe it drowns Through the Chobhar gorge flows Nepal's most beloved water This poem is translated with the help of Wayne Antels.

This poem is translated with the help of Wayne Antels.



It's not water that flows in Bagmati these days it's mockery

7 Day after day the city is eager for costly speeches costly commitments costly seminars costly news

But all at once and sometimes with no provocation all joys sizzle Their flames, dying out spill onto the streets and flow towards Bagmati (Fantastic! Even despair is costly in this city)

The city gets jostled on costly performances and costly books and loses itself in costly courtesy plays Dancing, leaping about, shining as brightly as it can it ejaculates before climax then they go to wash up in the Bagmati (A mockery! Even the city's impotence is costly)

Decked in costly outfits The city consumes costly resources wears costly recipes The city leads a costly life and in the end arrives in its entirety at Bagmati's shore (Ah, sometimes with price tags still affixed)

Three-fourths of the three cities' earnings flow into these waters everyone's despair all impotence many people's dreams and the waking states of many others Track, say, deeds performed for purification

Loose the rainbow shades of blood and sweat and unseen forms, unmetten stories and the rain of Bagmati's waters Your form is visibly firm is visible in this water A minor form in Bagmati

Nepal's most expensive water flows through the Chobhar gorge

8 People can always float for the shallow daisy bridges if not ride boats, ride ships People will cross water by any means But if by chance a river flows into a current of people gets immersed in the ocean of a city it can't cross it can't breathe it drowns Through the Chobhar gorge flows Nepal's most beloved water

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Anyone can kill them (Maist leaders), bring their heads in a bag, and take away the prize money in the same bag."

—Devendra Raj Kandel, Minister of State for Home in Rajkhandi, 24 April

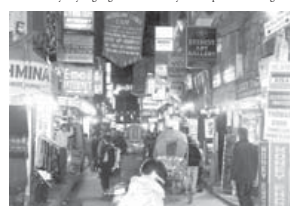
"The rally is different—it is more chaos than there are most prayers. There are prayers at Pashupati every morning and evening. Why do the poverty and stench around the temple not disappear? If prayers brought peace, the *thulabada* (those in positions of power and influence) wouldn't be involved in stealing idols from temples and selling them abroad... Our pundits pray and conduct pujas because they haven't learnt any other form of hard work. They explore the way through the Internet and television, but still want people

"Since Budanilkantha School has been accepted as collateral, this Ghatman was to put up Singha Dharma as a collateral."

Double Dorje

Saturday afternoon fever in Thamel, and a dancing monk.

It was a hot day in Thamel, and I was sitting on a bench, watching the world go by. The air was thick with the scent of incense and the sound of music. I saw a young man in a white robe, dancing with a mace. He was the only foreigner at the party, an ex-hippie and ex-Hare Krishna for whom Kathmandu was once an exotic destination, second only to Marrakech. But in 2002, post-11 September, here we were in Thamel and except for moi, not a hippie or tourist in sight. Here was another lost generation going to afternoon parties, but some of the other dancers were hard core. One hunky guy, who was the grandson of the river, really kicked up a storm although his



indication of their sexual preference. I had back been the epitome of post-modern under the influence of jazz and late space-age, aluminum-rimmed shades, signing out of a chat line. We exchanged email addresses and he said, "I was invited to my birthday party on 14 February"—also Valentine's Day and Idhar.

"I'm entering the days of Thamel's Station Pal, the doorman greeted me like Stanley meeting Livingston, 'Daniel, I presume.' That was expecting me for some time and so, without having to pay the Rs. 200 entrance fee, I was ushered upstairs to the pulsing rhythms of a disco beat and strobing lights. There were two basic propositions: handing over the right to nuke and promulgate the main laws of the country—the constitution—to the sovereign people for conducting elections to the constituent assembly, and building a national army or people's army."

The newspaper's press line states it is published in India, and carries the email address: np_ashby@hotmail.com

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went on about his double life—having to buy his disco gear in a secret hidden in the monastery, hidden from the stern head monk—I thought, "Double Dorje" would be the name of the book. He reminded me of the mischievous hero of the Bhutanese movie *The Cup*, about a young Tibetan monk, secret football fan who had to sneak around the monastery to watch the World Cup on a remote television. Dorje confessed to going to a friend's house to watch MTV and learn the dance steps. I left before the party was over, and I said good-bye to Buzz and his friends. Dorje was sitting outside the store preparing after another dance number, contemplating the pedestrian traffic, some gang-bangers, a newspaper hawkler. He said good-bye and invited me to his monastery in Bodhi where he is a teacher of some of the 500 young monks housed there, barakad. "Don't tell my teacher." A couple of weeks later I got a telephone message: my office. He didn't leave his house, the secretary informed me, but she said his name was "Double Dorje." ♦

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITION
 ♦ Paris-city of lights Exhibition of photographs. 30 April-9 May, 9AM-6PM, except Saturday at the Alliance Française, Thapathali, opposite Rotary Club. Organised by French Embassy and Alliance Française.
 ♦ Synthesis of tarai art by SC Suman. 8AM-6PM, until 30 April, Indigo Gallery, Naxal. 413580

EVENTS
 ♦ New dates - Festival of War based on episodes of the Mahabharata. Annual drama production of Studio 7. Shows cancelled: 26 and 27 April. New dates 28 April, 3/4/5/10/11/12 May at the Naga Theatre, Hotel Vajra, duration 1hr 15 min. tea and show Rs 700, reduced student tickets available. vajra@mos.com.np. 271545
 ♦ Nepal Education and Book Fair 2002 Discount on academic and general books, study abroad information, on-the-spot admission to foreign universities and colleges, career guidance, contests and more. 3-11 May, Bhrikuti Mandap exhibition hall.
 ♦ Peace rally Bhabhatri-Shahid Gate-Tripureswar-Teku. Ends near martyr's tree, Teku, Paschali. 3:45-5PM. 26 April.
 ♦ Psychiatry Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop on 29 April-3 May organised by ELD. eld@wink.com.np. 524202
 ♦ Friends of the Bagmati Special invitation to college and schools students, watch press for details. friends@thebagmatinepal@yahoo.com

MUSIC
 ♦ Dinesh & Pema Live every Friday 7PM-9PM, Himalatte Cafe, Thamel. 262526
 ♦ Under Memory Lane Teesta plays tunes from the 50s to the 90s, Wednesday nights, Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234
 ♦ Music by Catch 22. Friday nights at the 40,000 sq ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel. 414336

DRINK
 ♦ Beer Mug Club Talk beer, drink beer. Monday nights, Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234
 ♦ Sizzling Singles Buy one single malt drink, get one free. The Roodi Bar, Hotel Soaltee Crown Plaza. 273999
 ♦ Classic teas Thirty teas including all Dilmah Tea's herbals, greens, blacks and Oolong. Also Ilam, Darjeeling, Makabari and more. The Coffee Shop, Hotel de l'Annapurna.

FOOD
 ♦ Vegetarian delights 50 percent off all vegetarian items at any outlet during Hotel de l'Annapurna. 221711
 ♦ West and Mid Summer Swimming with buffet lunch and free bottle of beer or soft drink. Adults Rs 444, children Rs 222 plus taxes. Saturdays and Sundays at the Godavari Village Resort.
 ♦ The San Miguel Brunch Brunch, live music and unlimited draft beer. Rs 600 plus tax, Saturdays. The Fun Cafe, Radisson Hotel. 411818
 ♦ The new Roadhouse Cafe Completely redesigned with separate bar seating and coffee bar. Original Mediterranean specialities, and wood-fired pizzas coming soon. The Roadhouse Cafe, Thamel.
 ♦ Cakes, Bakes & Baguettes Pastries, puddings, oven-fresh breads, Shangi La Bakery. Home delivery available. 412999
 ♦ Krishnarjan Restaurant Six-16 courses of ceremonial Nepali cuisine in authentic setting, Dwarika's Hotel. 479498
 ♦ Weekend Brunch Rs 350 per head, special package available with bowling. Oriental and continental lunch or dinner by the pond. 1905 Boardwalk, Kantipath. 225272
 ♦ Vegetarian Specialties and clay-oven pizzas at Stupa View Restaurant & Terrace, Boudha. 480282
 ♦ Authentic Thai food Everyday at Yin Yang Restaurant. 425510
 ♦ Paddy Foley's Irish Pub A wide range of drinks and food. Live music on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday nights. 416066.

GETAWAYS
 ♦ White rhododendron getaway at the Horshorse Hotel in Mude, three hours from Kathmandu. Two days of rhododendron walks in forests, package tours at \$30 per day, all meals and sauna included. Email resort@horshoe.wink.com.np
 ♦ All-round entertainment Desserts and cooking-making for children, hiking and picnics for outdoor enthusiasts, ambience, books and bar for others. The Fort Resort, www.mountain-retreats.com. 226977
 ♦ Behind the Wall Two nights bed and breakfast with add ons for \$99 plus taxes for one or two people, Dwarika's Hotel, for details.
 ♦ Taste the difference Cozy Nepali-style house on an organic farm in Gamcha, south of Thimi. Up to Rs 1,200 per person per night including meals. aas@wink.com.np.

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

NEPALI WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The satellite picture taken on Wednesday at noon shows the massive buildup of thunderstorm cells across central and eastern Nepal. The influence of moisture from the Tibetan plateau meeting rising hot air from the Indian plains will continue to bring rain into early next week. Expect the cool spell to continue till at least Tuesday. When the heat picks up again, it will in turn trigger more localised thunderstorms caused by residual water vapour. High passes covered with new snow up to 4,000 m. Night temperatures will remain in the 14-15 range.

KATHMANDU VALLEY					
Fr	Sa	Su	Mon	Tue	
27/14	28/15	29/15	29/15	30/16	



BOOKWORM
 Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths Chetan Bhatt
 Berg, Oxford, 2001
 Rs 1700
 Bhatt examines the history and ideologies of Hindu nationalism and Hindutva from the end of the 19th century and evaluates the social and political philosophies of its main thinkers. Hindu nationalism's central claim is that it is an indigenous product of authentic Indian ethnic and religious traditions. Bhatt argues that it is in fact based on relatively recent ideas, frequently related to western colonial influences like Romanticism and Enlightenment nationalist ideas.

Condemned to Exploitation: Trafficking of Women and Girls in Nepal: Building a Community Surveillance System for Prevention Ujjayanti Sangroula
 Kathmandu School of Law, Kathmandu, 2001
 Rs 700
 The author examines the gender relationship in Nepal's current social structure, prostitution and other forms of trafficking, and recent trends, and analyses the causes behind trafficking. He asks what legal framework is available to contain the practice and through an examination of the social and economic marginalisation that contributes to it, suggests how and why community action is the best way to tackle it.

Radicalism and Violence in Agrarian Structure: The Maoist Movement in Bihar BN Prasad
 Manak Publications, Delhi, 2002
 Rs 760
 Prasad argues that changes in agrarian social formation the post-colonial era, and the emergence of democratic institutions altered traditionally disadvantaged as well as influential classes/castes. Various power groups launched 'Caste Sena' that worked through violent, extra-constitutional means, which placed democracy in crisis and in turn led to another agrarian crisis.

Collected Essays MN Sinivas
 Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002
 Rs 1,328
 MN Sinivas' work is seminal in the development of sociology and anthropology in India. His methodologically rigorous, yet accessible, essay/lecture theory, method and fieldwork track changing realities. They are grouped under the Village Studies, Caste and Social Structure, Gender, Religion, Cultural and Social Change in India, Sociology and Social Anthropology in India, Method and Anthropographical Essays.

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

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- The way to Mexico is too far. Bolega Restaurant and Tequila Bar is near Thamel Chowk. 266433. 15 percent off season discount

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Shanti, shanti, shanti, shanti.



When does moral righteousness win over rule of law? Can the taking of one human life by another ever be justified? What about revenge—won't a eye for eye only making both sides blind? All appropriate and timely questions in the context of the present conflict in Nepal. But these are the same age-old questions of righteousness, justice and compassion that people have been trying to find answers to since the age of the Mahabharata. And how pertinent that Studio 7 should decide to adapt the Hindu epic at the Hotel Vajra at this present time.

Directed by Sabine Lehmann, the production was staged in collaboration with the renowned Vaidyanath Theatre of South India. Vaidyanath, a form of theatre in which words and music merge with dance, gestures, eye and body language, are completely adapted by the Studio 7 crew. Duryodhana's rage and Krishna's grace are magnified by an accompaniment of best drums and graceful melodies. Shukun's exaggerated dance and eye movements combine with Saroj Aryal's lean physique in providing the audience with a false sense of raw and ruthless power, both key to his character. In addition, the exaggerated changes in tone and manipulation of speech of Surya Maharjan's Baddharjan bring to life the role of the chameleon in Duryodhana's court.

The production is based on two one-act plays of the Sanskrit dramatist Bhasa, who lived 2,000 years before the much-acclaimed Kalidasa. In the first act, Krishna plays the Pandava enemy to Duryodhana's court. Duryodhana's belligerence as he tries to arrest the envoy is in stark contrast to Krishna's mellow words of tolerance and wisdom. But even Krishna, brilliantly rendered by Sali Subedi, has his moments when pushed to the edge by Duryodhana's uncompromising and wasteful stance.

Krishna and Duryodhana, played by Sanjeev Dhakal, are the only characters that talk directly to the audience. Krishna is composed and convincing. Duryodhana is loud and comes across as audacious. The scene is thus narrated through the lens of Krishna's judgement.

"How can you kill your own people and be happy?"

The second act of this shorter-than-usual Studio 7 production dramatises the handoff at Kankubeta. A fighting dance tells the story of the death of rakes and "candids of fate", narrated by three soldiers, one played by Lehmann herself. (Her best line: "How can you kill your own people and be happy?") The dance is followed by a scene in which the stability of Arjuna, played by Ishwor Dangol, to take up arms against his kin is influenced by Krishna's reminding him of his duty. As Krishna bolsters Arjuna's spirit, his words in the play concisely echo the text of the Gita.

Then there is the famous macabre death scene between Krishna and Duryodhana, which ends in Duryodhana's thigh being shattered by a powerful blow from Bhim. Krishna tells Bhim to break the rules of danda. As with all Studio 7 productions, the heavily-accented delivery is not a distraction after the first few minutes, and instead lends a certain authority to the English depiction. The prep are what we have come to expect at the Vajra: superb. The timeliness of the selection, the rendering of the dance and music elements, the adaptation of the script and, last but not least, the intimacy of Vajra's Naga Theatre make this a production worth watching. And when you return to the stage to see the drama to the unfolding events in the nation at large, you are forced to think hard during the drive back across the Bishnumati.

Sail away home

Blue seas, great food, exotic ports—and speak Nepali.



MIN BAJRACHARYA
 Take a trip on one of the numerous luxury cruise ships operating in south-east Asia, and you might find yourself closer to home than you expected. No, Gai-bhat hasn't yet taken on the status of cuisine du jour.

From left to right: Dil Bahadur Sarker (Pokhara), Nar Bahadur Gurung (Dang), Masan Rai (Itahari), Gangi Rai (Dharan), Lekhi Bahadur Thapa (Pokhara), Gun Gurung (Jhapa), Anbur Gurung (Kathmandu), and Lil Thapa (Kathmandu).

It is the fact that many of the staff on these cruises are Nepali. And it's not just ex-Gurkha security personnel protecting cargo ships from pirate attacks in the Moluccas, these are now Nepali waiters and purseres as well.

On our first day on the Gemini Superstar's Andaman Sea Cruise that was making its way from Singapore through Malaysia to Thailand, my Australian friend Lesland Penton and I made our happy way down to the cocktail bar. We were served by a smiling man with a face of the cast commonly called "Mongolian" in this part of the world. He could be Filipino, we thought. But it was a naggingly familiar kind of face. So we asked and, of course, he was Nepali. Tej Gurung told us that there were seven other Nepalis on board, all British security officers.

If I was surprised to find so many Nepalis on a cruise liner in the Andaman Sea, they were even more surprised. There is nothing to beaming like to watch a fiery sun setting into a still sea reflecting mushroom-like limestone islands, and talk in Nepali about the faraway Himalayas.

Di Bahadur Thapa from Pokhara is a senior officer who has just completed his three-year term, and he said I was the first Nepali he'd had the pleasure of serving on this boat. Another senior officer, Lil Thapa, who is originally from Kathmandu, described to me how busy he is round the clock, responsible with the rest of the team for all aspects of security on board. It's hard work, but they seemed happy, earning a good living, travelling and serving as excellent roving ambassadors for Nepal. "After they talk to us, most guests tell us their next holiday will be in Nepal. There is tremendous goodwill for Nepal," Di Bahadur said. If there are people who deserve a medal for giving our country a good image and promoting Nepal, then these seven on board the Gemini Superstar are it. ♦

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Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Fortune cookies

Being a nation of chronic optimists, our jovial and carefree temperament makes us Nepalis able to overcome any adversity and confront all challenges that fate may have in store for us.

Luckily, we have astrology to help us in our ability to anticipate events and therefore psychologically prepare ourselves for any mischiefs that fate may have in store for us. The consultations, may have up their sleeves. Without this astrological Early Warning System we could very well be caught unaware as we go about our important task of national reconstruction.

For instance, if it wasn't for the Department of Astrology and Astrophysics at the Royal Nepal Academy of Sciences and Technology (RONAST), the under-ground comets would have been blissfully unaware that a planetary conjunction would favour a five-day national shutdown. It is our good fortune that Nepal's alert astrologers saw this coming, otherwise we may have squandered the banned days by inadvertently going to work.

For those of you who may have missed this news item in a Kathmandu daily last week about a conference that was convened precisely so we can predict the future even more accurately, I quote verbatim:

Crypticizing to stay Astrologers
Kathmandu April 17—Although astrology has carved a considerable niche among believers in Nepal and other places, sceptics still hound the scientific basis of the art of prediction. In order to protect astrology from vanishing, an association called 'Chinese-Tibetan Astrologers Academy' was established.

"Negative forces are decreasing the importance in our lives," said Astrologer Ganesh Bajaj Lama. At the inaugural session of the academy, astrologers practicing both Chinese-Tibetan and Indian astrology today called for the protection of both forms of astrology stating that they are facing a danger of disappearing.

Speaking at the conference, Dr Keshar Jung Rayamajhi, chairman of the Royal Council, said that astrology is especially necessary during times of crisis and expressed concern over the "abnormal condition" of the country at the present moment.

As far as I can tell, the good doctor is spot on. He has hit the bull right on its head in the bulls eye. There is no gazing that we have been deficient in the employment of the Chinese-Tibetan astrological techniques. It's time to find out which animal rules our year. As Mao said: "There is an animal that hides in all our hearts."

Year of the RAT: 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984. Makes a great underground leader, but basically a loner. Famous rats: Mick Jagger, Hulk Hogan, Zhou Enlai, Comrade Cloud.

Year of the OX: 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985. Please don't mind our saying so, but rather subborn in your ways.

Famous oxen: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Josef Stalin, Ferdinand Marcos, Comrade Swenson.

Year of the TIGER: 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986. Cunning, sharp-winded, a creature of the night and can turn into man-eater. Famous tigers: Roxanne Bar, Margaret Thatcher.

India Gandhi, Angha Neekalantan.
Year of the RABBIT: 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987. Opposite of tigers, but sure-footed and sensitive. Famous rabbits: Ben Kingsley, Roger Rabbit, Popeye.

Year of the DRAGON: 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988. Don't over-commit, or push yourself too hard. Admit that not everyone finds you attractive. Famous dragons: Empress Bokassa, Osama bin Laden, Queen Victoria, Puff.

Year of the SNAKE: 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989. Maintains a well-balanced diet and diller regularly. See a doctor if your venous count drops. Famous snakes: Frank Zappa, Che Guevara, Baby Doc.

Year of the HORSE: 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990. Others may think you don't have much upstairs, so think before you neigh. Surprise them with flashes of brilliance. Famous Horses: Vladimir Putin, Dr Keshar Jung Rayamajhi.

Year of the SHEEP: 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991. This is the year to stop following and start leading, but do you know where you are going? Famous sheeps: Johann Sebastian Bach, Engelbert Humperdinck, the Duke of York, Gwinda Raj Joshi.

Year of the MONKEY: 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992. Good at problem solving, can be too smart by half and this year stop scratching yourself in public. Famous monkeys: King Henry VIII, Mikhail Gorbachev, Rosanna Pisu, Pradyal, Taran of the Apes, Comrade Hanaman.

Year of the ROOSTER: 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993. Being an early bird, you tend to get the worm. But don't underestimate the advantage of business in this day and age. Famous roosters: Michelle Pfeiffer, Chicken Little, Cokool Sanders, Comrade Ginger.

Year of the DOG: 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994. This is an excellent year for romance, but partnerships may change. Lady Dogs should watch out for smooth talkers. Famous dogs: Ernest Hemmingway, Emma Thompson, Chazzyng.

Year of the BOAR: 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995. Although you may be scintillating company, boredom is your biggest challenge this year. Famous boars: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Zhao Ziyang, Napoleon, yours truly the Mad Hatter.

Year of the CAT: 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996. A creature of the night and can turn into man-eater. Famous tigers: Roxanne Bar, Margaret Thatcher.

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NEPALI SOCIETY

General dynamic

The Chief of Army Staff Prajwalva Sunshere Rana paused after pinning the first star on the shoulders of Dr Radha (Shah) KC, and said to her: "I am proud you've become a Brigadier General and made history." Hear, Hear, Radha then shared a glass of bubbly with other new generals—all of them men, except her. In fact, Gen KC has become the first-ever woman to earn stars in the Royal Nepal Army.

The career of Brigadier General Dr Radha, a paediatrician with the RNA, began with a scholarship to study medicine in 1968. She was the only woman among four Nepalis chosen to do so at the Armed Forces Medical College at Pune in India from where she graduated and joined service as a Lieutenant. She went on to become the first female Colonel, and two weeks ago the first Brigadier General.

Gen Radha says it has never been her intention to be the first in everything. "I just wanted to be a medical doctor," she told us. "But I also wanted to join the army because my father was an officer, and I liked its military orderliness and punctuality." The RNA does not have female soldiers, but women have served in the medical forces. There are now 25 female doctors and 40 nurses, some of whom currently serve in recently-set up field hospitals in different parts of the country. The RNA's legal wing also employs women. The only other army unit that has women is the paratroopers, where women fold up parachutes.

"There is talk about getting in more women as supporting forces," says Gen Radha. "I think

they can do well in the medical services, as engineers, in the legal departments, as Military Police, in signals and in other clerical jobs." Today, the army's women medics take up assignments in UN peacekeeping operations and have served in Sierra Leone, Lebanon and East Timor. Doing stints in field hospitals set up around the country is mandatory.

Radha's anaesthetist husband Dr Amrit KC was also among the Nepalis sent on scholarship to Pune in 1968. He retired as a Major, and Radha can't help quipping: "But he probably regrets his decision now." Dr Amrit is sitting nearby and nods, and says his job these days is to field congratulatory phone calls from friends and well-wishers. "That's all I have been doing all week," he says.

The doctor couple is happy, and they are clear about the reason for their success. "I made it because I got the opportunity to study," says Radha. "Most other Nepali women don't. This shows that women can all do better if only they get the chance." Their daughter is doing an MBA in Australia, and their son has just finished high school.

Gen Radha now joins seven other Brigadier Generals in the medical corps. This will be her last promotion—unless rumours are true that the RNA is considering having a Major General from the medical corps. All we can say is: "Salaam Jarsap!"



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