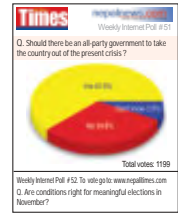




EXCLUSIVE

Bank accounts

Can a person's bank account details make newspaper headlines? Senior cabinet member Chiranjibi Wagle had his bank statements printed in the national media. Who is next? Girija Koirala, Madhav Nepal, anyone who has submitted property details? No one seems to have any doubts that Wagle has been up to hanky panky, but what about due process? Lawyers say that Rastra Bank officials can only order banks to divulge the privileged information to an investigating agency. So who looked? And why?



TOP CLASS
Show that makes past style.

Now Road
Tel: 245800

SARAD KC IN LIBANG

The remote mountain districts of western Nepal are food deficit even in normal times. But nine months of emergency and escalating violence have crippled food convoys, leading to severe undernourishment of hundreds of thousands of people. In addition, the marooned in western Nepal this year, and villagers who would otherwise have corn, potato, or millet this time of year have almost nothing to eat. Women and small children have already started showing signs of malnutrition. "We used to grow enough food to last six months, but with the drought and the food embargo, we may have nothing this year," says Ram Bahadur KC of Ramdi in Pyuthan. Locals traditionally migrate to India for work to feed their families, but fear of harassment by Indian police of Nepalis suspected of being Maoists is keeping them home. "But there is no food for us here," says Rekh Bahadur Pun of Pang in Rolpa. The security forces have been trying to stave out the rebels by restricting food going up the valleys, but that has had the opposite effect. Ordinary villagers are hungry, while the Maoists smuggle in supplies on secret jungle trails. A student at Sirjana Jyoti School in Gurchal told us: "The village has no food, but the Maoists eat rice, noodles, powder milk, biscuits." Worse, the student adds, militia regularly raid villages for the little food farmers have kept aside for the winter. Some local officials say hunger isn't that

Hunger for peace

When food is used as weapon, the innocent starve.

bad, and accuse the Maoists of propaganda. "They've felt the effect of the embargo, that is why they've asked the locals to take a shortage," Rolpa CDO Birendra Nath Sharma told us. But local representatives of the Nepal Congress and the UML say their constituents are on the verge of starvation due to the embargo and the drought together. The Nepal Food Corporation has shut down its godowns outside the district headquarters fearing Maoist raids. "We understand the hardship, but we can do little," says Rup Singh Bhandari, chief of the NFC's Nepalgunj office. The godowns are full, but there are no helicopters to take grain to remote districts. Mule transport to Kulu and Kalkoti has stopped after Maoists destroyed the suspension bridge on the Tila at Raraghat. There's been an exodus of villagers from the five districts of the Karnali Zone. "Everyone between the ages of 10 and 50 has left," says Deep Bahadur Shahi, former Kalkoti DDC chairman. "Women till the fields, but can't produce enough. Besides we have guests to feed," Shahi says, referring to Maoists. Security concerns for staff and the difficulty of working in insurgency areas is forcing donors in food for work programmes to re-evaluate their projects. The UN's World Food Programme and the German aid agency GTZ suspended programs in Jajarkot and Mugu in April after Maoists looted their food stores. The two are now trying to find ways to work directly with user groups to take food to the districts. "The situation isn't as bad as it is made out to be now, as there is something in the fields," Dietrich Stotz of GTZ's Integrated Food Security Project told us. "I expect bigger problems after December, when the people have eaten whatever they could grow."

HONDA
Creating pride and satisfaction in ownership of **My First Honda**

100 WTCB CLASS

Speaker Company Limited, Bhairahogi, Pokhara-2
Tel: 245800 Fax: 245801 Email: speaker@nepalitimes.com

Heads you win, tails we lose

BINOD BHATTARAI
The Election Commission's verdict on Tuesday may have given the Girija Prasad Koirala faction of the Nepal Congress the party flag and the tree symbol, but it wasn't much of a victory. After sitting on the dispute for four months, apparently deliberately, the EC came out with such a wishy-washy verdict that it evoked ridicule. And instead of resolving the dispute once and for all, so parties can now get down to serious campaigning, it has stretched the uncertainty by another week by allowing the Sher Bahadur Deuba faction to register a new party. In fact, the controversy will linger even after the elections, because the EC said that its decision was not final. Now, the real question is: what if the elections can't be held on 13 November? The Maoists have been picking off potential UML candidates in the districts one by one. "They have attacked some of our most popular cadres in the districts," the UML's Raghu Panta told us. "It has forced us to ask whether they are sincere about talks." The Maoists have killed over 65 UML workers. The Congress has lost more, and other political parties have also been targeted. According to the human rights group INSEC, the Maoists have so far killed 184 political workers. "As a believer in democracy I cannot say no to elections," says Hirdaya Ram Thani, former Congress MP from Sunkhes. "But I will be impossible to go beyond the district headquarters to canvass for votes if the security situation does not improve." Legally, after finalising the preliminaries, the EC needs 40 days to hold elections. But the security forces have said that they need at least six phases, possibly even as many as eight, which could stretch the elections over three months. And yet, as a senior minister told us, "Politics does not matter anymore. We've reached a stage where the security forces may be deciding how and when to hold elections." Last week police chief Pradip Shumshere Rana touched a raw nerve after articulating what security agencies thought was the ideal way to go. Based on an earlier assessment, that is, as a senior minister told us, "Phases to leave more time for the remaining 55. The uncertainty lingers, and in this scenario, the worst motives are ascribed to the king, irrespective of whether he decides to invoke Article 127 to try to take the country back to absolute monarchy, as some fear he might, or works with the government to devise a constitutional way out of the stalemate."



Sacks full of voter lists ready to be dispatched to the districts.

Corruption, coercion, or both?



A fortnight after former prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala linked the widening anti-corruption dragnet to a thickening plot to throttle dissent, we're still missing his larger point. The democracy-corruption link he brought up needs to be probed in its full depth if we are to enrich our understanding of both.

To be sure, Koirala is at an obvious disadvantage here. He's been prime minister the longest in our dozy years of democracy. Mention some of the sleaziest scandals of the period and his name just seems to pop up everywhere. Nepotism and favouritism are nouns most prominently associated with the country's most famous political surname. When Koirala castigates the government for covering the subtextual of the partyless decades, he draws the loudest cries. Those who recall

how he could have decimated the panches with the Malik Commission findings but didn't want to listen to his paans to perfection.

Before you come around to concluding that politics is too serious a matter to be left to politicians, you mustn't disregard one distinction. The current anti-corruption campaign is rooted in laws adopted by the very people we denounce as depraved. Koirala's prodemi-

nance probably entitles him to part of the credit.

Ridicule is something the ex-premier has confronted from the moment he described the success of the People's Movement as a victory for the panchas, too. As the Maoist insurgency was becoming bloodier, he regretted the decision to do away the panchayat or zonal commissioners. Earlier this year, he dismissed the Nepali Congress

If you think corruption is good reason to do away with democracy, think back to Nepal's three decades of corruption and coercion.

to our democratic struggle. Since only the living can be libelled, that part of history is as good as dead for purposes of the settling scores. The philosophical resonance of the inquiry persists. For today's political class, corruption has become a compulsion. In terms of conspicuous consumption, the panchas looked like saints because they could afford to. Austerity can be a clear disadvantage in a highly competitive arena. To prosper, politicians need to pander, please, plead, pressure and promise. The only thing that links those five, apart from the letter P, is self. Once you get this straight, it becomes easier to understand how people once considered paragons of probity could plunge so deep into debauchery. And once that's clear, you realize that being corrupt isn't being undemocratic.

There is anecdotal evidence in our part of the world suggesting that a populace tormented by political licentiousness is slow to recognize traits to personal liberties. The fact that the reactionary right considers this sufficient to strike at the heart of

the system reflects their disconnect with the public pulse. What they also overlook is the power of common cause in uniting the bitterest enemies. The "liberal panchas"—an oxymoron one would have thought—who detected how Kargensi and comrades started halting the system more than they did each other could easily secure their place in the Rastriya Prajantari Party.

A more instructive parallel goes back a generation. The Gorkha Parichad—billed as the party of the waning Ranas—was thought to be sworn to the Nepal Congress' annihilation. (Actually, its forerunner was the only non-sta party gunning for BP Koirala's life). When politicians were caught between submission, incarceration and exile, the main opposition party in the dissolved parliament cooperated and later merged with the Nepal Congress to fortify the struggle to restore democracy.

Even if the UML were to join hands with the Nepal Congress in a third movement to restore liberties, there's a scary side of history: three decades of corruption AND coercion. ♦

Goavari
LIVE WITH ANTIPUR FM
Now every Saturday & Sunday

Please help spark new hope for peace and justice!
CHARITY AUCTION
BICHALIT BARTAMAN
paintings by
Rajan Kaphle, Kiran Manandhar, KK Karmacharya, Uttam Kharal, Shankar Raj Singh Suwal, Sharada Man Shrestha, Nabindra Rajbhandari, Sudarshan Bikram Rana, Shobha Wagle, Umash Chandra Adhikari, Vijay Thapa, Krishna Manandhar, Shashi Shah, Shashikala Tiwari, Manish Shrestha, Pradeep Bajracharya, Erina Tamrakar, Sunil Sigdel, Durga Baral, Macha Maharjan
Bidding begins at Rs. 3,000

All proceeds from the auction will go directly to the families of seventeen innocent civilians in Diding District, who lost their lives to the violence of the insurgency and counterinsurgency.

Venue: Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited
Date and Time: September 22, 2002, 3:00-5:00 pm
Tea will be served.

Park Village
Rastriya Bank

Pushing drugs

Higher insurance rates
The Insurance Board has allowed insurance companies to raise some premiums to cover losses from sabotage and terrorism almost eight times. The coverage for damage caused by arson is Rs 0.50 for Rs 1,000 of the value of property insured, up from Rs 0.06 per Rs 1,000 of the insured value. The decision will be effective retrospectively from 17 July. The rates for insuring private vehicles and those used for public transport have also been raised by 0.25 percent and 0.50 percent of the insured estimated value. The Board approved increased premiums for storage and transport of cash and also introduced a rate for insuring engineering works.

On track, slowly
It was an all too familiar ending to the most recent talks held on railway operations in New Delhi last week: officials from Nepal and India agreed to a third round of meetings. The Nepal officials, who had been looking at making the railway from Kolkata to the Inland Container Depot in Birganj operational by September, have set themselves a November deadline. A full two years after the commencement of the ICD was completed. Officials said that the recent round of negotiations was helpful in sorting out matters like insuring cargo handling and documentation, but it remains to be decided how customs clearance will be handled. Nepal wants sealed containers to be allowed to the ICD without hassles on the border; India wants to look into the containers before sending them on. The operation of a broad gauge rail between the ICD and the port to Kolkata is estimated to bring transport costs down by 30-40 percent.

Rescuing RNAC
Another report on what should be done with Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RNAC) has been completed, and it repeats what has been said all along—the private sector is good at running airlines, so bring it in to manage the ailing flag carrier. The plan is to break the corporation up into two doing domestic and international operations and bring in private partners to run the foreign operations. The RNAC has already formed a committee to prepare an action plan to get the problem solved. The report says that RNAC's liabilities now stand at Rs 2.04 billion. The airline flies two Boeing 747s and about a dozen two-engine Twin Otters.

Trade woes
The trade numbers for 2001/02 are in—and we're not doing too well. According to customs data compiled by the Nepal Rastra Bank, exports tumbled by about 15 percent to Rs 47.54 billion, down from Rs 55.65 billion in the same year-earlier period. Imports were also slow, at Rs 106.11 billion in 2001-02, down from Rs 115.7 billion in 2000/01. Exports to India kept growing, but at a low 1.1 percent to Rs 28.8 billion, while imports from India grew by 0.5 percent to Rs 45.4 billion.

Not fueling the economy
The slow increase in the use of diesel has caused the consumption of diesel to fall by almost 12 percent. According to the Nepal Oil Corporation, diesel consumption in 2001/02 was 286,233 kilolitres, down from 326,979 kilolitres in 2000/01. Likewise, the use of aviation fuel has also dropped to 47,453 kilolitres down from 63,255 kilolitres in 2000/01. There is also a marked decline in the use of furnace oil by industries—down eight percent to 16,188 kilolitres, down from 19,810 kilolitres in 2000/01. There were increases in the sales of petrol, kerosene and liquefied petroleum gas.

“Figures look bad, but the fundamentals are sound.”

INTERVIEW
some increase in investment, if only of the short-term kind. Prices are still manageable, the exchange rate is stable, and the reserve position is still comfortable. The monetary aggregates have been hit by the recession, but are also stable. Fiscal imbalance is a chronic problem, but the deterioration was not very different from 2000/01. Revenue collection increased by three percent, reasonable when GDP is growing at less than 1 percent. Prices are up by less than 3 percent, and imports are down.

Where should we look for danger signs?
For stability, in the external sector. For the first time after 1995/96 we have a Balance of Payments (BOP) deficit of about 2.5 billion in 2001/02. A large BOP deficit can lead to reserves depletion and exchange rate speculation. This hasn't happened, simply because imports are down. We can't be satisfied about our low price situation; it could be suppressed somewhat, which would lead to the longer term affect domestic economic activity. A further slowdown in the domestic market could give a second blow to manufacturing, which has been hit by external shocks.

Third, agriculture cushioned us for most of the 1990s. It at least ensured food supply, so people could survive any hardship. Now agriculture may not be able to provide that cushion. The rains weren't on time, that could reduce paddy production, which is about a quarter of the agricultural GDP. In the case of other agricultural crops like wheat and vegetables, there's no incentive for farmers as we get cheap subsidised wheat and vegetables from India. We don't have subsidies here. If farmers' income does not rise, they cannot buy manufactured goods and services. This has domestic demand and slows the economy down further, pushing us deeper into recession. If agriculture can't provide the traditional cushioning, we may slip even further.

Has it been a bad fiscal year for Nepal: for the first time in the past 18 years, economic growth was less than one percent, both exports and imports have dropped, reserves have begun to erode, and the budget deficit has expanded by almost seven percent to Rs17.1 billion. We asked Yuba Raj Khattiwada, executive director of Nepal Rastra Bank's Research Department, about just where we stand.

Did the government contribute to this by over-borrowing and overspending?
The central bank has repeatedly cautioned the government on release of funds for development at the end of the fiscal year and in the first quarter of this year, too. The about Rs 4.5 billion overdraft could have been prevented if the government had not released funds towards the end of the fiscal year. There may have been political compulsions and security reasons, but the central bank warned the government beforehand about the fallout, the skewing of the budgetary balance. Development spending was down 16 percent in terms of cash, which could be proportional to foreign loan receipt. Foreign loan disbursement decreased last year, which means new projects were not implemented. If the money had come and been mobilised effectively, it could have improved the external sector in terms of capital inflow and the increased investment would have caused the production to grow, and the real sector would have gained.

How can we stop the economy from slipping further and overspending?
First, we need to expedite processing investment proposals in manufacturing and services—even if we have to be more flexible. If someone wants to come and invest even in this adverse situation we should give them easy entry. Next, we need to explore the trade and tourism potential in the Tibet market and think about trade based on re-exporting items. Just re-exporting tourism can have a multiplier effect in other sectors and raise demand. There are problems of governance, too. We are sometimes in situations where we can't use our resources already in the country because of delays and other interests interfering in decision-making. We need effective development. Having the elections on time has economic impact. An election will help reinvigorate into the economy, which can generate demand for domestic products. We're talking about Rs 4.5 billion entering the economy. It can also help raise business confidence and short-term investment. Of course, the present political conflict has to end.

Nepal's pharmaceutical makers have a 25 percent share of the Rs 6 billion local market for allopathic drugs, which is growing by 15 percent annually.

Some Rs 4 billion has been invested in Nepal's pharmaceutical industry, with individual investors putting anywhere between Rs 4 and Rs 200 million. A manufacturer told us that if you invest Rs 100 million and produce 25-30 medicines, you'd start seeing a profit within five years. The industry produces roughly 5,000 jobs directly, and indirect employment for another 15,000-20,000 people.

And yet, most pharmaceutical companies say that they are operating at 50 percent capacity because of marketing constraints. Of 35 factories registered at the Department of Drug Administration, only 24 are still manufacturing. Four companies shut down last year and the state-run Royal Drug Limited has been reporting losses.

The growing Nepali drug industry needs government monitoring.

Compulsion in the market is out there. The industry association of retailers and wholesalers has fixed commission at 15 percent on the products, but in reality it is free-for-all at individual retail outlets. Some Indian manufacturers have been selling their products at 10 percent and offering higher commissions.

Doctors and health workers are an important link in drug sales. Nepal producers say that the Indian companies have pampered them to such a degree that local producers cannot offer them competitive incentives. It's not unusual for doctors to get gifts and medicines on prescriptions, though medical ethics dictate that they should be using

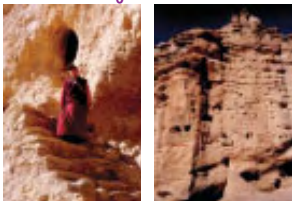
generic terms. Hospitals for their part charge exorbitant rates for medical store concoctions within their compounds. A drug vendor paying Rs 350,000 as rent at, say, the Teaching Hospital, will naturally try to sell the most expensive brand.

Compromising on quality to cut costs. Recently, a Department of Drug Administration (DDA) official at a public program organized by the association of drug manufacturers allocated 25 percent of drug supplies purchased from private manufacturers are counterfeit.

The WHO recently issued a set of manufacturing and staffing guidelines called Good Manufacturing Process. The DDA requires that all pharmaceutical companies obtain GMP by the end of this year. But a recent inspection of Nepali pharmaceutical companies by WHO representatives revealed that only four Nepali companies had been granted the GMP certification. Data from the department shows that 6,000 different brands made by three big brands and then purchased 5.5 billion tablets for an antibiotic for 42 Nepali markets. Prior to the introduction of GMP certification, 1,100 different foreign companies used to supply drugs to Nepal.

Cave-dwelling for beginners:

Inside Mustang's hidden mountains



Clockwise from left: village below Nyphu, monk at Nyphu gompa, cave at Nyphu, Nyphu gompa, suits along Charo Khola, northeast of Lo Manthang, Ear panel (page 1), Lori gompa

After returning to Lo Manthang, we left via the eastern route to seek out what is by far the most spectacular cave in Upper Mustang. We altered our route back to Jomsom so we could pass Rangjungnag, which sits in a valley east of the village of Samar. Inside, we found a set of chortens and "miraculous" carvings of deities that gave the place the appearance of having been a favoured site of pilgrims for generations. Mounds of *Khatas* were piled along the chortens, and the residue of countless candles ran down the cave walls. Much nearer to the Annapurna circuit, and thus more frequently visited, this cave has an arched, vaulted due to the graffiti left by visitors.

Approaching the cave site, we left our horses at the river in the upper and walked up the narrow valley leading to the cave. As we approached, we saw an old man, stooped and carrying a plastic jug, making the ascent ahead of us. Clinging up with him, we learnt that he was the caretaker. His dog came down to the river to fetch water in his jug, which we carried for him up the dwelling at the mouth of the cave.

A quick look was all we needed to see that we had arrived at a site of great religious devotion. The custodian told us on a package of large batteries for his flashlight, and our dog began. Despite his age and frailty, he became our dog as we started walking on the uneven, and at times slippery, floor of the cave. Guiding us up and behind the large central chorten, he pointed out figures in the cave wall that resembled the seven devities that, he told us, occurred naturally. A bit sceptical of this claim, we had to acknowledge the devotion of generations of pilgrims, whose offerings had carved the statues and the walls around them. We waved goodbye to our cave-dwelling host—he had spent more than three years tending the site—and began the long climb up and out of the valley to the main trail.

Our adventures in the caves were only a small part of the many wonderful experiences we had in Upper Mustang. Even in Nepal, not many places remain where you can experience the Himalaya without the outside world barging in. Whatever the cost of travelling to Lo Manthang, it is worth it. Sell your car, mortgage your house, but by all means go. You can always take up residence in one of Mustang's millions of tiny caves. ♦

After returning to Lo Manthang, we left via the eastern route to seek out what is by far the most spectacular cave in Upper Mustang. We altered our route back to Jomsom so we could pass Rangjungnag, which sits in a valley east of the village of Samar. Inside, we found a set of chortens and "miraculous" carvings of deities that gave the place the appearance of having been a favoured site of pilgrims for generations. Mounds of *Khatas* were piled along the chortens, and the residue of countless candles ran down the cave walls. Much nearer to the Annapurna circuit, and thus more frequently visited, this cave has an arched, vaulted due to the graffiti left by visitors.

GA DONOVAN

When I set out for Upper Mustang, I pictured myself in dark monasteries lit only with butter lamps, spinning to make out brilliant Buddhist frescos painted hundreds of years ago. But mostly I imagined wandering a landscape spotted with herds of yak and decorated with over-size chortens and giant prayer wheels. I would take in the awesome spectacle of the Trans-Himalaya, with its dramatic snow-capped peaks and stark high desert terrain, and I would spot all manner of endangered wildlife.

Finally in Lo Manthang in early September, I did all these things, and much, much more. Nomad families who still roam the moun-

tain with their heads invited us for tea in their tents. Fields of buckwheat blossoms painted bright whole swathes of Mustang a brilliant pinkish-purple. But when I found most attractive were the ruins left behind by ancient troglodytes.

Troglodytes? Needless to say, I was surprised to learn that a place I thought of as the land of yak-herding pastoralists had once been inhabited primarily by cave-dwellers. Carved into Mustang's cathedral-like cliffs are thousands and thousands of caves. These played a key part in the region's often-violent history, when they were used by monks to hide. Many still play important roles in the lives of contemporary residents, mostly as sites of religious devotion. As we learnt firsthand, exploring these caves is one of the highlights of a journey to Upper Mustang.

Our spelunking began in the village of Nyphu, about a four-hour walk up the valley leading northeast out of Lo Manthang. Dating back to the 14th century, Nyphu monastery's main hall, a wood-frame and mud construction painted a deep red, juts conspicuously out of the side of the mountain. The rest of the complex sprawls through several adjoining caves. As we climbed the steps outside the monastery, the sounds of chanting and drums beat gradually louder. The source of these sounds—a young monk of no more than twenty—did not look up. I alone mist a knot, as we entered the gompa. His colleague, a slightly younger monk, came forward to meet us.

After a look around the small, sparsely decorated main hall—which took barely a minute—the younger monk showed us to the abbot's quarters. The abbot inhabits a law room just off the main hall in what is really a small cave, barely high enough for us to

stand up in. The walls are black, coated with the smoke of years of burning yak butter lamps. Dozens of ancient *thankas*, equally darkened, hang around the room, the devils now nearly unrecognisable behind the red. The next day we left early for Lori, planning to return to Dhi late in the afternoon.

In the valley leading to Lori, geology has worked architectural wonders on the landscape, carving the mountains so that they resemble the ribs and plects of natural cathedrals. Lari Gompa came into sight below lunch. Nyphu monastery a splash of red stick in the middle of a sheer cliff, visible from the far side of the valley. Our guide quickly located the caretaker, an aged monk who lives in a house at the base of the mountain, and he came with the key to let us in.

Four small children accompanied the keyman. After the five of them led us up into the temple, out into a dark cave, they began to sing a prayer in Tibetan. When they were through, they showed us into the adjoining room that holds the famous chorten of Lari. We were not disappointed: the entire room is a fine art object. The paintings on both the walls and the chorten itself are well-preserved, even though reportedly dating back 500 years. Wild swirls of flowers on a dark background contrast with the chalk-white chorten and the many colourful painted deities surrounding it.

On the way out, the children held out open palms and asked for money. "Squeeze some skin," I said, offering my own palm and showing them how to slap it. They quickly caught on. "Skin" they screamed, slapping my hand in turn. "High five!" I answered back, teaching them how to slap hands in their. After a round of "high fives," we all scrambled down the rocky trail to the row of crumbling chortens at the foot of the hill, where we mounted our horses for the journey out of the valley, while they turned off to return to their small home situated below the monastery. They held up their palms one in

Kingdom within a kingdom

Why can't the rest of Nepal be like Mustang, asks a doctor just back from the trans-Himalaya.



Tractors have arrived in Mustang, can doctors be far behind? Women line-up for their medical exams at a health camp in Lo Manthang.

ARUNA UPRETI

Q: Do you know the name of present King of Nepal?

A: No.

Q: Do you know the name of Prime Minister of Nepal?

A: No.

Q: Do you know anything about the election that will take place soon in Nepal?

A: What election?

Of the 200 women we interviewed at health camps in Mustang recently, only two knew the answers to the above questions. And it is easy to see why this is the rate of Nepal

where there is no insurgency, no emergency, no checkpoints, no questions. Who am I, where am I going? No one remaining through my rucksack.

Having travelled through the Maoist heartland of the midwest earlier this year, I was used to these hassles. The security forces were suspicious of medical supplies, where was I taking the medicine? Who was I treating? Did I have a letter from the Ministry of Health?

But in Mustang, I was in the real Nepal of the old days: where you could travel freely, where people are not suspicious of strangers, and indeed welcome them into their homes. Maya Bista at Ghami coded for us, and wasn't sure we would

like her millet chapatis, but they were so delicious, they became our staple throughout our journey to Lo Manthang and back.

The nutritious food of the people of Mustang is one of the reasons for their good health. Millet, barley, potato, and milk are widely available, and rice now comes down from Tibet along the highway from the border to Lo Manthang. In comparison to far-west Nepal, very few of the women we treated suffered from malnutrition.

The other difference is that of the nearly 300 women examined. There wasn't a single case of prolapsed uterus, which is such a common affliction in the far-west. Successful childbearing, lack of resting during maternity, and hard

work has made prolapsed uterus an epidemic in the mountains of western Nepal. The medical problem is a direct result of the low social status of women there. Here in Mustang, the women had never heard of any such thing, and they had no word for it. One woman asked: "How can a woman survive, it is like having your heart or your intestine outside your body."

We were glad our hypothesis that women across the mountains of Nepal all suffer from prolapsed uterus was proven wrong. But the good health of women in Mustang is not due to health posts and hospitals—the level of medical neglect by the ministry in Kathmandu is as bad here as elsewhere in Nepal. No-

ness and the arid climate make it difficult to survive just on farming and livestock. That is why there has traditionally been out-migration, and this process has accelerated. In the village of Chitkang, nearly every young man or woman is either in Thailand or in Japan. Although this has brought remittances, little of that is going into village development. Locals invest in real estate in Pokhara or Kathmandu.

What is surprising is that despite the lack of health care and a district hospital that for days walk away, and medicines are generally not available, the public health problems are not as acute as elsewhere in Nepal.

On the flight back to Pokhara, we thought: why can't the rest of Nepal be like Mustang, at peace, full of hardworking and happy people and where women are treated equally with men.

Something to wish for as we celebrate another Mustang Festival this week. Let's go to Mustang and find out how they do it. ♦

(Dr Aruna Upreti is a woman's health activist.)

SUNLIGHT (P) LTD.
A multinational Nepal company, a technical collaboration with ITC Ltd. of India.

- Approved Patents
- Gas Nepal's Partner
- Gas Sky Light's perfect alternative to wood!
- A complete range of high quality aluminium kitchenware, tableware, appliances, flower vases, piggy banks, toys, etc.
- Stylish, elegant & innovative to modern household.
- Manufactured since 1965 for more than 35 years.
- Complete with international safety & stability standards.

Product Office, Pokhara 142
Tel: 032311 Fax: 032313 E-mail: info@sunlight.com.np

Spot the Real Ball
2 1/2 hrs to Mauritius!

LUCKY DRAW TODAY! (20th Sept. 2002)

Look for the Lucky Draw Winners on 22nd of September 2002 in all leading Newspapers.

All the participants with correct entries will be invited for the lucky draw through invitation letter.

- 1 Couple **Magnificent Mauritius** (6 nights / 7 days)
- 1 Couple **Thrilling Thailand** (4 nights / 5 days)
- 10 Couples **Pristine Pokhara** (2 nights / 3 days)

100% Preservation Free

No Artificial. Win for Real!

In Aceh, talks, violence, talks

Another round of talks between the Indonesian government and Aceh's separatist rebels of the Free Aceh Movement...

Wrong on rights

Malaysia - Caught between a rock and a hard place, Malaysia's Human Rights Commission, known as Suhakam, has been trying to win popular appeal by remaining independent...

Anti-poor

Foreigners often idealise Sweden's welfare state. But its economy has been losing jobs since 1990...

Advertisement for Organisation Development Centre (ODC) featuring an Open House Exhibition and a Managing Development Initiative in Nepal.

ANALYSIS

The problem with Sweden

Of the past two years, Western Europe's voters have been turning rightward. But as Europe's most recent parliamentary elections...

Opinion polls just a few months ago gave the Social Democrats 44 percent popular support. Together with the former Communists and the Greens, the left held a comfortable 12-15 percent lead over four non-socialist parties.

The immediate reason for Social Democracy's enduring appeal is foreign policy. In early 2001, Sweden held the EU presidency...

COMMENT

Designer demagogues

The world needs a Europe committed to internationalism, generous to its former colonies, and willing to absorb migrants and refugees.

A successful electoral platform in Europe today includes shunning out immigrants, especially poor or black ones, abandoning public education for 'cultural integration'...

In Denmark, the Danish People's Party, which received 12 percent of the vote in recent elections, similarly resists classification. Its program of slashing welfare benefits for immigrants is marketed as a 'defence of the welfare system' against interlopers.

Sweden won't join in Europe's rightist revival, but its love for the leftist welfare state may not be healthy.



gradual, so it fails to alarm voters, but Sweden notices it when they go abroad. One reason for this is the Swedish media: the world leader in tabloidism, with public expenditures claiming nearly 60 percent of GDP.

COMMENT

The Chinese challenge

The new European right twists liberal values to modernise chauvinism.

It is not revolutionary or violent. But modern does not mean moderate. The Danish People's Party is frank about its hate-list: 'who they betray, who transfer power from Denmark to Brussels, who agree with having a multiethnic society'.

Europeanisation stimulates nationalism, so the EU can never be safe from a rising right. Worse, in troubled times conventional Euro-politicians instinctively reach for consensus, cohabitation, and cosines. So now the mainstream is ignoring or assimilating the horrors, hoping to emasculate them by embracing them in government, or turning their votes. Europe is in for a spell of designing a demagogy that thrives on affluence or enmity. But domestic peace depends on mutual respect for cultural plurality, because Europe's changing demographic profile demands more open borders, not a gated continent, and the new right's inherent chauvinism is irreconcilable with the EU's survival and success.

China's domestic market is so huge, many companies have not turned their attention overseas. But they will soon be the most competitive original equipment manufacturers—producers of goods sold under other brand names—the

COMMENTARY

A new Asia

ISLAMABAD—Although Afghanistan has been the centre of gravity in the US-led war on terror...

China and Russia have quietly acquiesced to the build-up of a US military presence close to their border. Washington, in a reversal of past policy, officially declared the Muslim dissidents in Chechnya, under Russia, and Xinjiang (under China) as 'terrorist organisations'.



COMMENT

The Chinese challenge

Thirty-five years ago Joan Jackson-Swain Schreiber's Le-Daif America! (The American Challenge) claimed Europe was in danger of becoming a branch office for American multinationals. A decade later, Japan's rising commercial challenges seemed paramount. Now China makes people nervous.

China owes its growing dynamism partly to the central authorities' shrewd pursuit of well-timed and complementary development strategies. Less noticed than the 15-year process of gaining admission to the WTO had been the stabilisation of the currency, the renminbi (RMB), pegged to the Hong Kong dollar since 1997, when the territory reverted to Chinese rule.

China's domestic market is so huge, many companies have not turned their attention overseas. But they will soon be the most competitive original equipment manufacturers—producers of goods sold under other brand names—the

COMMENTARY

A new Asia

One year later, the political landscape is slowly taking clearer form.

Tajikistan, close to the Afghan border, according to a recent report in The Washington Times.

China and Russia have quietly acquiesced to the build-up of a US military presence close to their border. Washington, in a reversal of past policy, officially declared the Muslim dissidents in Chechnya, under Russia, and Xinjiang (under China) as 'terrorist organisations'.

During his recent visit to Beijing, US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage designated the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) a terrorist group.

The biggest change could be in economic cooperation, with countries in the region eyeing trade access to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean through Pakistan through a pacified Afghanistan.

India backed the Northern Alliance against the Taliban and now has military bases in Tajikistan and an agreement to help train the Tajik military. Iran has pledged \$550 million in aid to the Taliban, a promise reaffirmed by President Mohammad Khatami's visit to Kabul last week.

COMMENT

The Chinese challenge

The new European right twists liberal values to modernise chauvinism.

It is not revolutionary or violent. But modern does not mean moderate. The Danish People's Party is frank about its hate-list: 'who they betray, who transfer power from Denmark to Brussels, who agree with having a multiethnic society'.

Europeanisation stimulates nationalism, so the EU can never be safe from a rising right. Worse, in troubled times conventional Euro-politicians instinctively reach for consensus, cohabitation, and cosines. So now the mainstream is ignoring or assimilating the horrors, hoping to emasculate them by embracing them in government, or turning their votes. Europe is in for a spell of designing a demagogy that thrives on affluence or enmity. But domestic peace depends on mutual respect for cultural plurality, because Europe's changing demographic profile demands more open borders, not a gated continent, and the new right's inherent chauvinism is irreconcilable with the EU's survival and success.

China's domestic market is so huge, many companies have not turned their attention overseas. But they will soon be the most competitive original equipment manufacturers—producers of goods sold under other brand names—the

BY MUSHAHID HUSSAIN

Tibet update

Hopes that a meeting between an envoy for the Dalai Lama and a senior Tibetan government official could lead to a resumption of official contact between the quarrelling parties looked misplaced Monday, Leghcho said.

Turkey started looking east for the first time when it backed the Turkish-speaking Uzbek warlord, General Abdur Rashid Dostum, who spent the years of Taliban rule in exile in Istanbul.

Diplomatically, with relations between Moscow and Washington warming, the close camaraderie growing between Russia and China prior to 11 September has weakened, bringing into question the future of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

A series of moves this year, including an invitation for China to visit Beijing and Lhasa, the release of six Tibetan political prisoners, the visit to Lhasa in July of the Dalai Lama's older brother and two organised tours of Tibet for journalists, prompted speculation that the Chinese government might be reviewing its hardline stance against the Dalai Lama.

These conditions are not new, but his statement of them sounded as if China was staking out a negotiating position. Analysts say it may be a prelude to the re-opening of formal contacts between Beijing and the Dalai Lama, and point to another reason for his seeming thaw: China's President Jiang Zemin is due to visit the United States in October and meet President Bush.

BY KEMICHI OHMAE

The Chinese challenge

The new European right twists liberal values to modernise chauvinism.

It is not revolutionary or violent. But modern does not mean moderate. The Danish People's Party is frank about its hate-list: 'who they betray, who transfer power from Denmark to Brussels, who agree with having a multiethnic society'.

Europeanisation stimulates nationalism, so the EU can never be safe from a rising right. Worse, in troubled times conventional Euro-politicians instinctively reach for consensus, cohabitation, and cosines. So now the mainstream is ignoring or assimilating the horrors, hoping to emasculate them by embracing them in government, or turning their votes. Europe is in for a spell of designing a demagogy that thrives on affluence or enmity. But domestic peace depends on mutual respect for cultural plurality, because Europe's changing demographic profile demands more open borders, not a gated continent, and the new right's inherent chauvinism is irreconcilable with the EU's survival and success.

Advertisement for RUM DOODLE featuring succulent steaks and burgers, and contact information for Thamel, Rath-Poonje, Nepal.



Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Subcontinental drift

As some of you go about your daily lives observing bands by staying indoors to learn more about the reproductive habits of wombats on the National Geographic Channel, there are others who have to keep the vigil and guard this country's international borders so that at the end of everyday every square inch of Nepali territory is accounted for.

Just as the male wombat will sprinkle anointed water on termite hills on the perimeter of his

domain to mark out his territory, we too have to constantly guard ourselves against expansionist and hegemonic tendencies in the vicinity.

But, geologically speaking, this is a losing battle. For the past 65 million years, Nepal has been progressively squeezed between India and China, a fact that King Prithvi Narayan Shah recognized when he coined the phrase: "Nepal is a Bazooka Bubblegum between two large molars."

The result of the Indian plate pushing us relentlessly against the Eurasian plate is that we've had no recourse but to go up. This was fine as long as it gave us the highest mountains in the world which we could climb 15 times without artificial oxygen, without thermal underwear, and clad only in flip-flops, so that we could land ourselves regularly in the Guinness Book of World Records. But at the rate we are being pushed and shoved, in another couple of million years, Nepal will be flattened to a thin zigzag wall about 2,000 km long, 20 km high and a kilometre across at our widest point.

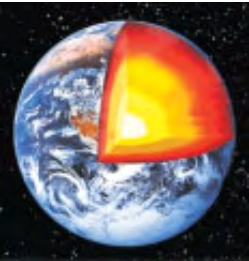
There are indications that this process is already underway. In Nawalparasi district, which geologists call the zone of the Main Boundary Thrust (MBT) and under which lie numerous geopolitical fault lines, border pillars have sometimes been known to move northwards by as much as 500 m in the course of one night. Nowhere else on the planet is continental drift happening at such a rapid pace.

It is due to these tectonic movements that

there are unconfirmed reports of the birthplace of the Buddha is creeping away from Kapilvastu, and at present time was located nearabout Orissa. Another millenia or so, and we will probably be told that the Buddha was actually born on what is now the Indian Zone on Antarctica.

The more sharp-witted among you may now be asking: a) what is he trying to get at?, and b) why doesn't he get to the point so we can all go home, and watch the mating habits of wombats on cable?

My thoughts exactly. But I can't let you go without this last message to our seemingly unconcerned authorities about the wild elephant menace in Jhapa district. Press reports say dozens of cross-border terrorists disguised as marauding wild elephants have been wreaking havoc along the Laxa of Control (LOC) plundering villages on the Nepal side. This calls for greater vigilance along both sides of our international frontier, that is if we can first find the border pillars. ♦



NEPALI SOCIETY

Ghana gourmet

Just over a year old and already a Lalitpur institution. The face and culinary brain of La'Soon Restaurant and Vinohque is forty-something Ghana-native Maria Zimmerman, who runs the restaurant with model-lawyer-entrepreneur Dolly Gurung.

Maria's a familiar, smiling face to Patansiders for whom La'Soon became something of a lifeline in what was then the dining wasteland of south Kathmandu. But many are still puzzled by one thing: what's a Ghanaian doing running a cult restaurant on Pulchowk?

In 1992, some ten years after she married her Swiss husband, who she met in her hometown Tamale, in northern Ghana, and had moved with him to Kenya and South Africa, Maria decided to give Asia a shot. A decade later, she's glad her children grew up here, her husband continues to build roads with the Swiss Development Corporation, and Maria's travelled all over the country, including going on a two-week trek to Lake Rara, on which she carried champagne. In addition, that is, to bring one of the best chefs and most energetic aerobics instructors in town.

The idea for La'Soon came when Maria realised that the massive parties she did every six months for her Nepali and expat friends always got rave reviews, not least for the food. So, in early 2001, she and Dolly decided that this side of the Bagmati needed some stirring up. Maria's love for feeding people until they drop happily away goes back a long


time. Back in Tamale, any time birthdays such as the prime minister, his entire cabinet and entourage visited, she was commandeered to put together a feast of northern Ghanaian food with perennial favourites like the nutty, melon seed-based egugui with meat or fish, palm butter soup, West African-style greens with black-eyed peas, and the polenta-like kuku made of a combination of yam, cassava or plantain. Sometimes, she says shaking her head, there were five or six hundred people.

"After I married Sepp, I started to play with other kinds of food," says Maria. Today, La'Soon hits that spot right between fancy dining and down home comfort

food with its Italian-, German-, and American-influenced dishes. Maria is the perfect restaurateur—solicitous, but not overbearing, willing to accommodate diners' tastes, but encouraging them to try new tastes. She's already got regulars habituated to Ghanaian peanut butter soup. Starting next week, there will be a West African chicken stew and some other surprises on the menu, so Kathmandu foodies can come back to life again. Between that and the African and Caribbean nights La'Soon organises, Valley residents finally have a place they can eat truly different food, look at contemporary Nepali art, and dance their hiking boots off. ♦



PHOTOGRAPH BY NINA



The Chimney
Garnished with love

At The Chimney, experience the fine art of dining and much more. Besides the international cuisine, the fine wines, the ambience and the royal history. It is also a perfect place to celebrate love. Introducing a new table d'hôte menu for a couple at Rs. 1500/-

For details & reservations contact: Great Services, Tel: 248999, extn: 2865

मूकटीमण्डप जाओ : काठमाडौं उत्सवमा रमाओ

काठमाडौं उत्सव २००२
आश्विन २ देखि ८ गतेसम्म मूकटीमण्डपमा

दर्शन आओ.... दर्शनको किमतेम, एउटै छानामुनि रोनेजन्ती.... खोनेजन्ती, त्यो पनि तपाईंकै दाममा

उत्सव विशेष आकर्षणहरू:

- ▶ लोकनृत्य एवं सांस्कृतिक प्रदर्शनहरू: उत्सवकाका सांस्कृतिक महत्व बोक्ने लोकनृत्य एवं फोकलहरूको निरन्तर प्रस्तुति ।
- ▶ **सीमा मित्रता** नृत्योत्सव कार्यक्रम: नेपाली आधुनिक पुराताका पप ब्याण्ड र गायक गायिकाहरूको मनमोहक म्यूजिक कन्सर्ट ।
- ▶ **उत्सव किट्स** कार्यक्रम: वास्तविकताहरूका लागि विभिन्न प्रतियोगिताहरूसहित मनमोहक वाद-खेलहरू ।
- ▶ **राज्यमा उत्सव फूड फेस्टिभल**: नेवारी, फस्टिभल र चाइनिज परिकारका स्वादिष्ट खानाहरूको अनुभव स्वाद ।

प्रदर्शनी प्रत्येक दिन विहान १० बजेदेखि ७ बजेसम्म हरदिन मनोरञ्जम: भरदिल मनोरञ्जम

Organized by: Everest Exhibitions The Event Managers
In Association with: San Riquel BEER
Sponsors: PEPSI, NE, htarak.com, Strite