







# Who will blink first in this tussle between the palace and the political parties?

ANALYSIS BY RAJENDRA DAHAL verything is on hold. The political parties are trying to remain united, while the palace tries to woo them away for a cabinet expansion. Distrust on both sides is high: the king wants to rescue Nepal from what he sees as a bunch of bunglers, senior political leaders see the danger of a return to the days of absolute monarchy.

Who will blink first? The fractious political parties have forged unprecedented unity to oppose the king's move, but they are still torn by mistrust. The Koirala Congress, for instance, has not allowed the Deuba Congress to participate in the all-party meetings, saying it is the only Congress.
Koirala wants parliament to be reinstated, since it would mean his party would probably reunite, and he'd call the shots again. The leftist Nepal Workers' and Peasants' Party and the United People's Front are with the Congress on this because they would get their seats back.

But the UML, which would not benefit from reinstatement, is sticking to its demand

Do you approve of King Gyanendra's decision of

for the formation of an interim government under Article 128 of the constitution, in which it would be an equal partner. The political parties are so caught up in ensuring their own existence, they have no time to think about the nation, people, democracy, constitution, or elections. Unless the emergency is reinstated, or there is a crackdown on press freedom (a proposal in the first cabinet meeting last week to this effect was reportedly rejected), it is unlikely the political parties will find common cause.

The king poached Lokendra Bahadur Chand from the centre-right RPP and Badri Prasad Mandal from the tarai-based Sadbhavana Party for the interim cabinet, and both parties are expected to go over to the king's side sooner or later. By bringing in a pro-madhesi Mandal and janajati leader Gore Bahadur Khanangi, the king may have tried to coopt them, but this move is fraught with the dangers of communalism

Ten days after the nine-member interim government was formed, the cabinet has met only twice. To get going, it needs clarity on its



ila Mani Pokhrel (in white cap), Arnik Sherchan, Chitra Bahadur KC, Pari Thapa. Nepal Workers' Peasants' Party. Narayan Man Bijukchhe, haityaraj Shakya. Nepali Congress Ramsharan Mahat, Krishna Sitaula, Govinda Raj Joshi, Arjun Narsingh KC, girija Koirala, Sushil Koirala, hakra Bastola UML: Subhas Nemwang, Ishwar Pokhrel, Madhav Kumar Nepal, Bharat Mohan Adhikari, K P Oli, Yubaraj Karki. RPP. Prakad handra Lohani, Surya Bahadur Thapa, Rabindra Nath Sharma. Sadbhavana Party: Hridesh Tripathy.

terms of reference in trying to fulfil the king's mandate: ensuring peace and security, streamlining bureaucracy, controlling corruption, delivering services, and preparing for elections. There are questions about who is really in charge. Chand, who's been in this post three times before, is called a "non-starter" prime minister. There are already jokes about "OK-endra Bahadur Chand".

Suddenly, no one is talking about elections. The political parties seem secretly relieved at their postponement, and the interim government has passed the buck to the parties. Only the donors and India still seem keen on

polls. That India waited ten days to officially greet the prime minister is taken as a sign that New Delhi had misgivings. Indian Information Minister Sushma Swaraj underlined her country's support Wednesday for a constitu-

tional monarchy and multiparty demogracy. King Gyanendra is keeping his cards close to his chest. Is the palace conducting behindthe-scenes bargaining with the Manists? Will they agree on a constituent assembly in exchange for berths for Maoist représentatives in the interim cabinet? The king's cabinet appointees have been remarkably soft on the Maoists, never using the "t" word, addressthat the insurgency needs a political solution

If there are secret contacts, we can expect an escalation of violence near the Maoists' 11-13 November strike as the rebels try to improve their bargaining position. The military would like to exert more pressure on Maoist strongholds, but there are no signs of the promised rifles, helicopters and transport aircraft from abroad.

Does the king really have a trump card, or not? Either way, we'll know by December •

KUNDA DIXIT

Major Mohan Khatri had a bright future in the Royal Nepal Army. But he found military life too confining, its hierarchy rigid, and many of its methods dubious. So, after a two-year officer's training at the US military academy in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and another three years with the Nepali contingent of UN peackeepers in southern Lebanon, Major Khatri took early retirement to work on his dream project: a tourist lodge in the

It took him over a year to find the right place; a south-facing slope on a ridge at 2,800 m on the Jiri highway with a great view of the Jugal Himal range to the north, and scented pine forests all around. He took a bank loan and began construction of

The resort was completed in 1997, and was a popular stopover for many trekkers taking the Jiri route to Lukla. When the Khimti hydroelectric project was started, the lodge became the preferred R&R site for Norwegian and Finnish engineers working on construction. Being from the cavalry, the major loved to ride and take care of horses, and for good luck called his Indae Horseshoe Resort

But Mohan Khatri's luck ran out on the night of 24 October when a group of armed Maoists came up to the hotel while he was having dinner dragged him outside, shot him, and slashed him with khukuris. His body lay in the undergrowth on a slope below the hotel till the afternoon of the next day, before the army arrived from Barabise.

Reporters who visited Mude three days after the event said employee

were still too shocked to speak. Salii I ama worked at the hotel, and her face showed a mixture of terror and sadness. When Mude villagers come running up in a croup to see who the recorters were, her face went pale with fear.

The villagers are devastated. The 45-year-old major was a benefactor: not only did the hotel provide employment, but he had helped renovate three schools in the area and given 35 girl students scholarships. He was working on an ambitious project to establish a well-equipped health post with a maternity ward which was going to be inaugurated after Tihar. The villagers can't think who will complete the hospital and

An ex-army major who tried to stay clear of both the Maoists and the military is brutally murdered. 

Khatri was aware of the dangers, and Maoists came around to force him to pay a "revolutionary tax". He was careful to steer a neutral path between the Maoists and plainclothes army patrols who roamed the mountains. He didn't get involved in politics, and thought that his charity work and his popularity with the villagers would protect him.

After killing him, the attackers set two hotel vans on fire. These were vehicles Khatri

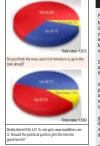
had used many times as ambulances to ferry sick villagers to hospital in Kathmandu. Caretaker Tilak Shrestha says that after killing the major, the attackers ransacked the rooms of the resort, looking for weapons. They found it hard to believe that there were none. Shrestha was repeatedly threat-ened, but they finally concluded that the major didn't keep guns. Ther they took all the money from the cash register, a tape recorder and also come cassettes. The major's wife, Krishna Kamal, was in the kitchen wher

her husband was attacked. ner husband was attacxex.

Man Bahadvut Lama sold Khatri the land for the hotel. He says he had warned the major that he may be in danger because of his army connection. But Khatri told him: "Man Bahadut, don't worry about me. Take care of yourself, be safe." Villagers suspected local Maoists could have blamed the major for passing information to the army that led to the raid earlier this year on a Maoist hideout on Sailung, two days away

from Mude, in which a dozen guerrillas were killed. Major Khatri (right) with his wife and daughter in Mlude. In an email to a find a few months before he was killed, Mohan knatri appeared to be aware that things were getting dangerous. He

wrote: "In the kuna kapchas of our country where the majority of the neglected, exploited and oppressed villagers are living, there is no lessening of support for the maobadis, there is no government, and there is no alternative for the people. They have nothing to lose. Keeping aside the morality and the methods of the *maobadis*, they seem to offer the only hope. I am keeping myself busy with the construction of our rural health centre...the villagers' support keeps me going...'









# COMMON SENSE IN JNCOMMON TIMES

I hat will it take for the elected national leaders of our six parliamentary parties to finally grasp that they had their chance, they had 12 years to show they could do it, and they goofed. Not once, but repeatedly,

They failed the people who voted for them, they failed the nation, and they failed their own grassroots cadre who were laying the foundations of democracy across the country. In contrast, the village leaders from these parties were mostly honest and accountable. They are the ones who are presently being brutally slaughtered by the hundreds for their political beliefs

Their bosses here in Kathmandu lost track long ago of what it is was they were supposed to be fighting for. And after more than a decade of abuse, they still need to invoke "democracy" so that they can get back to plundering the country. Or is this hollow bravado just to try to save their own skins while the CIAA cracks down?

Right through Dasain and this week, they have been splitting hairs about the constitutionality of King Gyanendra's action. So inert are they to the people's sentiments that it still hasn't sunk in that most

Nepalis have given up on them.

UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal gave a speech in Dharan on Tuesday in which he said the Nepali people had lived through the Rana regime and the Panchavat, and they would reject a sham democracy. Umm, was he speaking of the last twelve years? And when we hear top leaders of both factions of the Nepali Congress talk of "defending democracy" there is a collective urge to throw up

Here is a country that is teetering on the edge, and all they can think of is to try and position themselves to be the incumbent when next elections are held. Here we are about to be run over by a militant group intent on overthrowing parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy, and we can't unite against that common threat.

Is that because they can now blame someone else for their shortcomings, and use the king as a lightning rod to deflect criticism away from their own failures? Leave this pointless debate on Article 128 to the lawyers, gentlemen, just use your political common sense. To be sure, the king's gambit is a risky one. If he had expected the prime minister to resign when he told him to, and the political parties to fall in line, then he miscalculated. And right there is a timely reminder for his advisers: this is not 1960, nor is it 1980. Don't even

The constitutional monarchy as a symbol of our nationhood must remain above the fray. Only then can it bring errant parties into line like it is doing now. A rift between these two forces will only benefit those who don't believe in either. The monarch needs the mechanism of political parties to go to the people, he must not try to do it alone.

Some of the King Gyanendra's appointees to the interim cabinet may lack a certain oomph, but he definitely did not miscalculate the national mood. The mood is for peace, stability and development, And that can only come about through a dramatic move towards radical reform in the social, economic and cultural spheres. The current crisis is a result of the inability of the political parties and the Panchavat before that to deliver these reforms.

Once we recognise this failure and neglect, we act to correct them so that the system can muster the capacity to heal itself.

STATE OF THE STATE

SUGA (Mahottari District)—Officially

the district headquarters of Mahottari is a

town, but it retains all the characteristics of

# Borderline geopolitics

Can an executive king also be a constitutional monarch?

a village, including a hyperactive bush since a pilgrimage to Sita's birthplace is a telegraph. Nothing can happen in Jaleshwar part of every devout Hindu's itinerary.

without everybody in the outskirts coming Indian diplomats, in particular, have to know of it the very next morning. In the always delighted in the warm hospitality of middle of Dasain holidays, the officiating a town that considers itself the cultural capital of Mithila, a transborder culture Indian envoy in Kathmandu was here, and that has linguistic links in both Nepal and the village was already buzzing with the news. People speculated about the Bihar. People of this region have to rely on intended numose of his visit each other's physical infrastructure so much that roads on both sides of the international The only appointment the senior border repeatedly cropped up during

diplomat seem to have had was to hand over some books to a private school According to local papers, Mr Ashok Kumar said that his three-day visit to Janakpur and Jaleshwar was purely

the Janakapur intelligentsia. The transport problem has become even more acute these days as the roads in to Nepalis. personal. There is no reason to doubt this. Bihar are in ruins, while much of Mahottari However, whether New Delhi and Dhanusha on our side have no roads at all. Even after fifty years of planned welfare of Biharis is an altogether development, residents of western Mahottari have to travel while the centre suffers from high blood through India to reach

their own district headquarters. Most of the vehicles plying on the dilapidated Bhittamod-Sursand Road in Bihar display distinctive red Nepali plates with

Devnagari numerals Meanwhile, if the Parikrama Sadak and Hulaki Road were built, the trend would perhaps reverse. No one in their right mind would like to travel on Ribari roads if they can help it. The local unit of the Sadbhavana Party in Janakapur informal talks that the diplomat had with told the visiting diplomat that the condition of Indian roads are of as much economic interest to Biharis as they are

> bureaucrats care any more about the different story. Anaemia at the periphery

It's difficult to believe, though, that a late dispatch from Lainchaur was the sole reason for the delay in getting a diplomatic message that is considered an official high-five from big brother. The ilence from New Delhi had become particularly

Bali blast

pressure is the development reality in

the Indian envoy's holiday here have

Behari Vaipavee took in sending his

congratulatory messages to the king's

appointee, Lokendra Bahadur Chand's

bureaucratic procrastinators, the delay

could have been perfectly routine. After

all, it took our own Shital Niwas nearly

two weeks to draft a condolence message

glaring because of the

speed with which the

Chinese congratulated

Minister-in-Chief Chand.

The cynical specula-

tion this triggered in our

conspiracy-ridden

For those who know South Asia's

to Megawati Sukarnoputri for the

anything to do with the time that Atal

Still, I had a nagging suspicion: did

both India and Nepal.

In all probability, New Delhi too was directly briefed at the highest levels prior to the dismissal of Sher Bahadur Deuba. The reason king chose not see the officiating Indian envoy was perhaps because the designated ambassador hadn't vet arrived. King Gyanendra is said to be a stickler for protocol, and had there been an accredite Indian ambassador it's quite unlikely that

The rumour that Indians were neeved at being ignored and were merely showing convincing Ashok Kumar wasn't in

So, why the delay? Was there some geopolitical give-and-take before the cautiously-worded message to Chand came? We will know sooner or later, just like we knew sooner or later about Kalapani, Mahakali, or the new draft

in tarai, worthy of weekend breaks for more diplomats from Kathmandu. Ideal the Mithila festival of Chhath (9-10 November) celebrated on both sides of the border.

circles was that New Delhi had been holding out for some concessions before sending what should have been a routine message. But the doctrine of reciprocity in dealing with neighbouring countriesregardless of the history of proximity in al aspects of life—is too deeply ingrained in the minds of South Block diplomats.

Not that recognising Lokendra Bahadur by neighbouring governments matters all that much. His cabinet is composed of royal appointees, and it's merely an extension of the executive arm of the king without any locus standi under the 1990 constitution. Even though it wasn't said so in so many words, the king temporarily suspended the constitution for all practical purposes as soon as he assumed executive powers. Can an executive king also be a constitutional monarch? That question is now academic.

In the resulting constitutional void foreign governments have no option other than dealing with appointees of the king, whoever they may be. It is this stark reality that must have emerged when the American and Chinese ambas sadors had an audience with the king on 4

the king wouldn't have seen him.

their displeasure by withholding the routine diplomatic message doesn't look to be too Janakour to sulk

Until then it's a halmy autumn here time to visit: Tihar (3-6 November) and LETTERS

S Lamichane, Kathmandu

Congratulations for drawing once

again the attention of concerned

authorities about visa practice of

Nepal ("If we want tourists, scrap

visa fees", #113). But the logic of

scrapping visa fees to boost

tourism may not help much. It is

just a popular local perspective

and may not be instrumental to

boost the number of tourists.

have never met a tourist who

plans their holiday after checking

the degree of visa fees. The real

solution of the problem lies in the

simplification of visa process and

kind of visa, as Yogendra Shakya

correctly states in the article. An

would be: a) to simplify the visa

airport, as well as b) redefine the

kinds of visa by just single, double

and multiple entry visa, independ-

ent to the frequency of visit. We

Ram Pratap Thapa

Coloane

Friendship Association

need to just do it.

TRAFFIC BLUES

Thanks to Andrew Bunbury in

being so bold to write about

"Driven to distraction" (#115) for

completely chaotic driving rules in

develop a computer game simulat-

ing driving around the streets of

Sony or Microsoft I dronned the

I can provide some technical

assistance to mathematically

idea, but if somebody is interested

simulate a bull sitting in the middle

help simulate a bus driver talking to

his fellow comrade on the opposite

side, completely ignoring the fact

that traffic is backing up behind.

Driving around Ring Road would

be Level 1 and driving in New

Road would be I evel 10. The

lane and its effect on traffic. Or

At one time, I was motivated to

nmandu and marketing it with

instant recipe for the problem

application procedure at the

protest the royal move. Why? People are fed up of corrupt one to take Nepal out of the dark politicians. And they know that if the same thieves come back to power, they will be betrayed again like in the past. The king has promised to don't know however, is that the emain a constitutional monarch. He knows that the people want peace and security more than anything else so that political stability will bring economic progress. He had no choice, and

SELF-DESTRUCTING

King G's decision is a positive

("King G does it", NT Online) as

nows. What Nepal's politicians

people are so fed up with them

that the time will soon come

court". I am a true-hearted

when they will all he rounded

up and tried in a true "people's

democrat, but I think the king's

ntentions mean more than the

empty promises of our so-called

"democrats". King Gyanendra is

a well-meaning monarch, Nepali

politicians are not. The king has

people, the politicians only wish

Coming from an ex-Maoist

self-destruction

those who have been victim of

terrorism and tired of seeing the

The situation was so bad

that people preferred the safety

and security of the Panchayat

system. Political parties should

realise that they can't blame

anyone but themselves. They

streets to throw out the

mess-they were celebrating

no matter who said what.

commander, Puskar Gautam may

Jack Prasai. Cape Town

the genuine support of the

any well-wisher of Nepal

Either way, the constitution was in trouble Now is the time again for political parties to show their commitment to the people and bring the country back to normal. They have to yow that they will not play with the norms of the constitution and norms of democracy

time to argue about legality

Basu Shrestha Arlington, USA

know what he is talking about in "Fight to the finish" (#115). But if · Your editorial "The king and us" (#115) is one of the most his quotes from Chairman Mao are accurate, then the mentor of balanced analyses I have yet Nepal's "Maoists" contradicted seen in the Nepali press about His himself by first saving "that the Majesty's 4 October take over of decisive factor in any war is executive powers. It is easy to be public support, not weapons black and white about this decision. To say: it was an and soldiers" (fifth paragraph from the bottom) and then "Mao undemocratic move if you are a Zedong said that the people do democrat or to say that it was not exist without the army 100 percent correct, if you are (second last paragraph). It's just this kind of muddle-headedness But the reality lies somewhere

in between. His Maiesty had no that is making the comrades take the country on a path of choice, as you point out. He had to save the country, and his throne. Colonel BB Rai, Hong Kong The politicians had messed things up with their corruption and · When King Gyanendra took disunity, and this was endangering

over the executive power for sometime and fired an "incom-However, where the royalists petent" prime minister, most are wrong is to think that absolute politicians and affiliated people monarchy is the answer. We tried were shocked. But on the other it for thirty years and it didn't usher hand those people who have in development. Everything was been dragged to vote several so centralised (even corruption) times during 12 years, those that nothing moved. The king was who had seen confrontation surrounded by sycophants, the between parties and politicians press was strictly controlled. pressure started building up, and those who had seen prime by 1990 it got bad enough for the lid to come off. ministers who dissolved cabinet like a dollhouse, those who had No, the answer to our polity seen corruption at all levels, and

lies in finding the right balance to make democracy work better. The politicians are crying themselves hoarse saving the king's move is not democractic. But neither were they for 12 years. In fact, they made a mockery of democracy by using the system as an excuse to

should also realise that this is a game will also allow selecting smack on their face not doing different vehicles: three-wheeler their job properly. Deuba may rickshaw motorbike microbus It will also have so called "God" tent" prime minister, but he was only following the example of his incompetent predecessors The neonle came out on the

Democracy is too precious to crooks, the king needs to rescue it, reinstate it and install the checks and balances so that multiparty democracy begins to produce the results that will pull the rug from under the feet of the Maoists. And that is what this interim government should be immediately trying to do. And instead of sulking, the political parties should extend the king all the help they can.

> chance of being caught by traffic nedestrians run over and vehicles hit. The traffic police can use this computer game as part of a compulsory exam for all new drivers and provide the driver's license based on the score of the game. This computer game, I'm sure, would sell better than Quake or Doom. If Nepali Times doesn't

stop provoking me with articles like these, I'll drop my PhD and

computer game.

around Kathmandu without any

concentrate on developing this Rajat Rajbhandari Interdisciplinary Program in Transportation New Jersey Institute of Technology, USA

LINDER MY HAT Loved Kunda Dixit's "Recently declassified ads" (#115). Some one should alert I ee Kuan Yew to the item: "Country For Rent". I was also intrigued by the web site for idol thieves www.godrobbers.gov. The fact that the URL ends only in "gov" implies that it is a US website.

Maybe Dixit meant "gov.np"? Or

maybe we should wait for a new domain name: "god.np". S Peters, Kathmandu

. I am writing to apply for the post of Chief Executive Joker announced by Kunda Dixit in "Recently de-classified ads". have been serving as the Editor-in-chief of The Sinking Nepal, for the last two months.

Politically, I am "untainted" and I have no intention of running the next election. I have been "laathicharged" by the "sasastra fulish" only once and have served two days in jail for deriding a police officer. I know how to caricature most of the prominent leaders of Nepal like Girijababu, Makune, Deuba, and even Chand-ii. If selected for this prestigious job. I will do everything possible to ameliorate the quality of humour in your paper. References can be taken from my employer in The

iMisunderstood poetî.



# BY A CAR IS GREATER THAN BFING BLOWN UP BY A BOMB"

I am a budget traveller who likes taking pictures, getting good deals, and avoiding too many other tourists. In my experience, visiting troubled lands means more vacancies in hotels and better deals The downside is the inconvenience such as strikes that limit transportation in the city and often the impossibility of getting to distant locations by air.

The following is not a political comment. But it is what happened. I have been in Cambodia and Madagascar during factional fighting/general strikes. In both case it was armed representatives of the state who extorted me, not any terrorists, Also in Indian metropolises after "communal violence". There, even the most violent Muslim and Hindu factions could care less about me. I might as well have been part of the scenery. Cops and soldiers were sometimes a mild headache (curiously not in Srinagar though).

The news always shows the worst risk. In Phnom Penh and Tana I called or emailed home to tell family that I was OK. For example if there are tanks in the street, does that mean in YOUR part of

town? So my guess is that: 1 Kathmandu is still hasically safe

2. The likelihood of getting hit by a car is greater than being blown up by a bomb. 3. The major problems will be transportation-

related. 4. The most likely hassle will be the government

not allowing foreigners to enter (or confiscating video camcorders) if the situation gets really dicey Politically I am libertarian and don't listen to anybody's admonitions that I visit or not visit (whether they are Manists Monists narliaments kings or potentates). I go wherever I want to go and

I don't even listen to my own Embassy. Posted on soc.culture.nepal by iMariani

In "Who's Next" (From the Nepali Press, #115), Jit Bahadur Ariel should have been identified as belonging to the Nepal Intellectual's



lack family support and access

in the new law is that while it

provisions for improving access

to safe abortions. The new law

time limit for a woman to have

that's just not enough time for

a rural woman who has to first

make a tough choice, nearly

always with no counselling o

professional advice, and then

take time out to travel else-

where, funds permitting, to

have the procedure. "The

proportion of women ap-

proaching unqualified practi-

tioners and outflow to India for

abortion is not likely to drop

Tamang, director of CREHPA.

In order to make safe

abortion services more easily

available, the new law allows

health post levels to perform

abortions A 12-week time

period is fixed as the safest

period within which to have an

abortion, and the technique is

relatively simple. Activists like

Tamang are satisfied with this

provision, but caution that it

needs to be revised in about

overall improvement in health

The majority of women in

facilities, says Tamang, will

urban areas seeking abortion

wanted and mistimed pregnan

cies. A CREHPA survey shows

reported dealing with clients

for whom contraception had

failed and nearly three-fourth

reported receiving clients with

The law was also put into

place before the Ministry of Health could draft a new

abortion policy. One of the

most critical issues that will be

addressed in the draft policy,

consultations for which will

begin next month, is pricing

One impact of the legalisation

of abortion is expected to be a

drop in the cost of the proce-

dure Refore legalisation an

abortion in the first trimester

used to cost Rs 7000 to Rs

10 000 The CREHPA 2000

nercent of urban-based medical

practitioners expected the cost

legalised, while 38 thought it

would "only to some extent"

Monitoring abortion

Medical practitioners fear that

Nepal will see a spurt of sex-

selective abortion. According

percent of the surveyed doctors

said sex selective abortion will

increase "to a large extent". •

Mandala House

Delivering Applicated

to the CREHPA survey, 36

practices will be another

difficult legal challenge.

survey found that the 52.5

to drop if abortion were

services are those with un-

that almost 43 percent of

private medical outlets

unwanted pregnancies.

likely allow for the change.

five years to the WHO

standard of 20 weeks. The

trained health workers at

immediately, " says Anand

fixes 12 weeks as the upper

a legal abortion, but often

does not actually make

facilities. The other glaring omission

# Now to implement it...



knowledge means that women

will continue to be victimised.

An FWLD study report made

damming about the unbending

attitude of the court judges all

over Nepal towards women

facing abortion charges. The

percent of women facing

the charge of abortion.

worry in private that the

study, which covers the period

from 1997-1999, found that 68

abortion charges were convicted

In 1997 one in five women in

Nepal's jails is incarcerated on

Reproductive rights activists

public earlier this year is

HEMLATA RAI that the hard part begins nowersistent advocacy efforts

by women's reproductive Unsafe abortion is identified as a rights and health major killer of women of activists have finally paid reproductive age in Nepaloff. The first hard-won results of studies say that as many as six their intense lobbying came this women die everyday due to March, when parliament approved the 11th Amendment abortion-related complications. "Knowledge travels very to the Muluki Ain, which for the

first time in Nepal legalised abortion, if conditionally. Last abortion is legal in certain month, the Bill finally became an Act after receiving the royal seal. But legalising abortion in some situations is not an end in itself. Public health workers say

slowly here. Even court judges don't know, at the moment, that situations." says Sabin Shrestha. an advocate associated with Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD). Shrestha and others fear that this lack of

would be responsible for enforcing the legislation. The new law does nothing for women currently in custody on abortion charges, "The present law fails to decriminalise those already in legal custody." says Shrestha. The law is completely silent about releasing those already convicted, and

government doesn't seem

interested in actually making the

new regulations effective. In a

2000 survey by the Centre for

(CREHPA), 93 percent of urban

medical practitioners surveyed

believed that legalising abortion

would reduce unsafe abortion-

related maternal morbidity and

medical opinion didn't prevent

the government machinery from

slowing down alarmingly over

the changing of this Bill into

law. Traditionally, a bill gets

DC, Kavre, on 16 September. Sapkota was beheaded near his home by

In Kushadevi village, along a rutted track just outside Panauti, what

should be a prosperous community huddles in fear and anticipation. A local

chairman Krishna Prasad Sapkota of the UML a few months aback. He was

one of those few, one of the last probably, who stood up to oppose Maoist

influence in his village. He was beheaded at midnight during the last Negal

bandh. Now his village waits for the next visit by those demanding money

official talks volubly and anonymously about the death of Ryale VDC

carrying his head in a plastic bag, as the rest of the body is borne on a

talk to strangers about Maoists. The most expansive response to our

queries was a finger swirled in the air, meaning "they're all around".

ists on the night of 15 September. The photo shows a mourner, at left

mortality. But even strong

Research on Environment

Health and Population

crimes, women already con victed of abortion can only be relieved by a royal pardon on the recommendation of the cabinet. Those under trial can have their cases withdrawn by the court, again following a cabinet recommendation.

The women serving time aren't really in a position to demand that their situation be reviewed. A study by the USbased Centre for Reproductive Law and Policy with FWLD found that a majority of women on trial or in prison for abortion had no legal representation, and 60 percent of them never even

# What the law says

The new law on abortion has

government doesn't seem too

keen on making it work fast.

many gaps, and the

immediate approval from the

palace following approval from

parliament. But the amendment

to the Civil Code that legalised

abortion had to wait six months

to get the royal approval. And in

that time, virtually nothing was

done to educate the general

public or even the bodies that

are considered by reproductive health and women's rights activists to be more liberal than those in other South Asian countries. Abortion

- Up to 12 weeks for any woman
- Up to 18 weeks of gestation if the pregnancy results from rape or
- . At any time during pregnancy, with the recommendation of an authorised medical practitioner, if the life of the mother were at risk, if her physical or mental health were at risk or if the foetus was deformed. (The law does not specify what degree of deformity

Abortion is legally punishable if it is sex-selective abortion, or if it is performed without the consent of the mother.

# Valley of Unreality



t may be self-evident to many, even all too obvious. But it can't be overemphasised. There's Kathmandu, and then there's Nepal. A dangerous and deep divide between capital and country is growing wider by the day, and into the gap flow the Maoists and the unmet aspirations of their constituency, the rural people.

We can argue for hours about whether they actually support the Maoists or not. But one glaring, indisputable hard reality must be faced: the people of the countryside are not actively opposing the rebels, whether or

On a recent trip to Mude, to look into the tragic death of Mohan Khatri (casualties of this "people's war" always seem more tragic when they're known to you) we stopped many times to take the local temperature. Arbitrary, inaccurate, hopelessly shallow, our straw poll was all of these and more, and yet I have no doubts about the sense of hopelessness and passivity that oozed from every tea shop, every bus stand, every chautari.

In Mude, the people express sorrow over the death of a kind and active citizen. Mohan Khatri mattered to that town. Yet ask people why they believe he was murdered, and they mutter that he was doing the wrong thing by helping the army train its officer recruits. A few people hide behind their hands and condemn the Maoists who murdered Khatri, but no one thinks that anything can be done about it.

They laugh when you mention the police, they look mystified when questioned about the army's intentions, they have no idea if there are other brave souls who might resume Mohan Khatri's good works. As for the authorities in Kathmandu, "Government, what government," wheezed an old man, speaking around his cigarette, "there hasn't been any development,

Similar scenes and encounters abounded in other places. Tinpiple in Kavre, under the eye of a shiny new training complex for Nepali UN peacekeepers, at least had a functioning VDC office. But no one wanted to There is Kathmandu, and then there is the rest of Nepal.

> or recruits, and families quietly migrate to Kathmandu and poverty. The unreality begins at Bhaktapur and worsens as you drive past Thimi and Gathinagar, finally reaching Tinkune and dear old Kathmandu. Waiwai and cola signs bloom like weeds, a mini-property boom sees paddy terraces fall to brick houses and shops. The roads are choked with vehicles the air is foul. The smell is of money being spent frantically before either official or unofficial tax collectors come calling. Signs on government buildings boast of lavish and largely meaningless programs jointly funded with international agencies. The frantic bustle eclipses fear, the city ignores the tightening steel band that even now seems to be squeezing the edges of

In Kathmandu, a prime minister rightly calls for peace talks, and gamely promises elections and relief to the people. In the countryside, those who've long lost faith in the capital city's ability to solve their problems await passively—the next instalment of their wretched fate. They've given up trying to influence their futures, unless forced to. The rift widens, and nature hates a vacuum, especially when it's ignored by those who have the means but not the will to fill it.

And I don't just mean the politicians, I mean everyone in this city. Why help the people when there's black money to spend, intrigue to enjoy, a

All this is from a quick trip up the Arniko Highway and the road to Jiri. Imagine what it's like along the rutted road to Libang, the track through Jajarkot, the trading trails of Pyuthan, Surkhet and Rukum. ◆

# Abortive attempt

Legalising it does not ensure accessibility, or affordability of safe abortion. technically legalises abortion, it

> small, shy woman comes into our clinic in farwestern Nepal. "What is your problem?" I ask her. "I am pregnant, but..." she breaks off. I igure she wants to know whether she is pregnant or not. "No, she says, "I want you to help me to get rid of this." The health worker sitting next to me is shocked: "But it's illenal. It's a crime."

The patient looks puzzled: isn't it true that the government has passed a new law now making abortion legal? The health worker says that's not true, where did she hear such a thing? Both looked at me.

I asked the patient how she new abortion was not illegal anymore. "I heard it on the radio," she replied. The patient knew, but this health worker in far western Nenal hadn't yet heard that narliament had indeed passed the law. At that time two months ago, it still needed the formal approval of the king.

Most of us health activists think that our work is done when we lobby to change the laws. We think that by addressing the legal aspects of the problem. somehow it will be solved. Alas, as with everything else in this country: it's not the law that is the problem but its implementation.

And in this case, it is that even health workers don't know when the law has been channed. What is the value of all our lobbying and activism in Kathmandu if doctors and health workers haven't heard of it yet? The other issue is that even though abortion may be legal, most health posts like the one I. was in do not have the proper facilities for carrying out the operation.

The patient looked sad and worried, and slowly left the clinic. She probably went to a quack down the road, which is the reason why so many pregnant women die in this country because of unsafe abortions, and why the law needs to be passed.

We in Kathmandu think that if we know some thing, the whole country knows it as well. That is a wrong impression. We now know that even within Kathmandu, and even among professionals knowledge does not travel. And in many cases this lack of knowledge makes the difference between life and

A few weeks ago I was on Channel Nepal to discuss the new law on abortion. When we were asked the question, one of the panelists said with a straight face on camera: "According to the law a woman can have abortion only after her husband gives her permission." was quite astonished by his ignorance, and I asked that this section of the tape be expunged because it was patently wrong.

Nenal is a nood example of a country where persistent advocacy efforts by women's reproductive rights activists and strong support by research findings have significantly influenced the government to reforming the abortion law. The challenge now is to disseminate accurate information among health workers, lawyers, police as well as activists and cadre of political parties.

The medical profession is as much in the dark as any one else about the exact provisions of the new law. One male medical student recently asked me: "Don't you think that it would be inappropriate to give legal rights to women on the issue of abortion?" My respor was that the rights had already been granted. The priority now was to make sure that the services are available in the district hospital

From field experience so far of the medical sector, it will not be easy for the government to implement this law. We may soon see that private hospitals will start providing abortions at high cost, government hospitals in cities will also have the service, but a vast majority of rural areas will be left out. Legalising abortion does not ensure accessibility, nor affordability. Passing the law was only the first step. •

(Dr Aruna Uprety is a women's health and reproductive rights activist.)

# Godavari

## Annapurna to Everest Race

More than 30 runners from 8 countries and 5 Nepalis will do a high-altitude race from Annapurna Base Camp to Mt Everest Base Camp startion next week to kink off the company starting next week to kick off the commemorations of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniver sary of the ascent of the world's highest mountain.

The runners will race through six major Himalayan passes, including Thorung La, Larkya La, Lauribinayak, Chugyma La and descend down to the Khumbu Glacier via Gokyo and Kala Pattar. All the high passes are more than 5,000 metres altitude.

The Himal Race is billed as the "ultimate trail" by its organiser, Himalaya Racers Association and Mandala Trekking. The runners will first trek to Annapurna Base Camp on 31 October, from where they will begin running and finish up at Everest Base Camp in the third

Himalaya Racers and Mandala have in the past organised marathons, including the Annapurna Mandala Trail. (For further information: www.mandalatrek.com)

# Jvoti Duwadi is back

The Nepali who has made public installation art his forte has returned once more from the United States to his motherland for a series of exhibitions on his recurring theme of peace.

After a highly successful exhibition at Hanuman Dhoka in 2001. Duwadi will kick off his shows this year with a public art installation called "Remembering Peace" at Rani Pokhari 26-30 October 2002. He

then goes on to Pharping to work on a unique Peace Grove concept 2-9

The Raninokhari installation uses art to express the Nepali people's aspiration for peace. As a metaphor for

renewal and healing, herbal flowering trees and fruit trees will be planted in jute bags around Ran Pokhari. "It symbolises the hopes for peace and regeneration in Nepal and across the world," says Duwadi.

The saplings will form a Peace Grove around Rani Pokhari, and on 2 November other saplings will be taken to Pharping for another Peace Grove forest reserve which will be maintained by Sarki and Kami women from the Seshnarayan Village Community.

# Baburam's guru's school bombed

by bombing the school in Kailali run by the high school teacher of their leader, Baburam Bhattarai. A dozen or so armed Maoists entered the school ground on the night of 16 October in Tikapur, threatened the guards, ransacked the offices and blew up the main building after wiring it up with explosives.

The non-profit school was run by T Varughese, a south Indian teacher who had spent eight years at the Luitel School in Gorkha where Baburam Bhattarai was his student in the 1960s. Also in the

same class as Baburam was the health minister in the interim cabinet and Upendra Devkota, After leaving Gorkha. Varughese had spent the nast 25 years building and

running three schools in Nepal's remote western Kailali district which focussed on education

for underprivileged children. Varughese was in the United States when the attack happened and the 500 students were on Dasain holiday. Sources in Kailali said the school had received several extortion threats in the recent past and was one of the last-remaining non-government schools still open

in the far-western district. The school that was bombed was named after Khadga Bahadur Singh, who launched the Tikapur Development Project. The school was expanding fast, and a new wing had been added. Varughese was also planning to add a 10+2 section to meet the demand for students who would otherwise have to go to India or Kathmandu for

further studies. These plans will now be shelved, it is learnt. Varunhese came to Tikanur in 1973 and first set up a high school which was inaugurated by King Birendra and was later called Birendra Vidya Mandir and still has 1,000 students as well as a

# Rumours in the air

Friends and well-wishers are concerned again about Subash Gurung, a Nepali national who pleaded guilty to the post 9/11 US federal offence of attempting to board an aircraft with a dangerous weapon. After working hard to see that Subash, who was cleared of any supposed terrorist connections when a US judge proclaimed at the sentencing that he had no evil intentions, they have been worried about rumours that the Nepali authorities plan to take Subash into custody once he arrives back in Nepal from Minnesota.

Apparently, though, they're just rumours. When asked, the Home Ministry, media outlets, and the Nepal Police told Nepali Times that they knew nothing about the supposed plans. Sentencing guidelines in the US would normally have called for a five-month sentence for a first-time offender with no prior record. Farlier, the court also ordered psychiatric treatment for Subash, which, his friends say, helped

# The economics of politics

Foreign investors are looking for politically stable countries, not places with free press where citizens are allowed to vote.

he week Nepalis were lef without a government brought news of the biggest foreign investment in the country. Australia's Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation announced it would begin constructing the \$860 million West Seti bydro-electric project in 2004 and start running it four years later.

on the 750 MW project in the far western development region since 1996. So we shouldn't read too much into the fact that a prime minister representing the western extreme of the country has been succeeded by someone from the same region. (Actually, this is the second time Lokendra Bahadur Chand has succeeded Sher Bahadur Deuba in nearly six

The timing of Snowy Mountain's announcement is propitious for pondering the money-politics link from a different perspective Chand's hands are full. Worse. they are tied by perceptions of illegality at home and lack of enthusiasm abroad. His room for manneuvre in the mortified mainstream may be severely circumscribed. The Maoists freshly certified as one of the wealthiest rehel movements in Asia, might continue to see greater advantage in keeping their war machine running

Commercial considerations can confer political legitimacy. An unrest, prominent entrenreneurs

The company has been working

affluent agglomeration of Nepalis seems dead against reviving the politics that existed before 10.45 PM on 4 October. The business community was the first organised group to welcome the palace's intervention. If you followed the pronouncements of key captains of commerce over the past few months, you probably sensed their desperation for change. Reeling from industrial insecurity and

began warning politicians not to count on their patronage in the next elections

One industrialist threatened to publish explosive diaries that would rattle the political estab lishment. His threat, repeated over several newspaper interviews carried clear traces of revulsion with how leading politicians had become successful merchants

His refrain: For people trying

to make a living off the forces of

of the government of the day

"oligarchic, partyless or multi-

Similar sentiments were

buried in the Belgian govern-

Deuba was forced to camp in

party" hardly matters.

demand and supply, the character premier, was over whether Nepal is in a state of civil war. Several Belgian politicians, including Magda Aelyoet, the deputy premier who later quit the government, argued that the arms ment's decision to go ahead with its contract to deliver 5,500 sale violated both Relgian law and a European Union code of automatic rifles to Nepal despite conduct that prohibits weapons shipments to governments our political convulsions. The involved in warfare or civil strife controversy, which peaked when

Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt

Brussels on his last foreign trip as

and his allies characterised our conflict as one between an elected government and rebels hent on subverting democracy Deeper down, though, the dispute had economic roots exacerbated by Belgium's regional divide. The multimillion-euro arms contract has been awarded to Fabrique headquartered near Liege in the Walloon area. French-speaking Belgians accused their Flemish colleagues of trying to sabotage the fragile Walloon economy.

How foreign investors view Menal's two giant neighbours could clarify our understanding of the economics of our politics In the past 10 years, India has attracted an estimated \$30 hillion in foreign investment split evenly between direct and institutional investment in equity markets. China has raised over \$300 billion in foreign direct

investment alone. India attracts foreign investment of \$30 per capita compared to China's \$497. With 150 million subscribers. China has the world's largest cell phone market, compared to India's six million. There are a million Internet connections in India as against 30 million in China. (And we thought everybody was listening in to everyhody else un north ) You could insist that China began liberalising its economy a full decade before India did. For that argument to hold, though you'd have to be reasonably confident that, by 2012, India would be where China is today

Are you? If not, here's the next question: What helped China overtake the United States to reach the top of AT Kearney's Foreign Direct Investment Confidence Index (Nepali Times #115, The World Paper)? Robust economic growth? Entry into the World Trade Organisa tion? Beijing's successful bid for the 2008 Olympics? All three. But before all that, a relatively stable political environment, according to foreign investors. (Translation: Tibet and Tiananmen Square are just quaint attractions in the world's fastest-growing market for both inhound and outhound travel )

A plethora of parties, a strong legal system, English education and a free press don't necessarily create a congenial investment climate. This should worry Nepal's politicians more



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# More traffic jams

BIZ NE

The total number of vehicles registered in Kathmandu Valley and surrounding areas increased by nearly 16 percent in the past year, according to the Department of Transportation. At this rate, the number of vehicles on the streets of Kathmandu will double in the next five years. Motorcycles increased by over 20 percent, and two-wheelers now make up nearly 70 percent of all vehicles in the capital.

There are about 50,000 trucks, cars, jeeps and vans in the capital and nearly 136,000 motorcycles. The government registered 369 new diesel mini buses, but is still refusing to allow a prototype electric bus. This means more traffic jams, and more polluted air.

## LIC getting into reinsurance

The Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India first came to Nepal in 2001, but is now considering setting up a reinsurance company and a mutual fund here. LIC wants to get together with General Insurance Corporation and also set up the first housing finance company in Nepal, according to media reports in India. Nepal could become the first overseas venture for ILC Mutual Fund and ILC Housing Finance for which it is partnering with Nepal's Vishal group. It also plans to expand its investments into Bangladesh, Bhutan and

Calcutta holiday traffic hit

Despite assurances that Indian tourists entering Nepal are no longer required to carry passports or voter ID cards, the message doesn't seem to have reached Calcutta.

And this severely affected the flow of Indian tourists to Nepal during the Puja holidays last week, according to travel agents in Calcutta. Bengali families with children were finding it difficult to arrange the documents, and this adversely affected their travel plans, according to Dilip Sengupta of Kundu Travels. Together with fears of political instability, Nepal-bound holiday traffic was down 70 percent from last year. Royal Nepali Consul-general in Calcutta, Ghanashyam Lamsal, told *The Times of India* that the document requirements had been imposed "with mutual consent" between India and Nepal.

## Pressure cooker sales plummet

The manufacture and sale of pressure cookers has dropped dramatically in the past year since the Maoists started using them for explosives and the security forces restricted their availability in the marketolace.

Pressure cooker factories in Birgani, Butwal and Biratnagar have started closing down. Two factories in Birgani that used to produce 360 cookers a day and employed

70 workers have closed down. Birendra Kumar Jaiswal of United Industries says he stands to loose

Many downstream industries that supplied raw materials to the cooker factories are also going out of business. The only place where cookers can still be sold is in Kathmandu, everywhere else there are restrictions. In the absence of pressure cookers, fuel consumption has gone up.

# Rx for Nepal

Can we use this time to chase good ideas with good money

fter the institution of the A interim government in Nepal, the Beed has been bombarded with questions: about the future of the Nepali economy and developments in general. But the festive season has perhaps turned the Beed temporarily into an optimist. So here's my sugges tion: why aren't we asking what opportunities this situation provides, instead of looking at it from the traditional Nepali perspective of failure and disaster.

While an efficient democratic system is often held to be the foundation of a good economy, it isn't necessary evidently that economies only flourish under a participatory democratic political system. Look at Singapore and China, or the complexity of the Indian economy. Strong political will can override the limitations of any system. A political system by any old name is still about

If it's true that elections aren't ossible before November 2003, let's just put up with the interim overnment and get on with reparing for our future which, one way or the other, will eventually come to pass. Do we really need a bicameral legislative system or can we do with fewer lawmakers. Do we need the multitude of ministries and 75 districts that bloat administrative and government costs? Do we really need a planning commission? Perhaps a single ministry can take care of finance. local development, planning, implementation and

Eminent Nepali scholars have dealt with all these matters-Dr Harka Gurung on district divisions, Madhukar Rana on the integration of ministries, Dipak Gyawali on restricting the possibilities of making politics a life-long profes sion. Nepali academia comprises people who can hold their own even outside lecture halls. If the interim government recognises them, and the donor community can fund welladvised, if radical ideas, this phase will be worth it.

The prescriptions for the economy are clear; improve revenue. reduce costs, decentralise decisionmaking and punish the corrupt. Governance, foreign investment and a conducive business environment will follow automatically. It's vital to reduce the cost of government, and continuously monitor corruption. One way to begin doing this is legitimising campaign finance and

demanding transparency. We need at most 15 decentral ised financially autonomous regions in the country. Parallel to this, the central invernment needs to be reduced drastically to 10 ministries, and departments within ministries need to be slashed. A donorsupported enterprise development

and training fund can be created by the government to take care of government servants who are let or Pension money outflow would go down, and perhaps a lot more space would be available for remaining employees to function efficiently, possibly through a substantial nerformance-based increase in emoluments. Maybe we'll finally realise how weird it is that offices in urban areas close at 4PM in the winter. Fewer parliamentarians will mean fewer ministers, too, A unicameral 125-member House should dovetail with the division of local government, the key to

development and empowerment Revenue collection needs to be reorganised and GDP must be examined in light of total revenue collection. Increased revenue may come from higher land revenue taxes and no income tax, or through expanded economic activity that erges out of conducive tax laws

The Beed has discussed all this before, but this provides a good opportunity to pull everything together. There is an opportunity or administrative and other reforms. The interim government can set the stage for democratic institutions, including the political parties, to contribute better after the next elections. ♦

(Readers can post their views to arthabeed@vahoo.com.)

# TAIPEI IN TIMES Finding your own Nepal

IAN BARTHOLOMEW I epal has had a rough year with massive flooding and an upsurge in violence by Maoist insurgents. So as the trekking season, which runs roughly from late Septem ber through to early December, opens, businesses, which rely heavily on the surge of tourist traffic during this time, face bleak prospects as cautious travellers find safer destinations

But it's an ill wind that brings no good to anyone, and for those undeterred by reports of the kingdom's seemingly endless political difficulties, it is a time when they can avoid the crowds, even along some of the most popular trekking routes. "It's an opportunity to have the mountains to yourself," said a lone Australian trekker met on the Annapurna Circuit late last month. The circuit is often disparagingly labelled "The Coca-Cola Trail" because of the relative ease of procuring material comforts along the way.

Passing through the police checknoint outside the town of Chame late on a wet, blustervafternoon, only three other trekkers had passed that day according to the police log which the bored troopers were more than willing to show us. "Normally at this time [late September1, we can expect up to 300 people to stay overnight in Chame," said the proprietor of the Sangetse Hotel, where our group of three were the only quests.

The Maoist troubles have done little to affect the area around Annapurna, but taking the bus out from Kathmandu to the trailhead at Besisahar, around a seven-hour bus ride away, the interminable police and army checkpoints were a constant reminder of kingdom's political malaise. Tourists were generally treated with courtesy by the sometimes dangerously undisciplined troops, and even the Manists. according to Tilak Magar, a trekking firm operator in Kathmandu, generally only request "donations" from trekkers, "I ast time we met with them, each tourist and the guide gave



US dollars on hand. Along the well-established route of the Annapurna Circuit, such dangers seem far away, as trekkers hike from one comfortable teahouse to the next. In the 20 years since the circuit has been opened to tourists, the windowless insectinfested mud huts with wooden bunks have become much more amenable to urban tastes. Solar-heated hot water is one of the great luxuries after a long day on the trail, but we soon realised after two days of icy showers, that this only

applied when the day had been sunny. Arriving early in Pisang in the company of a couple of Australians and one Frenchman on the the ridge we stopped to rest after about an hour fifth day of our trek, after a blustery day with unly intermittent sun, there was a general rush for the showers and smug condolences afterwards in the dining hall for those who had missed out on the very limited supplies of warm water. The camaraderie of the trail is also a lame part of Annapurna Circuit's appeal. Sitting down over

innumerable cups of hot milk tea and hearing about other people's adventures at the end of the day before turning in for an early night easily swept away the weariness o

a day on the trail. The realisation that this existence of trekking, camaraderie and sleen had an increasingly tenuous connection with Nepali existence was brought forcefully to mind when taking a wrong turn out of the small town of Jagat, where we had slept at a new, characteriess lodge whose only advantage was that it was clean, and given the competition for the small number of trekkers, ridiculously cheap at just Rs 30 for a triple room. We had set off early, and soon found

ourselves fighting for breath as we fought our of exhausting climbing. A young boy dressed in rags watched us curiously, then in halting English, explained that if we were heading to Manang, a major stop three-days further up the trail, then we were going the wrong way. So where were we heading? Something.or, other Jagat, he said, then added: "Dirty Jagat," A

With political problems keeping tourists away, this is probably one of the best times to visit the Himalayan kingdom.

town of the same name where the real people lived. The Jagat we had passed through was largely for tourist consumption.

Many of the locals we met along the trail vere there solely to cater to the needs of trekkers. A baker in Manago, who managed to produce a chocolate brownie to die for, said that apart from the trekking season, he lived in Kathmandu. Asked how far it was to Yak Kharka, the next major stop along the trail, he shrugged. "I have never been there," he said, "Getting to Manang

is quite difficult enough." Along the path of the artificial trekking world, some of nature's greatest wonders lie, sometimes distant among the clouds, sometime pressing up against you, their massive proportions terrifying and beautiful. The high point of the trail, in every sense, is the crossing of Thorung La at 5,400 m. From Manang (3,540 m), it normally takes two days of climbing to reach the staging point at

orung Phedi (4,450 m) At this altitude, there is the danger of acute altitude sickness, which if ignored can prove fatal, and even as we clambered up a long high traverse around one of the innumerable landslides caused by this year's heavy monsoon rains, we met one group retreating

from the Thorung Phedi suffering from severe headaches and nausea. At Manang, we had visited a lama, called the 100 Rupee Lama, who specialised in giving blessings to those heading for the pass. This did not lessen our reliance on painkillers as we tried to settle down to sleep in the thin atmosphere. which contained only 60 percent of the oxygen vailable at sea level

Around 20 trekkers would cross the pass the next day, but spread along the interminably rising trail, a black line of wet rock and ice cutting amidst moraine and drifts of snow, it was easy to feel completely alone the only sound your own laboured breathing, the creak of your harness and the occasional rattle of rock displaced by a heavy footfall.

From the pass, the long descent to Muktinath, 1,600 m below, brings you out of the wild and back to the relative ease of the teahouse circuit. At Muktinath we stayed at the Hotel Bob Marley, which seemed too incongruous to bypass in one of the region's holiest sites on the very edge of the Tibetan plateau. Here we were invited into a Tibetan nunnery, and on the outskirts, watched the arrival of pilgrims who visit the Muktinath temple complex that has structures sacred to both Hindus and Buddhists

After the high pass and the closest approach to the snow-covered peaks of the Himalayas, you descend into the valley of the Kali Gandaki River, which boasts the deepest river gorge in the world and some outstanding white water rafting on its lower reaches

The Annapurna Circuit is only a small slice of the enormous diversity that Nepal has to offer. Even the presence of the Manists seem to offer more of a thrill to most tourists rather than a real threat. That the violence and political instability are very real seems readily hidden behind the offer of magnificent scenery and the sense of adventure. It's rather like the town of Jagat. The facade is more than adequate, and the harsh reality of poverty and dirt all but invisible unless you take a wrong turn. ♦

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Balkrishna Sama's hypothetical painting of all nine Rana prime ministers.

KUNDA DIXIT

ove them or hate them, but you can't ignore them. The lenacy of Rana rule remains everywhere: from the imposing façade of Singha Darbar the presence of Ranas at the top echelons of modern Nepal's business, army and police, and the Rana family tree, which is interwoven with the present members of the Shah dynasty. All this makes for fascinating history that has been documented in research papers. academic treatises, a best-selling novel, a Nepali movie, and recent Rana nostalnia in architecture

But surprisingly no one has until now, attempted to put together a coffee table book on the history, culture, lifestyle and even cuisine of the Ranas-written by the Ranas themselves. Enter Princess Juni of the former Indian princely state of Sarela visiting Kathmandu two years ago for a Worldwide Fund for Nature conference. "She said how come there is no book on the Ranas," recalls Gautam Rana of Baber Mahal Revisted Gautam already had a well-developed interest in his clan's heritage-when he returned to Nepal after completing a management degree in Germany in 1979 he was dismayed to see Kathmandu Valley rapidly losing what old charm it still had left In 1998, he began reconstruction the stables and cowsheds of his ancestral palace to develop an upmarket shopping complex of boutiques, art galleries and restaurants called Baher Mahal Revisited.

\*When she said that, I thought let's do it. But where was the money?" explains Gautam. A largeformat hard cover illustrated encyclopaedia of the Ranas was going to cost a packet. Luckily, in stepped the Swiss banking group Credit Suisse, which was interested in backing the project because the proceeds from the sales were going to help the conservation of Kathmandu Valley's unique urban heritage. With Credit Suisse bankrolling the printing in Europe. Gautam raised money from other illustrious Ranas who were going to be co-authors: Prabhakar Rana of the Snaltee Group and RPP politician, Pashupati Rana.

\*Pretty soon, I realised I may have bitten off more than I could chew," admits Gautam, who hired help for the editing design and photography from India's APCA

group, but was himself responsible for the research and coordinating the contents. The result is a well crafted work that is like a time capsule taking readers back to the extravagance, intrigue, hopes and achievements of those 104 years.

nost-1950 history books, the The authors have tried not to gloss over the raw ambition, greed history chapters in The Ranas of and, yes, lust that drove the power Nepal are an objective and credible struggles in the extended Rana assessment of the period. Coclan. But the overall impression is author Prabhakar Rana, greatgrandson of Joodha Shumshere. still a somewhat sanitised retrospective of those years. Even the actually lived in Singha Darbar decadence comes across as until the age of 11. Pashupati photogenic. Gautam isn't defensive Rana, grandson of the last Rana about that he says: "Some Ranas nrime minister Mohun of my generation feel very apolo-Shumshere, was present as a boy of getic, but there is nothing to feel four at the first coronation of King

guilty about. We have an

eclectic and cultured past, and

Despite being an "inside story"

by members of the clan vilified in

that should inspire us to help

build the country today and

conserve our heritage."

Gyanendra in 1950. Both have contributed chapters on history architecture, and lifestyle. Besides the research. Gautam helned track down rare photos, paintings and artefacts from private collections and also wrote the chapter on Rana iewellery.

The book's lavish visuals with early sepia photographs, period portraits from private collections bring this history alive. The illustrations are intelligently grafted into the text (edited by Brinda Datta and Dubby Bhagat), as are the contemporary photographs by Indian photojournalist Prashant Panijar

The book begins at the



Bhandarkhal. He sends the queen

and king into exile, installs the

crown prince on the throne and

Thus, at age 29, Jung Bahadur

makes himself prime minister.

beginning: with the royal rivalries among the Rajput rulers of Udaipur that drove one particular family of courtiers to the Himálaya, all the way up in Jumla. From there they migrated eastward to Kaski and on to Gorkha. The Kunwars helped King Prithvi Narayan in his conquests, and Bal Narsingh Kunwar was made governor of Jumla. But in the numes that followed the downfall of Bhimsen Thapa in 1840, Bal Narsingh's son Jung Bahadur emerged as a master manipulator who, through sheer charisma, craftiness and courage wormed his way upwards taking full advantage of the savage power struggles among the descendants of Prithy

Narayan Shah and their consorts Jung Bahadur is at the centre of this swirling tale of backstabbing, intrigue, conspiracies, alliances finding himself right in the middle of vicious infighting between a powerful gueen and her paramour, the king, and the crown prince. At gunpoint, Jung is forced to shoot his own uncle, the prime minister, and is then caught up in two massacres at the Kot and at



in 1845. He was also the first subcontinental royal to visit Britain and France, driven by a desire to bypass the obstructive diktats of Calcutta by dealing Kunwar launches the Rana century directly with London. Once there

he received royal treatment. One gets the feeling reading these tales of massacres, assassinations and chronic infighting that contemporary Nepali rulers are just following in the footsteps of their ancestors-maybe they are hardwired to be divisive and selfish. A paragraph from the book, describing the conspiracies of the royal court could very well have been written about today's Nepal: "He (Jung Bahadur) brought order to a Nepal on the brink of anarchy. Nobody can condone the means he used to achieve this end. However, it begs the question: could it have been achieved by any other means?"

It was perhaps inevitable that when Jung died during a hunting trip in Chitwan in 1877, his brothers immediately started squabbling for power. Jung's brother Dhir installed lung's son Rana Udip Singh as successor

while he manoeuvred to take over. Suspecting a plot, he beheaded two dozen courtiers and managed to carve out a place for himself and his 17 sons in the succession. The clan was thus effectively split between the Juna Ranas and the Shumshere Ranas By 1885, matters reached a head again and Dhir had his six sons kill their uncle, Rana Udip Singh and remove all the descendants of lung Bahadur's other brothers from succession

Rana power transitions were

messy affairs, and watching all this from the background was the British regent at Lazimpat. We see how British India tried to influence events in Kathmandu and this has familiar echoes today. When Bir Shumshere sidelined Jagat Jung and exiled him to India, the British refused for five months to recognise Bir as leader. And when lagat lung began preparations to overthrow Bir Shumshere from Indian soil, the British arrested him while he was planning to march into Nepal with his armed followers Sound familiar?

Bir Shumshere built Nepal's first hospital as well as the Darbar School, for which imported teachers from England. He was succeeded by the flashy Dev Shumshere who in turn wa replaced by the shrewd and astrute Chandra Shumshere, whose 37year reign was marked by uncharacteristic stability and development. He established Nenal's first college streamlined administration, built suspension bridges all over the country. installed Nepal's first hydropower plant in 1911 (from domestic coffers without foreign aid) and named the light powered by electricity generated by it after himself ("Chandra jyoti"). He sent architects to Europe and horticulturists to Japan for training. He also built a 1,400room palace for himself, which ended up being a contribution to the nation—it is now Singha Darbar. On the diplomatic front. Chandra Shumshere managed to convince the British to officially agree to Negal's independent status and got them to put it in writing in the 1923 Anglo-Nepal Treaty of Friendship

Chandra was succeeded by Rhim Shumshere, Joodha



Shumshere, Padma Shumshere and finally. Mohun Shumshere. But time was running out, the end of Empire was near. Although they tried to modernise Nenal with industrialisation, banking, railways, urban water supply, and even a liberal constitution, it was too little too late. Mohun Shumshere had to deal with newly-independent India and grapple with democracy-minded Nepalis whose demands sounded uncannily similar to today's discourse; set up a constituent assembly and form an interim government.

The book also delves into other massacres: that of tigers rhinos and other wildlife in hunting expeditions in honour of visiting British royalty. There is a dramatic picture of Joodha Shumshere posing in front of pelts of a hundred or so tigers. Good thing many Ranas have now moved away from hunting towards nature conservation

The rest of the book looks at Rana architecture, and mentions unsung Nepali engineers like Kishore Narsing and the legendary logial Sthapit, known more popularly as "Bhajuman" However incongruous the wedding cake Rana palaces may have looked when they were built, the authors argue that the palaces "seem to have achieved their own particular balance with the environment" with their use of local construction material and the incorporation of Nepali features such as courtyards, verandahs, and south-facing





jewellery traces the history of the Rana crown and how it evolved and bulged with gems and diamonds in 104 years (only to be sold to a Parisian jeweller in the mid 1950s). An error creeps in here—the bird of paradise plume is wrongly identified as coming from New Zealand; it is actually native to Panua New Guinea Many of these gems, precious stones and ornaments were brought into Nepal by Indian royalty fleeing Mughal invasions. Other jewellery came from the Lucknow loot during the mutiny, of which the soldiers and officers got to keep the gold and silver while iewellen went to the royal coffers.

There's more: Rana cuisine. Rana lifestyle, Rana fashion, Rana art, and short biographies of some prominent living Ranas. The hook also has a useful abridged family tree of most Ranas from Jung Bahadur's father to Siddhartha Rana, Prabhakar's son, so readers can navigate through the book's confusing genealogy, and untangle the complex web of Rana intermarriages with the Shah dynasty.

This hefty book with a hefty price tag will be available at Everest Book Shop, Baber Mahal Revisited from mid-November. Proceeds of the sales will go to the Kathmandu Valley Conservation Trust, which has renovated numerous temples, sattals and bahals in Kathmandu Valley

The Ranas of Nepal by Prabhakar SJB Rana, Pashupati SJB Rana, Gautam SIR Pana First adition Naef. Kister S.S. Editeur, Geneva 2002, 262 pp.







No parachutes

ews coverage of the horrifying explosions in Bali last weekend shows that not much has changed in journalism since 11 September. Despite the incessant cautionary statements about violence and the warning signals pushing the national state of alert up and down the colour scale inumalism nave us the same old news. Its knee-ierk treatment. of violence, terror and atrocityexemplified by the coverage of the bombing in the Indonesian resort village—barely differed from its

treatment of countless other events

Even though the blast killed an

overseas before 11 September.

estimated 200 people, it received the kind of patterned journalistic attention that we have come to expect of our media. It happened over there, so why pay too much attention? The explosions happened early Saturday morning, and only inched on to the violence, terror and atrocity. Over the news in the US. Initial stories on the hroadcast news focused on a tight past few months, warning signs recounting of what happened without proliferated: a colour-code alert was extensive analysis. By the end of the pushed up in September because of an weekend, the focus shifted to broader expected rise in terrorism in Southeast Asia, seven different explosions rocked considerations of its effect elsewhere in the world, as it should have, but failed the region over the past three weeks, a to flesh out the story. The blast heightened alert was in place at the received terse mention on the inside US embassy in Jakarta a month ago, and several US embassies in pages of US Sunday newspapers, bursting onto their front pages only Southeast Asia were closed. on Monday. In the meantime, stories Even after the explosions, the of the sniper shootings filled the news slight lag time between coverage of the blasts themselves and their contextualisation suggested a tempohole, following what journalists call

"firefighting" or "parachute journal ism". In the US. Bali just wasn't rary, if fleeting, lapse of judgement on important enough to lead the news the part of journalists who could and should have provided an immediate lournalism had not addressed Bali before last weekend's blast, context for the bombing. By Monday, curious given the post-11 September the skies over Bali darkened with journalism's parachutes. A statement call for a "different kind of coverage" of

Even after the lessons of 11 September, the US media bungled the Bali blast.



by President George W Bush and other officials positioned the Rali attacks as part of a so-called resurgence of al-Oaeda activities. That linkage brought with it a torrent of stories-all of which helped position the blasts against some larger context: Within hours, they were linked backward to the recent explosion aboard a French tanker in Yemen and attacks on American soldiers in Kuwait, and fast forwarded to next week's potential

targeting of oil and gas installations in Indonesia Only after the White House connected the dots did the mainstream LIS media report that al. ∩aeda functionaries were said to be entrench ing in Indonesia, and tapes bearing threatening messages against the west reemerged. Bali-long seen as both a

and a Hindu island alongside the world's most populous Muslim nation—became the newest repositor of the world's horror, with one tourist quoted as saying, "If Bali is no longe

safe, there's no place that's safe. By Tuesday the blasts were codified as "the beginning of a new campaign\*, and the media ran stories about the impact of the attacks on America The high Australian death toll prompted CNN to label the event "Australia's Sept. 11", urging comparisons of a pre-blast context that had not sufficiently been made hefore the hombs exploded

There is a limit to how much we can expect of our journalists. But there are lessons to be learned about iournalism that require a different mode of treatment than simple parachute entry and exit. These lessons call for different kinds of journalistic engagement with public events. Stories about warmongering against Iraq, waffling over whether Osama bin Laden is dead and the eradication of al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan deserve to be part, but not all, of what we know about the world.

In a post-11 September era, it remains curious that the news we get and don't get often has less to do with Indonesia, Australia or Southeast Asia than with ourselves. And in that respect, too, little has changed since 9/11.♦ (New York Newsday)

(Barbie Zelizerteaches communications at the University of Pennsylvania and co-edited the book Journalism After September 11.)

**UNdemocratic** 

NEVA - The United Nations and the principal multilateral institutions require profound reforms if they want to repair their imperfections, including their lack of democracy, says a group of nternational experts.

Without reform of the existing institutions and the creation of new ones "it is difficult to see how the international community can face the challenges of the first part of the 21st century," said Indian economist Deepak Nayyar, editor of the book Governing Globalisation: Issues and Institutions, a series of essays on the future of the multilateral system. The study proposes changes, in some cases radical reforms of the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO. The initiative is based on the conception that the changes in the world, particularly during the last decade, have eroded the UN's legitimacy, effectiveness and credibility. The book, which is the result of research conducted at the hehest of the United Nations University-WIDER Institute states that as far as maintaining world peace—one of the UN's principal mandates the institution failed to meet the challenge of the 1990s. The authors say that the UN's moral authority has been "seriously undermined" by the fact that the forum's laws or principles are selectively enforced. ailored to "the interests of the rich and the powerful". (IPS)

Again, rights vs 'security'

CANBERRA - In the wake of the bombing in Bali, Australian Prime Minister John Howard has alarmed human rights and opposition groups by announcing that he expects a review of anti-terrorism laws to be completed by early next week. Government sources have revealed that the Howard administration's priorities now include legislation that gives a designated government minister the power to unilaterally ban nisations deemed to be associated with terrorism. Constitutional lawyers and human rights groups are worried about the prospect of the further erosion of democratic rights in the name of 'anti-terrorism' legislation. Last Tuesday, special minister of state Eric Abetz reintroduced the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO)
Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Bill into the Senate after it had been rred earlier in the year due to widespread opposition, including within the government's own ranks.

The provisions of the bill propose to allow life sentences to be posed on those directly or indirectly involved with "terrorist" organisations and allow "suspects" to be held without charge, incommunicado, and without access to a lawver for potentially extended periods. A parliamentary committee of inquiry into the ASIO legislation dominated by government representatives—reported in June that the bill would "undermine key legal rights and erode the civil liberties that

make Australia a leading democracy". "Howard is being somewhat opportunistic in using this tragedy to try and revisit some of the worst aspects of the anti-terrorism legislation the Australian public clearly said 'no' to over the last year," said Damien Lawson, spokesman for the Federation of Community Legal Centres. "The nature of the threat that the Bali attacks have underscored will not be addressed by the sort of changes they are proposing. What needs to be addressed is the political and social underpinnings of the conflict in Indonesia and conflict globally and look at why there is so much support for radical Islamist organisa-

tions." he added. (IPS)

PRAGUE - The IMF is ready to start a dialogue with the World Social Forum at its third conference in Porto Alegre in Brazil early next year, deputy managing director of the IMF Eduardo Aninat said Sunday.

"If invited to Porto Alegre and given space to be heard, I'll go,"

Aninat said at the end of a two-day conference in Prague on lobalisation and development. The conference was organised joint by Forum 2000, the foundation led by Czech President Vaclav Havel and the Nippon Foundation. Delegates agreed on the creation of an independent international body that would undertake to arbitrate on debt issues, reduction of agricultural subsidies in the US, Europe and Japan, and on making trade rules transparent and fair. Apart from this the conference ended with the expected variety of harsh disagreements, with the IMF, the World Bank and business representatives on one side and civil society activists and scholars on the other in discussions on external debt, double standards in trade and finance uneven flow of information between North and South, and the social and environmental responsibility of corporations. Nobody claimed that corporations or the system of international trade and finance were playing fair with the developing world. But differences became apparent on where responsibilities lie and what needs to be done. (IPS)

Schizophrenic" UN

NEVA - The UN demonstrates a tendency towards "schizophrenia" in its approaches to agricultural reform and fighting world hunger, says Swiss academic Jean Ziegler, the global forum's special rapporteur on the right to food. Programmes aimed at agrarian reform, after more than two decades in near-oblivion, returned to the international community's agenda through the commitments made in the declaration signed in Rome at the 1996 World Food Summit. But the final declaration of the second summit on food, which took place this June, again in Rome, omitted the issue, even though two UN agencies back agrarian reform models as a means to improve food security: the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organi sation (FAO). In contrast, the World Bank promotes different models of agrarian reform, which place priority on the market and follow the rend set by what is known as the "Washington Consensus", said Ziegler, Half of the UN system, the World Bank, the IMF and a large number of the UN's member states are, in practice, against the right to food, said Ziegler, commenting that they believe the market is the only power that should establish food prices. (IPS)



BANGKOK - If investigators confirm attack killed at least 182 people and the charges by the US and Indonesian injured more than 300 people governments that 12 October's Muslim lawvers have chided the carnage in Bali was the work of country's defence minister for blaming the al-Qaeda network for the attack Muslim militants, the 'Islam encourages violence' debate sparked by without citing evidence. The leader of the 11 September attacks is sure to Indonesia's largest Muslim organisaintensify and put pressure on tion, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), also moderate Muslims Sensing this cautioned against pointing figners at Islam for encouraging such acts of possibility, some of the leading voices championing moderate Islam in terror. "It (the Bali bombing) was an south-east Asia have been quick to act against humanity and no religion speak up and raise issues about can justify it. The authorities must these acts of terror and separating solve the case and bring the perpetrathem from Islam tors to justice, but must do so Condemning the car bomb attack according to facts, not analysis, in Bali, Malaysian Prime Minister

language daily The Star.

Indonesians in connection with the

Hasyim Muzadi of NU was quoted Mahathir Mohamad said that terrorist as having said. attacks were "not a good way to fight Among those who have raged for any cause, as it was not planned for against Islam in the 'Islam encourages ultimate victory but to exact revenue violence' or 'Islam equals terrorism' and retaliation," reported the Englishdebate have seen people such as US television evangelist Jerry Falwell and In Indonesia, where officials in Franklin Graham link Islam with the Bali are intensively questioning two forces of darkness". Falwell has said

that the followers of the Prophet

Time to talk

The Indonesia attacks have finally pushed moderate Muslims to speak up. 

Mohammad are "bent on destroying all non-Muslims". In early August the US media reported that some neoconservative writers and thinkers close to the administration of President George W Bush were turning the pressure on Saudi Arabia for the conservative strand of Islam it practises. that traces its roots to the 18th century, Wahabism. They implied that Wahahism has an anti-I IS streak highlighted by the fact that the majority of the hijackers in the US attacks-and Osama bin Laden-were Wahabis, whose idea of an ideal Islamic state was the Taleban's Afnhanistan

But Muslim moderates in Southeast Asia have been at pains since 11 Sentember to counter those who acruise Islam of encouraging violence, by offering the region's tolerant face of the faith as evidence that it is not so. Indonesia, in fact, has been held up as a prime example of Islam's moderate face. It is the larnest Muslim country in the world, with 170.3 million out of its 220 million people adherents of Islam. The Nahdlatul Ulama, with a membership of 40 million Muslims, encourages the country's faithful to take a moderate path. Yet in the eyes of many, this image has suffered due to the Bali blast, and will place this region's Muslims in a further predicament if investigators link militant Muslims to the bloodshed.

At the same time, statements from some religious leaders accused of holding extremist views are not helping create space for moderates. For instance the line of argument used by Abu Bakar Baasyir, an Indonesian Muslim cleric that intelligence officials in the region have linked to planned attacks, will not help deflect charges that Islam encourages violence. Baasyir told journalists at a press conference that the Bali attack was the work of foreigners, "most probably the United States", to give the impression that Islamic extremists are present in Indonesia. The authorities will look to accuse Muslims—including himself for the attack, he added

In a commentary in last Tuesday's Arah Mews Abdul Oader Tash says a hostile approach, which "presents Islam as aggressive and antagonistic towards the west " is not the way to go "Our efforts will be wasted," he writes, if Islam is seen as trying to destroy the west and "huild an Islamic civilisation on its ruins". In the wake of attacks like the Rali blasts south\_east Asia's Muslims face the challenge of convincing many that Islam does not encourage violence, by looking into the community and launching a debate about what has gone wrong with the way some Muslims interpret their faith and use the religion for political DUIDOSES. ♦ (IPS)

by MUSHAHID HUSSAIN

TOT OF ACCUMENT

Degree is Travel and

JAKARTA – Many Indonesians are asking how the nation will cope with the economic fallout from the 12 October bomb blast in Bali, the hub of Indonesia's tourism industry, which last year attracted 1.35 million foreigners. Economists say confidence has been shaken in the short term, but some remain optimistic that despite initial reactions from the stock market and a decline in the value of the Indonesian currency, these trends should be temporary. A key gauge of international sentiment on Indonesia's economy will be a meeting in Yogjakarta of Indonesia's donors on 28-29 October.

Hotel bookings continue to be cancelled, and one hotel in Bali has already received 400 to 450 room cancellations since the blast killed nearly 200 people. "If there are no extraordinary measures to restore international confidence, tourism husinesses here will totally collapse," said the governor of Bali, Edi Bharata. (IPS)

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# Priorities change

ISLAMABAD - Over a year after the 'regime change' in Afghanistan, the nation building keenly undertaken there by the United States seems bogged down as new priorities take precedence over present policy.

The October election results in Pakistan complicate the American administration's Afghan strategy, given US concerns over the triumph of Islamist parties in two provinces bordering Afghanistan. These parties had campaigned against the LIS hombing of Afghanistan and onnose any American troop presence inside Pakistan. Other developments, like the upcoming American military action against Iraq and unfulfilled promises of massive, much-needed foreign aid, could

complicate an already difficult situation inside Afghanistan. The US-led 'war on terror' is already in a stalemate, given that Osama bin Laden, his chief lieutenant Dr Avman at 7 awahiri who recently sent an audiotaned message of defiance to Qatar-based Al Jazeerah television, and former Taleban supremo. Mullah Omar, remain at large, In a 14 October interview. Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Dr Abdullah Abdullah expressed concern that "in the event of any attack on Iran, the terrorists will try to destabilise Afghanistan". He did not mention the probable backlash among Afghanistan's Muslims.

Last week, General Tommy Franks, head of the US Central Command, visited Pakistan and Afghanistan and made public statements to assur Afghanistan on both counts, Addressing American troops at Bagram base outside Kabul, Franks said: "Any conflict in Iraq will not affect our mission in Afrihanistan \* But irrespective of Frank's comments, the stated US mission in Afghanistan is yet to be accomplished. US Presiden George W Bush had wanted bin Laden 'dead or alive', and the money pledged to Afghanistan is simply not forthcoming. A long-term US commitment, deemed crucial to stability in Afghanistan, is competing with Washington's obsession with Iraq, and possibly also North Korea.

Officially, the State Department welcomed this month's elections in Pakistan. But Washington's officially unstated concerns were voiced by the conservative Washington Times newspaper, which is close to the Bush administration. Its 21 October editorial said: "The power that fundamental ists have gained in the election is without precedent in Pakistan, and will probably affect US efforts to ferret out al-Qaeda terrorists along the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

However, the main problem in Afghanistan is not any potential political fallout from the Pakistani polls but the fact The focus on Iraq and Pakistan is drawing attention away from Afghanistan's needs. ......

that the situation in the country has not stabilised nearly a year after the Taleban's evit in November last year. American forces continue to be under attack, mostly. through hit-and-run snipers or rockets, forcing, for example, the closure of Kabul airport to UN planes last week Testifying before the US Congress last week, CIA Director George Tenet warned that the "al-Qaeda is reconstituting, the level of threat is

the same as it was last summer (prior to 11 September) and they are coming after us." But he remained clueless regarding the group's main leaders since they remain at large, sending periodic threats through audiotaped messages whose source has yet to be traced. Prior to the bombing at Kuta beach in the Indonesian island of Bali, Dr Ayman al Zawahiri had warned about "attacks on America and its allies". There have been attacks in Kuwait, which killed a US Marine, parcels bombs in Karachi and Kamra in Pakistan, and explosions in the southern Philip-

Afghanistan has also been disappointed at the lack of oreign aid actually coming in, despite promises of \$4.5 billion during the donors' conference in Tokyo in January, Only \$900 million of the \$1.8 billion pledged for 2002 has come in this year. However, the 14 October summit of the

Fronomic Cooperation Organisation (FCO) in Istanbul decided to set up a special fund to help rehuild Afnhanistan

ECO has 10 members including the Central Asian republics plus Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan

The ECO summit also supported a project to build a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan through Afghanistan, Pakistan provides the shortest outlet to the sea for the landlocked Central Asian region. The 1,450 km pipeline will cost \$2 billion, and once operational, would provide Afghanistan with \$300 million in annual transit revenues. But the project is inextricably linked to peace and stability in Afghanistan, which could again become a question mark should the US shift attention to 'regime change' in Iraq, and turn away from 'nation building' in ∆fnhanistan ♦ //ps

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# **lexic**o's machismo ma



onica rummages frantically in her bag as we dine at a Mexico City restaurant. She pulls out her cell phone and checks for messages. restaurant. She pulls out her cell priorite and outdoors for incomposition of "Anything wrong?" I ask. "No," she smiles, "just my husband. He becomes upset if he calls and I don't answer. He likes to know where I am " "You mean he likes to keep track of you," I say, and she laughs.

As Monica explains sheepishly that Esteban is actually open-minded, it dawns on me that I've been hearing a lot of similar stories from female friends and patients. The cell phone has become a new way for men to keep tabs on their wives, calling them and pressuring them to come home as soon as possible. Machismo might be out of fashion in today's Mexico, but control is definitely in

You rarely hear of men not allowing their wives to study, work, or go out during the day. Almost 40 percent of working-age women hold jobs, school and university enrolment is evenly split between the sexes, and the average wage differential, whereby women earn about 70 percent of what men make, is comparable to that of industrialised nations. Women are increasingly aware of their rights, demanding equal treatment in the workplace and in politics Machismo has also mutated. It now relies more on psychological coercion and control than on discrimination or physical constraints. In a sense, machismo has gone underground. Deeply buried within our daily customs, it is all but invisible—but ever present—among the educated classes.

Women may be considered equal in many areas, but men remain more equal. In Mexico, women's time is not their own. When they go out, spend money, see friends, they are still expected to render accounts. Fathers, brothers, boyfriends and husbands feel entitled to a detailed explanation of their everyday activitiesbut refuse to be questioned about their own. These double standards form a pillar

Mexican men use modern technology to reinforce profoundly traditional practices. .........

of today's machismo. Of course, it is far more evident in the privacy of the home than in the workplace or in public. Surveys show that men are willing to help out at home occasionally, but within rigidly defined parameters—they refuse to iron, sew.

chop vegetables, or clean the oven or toilet, because these tasks are considered unmanly This division of labour in all areas of life means that men and women remain surprisingly inept at certain tasks. We see educated men who don't know how to make a cup of coffee, and professional women who can't change a fuse. Men know little about habies: women know little about chequebooks—because they aren't supposed to. Machismo creates people with only half the skills that modern life requires. Far from creating a healthy complementarity between the sexes, it

perpetuates dependence on both sides and creates widespread inefficiency. Part of the problem is the deep-seated assumption that women are meant to attend to men's needs. From the moment of their birth, men are surrounded by the constant care of women. Mothers aunts grandmothers sisters and later girlfriends, wives, and daughters are expected to fulfil-even anticipate-a man's very desire. Mothers tell little girls to "attend" their brothers, while little boys are instructed to "watch over" their sisters. This non-stop pampering is aggravated by female domestic servants, from the high society governess to the part-time maid of a middle-class family. Servants are a bulwark of Mexican machismo. Though they allow women to no out and work, and ensure that men continue to be namnered like oriental potentates, never lifting a finger in the home. Where wives and daughters now refuse to drop everything to prepare lunch for the man of the

house, the maid takes up the slack The implications of these attitudes and behaviours go beyond the domestic sphere. Pampered Mexican boys grow into men accustomed to being obeyed instantly, who feel entitled to special attention, refuse to penotiate with those whom they consider inferior, and reject any form of criticism. The men who dominate public life often fit this mould: they are demanding, impatient, intolerant, and self-centred. There is an inescapable contradiction between machismo and our supposed transition to democracy. As Monica sums it up with mock exasperation after our lunch, twice interrupted by her husband, "This machismo business doesn't make sense any more. How can we continue to be governed by men who have never set foot in a supermarket?" 

(Project Syndicate)

(Marina Castañeda is a neuchotheranist in Mexico City and author of the recent bestseller El machismo invisible.)

25 - 31 OCTOBER 2002 NEPALL TIMES

victory of the People's Movement of

1990. According to a leader present

at the meeting, Deuba urged the

seven parties represented there to

unite against the king's decision,

Deubaremained quiet when KE

Sharma Oli asked why he didn't call

an all-party meeting as soon as he got

lieve him of office. He was also

elections by a year when an all-party

meeting had agreed to postpone the

elections for six months. When

Deuba asked the party leaders to

release a joint statement against the

king's undemocratic act in removin

Ghanashyam Sharma, and Nepal

Majdoor Kisaan Party leader Narayan

Janamorcha Nepal's secretary Sharma

victory of 1990 was to hold elections

for a constituent assembly to bring

the king and the Manists on a

democratic path

said the only way to safeguard the

leader Hriyadesh Tripathi,

Man Riiukchhe all refused

lanamorcha Nepal leader

the prime minister. Sadbhavana Party

silent when Oli asked him why he

had asked the king to postpone

an indication that the king was to

which he said undermined the agreement of the seven parties to

ostnone elections

Excerpts from an interview with Minister for Women and Social Welfare Gore Bahadur Khapangi in Nepal Samacharpatra, 20 October

Although the constitution outlines the work, the duties and the rights of the council of ministers, the king has issued a five-point list of responsibilities. Donit you think this implies that the council does not exercise executive powers? After he formed a new council of ministers, the king was responsible for issuing guidelines to it. He holds executive powers, but I don't think it is accurate to say that things have been done in a dictatorial fashion. If the five points were bad. then one could point that out. Those who want to oppose things will say anything. I heard someone saying on the FM that the ministers were in a hurry to get media coverage. Is the media distinct from the government and the people? People talk as

Would this present government have the right to sign any treaty or agreement?

Everyone knows that foreign affairs are looked after by the Foreign Ministry, which is part of the government. So it can easily do so. The subject falls within the five points. There's no. question of the government not exercising that right.

What is the stand of this government on resolving the Maoist problem? To put it briefly, the government and the Maoists have to talk. First, the government has to prepare guidelines [for talks], something the last government was unable to do. The government has to look for a strong mediator, it has to ask civil society for help. Everyone wants

peace. I feel that the individual also has a big role. For instance, let's ask whether the government would look at me and at yesterday's [former minister for Housing and Physical Planning]
Chiranjibi Wagle differently. This will definitely make a difference. I'm sure the Maosits will talk
to a government which includes Gore Bahadur Khapangi on a different level—they will have to. Because Chiranjibi and Gore Bahadur came into government from different places.

Another thing: we needn't worry if the Maoists continue fighting. That's a given process and will not affect talks. Once the talks begin, the fighting will decrease. Tomorrow, when we sit down for talks, whether their ideas influence us, or our thoughts influence them, we will arrive at a solution. If we only talk about weapons, the peace process will be delayed. When you cut a tree, do the leaves, the branches and the roots dry up all at once? It may take a year for the branches to dry

Thereis a price on the heads of the Maoist leaders. Will the government retract that before it calls for talks?

The government remains the government. Only the leadership has changed. Our Rastriya Janamukti Party never recognised the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) as 'terrorists' Being a representative of the party, can I accept such a definition? There's no question of my stepping beyond the boundaries set by my party. I will put forward my ideas while I am in the government. If the definition of terrorists given by the former government will make it difficult to have talks, then we must think again. The Maoist party went silent after three efforts at talks. That's the direction our thoughts must take.

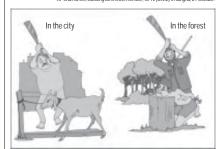
If the present governmentowhich, according to you, exercises executive powersoagrees with the Maoists to form a Constituent Assembly, will it be able to agree to a plebiscite without consulting the king?

I am not a student of constitutional law. I know that this government is not elected by the people, and that there is no parliament at present. The government is answerable to whoever has formed it. The government will consult with whoever formed it. But if you feel that something is 100 percent right, there's no need to make queries.

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

The Maoist policy is this; not to allow the UML to form a majority government; not to allow the formation of a communist government; to prevent the formation of a UML government in the name of their "great" revolutionary; to prevent the formation of a government that works for the people and towards progressive reforms. As a result, the main achievement of the Maoist revolution has been to hand over the people's sovereignty to the palace.

KP Sharma Oli, standing committee member, CPN (UML) in Sanghu, 21 October.



Himal Khabarpatrika, 2 October-1 November

## Mined land Himalaya Times, 20 October

हिसालयाँ वाडस्स

THIS PAGE CONTAINS MATERIAL SELECTED FROM THE NEPALL PRESS

There has been a marked increase in the use of landmines in Nepal since the Maoist insurgency began in Nepal. A recent report by the Campaign Against Landmines, Nepal says that the use of landmines targeting humans has doubled in recent years. In 2001, 210 people were injured and 214 died in 424 incidents of landmine explosions. In 2000, 84 were injured and 94 died. In 1999, 94 were injured and 40 died, while in 1998. 34 people were injured and 20 people

killed in explosions The people most affected. especially since the peace talks fell apart nd the use of landmines started increasing have been innocent children, students and farmers. The government maintains that the Maoists ve been making landmines at home after acquiring equipment, detonators, ves and weapons from the Pennle's War Group and the Manist

Communist Centre, both in India. In 2002 February, two children died and six people were injured when landmines laid by police in Achham went off. Another person was injured in Rukum when a landmine laid by army personnel went off. The government continues to deny the use of landmines by security forces, but Purna Shova Chitrakar, coordinator of the campaign against landmines says it is highly probable that the security forces lay landmines around

their camps. A landmine costs between Ps 25 to Rs 800 to make, and treatment of a person injured by one. Rs 10,000 to Rs 200,000. In the last two years, the Birendra Army Hospital has asked for Rs 9.3 million to treat people injured hy landmines. The novernment has so far allocated Rs 3.4 million.

A report released by the government records 2.456 incidents of landmine explosions between February 1996 and June 2000, which have killed 1.366 people. The use of landmines, which began in Rolpa, has spread to 37 districts by 2000. By

December 2001, 71 districts were affected. Of the seven SAARC nations only Bangladesh and Maldives have signed the Ottawa Convention which prohibits the manufacture, use and transport of landmines targeting endorsed the convention.

Not my fault Himalaya Times, 22 October

Former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba recently disclosed that his report unprecedented action to dissolve parliament five months ago was due to Former prime minister and

president of the Nepali Congress (Democratic) Deuba had invited leaders of various political parties to a luncheon at his residence on Monday. The gathering turned into an all-party meet where various political issues were discussed. When KP Sharma Oli asked Deuba whose pressure he had given in to the former prime minister indicated that he was forced by the palace. When Surva Bahadur Thapa, leader of the Rastriva Praiatantra Party, asked Deuba why he dissolved parliament, the former prime minister replied that he hadn't done so of his own volition. Deuba expressed sorrow over the royal declaration that followed his request to



# **Weighing risks**

Excepts from analysis by Kapil Kafle, Nepal Samacharpatra

abuse accounts The main parliamentary parties are raising a hue and cry that "the king has made a mistake". But if the

king can pull a rabbit out of the hat and resolve the Maoist crisis, this will silence the critics who have refused to help him. Leaders like Giriia Prasad Koirala, and countries such as India, where he has his second home, have not lent support to the Lokendra Bahadur Chand government. Knowingly or unknowingly, Koirala is helping those foreign entities who do not desire peace and stability in Nepal. The Indian papers are also writing editorials helping Koirala. And although Sher Bahadur Deuba may have physically split from the

party, ideologically, he is still parroting Koirala's unhelpful line.

And the Maoists attach more importance to the power of the king than that of the political parties. It is unlikely they will say: "We will stick with brothers Koirala and Deuba." It is not inconceivable that the Maoists who are a fighting a war against the Royal Nepal Army will begin negotiations with the Chand

government, which was formed by the army's Supreme Commander. The political leaders may be crying themselves hoarse calling the new government "unconstitutional", but the people aren't descending on to the streets. That is because of the commitment in the royal address to constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy. It is also because press freedom and the freedom to protest are intact, in fact the press is now even freer because it can be critical of the king. The media has even stopped tagging "terrorist" every time it mentions the word, Maoist.

The stock of political parties will plummet further when the king figures out what it is that can bring the rebels to the negotiating table. It will be the king, with or without the support of the political parties. who will have to take this risky step. We know that the Maoists are not stupid, they will not talk unless they get something. It looks like the king will have to start thinking about a constituent assembly.

Perhaps the next general elections can also serve as an election for the constituent assembly. And as soon as that nappens and the king can announce a date for such elections, the rug will have been pulled out from under Koirala and Company and their reliance on Article 128



# PUTTING THE MEDIA ON TRIAL

leaning vernacular weekly, carried a story headlined: A COLOURFUL EVENING IN FILM CITY. Written by Bishwamani Subedi and Yadavprasad Pandey, it concerned the alleged prostitution, sexual escapades and love affairs of those in the Nepali film industry.

Sadly, this was not out of the ordinary for the paper, leafed through by many for its insider police and army gossip, but considered, like many of the vernacular weeklies, to fall short of professional standards. But what was out of the ordinary, even for the sleaziest of vernaculars, was a photograph of a naked woman that accompanied the last story. Its caption sadistically read: "Do you recognise this Nepali heroine?"

The actress in the photograph, Shrisha Karki, hung herself at her home in Chabahil six days later in a case that shook the film industry over Dasain. It is not hard to imagine the intense degradation the young woman must have felt in her last days. What support would she have possibly received from a society obsessed with women's sexual purity? Anyone who looks at her photograph can measure her vulnerability: in it, she stares up from a hunched-over position in bed, her face contorted in fear, her body frozen in humiliation. It is obvious that the photograph was taken against her will. Karki's is the face of a victim-ised woman pleading, unmistakably, for some decency from her victimiser. This was a decency that Jana Aastha's editor, Kishore Shrestha,

Shrestha's decision to run the photograph has reared ugly allegations about the sordid underworld of journalism. Film artists claim that Shrestha had been using the photograph to extort the actress. According to them, the picture was taken a year and a half ago by a

did not extend to her.

फिल्मनगरीको रङ्गिन रात photographer and a policeman who has since retired, Uddav Bhandari, after inviting

Karki to an apartment and forcibly stripping he with the help of a film director; it was their intention to blackmail her into prostitution. The actress filed a complaint immediately after the incident, but the police were slow to act on it. She went to meet the photographer, but could not retrieve the film. According to film artists. Bhandari gave the photograph to Shrestha, who used it to extort her even after her engagement. He ran the photograph in his paper after Karki refused to give in to his demands. Krishna Malla of the Film Artists' Association says that the organi-

sation is pursuing a variety of legal recourses. These avenues, however, are limited. The Film Artists' Association helped file a plea. with the police-while Karki was still alive-requesting that strong action be taken against Shrestha. But the maximum punishment for defamation is a Rs 5,000 fine and a sentence of two years. The public offence law against indecency carries a maximum punishment of Rs 10,000, a two-year sentence, and damages. According to public interest advocate Gopal Sivakoti Chintan, punishment for such crimes usually amounts to a fine of five or ten rupees, and limited jail time, if any. There are no laws in Nepal to punish those who instigate suicide. A bill on journalists' code of ethics, which bars the publication of photographs without permission, is stuck indefinitely in parliament. With the help of women's rights advocates Shanta Thapaliya and Sapana Pradhan Malla, Karki's family is now proceeding with murder charges against Shrestha, in a case that, according to Chintan, could set a new precedent for Nepal's murder law

lobbying media organisations to hold its members accountable. The Nepal Film Directors' Association has pressed complaints at the Nepal Press Council and the Federation of Nepalese Journalists, asking that action be taken against Shrestha. Acknowledging that Shrestha violated Karki's right to privacy and instigated her death, the Press Council's Chairperson Harihar Birahi has said that the Press Council can issue a warning, demand an apology, and work to revoke Shrestha's press identity card. The Federation has been meeting to deliberate over its response.

The office of Jana Aastha remained closed throughout the Dasain holidays, and neither Shrestha nor the two authors of the article have surfaced. In the meanwhile Biswamani Subedi has taken out a notice claiming that Karki's suicide proved his story's allegations to be true; he has exposed, in the process, his own ignorance of privacy laws and journalistic ethics. The paper's assistant editor resigned after public outcry over the incident mounted. Police at the Hanumandhoka district office have said that the search for Shrestha is on.

Would this case have received such attention if Karki had not lost her life for it? Most probably not. It is an open secret that most vernacular weeklies are backed by various political parties, or cliques within them. The political patrons of Jana Aastha are said to be the Bam Dev Gautam clique of the CPN (UML). These patrons have never, till now. had to question their own moral standing, and their commitment to Nepali women by backing such a substandard, anti-women rag.

Strangely, despite the overt misogyny of Jana Aastha's treatment of Karki, women's rights activists have been slow to organise dissent against this incident. There is plenty they could do to address the widespread denigration of women in the media, and social double standards in demanding sexual purity from women. One problematic but typical response to Karki's death has been to blame the victim. An example: while supporting Karki, the Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Studies has also suggested that the film industry keep its activities respectable. Another response from a film industry journalist was: "Actresses with bad morals are also polluting Nepali society." (Needless to say most activists and inumalists are not of the breed that necks openly on the couches of Himalayan Java).

Manju Thapa of Asmita has been quick to speak against the preying of women in the media after this incident. To return to the 9 October issue of Jana Aastha: the only other story concerning women on the front page was headlined: MANISHA'S LOVER IN A BRAWL. The story reported a scuffle in the Everest Hotel's disco, where actress Manisha Koirala's former boyfriend was supposedly ogling, while drunk, a show of "young women in transparent clothing". In fact the former boyfriend and his wife were having a guiet dinner elsewhere in the hotel. None of which has anything to do with Koirala: Jana Aastha was simply smearing her name in the mud, in a casual show of contempt for an accomplished Nepali woman.

Such prevalent double standards pose a challenge to women's rights activists, who are, let us hope, not too busy with their party politics or NGO projects to act on this case. After all, Shrisha Karki is not on trial here. Nor is the film industry. Kishore Shrestha, Bishwamani Subedi and Yadayprasad Pandey of Jana Aastha are on trial. The police are also on trial, to route out police complicity, if any, in this case. And the sponsors of Jana Aastha are most definitely on trial.

The entire Nepali media faces a serious challenge at this time. Krishna Malla has been heartened by the media's support against Jana Aastha: "The press is very aware. I believe we will receive justice because of the coverage the media has given this incident." But stamping out corruption in the media will take serious effort. The Nepal Press Council and the Federation of Nepalese Journalists must not only penalise Jana Aastha in the strongest terms possible, they must actively enforce more ethical standards in their member organisations Media houses must aggressively flush out those among them who are violating their profession's code of ethics.

If such steps are taken, they may be the only meaning to be salvaged from the death of a brutishly hounded and hunted-down young woman. ♦

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# Don't give

wo elderly people in a retirement home are discussing the food they are served in this Woody Allen loke. One says, "They feed us such awful tasteless food." The other agrees, and adds, "And such small portions. My extended family and clan members are exactly like that. In the days before weddings were catered, they used to conduct vigorous post-mortems of the food served. A typical post-reception dinner conversation would be as follows Mum: "The meat dish, it was too salty and hot. And no meat chunks, just fal and gristle. Why bother inviting guests when you fear feeding them? And don't even get me started on the vegetables . . . and did you notice that the socalled 'pulau' was nothing but plain rice colored with furmeric? Terrible, just terrible. Some people have no shame. Dad: "Even so, I noticed you took three helpings. But I must say the 'laal

mohan' was quite stale. Mum (interrupting): "But its staleness didn't prevent you from devouring four of them. Don't ask me for Eno in the middle of the night...

Returning to Nepal after travels. I used to come home laden with gifts. Unfortunately, no one appreciated the presents. Younger brothers

tossed out the t-shirts because they were made in China. (If I wanted a made in China t-shirt. I could buy it in Asan. Lexpected something else from Hong Kong.") My aunts were equally rude about the saris, which were cotton

Expressions such as "French chiffon", "Japanese jaargette" and "Ranarasi silk" were tossed like Over the years. poisoned arrows at me. Even my I've learnt that beloved grandmother, who I hope has finally found peace and giving doesn't happiness, whose favorite grandchild I was, didn't spare me. "You necessarily know no one in our family ever make vou more wears anything but silk. And you

come here with cheap cotton dhoti

for your aunts. And what kind of

colour is this for me? Red! Am La. young, blushing bride or what? Don't you know by now that I wear

populár.

nothing but pure white silk saris?" A blossoming, promising romance with a wealthy lass was instantly aborted when I proudly presented her with not one but six pairs of earrings (and matching necklaces), made of exotic, exquisite sea shells, that I had bought in a provincial Thai town. The guidebook informed me that buying such local craftwork sustained local artisans and their indigenous occupation. By presenting this gift, I was killing two birds with one stone—appeasing both my social consciousness and the social climber in me. Alas, it only killed the romance.

I must confess that I myself have been quilty of looking the gift horse in the mouth. At a precocious six, we had been visiting one crumbling relative after another for Dasain tika. When one uncle gave me a suka coin I was insulted and threw it away. My father slapped me and my mother asked an older relative to take me home immediately. But the others of my age.

Some years later, older and wiser I was at a classmate's birthday. This was in an era when perhaps one boy out of a thousand actually celebrated a fullscale, western-style birthday with candles on a cake. I had finally pried money out of my father to buy a birthday gift, which was like extracting a healthy tooth without anaesthesia: he firmly believed that receiving is better than giving and that such new-fangled, foreign practices as celebrating a birthday would soon undermine our pure culture. My gift was a box of Monaco biscuits wrapped in glossy green paper and a red ribbon stolen from my sister. However, all that stylish effort came to naught. The birthday cake was so small, and my slice was so tiny that I decided not to give the present

Soon after an American official announced earlier this year that Nepal would receive \$20 million to battle our home-grown insurgents, I overheard a native deconstructionist sniff: "What! Just 20 million? From the richest. nation to the poorest, only 20 million? Why don't they just give us peanuts?"

# Wanted Research Assistants

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- The Great Godavari Getaway Special weekend packages including room with breakfast and dinner, 25 percent discount on health club facilities, Godavari Village Resort,
- Writing Retreat Full board package. Aesthetic living, innovative thinking, creative writing and nature at Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha, 375280

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





Foggy mornings of winter are already here, as that tiny speck of white in this satellite representing Kathmandu valley shows. Expect delayed morning flights, plummeting maximum temperatures. The mist is confined to Himalayan valleys, and the rest of north India is dominated by a wide high pressure zone. Off in the Bay of Bengal coast of Andhra Pradesh is a low pressure circulation that is not quite a cyclone. This may bring us some moisture incursion later next week

KATHMANDIIVALLEY









### Family Matters Robinton Mistry Faber and Faber, London, 2002

Rs 750 Mistry's eagerly anticipated third povel ones back to the author's vintage territory—Parsis in Mumabi, their fragmented families and tenuous communities. An old Parsi widower and patriarch is haunted by memories of the past. A broken ankle sets into motion a series of events—a great unravelling and a revelation of the family's lovelorn past—that leads to the narrative's final outcome

## Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia Ahmed Rashid

Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 2002 Rs472

Rashid, who previously unravelled the Taleban regime in Afghanistan, now investigates the five Central Asian republics adjacent to Afghanistan that were part of the former Soviet Union. Based on groundbreaking research and numerous interviews, Jihad explains the roots of fundamentalist rage in Central Asia, and suggests ways the threat can be neutralised through diplomatic and economic intervention



### The Algebra of Infinite Justice Arundhati Roy Viking/Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 2001

Rs 472

A collection of Arundhati Roy's political writings so far: The End of Imagination: The Greater Common Good; Power Politics; The Ladies Have Feelings, So; The Algebra of Infinite Justice; War is Peace. The essays are carefully researched and closely argued, and deal with big dams, India's detonation of its nuclear bomb, the downside of corporate globalisation, and the US government's 'war against terror'.

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

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Based on the short story by Philip K Dick Steven Spielberg's Minority Report is set in a

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enali artists are finding new outlets for their work. Three young painters, Erina Tamrakar, Pramila Bajracharya and Sunila Bajracharya, are now also designing wine hottle labels Their artworks now grace bottles of Nepali-made wine of Canadian vintage. Impressed by their paintings at an exhibition in February at the NAFA Art Gallery, Canadian Consul Carla

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takes the talk of the street it has been been broad an electrical one or

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each of the three women. The artists assumed that their paintings would simply hang in a quiet corner of an expat residence. Imagine their surprise, then, when they were told that their paintings would be used to sell wine. This is an honour for us, as well as a great promotional opportunity," says Erina.

As their work received more

with a unique proposition: an exhibition at the newly-opened Kasthamandap Art Studio, which combines the aesthetic pleasures of an art nallery with sociable café culture. "The gallery was opened to help promote young artists. In the coming days we also hope to hold photography and design exhibitions," says Ellen, a partner in the studio. For Sunila and her

trying to promote the new generation of artists, enthusiasts and art buyers." In addition, Erina conducts art classes for beginner's, as well as colloquia for more advanced enthusiasts.

reach out to more people with

sometimes sterile environs of

sometimes think that showing

"But this kind of thing is com-

the idea because the gallery is

highbrow galleries. "Artists

their work in gallery cafés

their art, take it out of the

The show is on at the café gallery until 30 October, and displays 13 oil paintings, of which three are already sold. Erina's works are mainly based on the everyday lives of women. Pramila displays landscapes, and Sunila focuses on semi-abstract faces. All three women studied fine arts at the Lalit Kala Campus

Three young women are helping revitalise the Nepali art scene.

colleagues, this was a chance to art nalleries increases in the Valley, Kathmandu migh yet return to its historic avatar as a city of art that diminishes its value," says Sunila. lives with the people, rather nonplace abroad, and we support than remain the reserve of only the very wealthy, "It isn't as difficult to be an artist today as it used to be. says Frina "Of

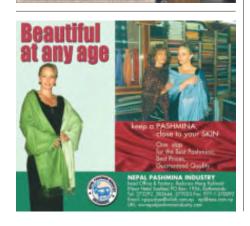
As the number of course, many challenges remain

> better opportuni-Kadhamandan Δr Studio 429590

but Nepali artists

today have much







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# Under My Hat |

by Kunda Dixit

he mass-murder of goats this Dasain, and their consumption, did not leave much time for our technocrats to get seriously down to the task of rebuilding the nation. But I am confident that by the latter part of this decade they should be able to do so. Caught up in all the festivities, one important anniversary slipped by largely unnoticed. It was the 20th anniversary of the first ever use of an emoticon in an

email message in 1982: Nuclear scientist #1: Wakey, wakey you lazy #\$%&"! Orangutan :-)

Nuclear scientist #2: Ha! Ha! Ha! Groovy! See what I mean? The heauty of the smiley emoticon was that you could hurl the worst insults ever invented, casting serious aspersions about your interlocutor's female ancestors, if any, and if you stuck a little smiley at the end, all would be forgiven.

The world has moved on, of course, And the primitive BBS of 20 years ago have given way to the internet, search engines, personalised sites, and chat rooms. I entered one of these chat rooms recently, and realised just how advanced the language of the internet has become as youngsters communicate with each other about matters of vital importance to the future of the world. Here is a short extract from one such chat room which is open 24 hours of every solar day: Enter LOVER BOY.

LOVER BOY: Hi guyz GEEK: I really think ratifying the Kyoto Protocol is the only way to prevent the unpredictable side-effects of climate change. GOONDA: Whadddiz? ur in wrong room, get out of

CHOR enters room. CHOR: That is like so totally uncool, man. LOVER BOY: Hi galz. YAMRAJ enters room. YAMRAJ: Wutz kookin, guyz

LOVER BOY: asi? LOVER BOY: galz, PM me GOONDA: brb GOONDA leaves room

CHOR: goonda's gone 2 loo PINKY: no, goonda gone 2 PM PINKY: mwahahahahaha LOVER BOY: hey Yamraj you guy or gal? YAMRAJ: lol

GEEK: The only way to address the greenhouse effect is if America cuts carbon emissions by 5% of 1991 PINKY: ok g2g

PINKY leaves room LOVER BOY: au reservoir, pinky c u later LOVER BOY: anyone still here of the female species GOONDA enters room GOONDA: am back yar YAMRAJ: ya i'm phemale LOVER BOY: lets go PM

Unfortunately, the vocabulary of our future stars is constricted by the limitations of the gwerty keyboard. We need to give expression to the vast array of emotions and hormones that flow through these chats, and here is where emoticons can play an important role. We also need to move beyond smiley to other emoticons more relevant to the times. Here is a sample-

Wild boar emerging through fog Baseball pitcher blowing bubble gum C|:3@) Mahatma Gandhi Hare Krishna devotee snoring 

KP Bhattarai addressing press conference while chewing paan

train school boys.

<[:-]== The new Minister of Women and Social Welfare

B abita Lama may be small and fragile, but she moves mountains. Providing health care in her native Humla has trained. There is one nagging worry: the insurgency has already pushed back the would intimidate anyone, but for trust's programme of expansion by a year. But Babita, it's just in a day's work. The nearest functioning hospital from Humla is on the Indian border, a she's not deterred. "All you need is a sense of two-week walk over rugged mountains. The child mortality rate here is 300—three times the purpose and commit-

ment," she tells us.

"The rest will follow."







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