



### Record year of record-breaking

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first ascent of Sagarmatha was a record-breaking year for breaking records on the world's highest mountain. Appa Sherpa made his 13<sup>th</sup> ascent (see p5) and said modestly that he wasn't trying to break any records. Lakpa Gyelu raced to the summit in under 11 hours, slashing two hours off the record set by Pemba Gyalzen two days before. Lhakpa Sherpa became the first woman to climb Everest three times and took along her 15-year-old sister Ming Kipa who became the youngest climber to reach the top. Ang Chhring Sherpa of Kantipur became the first Nepali journalist to reach the top and file a story. The largest number from a single family ever to climb Everest were six out of seven Sherpa brothers from Beding in Dolakha. Two of the brothers have climbed Everest nine times, the seventh brother turned back from the summit at 8,400m because of high winds. One of the other brothers is the only Nepali to have climbed K2.



# The king castles

**KUNDA DIXIT**  
King Gyanendra's move on Wednesday to appoint Surya Bahadur Thapa as prime minister was sharply criticised by those who lost out. But it fulfilled the main demands of parties agitating against the king. On Wednesday, the king used Article 127 to activate Clause 35 which gives the prime minister executive powers and full authority to name a cabinet. King Gyanendra and Surya Bahadur

Thapa have not seen eye-to-eye in the

**Castling: A special defensive manoeuvre in chess during which the king and the rook move together. If not followed up properly, it can be a trap.**

past. Thapa was a liberal-Pancha who struggled to expand prime ministerial powers during an absolute monarchy. He met stiff resistance from hardliners in the palace, whom he collectively called *Bhumigat Giroha*, "The Underground Gang". Some of them had made a comeback, so this week's events were in a sense a settling of scores.

Surya Bahadur Thapa is now a much more powerful prime minister than he ever was four times previously. His first order of business is to pacify the five-party combine by offering them a face-saving way to call off their agitation. He can dangle juicy cabinet positions or even announce a willingness to declare elections.

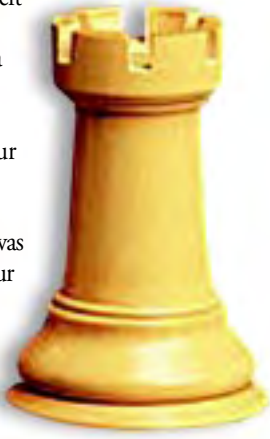
The Maoists have indicated they will talk to Thapa, and he may even be tempted to agree to constituent assembly elections, which would be a re-enactment of the 1980 referendum. It was Thapa who delivered a multiparty defeat to Naryanhiti on a platter then, and he retains some of his crisis management skills.

But the UML is smarting from humiliation, and Thapa needs to do a lot of fence-mending. The UML's Subhas Nemwang told us: "The king does not listen to parties that commanded 190 seats in parliament and chooses someone whose party had only 11 members in the house. How can we accept that?"

Speculation is rife about what nixed Madhab Kumar Nepal's chances, and political insiders we interviewed said it was strong opposition from several embassies in Kathmandu. "The international community just can't digest a communist government here, especially one that still calls itself 'Marxist-Leninist'," said one source. Perhaps sensing this, the UML toned down its radical anti-monarchist sloganeering, but that seems to have come too late.

There was also some deft mediation by senior RPP leaders to convince Girija Prasad Koirala that he should go along with his old buddy, Surya Bahadur Thapa and abandon his alliance with the UML.

If it is true that there was diplomatic activity in favour of Thapa, then it is also likely that the same forces will now try to convince the parties to join his interim government. ♦



Timesnepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #88

Q. Do you agree with the student unions targeting private schools?

Yes 38.6%

No 61.4%

Total votes: 1,891

Weekly Internet Poll # 89. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Who do you think currently best represents the general welfare of the Nepal and Nepalis?

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We congratulate Appa Sherpa on his World Record setting 13<sup>th</sup> successful ascent of Mt. Everest. We express our gratitude for taking us with him to the Top of the World on this momentous occasion.

We at Standard Chartered Bank believe in the Value of delivering the highest quality of banking services, as we have been consistently doing for over 15 years in Nepal and 150 years globally. As the Kingdom joins the Global Golden Jubilee celebration of the ascent of Mt. Everest, we are proud to reiterate our commitment to our Values and pledge to consistently strive to meet and exceed all your financial needs.

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STATE OF THE STATE

by CK LAL



# Staking claim

Deception is everything  
in times of war  
the skin of a fox  
shall be my secret suit of armour.

- Nietzsche



## THE KATHMANDU SHUFFLE

Every time history brings us to a fork on the road, our leaders have this extraordinary capacity to take the wrong turn. We then meander all over the place, blundering in the wilderness, to come back to where we started. Here we go again. The king, country, parties, and all of us have gone back to October Fourth. Once more we were taken through an excruciating search for a prime minister acceptable to all, or at least one against whom no one has any violent objections. No mean feat, considering that last time the only person who footed the bill was Mr Caretaker himself, Lokendra Bahadur Chand.

Once more we engaged in long debates about the constitutionality, or otherwise, of the process. And finally, we have fifth-time premier Surya Bahadur Thapa. If only he had agreed in October maybe we would have been prevented a lot of national heartburn, and not wasted months experimenting with this and that.

The UML has lost face, and can be expected to pour its fury out on the streets in the coming days. The Nepali Congress was torn by severe internal criticism of Girija Prasad Koirala's embrace of Madhab Kumar Nepal and will be more subdued. A question mark hangs over the whole peace process.

We are back to square one, but not to 4 October 2002. We are back to May 1990, when the first kangresi-communist interim government was formed to oversee elections after the Peoples' Movement. In terms of the evolution of democracy we have returned 13 years to a time when a new polity was being crafted.



The only difference today is that the euphoria of democracy is missing, the hope is gone—there is just an overwhelming sense of weariness with this game of musical chairs in Kathmandu. The entrenched political class, it seems, will go around in circles till there are no more chairs left. We find ourselves agreeing with the Maoist

analysis of this as a shuffling of cards of the 'old regime'. History has moved on, stop-gap measures to buy time and prolong the power of Kathmandu's ruling cliques cannot last.

We can understand Madhabji's self-righteous rage. After all, he was the common candidate for prime ministership put forward by six parliamentary parties. But something happened between Friday night's joint-party meeting with the king, and Wednesday morning when Surya Bahadurji was summoned to the palace. What disqualified the leader of the Unified Marxist-Leninists?

The West has always been allergic to that pseudo-radical party name, and regional players had their own favourite who was not the UML general secretary. It is an indication of how weak we have become as a state that diplomats this time didn't even bother to conceal their meetings with political leaders and express their preference for leadership.

We have brought this interference on ourselves. It is our own disunity, dismal governance and the absence of a sense of greater national purpose that makes us so vulnerable to geo-political tectonics. In the end, it shouldn't really matter whether it was Surya Bahadur or Madhab Nepal, the king would have used Article 127 to appoint either. Both would have the unenviable task of trying to agree on the composition and portfolios of a new cabinet. And both would have had to work with other parties to fill the cabinet posts.

This may then be the time to look forward and help create a stable interim administration under a newly-powerful prime minister to take the peace talks forward, and oversee local and general elections. Surely, that is worth uniting for.

The appointment of Surya Bahadur Thapa as the second prime minister after the October Fourth royal move doesn't resolve any of the outstanding political issues in the country. Thapa is leading just another government "of the king, by the king", and by implication, "for the king".

Vesting the executive authority in the new government doesn't indemnify the palace from its future actions. Thapa's nomination isn't a political settlement, it's yet another administrative fiat of an activist monarch. The irony is that the choice of Thapa was probably thrust upon the king, since Thapa isn't known to have been too close to King Gyanendra in the past.

In all probability, Thapa won the race due to what Newsweek senior editor Michael Hirsh calls the exercise of American power through the "imperialism of neighbors". If Nepal's imperial neighbour is unable to deliver a political miracle by way of helping resolve the Maoist insurgency, the king may once again be tempted to try another of his faithful courtiers, Badri Prasad Mandal. The latter is waiting in the wings along with other loyalists to pounce upon the failures of a leader seen to have been imposed from outside.

Unlike the natural buffoonery of Kuber Sharma or the artifice of Ramesh Nath Pandey, boorishness is not as intrinsic to Badri Prasad Mandal as it appears at first glance. For the shrewd supremo of the splinter Sadbhabana Party, an apparent lack of sophistication is his most trusted shield. He uses his rustic exterior to camouflage his unbridled political ambitions.

Mandal first proved his political mettle by humbling Nepali Congress heavyweight Shailaja Acharya on her home turf, in the traditional Koirala stronghold of Morang. Narayanhiti appears to have taken due note of Mandal's remarkable exploit.

His antics as a junior minister during the Panchayat, when he was alleged to have molested a nurse at Bir Hospital, were soon overshadowed by Mandal's claims to represent the political interests of madhesis. When the time came to find the first-ever deputy prime minister from the tarai, the choice for the king was clear.

Mandal subsequently justified his selection by successfully organising the first public reception for the king in Biratnagar in January. All that the leaders of Nepali Congress and UML

parties could do after that was fret and fume. By rallying the masses in the name of the king, Mandal exposed the hollowness of their claims of holding sway in the tarai.

He then went ahead and appropriated the political legacy of late Gajendra Narayan Singh by splitting the Sadbhabana, and his continuing influence inside the palace bureaucracy was on full display again last Friday. Sher Bahadur Deuba got invited to the 30 May meet of mainstream political parties at the palace, but Anandi Devi wasn't extended the same courtesy, even though the status of NC(D) isn't very different from that of SP(AD).

Mandal, the smooth-operator then used realpolitik to oust Col Narayan Singh Pun from centre-stage of the government-Maoist talks. After Mandal began leading the negotiations from the government side, the profile of Maoist convenor Baburam Bhattarai went down several notches.

Mandal once again came in handy when the Royal Nepali Army brass decided to deny that the movements of its men had been confined to a 5 km perimeter of barracks. After this fiasco,

any self-respecting individual in Mandal's position would have resigned to save face. But all Mandal did was grin and pretend nothing happened. It isn't at all surprising that royalty values the loyalty of such a malleable madhesi.

The half-hour Mandal harangue at Narayanhiti on Friday evening irritated Koirala no end, but it's very unlikely that Mandal was doing this in the presence of the king and the crown prince all on his own. As a street-smart survivor, Mandal knows how to unfurl his sails in the direction of the prevailing wind.

As home minister Mandal would probably have to share part of the blame for agreeing to confer Nepali citizenship on a proportion of Bhutanese refugees. But here again, the responsibility for that historic blunder is likely to be shouldered by the technocrat foreign minister Narendra Bikram Shah.

Whatever face the dice of power may show for the moment, after the political charade at the Narayanhiti Palace last Friday, Mandal may have become our own teflon man. The chances of royalist Badri Mandal as PM-in-waiting looks brighter than ever. He would face very few challengers since it would be politically suicidal for tarai-based leaders like Koirala and Nepal to oppose the candidature of a determined madhesi. So what if he mashed a nurse 20 years ago?

Mandal is the trump card up Narayanhiti's sleeves to counter the Girija-Madhab combine. And despite questions of protocol the Maoists would prefer a royalist on the saddle to a fellow traveller comrade for now.

As long as prime ministers are chosen from among many petitioners, Mandal will remain a serious contender for the leadership of the country. Only a concerted campaign against him can turn Mandal into a fall guy. If he is retained by Thapa as his deputy (with mainstream political parties bent upon boycotting the new cabinet as well, this is a strong possibility), Mandal will remain in the race for the top job and is the man to watch. ♦

## LETTERS

### PARTY TIME

Re: The editorial, 'Party time' (#145). In the heat of the battle of the current political stalemate, the big picture is getting lost, and the warring parties seem more interested in protecting and advancing their own power

position than anything else. The Maoists seem most interested in containing the army (so that they can continue to be a force to be reckoned with). The political parties don't seem to want to go beyond restoring the 1990 constitution (so that they can

resume their corrupt practices). The king seems adamant about teaching the political parties a lesson for all the mayhem of the last 12 years (so that he remains a potent rallying force). However, all three are behaving in a predictable manner. No one is talking about the necessary institutional reforms—political, economic and social—to promote not only responsibility but also accountability.

Alok Bohara, New Mexico, USA

• It was good to hear that Lokendra Bahadur Chand resigned so that a resolution could be found to the present deadlock. However, the king should lay down certain rules otherwise the same old corrupt leaders will have a field day

playing the game, 'ministerial musical chairs'. They have shown no leadership qualities, they are just cronies—their best asset is play-making. It is clear to everybody they will bring the country down again unless the king guides democracy with vision and good work ethics. God bless Nepal.

Sagar Onta, Portland, USA

### LOK BAHADUR

Thank you for the continued attention your newspaper has given to the plight of trekking porters in Nepal. This issue is of critical importance to the future of Nepal's trekking and tourism industry, and the Nepali Times has realised this from the very beginning.

Your recent coverage of the IPPG Machermo Aid Post and the

plight of Lok Bahadur Kharki does indeed have a happy ending. Thanks to the hard work of the IPPG doctors and the dozens of porters who carried Lok's body to Kunde and then kept a 24 hour vigil at Teaching hospital for him, Lok has made an amazing recovery. He is now able to walk on his own, speak coherently, and can even cook for himself. Doctors estimated that this would take an entire year to reach this stage. We are now expecting a speedy and full recovery.

Lok is a testament to the strength and determination of Nepali porters, and his story is again a testament to the fact that compassion and solidarity can accomplish miracles.

Ben Ayers, Porters' Progress Nepal

### TIBETANS

As friends of Nepal for over 40 years, we have always been proud of your nation's commitment to human rights and, in particular, your generosity and support for Tibetan refugees who have streamed into Nepal for half a century. As we all celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the climbing of Everest, should we not also be celebrating Nepal's historic welcome to suffering Tibetans? Thus it is with great shock and sadness that we read that Nepal has deported 18 Tibetans. The Nepal Police's collaboration with Chinese officials has resulted in the arresting, detaining, and now deporting of innocent Tibetans, half of them children and juveniles. As a state party to the International Covenant on





COMMENT

by BP GIRI



There is no shortage of commentary in the Nepali press advising the king publicly on how to tackle the two political problems facing the country: the non-cooperation of the parliamentary parties post-October Fourth, and a peaceful resolution of the Maoist insurgency. Although committed in principle to the constitutional provisions of a parliamentary democracy, the king's actions have since indicated he is not satisfied with the status quo which until recently limited the monarch to a ceremonial role, leaving the effective rule of the country to an elected government. Without going into the merits or shortcomings of his October Fourth declaration, it is reasonable to conclude in retrospect that his action has proved to be a strategic blunder with serious implications for the country.

What motivated the king to take the current course of action? There are as many opinions as there are commentators. If there is some consensus, it is that he lost faith in the Deuba-led government and the parliamentary parties to tackle the insurgency, or solve the country's development crisis. From events that unfolded later, his desire to broker and oversee negotiations with the rebels, too, seems to have been a likely motivation for action. Of course, the king may have used all this as a pretext to grab political power in a soft take-over cannot be ruled out. Indeed, many of the parties fervently believe this. Taking over the reigns of power is one thing, but effecting a lasting solution to the country's formidable problems is another, and it is here that the king's course of action has proved to be regrettable. First, the king's hope that he could

# The king's way

Maybe now we will find the middle ground between absolute anarchy and absolute monarchy.

impose a Panchayat-style government led by old palace loyalists has failed. It is true that major parliamentary parties are discredited by the near-total anarchy they unleashed in the country in the last decade. The agitation the parties spearheaded forced the king's hand, and he had to roll back the Chand administration. But the real point here is even after the king put together a government of his liking, he seemed powerless to exercise popular authority to bring about much needed political or social change, or impose his will on the people. The king enjoys a unity of command of the country's executive, legislative and judicial powers unhindered by constitutional provisions. But due to the same weaknesses that plagued Nepal's monarchy during its Panchayat years, it cannot translate its formidable authority into effective political and administrative action. Already the signs of its decaying authority are everywhere. Numerous press reports tell us about how the Maoists are running amok in the countryside with extortion, intimidation, and forced recruitment in a scale bigger than the last time they sat for the talks with the Deuba regime. Despite all the negotiation that is taking place, it is clear that the rebels are preparing for battles on a larger scale. Soon, there will be temptation to use accumulated weapons to gain political advantage in a later stage in the negotiations. The establishment does have international support. But if it can't figure out how to translate diplomatic or military advantage into effective political or administrative action, no amount of international support will make any real difference on the ground. Now that his government of royal nominees is no more, at the fundamental level the king's challenge is whether or not he can exercise enough moral, political and coercive authority to bring the warring political forces to the parliamentary mainstream and encourage constructive leadership toward modernisation. A big leap in economic and political reforms along the lines that China took in the early 1980s, or India in the 1990s, is not just a slogan. It is what the country direly needs at the moment. For this to happen, the king will have to learn to work with the existing political forces whether he likes the

individuals who lead these forces or not. The last eight months have been wasted, not just because the Chand administration lacked popular mandate to rule, but because rule by decree is hardly the way to usher Nepal into the 21st century. The king must now use his position of authority to strengthen the institutions that monitor the corrupting powers of an irresponsible government: the CIAA, the investigative processes of the parliament and the judiciary. Only a monarchy that refuses to compete with democracy at the political level has a future in a country surrounded by two fairly radical systems of ideas (China's state capitalism with socialist characteristics and India's bourgeois democracy). Chand's resignation as prime minister has opened up an opportunity for Nepal's political elite (including the Maoists whose leaders, despite their rhetoric, are alienated from the same middle class they despise so much) to work together one more time. But a number of things are still likely go wrong: ● The palace may still want to sabotage the transfer of power to the elected parties by trying to meddle in the process of creating the next government. It is likely that the change hasn't come about because of the king's change of heart, but through international pressure and strategic calculations. ● The major political parties already seem inclined to declare the change in government a victory of their street agitation. It may partly be true, but they should also know that it masks their shameful failure to institute a politics of possibility for over a decade. ● The Maoists' desire to play kingmaker has been interrupted by Chand's resignation. A functioning democracy, not the king per se, is their real enemy. Historically, communists have shown a capacity to fight feudalism, but they have failed to win the war of ideas in a pluralist democracy.

So, expect the Maoists to continue making threatening noises. Their hope of positioning themselves as the harbingers of a new totalitarianism is now truly threatened. ♦

(BP Giri is editor of *Center for South Asian Studies Newsletter* at the University of Virginia in the United States.)



Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and adherant to the "Gentleman's Agreement" of 1989 between UNHCR and the Tibetan government in exile, Nepal is bound to protect the right of Tibetans who seek refuge from persecution. How is it that Nepal has now turned its back on its Tibetan friends across the border and buckled under Chinese pressure? We trust that Nepal's free press will not allow this outrageous action to pass without vigorous protest. **Malcolm and Marcia Odell, South Hampton, USA**

**MESSNER** I attended the talk by Reinhold Messner and read your review "Messner: Don't mess with Everest", #147). His speech

was politically correct and it seems that he spoke from his heart; feelings were genuine. But at the same time, he showed some "foreigner" approaches. The way he talked about corruption, for instance, gave the impression that it is a phenomenon that only exists in countries like Nepal. It's time to change the question. Instead of "what are the consequences of the conflict on tourism" the question should be: "what impact has tourism had on the insurgency?" The benefits of tourism have not filtered down to the people and this has helped create the conditions for 'Maoism' to grow. Nepal must also discuss other economic alternatives. Tourism is very sensitive to external factors and it is a strategic mistake to

have the economy so dependent on this activity. **Luis Paulo Ferraz, Kathmandu** ● The Everest Golden Jubilee celebrations are over. The way in which the fragile environment of the region was neglected for the race-to-record by the climbers was disheartening. Why do we forget that the real beauty of Everest is not only its height but also its pristine surroundings which we have so cruelly neglected? **Bhumika Ghimire, Kathmandu** **BP** Your editorial 'Interview with BP' (#147) once more demonstrates the flirtation with fatalistic tendencies so prevalent in the

Nepali intelligientia and psyche. The point of your editorial is well understood in spite of the poor taste in satire. Why are you trying to beat a dead cow? BP Koirala was a good political leader, maybe even a visionary, but, he is dead. He has been dead. There's nothing he can do for the Nepali people anymore. It's time to wake up and smell the coffee. We are the only ones who can help ourselves. The silent majority needs to awaken and tell the politicians, parties, Maoists, bureaucrats, extremists, opportunists, royalists and elite that they cannot no longer take us for granted. We need to vote out the malignant tumor that is a plague to our society. Calling on Lord Pasupatinath or BP may merely have a psychological comfort, but, it is we, us Nepal

who need to act. There isn't going to be any divine intervention. It is we, we have to be responsible for our own actions. For a repsonible news media like your's, it is indeed interesting to observe the fatalistic (karmic) attitude in your editorial. All you are doing is justifying and perpetuating a dysfunctional socio-religious system. **SN Singh, email** ● 'Interview with BP' was hilarious and sad at the same time. At this moment of crisis, the country needs someone with his vision and boldness. His theme of 'national reconciliation' in a slightly modified strategy is what we need now to bring the palace, parties and the extremists together. **Sridhar Pandey, New Delhi**

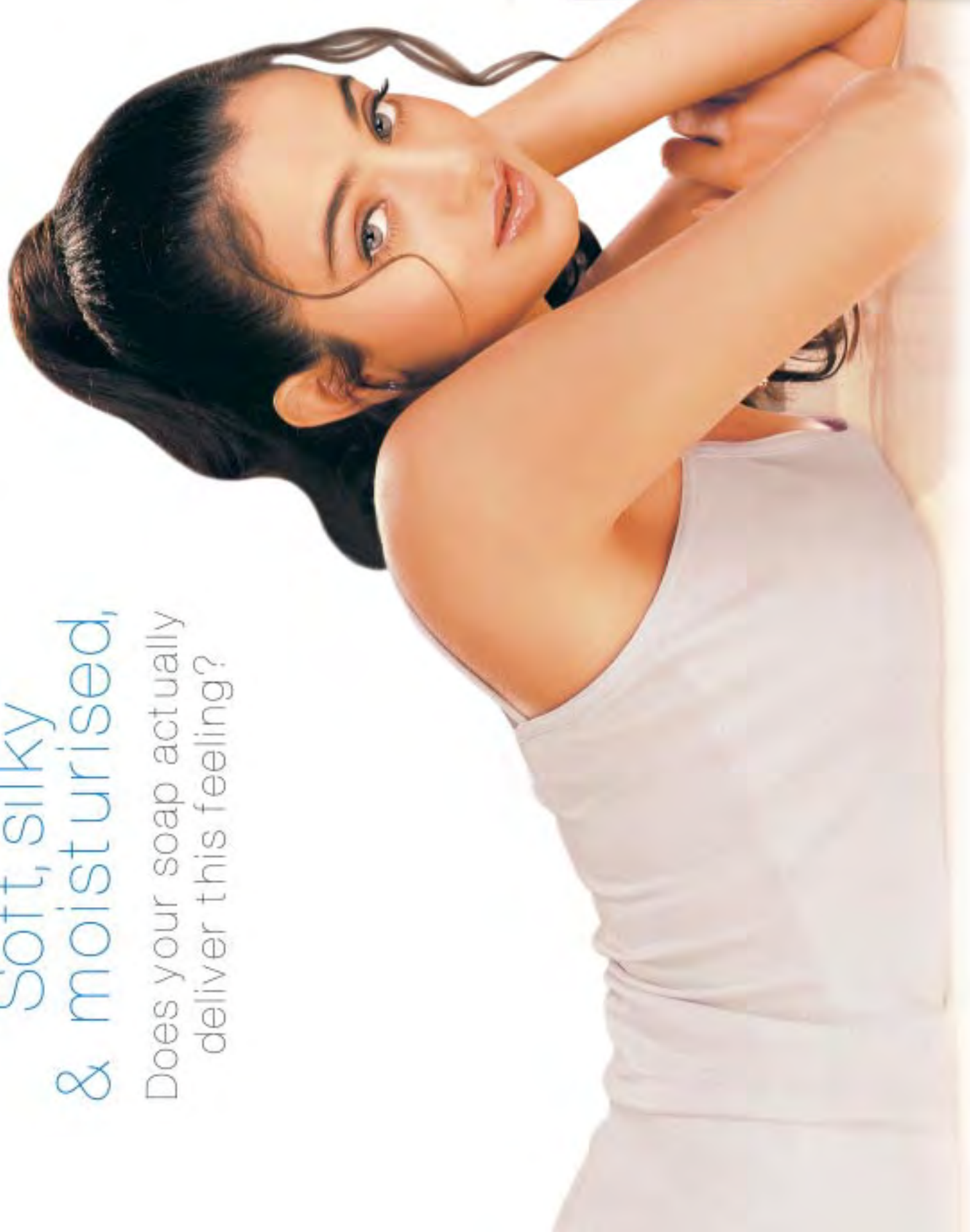
**CAKE** CK Lal's 'Let them eat the cake' (#147) was impressive, however I feel that Lal deviates from his previous views. Our society only hears the loud destructive voices, but not the silent grievances. We are drifting back to the Rana period. At that time only a few courtiers had access to education, similarly in future only those who have money can have access to quality education. And one thing is sure: unless the children of this hi-fi class are affected, nobody will bother about the children of poor people. Since this strike affected all the people who have the authority but not the will, let's hope something good comes out of it. **Giri Raj Dahal, Chosun University, Korea**



# It's not just soap, it's skincare!

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deliver this feeling?



BIZ NEWS

Brand ambassador

When Appa Sherpa stood on top of Sagarmatha for a record 13<sup>th</sup> time on the morning of 23 May 2003, he was carrying a flag of Nepal. But he also unfurled the banner of Standard Chartered Bank (SCB), which sponsored his climb and also made him its Brand Ambassador.

The bank held a Town Hall Meeting on 4 June with all staff from its Kathmandu branches present. CEO Sujit Mundul presented Appa with a cheque for Rs 500,000 (see pic, right).



Mundul said: "We are proud to have Appa Sherpa as the Standard Chartered Bank Brand Ambassador since he embodies our values of creativity, responsiveness, internationalism, courage and trustworthiness."

Appa then symbolically took the cheque over to the bank counter and cashed it. He also signed the bank's banner that was taken to the summit which will go on a tour of SCB branches and finally to the bank's headquarters in London. "It was a source of immense joy for us. Appa Sherpa carried with him the pride and aspirations of each and every staff member of Standard Chartered Bank to the Top of The World," said Anil Shah the head of consumer banking at Standard Chartered.

Appa said climbing Mt Everest is never easy, even if it is for the 13<sup>th</sup> time. There are so many challenges: the wind, the weather, human factors and the crowd on top. Appa Sherpa is 40 years old and was born in Thame, he is married to Yangi Sherpa and has two sons and two daughters. He first reached the top of Mt Everest in 1990 and has been doing it every year except 1996.

Upswing

SARS and the Iraq war may have taken a toll on our tourism but May saw an remarkable spike in Indian arrivals. A total of 10,182 Indians visited Nepal last month, marking a 30 percent growth over last May. The influx was attributed to holiday packages floated by Indian Airlines, Summer Getaway by NTB and five-star hotels in Nepal. The nation's present SARS-free status has also made it a popular alternative for Indian vacationers. Long-haul and third country arrivals from Germany, Japan and the US, however, plummeted.

Motor show

Calling all motorheads. NADA's third auto show is scheduled for 17-21 September and the focus is going to be on everything from two-wheeled bikes,

luxury cars to tyres for transport trucks. Organised by Global Position and Management Services, the show will also exhibit fuels and lubricants, tubes, batteries, accessories and even garage equipment. Eager participants began booking their spaces this week.

SKAL Asian Assembly



SKAL International held its Asian Assembly in Kathmandu 29 May – 1 June in Kathmandu with nearly 100 top managers and executives from the travel industry attending. The assembly elected Ambica Shrestha of the Dwarika's Hotel as the new head of SKAL West Asia. In picture: Peter Hillary and Jamling Sherpa at the SKAL opening.

STRICTLY BUSINESS

by ASHUTOSH TIWARI



ICAN can Raising the profile of number crunchers.

When will accounting be as respected as medicine, engineering and law in Nepal?

The statistics are depressing. Earlier this year a Valley-wide study commissioned by the Private Sector Promotion Project of GTZ-Nepal found only 2,000 out of almost 7,000 auditors and accountants are professionally active, and those not necessarily full time. From Nepali affiliates of Global Big Four accounting firms to one-man-outfits run by D-Class Registered Auditors, the two major concerns of accountants were expanding their share in a Rs 450 million market and sprucing up their professional image, which, let's face it, is notorious for less than ethical practices.

To some extent, those concerns emanate from a historical legacy. After all, until six years ago, it used to be easy to be an accountant in Nepal. All one needed to do was submit educational credentials to the Office of the Auditor General, who would then issue a license—arbitrarily, perfunctorily and inevitably. This led to an explosion in the number of auditors and accountants of varying competencies.

In the meantime, highly qualified Chartered Accountants decided enough was enough, and started lobbying for a new Nepal Chartered Accountants Act. Enacted in 1997, the act paved the way for a government-recognised



autonomous, professionally managed institute that would serve as both license-issuer and a business membership organisation. And so, in 1998 the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nepal (ICAN) came into being with a mission statement that sought: "to be recognised as a respected and highly professional accounting body, providing leadership on standards, education and self-regulation in Nepal".

To its credit, in the last four years ICAN has worked hard. Along the way they earned enemies who wanted to maintain the status quo but they continued to conduct examinations, issue licenses, run skill upgrade workshops, foster relations with donor agencies and counterparts abroad to make itself a financially strong entity that demanded high professional standards. Unwilling to rest on their laurels, ICAN officials say much remains to be done, especially after their elections later this month.

As ICAN members solicit votes in the next two weeks, they might

want to spell out what more they will do to make accounting a more respectable profession. Raising requirements of entry, though important, is only the first step. After all, in a profession that can only grow if more clients buy its services, improving public perception about auditors and accountants is necessary for long term growth.

ICAN together with the Big Four affiliates is in a unique position to take industry-wide proactive leadership. They can market the strengths of the entire profession to Nepali firms that are either unaware or unsure about the range of services that auditors and accountants offer beyond pushing the usual statutory paperwork. Having completed the groundwork for their professional development infrastructure, the challenge facing ICAN's new executive committee is convincing the junta that they are vital to business success, and not a burden to be avoided or called upon a day before filing audit or tax reports. ♦

FEEDBACK

by KABINDRA PRADHAN

A carpetbagger's utopia

There have been some negative comments in the Nepali media on the Bhote Kosi hydro project ('The price we pay for power', #142) and a rebuttle from Panda Energy

International ('Misleading and inaccurate', #144) regarding the power purchase agreement with the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA).

Trust the Nepalis to completely miss the silver lining in the pockets of shareholders. There is much to thank the promoters for, especially their pioneering work in establishing a few basic principles on how to get rich: Assured market, Business price determined only on the cost of production, and payment in hard currency. These are the 'ABCs' of joint venture foreign investment in Nepal.

There is no doubt that we will quickly become a nation of rich people (or at least rich shareholders) if we follow these principles. Better still, if we apply the same to the dairy industry the resulting flood of milk would be a Kosi, a *dudh* Kosi in fact.



The first step in any enterprise is ensuring a market for the product, even though it is plagued by fickle customers and suppliers who undercut each other. Even worse is if selective purchase results in wastage. The first principle then is to force the market to pay for everything produced, thereby creating a captive market. The product must be collected from the place of production: a very important consideration in our roadless country, and absolutely necessary during strikes. If the cow, buffalo or yak is milked, payment must be made.

The second principle is determining price. Right now, the government does a rather unfair job that fails to take into consideration the high cost of production due to special "Nepali Conditions" (read rock bottom productivity). They also assume labour costs are low.

One way around would be to give a modest salary, perhaps in dollars, to the dairy farmers and especially women who do most of the work, which brings up the third principle.

Payment has to be made in hard currency if there is foreign equity involved to protect against the steady devaluation of the local currency. Additionally, it ensures a steady stream of foreign investment, the mantra of all economic development. Once the

government agrees to buy all the milk produced in a price that is solely dependent on the cost of production (and not current market prices) and to pay for the milk in hard currency, foreign investors will come in hordes to invest in Nepal—SARS or the Maoists be damned.

There is one last trick. The government can easily go back on its word so it is important to have strong support. In Nepal, the shareholders of the Bhote Kosi project have very powerful backers who don't shy away from using force—money, missiles or marines—to get what they want.

To sum up, I propose a multimillion dollar dairy farm, financed almost exclusively by citizens and banks of a certain superpower. The government is to buy all the milk at the site of production and pay in dollars with an annual increase in purchase price linked to the US inflation rate. The purchase price will include a reasonable salary for farmers and include a steady return on the investment, no matter how expensive the investment proves to be. I am even willing to gift the government all the dairy animals after 30 years. Is anyone willing to join me in this venture? ♦

(Kabindra Pradhan has a farm in Butwal and runs a furniture factory in Kathmandu.)



HUBERT H. HUMPHREY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Commission for Educational Exchange between the United States and Nepal (also known as the Fulbright Commission and USEF/N) announces the competition for Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowships for the academic year 2004-2005.

The Humphrey Fellowship Program brings mid-career professionals from developing countries to the United States for one year of graduate study and related practical, professional experiences. Fellowships are granted competitively to professional candidates who can demonstrate a commitment to public service in the government, NGO, or private sectors and potential for national leadership. The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship is a non-degree program.

The Humphrey Fellowships are offered only in the following areas:

- 1) Agricultural Development/Agricultural Economics;
- 2) Communications/Journalism;
- 3) Economic Development;
- 4) Education, including Educational Planning, Educational Administration, Curriculum Development, Teaching of English as a Foreign Language;
- 5) Finance and Banking;
- 6) Human Resource Management;
- 7) Law and Human Rights;
- 8) Natural Resources and Environmental Management;
- 9) Public Health Policy and Management, including HIV/AIDS Policy and Prevention as well as Drug Abuse Education, Treatment and Prevention;
- 10) Public Policy Analysis and Public Administration;
- 11) Technology Policy and Management;
- 12) Urban and Regional Planning.

General Requirements for Entering the Competition

Applicants must have at least 5 years of progressively more responsible professional experience in Nepal, be under 45 years of age, and possess the equivalent of a U.S. bachelor's degree (i.e., at least six years of study beyond SLC). Except in the field of journalism, applicants must hold policy-level positions as **Managers, Administrators or Planners**. PLEASE NOTE THAT TECHNICIANS, TEACHERS OR RESEARCHERS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE HUMPHREY FELLOWSHIP. An applicant's employment record must show a pattern of exceptional career progress.

**Qualified women candidates are strongly encouraged to apply for this exceptional professional development opportunity.**

Application Forms

Application forms and further information regarding the Humphrey Fellowship competition are available at the Fulbright Commission, the American Center, Gyaneshwor. Applications and information may also be accessed and downloaded from the Commission's website: [www.fulbrightnepal.org.np](http://www.fulbrightnepal.org.np)

NO APPLICATIONS WILL BE GIVEN OUT AFTER JULY 11, 2003. COMPLETED APPLICATIONS MUST REACH THE COMMISSION NO LATER THAN 4:00 P.M., FRIDAY, AUGUST 1, 2003. INCOMPLETE OR LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.



# The war hasn't stopped



**NARESH NEWAR**  
in KHALANGA

For the last seven years, Lakshina Budha has been lying to her daughter Sapana that her father, Chhat Prasad Budha, is still alive and is working in Kathmandu. She doesn't have the heart to tell her about the brutal murder of her father by a group of Maoists when she was just six months pregnant. One of the villagers had a personal grudge against Chhat Prasad and misled the Maoists at the beginning by falsely accusing him as spying against them.

Around midnight, a group of Maoists entered the house and forcibly took Chhat Prasad. Two months later the Maoists announced her husband's death during a rally here. The villager achieved his personal vendetta. Lakshina became a pregnant widow at 25. Things did not stop there. Villagers constantly harassed Lakshina and forced her to leave the village. All her cows and buffaloes were slaughtered. The Maoists confiscated her house, land and all her belongings. She went to her mother's house in another



From l-r: Khalanga, where there are some 2,000 displaced people from the interior trying to survive. Bir Bahadur's family members are refugees in Khalanga. Lakshina Budha with daughter, Sapana, who was born three months after her father was killed by Maoists.

village, but the Maoists traced her there. Not wanting to endanger her parents, she left with a packet of rice, carried the newly-born Sapana and walked for days to Khalanga.

Lakshina still gets nightmares. At Khalanga, she stays in a rented house paying Rs 1,000 for one room. She can barely afford square meals and the school fees for Sapana. "I have to live for my daughter. Sapana is the only family I have. But I don't know how she will react when she grows up and finds out the truth about her father," she says.

For Lakshina, and tens of

thousands of Nepalis the ceasefire came too late. In Khalanga alone, there are about 750 displaced families. "If only this peace had taken place earlier, my son would be alive today," says a 60-year-old mother who has been bedridden for the last ten months since her son, Bir Bahadur Budha was killed during a firefight between the army and the Maoists.

Bir Bahadur had escaped from his village when the Maoists tried to force him to join the movement. His family had to flee, leaving behind all their livestock and property. When they arrived in Khalanga, the army asked Bir

Bahadur to join them as a porter and local guide. Reluctantly, Bir Bahadur joined the army patrol and traveled with them twice. He was killed on his third trip out.

Post-ceasefire Rukum is full of the horror stories of relatives of the dead still trying to come to terms with tragedies and desperately surviving from day to day. It is a place of hope and dread. Hope that the peace will be real this time, and a sense of dread about what will happen if it doesn't.

Life for local residents is getting better: the income is good, shops and hotels run till late

**Thousands of internally-displaced people in the district headquarters bear the double tragedy of losing loved ones, and having to fend for themselves.**



ALL PICS: NARESH NEWAR

night, development projects are gradually returning, the political parties are active again, schools have restarted. But for the refugee families there are the psychological scars and the hand-to-mouth existence. The ones to suffer the most are the children, widows and the elderly parents of those killed. Rukum lost more than 700 people in the past seven years, both at the hands of the Maoists and the army. About 500 of them were non-combatants.

No one is offering any help or rehabilitation for the displaced people here. The government

hasn't yet paid any of the promised compensation, and the charities haven't offered effective reintegration. The political parties are too busy holding anti-king rallies to help.

Most want to return to their villages, to plant crops when the rains come. But the Maoists are occupying their homes and fields. The Maoists have asked displaced families to come back, but the people do not trust them. Many do not believe the Maoists have given up violence, since the cadre is still extorting and

## HERE AND THERE

by DANIEL LAK

# The United States of Reason



A comedian with whom I share my country's passive aggressive ambivalence towards the United States, makes the following suggestion. He proposes that our native land, Canada, get together with Cuba to form a single nation. Not so we all can enjoy Fidel Castro's seven-hour speeches but because of the effect on Washington. "We'd have them surrounded," he says.

American friends with the proper sense of humour give this the small chuckle it deserves. Canadians usually find it hilarious. And increasingly, in the rest of the world beyond the United States, such jokes are catching on as Pax Americana. A policy that is enforced by the mailed fist of the Pentagon which looms ever larger. Afghanistan, Iraq, maybe Iran next and then Syria, Pakistan, Congo in there somewhere, Colombia's coca lands, Aceh, Burma: name a trouble spot and it's just possible that a pointy head defence planner at the Pentagon has drawn up an invasion plan with a catchy name and mapped out the TV camera positions.

So how does the rest of the world—whether merely sceptical or firmly against George Bush and his Neo-Imperialists, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, et al—deal with this? There are various options, none with guaranteed results save more of the same but, for the record, here they are:

- 1) Compliance. Trust the Neo-Imps to have "our" best interests at heart. You'll see. Afghanistan and Iraq will be model developing world democracies within months. Maybe, but at least we can prove the outcome of this one by watching the situation closely. And we will, Mr Bush, we will.
- 2) Outrage. Anti American rampages in European and Asian capitals, not to mention North and South America. "Yankee go home" graffiti



in a babel of tongues and election after election being won in various countries by people with no agenda beyond bashing Washington. Revitalised anarchist and Trotskyist movements, polite salon opinion from London to Luanda, Mexico City to Melbourne, dissing Uncle Sam and all his citizens with an almost racist fervour. In truth, I can see this option becoming more and more attractive to many of the world's liberal internationalists, as well as the disgruntled and hitherto unsuccessful leftists, nihilists and "smash-everything-ists".

This makes it most dangerous and least productive. America is not its government. The present administration was elected by the barest of margins, or not at all if you buy the theory that Florida was rigged or at the very least a shambles of banana republic proportions. George W Bush ran on a ticket of splendid isolation and leaving other countries alone. Most Americans, while deploring terrorism and dictatorial excesses everywhere, offer uneasy support

## The silent majority whose hearts aren't with Bush and the Neo-Imps are desperate for an alternative.

to their government in times of trouble. And these are such times. 3) Constructive opposition and bridge building. Those Americans—the silent majority or large minority whose hearts aren't with Bush and the Neo Imps—they're desperate for an alternative. Their natural home, the Democratic Party has never been so mealy mouthed, so obsessed with policy trivia. US politics have never been so utterly dominated by bit money and special interest groups on either side of the narrow American political spectrum. Many, if not most, Americans are troubled. They need to be constructively engaged by intelligent international thinkers from other societies, by governments with broad electoral support and committed policies in Europe and elsewhere.

In short, we need a United States of Reason that is world-wide, that supports American-style values of liberty and generosity. Liberal democracies with liberal value systems, ie most of them, need to get together with civil society's representatives from all over the world to tell the mad cowboys who have taken over the middle ground in Washington that enough is enough. Other voices have a right to be heard.

Join with Canada and Cuba and surround them with reason, understanding and nerves of steel. ♦



# in Rukum

intimidating subsistence farmers to feed them. Also, they remember how the Maoists forced every family to send a boy or girl for the revolution.

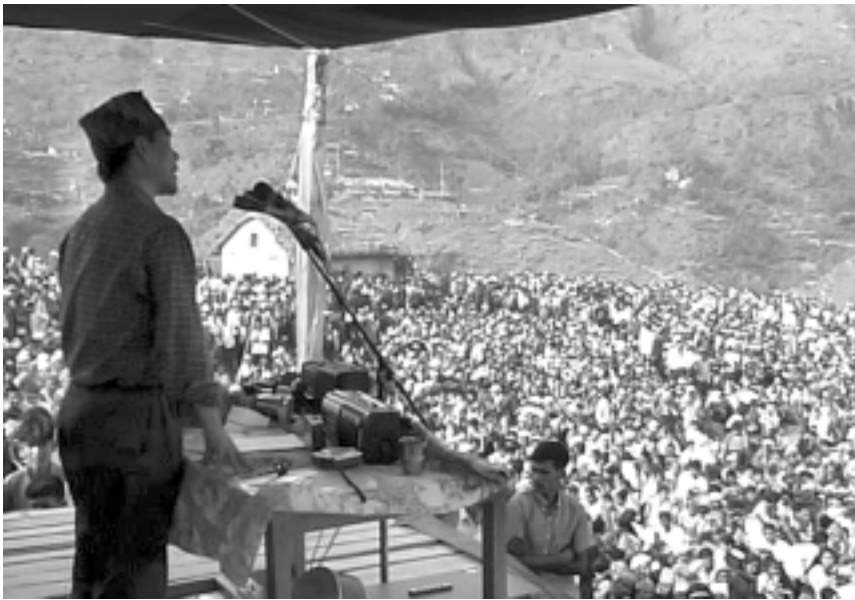
There is equal fear of the army: their arbitrary arrests, the torture and killings.

“Both the Maoists and the army have major responsibility to create an environment of trust and convince the people that violence and killings are not done anymore,” says Bhola Mahat, regional coordinator of the human rights group, INSEC.

The Maoist leadership seems to have realised they need to do some public relations to win back the hearts and minds of the people. They have been organising public meetings and

visiting them in their villages and promising help. Some 8,000 people from Rolpa and Jajarkot attended a rally at the Rukumkot airfield addressed by Deb Gurung (see pic, right).

The speeches lasted four hours, but there was not a single word of remorse or regret for the innocent victims of the peoples’ war or the displaced, no offers of help to resettle or re-integrate the people. There were vague promises of how things would be better when “peoples’ rule” came, and a harangue against western “imperialism”, diatribes against the UML “lackeys”, and predicting an Afghanistan-type conflict if the peace talks failed. If they came to offer hope, you couldn’t see it in the faces of the crowd at Chaurjhari. ♦



## Two Deb Gurungs at Chaurjhari

Deb Gurung is 10-years-old. And like his namesake, he says he is a Maoist: he blames the army for turning him into one. Two years ago, when he was helping an injured Maoist with water to drink. An army patrol spotted him, and since then he has been on the run. He ended up in a Maoist camp and today speaks in Maoist jargon. He can turn serious, and stuns those around him with his mature speaking style and in-depth knowledge of Marxist theories and Maoist thought. Working as a ‘child representative’ of the Maoists, Deb Gurung goes around villages forming Maoist’s ‘children associations’. Deb still goes to school and attends class six. But he says: “I have two kinds of education: *Marxbadi siksha* and formal education.

Education is important to launch the revolution and formal education is important in dealing with international issues and agendas, the international language and modern education.” Deb says that he spends time reading Marxist books and going around talking to children explaining Maoist principles and theories. When asked about the peace talks he gives us a Maoist *lal salaam* (see pic, above) and asks us to give this message to the people in Kathmandu: “There should no cheating or double standards in the peace talks. The talks should be done with utmost sincerity. To make this successful, we should go ahead without any bias and dishonesty. All people and powers should be working together to make this peace talk a success.”

### DOMESTIC BRIEFS

#### Mountain men

The Mountain Institute (TMI) in Nepal now has two directors, both Nepal hands: Lhakpa N Sherpa and Brian J Peniston are joint directors of the Himal Program at the TMI. Catherine Nixon Cooke, TMI CEO said the Nepal program of the international NGO is the biggest component and needed two directors. Sherpa was the project manager of the TMI’s Quomolongma Conservation Project, and joined the organisation in 2000. Peniston has worked for the TMI since 1996, serving as Nepal’s regional manager directing the organisations’ work in the Makalu Barun National Park. Established in 1972, the US-based TMI came to Nepal in 1986 to begin conservation work in and around the Everest region. Last year it handed over the Makalu Barun project to the local community. The Chomulongma project is already halfway through its five-year period. Peniston told us TMI’s future plans include conservation work at Jaljale and Milke Danda between the Makalu Barun and Kangchenjunga.

#### Ambulances

The Indian Embassy Wednesday donated a fleet of 16 ambulances to various rural health groups. Ambassador Shyam Saran, presiding



over the function in Lazimpat, said the vehicles symbolised the deep friendship between Nepal and India. In the absence of ex-Health Minister Upendra Devkota, chief secretary Bimal Koirala handed over the keys of the ambulances to the recipient groups.

#### Link up

A website to promote information on Japan and Nepal, [www.nepal-japan.com](http://www.nepal-japan.com), was launched in Japan by students and former students in Japan. Mohan Krishna Shrestha, acting Ambassador of Nepal to Japan inaugurated the homepage and said it would contribute informally towards strengthening the relationship between the two countries. The site is designed and maintained by Kumar Basnet and will carry information on education opportunities, online job search, Nepali

businesses in Japan and tips on living and travelling in Japan.

#### Newars abroad

More than 200 US-based Newars and guests attended the second convention of the Newah Organisation of America (NOA) on 25 May held in Metropolitan Washington. In its first year of operation, the NOA organised various events like the Nepal Sambat Day and a campaign to aid Nepal Bhasa Academy Cultural Centre. Prominent members of the community stressed the importance of Newar language classes and the importance of creating a repository for Newari arts and crafts before the skills become extinct. The convention concluded with the screening of the Newari movie *Paakha*, cultural dances and a “Taste of Newah Cuisine” dinner.

#### Flak for deportation

Eighteen Tibetan refugees of the 21 who were apprehended by the Nepali police at the Tatopani Nepal-China border last month were handed over to Chinese officials in Kathmandu this week and taken back to China, leading to international concern over their fate. The UN refugee body, UNHCR, dubbed the move a blatant violation of Nepal’s obligations under international law, calling it a “refoulement”. A 1990 agreement between Nepal and UNHCR allowed access to “persons of concern” and let refugees from Tibet transit through Nepal. This agreement had been generally followed until last week’s deportation of 18 Tibetans.

There were also sharp rebukes from the United States, Britain and human rights groups. The US said the deportation violated international norms and practices regarding the treatment of asylum seekers and the British expressed dismay over the way the Nepali government ignored repeated appeals on behalf of the refugees by diplomatic missions in Kathmandu. While the government, which was in transition from the Chand administration, chose to retreat behind silence it was left to the Chinese Embassy to defend the Nepali action. “It was well within Nepal’s jurisdiction and it is a common international practice,” the embassy said in a statement. UNHCR officials told us the Home Ministry was not responding to enquiries on the deportation. The Dalai Lama’s representative in Nepal, Wangchuk Tshering, questioned the presence of Chinese officials who accompanied the refugees as soon as they were released from police custody. “This was quite strange,” he said. “Why should the Chinese officials be here to take back the Tibetan refugees?”

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SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL

by PUSKAR BHUSAL



# Rearranging the furniture

With at least a quarter of kangresi MPs always in his pocket, Khum Bahadur Khadka determined the shape of post-1990 politics.



Sher Bahadur Deuba



Sushil Koirala



Chiranjibi Wagle



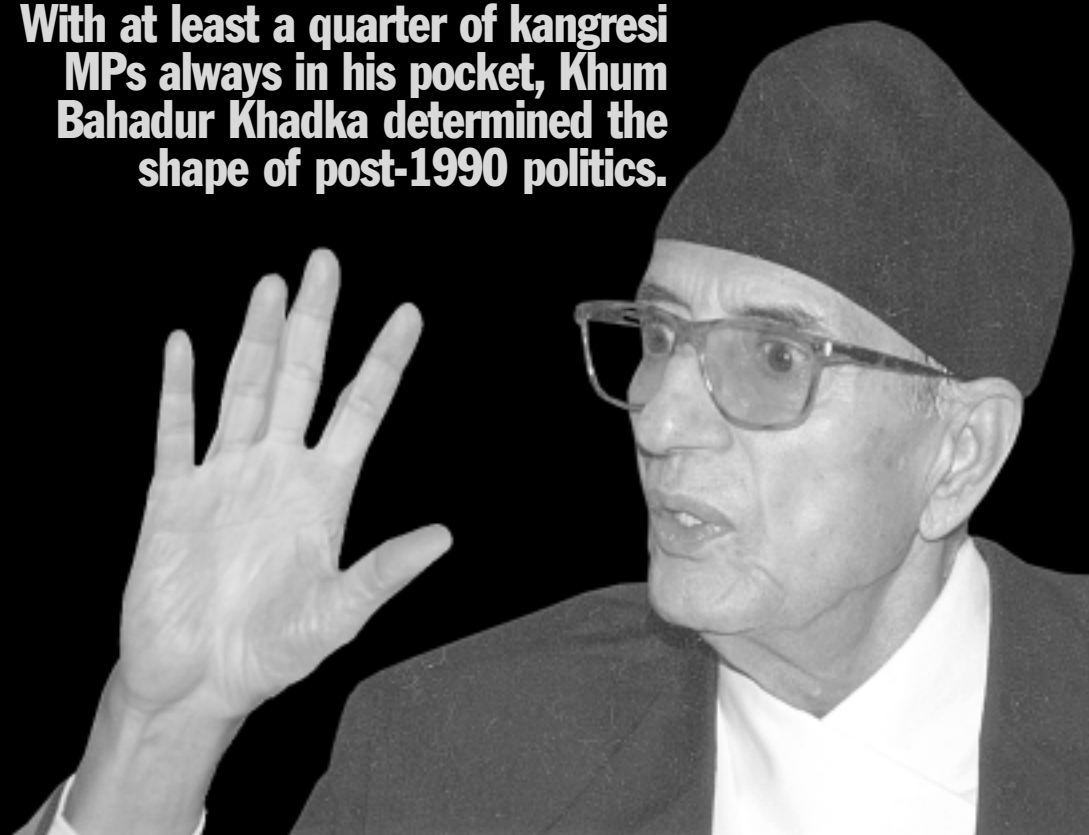
Khum Bahadur Khadka



Bijay Kumar Gachhedar



Govinda Raj Joshi



With the most laterally-mobile kangresi having made his latest move, some commotion in national politics was inevitable. After all that has happened in the last seven days, though, it would be tempting to dismiss Khum Bahadur Khadka's abandoning of Sher Bahadur Deuba's ship as an irrelevant ripple. The pertinent point the Nepali Congress (Democratic) ex-general secretary makes is that Nepali politics continues to be enlivened by empathy.

To be sure, without Khadka and his band of loyalists, Deuba's party would probably have been something akin to CP Mainali's Marxist-Leninist faction. The Baneshwor convention that ousted Girija Prasad Koirala as party president required much more than the resources Khadka

could muster as Deuba's home minister. The challenge of reinventing the Nepali Congress demanded organisational skills that rivalled Koirala's.

In the larger scheme of things, Khadka's post-October Fourth plight marked the apotheosis of political accountability. The man who helped push tougher anti-corruption legislation through parliament became one of its first test cases. Symbolism, however, can provide limited succour in solitude. Those close to Khadka tell us his latest switch was inspired by the phone calls he received from Koirala. Deuba let it be known that his moral moorings wouldn't allow him to come out in defence of a tainted ally. When Khadka's release on bail became imminent, Deuba did begin to show some solidarity.

The damage had been done.

In the current political context, it is perhaps irrelevant to recall how Deuba held his ground when the palace wanted him to sack some of his more sullied ministers. What's important here is that Koirala showed sympathy long before the kangresi-in-chief got his own summons from the anti-graft watchdog. And after all Khadka did to put Deuba in the prime minister's seat and Shailaja Acharya on the party president's.

With at least a quarter of kangresi MPs always in his pocket, Khadka's dexterity has determined the shape of post-1990 politics. From Krishna Prasad Bhattarai to Koirala and Deuba, premiers have staked their fate on the motions of this man. Once he helped you get the top job, he made you perpetually aware of your mortality. The

UML top brass still seethes when it recalls the most prominent Kangresi face grinning behind the split that denied the comrades their majority government in 1999. With such power behind the throne, why would Khadka ever want to sit on it?

Deuba, too, has his set of human foibles. Although it didn't look so ominous two years ago, his troubles started even before he took the prime ministerial oath. For three days, the planetary position wasn't propitious for the swearing-in ceremony. For another two days, Deuba tried hard getting the political alignments right while drawing up his cabinet list. In between, aides to the prime minister-elect tried rearranging the furniture at his Singha Darbar office along directions they hoped would

help prolong his tenure. In the end, Deuba decided to underpin the endurance of his government on a three-pronged formula: promises of phase-wise cabinet expansions to accommodate and pacify supporters, peace talks with the Maoists, and a "revolutionary" land-reform agenda.

In each initiative, Khadka was omnipresent. When the home minister flew off to an HIV/AIDS conference in Melbourne two years ago, he left Deuba a list of MPs he wanted aboard just in case the premier planned to expand the cabinet in between.

Actually Deuba's animosity goes back to the 6 March 1997 vote of confidence the first-term premier was never required to take. He had just defeated a no-trust motion the opposition had registered, but

the quarrels within his party were getting nastier. Some kangresis encouraged the premier to strengthen his grip on the government by proving his majority in the house once again. Remember how two kangresi MPs failed to show up for the vote and brought Deuba down? Khadka instantly blamed "foreign elements". If Lokendra Bahadur Chand hadn't already cut a deal with Bam Dev Gautam, Deuba might have spewed out his fire right there. Koirala's failure to re-enter the Baluwatar premises pushed Khadka into the opposition benches and made Deuba's injury less insulting.

A final thought: Maybe Deuba will turn out to be a sympathetic listener if Khadka discovers he can no longer put up with Govinda Raj Joshi and Krishna Sitaula intercepting his calls to Koirala. ♦



## JOURNALISTS COMPETITION FOR WASH AWARDS ANNOUNCED

The Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council, a multi-stakeholder organization based in Geneva, Switzerland, is holding a competition for journalists from developing countries who investigate issues relating to sanitation, hygiene and water problems in their countries, in collaboration with the International Federation of Environmental Journalists (IFEJ).

The winner will receive US\$500 plus an all-expenses paid trip to Dakar, Senegal, to attend the first WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All campaign) Global Forum meeting in March 2004. There will be four other prizes of US\$ 250 each including a "Youth Reporter" award.

A journalist can submit a maximum of three entries. These should be one or more articles which have already been printed in 2003 in a newspaper or magazine, or one or more stories which have been telecast or broadcast on radio. Entries should be copies of printed articles, with the title of the journal, city in which it is published and date clearly marked, and similar details for video or audio tapes from journalists working in the electronic media.

The organisers will appoint panels of judges for entries in three languages - English, French and Spanish. Any material in Nepali has to be translated in any one of these three languages for entry. The deadline for receiving entries is November 30, 2003.

Please submit entries to:  
Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC)  
International Environment House  
Chemin des Anemones 9  
1219 Châtelaine  
Geneva Switzerland  
Attention: Ms. Eirah Gorre-Dale  
E-mail: gorre-dale@un.org

Queries can be addressed to:  
Darryl D'Monte  
Chairperson  
Forum of Environmental Journalists of India (FEJI)  
President, International Federation of Environmental Journalists (IFEJ)  
29-B Carter Road, Bandra West, Mumbai 400 050, India  
Tel: 91-22-642-7088 Telefax: 91-22-645-9286  
E-mail: darryldmonte@hotmail.com

Published by: Mr. Umesh Pandey (NEWAH), National Co-ordinator of WSSCC for Nepal

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# Khumbu's wild dogs

The forests in Sagarmatha National Park have a new predator.



RAJENDRA GURUNG

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA  
in KHUMBU

Trekking in Nepal have often been impressed by the friendliness of Nepali dogs along the trails. Most approach hikers, tails wagging, and they have got used to being fed biscuits and will follow trekkers. Some dogs have even followed trekkers across the Tashi Labtsa or Thorung Pass. They bond with visitors, acting as guides and watchdogs: all in return for some food, and sometimes the privilege of snuggling into sleeping bags. But many of these dogs are abandoned when the trekkers fly back to Kathmandu from Lukla or Jomsom, and they eagerly await for the next trekking group to follow. Others get lost in the forests

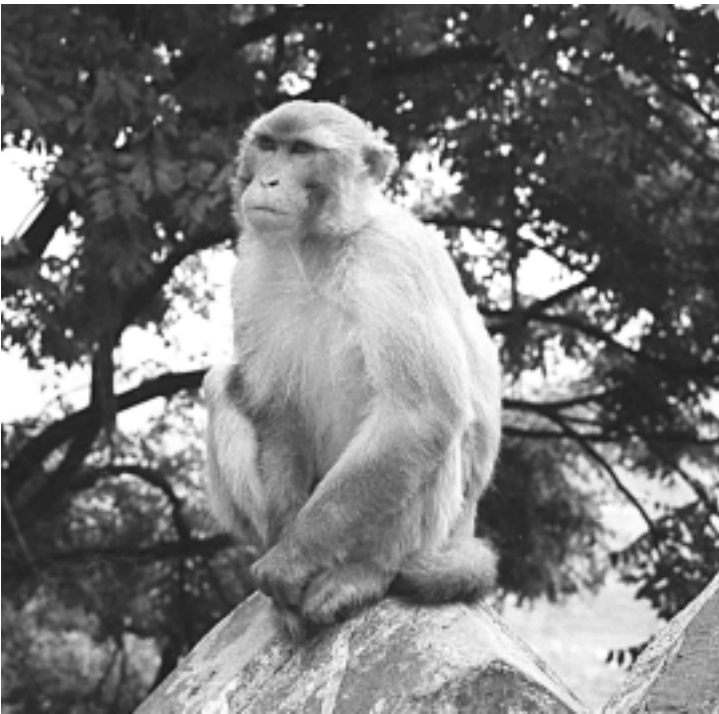
and go wild. It seems there have been quite a few dogs especially in Khumbu that are living wild in the moraines near Lobuje, taking on the habits of their evolutionary ancestors, the wolves. After hearing rumours of wild dogs from yak herders, Rajendra Gurung at the Khumbu office of the World Wildlife Fund decided to investigate. He encountered two wild dogs one early morning in upper Khumbu. They looked like a familiar breed but something was different. "They stared at me like wolves," Gurung recalls. "The way they looked at me, I was certain they were no longer tame." These were not your docile lap dogs to begin with: they were fierce Tibetan mastiffs who somehow must have got lost and decided to stay in

the seasonal pastures near Pheriche. Gurung gestured to them with hand commands that should have been familiar, but they kept their distance as if expecting hostility. Then he saw them try to hunt down a Danphe pheasant that escaped by flying off through the undergrowth. "That was enough to convince me that those dogs were indeed feral," says Gurung. Padam Ghale of Mandala Treks has come across the dogs along the Everest trail. "They are not friendly, and they hunt in packs attacking kitchen tents at night," he recalls. Chhingu Tshering, an elderly woman who lives just below Namche Bazaar pointed to one of the cliffs across the valley where she once saw two dogs circling a calf. The helpless cries of the animal carried across the mountain as it fell. If cows stray too far from their herders, the dogs are quick to seize their chance. From the ones that escape, locals have deduced that the dogs kill their larger prey in true wolf style—by sinking their fangs into the jugular vein. "This is becoming regular," Tshering told us. "We don't know where these dogs come from and where they go." Conservationists in the region believe the wild dogs have profited by a lack of other predators in the Khumbu forests. A few years ago locals had poisoned the dogs when they became a nuisance and buried them. But other dogs dug them up at night, ate them up, and died of secondary poisoning. Many Himalayan eagles also died from the poison. ♦

# Monkey business

HEMLATA RAI

Following the Indian ban on the export of rhesus monkeys for use in bio-medical research, Western research labs now seem to be eyeing Nepali monkeys. Two years ago the private Natural History Society (NHS) in Kathmandu put forward a proposal to provide monkeys to foreign labs, but dropped it after conservation activists, particularly the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation created a furore. Mukesh Chalise of NHS doesn't understand the fuss: "We are not talking about selling our monkeys, we just want to provide scientists with primates to conduct studies. It would contribute to the whole of humanity." This time, activists allege, the Washington National Primate Centre (WNPC) and its Nepali counterpart, NHS, have decided to come through the back door. A group of US researchers led by Randall Kyes of WNPC conducted a five-day 'health camp' for rhesus on Swayambhu Hill where 20 monkeys were said to have died from a mysterious epidemic. But this was apparently done without permission from the government's Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation. During that time, they collected stool, blood and hair from more than 40 monkeys and flew back to Washington, their activities still largely unknown. "This is a case of bio-piracy," says a source at WWF (World Wildlife Fund for Nature Conservation) Nepal Chapter. Our email queries to Randall Kyes went unanswered.



For over 30 years, the WNPC has been active in primate research overseas. The centre maintains a breeding colony housing over 1,000 monkeys in Indonesia and also works with the Institute of Medical Primatology in Russia. At the American Society of Primatologists annual conference held in June last year, Randall Kyes is said to have expressed WNPC's interest to establish a monkey-breeding centre in Nepal to ensure the availability of non-human primates for bio-medical research. Nepal does not have a law on the export of laboratory animals, but a 1973 law empowers the government to fine or imprison up to two years anyone found guilty of trying to "harm wild animals for any

purpose". The chief of the Department of National Park, Swayambhu Man Amatya, maintains that his office is not aware of any activities conducted by WNPC in Kathmandu recently. Meanwhile, the International Primate Protection League (IPPL) has posted an appeal in its site [www.ippl.org](http://www.ippl.org) to protest plans to exploit Nepali primates, and has also requested Nepal not to allow monkey-breeding labs to be set up. India banned the export of rhesus monkeys in 1977 on the grounds that they are worshiped as the god, Hanuman. China is the biggest exporter of monkeys for bio-medical research, while the US is the biggest importer of primates with an annual intake of about 14,000 primates. ♦



United Nations Children's Fund  
Nepal Country Office

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(Vacancy Reference No. 2003/02)

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Chief of Operations  
VN 2003- 02  
P. O. Box 1187  
UNICEF-Nepal CO  
Kathmandu, Nepal

**PLEASE NOTE:** Applications received without the complete documentation listed above will not be considered.

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**GES Technologies**



# Fat is fab

CLAIRE AINSWORTH

Hated, feared and reviled, fat is the modern-day bogeyman that scares adults and children alike. Only constant vigilance, diet and exercise, it is thought, will keep this dreadful demon at bay. But it's time the truth came out. Fat is no evil, lard-guzzling monster that lies in wait on your hips. It is a beautifully designed and multi-talented body organ that plays a crucial role in keeping us healthy and happy. Far from despising it, we should learn to love our fat. Bemoaning your bulges in front of the mirror, you may be tempted to wish that fat had never been invented. But if your wish came true, where would

you be? Chained to your fridge, that's where. If it weren't for your fat stores, you would need to eat almost constantly just to stay alive. Without a cache of fat to fuel a constant energy supply, you'd be lucky to last more than a day. Stockpiling your fuel as fat is a stroke of biological genius. High in energy, it's light and easy to store. And although most of us know that having a bit of fat will tide us over in times of starvation, few appreciate its dynamic role in smoothing out the energy peaks and troughs between daily meals. "It isn't just for rainy days, it's basic housekeeping," says Simon Coppack, an obesity researcher at

## Maybe it shouldn't be public enemy number one.

St Bartholomew's and the Royal London Medical School. But fat doesn't just hang around in your body like a passive pat of butter. It's stored in a specialised tissue called adipose tissue—often referred to as body fat. Take a look at adipose tissue under the microscope, and you'll see that it's a honeycomb of plump fat cells, each hoarding its share of the body's liquid gold reserve. Like little balloons filled with oil, they shrink and expand with the ebb and flow of the food supply. "The amount of fat that goes in and out of adipose tissue in a typical day is enormous," says Keith Frayn, professor of human metabolism at the University of Oxford. "It's best regarded as a sort of buffer." Packed together in elastic tissue, your fat cells pad out your fingertips and eye sockets. They cushion your heels and joints, helping to absorb the mechanical shock of walking. Life without fat would be a bumpy ride. It could also get a bit chilly. Although not specifically designed to keep out the cold, fat is a fairly good insulator. Recent discoveries have made scientists sit up and see fat in an entirely new light. "Fat is an organ," says Coppack. "You should think of it as a little bit like the liver." This organ is responsible for managing puberty, fertility and sex appeal, as well as shoring up our defences against infection. It influences our behaviour, and may even have a say in our mood. Instead of being concentrated in one place, fat is spread through

the body in a number of locations called depots. Depots are found under the skin (subcutaneous fat), lining your belly, and wrapping internal organs such as your guts and kidneys in an intimate embrace. Scientists are finding that different depots are designed to perform different jobs, from providing a quick-response energy service, to feeding specialised designer fuel to our immune systems. What's more, the relative sizes of these depots differ between men and women. Men have less fat in general, up to a fifth of their body weight. The average, healthy woman has more—between one-fifth and one-quarter of her weight is due to fat. Both sexes store most of their fat under the skin, although men store more around their internal organs and belly than women do. Why the difference? A woman needs to be good at storing energy to nourish a growing baby. She also needs fat if she wants to be a drop-dead gorgeous sex goddess. A young woman's body fat is placed in strategic places, such as her breasts and hips, rather than her belly, to give her the feminine curves that men find irresistible. So why do men tend to store their fat around the middle? Steve O'Rahilly, professor of metabolic medicine at the University of Cambridge, has some words of comfort for the modern man in despair of his gut. Our male and female ancestors, he reckons, had different stresses on their systems. Women would need a



steady supply of energy to support pregnancy and breast-feeding—a role fulfilled by her slow-burning subcutaneous fat. However, men needed an energy store that they could draw on at short notice, out hunting and fighting. To this day, belly fat is laid down and burned up three times faster than subcutaneous fat. So if all else fails, blame your paunch on the Pleistocene. Scientists are only now discovering how body fat lies at the heart of a complex and finely balanced system that helps our bodies run smoothly. The secret of

fat's sweeping powers lies in its ability to communicate by making a hormone called leptin. When leptin was first discovered in the early 90s, it was hailed a potential new wonder drug to fight obesity. When it was given to overweight mice, they got thinner. However, most obese people make plenty of their own leptin, but don't seem to be very sensitive to it—meaning it has limited use as a drug. But the discovery that leptin can brief the brain on the state of the body's energy coffers put paid to the idea of fat as a passive dollop of lard. "It made fat much cleverer than it was thought to

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be before,” says O’Rahilly.

In healthy people, leptin performs a delicate juggling act; putting a brake on our eating if we have too much fat, and ringing the alarm bells if our energy accounts start wandering into overdraft. But although leptin is important to keep us from overindulging, some researchers think it really comes into its own at the other end of the scale—to stop us from starving to death when times are lean. “Its real function is to drop below a very low limit,” says O’Rahilly. This happens when there isn’t enough body fat to keep the levels of leptin in the blood topped up. Not only does this switch on a voracious appetite, but it helps the body save energy for vital organs like the brain by cutting corners elsewhere.

One of the first casualties is reproduction. Women with very little body fat, such as anorexics, don’t have periods, which makes perfect sense. “If you went into pregnancy malnourished, that would be catastrophic for both the baby and the mother,” says Coppack. “It’s crucial that the mother’s system knows she has enough energy on board.” What’s more, girls with a rare genetic defect who lack the ability to make leptin never go through puberty in the first place. But fat isn’t just a feminine tissue. Boys need leptin to tell their bodies that they have enough energy to fuel puberty too. Men who have no leptin are perpetual Peter Pans; they never reach sexual maturity.

As a person’s energy economy plunges deeper into recession, their body fat is forced to make further cuts—by slashing the defence budget. About 15 percent

of your energy budget goes towards your immune system, so it’s a logical place to make savings if you’re forced to run a metabolism on a shoestring. Leptin does this by withdrawing its support for the vital white cells that fight off infection—but only as a last resort. As soon as you put on a tiny bit of fat, everything starts to behave normally again. But as well as issuing orders to immune cells from on high, fat rolls up its sleeves and mucks in at the front line, too. The heart, as it pumps tirelessly day and night, might call on the body fat around it for support. “It’s a very attractive idea,” says Frayn, “but there’s no anatomical evidence for that.”

Still, as scientists have only recently started to take an interest in fat, there could be many more surprises in store. Some researchers think it has a say in our mood, behaviour and hormonal responses. Long underrated, fat is a talented manager, book balancer and housekeeper—a Jack-of-all-trades and master of many. So pie and chips all round, then? Fat chance.

Although body fat is a highly sophisticated organ, you can have too much of a good thing. As doctors keep telling us, people with too much body fat are more susceptible to coronary heart disease, cancer and diabetes. But making fat the scapegoat is unfair. After all, the expanding waistlines we see today could be due to body fat’s naturally thrifty streak coming unstuck with TV dinners and sedentary desk jobs. So although the chances of us learning to love our fat are slim, it’s time to get things into perspective. ♦  
(© The Observer)

# Keeping abreast

## The truth behind the most eroticised piece of feminine frippery.

SALLY WEALE

Yesterday, I conducted my own little experiment. I went into the office toilet, removed my bra, then spent the day without it. For as long as I can remember bras have been a source of discomfort. My earliest bra memories date back to the first year of senior school, when half the girls in class moved with a quiet pride into their trainer bras. Oh, the shame of changing for double PE to reveal a virginal white vest while the rest of them giggled in their little white bras.

Eventually I graduated to my own trainer. It was white, with little pink roses, and made me feel very grown-up. It was utterly redundant, but reasonably comfortable—that is, until twanged repeatedly by one’s fascinated male peers. Next came the teen bra, with its adjustable straps and vicious little hooks that were forever being undone by classmates, male and female. I began to look wistfully at my drawerful of flat white vests. By then, however, I began to need a bra and there was no turning back. That was it—for the rest of my life, just like the rest of the adult female population.

Since then there’s been lift

and separate, Cross Your Heart, latex, Playtex, lycra and lace; there’s been Hello Boys, push up and plunge; the balcony, the Bliss, Affinity, Lovable, and something called Essensis. Strappy, strapless, underwired, wireless, sports bras, day bras—new ones with strings to control your cleavage size and the yoghurt-sounding Bioform with revolutionary plastic inserts instead of underwiring. A \$700 million industry aimed at your chest.

Then recently we read a report suggesting that wearing a bra could damage your health. Researchers asked 100 pre-menopausal women to go without a bra for three months then return to wearing one for another three months and record the differences. On average, the number of pain-free days went up by 7 percent when the women stopped wearing bras. Which seems unsurprising to most bra-wearing females. Bras are at best uncomfortable, at worst they can be instruments of torture. And even worse, they can cause cancer! But the theory that women in cultures where bras are not worn do not suffer breast cancer is more likely to be because of their diet rather than their underwear.

Whether bras are subsequently shown to cause breast cancer or not, many of us do not have very happy relationship with our bras,



whether we buy them for a \$15 with our groceries in a Marks & Spencer store, or spend \$150 after a two-hour personal fitting in a leading department store. For many of us they are so uncomfortable it would hardly be surprising if they were bad for our health.

This is what one woman had to say: “My whole life I’ve had one good bra—one bra that was comfortable, that didn’t leave enormous scarlet weals on my flesh, that gave me two breasts instead of one; that gave support without stopping me breathing. One good bra!”

Vests are fine for women with flat chests, but for women with big breasts, bras are essential for comfort. And our breasts are getting bigger all the time. When Tony Dixey, group general manager for Playtex, began working in the bra industry 20 years ago 34B was the average size, now it’s 36C. Bras may be bad for your

health; they may be good for your figure, they can be a turn-on (black, lacy push-up) or a turn-off (grey, saggy, gone through the wash too many times) but according to Cawthorn they can’t stop the natural ageing process. Not even if you wear one all night like Marilyn Monroe to keep them perky. “There’s no evidence that wearing a bra will prevent your breasts from drooping and sagging,” he says.

Which brings me back nicely to my own little experiment. It was much, much more comfortable going without. No red marks on the shoulders; no sore, itchy bit at the back where the label sticks and tickles; no constricted breathing or pinched ribs. Very earthy. Very pleasant. But I stayed very, very still, all day. And when I did move, I clutched something to my chest to hide any unprofessional jiggling. Bras: a necessary evil. ♦  
(© The Observer)

REALING, YOU'LL WANT TO EAT THEM!

ur teeth into them!

Tastes like eating a fruit



# Overhauling the UN

It must become a different organisation to be fit for democracy.

The war in Iraq raised starkly the question of the international order, in particular about the role of the UN. Many regard the UN's role as the guarantor of international law and legitimacy as self-evident, and now argue that its stature, undermined by the US-led invasion, must be quickly restored if the rule of law is to prevail internationally.

But to be a genuine locus of international legitimacy, the UN must become a different organisation—one secure in its own legitimacy and able to function

without the endless delays, vetoes, indecisiveness, and unwillingness to ensure respect for its decisions. The UN was born as a community of nations committed to safeguard and promote the values at the heart of the fight against Nazism and Fascism.

At its origin—with only 50 signatories of its Charter—the UN was a rather exclusive club of countries. Indeed, Article 53 of the Charter defined the formerly fascist Axis countries as “enemy states” of the UN, so that Italy had to wait until 1955 to become a member. Japan joined only in 1956 and Germany in 1973.

The UN Charter was, above all, a manifesto of nations committed to freedom and justice. It also contained a series of specific political objectives: decolonisation and self-determination of peoples, social progress, and the promotion of fundamental human rights. But with the onset of the Cold War and the emergence of the non-aligned movement, the intentions of the UN's founding fathers were progressively thwarted. Indeed, we are so far today from the original spirit of the UN Charter that it seems normal for dictatorships to sit

in judgement of democracies and for Libya to chair the Commission for Human Rights.

The Charter empowered the UN to react to threats to peace and international order arising from non-member states, including a requirement—never implemented—that signatories provide “military contingents under the command of the Military Staff Committee, composed of the Chiefs of Staff of the permanent members.” In this context, the veto power conferred on the victors of World War 2 was not concerned with “internal” conflicts among the member states; it extended only to threats to peace from countries outside the UN consensus.

Over time the UN was transformed by two factors. First, the presence of dictatorships among the permanent members of the Security Council caused paralysis and made many provisions of the Charter dead letters. Second, the rise of the non-aligned movement, founded by Zhou En Lai, Nehru, and Tito in 1955, launched a sort of substitute ideology for the UN. It emphatically reaffirmed the principle of non-interference in states' internal affairs and this principle's primacy over the rights of individuals enshrined in Article 1 of the Charter.

The non-aligned movement also stood for the principle of including in the UN, as a matter of right, all sovereign countries. This turned the UN from a club of countries that

share the same values into an amorphous forum of the international community—an indistinct body that never investigates the democratic credentials of its members.

Today's UN, which entrusts the protection of fundamental human rights to countries that are themselves among the prime violators of these rights, is no longer acceptable. We must modify not only the working mechanisms of the UN, but also its composition. What is needed is a “World Organisation of Democracies,” devoted to promoting the original values of the UN, including democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

Such a UN could follow the organisational model of the WTO, for example, or the Council of Europe. The latter is worth emulating because admission and continued membership are conditioned on respect for specific democratic standards. Countries from the former Soviet bloc, for example, had to adapt their legislation to these standards in order to join. The same should hold with respect to the new UN: to join and remain a UN member would require respecting the international commitments undertaken by each state, beginning with the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

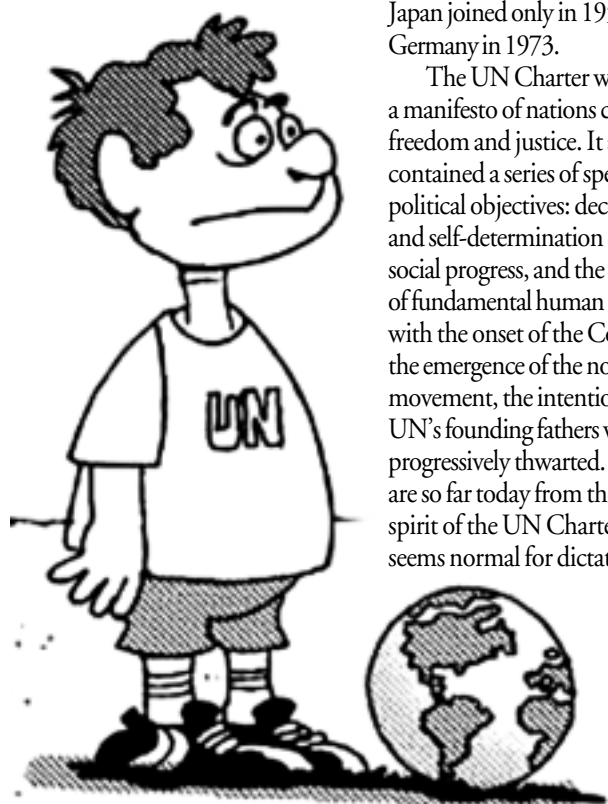
In recent years, a number of countries, often after painful reforms, have become democratic, showing that it is possible to

“globalise” democracy as well as trade. Yet other countries remain stubbornly outside this emerging democratic order, and some democracies may be moving toward authoritarianism. Shouldn't these attributes have an impact on their international status?

The UN must be re-founded on the basis of its original principles. The standard for admission should not be a country's mere existence, but its fulfillment of certain criteria of democratic governance. Like the European Union, the UN should possess mechanisms to suspend or even expel members that fail to respect democratic norms. Only a re-founded UN will have the

legitimacy necessary to react credibly to threats to peace and promote freedom and human rights. That re-founding should start without delay. A good place to begin would be to form, before the next General Assembly, a caucus of democratic states to coordinate their actions and establish common positions. ♦ (© Project Syndicate)

(Emma Bonino, a former EU Commissioner, is a Transnational Radical Member of the European Parliament. Gianfranco Dell'Alba is a Transnational Radical Member of the European Parliament and the director of the NGO No Peace Without Justice.)



## G8 for Africa

EVIAN – While the French and British governments were pressing to keep Africa as a special agenda item, the United States argued that development in all countries should be given equal priority.

The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) was developed two years ago under the leadership of five African heads of state. It has since been adopted as the official economic program of the African Union, as well as by the G8 as the basis of their Africa Action Plan.

More energy has gone into non-African issues such as the aftermath of the Iraq war than into matters of vital importance to Africa, says Ezra Mbogori of Mwengo that serves NGOs in East and Southern Africa. Caroline Sande Mukulira, spokesperson for Oxfam International says the G8 has not delivered on its promise made at last year's summit. This includes contributing additional \$6 billion a year in aid to Africa and agreeing to a timetable towards reaching the \$25-35 billion a year which the UN estimates Africa will need if it is to meet the Millennium Goals. Meanwhile, political analysts say African leaders need to take responsibility for Africa instead of pleading to the world to save the continent. (IPS)

## Debt relief

ANNEMASSE – Civil society organisations issued another call to the Group of Eight (G8) most powerful countries to cancel the \$350 million foreign debt owed by the world's 52 poorest nations—although they do not harbour hopes for a favourable response. In Annemasse, 40km from Evian, a civil society counter-summit debated questions like the relationship between trade and development, the effects of globalisation, terrorism, the environment, and human rights.

Besides the cancellation of the foreign debt of highly-indebted poor countries (HIPC), the chief demands that NGOs made include financing for HIV/AIDS programs, access to water and the need to hold transnational corporations accountable. But instead of writing off the debt, the G8 responded with the promise to reduce the amount by 110 billion dollars, but later announced only \$60 million would be cut. In the end the approved reduction of the debt has amounted to just 36 billion dollars, 10 percent of what activists and poor countries were requesting. Activists maintained that the G8 would have no problem writing off the debt if the political will to do so existed. (IPS)

## OPINION

# Industrialisation



The war in Iraq is over. But the battle to transform the economies of the Middle East—the only hope of preventing fanaticism from claiming a generation of young unemployed Arabs and Iranians—is only beginning.

That struggle goes beyond development strategies and touches the roots of Islam. “The people of Iran,” the late Ayatollah Khomeini is reported to have liked to say,

“did not make the Islamic Revolution to lower the price of watermelons.” By that logic, capitalism and Islam are incompatible. Are they?

History may provide some guidance here. The Industrial Revolution started in the English midlands and Belgian forests—regions endowed with coal, canals (along which barges could carry the coal), and skilled metalworkers (who could build coal-burning

steam engines). Coal, canals and metalworkers were the foundation for building, installing and using the automatic spinning machines, power looms and railway locomotives that were the first modern machine industries.

Steam power, factories, markets and industry quickly spread throughout northwest Europe and its settler colonies. By the end of the 19th century Turin, Vienna, Prague, Wroclaw, Essen, Paris,

Lille, Liege, Lyons and Barcelona in continental Europe, much of Britain and the United States, parts of Canada and Ireland, and Melbourne, Buenos Aires and Johannesburg (plus, of course, Tokyo) were centres of modern industry.

Beyond these limits, however, the fires of the Industrial Revolution barely smouldered, if they burned at all. For two centuries, far-sighted Ottoman viziers had argued for the need to spur Turkey's economic and technological development: back in 1453, Sultan Mehmet II's armies had conquered Constantinople, because Mehmet had built the most technologically advanced and powerful artillery in the world.

In the early 19th century, Egypt's Mehemet Ali looked at the global balance of economic and military power, and decreed that Egypt must industrialise, fast. He feared that unless Egyptians could learn modern industrial technologies and develop an economy prosperous enough to support modern industrial armies, his descendants would be mere puppets of British and French viceroys. His decree went nowhere: Egypt did not industrialise, and



# Schools for development

On 21 September, 1832, in Boston’s Franklin Hall, the first American woman to deliver a public lecture, Maria Stewart, shocked the town when she stood and spoke. What cause compelled her to abandon social norms and decorum so brazenly? “Daughters of Africa, awake! Arise!,” she cried, as she demanded that the United States provide education for black girls.

As so often turns out to be the case, our forebears were right. If Mrs Stewart, herself an African-American, knew what we know about development today, her demand would be the same now as it was then. Every shred of evidence we’ve accumulated over the past 30 years of academic and policy research, all the experience of our development efforts, confirm what our pioneering ancestors knew innately: education for all our children—poor, rich, white, black, boys, girls—means healthier babies, stronger families, wealthier economies, and more vibrant democracies.

Ask leaders of the “tiger” economies of Southeast Asia their secret for rapid development, and they’ll all tell you the same thing: first and foremost, we invested in our people. In its most basic form, that’s what development is: investing in people and their welfare.

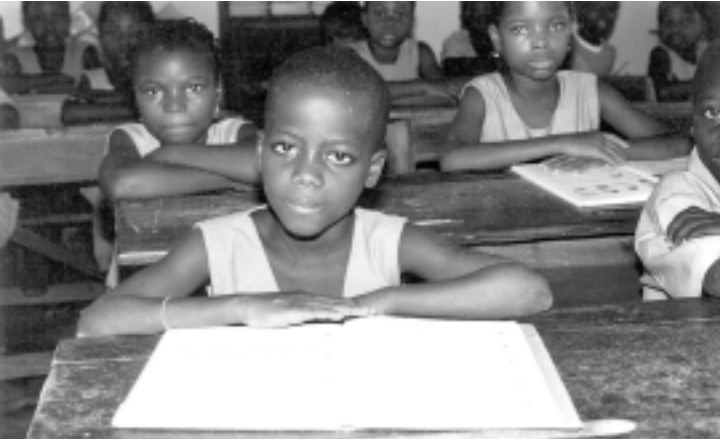
So, where does the world stand now? Roughly speaking, almost everyone in the rich countries, the formerly communist countries, and the Asian tigers is educated, with adult literacy rates approaching 100 percent, as are people of means in the poor countries. The poor in poor countries, however, fare worse, as do some poor people in rich countries. With half of the world’s 6 billion people living on \$2 per day or less, the education gap remains stark.

Indeed, reasonable estimates put the number of school-age children who are not attending school at 113 million, with 97 percent living in developing countries. These numbers are bad, and they’re getting worse. According to the UN’s Human Development Report, one in five children in the world’s poorest countries does not go to school, including a staggering 40 percent of school-age kids in sub-Saharan Africa.

In addition, the Human Development Report notes that 24 countries around the world are making insufficient or no progress—if not actually backsliding—in achieving the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education. One can only imagine how dire conditions may be in the 93 countries for which no data on the topic even exist. In the words of Mark Malloch-Brown, Administrator of the UN Development Program, “We’re losing the battle for primary education.”

In the 1990’s, we in the development community made a serious and costly blunder by pressuring national governments in developing countries to impose school fees in order to help achieve balanced budgets. Some research suggested that fees might be useful in

If your country wants to get ahead, first and foremost you invest in educating your people.



decentralising education—a laudable goal—and in helping poor countries to “live within their means” (a nasty requirement in an age of global prosperity). In fact, the policy was a disaster for the world’s most vulnerable children: any out of pocket costs for schooling meant no schooling at all.

Recent evidence from Uganda and Kenya show just how costly this error was. In 2000, upon receiving debt alleviation, Uganda chose to eliminate all school fees and says its number of schoolchildren nearly doubled thereafter. The new government of President Mwai Kibaki in Kenya announced his country would eliminate school fees, and within days an additional 1.2 million kids showed up for class.

We know what to do to educate our children. We know that basic education should be a free public good. We know that school meal programs are a development marvel that do as much as anything else to increase enrollment while providing nutrition to the hungriest youngsters, markets for their fathers’ produce, and often jobs for village mothers. Innovative initiatives providing rural child care mean that girls can go to school, and basic public health provision—such as de-worming—attracts chronically sick children to the classroom for both learning and healing. ♦  
(© Project Syndicate)

(Sara Sievers is Executive Director of the Center for Globalisation and Sustainable Development at the Earth Institute, Columbia University.)

# and Islam

## What determines whether a country can break free from the grip of backwardness and poverty?

Mehemet Ali’s great grandchildren did indeed become puppets of the British and French.

Today’s 70 million Egyptians live much better than their heavily taxed cotton- and grain-growing predecessors of Mehemet Ali’s time. But the gap between the economies of the Arab Middle East and Western Europe—in (non-oil sector) productivity, technological capability, and standards of living—is wider than it was a century ago, and vastly greater than at the start of the Industrial Age.

In many respects, the slow pace of the Islamic world’s economic development has been a matter of choice. The Prophet Muhammad was a merchant, and the Quraysh (Mecca’s ruling tribe at the time of the Prophet) lived by guiding caravans from Arabia to the Fertile Crescent. But the affinity between Islamic attitudes, rulers, merchants and craftsmen that made Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, and Samarkand jewels of High Medieval urban civilisation vanished long

ago.

Industrialisation means novelty and change. If those who hold power fear that change may bring unpleasant consequences, they will systematically obstruct it, which rulers in the Middle East proceeded to do for centuries. But slow and distorted development in the Islamic world is the result of blocked opportunities as well. Wouldn’t Pakistan be much better off if it exported more of its textiles to the rich industrial world? Wouldn’t waiving Pakistan’s quota under the Multi-Fibre Agreement have been a very good and important step for the US government to take in reciprocation of the Pakistani government’s help as US-led forces attacked al Qaeda bases in Afghanistan?

No doubt it would have been. Wouldn’t prospects for economic development in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia be much more promising if European governments would let EU citizens buy more

North African oranges? Of course.

But other key reasons for the slow pace of economic development in the Islamic world reflect the standard dilemmas of poor governance. “Protect property rights and enforce contracts,” say Western economists. But property rights and contracts are threatened at many levels. They are threatened by roving bandits, by local notables, and, most of all, by government functionaries who use their offices to extort extra income. Simply put, a weak state cannot enforce contracts and property rights, while a state that is strong enough to enforce them must control its own bureaucrats.

However, the most important reasons that the Islamic world has done worse than Latin America or Southeast Asia seem to be focused around education. There can be little hope for sustained economic development where the educational system is at least one

generation—and possibly three generations—behind other regions in terms of its commitment to universal literacy, and where higher education largely ignores the skills and subjects needed to enable people to master technology.

After all, blocked export opportunities, weak government institutions and high levels of corruption are worldwide problems. Even political and religious leaders hostile to change and industrialisation are not uncommon. But as we compare patterns of development throughout the world, more and more evidence is piling up that universal literacy and a large class of people with industrial-technical skills are key resources that determine whether countries are able to break free from the grip of backwardness and poverty. ♦

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(J Bradford DeLong is Professor of Economics at the University of California at Berkeley and a former Assistant US Treasury Secretary.)



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# Foreign hand

Gokul Baskota in *Drishti*, 3 June

Nepal has turned into a playground for foreign powers. The biggest question facing Nepalis today is where this foreign interference will take the country and its people's sovereignty. The recent visit of KV Rajan, former Indian ambassador to Nepal, raises an interesting point of inquiry. It was during his visit that Surya Bahadur Thapa emerged as a candidate for premiership, despite the recommendation of the five political parties. Of course, this succeeded in making our political future even more uncertain. The nomination, however, did highlight one thing clearly: India intends to turn Nepal into another Sikkim. Surya Bahadur Thapa is a puppet.

Immediately after sacking Sher Bahadur Deuba, King Gyanendra made a tour to India on the pretext of a pilgrimage. While the parties launched their agitation against the king's October Fourth move, former prime minister Thapa trotted off to lobby with the South Block. A royal audience followed his return, and immediately after that Lokendra Bahadur Chand tendered his resignation—seemingly out of the blue. In quick succession the RPP demanded an all-party government and the Maoists sat for a second round of peace talks.



Both took place due to pressure from India and the United States. On 2 June, the British special envoy Jeffrey James arrived in Nepal on an official visit, and there are rumours of Indian defence minister George Fernandes gracing us with his presence shortly. The Americans, who view Nepal through New Delhi's lenses, have vowed not to interfere in Indian interests. India shows overwhelming interest in Nepali politics, perhaps even more than to their own regional elections.

While it is true that we cannot change the mindset of our neighbours, we can however, reach a consensus on our foreign policy to protect national interest. When our parties are on the offensive they oppose foreign interference, talk about sovereignty and national integrity. But in the race for power these same leaders will not hesitate to ally themselves to India, neglecting all talk of nationalism. We must ensure that nobody—from the parties to the palace—will curry favour from Delhi and Washington just for power.

The US seeks to exert its influence over Nepal without alarming India. They are looking for avenues that serve Indian interests while securing a niche for themselves. India's interest in Nepal is limited to our natural resources and accessibility, but the US needs us to monitor China's economic and military fronts. Perhaps they hope to do this through a military base here. To meet their ends, these two giants are employing all the means at their disposal, even interfering in political matters that do not concern them. This should worry every patriotic Nepali. Without independence and sovereignty we cannot have democracy and development. The biggest need of the hour is solidarity against foreign interference.

## The people speak

*Himalaya Times*, 1 June

हिमालय टाइम्स

An all-party government is the way out of the present political stalemate: the majority of Kathmandu Valley's residents expressed this opinion in a survey conducted by *Himalaya Times*. Sixty-five percent said an all-party government should be formed with a mandate to hold elections as soon as possible. The other 35 percent thought reinstatement of the dissolved parliament was the key to ending the present political instability. Different recommendations were made to end the present volatility but no common consensus could be reached on the fundamentals during interviews by the Central Department of Political Science at Tribhuban University. A professor said reinstating parliament and mandating it to decide on breaking the deadlock would end the constitutional void, but his students challenged that view saying there would be no solution if politics is not actively part of the constitutional framework.

## Fallow money

*Deshantar*, 1 June

देशान्तर साप्ताहिक

The combined effect of defunct local bodies and political instability has badly hit development activities. More than half the development activities planned and being implemented by local bodies are in limbo. Sources from the Ministry of Local Development (MLD) say that less than half of the development budget allocated for the current fiscal year has been utilised and only two months of the current fiscal calendar is left. Statistics provided by the Evaluation and Monitoring Section of the MLD reveal that apart from a few priority projects, others used less than 40 percent of what they were allocated. In this situation, even high-priority sectors like district road networks are expected to receive only half of what they need. An official at the Evaluation and Monitoring Section claims that despite the simplification of budget release, modules lack accountability in the absence of elected representatives. The situation was exacerbated by the fear of Maoists. Despite food for development and west tarai poverty alleviation programs spending more than what they were allocated, the result would be less than expected. The local bodies could utilise only 25 percent of the allocated development budget in the first eight months of the year. It means that more about Rs 5.71 billion of the development budget will remain fallow.

## Our place

*Rajdhani*, 4 June

राजधानी

The United States' furor over Nepal's deportation of 18

Tibetan refugees raises some serious questions about our foreign policy. It couldn't come at a worse time: Nepal is being dragged into controversy at a volatile time in its political history. Internal conflict, competition and insurgency have almost brought us to a point where we won't be able to resist external pressures. Nepal is sincere and sensitive towards its prosperous and powerful neighbours, and is equally heartfelt in its relationship with the US, its major ally and donor. We cannot afford to be caught in a conflict of interest between them. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of those countries we count upon as friends to respect, not trap us in such a sensitive situation. We must not be used as a means to their ends. It is clear that we are finding it hard to shoulder our own burden at present. We cannot also be loaded with the interests of other powerful nations. This would go against all norms of civilised behaviour and friendship.

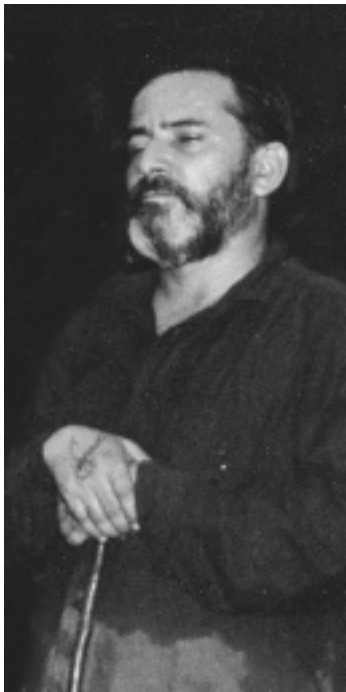
## Minutes

*Ghatana ra Bichar*, 4 June

घटना बिकार

A new strategy has been plotted by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) after geopolitical changes. The party's central committee meeting in Rolpa earlier this week decided to proceed simultaneously with street demonstrations, armed struggle, peace talks and propaganda war.

The Rolpa meeting took



place after Maoist supremo Prachanda's telephone conversation with Bob Abhagin, Chairman of the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM) and the General Secretary of the American Communist Party. The party's publication section chief CP Gajurel held talks with the leaders of the People's War Group in India before the meet. The Maoists concluded it would be unwise to identify India's interference in Nepal's internal politics. In a bid to attract more supporters they also inflated the number of their guerrillas to twice that of the Royal Nepali Army. There are plans to further investigate why their campaign suffered so many reversals in the central region during the armed struggle compared to the west. Party leaders said secret documents that fell into the hands of the RNA were partially to blame.

# Age no bar

*Himal Khabarpatrika*, 30 May-14 June

हिमाल

A 61-year-old grandmother is in the same class as her grandson at Madanpur VDC of Nuwakot. Chandra Kumari Wagle and Sushil even share the same bench in grade five at Chanda Devi Primary School. Chandra says, "My grandson Sushil helps me with homework, and I help him with whatever I know. English is very difficult."

Chandra Kumari regrets not educating her children. "If I had educated them, they might have been teachers in this school but in my time we believed those who studied English became disrespectful and took to drinking. My son's peers have all done so well, but he is still tilling the fields," she told us. Danga Ra, her eldest son, never set a foot in a school but willingly supports his mother's education. Chandra was motivated by the sheer joy of learning. "I plan to stay in school as long as this old body supports me," she says. Hari Sharan Pandey, the acting principal at the school does not give her any special treatment. "She is treated like any other student," he says, "but due to her age she cannot grasp things as easily as her younger classmates." Not that it deters the granny. She finished 20<sup>th</sup> out of 25 students in the last exams, but takes pride in never having failed a grade since she joined school.



Nepal-Bhutan Talks

हिमाल

*Himal Khabarpatrika*, 30 May-14 June

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"We won't have problems talking to a new government because it won't be fundamentally different from the old one."

- Krishna Bahadur Mahara in *Rajdhani*, 1 June



# Purna Bahadur Vaidya One and the world

Few poets today write as well as the Nepal-bhasa poet Purna Bahadur Vaidya about how we are interconnected with our surroundings. The external and the internal meld together in his sensibility, as he offers up the elements, space and nature as objective correlatives to deeply personal experiences. *Water is Water*, his book of poems examining water as an extended metaphor, has been translated into English by the American poet Wayne Amtzis, and is awaiting publication.

The poems below are twice-translated: they were originally written in Nepal-bhasa, and translated into Nepali in the book *Newari Bhasaka Kehi Adhunik Kabita* (Royal Nepal Academy, 2049). From those renderings they appear here in English. It is impossible to tell how close they are to the original.

The first poem visits a theme that Vaidya often writes on, the search for personal freedom:

## The moment I see a pair of feet

The moment I see a pair of feet  
I start to murmur—  
My destination remains  
Many places I must reach  
The moment I see doors and windows—  
I startle—  
I must liberate myself  
I must step out of myself

Discoveries lie all over somebody's path  
The struts of rooms and houses are of no use  
The path is itself the way of gathering  
How would we know the other if there were no path?

I inside  
and outdoors, the world  
I feel a dissatisfaction  
until I leave these restless dimensions  
a desire to see the countenances of my face  
The outdoors feel a similar urgency to obtain me  
My form is daubed outdoors  
My life is lost somewhere outdoors  
Experiences have spilled all over the path

What is the home but a rehearsal room?  
Only beyond the threshold does the path begin  
My expression is outdoors  
and the expression of the outdoors is in me  
Should I not go?  
My path could lag behind  
A screw in the machine could drop out  
A light may not light up in the lamppost  
How could one say that  
something unwanted might not happen  
on the selfish, hastening path?

The moment I see a pair of feet  
I start to murmur—  
My destination remains  
Many places I must reach

The moment I see doors and windows—  
I startle—  
I must liberate myself  
I must step out of myself

The second poem focuses on the fear of old age and death, a theme as universal as any:

## When the breeze blows in the evening...

When a breeze starts up in the evening  
the entire pond starts to shiver

Its cheeks, firm in the morning  
wrinkle at the evening breeze

When the breeze starts up  
the pond gathers into itself  
and holds tight onto its banks  
The evening breeze reaches it  
as soon as the day passes—  
And who can stop it?  
Terrorised by this relentless truth  
a hundred times a day  
the water extends the waves  
along its wrinkled surface  
and hunches them into itself

The sky-mirror watches on



KUMAR ALE

In the end  
it has no choice but to accept  
the most solid evidence to prove its doubts  
A soldier defeated and wounded  
in the mandatory battle with time  
The body that was moist in the morning  
has folded a little  
has dried a little  
now

Within is the fear of the terrible  
Its restiveness may suddenly  
disappear as it watches on  
The waves of youthfulness  
arise as stifled sighs  
and arise again and again  
Only emptiness arises  
In that too it used to harbour a dream  
to flow from there, gurgling, somewhere  
else  
That dream too hides along with the sighs  
and is thoroughly finished

# For Pico Iyer, travels never cease



**Pico Iyer was born to travel. Born in England to Indian parents, he moved at the age of seven to California where he did his schooling. Educated at Eton, Oxford and Harvard, he later joined *Time* in New York, to sit in little cubicles and “write palpitating, breathless accounts of foraging my way through the Philippines jungles or ascending the Andes to find the Sendero Luminoso without ever having been to those places and without knowing what they look like”. Ajit Baral recently caught up with Pico Iyer in his travels through cyberspace. In this virtual interview, Iyer talks among other things about the book, *Video Night in Kathmandu*, that made him (and Kathmandu) famous.**

**Ajit Baral: What purpose do travel writings such as *The Great Railway Bazaar* or *Video Night in Kathmandu* primarily serve? Aren't they just better written Lonely Planet Guides?**  
**Pico Iyer:** That's a wonderful question. I think that travel books of the kind you mention are the opposite of guidebooks, in that they don't tell you what to see, but how to see. In a way they offer a pair of spectacles as subjective and distorted as any other, but allow you to think about the world in a special way. In *Video Night*, I felt that there was nothing I could add to the wonderful accounts that writers more accomplished than I had offered. But there was something new going on—a fresh kind of exoticism—in the ways the East was taking in the West that seemed to speak to a whole new global culture. The only reason to write something, and inflict all those words on a reader and all those long hours at the desk on oneself, is if one can contribute something new that hasn't been covered already.

**But what purpose does it serve in a world that has become smaller?**  
There are always uncharted places to discover and record: Iraq right now for example is in many ways a new country. The world is constantly in flux, there is never a shortage of new places to explore and come upon for the

first time. Travel-writing, like fiction or poetry, has to take on new forms to deal with a new kind of world. In my next book, out next spring, I have a whole chapter on jet lag as a foreign land that no human had visited till forty or so years ago, but one where more and more of us spend more and more of our lives.

**How do book journeys compare to geographic journeys?**  
I'm most interested in the kinds of journeys that can be made while sitting still. Travel is only interesting to me in its inner effects, and the kind of transformations that can potentially come in the comfort of one's own home—and it's no coincidence that many of the great physical travellers are also great readers. Books are a form of travel as much as travels are a form of text. They offer a much more democratic form of travel that many more people can enjoy—more and more of the world is an honorary resident of New York or Los Angeles, in that sense (often with tragic results, especially if they try to come to those countries in life).

**But the place you wrote about yesterday will not be the same today. There isn't much left of the Freak Street in *Video Night*.**  
I'm less interested in roots than in flowerings. I don't have a very strong historical sense, and so, I'm much more compelled by the present and the future appearing around the corner than, say, musty churches or what happened in the place 300 years ago. So in writing about Freak Street, say, I was writing of a new blending of East and West. When I stayed in Los Angeles Airport for two weeks, I was trying, as best as I could, to see a new global future forming, in a place that might look like our cities of tomorrow (with people from a hundred cultures walking and talking past one another). The airplane has been more a theme for me than the bullock-cart. You're right that, as with Zeno's arrow and its paradoxical non-arrival, one can never catch the present because, by the time one's written about it, or photographed it, it is gone. Yet one can orient oneself towards trying to see what the future holds or chronicling and gauging the effects of the past (as such great traveling historians as Jan Morris or William Dalrymple have done). By looking at Freak Street, which no longer exists, I was trying to look at a new form of transnational tribalism that is in fact more with us with every passing year.

**How about re-visiting places to take stock of the changes? Are you curious about what has happened to Kathmandu in the decade-and-half since *Video Night*?**  
I do tend to revisit the place I wrote about quite a lot, and of course, as the Buddhists tell us, nothing stays the same. The person observing the place is himself moving on or getting old, and inevitably he registers all the things he hadn't seen before, or now misses. But the underlying characters of places

change no more than people do. In the case of Nepal, I did return seven years after my initial trip and found (as described in my book *Tropical Classical*) that there were many more tourists and motorcycles and the pollution was worse. But the sweetness of the Nepali people, and the various hopes or longings Westerners projected onto them (and vice-versa) had not changed much at all.

**You seem to defy a definition of home. What is home to you?**  
Home to me is in part the English language, which has kept me company for every waking moment of my life. It exists in the friendships and beliefs and assumptions I carry everywhere I go. It is, as much as anything, a Japanese friend I return to and a Benedictine monastery where I stay four times a year every year.

**VS Naipaul glories in his anxiety of belonging nowhere. Your writing, on the other hand, glories in belonging everywhere. Don't you need a mooring?**  
I feel that movement has been my inheritance, and I've rejoiced in it the way others might rejoice in being Bangladeshi or Indian or French. My particular home has been the state of movement, and that's where I belong, and what I'm used to—the space between places, or categories. I could wish that I had a different life, but to do so is as futile as wishing one were immortal, or every day never ended.

**You have now started writing fiction. Which is more difficult fiction or travelogue?**  
Fiction is more difficult, and therefore more attractive and interesting to me. It is about surrender, and not being able to bribe the Muse to make house-calls, or force inspiration to come, which makes it at once more frustrating and more magical. It's the difference between walking around the block and completing a somersault in mid-air while holding a torch of flame in both hands. In all my travel-writing, most of what I'm writing about is the states inside us. So nobody that I'm aware of has talked of *Abandon* as a travel-book in disguise, or travelling incognito. They might note that it has vivid scenes of Damascus and Venice and Agra and Paris and Iran—not to mention California—but I think they see instantly that it's first and foremost a romance, a mystery and a novel of ideas. The scenery is just make-up. ♦

Pico Iyer's books: *Cuba and the Night*, *Abandon* (both fiction), *The Lady and the Monk*, *Falling off the Map*, *Tropical Classical*, and *Video Night in Kathmandu* are all available in Kathmandu book shops.





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- ❖ **Orchids and Jewels of Nature** Botanical art exhibit by Neera J Pradhan from 1-15 June at Park Gallery, Lazimpat. 981055263
- ❖ **Contemporary Tibetan Art from Lhasa** till 14 June at Lotus Gallery, Thamel. 4253646
- ❖ **Exhibition and sale** carpets, thankas, handloom and pashmina at Gallery Room, Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4413632.

EVENTS

- ❖ **Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman** Directed by Deborah Merola at The Lincoln School 7PM on 6 June, 5PM on 7, 8 June. Tickets: Rs 300 for adults, Rs 150 for students. Available at Himalayan Java, Pilgrim's Bookshop, Hyatt Regency. Reservations: 4436458
- ❖ **Imaging Everest** photographic exhibition from the Royal Geographical Society, London, in association with The British Council, Kathmandu. 8.30 AM-4.45 PM till 31 July at the British Council, Lainchour.
- ❖ **Ride and raft** with the Himalayan Enfielders on 13-15 June for Rs 3,500. Email: [himalayanenfielders@hotmail.com](mailto:himalayanenfielders@hotmail.com). 4440462
- ❖ **Hyatt Opens Tennis Tournament** 19-21 June. For registrations: Hyatt Regency Kathmandu 4491234 ext 5165
- ❖ **Queensland Day** celebrated at Rox Bar. 8PM onwards on 6 June. International bands performing rock and roll, blues, jazz, acoustic. Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234
- ❖ **Shehnai recital** by Pandit Rajendra Prasanna presented by The Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Embassy of India. 6PM on 11 June at the Royal Nepal Academy Auditorium, Kamaladi.
- ❖ **Inter-Cultural Film Society** screens The Road Home a film by Zhang Yimou 5.30 PM on 15 June at Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikuti Mandap.
- ❖ **Charity Ball** in aid of the Nepal Football Fan Club Street Children Project, presented by the British Council, the British Embassy and the British School. Guest of honour: Brian McClair (ex-Man Utd and Scotland player, presently Man Utd Reserve team coach). 7PM onwards, 13 June at Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu. Black tie. Tickets: Rs 1,800. Available at British Embassy Sterling Club 4410583, British School reception, BGN (contact Matt Pittaway).

MUSIC

- ❖ **Live Music** Friday at 5.30 PM, Saturday movie at 4.30 PM. Jivin' Joe's Restaurant, Kupondole.
- ❖ **Live Acoustic Jam** 7PM on Saturdays at Himalatte Cafe, Thamel. 4256738
- ❖ **Full Circle** acoustic jam every Friday at New Orleans Café, Thamel. 4427311
- ❖ **Thunderbolt** with Ram Shrestha and Sabu Lama. 8PM onwards Wednesdays and Saturdays at the Red Onion Bar, Lazimpat. 4416071

DRINKS

- ❖ **Fusion** offers over 100 cocktails. Happy hour from 6-7PM. Dwarika's Hotel.
- ❖ **The Jazz Bar reopens** with 50 percent discount on beverages, DJ or live entertainment through June. Shangri-la Hotel, Lazimpat. 4412999.
- ❖ **K-too! Special** Tropical Khukri drinks Rs 125 or Rs 750 for every 1.5 litre. Free Irish Coffee with every main course. K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4433043.
- ❖ **The Piano Lounge & Bar** features the Trio Givone for Gypsy music, cocktails and snacks. Yak & Yeti Hotel.

FOOD

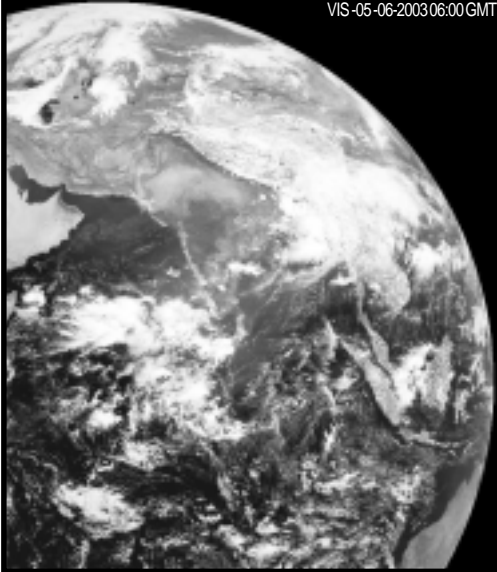
- ❖ **Summer specials** at Kilroy's of Kathmandu, Thamel. 4250440
- ❖ **Naachghar Revisited** with Myrna, an international exotic dancer, and North Indian delicacies. Every evening from 7.30 PM onwards. Rs 749 per person. Hotel Yak & Yeti, Durbar Marg.
- ❖ **Wood fired pizzas, Baskin Robbins icecream, cocktails and coffee** at the Roadhouse Café, Thamel.
- ❖ **Café Bahal** Dieter's delight for the health conscious at Kathmandu Guest House's Food Court, Thamel. 4413632
- ❖ **Kids Combo Meal** at all Bakery Cafés. Kids' meals with exciting gifts.
- ❖ **Weekend breakfast:** Smoked salmon scrambled eggs and filtered coffee Rs 100. 9AM-12PM. Thomas Kilroy at 1905, Kantipath. 4225272
- ❖ **Traditional Nepali Thali Lunch** at Patan Museum Café 11AM-4PM. 5526271
- ❖ **Saturday Asian Brunch** at The Café, **Sunday European Lunch** at Rox Restaurant. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4491234
- ❖ **Saturday BBQ Lunch** at Club Himalaya Nagarkot. Rs 500 per person. 4680083
- ❖ **The greenest patch** Weekend lunches at The Fort Resort, [fort@mos.com.np](http://fort@mos.com.np). 226799
- ❖ **Newari Bhoj** at Lajana Restaurant. Lazimpat. 413874
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VIS-05-06-2003 06:00 GMT



by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

This satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows a giant cyclone building up over the Bay of Bengal. Two powerful low-pressure points, one in the east and the other in northwest India, is pushing moisture laden clouds in our direction. By next weekend, the eastern parts of Nepal will experience the first monsoon showers—just about six days late. It will take another four days to reach Kathmandu Valley. Western Nepal will have to wait another week for a respite from the current heat wave and dry spell. The Valley can expect pre-monsoon rain and thunderstorms in the next few days.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
32-19	31-18	32-18	31-18	30-17

BOOKWORM



**Three Plays: Fire in the Monastery, A Journey into Thamel, The Caretaker's Sky**  
Abhi Subedi translated by Sangita Rayamajhi  
Across Publication, 2003  
Rs 300

These plays by Nepali writer, thinker and academic Abhi Subedi has been translated by feminist academic Sangita Rayamajhi. *Fire in the Monastery* is a post-modernist play that explores the subjective and objective realities in the lives of a group of Buddhist nuns. The last two plays revolve around the socio-cultural milieu of a bygone aristocratic era in Nepali history.

**Resources and Population: A Study of Gurungs of Nepal** Alan Macfarlane  
Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2003 (Second Edition)  
Rs 995

This study is probably the most intensive longitudinal study of a single community in the Himalaya. It uses the tools of social anthropology and population in an attempt to map causes and consequences of population growth and some of the effects of change in natural resources. Unfortunately, the conclusions that the author reaches are extremely gloomy.



**Art and Architecture: Remains in the Western Terai Region of Nepal** Giti Giri  
Adroit Publishers, 2003  
Rs 1,200

The area around Lumbini is considered one of the most archaeologically rich sites in the tarai. The author throws light on the history, archaeological sites, art, architecture and tourism potential of the region. Photographs, drawings and maps have been included to make the volume more authentic, informative and attractive.

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*X-Men 2* continues the cinematic saga of those strange mutant superheroes who made the smooth transition from comic book to celluloid. This sequel directed by Bryan Singer brings back Patrick Stewart, Ian McKellan, Halle Berry, Hugh Jackman, Anna Paquin, Brian Cox and Alan Cumming. It's packed with almost non-stop action and some reviewers think X2 trumps the first part. Fans of the first X-Men film will find this bigger and better.

4PM, 6.30PM

Ramgopal Verma has teamed up with his golden girl Urmila Matondkar once again for what promises to be a Hindi film that is out of the ordinary. Quite literally. *Bhoot* is a supernatural thriller set in Mumbai that involves dead spirits (as the name of the movie suggests), sceptics and believers. This spine tingler that also stars Ajay Devgan, Nana Patekar, Rekha and Fardeen Khan is a refreshing change from the normal Bollywood fare.

11AM, 1.30 PM

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# Nepal's Malaya

In Nepali, the word "Malaya" resonates in folk songs, in novels and short stories. In the Pacific War, Gurkha soldiers fought alongside the British and the Australians in the jungles to stop the Japanese advance on Singapore. Many were taken prisoner, and stayed behind after they were released. Others migrated down from Burma and Thailand, and there are thriving and prosperous Nepali kampongs today in the Malaysian peninsular.

Most have assimilated and intermarried, some older ones still speak Nepali. Others, like academic Bishan Bahadur Singh, don't speak a word of Nepali but often their names give them away. Or there is Bhakta Bahadur Rana whose father emigrated to Burma at the age of six. They moved down to Surat Thai in Thailand and then after the war fled to Malaya. He joined the British Gurkha in the anti-communist insurgency. Today, at age 80, Bhakta Bahadur runs a successful security business with his sons and is the godfather of Malaysia's original 5,000 or so Nepalis.

Now, Malaysia is seeing an influx of 'New Nepalis': migrant workers you see at gas stations, restaurants and palm and rubber plantations. There are an estimated 30,000 Nepali workers in Malaysia and the numbers are growing.

# Go East

With new flights, Malaysia is closer than you think, and truly Asia.

S SHAH

In the past this beautiful and diverse Asian nation failed to register on our holiday radars. Now, increasing numbers of Nepalis and expats in Kathmandu are discovering the pleasure of a holiday destination that won't break the bank and allows you to set your own pace. Malaysia offers something for everyone—from urban animals who get chills of joy just standing in the shadow of the Petronas Twin

Towers to those who want to feel dwarfed by the amazing rainforests. The first stop is usually the capital, Kuala Lumpur, universally known as KL. This city of 1.2 million is where the prosperity and multi-ethnicity of Malaysia is on display. It's not so much a melting pot as it is a peaceful co-existence of different cultures: Malays, Chinese, Indians, indigenous peoples and even a few Malay Nepalis—little wonder that the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board advertises the country as "Truly Asia".

The food and architecture reflects the people who turned KL into a mega-metropolis from a humble mining town in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Walk along any street in the city centre and glance upwards: colonial British buildings inspired



by Moorish designs share the same skyline with mosque minarets and glass-enveloped towers—centuries of civilisation telescoped into one view.

On street level, KL is a melange of colours, scents and textures. In many ways it retains the local charm and flavour that other Asian cities were only to eager to erase in the bid to become a global city.

Street stalls sell everything from delicious Nonya cooking that simply must be sampled, to designer label knock-offs which vendors insist are the real thing.

Bargaining is acceptable and even expected, and since English is widely spoken you need not be reduced to haggling in sign language

with the aid of a calculator. Experiencing KL can be tailored to suit every budget. There are upscale hotels that are used to housing state leaders and won't bat a lash over a request for a manicure for your poodle—miniature mutts have become the new status symbol among the moneyed class. Alternatively, you can find accommodation as a paying guest with local families for nominal amounts.

Eating out is a joy in KL, especially in the evenings when the Garden City of Lights takes on another dimension (*see Eat all you can*).

➡ see p18

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➡ from p17

The nucleus is the Golden Triangle—whole blocks of coffee-houses, nightclubs, fine dining establishments, supermalls and luxury hotels—bordered by Jalan Raja Chulan, Jalan Sultan Ismail and Jalan Bukit Bintang. A visit to Chinatown and Little India is always well worth a culinary visit too.

For those who get a thrill from the smell of burnt rubber and screeching high-powered engines, KL is the closest you can get to true blue Formula 1 action in Asia. The Sepang International Circuit outside the airport is 5.5km with 15 turns and 9 straights that have tested the mettle of greats like Michael Schumacher, Mika Hakkinen and Kimi Raikkonen. The F1-crazy nation comes to a virtual standstill every year for the Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix.

Malaysia is in the tropics so the only two weather conditions you're likely to experience are hot and rainy, with high humidity.

The Cameron Highlands are the cool exception, making it the preferred retreat for colonial rulers like the Dutch and the English. Not surprisingly this is where you can enjoy a true cup of English tea from the tea estates they established.

Malaysian history steepes the streets of Melaka. Founded in 1396 by a Sumatran prince it became a prosperous port-of-call that attracted Chinese, Indian, Arabian and European trade. Melaka fell to the Portuguese, then the Dutch who relinquished it to the English with another round of back and forth till finally Malaysia claimed sovereignty in 1956. The legacy of the colonists can be seen in Stadthuys, St Francis Xavier's church and A' Famosa, one of the most photographed subjects in the town. Even with 600 years of history behind it, Melaka is a strangely unique blend of the old and tourism boom new. You can try your hand at speed and banana

boating, para- and jet-sailing, snorkelling and diving (*see Under the Sea*). Lumut offers a unique array of processed seafood, most of which, like fish paste, anchovies and cuttlefish are an acquired taste! For a beach combing budget holiday make your way to Teluk Batik, a beautiful beach with its own bay just a few kilometres south

of Lumut.

Malaysia's natural beauty cannot be overstated. Geologists have established that Malaysia's forests, which vary from shoreline mangrove to mountaintop oak, are far more ancient than those in the Amazon and the Congo. In Borneo a single 500 square metre area alone may contain more than 800 different species of trees alone, and a profusion of flora and fauna. The adventurous can climb southeast Asia's highest mountain Mt Kinabalu, stalk big game, go fly-fishing for giant carp, hike through the forest (especially spectacular at night) and even try their hand spelunking in the numerous caverns that riddle the hills, especially at the Gunung Mulu National Park. One of the most spectacular tracts of pristine rainforest is the Taman Negara National Park. The 4,343 sq km park is accessible only by boat. Dusk and dawn are the best times to visit. In Sarawak and Sabah you can even visit tribes like the Dayaks who still live in longhouses, large communal dwellings shared by the whole tribe. ♦

# Under the sea



If Malaysia's forests are a revelation, then its marine life is a rich wonderland. The incredible bio-diversity in the clear, tropical waters coupled with beautiful beaches is putting the country on the world map for the best dive destination in the Indo-Pacific Basin. The reef ecosystem has more than 50 genera of corals and over 200 species of fish, with more being constantly added to the list.

Reputable diving schools certified by international and governmental bodies offer courses for beginners, instructors and refreshers. If that sounds like too much work, then try snorkelling which is as easy as breathing. And you'd just rather not get wet at all then get on one of the many glass bottom boats.

Water visibility is best during April to August. The temperature ranges between 27-31 degrees Celsius so you don't need a thick wetsuit for diving.

## Eat all you can



Sampling new food is part of travelling, and Malaysia is an epicurean paradise. There is a wide variety of cuisines on offer from Nonya (a fusion of Chinese and Malay food), Indian, and Chinese to Indonesian and Western dishes but ironically, authentic Malaysian food, apart from the ubiquitous *satay*, is difficult to find. Coffee houses are very popular and so are outdoor food stalls that dish up delicious food at very reasonable rates. Coconuts play an important role in the local cuisine, especially in *laksa*, a superb seafood noodle soup flavoured with lemongrass and coconut milk.

You'll be spoiled for choice when it comes to fruit—rambutans, kiwis, succulent mangoes and passion fruit can be had for a fraction of what they cost at home. If you have a sweet tooth don't pass up the chance of tasting *cendol*, a concoction of coconut milk, sugar syrup, milk and coloured noodles. The other dessert is *ais kacang*, a delicious mix of beans and jellies topped with shaved ice, syrups and condensed milk.

If you're a beer drinker KL offers a suprisingly wide variety from all over the world. The favourites are Bintang and Tiger drunk icy cold while watching the world go by from a street café.





The exhibition runs until 1 September, but for the more sedentary readers, there is also an excellent website, [www.nationalgeographic.com/everest](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/everest), which is full of sound and music signifying the Himalaya.

Imaging Everest, a photographic exhibition is currently on display at the British Council, Lainchaurl. The 84 original photographs from the Royal Geographical Society's archives in London cover the first attempt on Everest till 1953 when Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary made the summit. The exhibition will be on till 31 July. ♦

## An exhibition pays homage to a mountaineering legend.



While the exhibition is strong in many aspects, the focus is excessively Hillary-centric. This is particularly ironic and unbecoming given that Hillary (invariably referred to as Sir Edmund Hillary in the exhibition) has retained his charming humility and unpretentiousness to this day. Overt Hillary fetishes on show include the ice axe he used on Everest, his Kodak Retina 35mm camera that recorded the legendary

The exhibition organisers should be given credit for their sensitive handling of the often acrimonious debate about who got to the top first, the nationality of Tenzing Norgay (Nepali or Indian) and the sore fact that he was never made Sir Tenzing. As for the wall panels devoted to the Yeti, they are unsensationalist and straightforward, combining excellent visuals with solid commentary—the kind of reporting we have come to expect from National Geographic.

Aiming for embedded interactivity, the curators of the exhibition have decided to let visitors walk across a ladder over an image of a crevasse and try on backpacks of various weights to simulate what Hillary and the team carried up Everest as a reminder of how heavy the loads felt at different altitudes. Watching an entire family of severely overweight visitors strap the packs on and waddle around proclaiming success induced greater







## Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

# For the record

COMPILED FROM NEWSY REPORTS

KATHMANDU - With no other records left to break on Mr Everest this season, Nepalis are turning their attention once more to the neglected arena of politics where a veteran statesman shattered all previous records this week by becoming prime minister for the umpteenth time.

A jubilant, but visibly tired, Mr Surya Bahadur Thapa was mobbed by reporters as he arrived at Base Camp in Maligau, where he said: "I just wanted to prove to myself that I could do it, each time is a challenge." Asked if he would try to be head of government once again in the foreseeable future he said: "Yes, my goal is to hold office for a world record 50 times, and I think given the state the country is in, and with support from my colleagues inside and outside Nepal, there is no reason why I can't do it."

Thapa shattered the previous repeat ascent record held for just six months by his predecessor, Mr Lokendra Bahadur Chand, who was prime minister so many times that the Nepali people have lost count. In any case, carbon dating of some historical artifacts found in his household have removed any doubts that Mr Thapa had been appointed prime minister for the very first time during the late Lichhavi Period.

Earlier this week, there was a long queue outside the West Gate of the Royal Palace made up of Nepalis from various walks of life lining up to stake their claim to prime ministership. Some said they had applied with a Manpower Agency for new job openings in South Korea, but were also trying for prime ministership just

in case they didn't get to go to Seoul.

Others were there to prove the point that in a democracy any citizen is eligible to try his or her hand at being prime minister at some point in their lives, and so what if they didn't get the US diversity visa lottery? Most simply just wanted to get into the Guinness Book of World Records.

One eager candidate, Pokche Prasad, said he wanted to try to crush the previous land speed record by being prime minister for the shortest period in Nepali history. Clutching his photo ID and handwritten petition to His Majesty, he said: "I'll be happy if I can be PM for just five minutes. It will make my parents very proud."

A random sample of some others in the queue showed no dearth of imagination as to what Nepalis can achieve if they just put their minds to it. One social climber wanted to be prime minister just so she could be the first Nepali female to hold the top job without the aid of bottled oxygen. "It will be a breathtaking achievement if she makes it," said one western diplomatic source.

Near the end of the queue was two-year-old Ankit Ascharya munching a fist full of 'PM'

Instant Noodles. His mother said Ankit showed all the qualities to go down in history as Nepal's youngest prime minister. Also spotted in the queue was a noted columnist wearing a hat emblazoned with the message 'Why Not Me?'. He said modestly that he wanted to be the first journalist to be the country's premier. "If nominated, I swear I'll never write another weekly column again, and you can quote me on that," the reporter told reporters. ♦



## NEPALI SOCIETY

# Rubbish awards

World Environment Day on Thursday was award time for Sharada Vaidya of the Women Environment Protection Committee (WEPCO). The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) inducted the NGO into its prestigious Global 500 Roll of Honour and the World Wildlife Fund gave it the Abraham Conservation Award.

Sharada, who launched a model community garbage management system in Patan, is taking it all in stride. "We are not affected by awards, donors or change in governments," she says. "Whatever happens, our work will go on."

Everyone grouses about Kathmandu's garbage, but few do anything about it. Sharada is among the very few who decided to set up WEPCO in

1992 with a handful of friends to reduce, reuse and recycle Kathmandu's household waste. "We used to blame the government, the municipality—everyone but ourselves," she recalls.

Clad in green saris, WEPCO women went around collecting waste and advising Kupondol residents to separate their garbage. Initially, they were met with derision. People said it was the municipality's job, why are you getting your hands dirty? But slowly, the residents started taking notice and then they began actively cooperating and sorting the garbage.

Today, WEPCO collects garbage from 3,000 households in Patan, free of charge. It recycles paper waste into office files, envelopes, boxes, wrapping paper and penholders in its own paper plant. A compost site was built in 1996 to produce fertiliser from organic waste. And it runs its collection out of the revenue generated from sales of fertiliser and recycled paper products.

Nearly 65 percent of valley waste is organic, and WEPCO has been trying to tell households that garbage is valuable stuff. Sharada's office overlooks the Bagmati, and the smell reminds visitors of the enormous work that lies ahead. WEPCO is now planning to turn a stretch along the Bagmati called UN Park into a sanctuary. ♦



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