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# A big hole in our budget

**NAVIN SINGH KHADKA**

Only three weeks into his new job, Finance Minister Prakash Chandra Lohani is trying to see if he can plug the hole in the forthcoming national budget. He may have to start with the huge hole on the street outside his ministry (see pic, right).

Lohani has his work cut out: the government's security budget has grown four-fold to Rs 9 billion in the past four years, revenue is up but still below target, export earnings and tourism are down. If it wasn't for the estimated \$1 billion that came into the country from overseas remittances last year, this

country could be declared officially bankrupt.

Lohani is caught in a Catch-22: more money than ever before is needed for development, but more of it is being siphoned off for security. The army says it needs to augment hardware to deter insurgents from going back to war. On top of that, chronic fiscal ailments and structural problems all persist.

Even so, Finance Ministry officials see a silver lining: revenue has grown by 10 percent compared to last year and is now only Rs 3 billion less than the regular expenditure. Lohani is confident balancing the budget is within reach.

"We will increase revenue further and cut some more from the regular expenditure this year," he told us.

If that works, the government will not need to rely on internal borrowing that grew by 24 percent last year in direct violation of the Nepal Rastra Bank Act which caps internal borrowing to only five percent of the budget.

The security situation has meant that a large chunk of the budget in this fiscal year has not been spent, which does not mean that the need is not great. (See: 'Still standstill', #145). The World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank and some

bilateral donors are shoring up the development budget by injecting some Rs 7 billion this year. "We have an improved scenario vis-à-vis the development budget," says Shankar Raj Sharma at the National Planning Commission. "And if the peace holds, we can improve implementation."

And that is the big "if". Lohani's plans for an investment-friendly and job-creating budget also hinge on peace and political stability. If this week's isolated skirmishes between the military and the Maoists escalate, or the street agitation intensifies, his plans won't be worth much.

see p8



MIN. SAURACHARYA

**Times** nepalnews.com  
Weekly Internet Poll #91

**Q. If the election were to be held next week, who would you like to see as our next prime minister to lead the country?**

Candidate	Votes
Chandra Shekhar	153
Prakash Chandra	14,608
Shree B. Shrestha	8,151
Prabhu Datta	15,111
Shankar Sharma	14,223
Dr. D. M. Joshi	1,189
Don't know	16,530

Total votes: 3,853

**Q. If the Maoists laid down their arms and took part in elections, who would you vote for?**

Alok Bohara analyses recent poll results. p7

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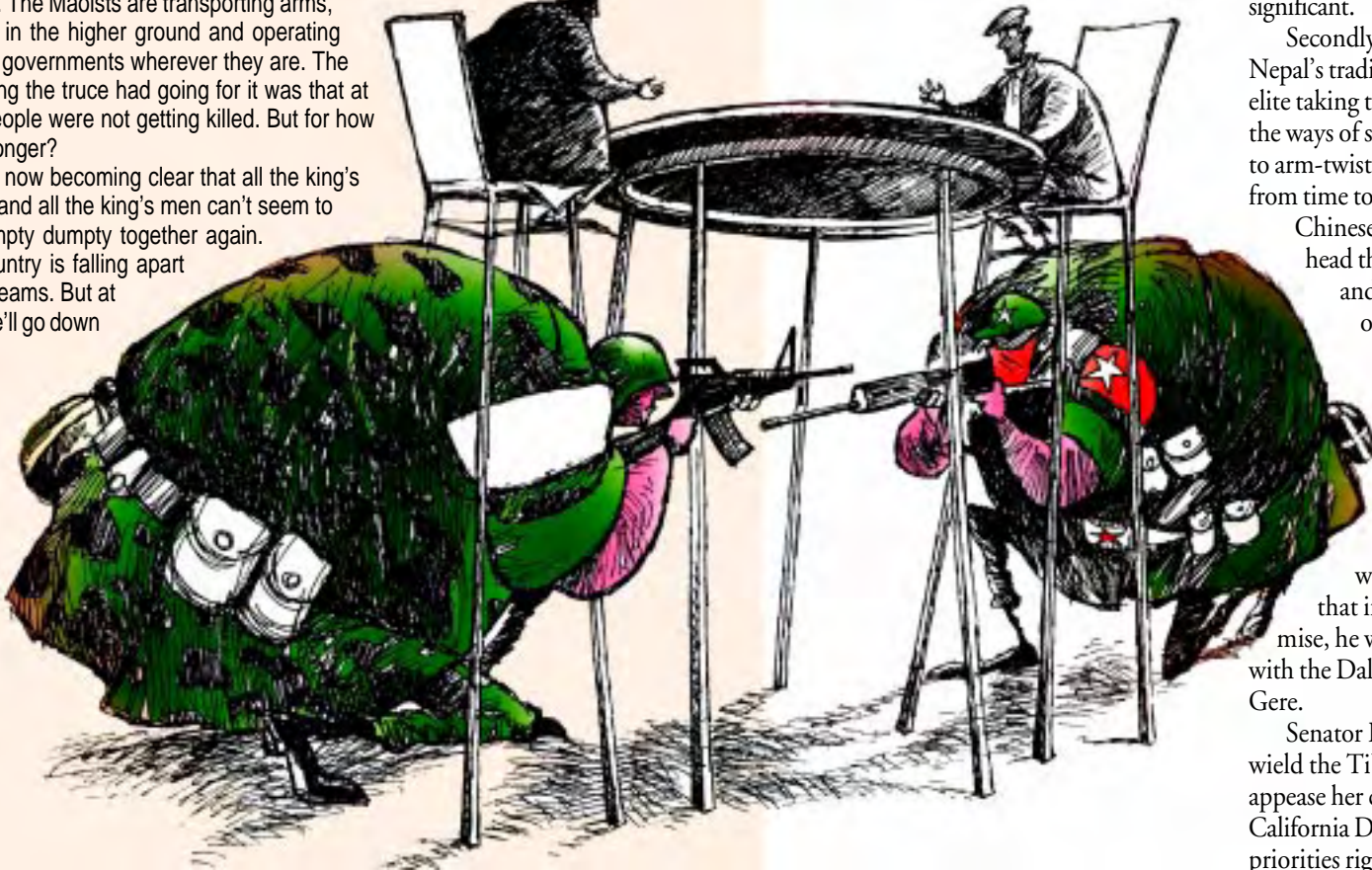




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KEEP TALKING

AREN't we talkative these days? Everyone is talking to everyone else, but it doesn't seem to get us anywhere. The seven student unions talked to the Ministry of Education last week, but predictably, the talks broke down. The revolutionary students also talked, but it was clear the talks were not about educational reforms but about social disruption. Those talks have yielded results, but we don't know for how long. Temporary government teachers are now coming out with their long-standing demands, and threatening a strike—so the government is trying to talk to them too. Tanker owners demanding the right to dilute diesel with kerosene blockaded supply to Kathmandu Valley this week, so the government talked to them and gave in by allowing them to carry on with business as usual. Now, tanker operators in Amelkhanj also want the same privilege and say the threshold of "leakage" should be raised so they can steal more en route from the Indian refineries. Talks to resolve that dispute are ongoing. The transport unions, egged on by their political mentors, brought the western half of the country to a standstill for a week. The government talked to them, but to no avail. Then, the eastern half of the country was brought to a halt, and the government supposedly gave in to all the demands so the strike was lifted from Thursday morning. Political leaders admit to us privately that they are behind all these strikes, and the idea is to force the king give in. By strangling transport and education and with the daily street protests, the parties have reminded us of what they used to do to each other. So, if this is what they'll go back to once 'democracy' is restored, then let Pashupatinath have mercy on us all. There seem to be some behind-the-scene talks going on between the kangresis and the prime minister, but those chats don't show any signs of unravelling the current political paralysis. Then, there is the mother of all talks: the peace negotiations between the government and the Maoists which are stalled and seriously threatened by recent skirmishes and flagrant violations of the code of conduct by both sides. The extortion, threats and intimidation in the countryside have reached a crescendo. The Maoists are transporting arms, training in the higher ground and operating parallel governments wherever they are. The only thing the truce had going for it was that at least people were not getting killed. But for how much longer? It is now becoming clear that all the king's horses and all the king's men can't seem to put humpty dumpty together again. The country is falling apart at the seams. But at least we'll go down talking.



SUBHAS RAI

STATE OF THE STATE

by CK LAL



Imperious power

The business of America is business, and the sooner we realise that the better.

THE ties that bind Kathmandu with Lhasa predate the formation of the United States of America by centuries. Kathmandu Valley craftsmen minted coins for the Tibetan court, Nepal was Tibet's principal trade partner and cultural links were vibrant. So when the Mao regime annexed Tibet, it was quite natural that many Tibetans afraid of the new emperor of China crossed the Himalaya into Nepal. For very practical reasons it is difficult to differentiate between Tibet's seasonal migrants and Tibetans seeking political refuge. Nepal has provided safe passage for the refugees even though Kathmandu formally recognises the annexation of Tibet by the People's Republic of China. This duality has worked, and as long as Nepal's hospitality for Tibetan refugees was purely humanitarian, the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu tolerated occasional street protests and let the Nepali police handle it. Successive Nepali governments have

been sensitive to Chinese concerns ever since the American inspired Khampa uprising from Nepal was brought to an end in the mid-1970s. Such are the sensitivities that the diplomatic cost of a Dalai Lama visit far outweigh having the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people meditating in the Lumbini Gardens. Lately, things are getting a bit edgy. The deportation of 18 Tibetan refugees on 31 May could be an indication of things to come, not a "mistake" as an unnamed cabinet minister confided to this paper last week. There may be several factors for this new get-tough policy. Just because the Chinese haven't said anything publicly, doesn't mean they are taking kindly to busybodies of the US Pacific Command sniffing around its backyard. Along with Taiwan and Xinjiang, Tibet is China's soft underbelly and it will do everything to pre-empt outsiders from poking around there. This is why the Sino-Indian rapprochement this week with the formal swapping of each others' annexations of Sikkim and Tibet was significant.

Secondly, the Chinese are miffed at Nepal's traditionally America-leaning elite taking them for granted. And one of the ways of showing their displeasure is to arm-twist Nepal over Tibetan refugees from time to time. Chinese President Hu Jintao used to head the Communist Party in Tibet and is one of the representatives of the Tibetan Autonomous Region in the Chinese Peoples' National Congress parliament. Unlike his predecessors, Hu can be expected to take a hawkish view of anything that involves his neck of the woods. He may have decided that if he has to make a compromise, he would rather deal directly with the Dalai Lama and bypass Richard Gere. Senator Dianne Feinstein is trying to wield the Tibet stick to beat Nepal and appease her constituency. But the California Democrat should get her priorities right: first she should clear her

own name over alleged campaign finance irregularities involving her husband, Dick Blum. And then she should boycott Boeing, IBM, Nike and Northwest for doing roaring business with Beijing. Jeff Greenwald's claim to fame so far are some books that have tried to cash in on Nepali exotica. Full of righteous indignation, he is now leading the charge for a tourism boycott of Nepal. (*The boycott has been withheld for now, see p7. -Ed.*) Members of Ethical Traveler should know that as a proportion of its population, Nepal supports more refugees than most other countries, including the United States. Nepalis don't need lectures on how to be hospitable to outsiders. Why doesn't Greenwald show the same concern for Guatemalans, Haitians and Cubans trying to escape to his own country? Double standards and hypocrisy in America don't seem to be confined to the current US administration. We don't need to worry too much about naïve lawmakers and misguided authors with a Tibet fetish. We need to worry more about the pushy investors of Bhote Kosi. They are also using the threat of trade sanctions to arm-twist Nepal into buying more power than stipulated in their agreement, and also dithering on paying the mandated royalty per kilowatt to the NEA. The loud-mouthed Texans have shown they will use their political proximity to the Bush team to punish us if we don't. None of this, of course, absolves our own policymakers from blame. We need to take the lobbying game in Washington a lot more seriously, and our envoy and embassy in DC have to be more than a recreation outpost. Let's get someone out there who really knows the American way. The business of America is business, and the sooner we realise that the better. No amount of chest-beating and hand-wringing is going to get us any concessions. If the Garment Quota Bill doesn't benefit powerful American interests, it will not materialise. The neighbourhood is coming to terms with the harsh realities of a hyperpower world, and so should we. □

LETTERS

**POLL**  
Your internet poll (Poll #90) has given a clear message: the ongoing agitation should be against GP Koirala. The Nepali Congress led by Koirala is responsible for ruining the country over the past 13 years. We gave a clear majority to the NC, but they wasted their chance with corruption and selfishness. It's clear what they want with the present agitation: they want to have another go. They have already betrayed the people. The Maoists are not a cause but are an effect of the NC's unsuccessful years of government. Your poll says Koirala is 46.59 percent responsible for this chaos, I would put it at a 100 percent. **Lila Khatiwada, IIRI, Philippines**  
□ Looking at the results of your ongoing poll regarding who is best suited to lead the nation (Poll #91), it seems that your internet voters overwhelmingly

want Baburam Bhattarai. If this has any significance, it behooves the king and other political parties to, for once, listen to public opinion and ask Bhattarai to lead the nation, and take us out of this 'summer of discontent'. I notice that multiple voting is possible on your web poll. I wonder how you plan to filter out the bias. Could it be that the good doctor got so many votes because most of his followers are internet savvy, or is it just because he can count on pranksters like me who love to skew public opinion? **Deepak Neupane, email**  
(No internet polling is ever totally scientific. The software used in the Nepali Times Nepalnews.com internet poll does not easily allow multiple voting, but there are always ways around it for really determined people with lots of time on their hands. -Ed)  
**HEARTS & MINDS**  
Reading Min Bajracharya's 'Hearts, minds and haircuts' (#149) we get

the impression the security forces are serious about cleaning up their image. But they have a long way to go. People in the far-west are still afraid of the police and the army. In Gorkha, where I was a student, I was often harassed. It's a good start, but they can't wash away the human rights violations with these public relations exercises. The people will want justice. The Maoists' hearts-and-minds programs are working better. But both sides



should realise that you don't win peoples' minds by killing them. **Buddhi Pant, Coventry UK**  
□ After reading 'Hearts, minds and haircuts', I wonder if the Royal Nepali Army really cares about the people, or is it just a pretence? After decades of political ineptness, corruption, irresponsibility and dysfunctional bureaucracy, ordinary people were the least of anybody's concern. The elite leaders and rulers who hide behind the gated fences in Katmandu should learn a lesson in winning the hearts and minds of ordinary citizens. You cannot do politics without the support of the people. I despair for Nepal's poorest of the poor—the forgotten, ignored and disadvantaged. **Roshan Paudel, Minneapolis, USA**  
**MONKEY BUSINESS**  
Friends of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCAN) is extremely concerned

about the activities of the Washington National Primate Center and the Nepal Natural History Society ('Monkey business', #148). As if not enough suffering is being inflicted upon Nepal's animals already, this unholy alliance now eyes the country's primates, considered sacred and an important part of the country's heritage by the population. The Washington centre tries to find loopholes in the world's legal animal rights provisions, and in Nepal (one of the few countries in the world still without such legislation) it found ideal working ground. The plans to establish a primate research/breeding centre in Nepal were discussed during a 2002 Washington workshop on the future of 'Nonhuman Primate Resources'. Nepal is proud of its primates and does not want them to suffer unnecessarily. We certainly do not want our monkeys—sacred or not—to end up in an American lab, subjected to horrifying experiments. Friends

of SPCAN call upon the media and authorities to:  
1. Investigate how alliances such as these can enter the country in disguise, without permission and/or informing authorities (and make sure it won't happen again).  
2. Clarify the country's stand on the protection of its precious fauna, including primates.  
3. Pass animal welfare legislation as soon as possible, including a ban on (inhumane) research on animals and export of animal species for scientific use.  
4. Prevent overseas centres from conducting tests on Nepal's animal species, unless aimed at improving their welfare and/or genuine conservation. **Friends of SPCAN www.fospcan.org.np**  
**EDUCATION**  
Re: 'Learning education' (Editorial, #150). It seems that the anti-education forces are not listening. Last Friday, most schools in the Valley shut down early fearing the Maoists would force them to join



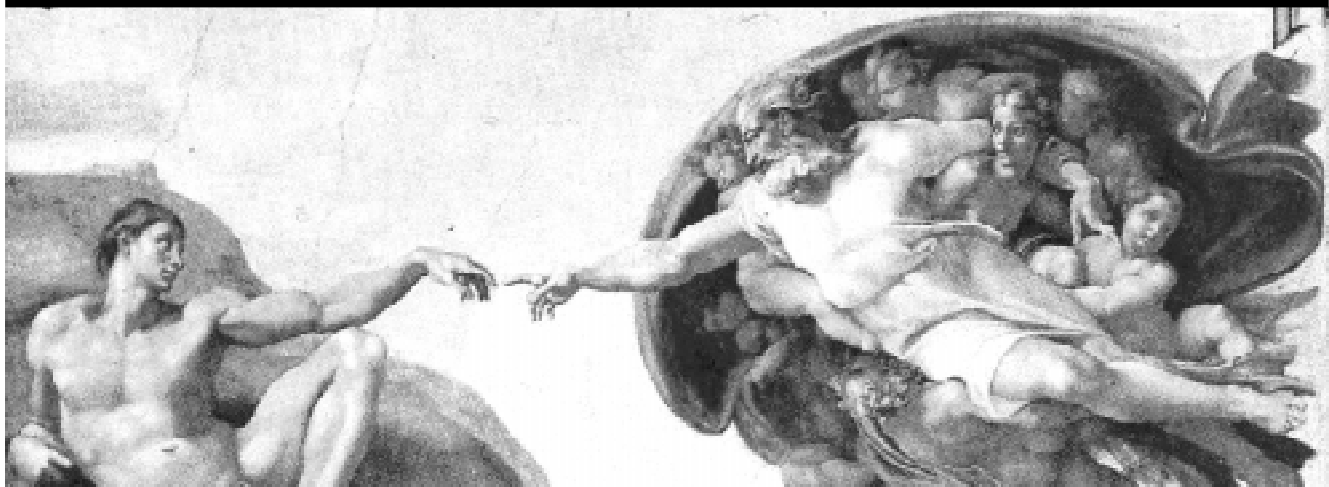
OPINION

by DIPAK GYAWALI



# Of Foreign Hands and Grand Designs

**Instead of being paranoid about outside interference, a wiser course would be to focus on the conditions at home that encourage meddling.**



For all the rhetoric to the contrary, Kathmandu lusts for external intervention. One only has to go to Patan's Bagalamukhi temple on Thursdays to appreciate this innate national belief in help from outside to set one's affairs right.

Intervention, both divine and foreign, have the same source. Bagalamukhi is one of the ten Tantrik goddesses, this one having the power of blocking energy flow. She is also called the Great Stupefier and is the patron deity of hatha yoga that stems normal breathing to move vital flows to higher spiritual planes. But is this what the politicians and litigants that throng the precincts on Thursdays after? What is really being sought from the goddess is not so much wisdom for self but active interference against one's adversaries, whether in the political or judicial arenas. One wonders what democratic criteria the goddess would apply if adversaries of opposite camps prayed for the same favour.

Appeals to powers more mundane to intercede on one's behalf have happened often in Nepali politics. The king's intervention using Article 127 of the constitution seems fine as long as it does not make the other guy prime minister. Resolving the quagmire is possible only by appealing to a higher power, the sovereign people through free and fair elections. But those who need to derive their legitimacy from popular support don't seem to want to do that without the rigging machine under their grip.

Like a 'just war', what is a 'good' intervention? What is the wider universal principle that justifies appealing to external agencies, other than 'it is good for me'? It helps to accept the fact that interventions are a way of life, righteous indignation notwithstanding. Brian Hodgson did it to further the interests of the Raj, the Chinese Ambans did so for their

emperors, while the French and the Japanese were always on the lookout for any opening to push their interests through. What makes Kathmandu cognoscenti believe that today's foreign ambassadors should be any different? They are after all paid by their governments to further primarily their country's interests. If they coincide with Nepal's, the envoy will be remembered for enlightened statesmanship and good diplomacy. If not, then it will be said that nations don't have permanent friends, only permanent interests.

Demonising retired diplomats and crediting ex-professors with transboundary powers is bad comedy, not serious analysis. The most devastatingly effective intervention regime human history has ever seen is the global market since the 1500s. Its aggressive expansion destroyed the Chinese, Mughal and other empires. Today, in the globalised world it passes death sentences on many cherished traditions. Governments of nations sitting as drivers of economic bulldozers have inherent advantage over those that are weakly marketised or pre-market. The only proven way to

challenge this juggernaut is with effective market instruments of one's own as shown by recent Chinese history. Sloganeering and rallies may help keep the faithful together for a while but will not keep an intrusive market out for too long.

If external interventions are inevitable facts of life and if there are certain intrusions we do not like, where should our attention be focused? The temptation would be to attack the attacker, but a wiser course would be to focus on the conditions at home that encourage meddling.

One example is religious conversion banned by Nepali laws, but ineffective in preventing it or discouraging the committed proselytiser. It will merrily happen as long as orthodox Hinduism refuses to reform enough to embrace dalits and janjatis within their ecumenical fold. If Maoist violence and economic stagnation from political instability forced large numbers of Nepalis abroad, will not the role of host countries automatically increase in Nepali affairs? If Malaysia and the Gulf countries employ more Nepalis in their formal sector than Nepal

herself, will they not-out of self-interest-be making suggestions about Nepal's politics and governance?

Foreign-aided development is another area where Nepal automatically invites intrusion. If external aid accounts for two-thirds of the overall development budget, conditionalities imposed should be no surprise. Sahujis cannot be blamed for trying to protect their investments, but our political-administrative machinery can be for surviving on short-term expediency. We have entered into many internationally enforceable contracts where procurement of goods and services in development projects invariably shifts the burden of risk away from international contractors and consultants onto the unsuspecting Nepali consumer.

Fulminations in the streets or the tabloids will not rectify the situation, nor stem the intervention. Those who fashionably decry conspiracy theories are as wrong as those who mutter of grand designs. There are conspiracies both in politics and business, but failure to provide go beyond fuzzy plots just exhibit grand mediocrity.

For grand design conspiracies to work, it first requires a grand mind not visible in Nepal or the neighbourhood. Second, such a non-existent grand mind would need an unbelievably grand control of every lever and knob, knowing just how and when to produce the right flap of butterfly wings in New Delhi to create a cloudburst over Singha Darbar.

The reality is that interests big and small all push their agendas, some with a two-day vision and some with two years. The ones with the longer view often come out winning, and to their more myopic rivals this would look like some sinister grand design. There is a simple explanation from political sociology for regular grand design alarms in Nepali polity: we adopted a multiparty system without a party culture of established procedures. Nepal's main parties come from an underground culture of loyalty to charismatic figures rather than ideas or institutions.

Such enclavist groups require some fear, an external threat, to keep the band of faithful within the prescribed boundary. In power, when they are the threat to ordinary citizens, much of their energy is spent in group infighting between rivals with mutual witchcraft accusations of defilement. Out of power, an external bogey is useful as a scapegoat explanation.

The solution to external intervention is a triad of better internal social justice, business efficiency and administrative integrity. If an active civil society and innovative business were to promote enlightened political and bureaucratic leadership, we could even intervene abroad through economic diplomacy. Otherwise, foreign intervention is an easy walkover. □

Dipak Gyawali was water resources minister in the Chand government. This article is based on a talk at Nagarik Awaj on 17 June.

their protest rally. I would like to lodge a strong protest against the Maoists' protest rallies. Whatever the 'revolutionary' students may say, the students in school uniforms drenched in the rain prove they were not there out of their own free will. Political turmoil and the self-interest of politicians has already ruined our economy and set the country back 50 years. The country is in shambles, and dismantling education is the final step.

**Pravesh Saria, email**

**TAXUS**  
Daniel Lak's column is always refreshing and is an asset to your weekly. However, his born-again discovery of a miracle medicinal herb as worth much "more than all the development esoterica" ('Revolution in Mustang', #149) is a frightening example of a journalist as an instant development expert. Cultivating Taxus and other specialised mountain plants with

ready markets can be a good thing—but like the apples he disparages, they must be matched with the ecology, transport and market arrangements as critical, and a number of other so called esoteric factors—including gender—spell either success or disaster. In the case of Taxus, did Lak look into the many areas where it has failed? Or, as he obliquely notes, does cultivation serve as the guise for wholesale looting of natural sources?

**Rattan Chand, email**

**ZOOLOGY**  
Since Kunda Dixit seems to be running out of hats, we hope this piece of research is helpful. The 'World of Animals' book has got a new entry: Kangresis. They are apparently wild animals that maintain a feudal hierarchy and hop around on their hind legs in the streets in an agitated manner when their pouches are empty. As they believe it is their

inalienable right, to having pouches, and bellies, full of goodies and spoils, they are known to go to great lengths in agitation, even joining hands with predator species if their instinct drives them. When it ingests ample food, it become satiated, dull and unresponsive to any outside stimulation, ignoring danger, even to the point of its own annihilation.

**Tony Undholm and David Marcus, email**

**CURTAINS**  
Re: 'Curtain call' (Artha Beed, #149). As there is no planning for life in Nepal, how does the author expect us to plan for death? When basic needs like health care, education, transportation, human rights are not taken care of in Nepal, it is absurd to talk about death. How will a farmer set aside money for his funeral when he doesn't have enough for the education and food for his children when he is alive?

**Kiran Nakarmi, email**

□ I cannot say that Artha Beed's comparison between death rites in Nepali and American cultures is completely illogical. But the arguments are flawed because he compares apples and oranges. The death rites in the two cultures stem from, at the most fundamental level, different beliefs. True, there may be numerous things that we have to review or that we can do away within our rites, but the Beed unambiguously praises the 'American' way of doing things while calling into attention only the negative aspects of our culture. There are problems associated with the 'American' way of handling death and the dead which we are all aware of. The article smacks of cultural denigration, a lop-sided view that exalts the 'American' way. Our traditions are not so sacrosanct that they do not require review. But these can be done without incomplete and biased reference to other cultures. Cultural hegemony is a very real threat

and that monster does not need any blind abetting from our part.

**Sujan Rajbhandary, email**

**TIBET, TIBET**  
There may be some validity to the argument that a tiny poor country like Nepal bears the brunt of a superpower in 'Nepal feels the heat over Tibet deportations' and 'Tibet, Tibet'. But you failed to look introspectively at our own inadequacies. We do not have a coherent policy that tackles refugees, foreign policy and trade. Our government officials and diplomats are ill-informed or not adequately trained to tackle complex international issues. A sudden 180 degree turn in the official refugee policy towards Tibetans could not have happened without the blessings of the powers to be. This type of policy of appeasement will only lead to greater problems. Our ambassador in Washington should have warned Kathmandu

about the severe consequences of an international uproar and the probability of Senator Feinstein's withdrawal of quotas for Nepali garments. Obviously, our foreign policy does not function in terms of national self-interest. Which is greater: jobs for Nepalis, trade, foreign currency earnings at this dire political and economical juncture, or sending back a handful of Tibetan refugees to appease a neighbour? Let us not blame the Senator, INGO's or other nations for this. We must blame our own policies that run at the whim of a few in Kathmandu.

**SN Singh, email**

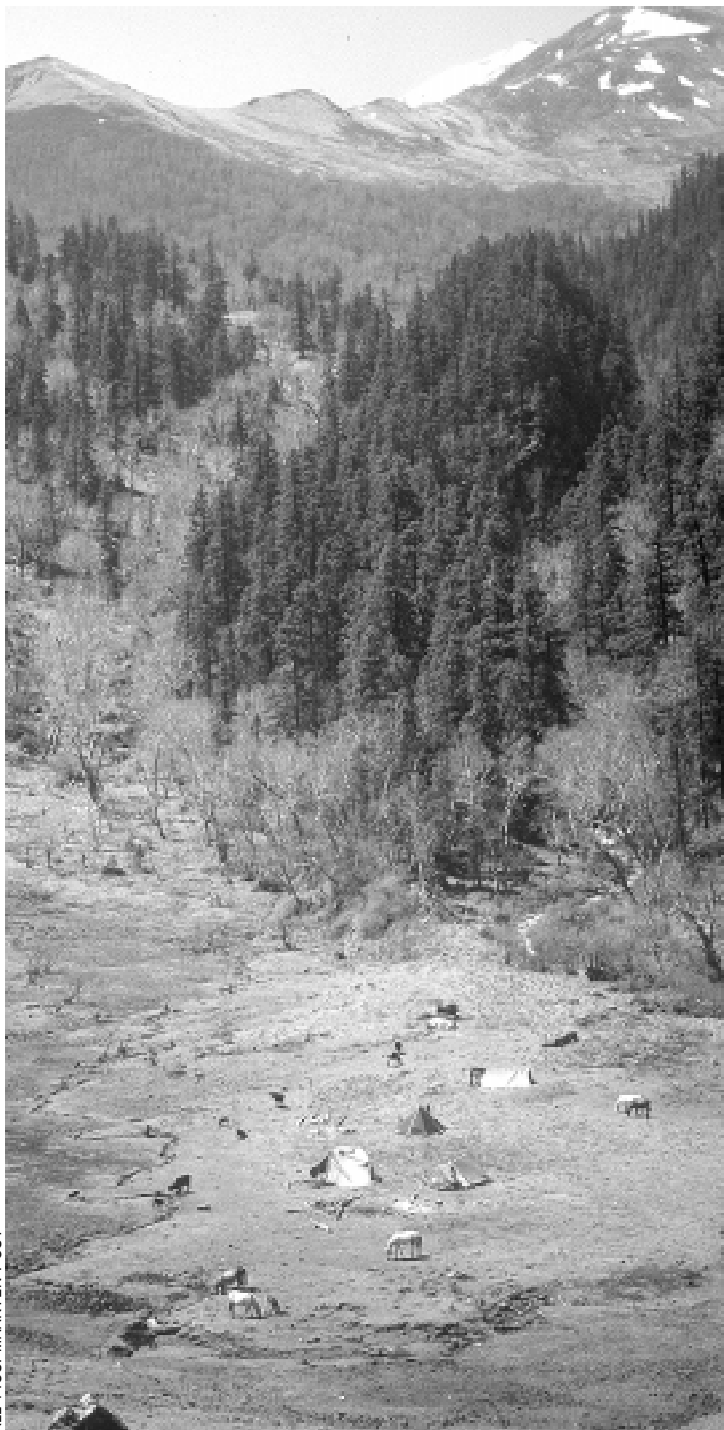
## CORRECTION

In 'Nepal feels the heat over Tibet deportations' (#150) Senator Dianne Feinstein's husband was incorrectly identified. He is Richard C Blum. - Ed



# Gold rush in Dolpa

The Himalayan viagra harvesting season brings tens of thousands of fortune seekers to this harsh region.



## MAARTEN POST in DUNAI

This is the yarchagumba picking season, and across Dolpa district schools are empty, government offices are deserted. Just about everyone has gone up the mountain to see if they can pick the mysterious half-caterpillar-half-mushroom known as Himalayan viagra.

"Yarchagumba cures headaches, stomach aches, many diseases. You'll get lots of energy," Chandra Shahi explains. Then he leans across and whispers: "It's also good for... if a man doesn't feel like sleeping with his wife anymore he should definitely try yarchagumba."

By the end of May every year, some 30,000 people in Dolpa set off to find yarchagumba. The season lasts until the end of June. "It's an unofficial holiday," says Narayan Parajuli. "I have only 10 students out of 65, most of them are out searching for yarchagumba."

Yarchagumba is known by its Latin name *Cordyceps sinensis* and is a unique combination of a yellow caterpillar and a mushroom. Few scientists have studied the phenomenon, and its lifecycle is not completely understood. The Tibetan name means 'summer grass, winter insect'. Just before the rainy season, spores of the cordyceps mushroom land on the heads of caterpillars of the Lepidoptera family that live mainly underground. After the fungus buries itself in the caterpillar's body, it works its way out through the unfortunate insect's head. The parasite soaks up the caterpillar's energy until it dies. Yarchagumba can be found when the snow starts to melt between 3,300-4,000m in parts of Tibet, India, Bhutan and Nepal.

"When Dolpa people find yarchagumba, they don't find a caterpillar, they find money," Chandra Shahi tells us. "Last year I made Rs 50,000. Even kids were

making Rs 2,000 per day." This is big money in one of Nepal's more remote and rugged areas.

It is an intricate network of Kathmandu investors who finance local businessmen who in turn hire subcontractors or buy yarchagumba directly from gatherers. "Everybody who has a lot of money in Dolpa is involved," Dipendra Shahi, a local businessman told us. This year the yarchagumba is bought from collectors for Rs 120,000 per kg. Depending on quality and size of the product, the middlemen sell the stuff by the sackload in Thailand, Korea, China and Japan for \$2,800 per kg. The Western market is also said to be getting bigger. Japanese scientists, who first came to Dolpa's mountains in a helicopter, have even tried to grow yarchagumba back home in refrigerators to simulate Himalayan conditions. It didn't work.

Until recently, collecting yarchagumba was illegal in Nepal.

Clockwise from top, left: Dolpa trader with sackful of yarchagumba worth lakhs.

Porters on the caterpillar trail.

A yarchagumba.

Rukum villagers on the road to Dolpa last month.

Scouring the slopes on Jangala Pass.

A yarchagumba 'base camp' in Dolpa.

That changed two years ago, when the government allowed collection of the precious caterpillar-mushroom outside of the Dolpa National Park boundaries. The government wanted a share of the lucrative pie: businessmen now need a permit and the government collects Rs 20,000 tax per kg. However, most businessmen say they sell the yarchagumba directly to Tibetan traders, who come to buy the goods in Do Terab, Upper Dolpa.



## HERE AND THERE

by DANIEL LAK

# Gender agenda at the Hotel Blue Sheep



DOLPA—What would the grand procession of events be, if not a study in contrasts? Things may not go as we want them to. But they go, and go, and go. And there's little we can do about it.

These are the thoughts of the trekking trail, the mindless pound of booted feet on stone and forest floor, the numbing of the brain freeing up the soul to roam and reflect. Cynicism begone, let only idealism flow. Alas, on my trip through Dolpa last week, only my existing ideas got confirmed. Sorry. Read on at your peril.

First encounter of note was a 'gender specialist' in the employ of a large, respectable European bilateral aid agency. (Note to few remaining friends at DfID: I don't consider Britain "European", not yet.) Anyway, said specialist was relaxing with tea at the Hotel Blue Sheep in Dunai. Old tea it was, left over from the last large trekking group through town. Last year some time, I'd say, by the sad, stale brew in our cups.

We sipped, and talked. Mostly I listened as she—sleek, well-dressed, English-speaking, elite education, extremely dedicated and well aware of how her own privileged background overcame this country's vast inequities—told me she was doing a 'gender audit' for head office in Europe. "There's funding left over before the end of the year and we need to spend it because good governance is going out of fashion, and we're not sure where gender fits in." Not sure? I'd call that a damning indictment of years of funding, but there you go. I'm just cynical, I guess.

She'd wandered Dolpa, Mugu and a few other remote, disadvantaged districts talking to women and doing what I am sure is good work. Valuable too, if it goes to any end other than propping up the smugness of the development elite back in Europe. My friend over bad tea and I agreed that much needed to change in the gender department in Nepal. And—very honestly I thought—she agreed with me that indigenous change was the best option. Nurtured, helped, prodded subtly if all, but left as much as

possible to its own devices. She also voiced the opinion that too much gender awareness work in Nepal concentrated on telling women their rights and not making men aware of the damage that orthodoxy does to them and society. "Ke garne," she concluded and left for the gruelling three hour trek to the airport, a lucky woman at the head of long line of poor, unlucky porters—men, the lot of them.

Up the river Bheri, I found the reality of gender in much of Nepal. Never mind audits, 'rights-based' advocacy, foreign funds to empower the sisters, a man I'll call Prakash Raj Shahi embodies what's really going on here. Prakash runs the best hotel on the trail between Dunai and Phuksundo Lake. He's not from Dolpa but two of his three wives are. Wife number one lives back home in Rukum where "you can't earn a proper living". First married at age 20, he wed number two ten years later to get



## It's hard to see how anything that happens in Kathmandu will ever change things in these remote mountains.

the land for the hotel—prime land astride the only trekking trail and just the right distance between other hotels for rest and hospitality. "Dowry," he explained, gesturing at either the land or the harried number two, Dolpani and pregnant.

Spouse number three, just 19, came along when Prakash hit 40. His mid-life crisis, I guess. She quickly delivered a son, the object of the marriage. Before that, she'd worked as kitchen help in the hotel for several years. Prakash shrugged when we told him his actions were against the law. "Well, who'd help these women if I didn't, and they have a good place here." Besides, he pointed out, there is no "law" as such in his part of Dolpa. No police, no army, no government officials, not even national parks officials. Just trekkers, yarchagumba traders and Maoists. Plenty of Maoists.

That's the final little irony of Dolpa. It's pretty much a sovereign Maoist state at the moment. The rebels, and it now sounds foolish to call them that, run the show, posting environmental regulations for trekkers and porters and regulating the yarchagumba trade (see article, above). Shops, restaurants and hotels charge Maoist-regulated prices. They run a tight ship, and Prakash—ex-army man that he is—has no trouble with that.

Nothing wrong with a little discipline, he says, motioning for our glasses of *chhang* to be refilled. Welcome to reality in Nepal, light years from Kathmandu and happy to have it that way. Hard to see how anything that happens in the capital Valley can change things in distant Dolpa, or Mugu, or Bajura, or Accham, or Rukum or...



“The tax is way too high,” a businessman from Dunai says. “This year we might have to use official channels and send the yarchagumba to Kathmandu, because the border is closed for Tibetans because of SARS. But we’ll probably first wait and see, keep our goods in stock for a while.”

Walking up the small trail from Dunai to Thaage Lekh, an area near the Rukum border, there is a lot of to and fro of fortune hunters. Many are from Dolpa, but some are from distant districts, carrying baskets with tents and food. People going up are generally in a far better mood than people coming down. “I’m going home,” says Bahar Rawal from Jajarkot. “Everybody told me: go to Dolpa, you’ll make lots of money.” He took a loan and walked for six days, his food is finished, and he found only three pieces in three days. “I’m in big trouble,” says Rawal.

The Dolpali don’t like the invasion of their district by groups from other districts, but the outsiders have the protection of Maoists. “Everybody has the right to collect yarchagumba,” Comrade Leknath explains. The Maoists allow the Dolpali to collect a Rs 100 fee from the visitors, but if a collector finds only a very few yarchagumbas the Maoists force the VDC to refund the money.

The Maoists collect their own tax as well and are competing with the government to control as much of the business as possible. In order to bring a bigger area under their influence, 150 of

Dolpa’s 500 armed Maoists went to Do Terab in Upper Dolpa at the end of May. The Maoists say they have a tendering system: businessmen who want to buy and sell yarchagumba have to pay a Rs 20,000 advance. If the Maoists find a trader without a permit they loot his yarchagumba.



In addition, they have to pay Rs 5,000 per kg. Maoists buy yarchagumba directly from freelancers as well for a fixed price of Rs 30 per caterpillar and sell it back to businessmen. “We use the money to pay for our armed forces and cultural programs, since we no longer take donations from locals,” Comrade Leknath explains. The Maoists have also been collecting \$100 from every trekker entering the Dolpa region, and their collection point is only 100m from the security base at Jufal airfield.

At a camp on Taaghe Lekh (4,200 m) the sun goes down. It is quickly getting cold and everybody sits around campfires. The atmosphere is cheerful.

People drink ‘Tibetan water’ (raksi), listen to the radio, and dance in a big tent in the middle of the camp. They talk about the necessity of peace and, inevitably, about yarchagumba.

“A week ago there were more than 200 tents here,” Sher Bahadur Shahi says. “Many people have gone to try their luck

somewhere else.” The next morning the remaining group leaves early with their sickles. Near Jangala Pass (4,500 m) small dots of people are scattered across the flanks for the mountain. On hands and knees they go through the ground on all fours looking for the small brown stalk of the yarchagumba mushroom that sticks out of the ground.

“Last year we found many yarchagumba here,” Chandra Shahi says, his eyes focussed on the slope. This year, the catch is poor. Some believe it is because there has been too much snowfall. Others think too much was collected last year. And that is also what national park rangers are worried about: if picking goes on

at this rate, yarchagumba may be driven to extinction. The gatherers also disturb the park vegetation and leave trash.

At Tarakot, a conspicuously dressed man named Purna Buda has just arrived from Kathmandu. Sitting under his umbrella, Buda relates how he discovered yarchagumba in Dolpa ten years ago. “After a friend told me about yarchagumba I went to Lhasa with samples. The first year I sold 16 kg for Rs 12,000 per kg. The second year I collected 85 kg.” Buda hasn’t looked back since, and he swears by the aphrodisiac value of the caterpillars. His method: take 30 or so yarchagumba, dry them, keep them soaked inside a bottle of local raksi for a month then drink the raksi every day for a fortnight. “It works for me,” he says.

No one really knows whether yarchagumba has aphrodisiac value. But when belief in traditional medicine is so strong, that is really not important. For an area of Nepal where there are no roads, no jobs, and hardly any agriculture it is just another cash crop. □

DOMESTIC BRIEFS

Bhutanis in limbo

Bhutani refugees in Nepal had no illusions about the outcome of the joint verification team report on the interviews of families at the Khudunabari camp. But what they are shocked about is the disinterest shown by the Nepali government and the international community to what they say is stonewalling by the Bhutan government on repatriation.



If the Khudunabari results are anything to go by, most of the 100,000 Nepali-speaking Bhutanis who have been living in camps in Nepal for the past 12 years will fall into the “Bhutanese who emigrated voluntarily” category set out by the bilateral Joint Verification Team.

Of the around 12,000 refugees at the Khudunabari camp, more than 70 percent fell into that group, which means loss of citizenship according to Thimphu. The Bhutani delegation at the 14<sup>th</sup> round of talks in Kathmandu last month has said that these refugees would be allowed to apply for citizenship and their case would be dealt with leniently. Human rights groups say the Nepali side was taken for a ride as Bhutan has a law that prohibits re-entry to those who emigrate voluntarily.

The majority of the refugees claim they were forced to sign forms saying they were leaving of their own free will before being loaded into trucks and taken across India to Nepal in 1991-92. “The question here is of trust. The Nepali ministerial delegation trusts the Bhutanese when they say they’ll take back Cateogry Two people, but no one else trusts the Bhutanese,” said one human rights activist here. Furthermore, the news that Nepal agreed to accept refugees rejected by Bhutan has fanned domestic and international outrage.

“We are aware of the criticism,” says Foreign Ministry spokesman Madan Kumar Bhattarai. “We assure you, our naturalisation process is not easy. You shouldn’t believe that so many refugees will become Nepali citizens.”

In that case what happens to the majority of the refugees in the seven camps in eastern Nepal? Officials say the nitty-gritty details will be discussed at the 15<sup>th</sup> round of talks in Thimphu in August. Meanwhile the refugees stay where they are: in limbo. (Navin Singh Khadka)

Children suffer sexual abuse silently

A survey report on child sexual abuse in Kathmandu Valley has quantified what society has tried to sweep under the carpet for so long. Based on a random sample of nearly 5,500 school children and over 200 out-of-school children, the survey looks at physical sexual abuse of children as well as the prevalence of exposure of children to obscene materials and verbal abuse.

Children in the 11-14 age group were found to be most vulnerable with nearly 15 percent of the girls and 13 percent of the boys admitting that they had been sexually abused. Girls reported more abuse at home, school or market, while boys were mostly abused at the home of the perpetrator. The rate of abuse among street children was the highest with most having sexual relations with multiple partners of different ages and both genders. (Silent Suffering, Research Report, CWIN and SCF-Norway, cwin@mos.com.np)



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.

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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.

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# Why they love to hate GP

Girijababu's impatience with the left's timidity before royalty may carry a deeper meaning.

Girija Prasad Koirala moved out of Baluwatar nearly two years ago when he still had a majority in parliament and his parliamentary party. For nine months, he's been at the forefront of the movement to preserve the gains of the Jana Andolan. Yet most of us think the kangresi patriarch is primarily responsible for the current state of the nation (*Nepali Times*/Nepalnews.com Internet Poll #150). We must be real angry.

What is so nauseating about the man that we can't even give him the respect a senior citizen deserves? The realisation that no monarchy—constitutional or absolute—has room for two dynasties? Koirala's all-in-the-family demeanour where real power rarely flows along the most democratic party's organisational chart? The dubious fund-raising tactics kangresis couldn't have adopted without his concurrence?

Koirala's worst critics praise his strong organisational skills. Not enough of his supporters ponder how he still has them in

his eightieth decade on the planet.

Candour sets him apart from the crowd. Koirala's celebration of the restoration of multiparty democracy as a victory for the panchas as well as only the beginning. He was the first prominent politician to acknowledge that political parties were too busy trying to overthrow the panchas to think up a way of doing things better. He regretted having thrown the zonal commissioners along with Panchayat bath water. A prime minister battling to restore law and order could forget his anachaladish-inflicted tribulations to appreciate the administrative sturdiness of the office.

By pitting Govinda Raj Joshi against Ram Chandra Poudel in Tanahu, Bal Dev Sharma Majgaiya against Khum Bahadur Khadka in Dang and Ram Sharan Mahat against Arjun Narsingh KC in Nuwakot, Koirala bred factionalism in a party complacent in its exceptionalism. Handled properly, intra-party warfare could have fostered democratic competition right down to the district level.

Surya Bahadur Thapa may have conceived the broader democratic alliance, but Koirala gave it a context. (Would the RPP ever have been able to publicise the platform in such a big way?) Most of us jeered when Koirala said the Nepali Congress' 113

MPs amounted to nothing. With the entire lower-house membership having come to naught, the joke's on us.

Many Nepalis who agree with Koirala's message can't quit suspecting his motives. With an eye on his legacy, couldn't he be genuinely concerned about the country this time. Consider some of Koirala's post-October Fourth moves. The man has gone to over 60 districts railing against the perils of royal assertiveness. Of the major post-1990 players, he's come the closest to acknowledging his mistakes, with the strict proviso that the rest accept their full share. After Sher Bahadur Deuba's boys hurled those projectiles on home turf, Koirala maintained a dignified silence until he called his former protégé for an update on his health. Deuba's presence at the palace meeting rankled Koirala not because of the intrusion. He still can't figure out who's shielding whom. (Remember what we were discussing around this time last year?)

Why didn't Koirala expose the "grand design" in an early-morning address to the nation on 2 June, 2001? Because, he says, he wanted to avoid further turmoil. Doesn't sound like a bad reason. How many column inches did that assertion get in the papers?

It was a little jarring to see Koirala chairing a special session of the dissolved parliament at the

Royal Nepal Academy days after he went to the Supreme Court to bypass the CIAA. In retrospect, maybe we missed the connection. The post-October Fourth fight is a political one. Koirala's battle with the CIAA is constitutional.

His demand that the army be brought under the elected government's control had started sounding devoid of national-security sensitivities. Given the timing, it looked like a shrewd move to deflect the generals' ire at the kind of slogans being raised on the streets.

But, then, who was the first non-ex-pancha to come out in defence of the troops' right to unrestricted movement? If Koirala and the commander-in-chief can see eye to eye on national issues, not all hope is lost.

Each time Koirala comes back from Biratnagar, Kathmandu politicians know he has something up his sleeves. His impatience with the communists' timidity before royalty may have a larger meaning. Koirala probably read last week's poll saying that only one in 20 Nepalis blame Madhab Kumar Nepal for the country's mess. He certainly knows that the UML general secretary served nine months in power with the official designation of deputy premier. If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen. By the way, how does Koirala feel about us? □



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# Illiberal democracy and the leadership crisis

## Analysing results of recent opinion polls on public perception of governance.

With much of the country’s institutions such as law enforcement, education, bureaucracy, and judicial system politicised and shamefully corrupted, our election-focused democracy has become unstable, dysfunctional, and illiberal.

This could be why civil society has refused to join the current political leadership in its struggle against the royal intervention. The press too does not seem overly enthused. More than 7,000 Nepali lives have been lost, the peace process is in limbo and yet no one seems interested in a long-term fundamental solution: How to build a liberal democracy by striking a balance between system that values elections, and liberty that promotes the rule of law and political, economic and legal reforms.

So, is there a leadership crisis in the country? To understand this, I will take a heuristic approach and analyse a series of recent polls conducted on the internet by *Nepalnews.com* and *Nepali Times*. Internet polling is not completely scientific because of the possibility of multiple voting and demographics. But public opinion is indispensable in a liberal democracy, and the results of most internet polls bear strong correlation to scientific random sample nationwide polls done by *Himal Khabarpatrika* in the past. Also, the educated Nepalis may have something to say to our political leaders. After all, it was this same group that played a vital role in the People’s Movement of 1990.

In five questions related to the royal role on various issues, King Gyanendra has between 45-60 percent favorable opinion.

For example, 70 percent don’t blame the king for the current state of the country,

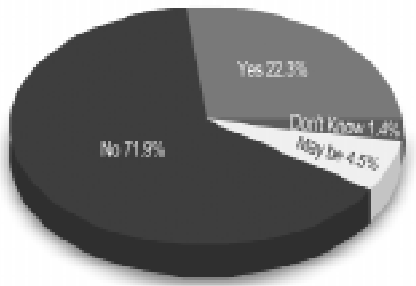
while nearly half the voters blame Girija Prasad Koirala. On the issue of national welfare 20 percent show ambivalence, but the king scores about 46 percent as being someone who cares about the country and its people. The parties and the Maoists get only 18 percent and 16 percent shares respectively.

This royal tilt is consistent temporally when compared to a 64 percent support for the king’s October Fourth move. Generally, the Maoists trail distantly along with the parties whenever the people are asked to express their opinion on the royal role vis-à-vis other powers. The people seem tolerant and generous in giving the king the benefit of the doubt whenever he is embedded with other rivals. But such generosity will not last forever, and can change with political developments.

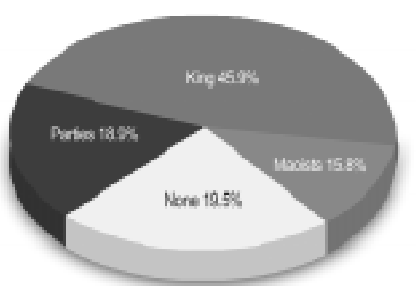
The leadership of the major parties seem to be on the wrong side of public opinion. For example, 84 percent of the people support the CIAA’s actions whereas our leaders have shown contempt for this organisation. In answers to several questions, between 60-77 percent do not support agitating student unions. The people’s desire for peace is so strong that 57 percent do not mind including the Maoists in an all-party government, and a large percentage (90 percent in a small sample) urges the parties to extend support to the government, not necessarily to join them. And 58 percent want the problem solved either through an all-party government or a constituent assembly.

The public therefore gives high priority to the current conflict resolution, whereas the political parties prefer to stay away from it. Could this be the reason for the poor showing for Koirala (8 percent),

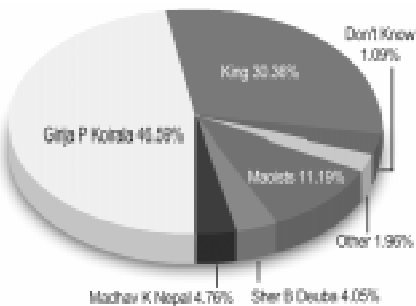
Weekly Internet Poll #85  
Q. Do you think the agitation by the parties will end the present political deadlock?



Weekly Internet Poll #89  
Q. Who do you think currently best represents the general welfare of Nepal and Nepalis?



Weekly Internet Poll #90  
Q. Who do you think is primarily responsible for the current state of the nation?



Nepal (15 percent), and Deuba (8 percent) vis-a-vis the leaders of the smaller parties-Pashupati SJB Rana (16 percent) and Baburam Bhattarai (34 percent)—who, at least in theory, are engaged in a negotiation effort? Polls can plunge and the polls can surge, but the Nepali people seem to be looking for new faces.

Koirala’s tenacity to stand up against the royal intervention is commendable, and he is right to set a boundary for the constitutional monarchy. But the public seems to care more about issues like rule of law, stability in education, good governance, political stability, checks and balances in governance, and above all a negotiated settlement to the insurgency.

Their preference for a multiparty system and constitutional monarchy is strong (40 percent for multiparty with active monarchy and 46 percent for multiparty with constitutional monarchy).

Internet Nepalis seem to be sending a message that they want more than election-focused democracy. They seem to crave for a functioning liberal democracy with necessary institutions to sustain it.

There also seems to be a wish to see a fresh leadership. How else to explain 47 percent of respondents blaming a veteran leader of a veteran party for the national woes, and their dismal showing against the leaders of smaller parties? A similar pattern seems to be emerging in the current poll (#92) on the question of party preference in case the Maoists lay down arms. Is this a signal for the major parties to regroup and reassess their messages, methods and priorities, or even their leadership? And rewriting the national anthem does not seem to be on the priority list of most Nepali voters. Go figure!

The internet poll results tally with a nationwide random sample *Himal Khabarpatrika* poll in April in which 20 percent of respondents said they would vote for the Maoists if they laid down their arms, with 50 percent undecided. The major parties trailed in the single digits.

In the long-term, only the political parties can provide the superstructure of democracy. Perhaps more internal democracy and transparency within the parties will encourage bold and visionary new leaders to emerge and start asking hard questions. Questions like: Will holding elections alone solve our problems?

In Nepal, public opinion has always been expressed in two ways: through the media and through street agitations. The well-organised political rallies, often disruptive and sometimes violent, do not always reflect public sentiment. The press, a remarkable achievement of the post-1990 era, often tries too hard to shape public opinions to promote certain political views instead of engaging in fair analytical assessment.

Conducting scientific public polls is expensive business in a country like Nepal where very few households have telephones, and the internet has its own problems. But regular, nationwide, and scientifically-conducted public opinion polls are an investment worth making to help create and defend liberal democracy. And its results should be vigorously and carefully discussed through the media in the public sphere.

Alok K Bohara, PhD, is professor of economics at the University of New Mexico, bohara@unm.edu

### FEEDBACK

## ‘We withhold action on the proposed tourism boycott..’

In ‘Tibet, Tibet’ (#150) Sara Shneiderman and Mark Turin bring up cogent points questioning our proposed boycott of travel to Nepal—a suggestion made in the wake of Nepal’s repatriation of 18 Tibetan refugees, a stark violation of international law. Some of the authors’ points are naive, however, and must be addressed.

Both Ethical Traveler and the Tibet Justice Center, partners in this action, acknowledge the fact that a Tibetan monk, Shovo, was appropriately handed over to the UNHCR this past weekend. We thank the Nepal government for this sign of humanity, and take it as a commitment to legal and ethical behaviour in the future.

Still, as Shneiderman and Turin point out, Nepal’s human rights situation is alarming, despite the nascent ‘democracy’ installed in 1990. The Nepali citizens suffering these abuses at least have the constitutional right of redress—and the right to overthrow any government, democratic or otherwise, that denies these rights. But the deportation of the 18 Tibetan refugee men, women and children, who have utterly no rights under Nepal’s law, was a cynical act of kowtowing, and had to be discouraged at all costs. The fact that the government actually accepted money for these refugees made them appear no better than slave-traders.

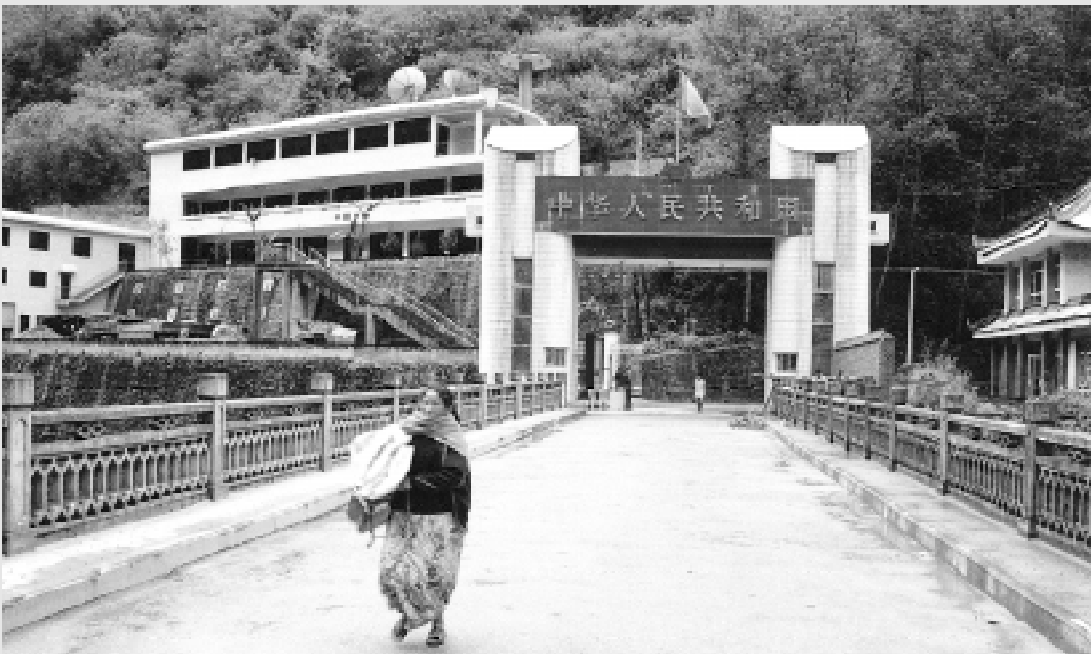
The idea that the international activist community is “too intimidated to challenge China directly” is absurd. We have been involved in numerous such movements, especially in the early 1990s, against China’s prison labour abuses, and led to immediate investigations. A boycott of Chinese imports was indeed launched, but the attempt to pressure China economically proved untenable due to US industrial interests. Most Favoured Nation status was prematurely granted to China in 1994 by then-president Bill Clinton.

China is still being scrutinised and pressured by numerous action groups. Nothing that China has done, however, excuses Nepal’s actions. Over the past 40 years, the US government alone has provided Nepal’s government with more than \$700 million in aid. Most of this aid has been squandered, wasted, or just plain stolen. Somehow, this is never the Nepali government’s fault, the blame is always shunted elsewhere. In this situation, too, confronted by the international press, the government of Nepal offered up lies and excuses. “Hey, we didn’t do anything wrong! This is all normal! Anyway, it’s all China’s fault!” Sorry, guys. The US government has its own agenda, but any traveller who pays your hefty visa fees has a right to say: “You want my money? Then abide by international law.”

No one who has read Jeff Greenwald’s books or articles doubts his respect and admiration for your country, culture, and people. He has been advocating for human rights in Nepal since the mid-1980s, as his controversial book, *Shopping for Buddhas*, makes clear. Neither Ethical Traveler nor the Tibet Justice Center has any wish to harm Nepalis who depend on the tourism trade.

Here is our current position. After consulting with several other human rights and Tibetan activist groups, Ethical Traveler and the Tibet Justice Center—the authors of a key report on the refugee crisis ([www.tibetjustice.org/reports/nepal.pdf](http://www.tibetjustice.org/reports/nepal.pdf))—have decided to withhold action on the proposed tourism boycott.

This said, we are by no means taking Nepal out of the spotlight on this issue. We have instead developed a strategy that will better serve the concerns of Tibetans and Nepalis who rely upon tourism for their livelihoods. To begin with, we are issuing an advisory, asking that travellers planning to visit Nepal do so with open eyes, and with full awareness that Nepal is on notice. We also ask that travellers within Nepal,



From Nepal into China over the Friendship Bridge.

whenever possible and appropriate, express their concern directly to Department of Immigration officials, and to other authorities.

Most importantly, we ask that travellers in Nepal serve as “witnesses” helping the international human rights community monitor the fate not just of Tibetans who have crossed the Himalaya seeking refuge, but of other Nepalis suffering from human rights abuses.

The goal of Ethical Traveler is to promote travel, not curtail it. Yet travellers must be ready to use our combined economic clout, when necessary. If the government of Nepal continues to repatriate Tibetan refugees in violation of these laws, sending shackled Tibetan refugees back to Chinese prisons, stronger measures will need to be taken. Assuredly, they will be

taken—and not just by travellers, as the US Senate’s killing of a recent Nepal garment trade bill attests.

We hope that, should further actions become necessary, all Nepalis will support whatever actions Ethical Traveler and the human rights community suggests. Respecting international law is not just a good thing for Tibetan refugees—it is an essential condition for the peaceful coexistence and true democracy so beautifully articulated by the late King Birendra’s in his call for a ‘Zone of Peace’.

Jeff Greenwald  
Executive Director, Ethical Traveler  
Minnie Cancellaro  
Executive Director, Tibet Justice Center

*Chiso chiso hawama, Himalako kakhama, Nagarkotko dandama...*



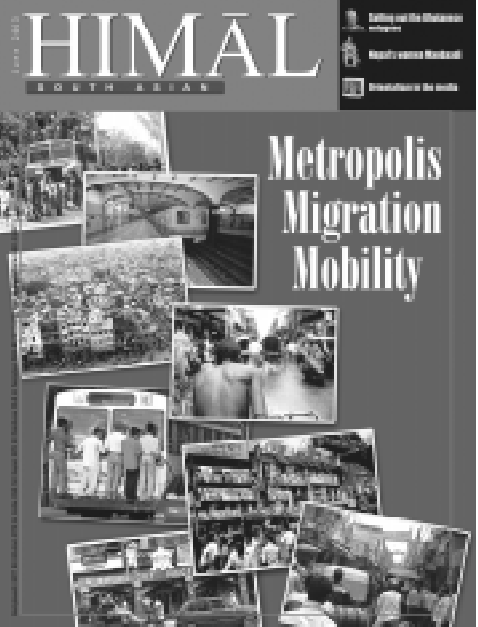
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## ANALYSIS

by J BRADFORD DELONG



# The new new thing

We need another policy-making revolution for the world's macroeconomic problems.

The Great Depression brought John Maynard Keynes to the forefront of economic thought. The key 'Keynesian' insight was that private investment spending is inherently unstable—due to fads and fashions among investors, or because of shifts in the "animal spirits" of businessmen, or because falling prices disrupt the financial system.

Keynesians thought that prudent monetary policy—central banks raising and lowering interest rates to diminish fluctuations in private investment spending—could go part of the way toward stabilising the economy. But they also believed that the government had to be willing to step in directly, through expansive fiscal policy, to keep the overall level of spending in an economy stable. Such a policy, they believed, would forever banish the spectre of large-scale mass unemployment, as in the Great Depression. Moreover, near-full employment might effectively be guaranteed.

The Keynesians foresaw that near-full employment raised the threat of inflation. After all, why should workers and unions moderate wage demands if governments will boost spending whenever high unemployment looms? One big curb on high wage demands—fear of being let go when unemployment rises—was gone. What would replace it?

For the first post-1945 generation, the predominant answer was that corporatist social democracy would replace it. Unions would bow to

government requests to moderate their demands for wage increases, and governments would bow to union demands for public spending and social insurance. Keynesian thinking guaranteed that nothing like the Great Depression would ever return. But its solution to the problem of creeping inflation was jury-rigged, and broke down completely in the 1970s. In the aftermath of the main industrial countries' burst of inflation in the 1970s, mainstream economic thought in the world's industrial core shifted into a "semi-Monetarist" channel.

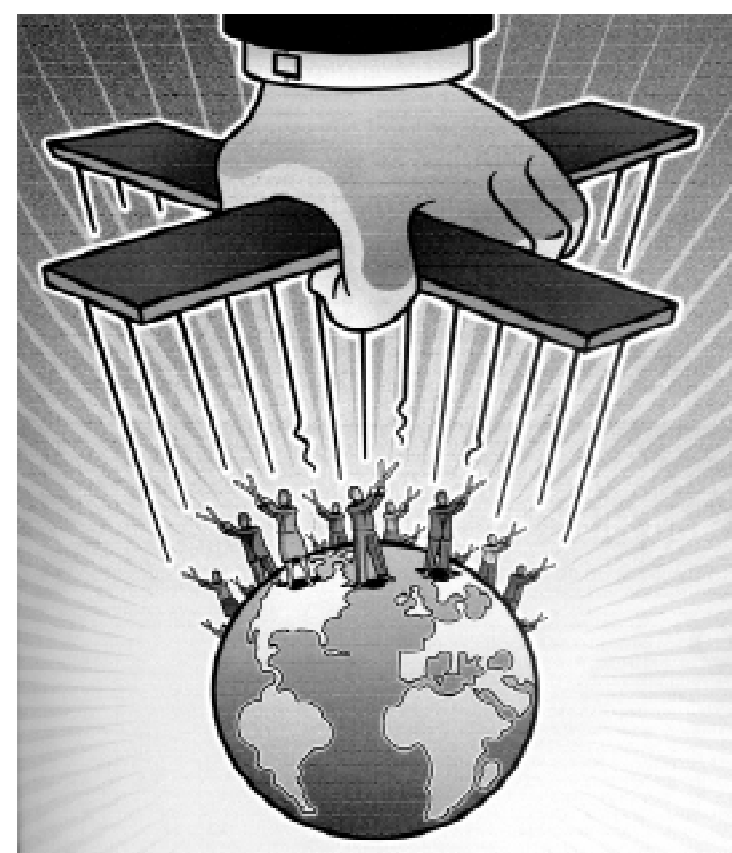
Milton Friedman's victory was never as complete as the Keynesians' had been. But by the mid-1980s policymakers throughout the world were assenting to the following propositions:

- Central banks must make their commitments to long-run price stability credible,
- Central banks must accept that the average level of unemployment is determined not by cyclical factors, but by "structural" factors, which they have no business trying to address,

Announcing and trying to maintain a money-supply growth target is an easy way for a central bank to communicate its principal intentions, gain credibility, and give outsiders a way to check whether sound policies are really being followed.

Monetarism was the mirror image of Keynesianism. It seemingly guaranteed that nothing like the inflation of the 1970s would ever return. But it offered no solution to the problem of structural unemployment that arose in western Europe. The past decade and a half demonstrated that monetarism is ill-equipped to deal with the challenges of falling prices in the context of highly-leveraged firms and banks as the Keynesian prescription was ill-equipped to deal with the challenges of inflation.

Back in the 1970s and at the start of the 1980s, many (I was one)



blamed bad decisions for the breakdown of the social-democratic systems' ability to control inflation. Politicians did not understand that expanding social insurance was the inevitable price of wage restraint, while union leaders did not understand that if corporatist social democracy did not restrain inflation, political power would shift to the right and high unemployment would be used to restrain it.

The inflation of the 1970s was a natural failure of Keynesian political economy. The deflation that threatens Japan, Europe, and perhaps the US with the prospect of a long period of large gaps between potential and actual output is a natural failure of the semi-Monetarist orthodoxy that governed macroeconomic policy in the worlds industrial core since the early 1980s.

We need another policy-making

revolution like the Keynesian and semi-Monetarist ones, a revolution that will not (wholly) lose sight of its predecessor's achievements, but will eliminate its natural failures. Where might that revolution come from? Perhaps the next revolution in economics will grow out of US Federal Reserve Governor Ben Bernanke's career-long concern with asset prices, the role of adverse selection in credit markets, and the need for central banks in difficult situations to do more than conduct short-term open-market operations. He believes that banks should try things like putting a floor beneath key long-term bond prices. Bernankeism, anyone? □

(© Project Syndicate)

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

## Educate Sushila

Sushila Chaudhary is nine-years-old and lives in Sonpur, Dang. She has three sisters and two brothers. Unable to take care of so many children, her family gave her away to work as a child domestic in a household in Ghorahi. She has now been rescued, and goes to school thanks to a unique sponsorship programme.

There are thousands of girls like Sushila all over Nepal who also need help. We are sponsoring the schooling of 65 girls in Dang, and all it takes is Rs 8,000 a year for each. So far, we have found sponsors for 30 of the girls, with your help we can help all of them.

This project benefits and empowers Nepali girls directly through basic education, and is undertaken by the United Nations Women's Organisation, the Dang-based Friends of Needy Children, and the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry.



If you want to support one, or more, of girls like Sushila, contact:  
**Vibha Singh at 44 71 836**  
**Daljit Sudan at 9810 24352**  
**Yangtze at 9810 38264**



United Nations Women's Organisation



Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Changing the world starts with you.  
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□ from p1

## Tight balancing act

This year, the budget faces the same fiscal constraints of the past. Ineffective VAT collection is one of the biggest setbacks in improving revenue. "Regulating VAT billing remains the top challenge," admits Badri Prasad Shrestha, the previous finance minister who was working on the budget he thought he would get to present, but had to hand over to Lohani. VAT contributes only three percent of Nepal's GDP, while income tax represents barely two percent. The slight increase in revenue compared to last year is not enough to cover the Defence Ministry's demand to add Rs 2 billion to its budget this year. The extra money will be used to buy aircraft and equipment and recruit soldiers, says Defence Secretary Madan Prasad Aryal. "We need to upgrade our defence capability, but let's see what Finance says." We put that to Lohani, who replied: "It will go up, but we can't compromise on security."

As if that were not enough, the government is burdened with maturing foreign loans the country borrowed almost 50 years ago.

"Finance ministers are often not bothered about such loans because they have longer grace periods," says economist Bishwamber Pyakurel. "But sooner or later, we have to pay them back." Debt servicing already eats up seven percent of the regular budget, and now that it is time to pay the principle the strain will show.

The World Bank and the IMF are stepping in with nearly \$70 million each to bail us out through their Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility. But there are strict conditions: effective implementation of reforms, privatisation and trimming the bureaucracy. These are conditions that the presently shaky Thapa administration may find too risky to push.

The two lenders also want Lohani to keep to the budget that Badri Shrestha was working on. "Before finalising our aid for the PRGF, we will confirm if the budget comes out the same way we had agreed upon with the last government," Sukhwinder Singh of the IMF's Nepal office told us. Since the World Bank is working closely with IMF in the poverty reduction scheme, it will certainly follow suit. □





## Nathu La and Nepal

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by **ARTHA BEED**

# Come together



## The ANA Bipalis are gearing up for their annual do.

Despite the ANA's good intentions, it is practically impossible to cater to the needs of all Bipalis, which has given

rise to a plethora of smaller organisations within the ANA. Unfortunately, the Beed has noted you can take a Nepali out of the country but you can't shake them out of the old ways: in this case, too many factions have led to squabbles and power struggles.



For the most part, Bimalis are patriotic and proud of their identity. Our rate of application for US citizenship is relatively low. Of course this could stem from the fact that US citizenship means forfeiting Nepal's, therefore cancelling property and ownership rights in the latter. Dual citizenship must be made possible. In our context it would be an economic and not a

Our basic outlook has to change. Professionals of Nepali origin working in the US are beginning to network informally amongst themselves. The Chalphal group in Boston is a good example. The time has come for Bipalis to realise they wield substantial potential to form a pool of human, intellectual and financial resources to be leveraged both in their adopted and native homes. Instead of executive committees ad nauseam, might the Beed suggest an informal guthi type network, with a rotation of leaders so nobody feels short-changed? That way, at Denver we can get together and get down to business that benefits both Bipalis and Nepalīs too. □

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# Home as theatre



tools? Afraid to invest in technology that becomes obsolete almost as soon as it is introduced? Unless you like to have the first of everything new on the market, the most practical route to buying a new entertainment system is to research the best-selling technologies. Although obsolescence is guaranteed, at least you'll know you can upgrade and the manufacturers won't discontinue your product. Those who bought the Betamax over the VHS in the 1980s, and LDs over CD players in the early 1990s have learned this lesson the hard way. Don't get caught with a dead technology.

## NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

...ained out? The cinema could be a perfect escape. But thanks to the enormous leaps made in digital technology you can watch the latest movies from the comfort of your own sofa. All you need is a state-of-the-art system, a universal remote control, a flat LCD or plasma screen and several strategically placed speakers equipped with a Dolby surround system. These systems are now available in Kathmandu, the prices for the top-end systems may be way too high but they are not much more expensive than in Singapore or Bangkok.

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upgrading a few peripherals, can be an intimidating experience. You wander into a showroom and very often all you can go by is size. The fancy acronyms might as well be in Greek. So you let the salesman make the choice for you. Research is key, so is window shopping and sticking to the budget. Happily, many big companies offer installment schemes that don't knock the bottom out of the budget.

Price is a big factor. The tag on a conventional and flat TV is almost the same. The difference in cost is a mere Rs 2,000 between a Philips 21-inch colour TV priced at Rs 24,000 and a flat screen of the same size. Although bigger is not necessarily better, the shock-and-awe quotient of the *Crocodile Hunter* is certainly boosted when seen on a 50-inch plasma screen which can set you back a cool Rs 1.5 million. Some are almost as big as a car and they can take you places a vehicle never could.

Analogue entertainment—the way of the Cathode Ray Tube screen, VHS and cassette tapes—don't have a patch on digital quality. The pictures are sharper, the sound crystal and you can manipulate exactly what and how you want everything to be set. Besides, rewinding is a cinch. So is setting it up. There are no endless wires snaking under the carpet and for the most part it's as easy as plug-and-play.

Manufacturers are getting smarter. TV sets are being manufactured in what they call "future format", made in such a way that can easily be made compatible for the technological advances in the future. Saurav Jyoti of Jyoti Group, the authorised dealer of Philips, believes consumers should think about the future. "These TVs can be adapted for receiving digital transmissions if Nepali broadcasts start down that road," he says. Should that happen, all we need to change is cable, from coaxial to fibre optic, and possibly even wonderful wireless technology. Even if Nepal doesn't get on the information highway, it is likely that the information highway will come to us.

Of course this doesn't mean we are stuck in the past. Distributors and retailers are seeing a marked change in consumption patterns. Nepalis are rapidly educating themselves and adopting newer technologies. Video Compact Disc (VCD) players have almost completely replaced the VCRs that used the VHS systems. Digital Video Display (DVD) is catching on and when that



reaches critical mass you can be certain the rest will go the way of the dinosaurs. Jyoti predicts very soon DVDs will take over VCDs. "People can tell the difference in quality and know a better buy when they see it," he says.

The more-for-less approach is always a winner for consumers and DVD players today are uniquely positioned for this. They are compatible with VCDs, CDs and MP3s, which is why buyers are opting for a system that does it all and paying upwards of Rs 40,000. A branded DVD player costs a little over Rs 10,000 while a Chinese knock-off is between

Rs 7,000-8,000.

A surprising new trend, the techno-savvy lot at DND International tells us, are families buying multimedia projectors for the home. Restricted earlier almost exclusively to corporate use, these projectors that can interface with DVD, VCD and PCs are addictive. "Once you develop a taste for watching movies on these you'll never really go back to anything else," says Tarun Bajracharya at DND who has sold about 60 Optoma projectors in a year. At Rs 180,000 it's obvious the buyers don't put a premium on their entertainment.

In the past most people paid more attention to the visual part of the audio-visual equation. Not anymore. They are fine-tuning their entertainment systems for optimum sound quality which is why 'home entertainment' packages throw in five Dolby 5.1 system equipped speakers and a hoover to boost the already brilliant DVD quality. Of course it doesn't come cheap at Rs 50,000 for the Samsung model, but for connoisseurs it is truly bliss being cradled by perfectly balanced sound. "By installing them at home you will have what you hear while watching movies in Jai Nepal Cinema," says Shekhar Golchha, the authorised dealer for Samsung and Daewoo. If you want better, why then, you need only ask—Dolby Digital DTS and DTI AC are all available.

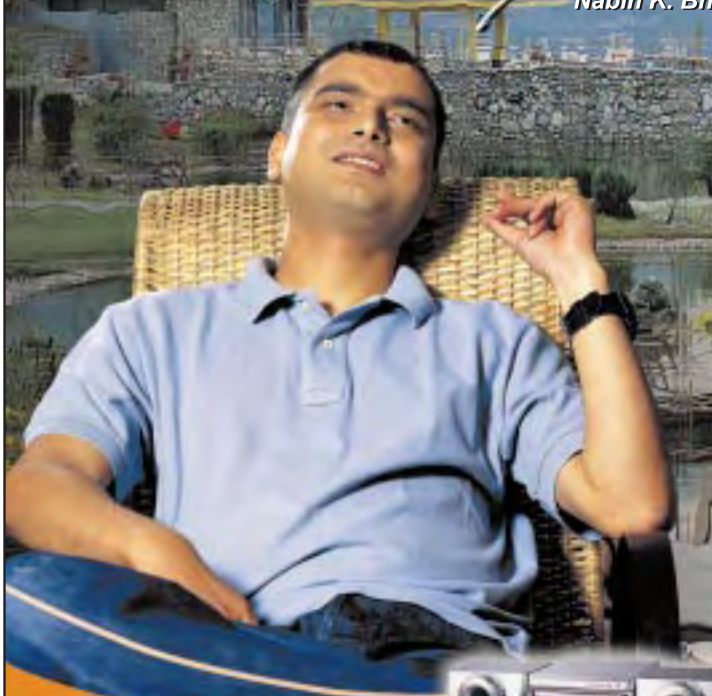
The demand for a theatre experience at home is growing, and competition is stiff among suppliers although all of them average annual TV sales between 50,000 and 60,000. Major international companies have showrooms in Kathmandu: Samsung, Philips, Daewoo, Sony and LG. This works to the advantage of the consumer in terms of price, after-sales services and warranties. Think about it: no more queues, no more cell-phones ringing in the middle of the show and no spoilsport giving away the ending. Now all you have to do is organise a long, tall drink, roll down the blinds, let the dogs out and enjoy the movie. □






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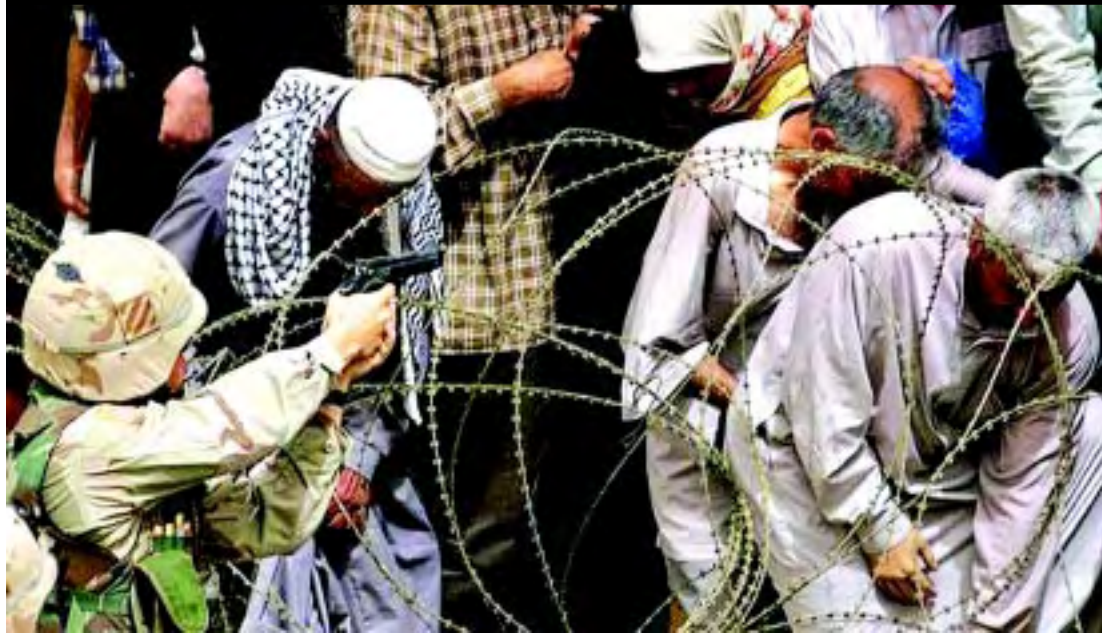
# The Iraq quagmire

**D**azzling military victories in Afghanistan and Iraq may mislead us about the war on terrorism. If it were merely a matter of rogue states, we could think that progress is being made. But technological progress is putting into the hands of deviant groups and individuals destructive capabilities that were once limited primarily to governments and armies.

Even if eliminating all terrorist incidents proves impossible, reducing their frequency and lethal potential will make a large difference in their impact on our societies. The world needs a multifaceted strategy that de-legitimises attacks on civilians as a method of conflict, discourages states from providing resources or safe harbour to those who use such methods, hardens our targets at home, denies terrorists easy access to weapons of mass destruction; and reduces incentives to use terrorism.

Military measures may not deal with the largest part of the problem, but they are essential sometimes. Depriving al-Qaeda of its Afghan safe haven was not sufficient, but it was necessary. The number of states sponsoring terrorism has decreased over the past decade. Diplomacy backed by military threat can reduce the number further. Some failed states are so chaotically organised that they cannot be deterred from providing a haven for terrorists.

**There will be no equivalent to the fall of Baghdad, and no silver bullet in the struggle against terrorism.**



In such instances, military assistance may be relevant. In others, intervention may be necessary.

Intelligence sharing and police cooperation is often the most effective front line of defence. Because of the sensitivity of sources and the dangers of disclosure, much of this work is carried out through bilateral arrangements. Multilateral cooperation is possible in tracing financial flows, which can help to deprive terrorists of resources as well as provide useful information. Devoting more resources to under-funded organisations like Interpol can

also enhance information sharing.

Working to raise the thresholds that terrorists must overcome requires a systemic approach, since plugging one hole can simply divert terrorists to others. Our societies are as vulnerable as the weakest international link. It makes no sense to beef up airport security in London if a terrorist can enter the system easily in, say, Rome or Lagos.

Because modern societies are similar in their vulnerabilities, countries have a great deal to learn from each others' mistakes and best practices. Governments should establish regular contacts among agencies responsible for

both the technical and policy dimensions of homeland security. Homeland security is an international issue.

Aid and assistance can be used to strengthen the capacities of poor countries involved in these transnational systems. Such investments are a clear case of coincidence between self-interest and charity. A particularly important type of assistance is in helping other countries to develop capabilities to deal with weapons of mass destruction. In the case of biological agents, world public health has become a security issue.

Terrorists can obtain microbes and viruses from inadequately protected foreign laboratories, or by bribing underpaid scientists in the remnants of the Russian biological warfare system, or from natural sources. The World Health Organization has created a global network of national laboratories that do early detection work, and manages on a meagre annual budget of roughly \$400 million.

Another crucial area for assistance is the Cooperative Threat Reduction effort, which provides funds to help improve the control and destruction of weapons-grade materials in former Soviet countries. These programs, too, are under-funded, although there was an agreement in principle at the G-8 summit in Canada last year for ten countries to provide an additional \$10 billion over the next ten years.

Somewhat more controversial is the question of whether aid to development is an important counter-terrorist instrument. Advocates say that it is a crucial tool for "draining the swamps". But sceptics challenge whether poverty lies at the root of terrorism. They point out that most of the terrorists who attacked America in September 2001 were middle-class citizens of a relatively wealthy country. If we must wait for development

assistance to raise the world from poverty as the answer to terrorism, we will all be dead.

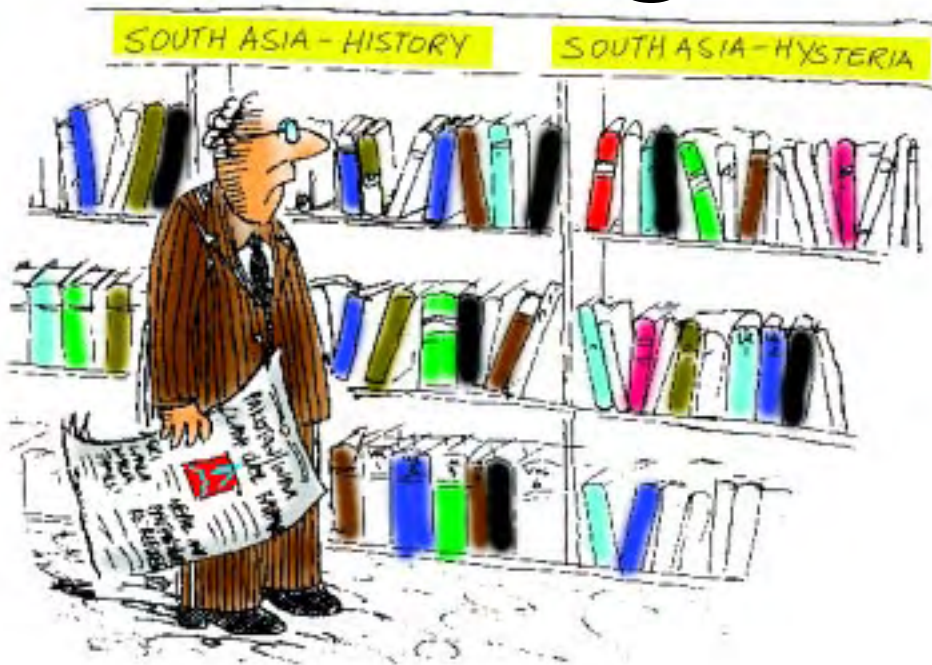
Both sides of this argument have a point. The time horizons of development policy are out of line with the time horizons of counter-terrorism, but terrorist groups are often led by well-off deviants who—like Osama bin Laden—recruit followers by pointing out the world's injustices. Development assistance by wealthy countries can help deprive terrorist leaders of such arguments by showing that policies are aligned with the long-term aspirations of the poor. It is important to provide the prospect of hope, both in material terms and in our policies towards intractable conflicts such as those in the Middle East and Kashmir.

US military success in Iraq was dazzling, but the metaphor of war is misleading. There will be no equivalent to the fall of Baghdad, and no silver bullet in the struggle against terrorism. Success will require investment in a wide range of instruments. Yet, while the US spends only about 1 percent of its federal budget on foreign affairs, an effective counter-terrorism strategy cannot be divorced from all the dimensions of foreign policy. □ (© Project Syndicate)

Joseph S Nye, author of *The Paradox of American Power* and a former assistant secretary of defence, is Dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.



# Analysing ourselves to death



**T**he biggest weapon of mass destruction on the subcontinent is that double-edged sword called the tongue.

Our leaders seem determined to be sentenced by their sentences. This is bad enough. It becomes worse when media becomes interventionist. Television searches for a story in between the blank spaces of a conversation. Text flutters at the top of a newspaper page, rudely divorced from context. Forget peace: this is a strange environment where even silence cannot deliver peace of mind.

What-did-Musharraf-say-and-why-did-he-say-or-not-say-it is the favourite game of Delhi. Islamabad displays similar affection for Lal Krishna Advani. War and peace sway on the edge of a sound bite. If such analysis were merely puerile it might be left alone. But it does have its impact on atmospherics, and atmosphere is a critical indicator of the season through which we might be passing.

India-Pakistan relations are a forest in which everything can be found. Hares race in one place, hounds in another and it is only to be expected that their paths

**South Asians talk too much, and the media laps up every word.**

will cross. Lambs work their corner while lions growl nearby. There are bees who will sting and disappear, and snakes who will wait in the grass. Bears will growl, even those who mean no particular harm. You will also find Pan strolling along playing the flute, dreaming of the beauty that is also an integral part of a forest. Within paradox and conflict we have to keep struggling to find peace, certain in the knowledge that the only alternative to peace is a debilitating and dangerous war.

There is one way out of the confusion. If you want to know what is really happening, or more accurately what might really happen if some saboteur does not turn up, then look through the thicket of statements that land up in newspapers every day and search for the unusual rather than the usual.

General Pervez Musharraf was an author of the Kargil operations, and he will always believe that it was useful in any case and could have turned out more positively for his country if but the politicians had listened to him. Otherwise he would have to deny his sole contribution to Pakistan's military history, and not a very glorious one at that. A general like him is bound to argue that three full-scale wars have

taken place because of Kashmir, and if something is not done, a fourth one cannot be ruled out. (Just for the record, one of the three wars was not over Kashmir; it was over Bangladesh.)

More depressing are the other "usuals" in his repertoire, which he pulled out in the course of his trip to Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. The nuclear gambit, for instance. Crying nuclear wolf frightens no one, except of course investors who might for some reason want to put a little money into Pakistan. Why should any businessman sow money into a country whose leader threatens to wipe out the crop in a nuclear war?

The debris of past experience must be cleared. The bus to Lahore will hopefully restart in July, but hawks have descended on the train and the aeroplane. All manner of excuses are being trotted out to stop the Samjhauta Express from resuming: a train becomes a vehicle for smuggling, suggest some officials sombrely. Pakistan wants flights to resume between India and Pakistan but is hesitant about overflights across airspace. Why? Apparently someone in Islamabad believes that this would

increase the level of contacts between India and Afghanistan. This is how silly a problem can become. When President Musharraf says that he will take two steps towards peace for every one that India takes, it is greeted with a yawn. But within the thicket of statements look and you will find a suggestion that if both sides shed their rigidity, there could be the beginning of a solution to problems, including Kashmir.

The most specific unusual statement was made by Advani during his visit to the US and the UK. He clearly said that with a little bit of give and take, the most difficult of problems could be resolved. He is doing something that may be happening in both countries. It seems to me, and it is difficult to be more definite than this, that an effort is being made to seed the mind of the people and prepare them for the start of some new turn in direction. I would be happy to be proved right, but I am prepared to be proved wrong. Experience tells me that pessimism rules longer in India-Pakistan relations than optimism.

India-Pakistan relations should be taken away from the tongue and returned to the heart. □

(MJ Akbar is the editor of *The Asian Age*.)



# Bhai-Bhai again

## China could become India's third largest economic partner.



Nathu La as seen from Gangtok

**RANJIT DEVRAJ** in NATHU LA  
Relations between the world's two most populous countries, India and China, hinge on the newly reopened cross-border trade across this snow-swept 4,545m high mountain pass, which provides a window into the once forbidden land of Tibet.

From time immemorial, yak and mule trains bearing anything from salt, gold, silk, cotton and Buddhist ideology have trudged up and down this gap in the formidably high Himalaya, a little more than 300km south of the Tibetan capital of Lhasa. But it took Britain, that 'nation of shopkeepers', to formalise and widen the trade through the Sikkim-Tibet Convention of 1890, which thereafter continued uninterrupted until the brief but bloody 1962 border war between yet new post-colonial republics of China and India.

This week, three decades after the war that saw deep incursions by China's army into Sikkim—then a Buddhist kingdom and protectorate of India—Asia's giants have decided to put aside their quarrels over real estate aside and get on with the business of mutual development through

trade. On Tuesday, as a highlight of Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's six-day-long visit to China which ends Friday, leaders of the two countries signed documents that facilitate trade between the "Sikkim state" and the "Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China" over the Nathu La pass.

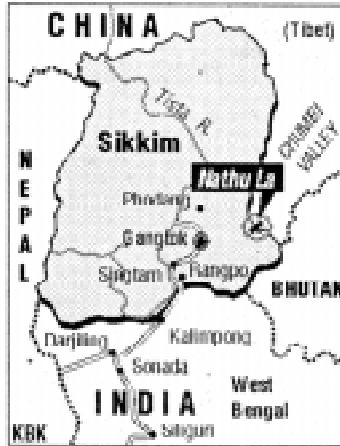
While analysts in New Delhi are still wrangling over what exactly was agreed on and whether or not this would mean Beijing's recognition of Sikkim, which merged with India in 1975 following a referendum, there is cause for local celebration. "This is the best news we have had in a long time maybe there is now chance for the real development of this remote state," explains Jigme N Kazi, a writer and historian based in Gangtok, the picturesque capital of Sikkim.

Until the 1962 war, Sikkimese like Kazi maintained close relations with people in such Tibetan towns that lead to Lhasa, such as the trading town of Yatung and that great centre of the Buddhist Lamaistic faith Xigatse. "If nothing we can now visit those places my forefathers

roamed not too long ago and even find brides," says Kazi, who is himself married to a Tibetan, Tsering, a teacher in Gangtok.

Until recently Sikkimese, who formed part of Indian official delegations to China, were routinely denied visas. This week's agreements fall short of open recognition for Sikkim as an integral part of India. Excited by this week's developments are the Indian traders from India's eastern port city of Kolkata, who were encouraged to settle in Gangtok in the early part of the last century by the British in the hope that their renowned business acumen would further stimulate the cross-border trade.

"We have been waiting for decades for the trade to revive," says Bhaskaranand Aggarwal, whose family maintained shops in Yatung that had to be abandoned hastily on hearing the news that the Chinese army was sweeping down to the Indian border. A keen photographer, Aggarwal's prized possessions and memorabilia from the "good old days" include amateur footage of the mule-back trade across Nathu La as it was conducted during the 1950s. "We even used to carry across knocked-down American



automobiles and motorcycles, which were reassembled in garages in Tibet," recalls Aggarwal.

According to Aggarwal and other traders in Gangtok, China would greatly benefit from revived trade because the high Tibetan plateau is better accessible from the Indian state of Sikkim, which is barely 500km north of the bustling port of Kolkata. Gangtok traders say that long before the 1962 war erupted, the Chinese army actually used their services to stock supplies of rice and equipment brought in through Kolkata port, while Indian intelligence agencies believed they were meant to help with the 'pacification' of Tibetan rebels. "Sikkim is the lifeline of Tibet. For the better management of Tibet, China needs to regularise food supplies through Sikkim," explains K Srikanth, China scholar and researcher at the New Delhi-based Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), a government-backed think tank well-respected for its independent views.

Sikkim's elected chief minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling, who has been advocating the revival of the cross-border trade, is convinced that the future development of the state lies in trade and tourism. "We have no industrial base here



and there is no other scope for providing employment for our people," he says. Since the 1975 merger of Sikkim and the abolition of the monarchy, the state has depended on large amounts of development funds from the central government in New Delhi, a distant 1,500km to the west. Sikkim has no airport or railhead and the roads down into the plains are prone to blockage by perennial landslides.

"If there can be a bus route from New Delhi to Lahore then there is no reason why there cannot be a bus route from Gangtok to Lhasa," says Palden Gyamtso, a member of India's parliament and an influential bureaucrat. But the opening up of Nathu La to trade holds out prosperity not only for Sikkim but for India's entire north-eastern region, which has been ridden by insurgencies partly because of unreconciled ethnic differences with the bulk of India and partly because of sheer remoteness. According to Alokesh Baruah, a well-known economist and expert on north-eastern affairs, the revival of cross-border trade could also greatly help with the rapid development of

countries that surround Sikkim like Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. Baruah, who is working on a book on the trade history of the region, said China's booming south-western province of Yunnan has long been seeking economic cooperation with the eastern parts of India, Bangladesh and Burma.

This, however, has been blocked by the unsettled border issue between India and China. Yet following the liberalisation of the economies of both countries, bilateral trade has galloped at an extraordinary speed. Over the last three years, trade has been growing at a rate of 25 to 35 percent annually, touching \$5 billion in volume in 2002. If Hong Kong and Taiwan are also included, Greater China would become India's third largest economic partner after the European Union and the United States.

"With globalisation a fact of life, there is now no way of stopping the opening up of the floodgates of border trade between such giant economies as those of India and China—and allowing the entire region to benefit from it," Baruah says. □ (IPS)

### A new beat

**BANGKOK** – Thailand's national police force will soon have another beat—the support and 'protection' of the development of a long-disputed gas pipeline project with neighbouring Malaysia. The estimated 400 policemen who have been assigned this task will also have to deal with the groundswell of opposition to the Thai-Malaysian pipeline project from local communities.

The pipeline project, which will also have a two-unit gas separation plant in Songkhla, is due to be completed in 2005 at an estimated cost of \$565 million. But available reports point to some 10,000 lives being affected by the pipeline and the nearby sea and marine life, which the villagers depend on for their living, being polluted. Community leaders and grassroots activists have made it known they will continue their opposition to the pipeline by staging demonstrations along its route. Last December a peaceful demonstration of community leaders and grassroots activists provoked harsh police action. Parichart Siwaraksa, a member of the Environment Impact Assessment Panel, a national body believes police presence will cement the dispute that is at the heart of this issue: "a clash between the national interest versus the local way of life". (IPS)

### Bangle manacles

**HYDERABAD** – Pakistan's glass bangle industry exploits children who have to work in confined spaces where they are exposed to dangerous substances and long working hours with little personal free time and no previous training in safety. Jiwan Das, country program manager for Save the Children UK, a UK-based international children's charity, said that while the work itself is not life-threatening, it is hazardous.

A study they conducted pointed out that "eradication of this labour is not a viable option unless new avenues and opportunities are created". One impediment is that there are few work alternatives and few pay as much. Children are the mainstays of the industry. The current wages are between three and five cents per batch of 300 bangles. In a day, an individual may complete between 25 and 35 batches. The average monthly household income for families whose children are involved in the industry is \$74, of which two-thirds is generated by glass bangle work. The children get less than a dollar a month to spend on themselves. The economic reality, the Save the Children report concluded, is that "poverty leaves few options for the family other than for the children to lend a hand in income generation". (IPS)

# Indian troops to Iraq?

**PRAFUL BIDWAI** in NEW DELHI

**NEW DELHI** - A major political row is brewing in India over the issue of dispatching troops to Iraq to partially relieve the US and British soldiers now in that country.

The US government is insistent that India should send about 17,000 soldiers as a 'test' of its commitment to fighting international terrorism, and more important, of India's bid for great world-power status and its much-coveted 'strategic alliance' with Washington.

Washington is offering India the carrot of military hardware and lucrative contracts in Iraq's reconstruction.

On 16 June, the US government sent a senior-level Pentagon delegation to talk to Indian ministers and diplomats. It did not get an assurance that India would send troops, but was told that the government is trying to generate a "consensus" on the issue by talking to all political parties, as well as Iraq's neighbours.

Indian public opinion and the political opposition is set against sending troops to Iraq and bestowing legitimacy on what it regards as the illegal and immoral invasion and occupation of Iraq. Besides, Indians would not like their sovereign army's soldiers to salute the US flag or fight under a US general command.

Caught between the two forces, the Indian government is desperately looking for a figleaf such as authorisation for the troops' dispatch from the UN Security Council. For it, this is a test case for diplomatic fancy footwork and spin-doctoring. New Delhi would like to depict military cooperation with the occupation powers in Iraq as a variant of a peacekeeping operation. It would like to get around the problem of a US-dominated command structure in Iraq by asking for an autonomous operating area or zone for Indian troops. Coalition partners of the ruling pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party, including Defence Minister George Fernandes' Samata Party, are opposed to the proposal.

The reason why the Indian government wants to collaborate with the United States in Iraq has to do with its eagerness to seal a long-term military alliance with Washington and outflank Pakistan.

India is also keen to buy top-of-the-line US and Israeli military equipment, including missile-defence systems and the 'Patriot' missile.

The United States is keen to hold joint exercises with Indian forces and establish access to military bases. According to a Pentagon report, quoted by US defence specialist John Carbaugh: "American military officers are candid in their plans to eventually seek access to Indian bases and military infrastructure."

# The long road home



Ajako Kura  
Teknath Rijal, Bhutani human rights activist living in Siliguri, interviewed by Kiran Pokhrel for Radio Sagarmatha on 22 June.



**Kiran Pokhrel: What is your reaction to the results of the classification of Bhutani refugees?**  
Teknath Rizal: After suffering so much in Bhutan and living as refugees in Nepal for the last 12 years, Bhutan has put us back to square one. The results of the classification are not satisfactory. It's not just us here in Nepal, even within Bhutan people are against this.

**But now it is clear that Bhutan acknowledges the problem. Shouldn't this be taken positively?**

I thank the Nepali government for this. Its efforts made Bhutan accept that they drove us out. No matter what reason they give, whether they say we migrated from Bhutan or came here of our own free will, they have at least accepted that we are Bhutani. But that is not enough. We have lost our relatives, our property.

The sacrifices we made for the Bhutani monarchy have not been recognised. Although I am satisfied with what the Nepali government has done for us they cannot leave us hanging in the middle. What I do not like is the government of Nepal offering us citizenship if Bhutan will not take us back.

**Will the 293 out of 12,000 refugees from Khudunabari certified as Bhutani return to Bhutan?**

No, they will not go. How can just these 293 people return? We will have to leave some members of our families behind because they did not qualify. When we were driven out we were separated from our families, now if we go back we will be further divided.

**What is the next step?**

This is what I wanted to ask you in the media. What can we do now?

We have never gone against the king of Bhutan. I am only talking of our basic human rights. They shot us, beat us, put us in jail and finally drove us out. The world remained a silent witness. The king has absolute power. He can appoint a peon or a minister and dismiss them if he so pleases. Those who drove us out are the ones who are in power. They are the same people who come here to say who is Bhutani and who is not. Will they take responsibility for us when we return to Bhutan?

There is not a single representative from southern Bhutan in the courts or the administration, no one to speak for us. If the UNHCR, the Indian government or UN stands guarantee for our safety and sees to the return of our ancestral land and property, then we will certainly return to Bhutan.

**So you will agree to go back if the UNHCR is involved? Won't there be an international agency to monitor things anyway?**

No, Bhutan will not involve any international observers because the king is orchestrating all of this. His ministers are involved in the verification and classification process, which is acceptable, but he must give us in writing that we were his subjects before, we still are, that we had to suffer because of the mistakes his ministers made. He must personally guarantee our dignity and safety. There have been many cases of people returning to Bhutan for nothing.

**How crucial is India's role?**

Until and unless India is involved the problem will never be solved. India made Bhutan what it is. The Indians implemented the fourth development plan for southern Bhutan, not just in the technical aspects but also in the administrative side. They know everything, but they chose to keep their eyes closed. Yesterday Bhutan drove us out by creating a green belt. Today they are using the terrorist belt to drive people out again. Indian terrorists are entering Bhutan and creating havoc. Indian involvement in resolving this issue is vital.

**Activists in Kathmandu say their efforts might be more effective if they take the issue to Bhutan and start a rebellion there.**

The question here is not of taking the rebellion to Bhutan. When the country refuses to acknowledge its own citizens what can outsiders do? I don't believe taking the protest to Bhutan will be of any help.

**Do you think visit of Queen Ashi Tshering Pema Wangchuk to Nepal will help matters?**

I certainly hope so. I can confidently say 52 percent of Bhutanis are Hindu but the king has never spoken in Nepali when he visits the south. His ministers translate his speeches for the people. Likewise, the people's grievances are translated from Nepali to Dzongka for the king. The queens speak Nepali and know the problems of the people in southern Bhutan. They could help the king understand the situation and talk with the government of Nepal. This official visit is an important opportunity for a possible breakthrough.



Blurb: "Come and get it! New books students must have!"

Signs on books: 'Lockout', 'Demos', 'Rallies', '101 Ready-made Slogans', 'Beginners' Guide to Burning Effigies', 'Instant Speeches'.

राजधानी Rajdhani 24, June

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"It's OK, mother, we have killed enough [goats]. We don't need to carry out any more sacrifices. Our wishes have been fulfilled."

- Baburam Bhattarai to his mother at Manakamana Temple, as quoted by Ujir Magar in Kantipur Koseli, 21 June

## Foreign students

Kantipur, 25 June

कान्तिपुर

DHARAN – Foreign students are lining up to get into the BP Koirala Health Science Institute. The institute received 1,322 applications for the MBBS entrance exams this year of which 203 are Indian nationals. For the BDS degree, 25 of the 59 applicants are Indian. In order to give equal opportunities for people of all caste, creed and region, quotas have been allotted for applicants from 15 remote districts. One seat each has also been reserved for janjati, dalit, and women. The institute has 75 seats for MBBS, 40 for BDS, 15 for BSC Nursing, 6 for BAM IT, 10 for OT Technician, 40 for diploma level technician, and 6 for MSc. Fourteen places are reserved for SAARC country applicants and nine others for other nationals. Applicants other than from Nepal and SAARC nations need not give entrance exams and are eligible for interviews straight away.

## Another witchhunt

Spacetime, 23 June

स्वेसटाइम डैनिक

Six-months pregnant Jivsi Devi Shah didn't know she would pay such a heavy price for acting as a midwife for her nephew's wife. The baby had a difficult delivery and died soon after being born. Immediately, muttering began in the Saptari village that she was a witch. Four months after the incident, Jivsi was dragged out of her kitchen by a group of locals. They picked a day when her husband, a rickshaw puller, was away in Biratnagar. Jivsi's hands and feet were tied and she was taken to a nearby river. After beating her, they forced Jivsi to eat human waste. She was left unconscious before a passer-by took her to a police post. "The police arrested one of the locals for a very short time and let him go," says Jivsi who has been brought to Rajbiraj for immediate

medical treatment by a local NGO. When the police were approached by the organisation, the former said the accused would be interrogated. The Centre for Victims of Torture (CVICT) in Kathmandu has already invited Jivsi for further treatment.

## 'Not incompetent'

Nepal Samacharpatra, 26 June

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

Excerpt from an interview with Sher Bahadur Deuba.

**His Majesty labelled you incompetent when he dismissed your government last year. Why should an incompetent government be reinstated?**

I am not incompetent. I dissolved the House of Representatives and announced election dates. Even at the eleventh hour we were prepared to go ahead with elections but the political parties came forward and said the situation wasn't right. They suggested we form a government that would include them and possibly the Maoists too. All of them had collectively agreed on this course of action. I acted correctly by following through on their suggestions. The events that followed the royal move have proved that the accusations the king levelled against me were false. If he is really worried about elections he would have announced a date on the very day my government was deposed. He should have been able to hold the elections I couldn't. My removal from office had nothing to do with elections, which is why my government should be reinstated.

**Then why were you made to step down?**

The main reason for my removal was the king's desire for a return to absolute monarchy...I will not hold



grudges against the king, neither will I call him incompetent...

**Will the present agitation by the political parties turn the tables?**

I would not like to point fingers at anyone, but the truth is that when I was dismissed, all the main leaders of the other political parties hoped to become the next prime minister. The scales fell off their eyes only when the king appointed Lokendra Bahadur Chand to the post. Then they understood that Deuba's removal was motivated by the king's desire for power. In a way their struggle is good.

**Will it be enough to bring back the people's power?**

The Maoists opted for war and so did the king. The people want peace at whatever cost. Nepal and Nepalis still suffer from terrorism. That is why political parties cannot mangle peace and go to war. It is critical that they choose peaceful ways of showing their dissent.

**Nepal is swinging between calls for a republic and a possible return to monarchy.**

The country is not ready to become a republic. Our party is not willing to push for a republic system. We have to put the king in his place through a peaceful revolt.

# Trading places

Rajdhani, 26 June

Excerpts of an interview with Prahlad KC, representative of the Nepal Chamber of Commerce in America.

राजधानी



**What happened to the Nepali garment import bill?**

Unfortunately the bill that was proposed in the American Senate for a tax subsidy to Nepali garment imports was rejected because of the controversy surrounding the 18 Tibetan refugees being sent back to China. Hollywood is enamoured of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and it was from that lobby that the most pressure came to squash the bill. But it wasn't passed only because of the deportation of the refugees.

**How can the situation be remedied?**

The Nepali garment industry and the government must now attempt to get the ball rolling again. His Majesty's Government has already sent a formal request to the American Senate to reconsider the tax subsidy bill. Entrepreneurs, too, must launch a movement through their lobby explaining that Nepal was under pressure from our northern neighbour to deport the refugees. We must convince America that our actions were prompted by immense duress from other forces and we are willing to work at creating a positive atmosphere.

**What is our position in the American market?**

We have always looked towards Europe to export our carpets, but trade hasn't been what it used to be in the past. Nepal must therefore look to America and spend as much time and money investigating the market here as we have done in Europe.



Back at Sundarijal &gt;38

# 'I miss GM a great deal.'



BP Koirala and Ganesh Man Singh with a Chinese dignitary at Beijing in 1960.

**BP Koirala worries about Ganesh Man Singh in the next cell, and wonders how he is faring. He also analyses his comrade-in-arms and pays tribute to Ganesh Man's tenacity, conviction and commitment to the cause. Since both are now in solitary confinement, BP rues: 'Now I have no one to discuss my ideas with.' There are continuous worries about BP's health, he coughs blood and a doctor is brought in.**

7 April, 1977

Sundarijal

I don't know how GM is passing his time in the next jail. He has no books except one Nepali to Nepali dictionary. He is perhaps writing. He sent for some paper clips and pins from me. It think he has a...of fullsize paper and a dot pen with a refill. When he was being taken away he was told by the officer that he would be brought back again to his jail to be lodged with me after a week or so. And he even suggested that he could leave his things which he won't need for a few days urgently. Hence GM's suitcase, a handbag, and bedding, hold all and some dolai are left in his room here. But the kind of arrangement that has been made for them in the new jail specially constructed for him in a record time doesn't suggest that he has been taken away only for a short duration.

I miss him a great deal. He is not very pleasurable company because he is too strongly self-willed, which not a very endearing qualification of companionship, and he tried to impress his style of life on others. But he is a man of sterling quality. He is absolutely free from any superiority complex, is not embarrassed to do manual work if occasion demanded. Of late he has given up considerably using strong language against his opponents and has considerably softened in his rigid political stand. He has been a source of a great political strength to me. He is totally identified with my line. He has one great quality, he takes long to be convinced, but once he is convinced you can depend on him to adhere to it to the end. In the beginning, he was not convinced of the reasoning of our present political line, but once he was convinced, he hasn't shown any sign of wavering. As a matter of fact, even when I am sometimes assailed with doubts, he remains firm in his conviction. The govt has deprived me of his company and now I have nobody to discuss my ideas with. I don't think he will be bought back here to rejoin me. I hope and pray that GM will be all right.

I am feeling lonely today. In the afternoon there was no electricity, hence I couldn't prepare my tea. I prepare my tea—altho it is only for me—and that too to be taken in loneliness. I prepare with some elaboration—like how Mahabir does things. Since I can't prepare the afternoon tea for there was no electricity, I suffered from a sense of worklessness and the time hung more heavily with me. I spent the day with extreme boredom and loneliness.

8 April

Sundarijal

Dr Bhattarai: my BP: 136/82. The morning cough that I brought out was saturated with blood. About more than a month ago I had persistent cough and for sometime every morning my sputum contained blood—not traces of it but full of it. It was sent for culture, but the report that was sent to me said that no pathogen was detected. I took Avil cough expectorant prescribed by Dr Vaish of BHU which gave me relief and the cough subsided. This morning again the blood is seen in the sputum, I have kept it for the doctor to see it. I have asked the major to get me a doctor soon. I don't know how soon he will come. I am worried. I am fully conscious that health is the most precious thing in prison and I have been careful about it. But no care seems to avail. This is what is worrying me—and I think worry aggravates the illness. I shouldn't be suffering from serious illness, because the thorough health checkup I had gone through in Varanasi was reassuring. When I came here I was in perfectly good health, and I have no reason to expect a foul play and the doctors are available tho they come tardily, not promptly when we want. That is why I feel that physically I am not affected with any serious trouble. The trouble is mostly mental—which is due to the most unnatural condition of prison life.

I do a little bit of writing and reading but there is no joy in the exercise. Therefore I drag myself through the exercise of study. The diary pages are full of commonplace read of my insignificant mental state—and the records are repetitive. This is an indication of the determination of my mind. I hope it is temporary, as I think my physical illness is of no serious kind.

Dr Bhattarai came to me. He examined me thoroughly which is his usual practice—had brought cardiograph machine also. He saw my sputum which he took with him for culture. He appeared to be a little concerned about that. He was also a little concerned about the shooting pain that I had about 14 days ago in the liver region. He was inquiring if the pain remained located there itself of it radiated. That I had similar pain about a month ago appeared to have some significance in the determination of my trouble. I had expected Basnet to come—he is more friendly, but Bhattarai as a doctor is more reassuring.

REVIEW

by SANJIVE MISHRA

## A cartoon is worth a thousand words

Subhas Rai has been drawing ever since he can remember. The draughtsman-ship itself seems to come easily to him, but like all professionals he grapples with the universal dilemma: does my work make any difference?

Journalists who work with words go through throes of such existential angst, too. After ten years of writing, they wonder whether what they have written has changed anything at all. Serious journalists seriously believe that the

power of media is exaggerated, that it is given more due than it deserves as an agent of change. (Opportunistic journalists need no convincing that the Fourth Estate is extremely powerful.)

So, it is natural for someone of Subhas Rai's calibre to wonder why. He needn't. A cartoon is worth a thousand words, and drives home the message using satire and humour much more effectively than mere words ever can. Change may not be immediate or dramatic, but thousands of pairs of

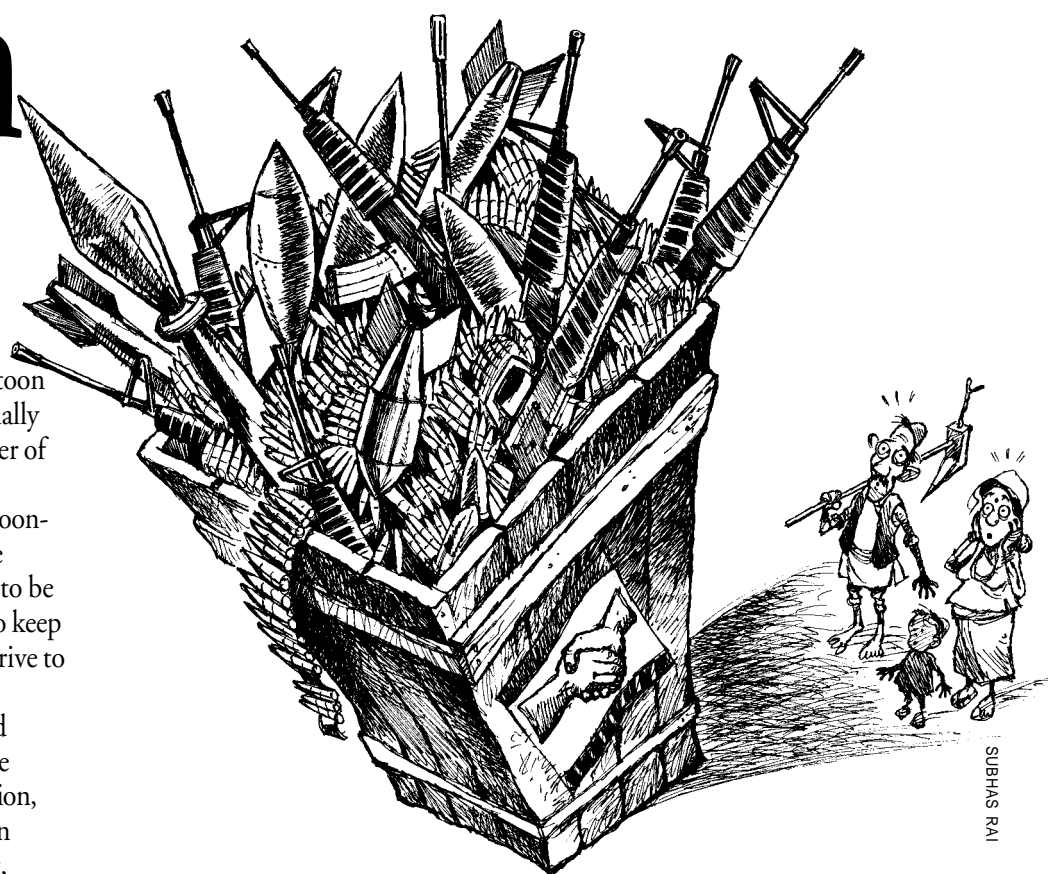
eyes looking at a well-crafted cartoon will take in the message subliminally and the issue will become a matter of public debate.

Compared to journalists, cartoonists have it much easier. They are allowed to have a point of view, to be sharply critical. Reporters have to keep their biases to themselves, and strive to be objective.

Also, in this visually-dominated media world, where newspapers are fighting a losing battle with television, infographics and cartoons take on added significance. They are not, should not be, just the one column filler on page one, they must expand to prominence, be directly interwoven with the page one text.

Luckily, in Nepal the post-1990 growth in media has made editorial cartooning blossom into an important part of newspapers and magazines. Nepali cartoonists in fact have used new freedoms much more effectively than their text counterparts to push the envelope of what is allowed. They have tackled the traditional holy cows in Nepali politics to present biting satires of the traditional ruling elite in Kathmandu.

Subhas Rai's cartoons and graphics have been the common feature of *Himal*



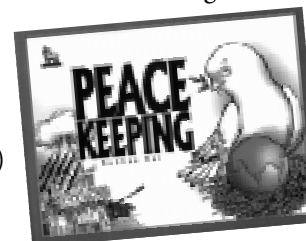
SUBHAS RAI

*Khabarpatrika* and this newspaper for the past four years. By training himself in the latest computer graphics techniques, Rai's illustrations have a world class finish. But he has never abandoned the basic skills of an artist to the short-cuts and gimmicks of Quark Express. Rai's basic work is still done laboriously pen-in-hand on a piece of paper, and scanned for computer tinting.

Subhas Rai is one of Nepal's most versatile cartoonists. In the collection of his cartoons on peace (*Peace Keeping*) released this week, he drives home the message

of non-violence and tolerance more than words could ever do.

Rai's distinctive and relaxed touch, and vivid imagery are familiar to readers of *Nepali Times*. But in this book, Rai expands his field of interest to include conflicts in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Iraq, India-Pakistan and Nepal. Every image forces us to reflect on the subject of peace and non-violence, and the humour gives us hope for the future.[]



Peace Keeping  
By Subhas Rai  
Himalmedia 2003  
pp 50+4, Rs 200  
Available at major  
bookshops or through  
subscription@himalmedia.com



SUBHAS RAI





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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- Picture from Modern Life in Nepal photographs by William Mebane till 4 July at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. 4411122
  - Soham Silver jewellery by Shruti till 6 July at Gallery Nine, Lazimpat. 4436994
- EVENTS
- Fulbright Forum The Status of the Red Panda in Ilam District, a talk by Brian Williams, 5PM on 1 July at the American Center Auditorium, Gyaneshwor.
  - 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.
  - Shukrabar presents Jharana 27 June at Tridevi Mandir, Thamel, opposite Himalayan Java. Rs 350. Tickets available at Jatra, New Orleans, Suwal Music and Movies, Patan Museum Gift Shop. Email: [reservations@shukrabar.com.np](mailto:reservations@shukrabar.com.np)
  - Reiki Level One Workshop with Elif Koksall from Turkey. 28-29 June at Babar Mahal Revisited. [reiki@eld.org.uk](mailto:reiki@eld.org.uk), 4256618 / 5541613

MUSIC

- Cadenza live 7.30PM every Wednesday and Saturday. Rs 200 entry. Interested musicians welcome to jam. Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lazimpat.
- 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
- The Jazz Bar presents Abhaya and The Steam Injuns. 7PM onwards, 27 June. 50 percent discount on food and drinks. Shangri-la Hotel, Lazimpat. 4412999
- Chill out Friday jazz and club music 7PM onwards. Free entrance. The Club, Bhat Bhateni. 4440163, 4416430

DRINKS

- Liquor Buffet 7-9PM at the Splash Bar & Grill. Rs 550 per person. Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu. 4411818
- Fusion offers over 100 cocktails. Happy hour from 6-7PM. Dwarika's Hotel.
- 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

FOOD

- Exquisite dining at the Chimney. Hotel Yak & Yeti. 4248999
- Espresso Bar Calling all coffee lovers at new look La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4419612
- Friday BBQ at the Summit Hotel 6.30 PM onwards. Rs 500 + tax. 5521810.
- Breakaway Buffet Lunch Rs 325-375 (weekdays), Rs 650 (weekends) at the Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu. 4411818
- Traditional Nepali Thali lunch at Patan Museum Café inside Patan Museum. 11AM-2.30 PM. Cocktails and snacks 4-6.30 PM. 5526271
- Weekends BBQ at the Shambala Garden. 50 percent off through June. Shangri-la Hotel, Lazimpat. 4412999
- Summer specials smoked salmon soufflé, shrimp Newburg and crispy duck breast. 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, Darbar Marg.
- Wood fired pizzas, Baskin Robbins ice-cream, cocktails and coffee at the Roadhouse Café, Thamel.
- World BBQ Nite 27 June at Dwarika's Hotel. Singaporean satay, Persian kababs, Churasqueria. Rs 699 + tax. 4479488
- 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.
- Saturday BBQ Lunch at Club Himalaya Nagarkot. Rs 500 per person. 4680083
- Papaya salad, seasonal vegetables with fillet or chicken and Italian icecream at Singma, Jawlakhel, Lalitpur. 552004

GETAWAYS

- Dakshinkali Package every Saturday Rs 500+tax. 4370714, 4371537
- Shivapuri Heights a traditional cottage with modern facilities. Rs 1,850 pp. [www.escape2nepal.com](http://www.escape2nepal.com). Email: [info@escape2nepal.com](mailto:info@escape2nepal.com)
- Great Godavari Getaway special weekend packages. Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- The Secret of Kathmandu Overnight package \$99. Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- Gamcha Organic Farm Guesthouse Traditional Nepali farmhouse. 6631734
- Writing Retreat Full board package. Aesthetic living, innovative thinking, creative writing and nature at Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha. 375280
- Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge Special offers for Nepalis and expats. 01-361500 TMPL Reservations - Nepali/Expat Offer
- Bardia Tiger Madness special deals for expats. Jungle Base camp, Bardia. 061-532112. Email: [junglebasecamp@yahoo.com](mailto:junglebasecamp@yahoo.com).
- Escape to Jomsom this summer. Rs 3,999 per person at Jomsom Mountain Resort. 449610
- Five-star packages at The Fort Resort, Nagarkot. 421633



BOOKWORM



**The Best of Laxman:** The common man in the new millenium RK Laxman  
Penguin Books, 2000  
Rs 350  
From financial crises to the woes of householders, from political instability to rampant corruption, Laxman's cartoons capture the entire gamut of contemporary Indian experience. Hilarious and thought-provoking at the same time, this is a treasurehouse of humour from one of the most striking voices on Indian socio-political life today.

**Nepalese Cartoons:** a portfolio of cartoons of Nepal by representative cartoonists  
Ram Kumar Panday  
Ratna Pustak, 1997  
Rs 190  
The cartoon as a genre of satirical drawing in the occidental and now universal sense appeared late to Nepal. But the modern history of the cartoons, though short, has a strong functional basis. The author, a writer and cartoonist too, presents contemporary Nepali cartoons in a timeline and accompanies it with a lively analysis.



**Peace Keepers** Subhas Rai  
Himalmedia, 2003  
Rs 200  
The cartoons in Rai's first book cements what we already know: this is an insightful, talented artist who has a keen eye and a light touch. One of Nepal's foremost political cartoonists, his work has appeared regularly in *Nepali Times* and *Himal Khabarpatrika*. His work in *Peace Keeping* embraces a wider global perspective with the finesse we have come to expect.

Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 4227711, [mandala@ccsl.com.np](mailto:mandala@ccsl.com.np)

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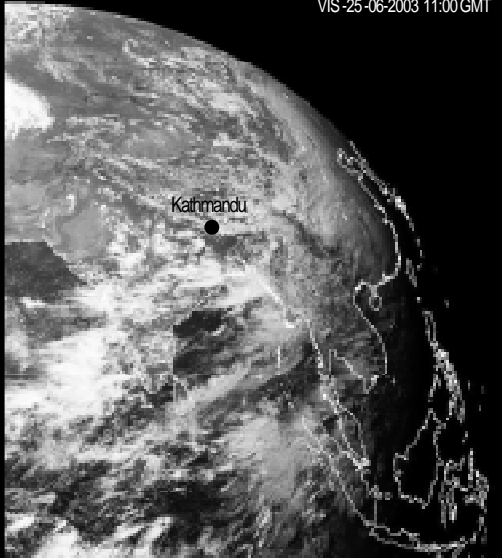
The genius of the Wachowski brothers returns in the *Matrix Reloaded*. There are better special effects and action sequences as the sequel journeys deeper into the Matrix where more humans are free and attempting to live in the real world. Crisis strikes when the Machine Army lays siege on Zion, the last real-world city. Neo (Keanu Reeves), Trinity (Carrie Anne Moss) and Morpheus (Laurence Fishburn) have to save the day.

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NEPALI WEATHER





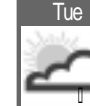


VIS-25-06-2003 11:00 GMT

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

After a weak start, the monsoon is picking up strength and has now covered the whole of Nepal from east to west. This satellite image taken on Thursday afternoon shows that the rains will take a breather, and the next monsoon pulse will arrive early next week. Till then, expect clear bright mornings, warm days and showers towards the evening and night. The Bay of Bengal branch of the monsoon is getting distracted and dropping its moisture over northeast India, while the Arabian Sea branch has been vigorous and pumping water vapour into western Nepal.

**KATHMANDU VALLEY**

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
				
30-20	30-19	30-20	39-19	28-19



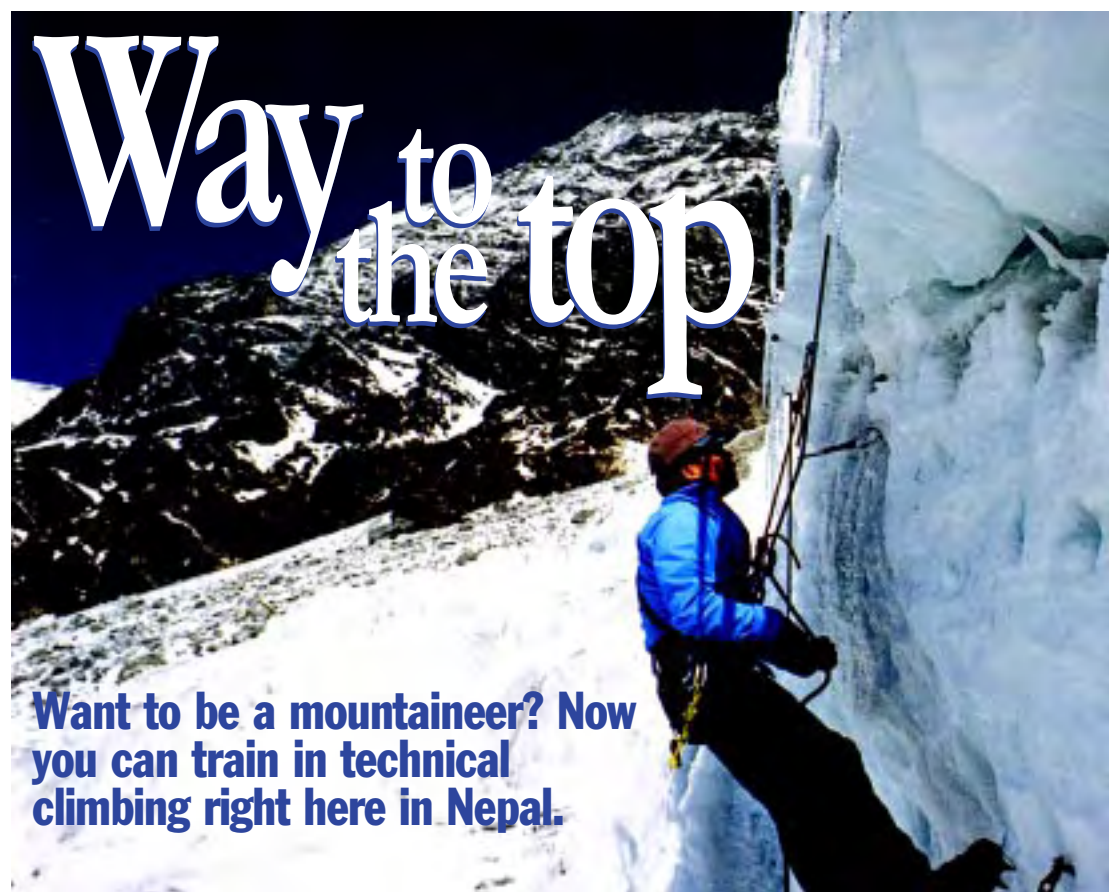
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PADAM SINGH GHALEY

# Way to the top

**Want to be a mountaineer? Now you can train in technical climbing right here in Nepal.**

## JANAKI GURUNG

One fallout from the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary hoopla of the ascent of Everest last month is that many Nepali youngsters suddenly want to learn to climb. And they are not just Sherpas.

So, the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) climbing school in Manang (*see pic, below*) is gearing up to meet the rush. In addition, a group of veteran Nepali climbers have set up the Nepal Mountaineering Instructor Association (NMIA) with the view to encourage Nepal's youth to discover the wilderness, learn basic climbing techniques and undergo survival training.

NMIA was set up last year by three-time Everest summiteers, (*from left to right in picture taken at the NMIA launch this week, below*) Lhakpa Sherpa, Pemba Gyaljen Sherpa, Ang Norbu sherpa and Dorjee Lama. The group's professional instructors carry out training on rock climbing in Chewang in Solu Khumbu and in Nagarjun and Hatiban in Kathmandu. Ice and glacier traverse training is done in Langtang, basic mountaineering courses are carried out in Manang while advanced mountaineering courses take place in Thame.

"Mountaineering in Nepal is changing, it is no longer just about high altitude portering to make a living," says Padam Singh Ghaley of the instructors' association. "Many Nepalis now want to climb for the love of it, and there is a tremendous lack of proper training."

The NMIA is collaborating with NMA to carry out specialised training in rock and ice, as well as in mountain rescue and survival. Some 15 trainees took part in a recent course in Langtang (*see pics, above*), and another course is planned in Manang this August. Since the two valleys lie in the

rainshadow, the fallow monsoon months can be used for training.

The NMA school in Manang was set up in 1975 with help from Yugoslavian climbers and has already produced 130 graduates. It still uses training manuals from France's Ecole nationale d'Alpinisme et Ski (ENAS) and many of the instructors have been schooled in mountaineering training by professional instructors. "Although many of the applicants for mountaineering training are still Sherpas, there is a noticeable shift towards other communities," says NMIA chairman, Dawa Gombu Sherpa. "This is a healthy trend."

NMIA, with support from the Austrian group, Eco-Himal, is translating its mountaineering training handbooks into Nepali so that trainees as well as porters who



for its training programs, and is subcontracted by the NMA to carry out some of its courses, like the one in Langtang and Manang, "It is a mutually beneficial partnership," says Dawa Gombu. NMIA also wants to branch out and offer

hiking and trekking experiences for schools in Kathmandu, Pokhara and Dharan so that Nepali children can learn about their country. "The programs will introduce Nepali children to trekking, mountaineering and basic techniques and wilderness survival training," explains Ghaley.

There are also inquiries from corporate groups in Nepal to organise challenging outdoor activities for their senior managers and executives. Business houses in Britain, France and the US regularly bring senior staff to Nepal for trekking to train them in teamwork, and NMIA thinks it can do the same for Nepali corporate houses.

"There are a lot of benefits: managers learn to work together, they gain self-confidence and they become better at problem-solving," says Ghaley. "This is not just about climbing, it prepares them to deal with life's adversities, and they also get to learn a lot about the diversity of their own country which is an added bonus." □

nmia@csf.com.np  
www.nma.com.np



don't know English can learn technical aspects like fixed rope climbing, glacier traversing, search and rescue and altitude sickness. "We hope the book will spread knowledge about safe climbing to a larger Nepali public," Ghaley told us.

NMIA is already self-sufficient because of the royalty it receives from trekking peak fees, and a part of its mandate is to popularise mountaineering activities among Nepali students and youngsters, according to its president, Ang Tsering Sherpa. "We want to spread awareness at both the national and international levels to preserve the beauty and challenge of the Himalaya," he says.

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## Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

# CORRECTIONS

It is our duty, as journalists, to adhere to the truth as far as humanely possible. But, now and then, we make mistakes. Who doesn't? And when we do, it is part of our strict journalistic Code of Ethics to lie low and hope no one noticed. Just kidding. Actually, we issue a correction and publish it at the bottom of page 37 where you need a magnifying glass to see it.

It may be a tiny typo or a huge grammatical error, either way the important thing is to alert all unsuspecting citizens about the blunder, acknowledge our short coming, and learn from our mistakes so we can move on to make even greater ones. Such is life. This is why it is incumbent upon the Nepali media to examine and rectify its erratum. For the public record, we hereby publish the following corrections:

□ A small typographical error crept into an article last Saturday about Kathmandu being developed as an International Humour Centre. Heh-heh. Sorry for that funny mistake. In actual fact, the city is developing into an International Tumour Centre.

□ A picture caption in the Entertainment Section misidentified a new eatery in New Road as the Revolving Restaurant and Bar, it is in fact the Revolutionary Restaurant and Bar run by the ANNUS(R). The terror is deeply regretted.

□ We apologise to the UML General Secretary for the major national crisis triggered by our headline on the Sports Page of yesterday's edition, 'Nepal Thrashed Badly'. The article was actually about the Nepali soccer team beaten 8-0 by Oman in the ongoing Asian qualifiers.

□ Because of an editing error, an article by Chicken Little on page one of the Sunday edition gave the impression that the world had ended. We are happy to report that the world is still very much around, according to a higher up authority. "We'll let you know if and when we decide to terminate the world," the Almighty said in a statement, read out by a spokesperson.

□ Due to confusion in the newsroom, the prime minister was incorrectly identified in yesterday's editorial as Sher Bahadur Thapa. The present premier is actually the Right Honourable Lokendra Bahadur Deuba. We apologise to both prime ministers.

□ Several readers have been rushed to the ICU after trying out the weight-loss formula in our Lifestyle Section last week. The sentence "Take 6 oz of Kathmandu water straight off the tap, remove all unidentified floating objects, and drink it. The ensuing dysentery will guarantee you will lose 10 kg in one week." was supposed to be a joke, silly. Any incontinence is regretted.

□ The Five-Party Alliance against Regression (FPAR) has just informed us that a news item in yesterday's edition announcing the launch of the 148<sup>th</sup> Phase of their street agitation was a huge mistake. They shouldn't have done it.

□ Due to a fact-checking error, reports in our Obituary Section yesterday of the death of Mr Mark Twain were exaggerated. After a strenuous workout, Mr Twain actually felt only half-dead.

**आशिर्वाद**  
खुद गर्नुको चक्की आटा

आइरन जस्तुरी हुन्छ किन ?

- बच्चाहरूमा स्वरस शरीर, बौद्धिक विकास, तीक्ष्ण बुद्धि साथै शारीरिक बृद्धिका लागि ।
- विवाहीमा अकम्पकउने तथा अलिखपन हुनबाट बचाउन र पढाई तथा अन्य क्रियाकलापमा सक्रिय बनाउनका लागि ।
- गर्भवती आमा र बच्चाको राम्रो स्वास्थ्यको लागि ।

त्यसैले वैज्ञानिक अनुसन्धानद्वारा प्रमाणित गर्नुको पिठोमा आइरनको आपूर्ति उपयुक्त र सरल हुने हुँदा को. एल. दुम्ड बापले आशिर्वाद चक्की आटालाई आइरन, भिटामिन 'ए' र खनिज पदार्थ युक्त पूर्ण पोषित खादिलो चक्की आटामा प्रस्तुत गरेको छ ।

**आशिर्वाद**  
खुद गर्नुको चक्की आटा

गर्नुको सम्पूर्ण स्वाद चक्की आटामा, सम्पूर्ण पोषिकता नरम रोटीमा

## NEPALI SOCIETY

Many Nepalis are doing well for themselves in the field of Information Technology. Some work for Nokia in Finland, others are up-and-coming names in Silicon Valley. But few ever uproot themselves and come back to their homeland to make a difference. One such Nepali is Suresh Ojha (pic, below). A wireless systems design engineer on the fast track at Hewlett Packard, Suresh lives and works in the San Francisco Bay area. At the age of eight he moved to the US with his parents, and in all the years that followed he never

## Silicon Valley to Kathmandu Valley

quite forgot his childhood memories of growing up in a Newar neighbourhood in the Valley. "I decided I couldn't face myself if I didn't do anything for Nepal," he says.

After a visit to Nepal, Suresh was convinced that Nepal had great

potential in the IT field to bridge the digital divide. He set up the Nepal Information Technology Task Force of Silicon Valley with the help of a few other Nepali engineers and American friends. The purpose was to usher in the wireless revolution, and let Nepal's IT industry leapfrog technology. "Given Nepal's terrain and financial restrictions, wireless technology can be hugely beneficial," says Suresh.

This conviction led his group to bring in \$500,000 worth of radio frequency and microwave-testing equipment for the Institute of Engineering (IoE) at Tribhuban University. The IoE will now have a wireless lab that is more sophisticated than most labs at US universities. Suresh is currently taking time off till December to teach wireless engineering here. "Very soon wireless technology will replace cable-based technology all over the world. The beauty of it is that though it is more sophisticated than cable based technology, it is less expensive and most suited to Nepal," he says.

He is convinced Nepal is on the edge of something wonderful: "I believe in the calibre of Nepalis to succeed, but it requires effort. This is a test case, there are people willing to help us. In the end, it is the Nepalis alone who can make it work." (Alok Tumbahangphey)

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