

RARA
Between heaven and earth 10-11

Mr Condom
4-5

EXCLUSIVE
BP and Mao



Midnight handshake in Hanchow in 1960.

Chairman Mao Zedong: We and India have been at odds. Never mind. It will be over soon. We have common interests, because we are both undeveloped countries. It is a false charge that China invaded India. We do not want an inch of (their) land. We have a vast land of 9.6 million sq km, with a large part uncultivated. It is a crime to take others' land and not run one's own country well. Have we invaded Nepal? We do not want a single inch of Nepalese land. Can we sign a border and erect boundary markers?

Prime Minister B.P. Koirala: Yes, we can. I have discussed it with Premier Zhou Enlai.

Mao: Do you agree?
BP: An official marking of the boundary is needed.

Mao: It is necessary to mark the boundary. Once it is drawn, there can be an unpatrolled zone. The length of the unpatrolled border can be decided through consultation. If you like, we can have a clause in the stipulating an unpatrolled border area, the length of which can be worked out through consultation. It will be 40 km altogether if each side has 20 km, 20 km if each side has ten km, ten km if each side has five kilometers. It is up to your convenience. How about it?
BP: It is worth considering.

Mao: If you are interested, we can sign a friendly treaty of non-aggression. We are a big country and we never suspect you will invade us, but you may suspect that we shall invade you. We would commit a blunder if we broke the treaty after it was signed.

BP: During our talks, Premier Zhou Enlai put forward a draft for a friendly treaty. We shall take it back to the cabinet for decision, there may be some revisions. It may be signed at Kathmandu when Premier Zhou Enlai visits Nepal after his trip to India at the end of April.

Mao: Very good. We have received two of your prime ministers separately and our premier should visit you, making it equal. We thank you very much. It is excellent that we are to set up an embassy in your capital this year. You may set up an embassy here without many people, three or four, maybe seven or eight. It won't be very expensive. It is not difficult to find people out of eight million people.

BP: When we are ready to send them, it will not be too many, because we cannot afford it.

Mao: We heard that you are building a highway directly to our country.

BP: No. We wanted to build a highway two years ago. It could not go on because of lack of funds. Now technicians from the Soviet Union are helping survey, in preparation for a east-west highway.

Mao: You have to go via another foreign country if you come to our country...in one year, ten years, or 20 years sooner or later we shall have a direct road.

BP: I invited Jawaharlal Nehru and Premier Zhou Enlai to hold talks in our capital, Kathmandu, but they could not (come).

Mao: It was because Nehru wanted our premier to go to his capital, Delhi. At first we suggested Rangoon, but Nehru did not agree. Now we have agreed to go to Delhi, so he cannot go to Nepal. Thank

Mao Zedong met visiting Nepali Prime Minister BP Koirala on 18 March 1960 in Hanchow after a sudden midnight summon from the Chairman. A transcript of their chat has recently been made public in Beijing. China's relations with India were deteriorating and a brief border war was soon to break out. Mao Zedong comes across here as mellow and liberal. BP Koirala, instead of playing India off against China, tries to ease tensions between Beijing and New Delhi by offering Kathmandu as a venue for talks. The Nepali prime minister is quite pushy, and also brings up the dispute over the world's highest border pillar: Mt Everest. There is agreement to have embassies in each other's capitals. Excerpts of the transcript:

you for your kindness. You have every good intentions. When Nehru said it was not convenient for him, we had to make concessions to him. We have had quarrels with India for about a year, but we are still friends. There are often quarrels between friends, between husband and wife, and between brothers. We have had no quarrels with you, Burma, Ceylon and Cambodia. We have serious quarrels with only one country in the world, the United States. It has occupied our Taiwan and has called us "aggressor". We shall call it aggressor, too.

Now there is one country that wants to have "joint defense" with you against us. I learned that you did not agree. We are pleased. You said that Sino-India relations should be solved by themselves and you would not interfere. India alleged that we had invaded you and you made a statement declaring there was no invasion. There is a rumour about our troops intruding into your country. Is there any intrusion, after all?

BP: Because there isn't, we made the statement. On the question of the Nepal-Chinese border, there are still differences. In our view, there are disputes in four places, based on the historical situation in the past 50 years. Now it is time to settle the disputes.

Mao: Good.
BP: In our talks with Premier Zhou we have worked out several principles: first, draw the boundary based on the existing traditionally accepted boundary line, second, take into consideration the practical situation of jurisdiction by either

JUST TALK

Wires are crossed, and there is too much grandstanding and rhetoric about peace talks with the Maoists.

BINOD BHATTARAI

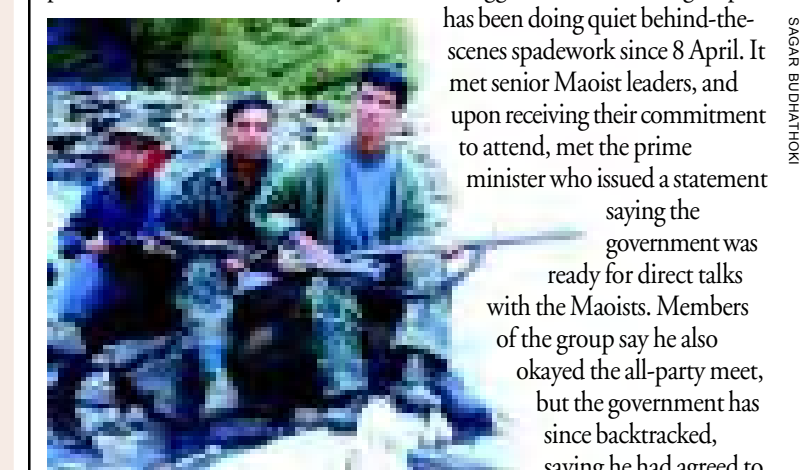
If there was less talk about talk and more talk, maybe we would be getting somewhere. But for the moment, wires are crossed, there is duplication of effort, and too much political grandstanding and rhetoric.

But no one seems to know for sure whether the Maoists genuinely want a negotiated solution, or they are just pretending. The government for its part, feels it is losing the war and unless it can wield a big stick the Maoists cannot be persuaded to talk. Deputy prime minister Ram Chandra Poudel who took part in the first abortive talks in November is not optimistic. He told us: "There has been ...no progress on the possibility of talks." (see p. 2) What's more, Poudel doesn't even trust the mediators who are trying to get the Maoists to the table.

A five-member group (all men) representing 11 human rights groups has spent the past two months trying to lay the groundwork. A 15-point "concept paper" has been prepared.

The government has read the paper and the Maoists will get their copy when Padma Ratna Tuladhar, one of the five facilitators returns from a junket in Geneva. "The process is being publicised as needed because that will also contribute to peacemaking," says Sudip Pathak, of the Human Rights Organisation of Nepal. The Tuladhar initiative would first require both sides to put it in writing that they are committed to dialogue.

There are others. A loose alliance of professionals, politicians and human rights activists is trying to organise an all-party conference to find a way out of the bloodshed. The immediate goal is to stop army and armed police mobilisation, which they believe will trigger a civil war. This group

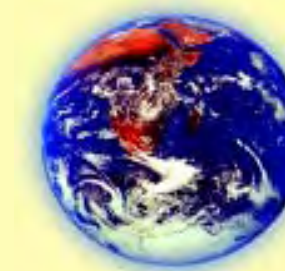


has been doing quiet behind-the-scenes spadework since 8 April. It met senior Maoist leaders, and upon receiving their commitment to attend, met the prime minister who issued a statement saying the government was ready for direct talks with the Maoists. Members of the group say he also okayed the all-party meet, but the government has since backtracked, saying he had agreed to all parties except the Maoists. The group has also met the UML who think conferencing is a good idea. The group is now ready to announce a date. Secretary of the group, leftist journalist Shyam Shrestha says: "We can organise this conference if the government does not pull back. It will have to trust us."

The only trouble with all this is that peace seems to have become politics. And one group is racing to outdo the other. "I'll believe in talks only when the state and the Maoists do it directly, and the interlocutors have no other political agenda," says a constitutional expert. The preparations for talks should also be done in secret to prevent grandstanding by people who have a declared position on the nature and type of polity after the talks take place, he says. The allusion seems to be towards Padma Ratna Tuladhar and Daman Nath Dhungana. But for those who genuinely seek peace, it seems some talk of talks is better than no talk of talks.

SAGAR BUDHATHORI

one world...



...one link



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IN THE REALM OF THE SENSELESS

A senior Nepali Marxist, disenchanted with the personality cults that have destroyed the application of true communism in Nepal and elsewhere, once confided to us that he had hit upon the reason why people join the left movement: envy.

This was a startling confession for someone for whom communism is an evangelical crusade for equity and social justice. And it was probably because they speak their mind that Marxists like him now shun organised communism and have turned into freelance leftists.

Nepalis can't seem to be able to improve on anything without first wrecking what exists. We want to fix things even if it ain't broke, or break everything while trying to fix things. To reform our school system, we first want to shut them all. We want to bring down a ruling party through street protests, and nearly end up bringing down the country.

Fact: Of the 40 forced bandhs in the past seven years, in not even one has the main demand of those calling it been fulfilled.

Fact: A one-day nationwide involuntary strike costs the country upwards of Rs 80 million, a three day shutdown will cost Rs 240 million. (Can we send the bill to the UML?)

Fact: This time, even hospitals (except emergency wards) will be forced to shut.

Fact: The rich are not affected by bandhs. (They get some much-needed exercise.) Those who suffer the most are daily-wage earners, petty shopkeepers, taxi drivers.

Given the universal negative public opinion about these forced strikes, one wonders what the organisers have in mind. There is only one thing we can think of: the soft left wants to take the wind out of the sails of the hard left by punishing the centre right party in power.

So who benefits? It is not difficult to figure that one out: those who want to sow anarchy and discredit parliamentary democracy. And who in Nepal wants to sow anarchy and discredit parliamentary democracy? No prizes for guessing.

Having said that, the Nepali Congress has become a part of the problem by not being a part of the solution. It is destroying democracy by being its feckless self. Two years after being elected, the one political party that has a majority in parliament has lost its moral legitimacy.

We will say this again: for his party's sake and for the sake of the country Girija Koirala must remove the log jam by removing himself.

"The Maoists won't come to the talks unless they are cornered."

Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel spoke to Nepali Times this week about talking to Maoists, Congress infighting, and the opposition street agitation.

Where do we stand as regards finding a solution to the Maoist problem?

There has been no development, no progress on the possibility of talks. His Majesty has approved the internal Integrated Security and Development Package (ISDP) which is now being started. It aims to look at our problems in totality, security in a national perspective of which the Maoists are a part.

But the opposition is not even talking with you on the ISDP...

UML leaders are also concerned, but they have a problem because they are trapped by their earlier decision. The UML came with a single point-agenda: remove an elected prime minister without due process. That has made it difficult for them to come and talk with us.

Is UML talking with you informally?

Informally, yes. But they say the problems can only be solved after the prime minister resigns. They want us to throw him out. But we can't do that. They want our party president to exit in disgrace on something that is yet to be proven.

What is the reason for the deadlock in talks with the Maoists?

The Maoists are saying they're uncertain about talks because of the clash between and within political parties. They are unsure about

what will happen to the prime minister, so they are saying who should we talk to? I think the Maoists figure the left opposition is demanding the resignation of the PM, and if they sit down for talks they could be branded opportunists.

What are groups preparing for talks with the Maoists saying to you?

I have been telling them let's not do a drama in the name of talks. Let us not make excuses and propaganda, it will just confuse the people. The government has been saying it is ready for talks—I have been saying I am ready—they are also saying they want talks.

Do you think the Maoists are serious about dialogue?

I still do not believe the Maoists are serious about dialogue. I have told the same to those coming to me with proposals. If the Maoists really want peace and don't want the country and people to suffer further, they first have to convince me that they are serious.

Ultimatum it is the prime minister's responsibility to find a solution. What advice have you been giving him?

Have told the PM he should try to include all (party opponents) because he is president of the largest democratic party, and for the sake of democracy which is under attack.

Have you and the prime minister been stepping on each other's toes?

So far there has not been one instance where he and I have a difference of opinion. I have coordinated with him and done everything with his concurrence. The PM has said the Congress may participate in an all party conference (excluding the Maoists) for finding ways to resolve the problem.

Do you have full support of the army?

How can the government not have support of the army?

Theoretically, but in reality...

They have been preparing and visiting the field following orders that have been given, so this is not the time to discuss if they support the government or not.

What about the confidence level in the army?

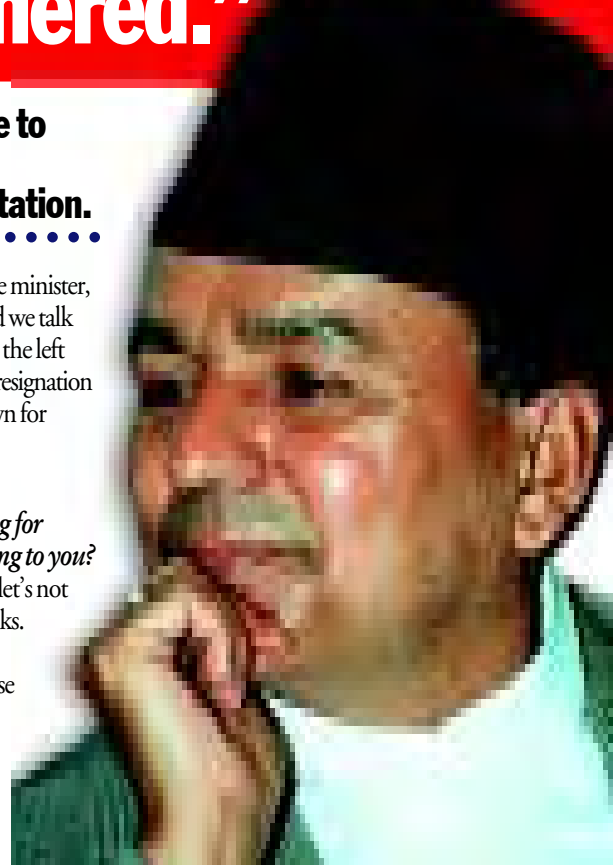
They would like to move in gradually and systematically. They are preparing work-plans based on that. Their work will be co-ordinated by civilian administrators at different levels.

Can the government pay for the new security program?

Because of the Maoist problem we've been forced to spend money that would otherwise be used for development. But you can be sure this programme will not stop because of lack of funds, what is needed will be mobilised.

How will you do that when the government is in such disarray?

The opposition blocked parliamentary proceedings, and that spilled over into our party with one group trying to reap benefits. Then we have had incessant Maoist attacks while the opposition has taken to the streets. All this has naturally affected



MIN. BAIKACHARYA

government performance, and affected the people. We have not been able to use our energy to do the things we want to, we have been forced into day-to-day damage control mode.

Have you advised him to step down? All of us have to work to give him a respectable way out.

Is he looking for a respectable way out?

The situation now is different. He is now under intense personal attack, and he has to face them. I don't know what he plans to do once he comes out of this round.

Will his exit bring unity in the Congress?

It won't be easy in the present situation. I don't think unity will come the moment he leaves, or that the Maoist problem will be resolved, and that all parties would unite to face the Maoists.

As home minister, what do you have to say about the strikes next week?

We've been saying to all parties: let us not shut down the country just for party interests, because that affects the interests and livelihood of ordinary people.

What do they say?

They have not come to the meetings we have called, but we're still trying to hold discussions. As a responsible party they have to realise the impact such a long strike can cause. Over time the opposition may have to pay for the losses their strikes cause to the nation. It's their credibility at stake.



MIN. BAIKACHARYA

"We are optimistic we can reach an agreement on constitutional reform with the Maoists."

Jhala Nath Khanal is the Standing Committee Member of the main opposition Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist). He heads the party's Intellectuals Department and is regarded as a shadow foreign minister.

Ten years after democracy, where do you think this country is headed?

The way we have run the country in the past 11 years is not what was envisaged by the constitution. We have distorted the constitutional provisions.

How?

Democracy is not only the freedom to speak and organise rallies. They are inseparable parts of democracy, but we have not been able to implement democracy in social, political, administrative and cultural aspects.

What factors led to this crisis?

We could not establish good governance. We got democracy, but retained the old administrative system. We should have re-organised the VDCs, districts, zones and developmental regions in light of changes, and devised a system compatible to democracy.

But aren't political parties like yours responsible for this?

When the party in power began doing it, others were forced to follow suit. During the interim government when I represented the left alliance, we had agreed that employees should be allowed to organise in a united manner.

Your party's demands for constitutional changes are close to what the Maoists want. Is that the way out of this impasse?

There may be similarities but many of their positions are unclear. The Maoists want an interim government to formulate a people's constitution by electing a constituent assembly. We cannot agree to that position. The constitution is the outcome of the 1990 movement, and it has problems but we think they should be corrected through amendments.

LETTERS

CK LAL

The column by CK Lal ("Time to go", #43) on Prime Minister Koirala is just right. But what is the alternative? All politicians are involved in petty politics, they have forgotten the sacrifices they made for democracy.

Sonali Regmi New York, USA

CK Lal's State of the State columns are almost universally exceptional. They are balanced and give a judicious interpretation of events in Nepal. We need more writers like him, particularly at a time when rationality seems to be clouded by excessive emotionalism and a penchant for attack and slander.

Bhaskar Koirala by email

We have jubilantly proved that Buddha was indeed born in Nepal, but as CK Lal says, if the Buddha was born today he would not be eligible for Nepali citizenship ("In a state of statelessness", #41). Aren't we playing into South Block's "grand design" by denying our fellow citizens their birth right? Let

us be vigilant against crooked Indians, but defend the rights of our madhesi brothers who fit in Pritivhi Narayan's "char barna, chhatis jaat".

Bijaya B Mali Chhetrapati

Amidst the chorus of senseless opposition to the Citizenship Bill by Kathmandu's ultra-nationalists, your editorial and CK Lal's column ("Powder keg" and "In a state of statelessness", #41) come out as dissenting voices of sanity.

Dr. Taslim Ansari Adarshanagar, Birgunj

My grandpa and papa were always keen that I never lost sight of my Nepali roots. That is why I undertook to visit Nepal, our family's spiritual homeland, with my classmates from St Helen.

Imagine the rude shock that we received when some local boys in Pokhara taunted my friends on the basis of their skin colour. "Dhoti chicks" was one of the nicer remarks. I came back with some unforgettable memories, but there were other nasty CK Lal-esque experiences ("Nepal fizzles as India sizzles", #42). It was a loss of innocence for me: the Shangri-

la image of my forefathers' homeland suddenly looking phoney. European, American and other dollar-paying tourists on the other hand got lavish treatment everywhere. Perhaps the Nepali proverb "Guest is God" was updated to "Dollar is Deity".

Anupama Ghale and friends Kalimpong

I have been following the recent madness of private schools closing down due to Maoist threats through your Internet edition. Finally something is shaking up those complacent politicians, administrators and people to look into the much neglected state of public education in Nepal.

KESHAR MAHAL

Thank you for "Garden of dreams" (#43) by Sallil Subedi and Anagha me say we have come a long way in stopping the mass migration of

children across the border, saving a lot of money. It is a shame that it took violent attacks on schools to wake the government up. But private schools should not be made scapegoats for the government's negligence. Shame on the government and shame on you and I for our apathy.

Neeta Pokhrel London, UK

I agree with Binod Bhattarai in "A classless society" (#43). The students' wing of the Maoists must realise this is a very unpopular move that needs to be condemned by all conscious Nepalis.

Sushil Thapa Winchester, Virginia, USA

After reading your editorial "Grenada and Nepal" (#42) I had this eerie feeling that the Indian media inhabit a Borgesian world where fiction contaminates reality, and journalism reads like a branch of metaphysical fantasy literature.

RAM LIMBU Sydney

After reading your editorial "Grenada and Nepal" (#42) I had this eerie feeling that the Indian media inhabit a Borgesian world where fiction contaminates reality, and journalism reads like a branch of metaphysical fantasy literature. Jorge Louis Borges would feel at home.

BARBARA COLLUM

Here is another definition of "expert" ("Expat=expert", Letters

development process will come together. If there is unity between us it can help us in tackling the present extreme leftist tendencies.

There has been criticism that you are crossing the boundary of constitutional opposition in harassing the Nepali Congress.

We have also heard comments to the effect that the main opposition has become a "gentlemanly" opposition (laughs). In fact, the ruling party did not respond to polite talk that is why we have been forced to combine opposition on the streets and in parliament.

Is that why you're shutting the country down for three days?

We are hoping that will not happen, we don't want to have the three-day bandh. But for that the government would need to take proactive steps and make a proposal for finding a solution.

Is your party in the school-reform protests because you feel the Maoists and the ML have overtaken your student wing?

The directionless, indisciplined and blinkered situation of the educational sector is because reforms have not been implemented after 1990. What we see today is the sum total of all the problems that have accumulated over the years. The quality of public education is bad, the management of education is politicised, and there is corruption.

Why should college student unions be agitating? Isn't school reform the purview of legislators?

We've discussed education policy many times in parliament. We have raised the issues in parliamentary sessions and concerned committees and with ministers. The government has also formed commissions with valid recommendations.

But there is no implementation. Our students identified the problems and suggested solutions, which we took to parliament but the ruling party didn't listen. This is why the students feel the democratic process won't lead to a solution, and have decided to get out on the streets.

Basically, we don't have any ideological or political differences with the ML. We agree on almost every issue, but there were differences over party leadership positions. This can be resolved over time and leftists who believe in a peaceful

Neelakantan about the restoration of Keshar Mahal. The before and after photos of the staircase proves that where there is a will, there is a way. Abhas Parajuli, Baneshwor

LORD PASHUPATINATH

I have been following the on-again-off-again saga of Girija Koirala in your paper. What if Koirala steps down, who next? I can't see any leader that can put our country back on track for development.

Dibesh Karmacharya New Jersey, USA

Yours is the best paper to ever come out of Nepal. CK Lal should be commended for his analytical writings, even though some of his analyses end up in circular reasoning. Binod Bhattarai is well researched and convincing. But what stands out is Kunda Dixit's Under My Hat column. His articles for me work like an anti-depressant.

ANTI-DEPRESSANT

They have helped me maintain my—and I think everybody else's—sanity. "End of ceasefire" (#43) acted like therapy. I laughed myself silly.

NIRMAL NIROULA

Here is another definition of "expert" ("Expat=expert", Letters

COMMON SENSE

Saundarya Thapa has an understanding well beyond her fifteen years. Wouldn't it be nice if everyone in government, and also the Maoists would think about what she had to say which was not politically motivated, or to gain power.

BARBARA COLLUM

Here is another definition of "expert" ("Expat=expert", Letters

MIN. BAIKACHARYA

MIN. BAIKACHARYA



20

Thailand's Mr Condom comes



A pioneering Thai activist says Nepal can learn a lot from Thailand's mistakes and achievements in fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

emergency break glass", and a restaurant called Cabbages and Condoms in Bangkok to raise money for awareness. The idea was to break taboos surrounding sex, and spread awareness by demystifying the condom. Today, a condom in Thailand is called a "mechai" after this visionary activist, son of a Thai father and Scottish mother.

Says Mechai: "We had to get people to be relaxed. We had to wipe out any embarrassment." Condom use in Bangkok's sex industry went up from 30 percent to 90 percent in seven years.

In 1992, Mechai was asked to join the government, and took his anti-AIDS message on a war footing—defying the all-important tourism industry, which said he was giving the country a bad image that would hurt

of the country's GDP. Instead, Mechai's awareness campaign turned the epidemic around, and the number of new infections has declined sharply. Today, Thailand has about one million infected people. His advice to Nepal is simple: "You are in the same stage of the epidemic as we were in 1992. Please Nepal, don't make Thailand's early mistake. Act now."

Asked about countries where people are squeamish about discussing sex and condoms, Mechai says with his characteristic bluntness: "Would you rather be sensitive, or dead?" Thailand's condom man was in Kathmandu this week to address a high-level South Asian meeting on children. In front of delegates at the Crowne Plaza, Mechai distributed condoms, blew one into a balloon, and showed the multipurpose uses a rubber can be put to: "A tourniquet for snake bites, to keep dust out of soldiers' gun barrels, the ring can be used to gather ponytails, the lubrication can be after shave lotion. There are different colours: red for Sundays, black for mourning."

Nepali Times talked to Mechai this week about the lessons for Nepal from Thailand's experience, the importance of political will and public awareness. Excerpts: Nepal is at the same stage as Thailand was in 1987. What is your impression of how we are dealing with the HIV/AIDS epidemic?

It appears that there is awareness and willingness in Nepal to understand the epidemic. If you look at the consequences for Nepal I can't

think of any sensible politician not taking it on head on. The cost of inaction is huge, it is not just the loss of life. It is going to be a tremendous strain on government health services and a loss to the economy. You will be losing a minimum of 25 years of a person's working life and you multiply that by the number of infections in the next ten years and you have a staggering figure. Add to that the medical costs to take care of people who are sick, the indirect cost for the family.

Three basic sectors of the economy will be hurt: Nepali workers abroad may face problems if there is an epidemic at home, foreign investment will be hit as workers fall sick, tourism will be affected as visitors avoid Nepal. So, it's not just the health of individuals that will be affected, the nation's economic health is at risk. I can't imagine any politician or businessman saying this is not a problem.

How did you fight the initial denial in Thailand in the early 1990s? That there are other more serious medical problems.

That is a typical reaction. But what we did in Thailand is just keep on talking, raising the issues in public warning people about the consequences of doing nothing. Media is important, civil society, businessmen, students—all have to be involved. The argument about other diseases is also very common: if not enough money is not being put into addressing those diseases it doesn't mean we don't have to do something about AIDS. We have to do both. But AIDS you cannot deny. The cause of the other

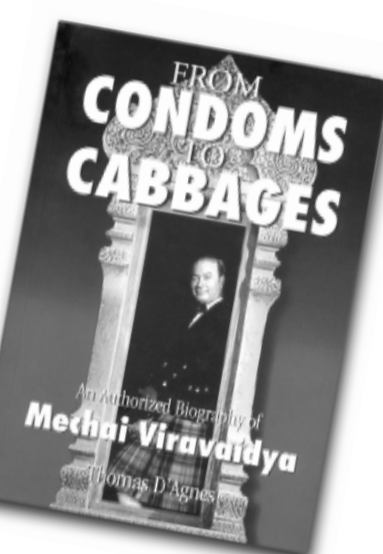
diseases and AIDS is different. Human nature has made us interested in sex whether we like it or not, and through that you are going to get infections. Everyone who has sex, even if you are monogamous and your partner isn't, is at risk. There is no such thing as a high-risk group, only a high-risk nationality. Thailand is a high-risk nationality, Nepal could be too.

There seem to be worrying signs that the gains you made in Thailand in the past ten years are slipping a bit?

There is always a threat in every country of being somewhat nonchalant, saying AIDS is not around anymore so we can relax a bit. It is happening in the US, Australia where infections among gay people is up 30 percent. In Thailand, the government started spending less on condoms, and they went quiet on public information. But the new government has corrected that. So I think the slight rise is now going to go down.

How much of a factor does migration play in the spread of AIDS across boundaries in Thailand and its neighbours?

It has neutralised itself now. There were Cambodian women coming across in the sex industry, they didn't understand AIDS. But the Cambodians are taking action now, so it's not so much an issue. In the case of Nepal, you have a lot of men and women going out. Sometimes you go out infected and you come back infected, and after that you can't blame the other country anymore. What Nepal must do is educate men and women in the villages, saying wherever you go take condoms



along if you are going to have sex. Do you think Thailand had an easier time because of higher literacy levels and the higher status of women in the family and community?

I think we use education and literacy as a crutch. We tend to under-estimate the role of face-to-face communication. A lot of the message that you need to spread in Nepal must go out on radio and television. Women in most developing countries are at a disadvantage when it comes to sex. We may have higher status at work, but probably not much higher when it comes to being beholden to men on sex. Being able to say: "Hey, husband, wear the condom!" Often it is the lack of effort rather than the illiteracy or the status of women. Nepal is putting in terms of its own budget only \$30,000 a year for AIDS control. That is equivalent to the economic cost of one and half person who dies of AIDS. So the civil servants and others say, if we don't put our own money into it, it can't be important.

This is a war. The more you do today, the less of a problem it will be in future. The less you do today, the bigger will be the problem in future. It's your



by DANIEL LAK

An ageing enlightenment

The bond between our children and their grandparents, the same thing that gave the Cro Magnon the edge over their ugly Neanderthal neighbours, is ignored.

pollute, develop weapons of mass destruction and eat junk food—all things that self-evidently shorten the human life span.



Elephants, parrots and turtles all live longer than we do and they don't seem to get decrepit decades before they pass into the animal afterlife. Mind you, how can you tell with a turtle? Our most distant ancestors in the evolution theme park are something called cyanobacteria. They live in volcanos, eat sulphur and cyanide and live forever. There are bacterial colonies in western Australia and the Canadian boreal forest that probably date back to the beginning of life, or at least back when Michael Jackson looked normal. Highly paid scientists and researchers have spent years looking at these things through microscopes, not realizing that the little creatures were staring back and giggling madly at the antics of short-lived, balding, sagging, long-sighted louts on the other end of the tube.

Mind you, we've made good use of the elderly over the years. Being able to live to a ripe old age actually helped our species

triumph. Apes and the evolutionary dead end known as Neanderthals barely made it out of their twenties, spending all of their time mating or fighting. Across the forest, a group of hairless, weak but brainy geeks called Cro Magnon's were busy discovering fire and sharpening bits of flint so they could kill something and cook it. Cro Magnon's lived to be sixty or more and scientists speculate that their elderly were the repository of wisdom, knowledge and solutions to common problems. Just as the Neanderthal figured out that sabre tooth tigers were not to be trifled with, he died of old age. His species soon followed and a good thing too. Those heavy bone ridges over the eyebrows would look terrible on a television newsreader.

Now in western countries, and increasingly here in the developing world, old people are a burden, an obstacle to the pursuit of happiness and material success. We whack our parents into old folks' homes and come see them on their birthdays. The bond between our children and their grandparents, the same thing that gave the Cro Magnon the edge over their ugly neighbours, is ignored. I met ageing men and women in India who'd been dumped on the steps of hostels or charities so the twenty-somethings could pursue cyber-stardom in America. This is still the exception to the rule, but it's changing, subtly and dangerously. So when you see me shuffle by in ugly slippers, peering over and under my new specs and forgetting your name, remember that I am the future of the species, whatever the evidence to the contrary. ♦

to Kathmandu

choice. When you have a war, you don't just use the army, you use the air force, the navy. The Ministry of Health can't fight this alone because it is before coming to the doctor that people get infected. You have to work on prevention: changing attitudes and behaviour. The only way Nepal will probably win this fight is when the prime minister chairs the National AIDS Committee. How much of Thailand's success is due to the fact that you joined government?

I started on the outside, and I don't know how much harder we'd have had to push if I had remained outside. But by accident I got in, and once in, I gave the politicians little choice. I told the cabinet meeting everyone in this room will have a relative, if not themselves, who will be HIV positive 'x' years from now. I told the military, very few of you will be generals because you will be dead by then. You have to push, politicians will not do it naturally. And foreigners can't do it. Nepalis will have to do it themselves.

Part of your strategy has been to break taboos on sex, make the condom a household word, and not something to be ashamed of. What about ultra-conservative countries where HIV is a problem, how can they go about it and avoid a backlash?

The choice is very simple, you either spread awareness or you allow your children to die. It's as simple as that. Would you prefer

MECHAI SOUNDBITES

- "Sick staff can't work and dead customers don't buy."
- "If you believe the citizens of your country are perfect and moral then you don't need condoms."
- "The more you do today, the less of a problem it will be in future. The less you do today, the bigger will be the problem in future."
- "There is no such thing as a high-risk group, only a high-risk nationality."
- "Instead of bringing people to the factories, let's take the factories to the people."

to stay conservative and then go to your children's funeral when they are 25 or 30, or do you provide scientific information and moral guidance so that they know that one of the ways HIV is spread is through sex, and you can't tell if people are sick with HIV from the way they look, and how using a condom is the only way. If you were directing AIDS policy in a country like Nepal with very limited resources what would your priorities be?

Definitely education and information are the most important. Also, family planning, because you reduce the demand on limited resources. Look at the difference between Thailand and the Philippines. We were the same level in 1972, same population, growth rate 3.3 percent, 7 children per family. Today we are 62 million and they are 76 million—14 million more. They didn't do the job that could have been done. So, with the same resources they have to spread it to

an ever-increasing demand. You moved on after your family planning and AIDS work. What took you to rural industrial development?

We had factories around Bangkok and people were delighted because we had investment, but if you took a closer look you saw that people migrated to the city, it destroyed the traditions and social fabric of the villages, and the money they could send home was very little because of the high cost of living in the city. So I thought instead of bringing people to the factories, let's take the factories to the people. They stay at home, they stay with the family, nearly all the money goes to the family, agriculture flourishes. I call this "the privatisation of poverty alleviation".

We go to a company like Nike or Pierre Cardin to convince them, we build the factory by borrowing money and they rent it,

we get electricity, we train the labour force. Our company arranges all this and charges a fee, and the profits are ploughed into charity work in Thailand. The idea is to ultimately be free of outside donor support and do things yourself. It's a very simple idea, and in Nepal you may say there are too many problems, it won't work. But someone has to try, and someone has to start.

What is the main message you are sharing with South Asian politicians, businessmen and activists in Kathmandu this week?

Every other Asian country has gone through the stage of denial about HIV/AIDS. And when are you guys going to come out of it? Stop the denial, the problem is going to be there sooner or later, some sooner, some later. You have to see it as a war. Everyone has to fight together, and the chief executive of the country has to lead it. The Ministry of Health alone cannot do it. It is not a medical problem, it is a societal problem. Public education and information is the most important, and if you believe the citizens of your country are perfect and moral then you don't need condoms. But if they are ordinary people like my people then you better have condoms around and lots of them. That is the only thing that will prevent the transmission of HIV when sex comes into it. So, you have to get to everybody involved, everyone who can change attitudes and behaviour. You must be very careful about keeping the ratio of AIDS money for prevention and care. A happy ratio would be 75 percent for prevention and 25 percent for care, and later when the epidemic comes under control reverse it. But no Asian country except perhaps Singapore will have enough money for treatment. Don't expect to solve this problem medically, that is a long way away. Business has to be involved because sick staff can't work and dead customers don't buy. If you think of your children and you don't want to see them dead, you better start now. You have to have political commitment backed up by a financial commitment. Don't just rely on foreign assistance. They might get tired of you and stop giving you money after a while. Which countries in the region have you been most impressed with, the way they have tackled AIDS?

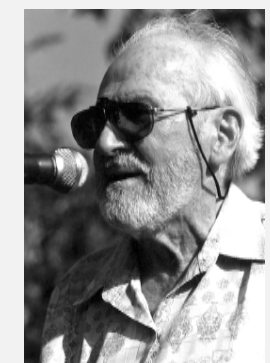
Malaysia's prime minister Mahathir Mohammad hosted a major AIDS conference. Vietnam and Cambodia are taking it seriously. Unfortunately India's response is like chicken soup where the chicken flies over the pot only. India may not be as bad in terms of proportion as Africa, but in numbers it is going to be far greater with already five million or so infected, the base is very large. People in India should go to Africa and take a look—countries like Zambia where life expectancy has dropped to 32 years. Unless India takes real action it will start showing the same horrifying results as Africa, with orphans and mortality. In Thailand, if we hadn't started in 1990, we would have had 4 million HIV infected people by now. We now have one million. If we could do it, anyone else can do it too. In Nepal it's just a question of getting started and getting someone to push. You need a new organisation dedicated to saving lives, helping the country. ♦

Another Jana Sarkar

It's official, sort of. The underground Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has declared the formation of the fourth Jana Sarkar (people's government) in Rolpa district. The announcement was made at a public meeting held at Bhawang—about eight hours trek east of Liwang, the district headquarters. A local Maoist commander, who goes by "Manohar" only, said village and ward people's committees had been formed in all of the 51 Village Development Committees. Late last year the Maoists announced similar People's Governments in Salyan, Jajarkot and Rukum. Other districts where the announcement of people's governments are imminent are Kalikot, Jumla and Gorkha—districts where government institutions have effectively been paralysed. The timing of the announcement in Rolpa is ominous coming as it comes when the government plans taking its new security and development package to the district and while talks of peace-making abound. Locals fear the worst: the possibility of being caught in the crossfire.

"Man, mountains, and monsoons"

Four decades after he wrote about the three M's (man, mountains and monsoons) in *Nepal*, Toni Hagen's comprehensive book on the society, culture and geography of this country, is now available in Nepali. About time too, say Nepali development gurus, who believe only that will help educate masses about their country and its multi-faceted intricacies—the ignorance of which has stalled progress. A geologist, Hagen did Nepal's first geological survey between 1950-1958, a time when the country was closed to foreigners. He was the first foreigner to travel in Nepal's interior, trekking over 14,000 km in eight years. The book was launched on 18 May and so was the formation of a new Toni Hagen Foundation. The organisation is to provide opportunities to young men and women to conduct research like Hagen once did.



Mission: Purnagiri

First the United Marxist Leninists marched to Purnagiri. Now it is the turn of the Marxist Leninists to express their nationalism. About 200 women, health workers, politicians, including the Chair Sahana Pradhan, have headed west. Nepal and India are looking at Purnagiri as a possible site for building a dam. The marchers say building it there would benefit India and not Nepal. The dam site has not been formalised to date.

Say No to child domestics

Child rights groups are asking households and individuals not to employ children under 14 years as domestic help. A statement by CWIN appeals to all not to abuse or overwork children in their homes and to provide them with education, health and other facilities. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), recognises child domestics as one of the worst kinds of child labour and in a new, time-bound programme, has set out to eliminate it along with other forms of exploitation of children at work - as porters, rag pickers, bonded labourers and victims of trafficking.

Sticky fingers

Senior government officials are continuing to use official vehicles for personal use even after they were allowed to import cars for personal use duty-free. Many are still using official vehicles even though they don't have their jobs anymore. By rule official vehicles are to be returned within a week of leaving office. But no one seems to care. Some top offenders: Former prime ministers Lokendra Bahadur Chand, Sher Bahadur Deuba; Former Chief Justices Biswonath Upadhyaya, Trilok P Rana, Surendra P Singh, Om Bhakta Shrestha and Mohan Prasad Sharma. The firebrand chief of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority Surya Nath Upadhyaya is also among other ministers and politicians, all listed in a parliamentary committee report.

Under fire

Another government decision has come under fire. The parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has asked why it has promoted a number of senior government officials found guilty of financial misconduct and/or irregularities. PAC is asking why instead of taking actions recommended by it, the government has promoted officials who have been categorically named for departmental and other action. That's not all. The Supreme Court is also looking into an earlier decision on promotions of secretaries which seven government officials have challenged. The joint secretaries, including a consul general who flew in from Hong Kong to file the lawsuit, say the government was unfair while making the pick of those that were promoted.

A Cloud Nine Affair

Ai Raa Rai, recharge yourself in the electricity of the spiritual (no need, Wednesday this Monday)

Join: Book, Blues, R&B, Latin, Pop and more. Sip a cocktail, drink a big one and get into the groove.

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SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL

India, Nepal daju-bhai?

by PUSKAR BHUSAL



How about inviting Pakistan's General Pervez Musharraf on a three-day official visit to Nepal?

Nepali Congress started becoming more visible at diplomatic receptions. Consequently, the panchas allowed the Nepali Congress to carry out its tree plantations and clean-up campaigns as long as it used the prefix "banned". The political change of 1990 was another grand compromise largely facilitated by India against the backdrop of what was heralded as the democratisation of the planet. The Indian government was already supporting the Nepali people's aspirations for liberty by blocking all but two border transit points. Indian opposition leaders of all persuasions arrived in Kathmandu to address the Chaksibari convention to persuade us to rise up against the source of all our troubles. Ever since, our political permutations and combinations have firmly reflected the ancient ties subsisting between Nepal and India and our shared social and cultural heritage. During the days of the hung parliament, Nepal finally succeeded in achieving genuine national reconciliation when the ex-panchas became accepted as full partners of the system that was supposed to have swept them aside. The diplomats in Lainchaur deserve full credit for this cleansing of the Nepali body politic.

Our road to perpetual compromise was not without its bumps, though. The Maoists went underground to present themselves as advocates of total revolution. They, too, have now expressed their

willingness to become part of the system they want to dismantle. Since the conference at which the Prachanda Pathists made that policy revision was said to be held in the Indian city of Gorakhpur, speculation on the external hand that might have facilitated this strategic shift is a logical extension of our political discourse.

While the role of our Indian friends in ensuring our well-being is in keeping with the true spirit of our special relations, have we reciprocated the cordiality? The government even today is struggling to prove its friendship but fumbles every time that combative cable operator wants an update on the status of his satellite uplink application. True, the main opposition CPN-UML and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party have been careful not to use the Supreme Court ruling against the citizenship amendment bill to increase the pressure on the prime minister to step down. However, you cannot gain the confidence of your neighbours by such half-hearted gestures.

It is time for some real thinking on giving and taking. The Indian security establishment, following the tradition of its colonial forebears, has always regarded the Himalaya as the equivalent of the Great Wall of China. From RDX hauls to the Hrhithik Roshan protests, everything inevitably gets a security-perception touch. We can try to be a little more accommodating to India in the larger interest of

Nepalis by having a frank exchange of ideas on the entire gamut of bilateral ties. The agenda should be flexible enough to include everything from maintaining the status quo of nominal Nepali independence, transforming the country into an autonomous region of India, to gaining full statehood of the most populous democracy on earth. Once the options are on the table, we can decide on our negotiating posture. A couple of things are clear enough. Nepal has millions of cousins already living across the eastern, southern and western border. Most of us speak better Hindi than former Indian Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda. (All India Radio would be happy to amalgamate its domestic and international units handling Nepali programming.)

But let us allow the Indians to do their own homework on what they stand to gain by absorbing an insurgency-battered country whose only natural resource flows down south anyway. What are the benefits for us? We wouldn't have to be constantly duped by the pontificating of politicians whose patriotism ends with the election campaign. We can avoid the affliction of emotional distress every time we see Indian cops raiding suspected hideouts in Baneshwor. We get to maintain Nepal's geographical and linguistic identity within a larger federation, which we will understand is no mean

achievement once we try locating Prussia on today's political map. We can claim federal subsidies every time we feel the local budget deficit risks spawning heavy inflationary pressures. What's more, we could even lobby with the centre to make Nepal a big export processing zone, with the captains of Indian industry and generals in charge of defence production recreating a military-industrial complex of Eisenhoweresque proportions. Many of us who castigated the BBC a few months ago for asking listeners whether they thought Nepal should come under the Indian security umbrella always knew that Kalapani had gone down the drain. The stream of denunciations was just symptomatic of our inability to break out of the nationalism-soaked mindset three decades of disorganised politics fostered. (What was interesting, though, about that rephrased BBC question was that most of the Indian respondents wanted Nepal to maintain its independence!)

If this modest proposal sounds un-Nepali, we might want to do something tangible that would make us believe that we are truly independent. How about some instant action like, say, inviting Pakistan's Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf on a three-day official visit to Nepal? ♦

Our amazing ability to reach political compromises with foreign assistance is matched by our readiness to accept them as revolutionary. From the dawn of democracy to the restoration of multiparty democracy, Nepali politics has thrived on deals struck through the mediation, arbitration or facilitation of our Indian friends.

In 1951, the "New Delhi compromise" saw Shree Teen Mohan Sumshere Jang Bahadur Rana succeeding himself to become the first

prime minister of democratic Nepal. Most of the power squabbles between then and 1960 were settled through the good offices of Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in full public glare. The panchayat system did not have to rely too much on Indian assistance for internal conflict resolution because the power equations between our northern and southern neighbours determined much of our politics.

External realities necessitated major internal adjustments. By the last decade of partyless rule, leaders of the

ANALYSIS

RPP is searching for its soul

by DIPAK GYAWALI



The party has a good chance to occupy the currently vacant "liberal democratic" band of the Nepali political spectrum that is left of the hardline royalists and right of the socialists.

To reach this goal: a discussion between all parties, then a conference of all national political parties in parliament, and finally discussions with those parties outside of the current framework (Maoists and others).

This is no doubt a commendable exercise. But the effort is hampered by several factors, only one of the RPP's own doing. This party has a good chance to occupy the currently vacant "liberal democratic" band of the Nepali political spectrum that is left of the hardline royalists and right of the socialists. But for this to happen, the party must shed its self-created image that it is a party of ex-panchas and come out aggressively as liberal democrats capable of calling for a political program of their own that does not have to drag in the king as a shield every time.

If they were to take the suggestion from Raghav Dhoo Pant that they begin self-reform by making sure that at least half their central committee members are not senior ex-panchas, they might have a chance. Given the reality of present-day, donor-dependent Nepal, it is better that a liberalisation program be pushed honestly and openly by liberal democratic politicians than undercover and politically fraudulently by socialists and communists, as has happened in the last ten years. And this way, they may even pull to their side the frustrated middle and lower rung cadres of the Congress, which have come from the erstwhile Panchayat anyway.

The RPP's efforts are hamstrung because the political problems in the six areas identified by them come mainly from a flawed political framework agreed upon between the king, the Congress and the communists on 8 April 1990 (Chaitra 26, 2046). It is this framework that gave birth to the malfunctioning 1990 constitution, which in turn gave birth to the defective administrations, elections and many

resentment and compound the problem.

While the 1990 framework agreed upon a Westminster-style parliamentary model with a winner-take-all system of elections, it has not been able to represent many identities, views and aspirations, whether ethnic, religious, linguistic or simply secular developmental. Today, the winners of elections are afraid to go to the villages and face their electorates.

Those calling for alternative modes of economic or ethno-linguistic development find that there is no party that emotionally represents them. This has led to a political culture where peaceful protests are not heard or responded to (forcing a trend to violence), where parties call for bandhs at no cost to themselves (but only to the working public), and where elected offices are not meant for public service but are merely rent-seeking enterprises for personal gain ("the best business in town").

The RPP's call for a larger national consensus has to go to these issues at the heart of current malaise in Nepal, but they seem to be coy about challenging the 1990 framework lest they be seen as reactionaries out to turn the clock back to the Panchayat days. To be credible, they must begin by reforming themselves, clarifying their political philosophy both intellectually and in practice, and broadening their liberal democratic base. Not really being party to the 8 April 1990 consensus on the political framework (the Palace ditched them as political bureaucrats with a public image liability), they do not carry the burden of its baggage. Hence they should be in an ideal position to bring forth innovative suggestions to rectify the flaws in the body politic that would inspire the youth of Nepal, then not even teenagers who could vote today. Is their leadership up to it or is it a tired group of old-time politicians that is content to remain "all Chiefs and no Injuns"? ♦

Gyawali is a Pragna of the Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology

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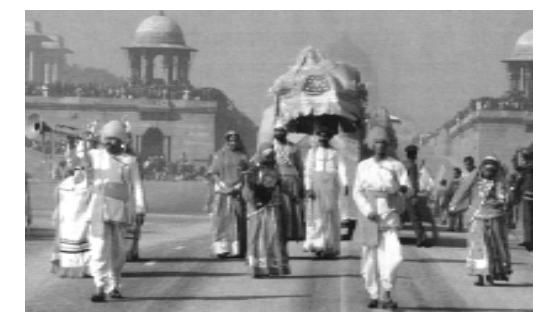
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OPINION

by DUBBY BHAGAT

The Block



It must surely have occurred to several wags just how aptly named "South Block" in New Delhi's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is. While the South is sometimes a misnomer specially when dealing with the North, the Block lives up to its name by effectively blocking everything including such incidentals as good relations with ones neighbours. The latest case in point is when The Block, after what must have been a cosmetic meeting with its Nepali counterparts, decided to overturn a 50-year-old tradition and impose new documentation on Indian tourists to Nepal. So tourism to Nepal is blocked.

Mr and Mrs Bhindiwallah from Ludhiana Cantt who have pots of money to spend must now obtain either passports or voter I.D's for all the Bhindiwallahs who want to get away from the burning plains, and wallow in the coolth and casino replete Kathmandu. The Block in its infinite wisdom has decreed that the Bhindiwallahs need nothing more than a wish and a scappy bit of paper to cross the land border into Nepal. Because being mere citizens, and not terrorists, their intentions like halos will precede them at check points. This is, apparently, beyond the capabilities of those manning checkpoints at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu who are dab hands at voter I.D and passports but not terribly good at halos.

And the best terrorists can't possibly travel overland having need of Business Clubs liquid sustenance on Indian Airlines or Royal Nepal to perform their evil deeds. Anyway The Blocks and India's, "Security Perceptions" are assuaged and everyone can now concentrate on seeing that the Red Fort and Railway stations are not attacked by baddies instead of splitting their concentration. But the Bhindiwallahs are not the only people being Blocked.

Bombay Dyeing, Htikari and a number of Indian, Business Houses, as well as suppliers of livestock, mallasas you-name-it are halted in their tracks as Nepal's orders to them diminish in direct proportion

to tourism needs. But presumably this will take a little time to sink in. By then the present blockers will be replaced by clones who will stop or pass or block the fallout. And Nepal which is the ninth nation on China's list of nine places the Inscrutable can visit wooed the Chinese with the same attractive holiday packages offered to Indians when Chinese premier Zhu Rongji visited on May 14th. And the Block will say that Nepal is playing the China card and/or a Foreign Hand is at work, or all of the above.

The Block must be seen as working to perpetuate itself. Being possessed of mass they cannot bend to Nepal at the negotiating table with infinitely more carrot and much less stick. At the moment it is said that the Indian embassy in Kathmandu has been trying to get the Nepalis, wounded by the negotiations, to meet again. But the Nepalis are busy till two months from now – so the Block mindset has been passed over several high mountains. Only in Nepal it is not called the Block it is called Singha Durbar, or Sheetal Niwas. Amazing what trans Himalayan osmosis can achieve in making the bureau in bureaucracy heavy and immovable.

The Block has to block so their budgets are ever higher, their power over the fate of twenty three million people absolute and they can truthfully tell their children, "We were working our blocks off to see you through school, college, marriage and a house in the hills since you cannot go to Nepal with a passport or voter I.D. And since your children can't get Voter ID and their passports will take forever, forget Nepal altogether. We have". ♦

(reprinted with permission from The Asian Age)

→ from p. 1

side at the border, third, try to solve the dispute on the few places, if some cannot be solved, hand them to a joint committee.

Mao: Good. Those disputes are easy to resolve. There are no human beings in the mountain passes. As for disputes over the Himalayas, a joint committee may be established to solve them.

BP: To you, the currently disputed places are of no importance, while they matter to us. It is a question of prestige.



Mao: Don't worry; they can be solved.

BP: There is another question, a question of sentiment. We call it Sagarmatha, the West calls it Everest and you call it Qomolangma. This place has always been within our boundary, but Premier Zhou Enlai said it was within yours.

Mao: You should not feel uneasy about it.

BP: It is a sentimental question.

Mao: It can be solved, half for each side. The southern part is yours and the northern part is ours.

BP: How about the mountain top?

Mao: Half for each side as well. Will that be all right? If it cannot be solved now, we may postpone it as well. The mountain is very high

and it can safeguard our security at the border. Neither of us will suffer losses. If all of it is given to you, sentimentally we shall feel sorry. If all of it is given to us, sentimentally you will feel sorry. We can have a boundary marker on top of it...the mountain can be renamed. We shall not call it Everest, that was a name given by Westerners. Neither shall we call it Sagarmatha, nor shall we call it Qomolangma. Let's name it Mount Sino-Nepalese Friendship.

BP: All right. There are five other places in dispute, three of them major ones.

Surya P Upadhyaya: The question is to draw the boundary one or one mile to the south.

Mao: That is not hard to solve. With no population, it is easy to solve it.

BP: How can we put it to you if it cannot be solved in our talks in Beijing?

Mao: You do not have to talk with me, but continue to talk with Zhou Enlai. You may continue the talks when he visits your country. We shall keep in communication through telegram. The two sides have to agree in the joint committee. If you do not agree, you should insist. If you insist, what can we do? Can we fight a battle? We are optimistic.

BP: So are we.

Mao: We want friendship from you, and you from us. This is the crux of the matter. With this central point, everything will fall into place. Isn't that so?

BP, Upadhyaya: Yes.

(From the verbatim record published in Mao Zedong on Diplomacy, Foreign Language Press, Beijing, 1998)

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All applications will be given out after July 5, 2001. COMPLETED APPLICATIONS MUST REACH THE COMMISSION NO LATER THAN 5:00 PM, FRIDAY, JULY 20, 2001.

BIZ NEWS

Stocks tumble

Commercial bank shares took a downturn last week, causing the Nepal Stock Exchange Index (NEPSE) to fall by about 20 points to 331.7 on 18 May, down from 351.1 the week before. Commercial banks are the most heavily traded stocks on the NEPSE and so any change in prices is directly reflected in the index. The only bank whose prices did not fall was the Nepal Arab Bank. Brokers say one reason for the drop in prices and demand for banking sector shares is the new regulation that comes into force mid-July (NT # 38). Among others, the regulation requires banks to hold more money as provision for losses and capital adequacy. The prices of banking stocks were bearish since an earlier central bank directive requiring banks to increase paid-up capital to Rs 500 million, which most banks met by issuing bonus shares. Investors bought bank shares because of the possibility of getting bonus shares and also because of the low interest banks offered on savings. Banking sector shares dropped by a total of almost 30 points last week. The NEPSE last took a similar fall in early March when insurance and finance companies—the other major group traded—went into a tailspin and caused the index to fall 22 percentage points. The group continues to remain low, and dipped one percent last week. The manufacturing group did not fare better—its index dropped three points.

Aqua vs Aqua Smile

A battle royal is brewing between Aqua, one of Nepal's most successful bottled water companies, and a rather cheeky new competitor that has begun selling a product with a name, which many find too similar to the older brand to be a coincidence. The new entrant, Aqua Smile, also claims to use a similar purification technology—the reverse osmosis that Aqua promotes in its ads. Sources at Aqua say the company, which has spent millions on publicity, is so angry at the government for permitting a new product with such a similar name, that it might sue the government for losses. KB Ghimere, managing director, of Asian Drinks P, makers of Smile, is unconcerned. "Aqua is generic for water and our brand has a Smile, that's how we are registered," he says.

Visit Nepal for a Maruti

The Nepal Tourism Board has switched gears, as is apparent from this ad which appeared in the Times of India on 18 May. Maruti is offering a free holiday to Nepal to anyone buying a Maruti 800 paying Rs125 a day. More tie ups include one with Gillette and Jeep. Good start NTB.



OPINION

by PAUL D. GROSSMAN

To whom it may concern

Since my first visit to Nepal in 1991 I have not seen a level of discontent with the current political and social environment as I am seeing in the last year and especially the last six months. In the last month alone I have seen bandhs which closed traffic and the entire city, and attacks on schools, individuals and police. There appears to be an overwhelming need, often competitive, to demonstrate and consolidate power among political groups in a negative and destructive way. Obviously, there is overwhelming anger and frustration, but these are negative ways of dealing with this: strikes and bandhs which demonstrate no positive vision, no effort, and result in... nothing.

Attacks which are violent and destructive prove that the acting parties are frustrated and have gained some power, but that is all. Strikes affect all people, but considering that the communist groups' greatest support comes from rural areas and the poor who live hand to mouth as it is, these actions have a profound effect on those they are intended to help. Being unable to work for one day brings them one day closer to disaster. Crippling the economy is not a viable method of bringing the current administration to its knees. Members of the government are the least likely to be affected while members of the police force, for example, who are not rich or powerful and likely have taken a dangerous job to support their families, will be affected greatly.

A viable political movement must act according to their values and in a



Destroying is easy. Harder, and more important, is building a vision for the future.

manner which demonstrates something about their ability to use power. It is about character. It is about "walking your talk", brothers and sisters. Imagine a political group calling a new kind of bandh as an act of positive change: cleaning up Kathmandu's streets, a music concert in which the proceeds benefit some worthy group or area, repainting schools, planting gardens, a bicycle repair workshop, a day of repairing auto rickshaws and motorcycles to make them less polluting. Such actions are not concessions to the government, they are acts of leadership and civic mindedness. A true leader is one who sees what needs to be done and does it, one who does not wait for conditions to be perfect or expects it to be easy, or waits for others to begin first.

It may be true that agents of meaningful change must necessarily begin with demonstrations of discontent and expressions of frustration. But such things are merely an early stage. After that, organisations

must move ahead with the far harder work of creating something new. The power achieved is far more solid and profound. Anger is a deep yet fleeting emotion, but the forces that drive positive change are vision, willpower and tenacity, elements of character, not temporal emotions like anger or frustration. There has never been a better opportunity for political parties to demonstrate positive political will and leadership. No one wants Nepal to become a blank spot on the tourist map like Kashmir, or be like Bangladesh where too-frequent bandhs have become a barrier to foreign investment. But that may be the future. I have no interest in which movements gain power and lead this country; only in that whoever does so leads Nepal down a positive path in accordance with their values and with the legitimate support of their constituents. We need leadership based on a persuasive vision for the future, not on fear, violence, coercion, destruction and short-term thinking.

Running for president

Nepali business suffers from the same malaise as politics: factionalism and infighting.

unhappy with its election system, which places most of the onus of selecting leaders on the district and municipal chambers, whose members are mostly small businesses. Associate members say this means they don't really have a voice in the election or the federation's decisions. Associate members ask that the federation reform, or they will form their own organisation.

"All this has happened because the FNCCI has been hijacked by office bearers promoting their own interests," explains Suraj Vaidya, of the Vaidya's Organisation of Industry and Trading Houses (VOITH). He supports finding a consensus president but on the condition the new chief revamps the organisation and its structure.

Others say that is not an option, because the 35-year-old FNCCI already has a network of district and municipal branches that has taken years to build. The 84 district and municipal chambers elect 50 percent of the executive committee, the 48 commodity groups 20 percent, and the 425 associate members 30 percent. This, say business leaders, is where the problem lies. The district and municipal bodies are vote banks and whoever has the time to campaign—and the money to hand out—wins. The president then becomes hostage to the demands of these constituents and cannot focus on national policy. And yet it is the associate and commodity members who contribute two-thirds of the funds needed to keep the FNCCI going. "Because you need district support to become president, the associate members and commodity organisations have been reduced to second class members," says Pravakar Rana of the Soalte Group. That someone like Rana—who runs what is perhaps Nepal's most successful and professionally managed business empire—has been on the sidelines of the FNCCI is itself telling.

The office of FNCCI president is obviously attractive given its prestige and the doors that open to the incumbent. And occupying it is a question of balancing

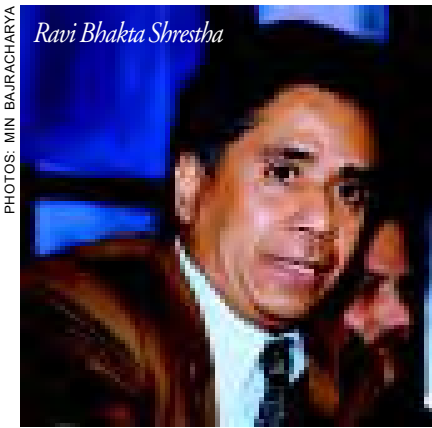
personal gain with institutional interests, something those at the top forget. Another reason the organisation ends up being dominated by one lobby or another rather than focusing on long-term policy beneficial to all. But there was a time when the FNCCI looked like an organisation that meant business: Binod Kumar Chaudhary (president from 1993-95) of the Chaudhary Group installed it in permanent quarters—a posh building on the banks of the Bagmati in Teku. Padma Jyoti of the Jyoti Group succeeded Chaudhary and led the FNCCI to lobby for the preferential trade treaty with India. Jyoti's successor was Anand Raj Mulmi, who won the elections. When he wasn't hobnobbing with the powers that be, he managed to pull off a term that was business-as-usual at best. Pradeep Kumar Shrestha promised to change that but now he is under criticism for doing just as much politicking as Mulmi did, possibly more.

"Look at the newspapers and you'll know exactly what Pradeep has been up to in the past two years," says a FNCCI insider. "All he did was go on junkets and promote himself and his own businesses." The July election looks like it will be a repeat of what happened before Jyoti nudged out Chaudhary in 1995. Like Pradeep, Chaudhary had agreed to work for a term and pass the baton to Jyoti. But when the time came to go, he wanted a second term. Jyoti challenged him and voted him out. Pradeep has not yet said he will not contest. If he does, the odds will likely favour Ravi Bhakta, who won't stay away. He would like to see a smooth change of leadership based on consensus, and says that since people's "word" is what business is all about there should be no elections. Still, Ravi Bhakta isn't taking any chances and has been politicking in the districts to strengthen his chances, no matter what. He denies he's panning for votes, saying only that he wants to understand the organisation to be able to run it better. Pradeep,

between organising trade fairs and going on junkets, has not yet let anything slip except that he believes Ravi Bhakta's actions "threaten to disturb the consensus." The major charge against Pradeep is that he has failed to be more than a figurehead, a charge he doesn't so much answer as deflect. "How can you expect the FNCCI to be different when government has not been serious and stable?" he asks.

Rajendra Khetan, who heads the Employers' Council, says much remains undone at the FNCCI. One of the key behind-the-scenes "kingmakers" at the FNCCI, he says the institution has not done enough to lobby for improved industrial security and relations, or to build an environment to attract investment and prepare for Nepal's eventual entry in the World Trade Organisation. It isn't surprising then, perhaps, that about 50 percent of the FNCCI's associate members have not bothered to renew their memberships in the last four years. Many other successful and new industry groups—hotels, tourism, and information technology—have also stayed away. Now there is a group that wants to form a new Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CEN), similar to the Confederation of Indian Industry. Proponents say the CEN would look into larger policy issues and let the chambers engage in petty politics over licenses or other concessions. An anonymous four-page document received by NT names Binod Chaudhary as one of its founder-sponsors. FNCCI sources say the associate members hope to use this threat as a bargaining chip for more power in the federation—perhaps to ensure that the first vice president comes their corps.

The machinations this situation is inspiring are numerous and varied. Binod Chaudhary, who has scores to settle with Padma Jyoti (who backs a consensus Ravi Bhakta as president), had a one-to-one with Pradeep Shrestha at a posh city hotel last Thursday. The next day, he met the backers



KIRAN NEPAL

If you're fed up by just how low the business of politics in this country has fallen, take a look at the business of business. The same story, but the actors are in pinstripes. It's election time at the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI): there are three contestants vying for the top spot, and one embittered group that thinks it is all a farce. The cast is as follows:

- **Ravi Bhakta Shrestha** First vice president at the last election two years ago, he agreed not to run for president in favour of Pradeep Kumar Shrestha. In return, Pradeep promised to support the VP in his bid for the presidency in the upcoming election. Ravi Bhakta, wanting to play it safe, asked Pradeep to make a constitutional change to enable this to happen, but it wasn't made. Now Ravi Bhakta, the Nepali partner of Nepal Lever, is campaigning to become a president of consensus, but if that is impossible, he will take on any competitor.
- **Pradeep Kumar Shrestha** The incumbent president, from the Panchakanya Group, says he'll stand by this understanding, but is prone to double-speak. He often says he's just learnt the ropes of running the organisation, enough hint that he would not mind a second term.
- **Mahesh Lal Pradhan** A former president and still a proponent for the protection of Nepal's failed textile sector, where his business interests lie. He argues that there is no alternative to an election.
- **Associate members** Large corporate groups and joint ventures say they are fed up with the politics at the FNCCI. Mainly they are



of the new to-be-formed CEN at another five-star location. Kathmandu's top hotels are filled with whispering groups convening meetings, and cell phones ringing relentlessly. Until July all the business community will talk about is politics. At the end of the day, they will have to ask what the role of the FNCCI is, and whether it is running on empty.

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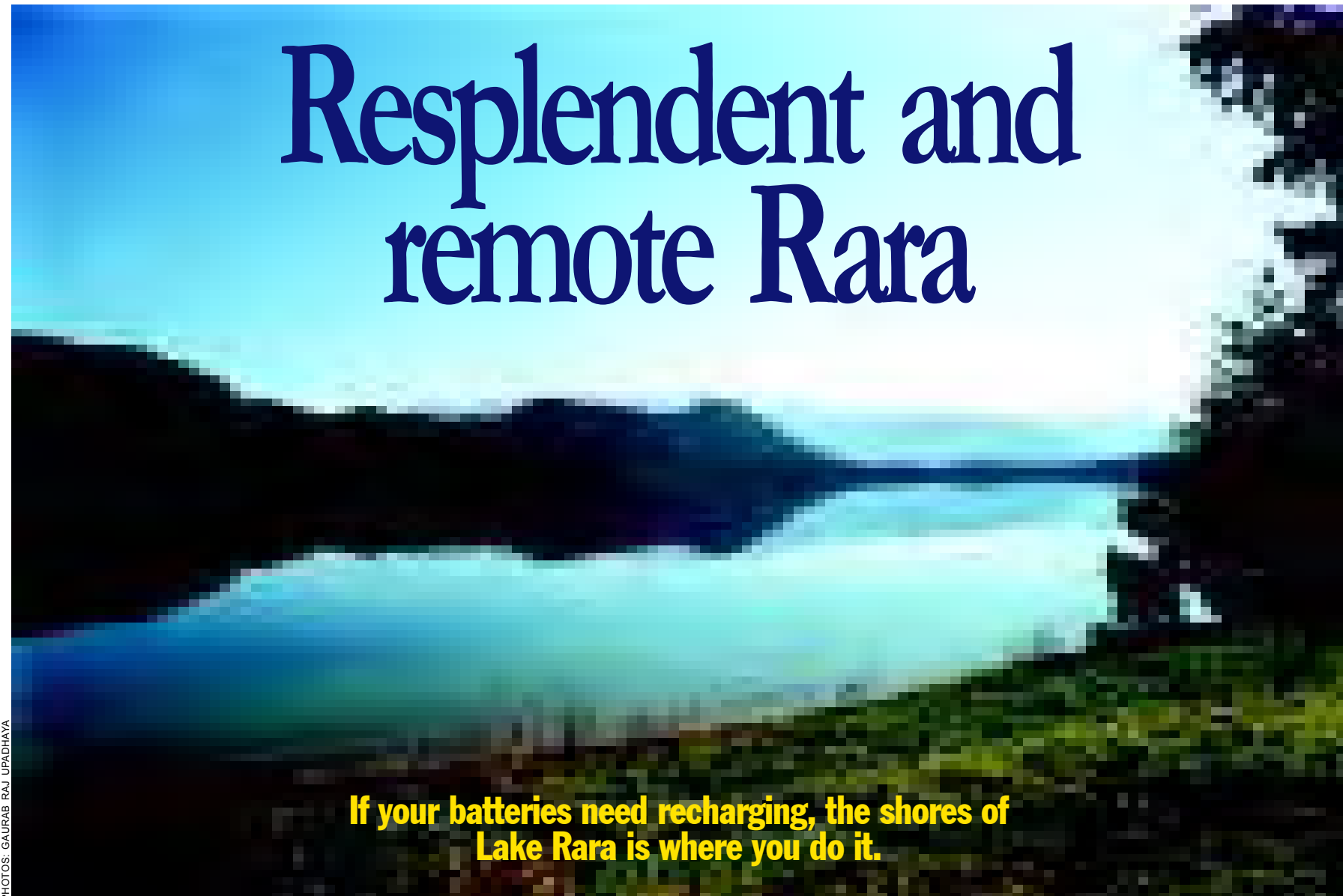
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Sn.	MDP Title	Prog. Director(s)	Date	Course Fee
1	Strategic Marketing	Prof. Ranjan Das	Jun 13-15, 2001	Rs. 12,000/-
2	Management of Creativity and Innovation	Prof. V. Jha	Jul 23-26, 2001	Rs. 14,500/-
3	Finance for Profit Centre Heads and Senior Managers	Prof. Ranjan Das	Aug 23-25, 2001	Rs. 12,000/-
4	Value-Based Leadership in Political and Administrative System	Prof. Victor Van Bijlert Prof. S. K. Chakraborty	Sep 06-08, 2001	Rs. 10,000/-
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Resplendent and remote Rara

If your batteries need recharging, the shores of Lake Rara is where you do it.

If there is one jewel in Nepal's tourism crown that outshines all else, then it should be Rara. In few places on earth do sky and earth, mountain and water merge with such scenic splendour as they do in Rara. And it is Rara's remoteness and inaccessibility that give the lake its added aura. You go to Rara as a treasure hunter, a miner for a heart of gold. The journey to Rara usually begins with the flight to Nepalgunj from where there are flights to either Jumla or Mugu. But these are flights operated by Royal Nepal Airlines and the schedules are rather iffy, so you may be better off driving up to Surkhet and taking one of the regular Russian cargo helicopters that fly to Jumla and Mugu. Both flights are tourist attractions in their

own right. The Russian Mi-17 thunders up the mid-hills to gain altitude to fly over the mountains north of Surkhet and then follows the scenic Sinja Valley. "In winter, this place is like Switzerland," says the pilot in his broad Slavic accent. Sinja is a tributary of the Karnali and we branch off to the east after overflying Manma. The mountain flanks on either side of the river are rocky crags—brown and dusty at their base and bristling with pine on the high ridges. Some of the north faces of the Punga Lekh still bear unmet snow from the winter. The helicopter's rotors change tone, and you realise the pilot is making the intricate approach to Rara. And what an approach it is: the lake lies at 3,050 m and fills the top of the Ghurchi Lekh

west of Jumla. The lake was formed after relatively recent tectonic upheavals blocked the outlet of the streams that fed into the valley from the surrounding hills. The lake itself is about 6 km across at its widest point and its placid ink-blue waters reflect the steep coniferous-covered sides. At nearly 12 sq km, it is the largest lake in Nepal. It is supposed to be at least one km deep, although no one seems to know for sure. Our arrival at Gam Ghadi's school playground is greeted by the entire township which pours out to watch us land in a cloud of yellow dust. Since there is no airport, this link to Surkhet by "flying trucks" is a lifeline for remote northwestern Nepal. The nearest road is Sanfegagar, at least a week's walk to the southwest. Kathmandu school children may associate Rara more with instant noodles than with this unique lake. Nearly 400 km west of the capital, Kathmandu is not just

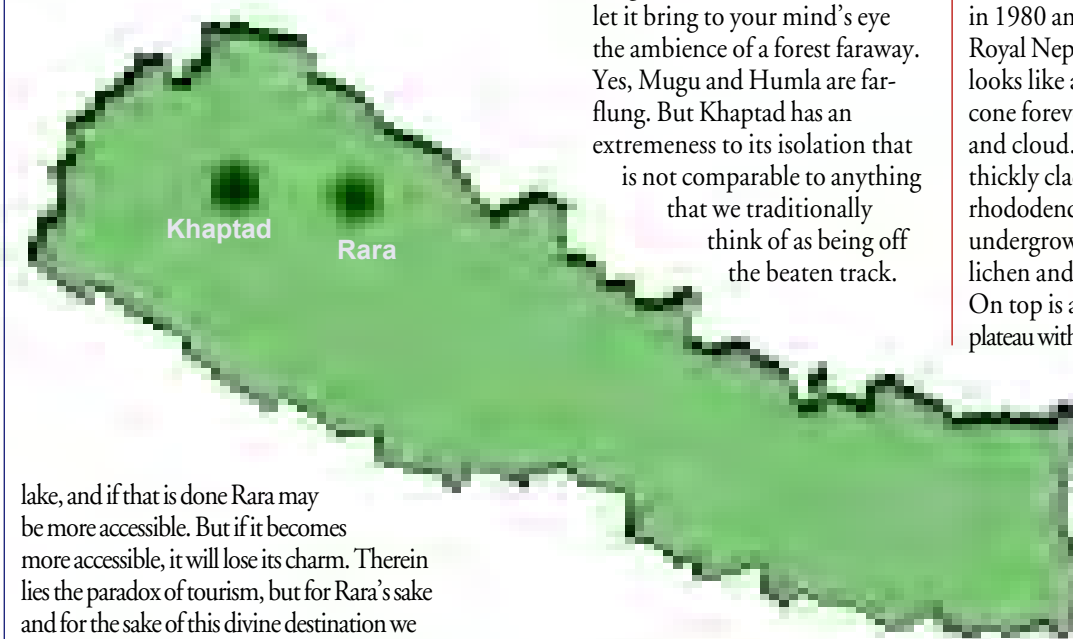
physically far away. As far as the locals are concerned, Kathmandu may as well be on another planet. There is very little to remind you of the presence of the Nepali state in this township which even the people of Jumla (three days walk to the south) regard as remote. A short bracing walk brings us to the entry point to the National Park, which is guarded by the Royal Nepal Army and where visitors are required to autograph the park log with names and addresses. Once inside the park, you don't even see the woodcutters, the sheep herders and villagers. The untrammeled wilderness, combined with the feeling of isolation, overpowers us with a sense of oneness with nature. Thick forests of blue pine and black juniper scent the air with a sharp and fresh tang of resin. But it is the first sight of the lake an hour after the army checkpoint that is the most striking. The serenity of the spot, the breathtakingly scenic surroundings, the feeling of utter calm and peace soothes the soul. As the afternoon turns into evening, the lake ripples with the breeze blowing up the Karnali Valley, and little waves lap upon the reed-filled shores. Startled water birds take flight as we approach. This is the only shore that is relatively flat, elsewhere the steep mountains plunge into the icy waters.

The national park office has a guest house and the charge for lodging and food at the park canteen is reasonable. But food is scarce in this food-deficit region, and sometimes you cannot buy rice whatever you are prepared to pay because there just isn't any available. Visitors can also stay at the curiously-named The Third Triangle, the only "hotel" in the area, located just beyond the park boundary.

Rara is not one of those places you would want to rush through. We had an easy way in by helicopter, but most will have to take the three-day walk from Jumla. And once you get here, the question that will strike you is: what's the hurry? So you linger and laze around, drinking in the unforgettable sights and letting the silence soak in and cleanse your heart. You watch the sun rise, the moon set both reflected in the crystal surface of the lake. You take a dugout canoe and row along the far shore. If your batteries need recharging, this is where you do it.

Forest walks are invigorating, and if you hear a rustle in the undergrowth you can be sure it is a shy musk deer watching you. The wild boar, of which there are many are not so shy and entire clans of them will grunt as they forage for food. Rara is a major centre for migratory water birds making a stopover as they cross the Himalaya from as far away as Siberia to the Indian plains and back. There are resident species like coots which stay all year round and pheasants, including the *danfe* in the forest.

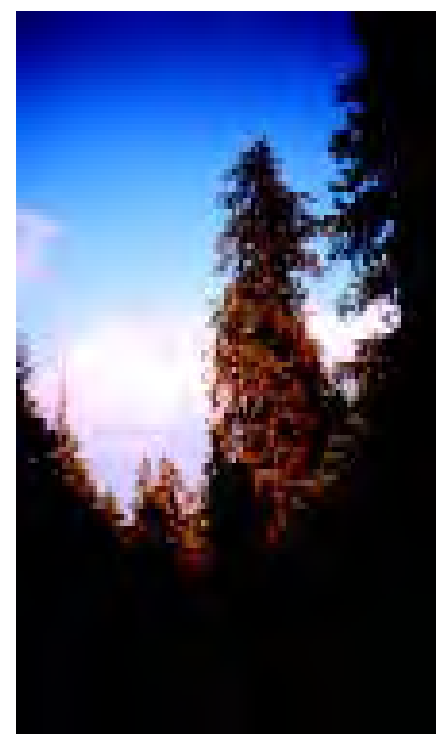
There you have it: undiscovered by outsiders, visited by only the most intrepid trekkers, the most uncommercial nature reserve in Nepal. There is talk of rebuilding an old unused Pilatus Porter airstrip near the



lake, and if that is done Rara may be more accessible. But if it becomes more accessible, it will lose its charm. Therein lies the paradox of tourism, but for Rara's sake and for the sake of this divine destination we must chart a third course.

Like all good things, it is time to go. The trek to Jumla follows the lifeline between Mugu and Jumla, the walking superhighway for traders, herders, farmers and migrant workers going or returning to their homes. You have to cross two high passes, and in winter there can be snow up to your knees on Gurchi Lekh and Danphe Lekh. Compared to the wilderness we just experienced, getting down to Jumla is like coming to a big city. There is Coke, and beer. It is a good idea to stay in one of the lodges near the airport so you can run out and catch a flight when you hear the plane arrive. ♦

Ganab Raj Upadhyayin
Gam Gadhi



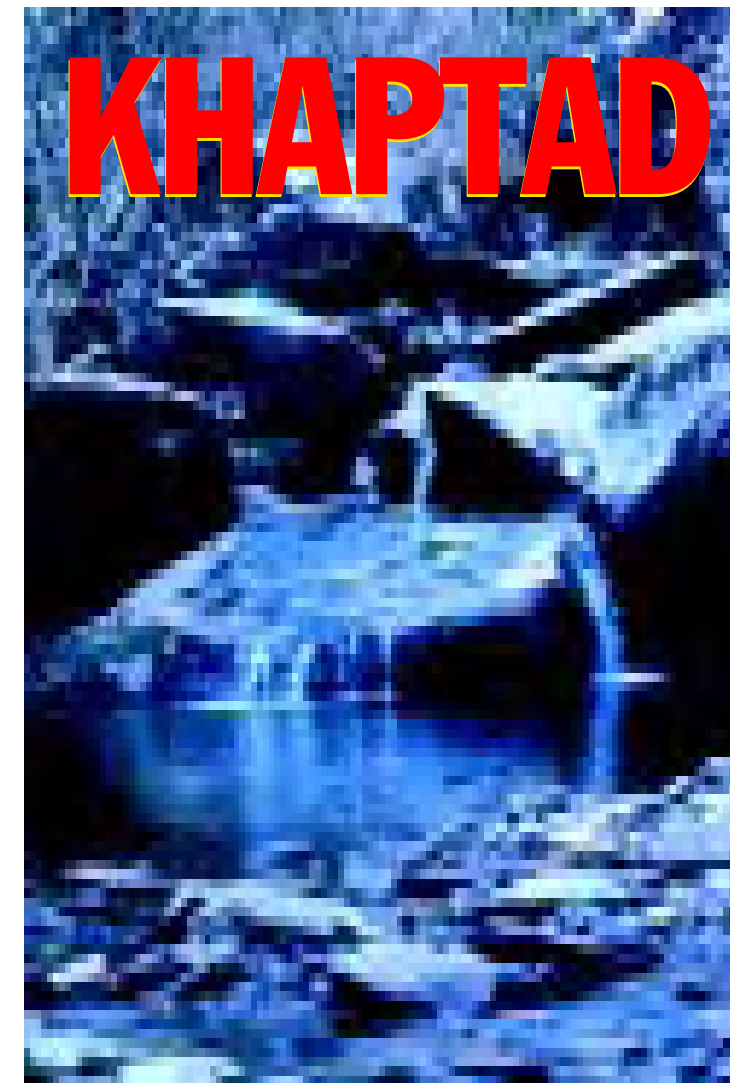
Rara Festival

The banks of *Mahendra tal* in Mugu will be buzzing with festivity June 6-8. Across the 10.8 km sq area in the Rara National Park, villagers are hosting a large new festival with traditional food, crafts, cultural shows, and plenty of interaction between the good folk of the park and visitors. The festival has been made possible because of the efforts of the District Development Committee and other institutions like the district administration and education offices, the national park and the army stationed in the area. The Nepal Tourism Board has been promoting and marketing the festival at across the country. There is discounted accommodation and travel for visitors. The organizers say they might fly special guests and foreign dignitaries from Surkhet to Gomgadi by helicopter. "Our main objective is to show and inform people about this hidden beauty. We hope that people are inspired to come here, as locals will benefit a lot and this will be another impetus taking development work forward," says Mohan Baniya the DDC chairman. In addition to the famous charms of lake Rara, Mugu is also known for its historical and religious sites like the Chayanath, Rinmochya, Kalika Malika and Tharpnasta temples. For adventurers it has the Murmatop peak, and the Kanjirongba, Garudnani Chuchemara, Keshmimalika mountain ranges.

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Even the name evokes mystery, remoteness and holy tranquillity. Khaptad. Let the hard consonants roll around your tongue, recite it like a mantra, let it bring to your mind's eye the ambience of a forest faraway. Yes, Mugu and Humla are far-flung. But Khaptad has an extremeness to its isolation that is not comparable to anything that we traditionally think of as being off the beaten track.

Right in the heart of far-western Nepal, soaring like Olympus above the arid terraces of Bajhang, Doti, Achham and Bajura is Khaptad's amazing hulk. Declared a National Park in 1980 and guarded by the Royal Nepal Army, Khaptad looks like a gigantic volcanic cone forever shrouded in mist and cloud. The slopes are thickly clad in oak and rhododendron, and in the undergrowth there are orchids, lichen and thick carpets of moss. On top is a unique undulating plateau with coniferous forests and lush meadows which are covered in a metre of snow in winter, but yield to verdant and wet summers. Villagers from the surrounding valleys have traditionally

moved up with their goats to spend the summer with their cows, goats and water buffalos in the pastures called "patans".

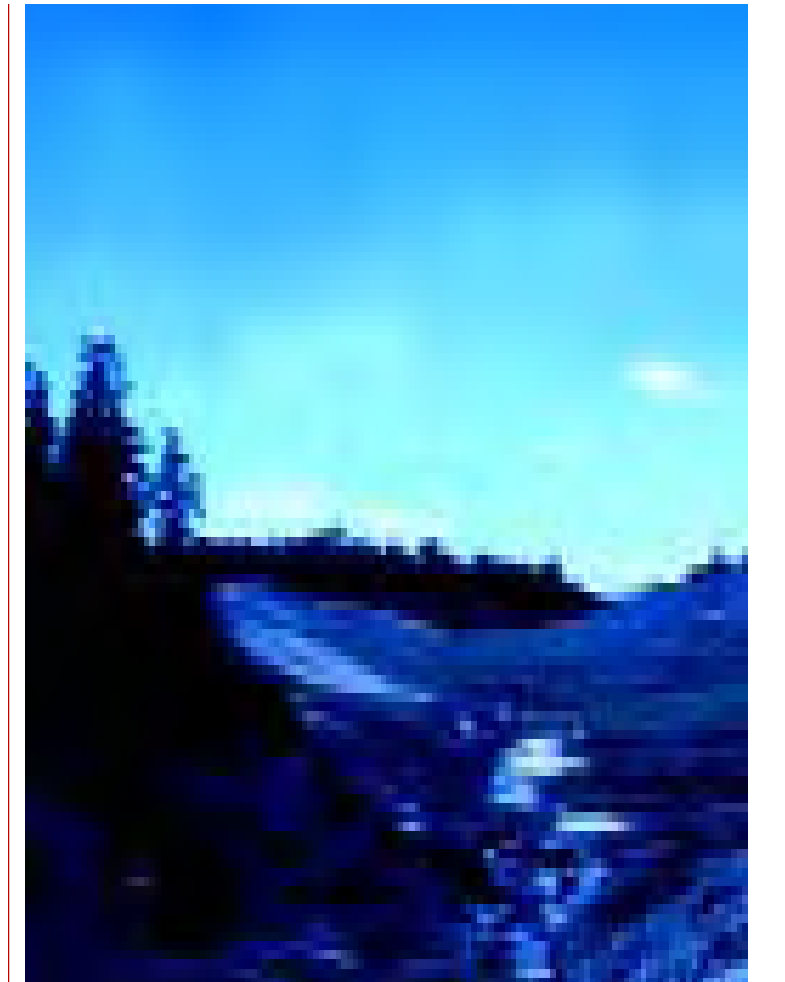
May is also the month of the annual Khaptad Mela, the full moon night when villagers in traditional finery dance all night to the beat of drums in the moonlight. The mela is also a no-holds-barred match-making festival where boys and girls from all three surrounding districts meet, pair off, and ultimately get married when they get back home. Already-married pilgrims also take time off to take a holy dip in the Khaptad spring and make a side-trip to the Shiva shrine in Shailung, the highest point in Khaptad at 3,700 m.

Because of its location at the bio-diversity crossroads of South Asia, Khaptad is a goldmine of Himalayan herbs and plants, the forests are alive with birds including the rare satyr tragopan pheasant and migratory species. The Department of Medicinal Plants runs a nursery for traditional herbs, trying not always successfully to cultivate wild plants. Conservation in Khaptad faces threats from forest encroachment, the 10,000 or so heads of livestock

that summer here are creating a serious problem with soil erosion on the plateau.

The nearest road-head is at Dipayal, situated at 540 m on the banks of the Seti, sometimes a full day's drive from Dadelhdhura. Three days walk to the south-east is the airfield at Sanfegagar which is connected to Nepalgunj erratically by Royal Nepal Airlines. From the depths of these hot and dusty valleys, you have to climb nearly vertical to the Khaptad plateau at 3,600 m. It is a climb that tortures your body, humbles your soul and shows you the true scale of these mountains in Nepal's wild west.

Nothing really prepares you for the dark, mysterious and sometimes even ghostly interior of the Khaptad forest. You understand why pre-historic human tribes revered forests and saw them as the homes of fairies, leprechauns and other enigmatic beasts and spirits. The locals have their own stories of mythical mongrels like half-wolf, half-humans and other animals that prowl the jungle. Leaving the main path can be dangerous, pilgrims have got lost and their skeletons found months later very near the trail which they could not find. Trekkers have wandered in circles for days



before finding their way out of the forest. A guide, therefore, is a must. This is no place for solo treks. The brooks, waterfalls, ponds and lakes of Khaptad make this unique national park well worth the trouble to get to. ♦



ON NEWSSTANDS NOW

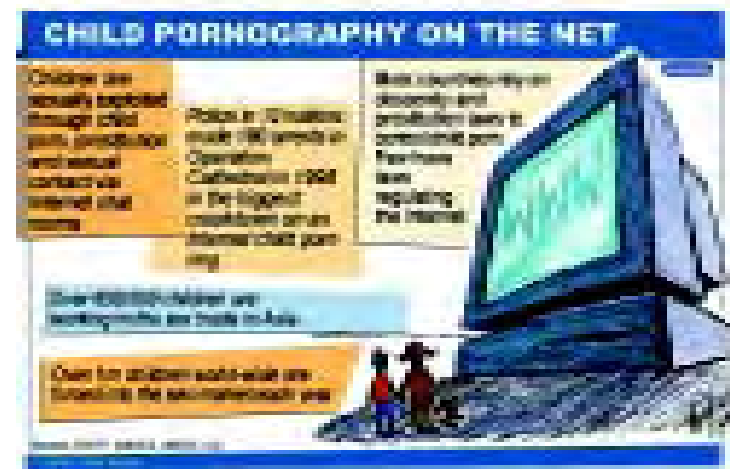
HIMAL

THE KILLING TERRACES of Nepal

Indo-Bhanga 'war' Treks in B&W
Ajaya Debnigra

Tang

Do you know where your children are?



especially chatting in the US shows that most chatters are male—and that female names get all the attention. No in-depth study has been carried in Nepal, but an overwhelming number of chatters we found turned out to be female. “My parents would rather have me at home, using the net rather than going out to a disco. I don’t really mind,” says 17-year-old Ameena. Parents and children alike see the Internet as a “safe place” for young people to socialise.

Talk to your children and watch where they are clicking before we have our first cybercrime.

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

It’s dinnertime and your teenage daughter doesn’t respond to your calls. Then it strikes you: you’ve just bought her a brand new personal computer with all the latest features and given her an exclusive Internet account. So you assume she’s safe and sound in her room, surfing the net, widening her knowledge. Maybe not.

One of the defining characteristics of the Internet is that you never know when it will startle you. Virtually every crime is possible here. There is paedophile racketeering, stalking, high security systems hacking, and child pornography. The net can be a dangerous place for a growing mind to experiment. There was the 20-year-old Israeli who hacked into the sophisticated Pentagon system and the 16-year-old Indian boy who made

a porn site with pictures of classmates who’d taunted him. The net may not turn children into criminals, but it may well take them deeper into a seamy world than they ever need to go. Even searching for Britney Spears pictures can lead to a world your child has never imagined.

One phenomenon of particular concern in Kathmandu is chatting, and it isn’t restricted to children. In corporate offices that use leased lines, there is almost always someone chatting. Eavesdrop on any teenage conversation and the words “this guy/girl I met on the net” are sure to pop up. It’s fun: the chatter can assume any identity. “I go to general chat rooms because I don’t have to go through the pain of meeting the person in real life,” says 18-year-old Mamma. Research on Internet use and

committed suicide. Things here haven’t reached that pass yet, but there are already tell-tale signs that it could happen. “This person I was chatting to kept sending me nasty emails. I eventually changed my email address,” says 17-year-old Srijana.

Even more terrifying for parents of younger children is how paedophilia seems to have found its home on the net. In South Asian countries like Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, many paedophiles find their targets chatting on the net. Authorities in Sri Lanka estimate that around 600 boys below 18 are used for paedophilia on the net. Children as young as ten are known to chat in Kathmandu, and not always at home, but also in cybercafes. The number and diversity of users in Nepal will only increase because of the ISP’s price-wars. “The larger problem here is that its not impossible for some sexually frustrated, middle-aged person with sweaty palms to harass you,” says Bela Malik, a teacher at Rato Bangala School, who is running a campaign to make her students aware of the dangers of the Internet. Malik feels young people should be encouraged to go out and meet real people rather than on the chat.

Nepali users are still in the dark about what can go wrong on the net, not because nothing can happen here, but because we’re at an earlier stage of engagement with the net. Some people are waking up to this, and 11-year-old Serina, a regular net user and chatter is lucky: her parents ensure there is always someone to guide her when she is online. No one here is thinking yet of laws against crimes in

cyberspace. Will we wait for the first cybercrime to happen before we think about safety on the Internet? Talk to your children and watch where they are clicking before we have our first

juvenile cyber criminal or victim. ♦
(Names have been changed to protect the identity of minors.)

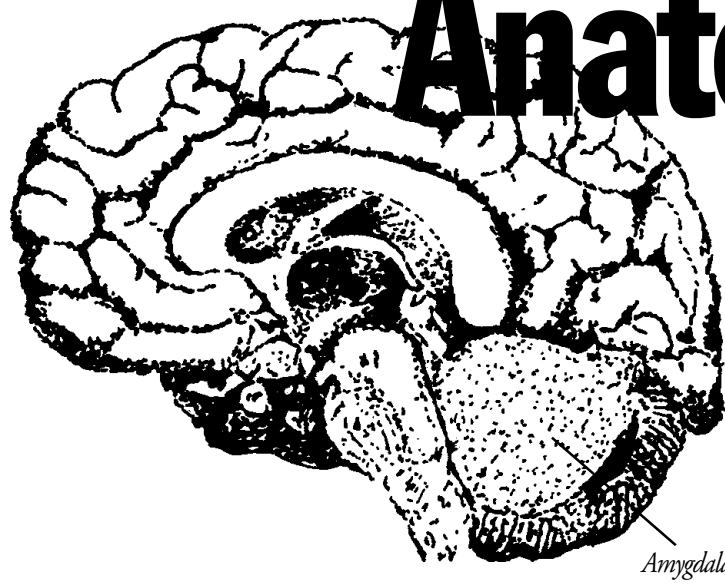
Safety tips for chatters

- Don’t respond to flaming (provocation online).
- Choose a gender neutral screen name.
- Don’t flirt online, unless you’re prepared for the consequences. You have the right to flirt and the right to a provocative nickname, but sometimes it’s better just to back off a bit and not exercise all your rights all the time.
- Save offending messages and report them to your service provider.
- Don’t give out any personal information about yourself or anyone else.
- Get out of a situation online that has become hostile, log off or surf elsewhere.
- Change your password regularly.

Guidance tips for parents:

- Keep the computer in a central family location, not in the child’s room. The computer shouldn’t be an escape for the child, but a family activity.
- Get to know your children’s online friends. You wouldn’t let them spend loads of time with a new friend in the neighbourhood until you’ve met them. Online friends are no different.
- Screen e-mail with all younger children. Many paedophiles attach child pornography to e-mails sent to children. The child pornography is used to convince the child that other children are performing sexual acts. Make sure you screen all attachments or limit e-mail through parental control features or software.
- Help your children keep being online in perspective. Too many children get compulsive about computing and forget to play with real friends, and ignore physical activity.
- If you can’t be home with them when they’re online, use a net nanny—child protection software to help keep an eye on them. Some software keeps them from sharing personal information with others online, like their names, addresses and telephone numbers.
- Make sure they understand that they should never meet anyone in real life that they met online without parents in attendance, and that people online are often not honest about who or what they are.

Anatomy of fear



Many human emotions are related to the brain’s fear system.

that evolved as behavioural solutions to problems of survival. In order to understand feelings, we need to step back from their superficial expression in our conscious experiences and dig deeper into how the brain works when we have these experiences. A fundamental discovery has been that the brain has multiple memory systems, each devoted to different kinds of memory functions. For memories of fear arousing experiences, two systems are particularly important. For example, if you return to the scene of a recent accident, you are likely to have a physical reaction that reflects activation of memories stored in the amygdala. At the same time, you will be reminded of the accident, will remember where you were going, who you were with, and other details. These are explicit (conscious) memories mediated by another system, the hippocampus. Memories mediated by the amygdala are unconscious. These are memories in the sense that they cause your body to respond in a particular way as a result of past experiences. The conscious memory of the past experience and the physiological responses elicited thus reflect two separate memory systems that operate in parallel. Only by taking these systems apart in the brain have

neuro-scientists been able to figure out that these are different kinds of memory, rather than one memory with multiple forms of expression. Many common psychiatric disorders that afflict humans are emotional disorders related to the brain’s fear system, like anxiety disorders, including phobias, panic attacks, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, and generalised anxiety. Research into the brain mechanisms of fear helps us to understand why these emotional conditions are so hard to control. Neuro-anatomists have shown that the connections from the cortex, the thinking brain, to the amygdala are considerably weaker than those from the amygdala to the cortex. This may explain why, once an emotion is aroused, it is so hard for us to turn it off at will. This asymmetry may also help us understand why psychotherapy is often such a difficult and prolonged process, for it relies on imperfect channels of communication between brain systems involved in cognition and emotion. ♦ *(Project Syndicate)*

Joseph E Le Doux is Professor of Neural Science and Psychology at the Center for Neural Science, New York University.

JOSEPH ELE DOUX

How does your brain form its most significant memories? Often through mechanisms of fear. Fear is at the core of many human pathologies, and so breakthroughs in understanding the brain’s fear system may lead to new ways to treat these disorders. The core of the brain’s fear system is in the amygdala, which receives information from all the senses and controls the various networks that inspire the speeding heart, sweaty palms, wrenching stomach, muscle tension and hormonal floods that characterise being afraid. It is through studies of the way the brain learns about stimuli, such as the sounds that precede danger, that our systems for learning about fear, and memory as a whole, have been elucidated. Studies suggest that early on (perhaps since dinosaurs ruled the earth, or even before evolution hit upon a very effective way of wiring the brain to

produce responses likely to keep an organism alive in dangerous situations. Once the fear system detects and starts responding to danger, the human brain, with its enormous capacity for thinking and reasoning, begins to assess what is going on and tries to determine what to do. This is when feelings of fear arise. But in order to be consciously fearful you have to have a sufficiently complex kind of brain, one aware of its own activities. While this is undoubtedly true of the human brain, it is not at all clear which (if any) other animals have this capacity. So, in evolutionary terms, the fear system of the brain is very old. It is likely that it was designed before the brain was capable of experiencing what we humans refer to as “fear” in our own lives. The best way to understand how the fear system works is not to chase the elusive brain mechanisms of feelings of fear, but to study the underlying neural systems

OPINION

by GASPAR M TAMAS

The extremism of the centre

BUDAPEST: First Haider, now Berlusconi. The government of my country, Hungary, is also part of that worrying trend. Along with Bavaria’s provincial government (provincial in more senses than one), it has been the strongest foreign supporter of Jörg Haider’s movement. Viktor Orban’s government here, besides other misdeeds, attempts to suppress parliamentary government, penalise local governments controlled by its opponents, and is creating a novel state ideology in cahoots with a group of lumpen right-wing intellectuals.

I cannot consider myself a neutral observer of all this. A video from 1988 shows Orban protecting me with his body from the truncheons of communist riot police. Ten years later, Orban appointed a communist police general as his home secretary. Political conflicts between friends are usually acrimonious and this is no exception. Our opponents are, in personal terms, too close for comfort.

Orban, Haider, and Berlusconi represent a new politics of exclusion that has found a comfortable niche in today’s global capitalism. The old politics of exclusion was Fascism. This new post-fascism is very different: it lacks a Führer, one-party rule, or an SS. Yet it shares a crucial feature with Fascism: it seeks to reverse the great Enlightenment idea that linked citizenship to the human condition. By equating citizenship with human dignity, the Enlightenment extended it, at least in principle, to all classes, professions, sexes, races, and creeds. The state was conceived as representing everyone—citizenship ceased to be a feudal privilege for the few and became a universal ideal, delivering virtual equality in political conditions.

The Fascism of the first half of the 20th century attacked the notion of universal citizenship, but not in the name of conservatism. For although Fascism was counter-revolutionary, it did not seek to re-establish hereditary aristocracy. Nonetheless, it obliterated the universal citizenship within which the nation-state represented and protected everyone inside its borders. Under Fascism, the sovereign power determined who did and did not belong to the civic community. The Fascist idea of denying citizenship through exploitation, oppression, discrimination or even annihilation is being replaced nowadays by a new form of exclusion. The new politics of exclusion—what I call post-fascism—does not need stormtroopers and dictators. Freedom, security, and prosperity are left undisturbed, at least for that productive majority living in rich countries. But the idea of citizenship here is akin to what existed before the Enlightenment: it becomes a grant from the sovereign, not a universal human right.

These new politicians of exclusion represent a striking new phenomenon: *an extremism of the centre*. How can you have an extremism of the centre? Before communism collapsed, the old bourgeois world was permanently confronted by strong competitors to the right and left. Both those antagonists vanished ten years ago, leaving capitalism as the sole force on the political horizon. In such a world, dissent is pointless, because anti-capitalist politics is taken seriously by very few. As a result, political repression is unnecessary and exclusion can be accomplished from the centre. Citizenship itself is increasingly defined in apolitical terms. Interest groups and other voluntary associations—the touchstones of the much-lauded “civil society”—are cannibalised politics, and citizenship increasingly becomes a matter of policy, not politics.



After communism collapsed in Europe, dissent became pointless.

Haider, Berlusconi, and Orban are prime examples of this. Their discourse is partly libertarian/neo-liberal. Their ideal is the propertied little man. They strongly favour shareholding and home-ownership, and are mostly free of the old Fascism’s romantic-reactionary nationalism, as distinct from the new parochial selfishness and racism. They seek to achieve their goals through a “soft” exclusion of borders, immigration laws, neglect, and the movement of capital. In the old days universal citizenship resulted from liberation struggles and efforts at exclusion were used to suppress these insurrections. Such struggles are impossible to imagine for today’s wretched of the earth because no one exploits them. No extra profit or surplus value is being extracted. The poor are superfluous. Far from abusing those on the periphery, the centre (majorities within rich countries) focus on keeping the poor at bay. Awesome frontier barriers are erected. Humanitarian wars are fought in order to prevent masses of refugees from flowing in and cluttering up Western welfare systems.

Abetting this extremism of the centre is the international economic system. Fights for higher salaries and better working conditions are met nowadays, not by violence and strikebreakers, but by capital flight and rebukes from the IMF. Only one exit—exodus—remains for the poor and it is the exclusionists’ job to prevent their taking it. The attacks on the domestic and global underclass which follow provide post-fascism with populist energy. Citizenship in a functioning Western state is the one safe meal ticket in the modern world. Post-fascists need not put non-citizens into freight trains; they only need to prevent them from boarding any train that might bring them to the West. Of course, post-fascist ideas are not unique to Austria, Italy, and Hungary. They exist throughout Europe’s anti-immigrant movements. Extremism of the centre may not threaten liberal democratic rule, but is incompatible with the Enlightenment idea of universal citizenship. For the threat posed by post-fascism is not that of incipient authoritarianism, but of a politics that reserves the benefits of citizenship to the few. ♦ *(Project Syndicate)*

Gaspar M. Tamas is a philosopher and a former leader of Hungary’s Free Democrats.

Fewer “poorest nations”

BRUSSELS – EU Commissioner for Development Cooperation Poul Nielson said at the end of the Third UN Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDC III) that there would be fewer LDCs in coming years. The number has almost doubled to 49 in the last three decades. Industrialised nations pledged to reverse the declining trends of Overseas Development Aid (ODA), and enable debt cancellations progressively to full cancellation of outstanding bilateral debts within the framework of the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Since the 1999 Cologne Summit of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada and the US, 22 countries have decided to ease the debt burden and 17 LDCs are already profiting. They will be given a nominal debt service relief of some \$23 billion. Estimates are that the HIPC initiative will free funds equivalent to 1.2 percent of the LDCs’ Gross Domestic Product on average. Post-conflict countries will also receive debt relief. But Rubens Ricupero, UNCTAD secretary-general, was cautious, saying that much depends on the global economic environment and commodity prices on which LDCs rely. But there are already positive developments: Industrialised nations recently agreed to untie financial cooperation with the LDCs, which would enable them to buy know-how and equipment anywhere they wanted, and not necessarily in the donor country. Also, The EU’s Everything But Arms Initiative gave the LDCs free access to developed markets. *(IPS)*

The energy divide

UNITED NATIONS – A third of the world’s population still lacks access to reliable, regular and affordable energy, according to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). “At the most basic level, affordable, modern energy carriers, like clean fuel and electricity, are critical drivers for human development,” says Mark Malloch Brown, administrator of the UNDP. Currently less than \$1 billion (approximately 10 percent) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)’s publicly funded energy-related research goes to renewable energy and less than \$1 billion to energy efficiency, and over \$150 billion dollars are spent annually worldwide on subsidies to conventional energy. But this is changing. “In the next two decades, an estimated \$10-15 trillion will be invested in new long-lived energy-sector projects,” Klaus Topfer, executive director of the UNEP told the CSD. “If that investment is directed toward clean energy technologies—including solar cell, solar panel, hydro, tidal, wind and thermal power—everybody will enjoy a world economy what is more secure, robust and clean.” The EU now believes sustainable energy should be integrated into poverty reduction strategies and overarching issues of financial assistance, transfer of technology and capacity building. *(IPS)*

Peru’s past

LIMA – 20,000 deaths, 4,000 disappearances. A decade after the capture of the leaders of the Shining Path and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) ended almost 12 years of political violence, Peruvians may finally learn what



happened. Interim Justice Minister Diego García Sayán recently announced the establishment of an investigative Truth Commission. The commission will have to decide whether it will look into cases from 1980, when Peru returned to democracy after a military dictatorship; from 1985, when Alan García assumed the presidency; or 1990, when Fujimori was elected. Many of the worst atrocities, including massacres in the highlands and several Lima penitentiaries, occurred under García, who runs for president in next month’s election. In Fujimori’s administration, massacres were carried out by a death squad (the Colina Group) allegedly overseen by national security adviser Vladimiro Montesinos, now a fugitive, and Fujimori could be held legally responsible. Alleged subversives also received summary trials in military courts before judges with hidden faces and disguised voices. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights recently ruled that amnesty laws passed in 1995 to protect military officers involved in human rights violations “lack juridical effect”. The National Human Rights Commission of the Justice Ministry is preparing long-overdue reports to UN committees that oversee international conventions. The Truth Commission expects to review at least 300 requests for pardon and 300 requests for commuted sentences. About 2,000 additional cases are pending. *(Gemin)*

Shangrila

Where do you want to be?

or here?

Further than (the rest)

Climbing to independence



TV PADMA KATHMANDU—When Bhago Devi, an illiterate grandmother in her fifties in the remote Kangra hills of the Indian Himalaya, enthusiastically took to horticulture, she proved it is never too late to change life in the tough mountain terrain. Hundreds of Kangra hill women like Bhago Devi, trained in a simplified version of tissue culture—a method of rapidly producing hundreds of plants by growing tiny pieces of root, stem, flowers or leaves on a special nutrient medium—are augmenting their income by supplying flowers to the plains. Thousands of kilometres across the Himalaya in Chitral in north-west Pakistan, women are patiently building up their meagre savings from farm produce to set up small shops and become financially independent. Over five years, their savings have multiplied five times from PRs 50,000 (\$1,000) to PRs

Mountain women from around the world gather here next year.

deprived of the fruits of development and welfare. The over-exploitation of mountains' natural resources has hit women hardest. Studies in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region show that women's workload increases with environmental degradation as they walk longer distances to fetch water, fuel wood and fodder. They also have to cope with the hazardous effects of environmental degradation, landslides and erosion of topsoil, crop failure, and the migration of men to cities and towns for jobs.

Access to health care facilities is limited and the heavy workload, malnutrition and unending cycle of pregnancies take a heavy toll on women's health. The trafficking of mountain women into cities of South Asia has also increased. Though the survival of households and communities rests largely on the contributions of women, most planners ignore their needs and problems, and women's perspectives are not reflected in the discourse for development planning and interventions in the Hindu Kush Himalaya, says Jeanette Gurung of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) here.

Income-generating projects for Himalayan women are mostly farm and home-based activities, including animal husbandry or non-timber forest products that earn them little money. The more remunerative enterprises are run by male entrepreneurs who have better access to capital, credit and bigger markets.

Recently, governments, global agencies such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) through its network of NGOs, and local groups have begun trying to effect change. Their schemes teach women simple skills that help them become small-scale entrepreneurs. But in the end, ICIMOD officials say, change must come from within mountain women communities. They must realise the important role they play in the maintenance of families, economies, cultures and communities. In China's Yunnan province, the Women's Federation runs literacy and health projects, and trains them in rural skills. In Burma, a UN-supported project has set up women's income generation groups and is training mountain-based women in knitting, tailoring, jam and jelly making and candle making. Some are given access to a revolving fund and trained in bookkeeping. Nepal is providing technology and credit access for income-generating projects to women's farmers groups. ♦ (IPS)

250,000 (\$5,000) Elsewhere in the majestic Hindu Kush Himalayan ranges in Asia, home to some 140 million people in Burma, Bangladesh, China, Bhutan, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, women are slowly awakening to the need to set up small-scale enterprises. Such programmes aimed at financial security, and experiences in coping with tough mountain life will be shared by many Asian mountain women, and their sisters across mountain ranges in Africa, South and North America and Europe at an international meeting in Kathmandu next May to mark the UN Year of the Mountain in 2002.

Women across the Himalaya are responsible for almost all farm activities and household maintenance, are holders of indigenous knowledge and also entrepreneurs in small-scale businesses such as crafts and food production. Yet, hill inhabitants are

Back to basics

COLONBO - Rising living costs and attempts to liberalise Sri Lanka's labour markets have propelled the country's main Marxist group into the forefront of workers' rights, outdoing more established trade unions. Sri Lanka's third political force, the now-mainstream People's Liberation Front (JVP) is pushing for a wage rise of at least Rs 2,000 (\$24) per worker per month. Inflation is officially estimated to rise to 9.5 percent this year from 6.5 percent in 2000 due to hikes in diesel, kerosene, gas and electricity prices. The price of diesel, used extensively in the transport of goods, has more than doubled in the past year. Last month's budget also announced a wage freeze for six months and the government is determined to go ahead with labour reforms for greater labour mobility requested by the IMF as part of a \$500 million bailout package. The business community has for a long time complained of rigid pro-worker labour laws. Transnational firms like Bata and Unilever are considering shutting down production units due to JVP-influenced worker unrest. There are now fears of a repeat of 1988-89 when the JVP launched crippling strikes and shutdowns as part of its attempts to oust the government through armed revolt. Thousands were killed by government forces and the JVP before the military crushed the revolt. (IPS)

Up in the air

On his first visit to the US this month, Okinawa Governor Keiichi Inamine will raise one of the most contentious issues for this Japanese island: the relocation of a US military air station. There are 250,000 US troops in Okinawa, over half the total US forces in Japan. Local opposition to American military presence has grown since September 1995, when three US marines gang raped a 12-year-old Okinawan girl. The Futenma air station, on a military base in the heart of the populous Ginowan city, was another sore point until the US agreed in 1996 to relocate to a remote coastal village. The proposed facility would be either a floating or an anchored sea borne airfield. Inamine is lobbying for a larger land-based airport that allows civilian use, has cargo handling facilities and runways for mid-sized commercial jets, and can handle 200,000 passengers a year. The Americans accept this, but not the 15-year limit Okinawans propose, after which it would revert to civilian use. There are also environmental concerns. The coastal location involves construction techniques like pile driving and land filling that environmentalists fear will threaten endangered animals such as the dugong, a south-east Asian sea cow. The facility would encroach on the Yambaru Forest, home to two rare bird species—the Okinawa Rail and Peyer's Woodpecker—and impact on nearby coral reefs, the habitat for coral fish and sea turtles. (Gemini)



SONNER/GETTY IMAGES

support the construction of a new port at Gwadar on Pakistan's southern Arabian Sea coast, facing the Persian Gulf, and help build a coastal highway linking the principal port of Karachi with Gwadar. This would have tremendous potential for travel and overland trade with Central Asia, a role Pakistan has been keen on after the break-up of the Soviet Union, but not able to play due to the Afghan civil war. Politically, the most important aspect was Pakistan's support to China on the NMD. Pakistan's military ruler General Pervez Musharraf said Islamabad is "opposed to any move that re-initiates the nuclear and missile race in the region." Zhu for his part supported Pakistan's stand on its dispute with India on Kashmir and urged a peaceful settlement through talks. He also endorsed the policies of the military regime, saying these have brought about "political and economic stability in Pakistan." India, with its military conflicts and adversarial relationship with both, remains the centrepiece of the Pakistan-China bond. China has an unresolved border dispute with India that erupted into war in 1962, and the Kashmir dispute has caused three wars between Pakistan and India.

Dams, again

ISLAMABAD - Faced with one of the worst water crises in decades, Pakistan's government has approved an ambitious plan of building hydroelectric dams—but not without calls for caution from green groups. Reports say water shortages have caused financial losses of more than \$1.5 billion through lower crop yields, the subsequent importation of food crops, lost employment and low industrial output. The \$4 billion Water Resources and Hydropower Development Vision 2025 programme envisages more than 25 small and large dams and identifies 591 sites for small hydropower projects on small falls and barrages. Green groups say the option of harvesting rainwater and developing and better managing a hill torrents system was totally ignored in the decision-making process. Government reports say system losses in the irrigation sector exceed 40 percent of total inflows. Unlined canals lead to water losses of some 24 to 25 million cusecs every year, which later result in waterlogged lands, says a report by the International Institute of Water Management (IIWM). Environmentalists say the need for reforms and equity in the existing water distribution system is the first step to overcome the present and any future water crisis. They recall the controversy that shrouded the Kalabagh Dam for more than two decades, because the site selection did not reflect popular sentiment and involved major social and environmental costs. They also note that hundreds of thousands of people affected by the construction of the Tarbela Dam, built in 1976, are still awaiting compensation. (IPS)

"If you cannot support people who want to rehabilitate themselves, you might as well shoot everyone."

Excerpts from an interview with Rajiv Kafle, *Jana Aastha National Weekly*, 16 May

"I studied in St Xavier's school, where very few students fail the school-leaving (SLC) exams. I failed by one mark. It's a tragedy when you fail in your mother tongue. My Nepali is still not too good. I had to wait for a year to retake the exam. In this time, I had to figure out what to do, and I made a decision. I chose new friends—all people who had failed the exam. Then we began moving towards drugs."

Rajiv, who is HIV-positive, has now completed a diploma course in Danish. These days he represents Nepal at international drug-abuse-related, and HIV/AIDS conferences. He recently represented Nepal at a UN seminar. And he is doing all he can to promote awareness about AIDS and HIV. But Rajiv is sad, because he is stigmatised as HIV-positive and furious because he believes foreign aid is coming into Nepal in the name of people like him, but misused.

Why is it assumed that people who are HIV-positive or have AIDS cannot do anything for themselves. Why do people look at them contemptuously?

A few people may have this opinion, but it isn't shared by everyone. You cannot generalise. If you publicise this sort of statement, HIV-positive people will find it very difficult to come out into the open. I needed a lot of support and strong willpower when I announced I was HIV-positive at the Khula Manch (Open Theatre near Ratna Park). I went public to see for myself whether people with HIV/AIDS are discriminated against, whether they are shown any warmth at all. I went public six months ago and since then I have got more warmth and affection than before.

How does it feel to be questioned about your illness?

I realise I am very lucky, in that everyone loves me and showers affection on me. If there is still some discrimination in the villages, then it is the duty of city people to try and change such attitudes through their actions.

You have been treated with warmth, but do you think everyone who is open about having HIV/AIDS will get the same response?

It is not possible for everyone to get such a reaction. I had the support of my family and also access to different platforms which I could use. This made it easier for me.

Do you feel all the aid coming into the country in the name of people like yourself is being used well?

Many NGOs bring affected people to the forefront while asking for money. If they had used the funding they have received well, the lives of many people would have been different today. People would have been educated and the difference between people with HIV/AIDS and others would not be so great.

Are you scared of dying?

We will all die... I am not scared of death. But I realise I made a mistake. I feel that though I will die young, I should do something for my nation. This is why I have refused offers to live abroad.

Are you making this effort so people will always remember you?

I don't expect to see the results of what I do, I am just interested in doing my duty. My only concern is that I should do the maximum that is possible. If you are talking of establishing records, well, how many records can a sick person establish. Since I was a child I've been interested in trekking and climbing and would like to climb Mt Everest. People have promised me full support, should I try to do it. I want to request the Nepal Mountaineering Association to help me. If they train me, then one day I definitely will climb Everest.

Are you depressed when you analyse your situation?

Everyone feels frustrated sometimes. I am not sad just because I am HIV-positive, in fact I am happy. People may say I'm putting on an act, but believe me, I really am happy. I am just sad that I made a mistake. But there's no use crying over spilt milk. See, yesterday I had an appointment with you but fell sick suddenly. I thought I would die. I wondered if I had developed AIDS already. There is no medical facility in Nepal to check all this. We requested that the equipment be brought

into the country, but to no effect. How did you become HIV-positive?

I did drugs around 1996 and I shared syringes. I am not very certain about the time frame. I did not become HIV-positive because of my sexual habits. At that time, we couldn't buy new syringes, even if we had the money. Many people—around ten—had to share one.

How do you feel when you hear that friends with whom you used to do drugs are dying?

A friend died a couple of days ago. Another one died a few days before that. I had told that person not to drink ever, as alcohol is poison for an HIV-positive person. I cannot believe that the person is no more. He was much younger and used to live with me. After I stopped drugs, I lived at the rehabilitation centre run by the late Fr Gaffney. When Fr Gaffney was murdered, that person was very, very helpful to me. His parents were poor and illiterate, so he didn't get much support, and kept up with friends who did drugs. It is really sad to see people close to you dying slowly, one by one.

Do you realise the problems and sorrow your family went through when they got to know you were positive?

The more you are attached to something, the more you feel for it. I am their son, and it was definitely painful for my parents. They raised me, looked after me. Definitely they were very hurt. But I gave them all my love and respect.

What should the government do for people with HIV/AIDS?

Rehabilitation centres should be established for them. People who make mistakes should be given the chance to reform. The government should care for these people, but we don't have enough rehabilitation centres, and often people who want to change don't get the chance to. If you cannot support such efforts, you might as well just shoot everyone. Today's drug-doers are in the same situation I was in.

Is it wrong to publicly emphasise that HIV can be transferred through sharing syringes and unsafe sex?

People have been saying for years now that clean syringes should be used. But has it made any difference? When users go to buy syringes, they are asked to furnish a prescription. The government passed a law that requires you to have a doctor's prescription to buy new syringes. HIV did not just fall from the sky, it is transferred by people. If this law is annulled, then the transfer of HIV through shared syringes will stop.

Won't making access to syringes easier increase the number of abusers?

If I give you a new syringe, does that mean you will immediately go looking for injectable drugs? Anyway, if people can't get new syringes, then why make a big deal about telling users not to share them? Drug abuse is a problem of the mind. It can be treated. We need the environment for that to happen. In our society, when someone starts doing drugs, they marry him off in the hope his wife will bring him under control. No one has ever thought of the problems a drug addict's wife and children have to go through.

What is the main reason for the spread of HIV in Nepal—shared needles or unsafe sex?

There are no official red light areas in Nepal, but there are commercial sex workers. And many people in the profession also do drugs...

Talibanised

Yuvraj Ghimire in "Zero Hour", *Kantipur*, 21 May

कान्तिपुर

There are about 600 students in Notre Dame School. About 120 are Dalits or from poor backgrounds and pay no fees at all. Their education is free. Another 120 students pay only half the fees. Every month the school has a fund shortfall, which is covered through Japanese aid—this deficit is anything between Rs 80,000 and Rs 200,000 every month. The real reason for describing this school is not that it is not doing good work, but for something else. A close relative of Devendra Parajuli (leader of the Maoist students' wing, the ANNFUSU-Revolutionary) appeared for his school-leaving certificate (SLC) exams at this school. He had applied for a scholarship but his application was rejected. On its part the school has always called upon

those against it to examine its accounts.

The fees collected by schools in Kathmandu have to be studied scientifically and in terms of their practicability. You should analyse how much it costs to keep a student in school and how much each one pays in fees. You have to find out how much money the school is making. There should be a line drawn on schools' profits. If the amount a school spends per student is equal to the amount they charge as fees, then the ANNFUSU (R) has no moral right to tie up teachers and pour kerosene on them. The ANNFUSU (R) should not blur the line between political and criminal acts. Otherwise it, too, will have to face the music once the people rise up to oppose them.

Another important point is whether the ANNFUSU (R) is collecting money from private and boarding schools? If yes, they we must ask why they are doing that. What is the philosophy of the ANNFUSU (R) about the security and future of our students? We hear of children in Rolpa, not more than 11 or 12 years old, walking around with grenades. The ANNFUSU (R) has to make clear its opinion on this. Is it really concerned about the future of this country's children?

The ANNFUSU (R) is trying to prove that it is very different from its mother organisation. By asking for changes to be brought about in the field of education it wants to portray itself as a force



for positive change, and not a reactionary force. But this claim becomes suspect when you ask what the connection is between positive change and the collection of money from schools. This raises doubts about the student union's commitment and so-called sense of duty.

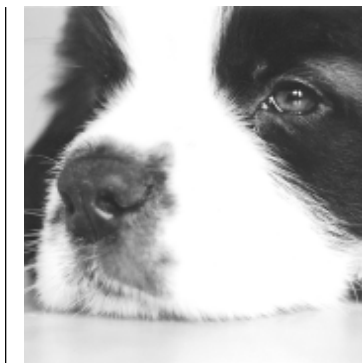
Also in the name of positive changes, the Maoists have imposed a dress code for women. What a woman wears should be left to her choice. Some time ago in India the pro-Khalistan forces and now the pro-BJP groups, especially the Bajrang Dal tried the same thing. The Taliban in Afghanistan is also doing the same. They call themselves Islamic Revolutionaries. The ANNFUSU (R) has not protested this sort of behaviour by elements in its sister organisations. It is getting very difficult to believe them when they talk of bringing about changes in the field of education.

Every dog...

Binaya Kasaji in *Budhabar*, 16 May

बुधवार

After a foreign woman working in a development project moved into a village, dogs began to have a good time. One day, she noticed a malnourished dog feeding its four puppies near the



village eatery. She took pity on the dogs and gave them some food she was eating. Earlier all dogs survived on leftovers from the hotel. After this incident, the dogs followed the woman home. She then took these animals into her house. Soon all the stray dogs and cats of the village started moving to the area around this person's residence. The villagers were surprised, but the condition of the animals did indeed improve.

....After a couple of years, the dogs and cats in the village became mal-fed and began straying all over the village. The money the woman had left with the house owner for the well being of the animals was also spent. The villagers have not given up hope and pray that another foreign woman will move in someday. (Today) as soon as the dogs see a foreigner, they wag their tails. When they see an unfamiliar Nepali face, they bark and attack them.

Good times for nephews

Taru National Weekly, 14 May

तरुणा

The prime minister has taken a direct interest in the Nepal Telecommunication Corporation's Six Telecom Project. The project is to lay cables across the country at a cost of over Rs 10 billion. Apparently, the prime minister could not stay aloof. That is proved by the moves to award the contract to a company whose ability to perform is suspect. Sources say the former communication minister had almost decided to award the project to a Chinese company, which is known to be very proficient at the task. Sri Harsh Koirala, who is the agent in Nepal for many big Indian companies, didn't like that.

The prime minister then stepped into the picture, called the concerned minister, the secretary and the deputy minister and asked them to stop the deal with the Chinese company and award the job to an Indian company. Now, Sri Harsh has become very active. He called the telecommunication secretary and the chief of the NTC and told them to cancel the deal with the Chinese. The prime minister's nephew has been successful in getting what he wanted to a limited extent. But both the NTC and the National Planning Commission have said the Indian company will not be able to complete the project. NPC member, Rameshananda Vaidya has even put it in writing that the Indian company will never be able to complete the job. Many say the NTC dealings could be the beginning of another Lauda Air scam.

Gossip in a strategic backyard

ISLAMABAD - Chinese Premier Zhu Rongzhi's recent visit to Pakistan, marking the 50th year of diplomatic ties between Islamabad and Beijing, comes in the context of significant developments in the regional political scene. The timing of Zhu's journey, which included Nepal, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand, is important. Zhu's trip came following US President George W Bush's May Day announcement of Washington's plans for a National Missile Defence (NMD), which has pitched China and India on opposite sides.

China attacked the NMD saying it will "start a new arms race." India's euphoric endorsement was rewarded by the prompt dispatch of a US special envoy who also visited Japan, the other Asian country that Washington now seeks to promote to counter China. Likewise, with India and Bangladesh having their worst border clash since 1971 in mid-April and India holding last week its biggest military exercises on Pakistan's border since 1987, China's role in South Asia, its strategic backyard, is crucial. If India looks to the United States to counter China, smaller South Asian states look toward China to counter India.

But new realities make the Pakistan-China relationship more challenging. Important for both is the conflict in Afghanistan and its possible fallout on Central Asia and China. The Chinese do not have a problem with Islam or Afghanistan's regime—after all, China cordially coexists with Iran's Islamic regime. But Beijing is concerned that Afghanistan-based Muslim dissidents from Chechnya, Uzbekistan and Xinjiang could destabilise Xinjiang—its sensitive and strategic western region that borders Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Kashmir, Tibet—and cause unrest among its own Muslim minority in this region.

It is in this context that the Chinese military has revived cooperation with the Russians after a 40-year hiatus, within the framework of the Shanghai Five group that includes Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In Pakistan, Zhu indirectly alluded to this aspect. Giving an "all-is-well" message, he said: "Despite differences between Pakistan and China in social systems, cultural traditions and ideology, our bilateral relations have not been affected." During the visit, all Pakistani political and religious parties supported friendship with China, endorsed Beijing's policies and denounced any attempt to destabilise China. The visit was symbolic and substantive, enlarging the scope of bilateral cooperation. Six new agreements, ranging from tourism to transportation, were signed. China agreed to



China and Pakistan get closer due to the India factor, the US's new missile programme and developments in central Asia.

dispute with India on Kashmir and urged a peaceful settlement through talks. He also endorsed the policies of the military regime, saying these have brought about "political and economic stability in Pakistan." India, with its military conflicts and adversarial relationship with both, remains the centrepiece of the Pakistan-China bond. China has an unresolved border dispute with India that erupted into war in 1962, and the Kashmir dispute has caused three wars between Pakistan and India.

Probably the most significant strategic post-Cold War shift is taking place in the region of Pakistan and China. Changes in America's Asian strategy that is transforming China into a competitor and India into a partner. US special envoy and deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage spoke recently in India of a "new relationship" and said the NMD was directed at "rogue nations, some in India's neighbourhood," including Iran, Iraq, Libya and North Korea. Other developments also make clear this "new relationship," such as India's strong support for the US over the NMD, the Dalai Lama's potential to play the "Tibet card" from his exile in India, India's justification of its nuclear and expanding missile programmes by invoking the "threat from China," and India's naval expansion east. India was among those few "friends and allies" the US briefed prior to Bush's speech on the NMD. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the most senior military officer in the United States, is to visit India later this month. US sanctions imposed on India after the 1998 nuclear tests may soon be lifted and at the height of the US spy plane crisis, Bush took time off to receive Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh in a pointed gesture of goodwill to China's main adversary. ♦ (IPS)

COLONIAL CRICKET BOWLS OVER TALIBAN

Afghan refugees learned to play cricket while they were living in camps in Pakistan. Now, they have got the Taliban rulers to agree to make the game official.



emotionally charged game and Afghan youth, watching play on television and on their field, became enamoured of it. "I am here to support my team. They will win, *inshallah*," said enthusiastic teenager Zabiullah, who was among 300 spectators at the Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium braving the 42 degree Centigrade heat, to cheer his national side. Zabiullah, like most of the other Afghans at the stadium, came from refugee camps scattered around Peshawar. Some, like Nasirbagh and Kachagari are only 10 km away. Like most of the others in the team, captain Noori spent 19 years in Peshawar as a refugee. His family has a foreign-exchange business at Chowk Yadgar, an area in the old city of Peshawar known for such transactions. Though he returned to his native Afghanistan three years ago, his family still lives near Peshawar. It is such interaction that has made cricket Afghanistan's newest sport.

is played on horseback—they have also adapted to the local environment. Afghan children born in Pakistan have grown up playing cricket on the streets like the locals and speak local languages. "We want to prove that Afghanistan is not far behind in cricket and we should get associated membership of the International Cricket Council," says Noori of the just-concluded tour. Noori, who speaks fluent Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, has styled himself on Pakistani fast bowler Wasim Akram. Afghanistan's strongly Islamic Taliban rulers, who are averse to any kind of entertainment including music

and fine arts, spent \$1,300 or so buying cricket gear in Pakistan for the tour. It was undertaken at a time when Maulvi Kalamuddin is heading the sports ministry. Previously he was in charge of the dreaded ministry that handled vice and virtue and enforced a strict Islamic code in the streets and public places of Kabul, the Afghan capital. Ilyas Khan, a senior journalist who writes regularly on Afghan issues for the leading political magazine *Herald*, believes the Taliban agreed to the Pakistani request for a cricket tour to soften its image as a reactionary group. "Through cricket they are trying to put up a

benign face which is more in line with modern times. It's a public-relations stunt to create goodwill among the people," he says.

Afghan cricket officials hope that the annual meeting of the ICC in June will give some official recognition to their efforts to join the cricket world. But former Pakistan test cricketer Farukh Zaman, who coached the Afghan players in 2000, says there is little chance of getting ICC affiliation in the near future. "Most of the cricketing world does not recognise them. They do not have the financial resources for building infrastructure. Above all the cricket culture is missing in them."

But cricket captain Noori has set his sights high. "It may sound odd to you but let me assure you that our aim is to play in the World Cup and win it," he says confidently. ♦ (Gemini)

NADEEM YAQUB IN PESHAWAR . . . who had ever heard of a cricket tour that lasted less than a week?

Afficionados of the game might be shocked at the thought that the once-leisurely game had been turned into a fast turnover—like instant noodles.

But Afghanistan has just completed a cricket tour of Pakistan that was over in five days and four matches. Unknown to many in the cricketing world and blessed by the puritanical Taliban leaders, Afghans who have never heard of holding a bat, battled on the playing fields of Peshawar from 10-14 May in the first-ever cricket tour by an Afghan team. They may have lost this 40-over war of bat and ball to neighbouring Pakistan by three matches to one. But the one game Afghanistan won by five wickets against a Federally Administered Tribal Areas team showed

sceptics that all is not lost. "Although soccer is the most popular sport in Afghanistan, many youngsters are taking to cricket seriously," says bearded Allahdad Noori, the 28-year old captain of the Afghanistan team. Curiously enough it was not Britain that taught Afghanistan the game, unlike other countries where it planted the Union Jack. The thanks must go to the Russians, who are more adept at holding a volleyball ball than a cricket ball. When the Russian army came to Afghanistan in 1979, hundreds of thousands of Afghans fled the country, many crossing in to neighbouring Pakistan. They were housed in refugee camps that dotted the frontier areas and Peshawar, the provincial capital. It was those Afghan refugees who picked up the sport watching Pakistani and South Asian cricketers.

In South Asia cricket is an



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SAVING FAITH

by DESMOND DOIG

When a goddess played dice

The temple is the most majestic in all of Kathmandu. Its legends are the most romantic. When it was built in 1576, at the command of a king, it was required to be seen from the old city of Bhaktapur, some ten miles away, from where the resident goddess was brought. No other building was permitted to rise higher than its gilded roofs and golden finial. To attain its imposing height, it was raised on several receding brick plinths. The plinths alone would rival an Aztec temple and the mind boggles to think of how they were made, of how many people laboured to construct them, of the enormity of faith or discipline that inspired the builders.

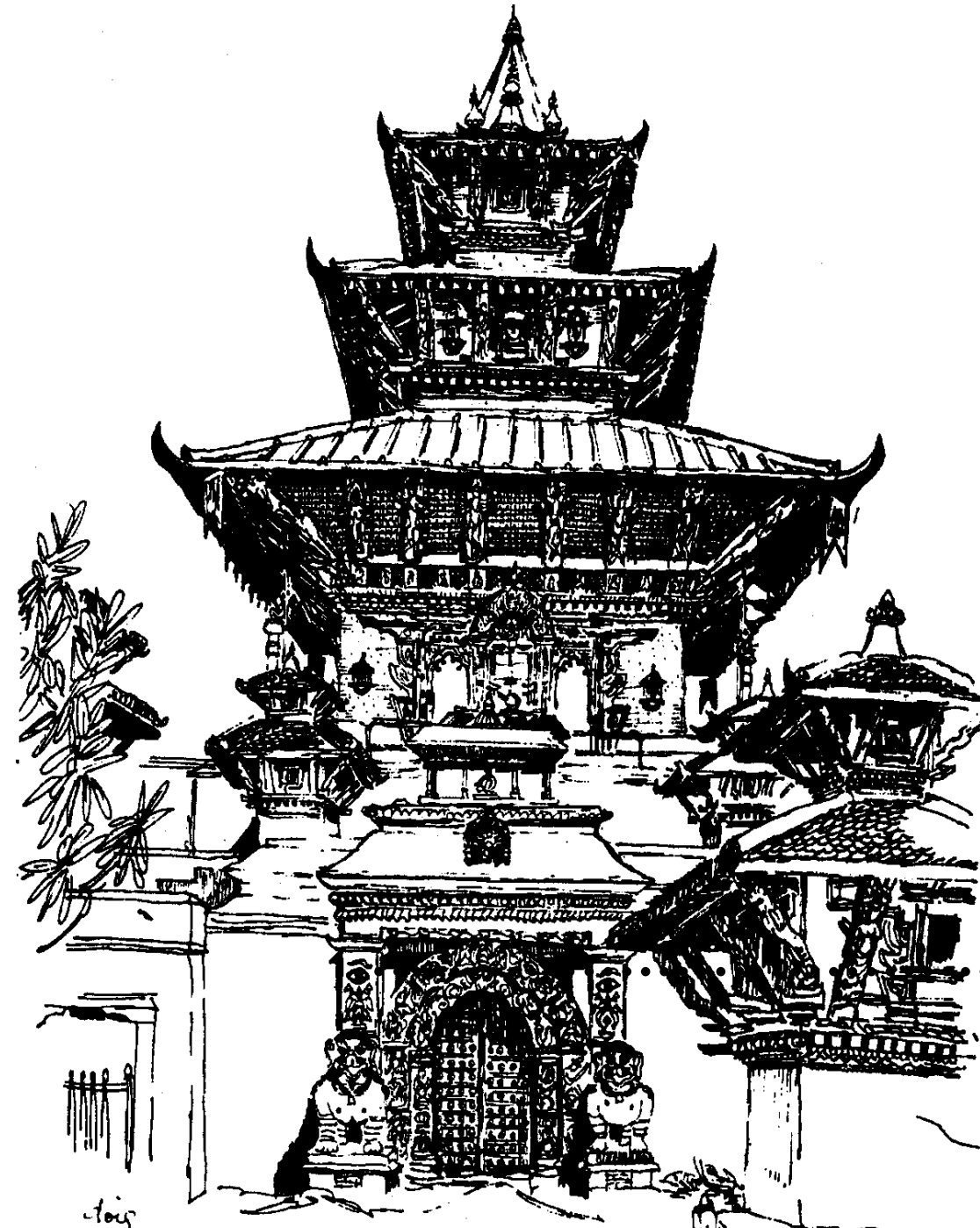
Several small pagoda-style temples, housing the guardians of the eight directions and the Panchayan gods, are set symmetrically upon the plinths. They supplement, rather than detract from the soaring magnificence of the temple itself. A paved courtyard away is the old palace, its roofs pierced by many

fine temple spires and pavilions, but the temple of Teleju surpasses them all as if proudly conscious that it enshrines the royal goddess. Teleju Bhawani is a goddess from South India who well may feel far from home were it not for the great devotion lavished on her here. She was brought to Nepal in the early fourteenth century by Harisingha Deva, a Karnatak king who ruled over the small kingdom of Simroanghar in the foothills of present-day Nepal. When Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlak, who had marched on Bengal to suppress a rebellion, was returning triumphantly home to Delhi, he laid siege to Simroanghar. The royal family, the court and presumably the defeated army, fled northwards into Nepal. Here historical opinion is divided. Either the Malla king, then resident in Bhaktapur, fled before this unintended invasion and abandoned his kingdom to Harisingha Deva, who

established a Karnatak dynasty in the Kathmandu Valley; or Harisingha Deva was hospitably received as a royal refugee by the Malla king and given the freedom of the Valley for as long as he cared to stay. His influence on the political and cultural scene was nevertheless great. It is believed by many to this day that the highly talented people of the Kathmandu Valley, the Newars, derived their name from the Naya who accompanied the Karnatak king, and remained to intermarry with the local people. One of the greatest Malla kings was of mixed Malla and Karnatak descent.

As soon as Ghiyas-Ud-din Tughlak tired of besieging Simroanghar and marched away, King Harisingha Deva returned home. He left behind him his son, who was to rule the Valley, several members of his court, and the precious gift of Teleju Bhawani. The goddess came to be greatly venerated by the kings of Nepal. The magnificent Teleju temple was built to enshrine her and here only royalty may worship except at Dussehra when the public is permitted to enter, to pray and make sacrifices.

Legend takes over. Some two hundred years ago a young Newari girl found wandering outside the palace claimed to be possessed by the spirit of Teleju Bhawani. When the news was brought to him, the king, thinking her to be an evil imposter, had her banished from the kingdom. Within hours, one of his queens suffered not only convulsions but delusions that she too was possessed by the spirit of the goddess. The worried king had a search made for the girl and finding her declared her to be the Living Goddess Kumari. The queen was immediately cured. A more colourful story has Jaya Prakash Malla, the very same king, playing dice with the goddess Teleju, who appeared to him as a beautiful mortal after his devotions. While they played, she advised him on affairs of state, a happy and helpful situation that would have continued had not the king one



A desolate and repentant King Jaya Prakash Malla ordered a search for a suitable child.

night looked lustfully upon the goddess. In great wrath she announced she would never come to him again. Worse, she predicted that both the end of his reign and the fall of his dynasty were at hand. When the king begged humbly for forgiveness, the goddess made a strange concession. The king was to select a virgin child from a Newari caste, proclaim her the Living Goddess Kumari, and worship her, for in this child she

herself would manifest. A third, more human story, has the goddess Teleju playing dice with King Jaya Prakash Malla as before, but herself succumbing to a very ungodly failing. One of the queens, growing suspicious of her husband's nightly disappearances

followed him to his rendezvous where the goddess saw her peeping from behind a curtain. Mistaking the queen's curiosity for a betrayal of the king's vow never to tell anyone of their meeting, the goddess immediately vanished. Appearing to him in a dream that night she informed the king that she would never return, but he would find her if he searched, in the guise of a virgin child of the Sakyas class.

Whatever the legend, the consequence is the same. A desolate and repentant king at once ordered a search for a suitable child. When she was discovered with the help of his advisers and priests, King Jaya Prakash Malla had a fine dwelling built for her close to his palace and within sight of the temple to Teleju.

There she was installed with great ceremony and jubilation and the king instituted a yearly jatra in her honour. Perhaps, in the midst of all this joyful activity he forgot something very important. The goddess Teleju Bhawani's prophecy: the loss of his kingdom and the fall of his dynasty. ♦

(Excerpted with permission from In the Kingdom of the Gods, Harper Collins, 1994.)

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ABOUT TOWN

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EATING OUT

- ◆ **Padharo Hukum** Rajasthan Food Festival, traditional dances and music. Chefs Kanwarni and Kanwar Vijay Singh Bedla of Udaipur. Complimentary starters. Until 27 May, 7-11.45pm, Far Pavilion, Everest Hotel. 488100
- ◆ **Singapore Food Festival** Special artists, entertainers, and musicians will perform. Daily draw for a couple—free trip on Singapore Airlines, two nights complimentary hotel stay. 24-27 May, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 248999
- ◆ **Sekuwa (BBQ) Night** Dwarika's Hotel. Starters, meats, vegetarian selections, dessert, complementary drink. Traditional dance in lampit Newari courtyard. Rs 699. Friday nights. 479488
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DANCE

◆ **Bharatanatyam recital** by Alarmel Valli. Passes available at: Embassy of India (413174), Nepal-Bharat Sanskritik Kendra, (243497, 255414), Bhartiya Gorkha Sainik Niwas (413785, 414283), Indian Airlines, (429468), Chez Caroline (251647, 263070), Nepal Association of Fine Arts (411729), and Indigo Gallery, (413580). Friday, 25 May, 6pm. Royal Nepal Academy Hall

MUSIC

◆ **2:00 For the Love of Rock Vibes** Entertainment presents the third annual rock festival with Robin and Looza, Flower Generation, Axata, Albatross, and Hybrid Pressurize. Scout Headquarters, Lainchour. Ticket Rs 200. 2 June. Go online and win free tickets at www.vibes.com.np

EVENTS

- ◆ **Fanta Grand Fun Fair** Organised by Godavari Alumni Association and Cohort. Mind blowing live music, action packed games and tongue tickling dishes. 1,2,3 June. Jawalakhel Ground.
- ◆ **Stress Free Weekends** Overnight stay at the Hyatt, dinner for two at the Rox Restaurant, use of pool, health club, spa and outdoor jacuzzi, ayurvedic massage for two, weekend brunch, late check out Sunday. Rs 9000 plus tax. Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 491234
- ◆ **Pheri Jaun Hai Pokhara** Free airfare, room, breakfast, airport transport, use of health club and lots more. Rs 1500 for Nepalis, \$45 for expats. Shangri La Hotel & Resort; sales@hotelshangrila.com. 435741
- ◆ **Spiny Babler Museum** Readings and presentations of contemporary Nepali literature and art Sundays 5-6pm Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel; Tuesdays 4-5pm Kathmandu Environment Education Project, Thamel; Thursdays 7-8pm Bamboo Club Restaurant, Thamel, Saturdays 5-6pm New Orleans Café, Thamel. spinybabblers@mos.com.np. 542810, 546725

EXHIBITION

- ◆ **If Bodies have Voices** From the Street: Kathmandu 1985-1995. Photographs by Wayne Amtzis. 25 May-7 June. Amtzis reads from his collection City on His Back. 3 June, 4pm. Siddhartha Art Gallery. 411122
- ◆ **Mani: Jewelled Words of Tibetan-Buddhism on Flags, Wheels, and Stones** Fulbright Scholar Katherine Anne Paul's research on the popular use and manufacture of Tibetan religious artefacts in Nepal. Until 2 June. Bamboo Gallery, Panipokhari. 412507



SPORTS

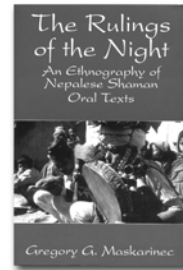
- ◆ **St. Xavier's School Golden Jubilee Walkathon** 26 May. Participation open to all. St. Xavier's School Jawalakhel. 26 May 8am. Reporting time 7.45am.
- ◆ **5th Nepal Mountain Bike Championship.** Nepal's oldest annual national mountain bike race. Winner will qualify for the 7th Asian Mountain Bike Championship in Seoul, Korea in October. 26 May. Race starts at 8 am. Venue: Gairi Gaon west of Swayambhu.

MARTIN CHAUTARI

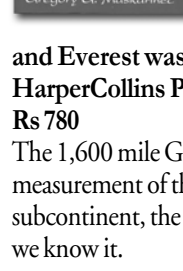
◆ **Classic Literature Discussion Series 6:** Ramesh Vikal's "Naya Sadak ko Geet" Govinda Vartaman and Manjushree Thapa 29 May, 5.30pm, Martin Chautari, Thapathali. Unless otherwise noted, presentations are in Nepali. chautari@mos.com.np. 246065

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

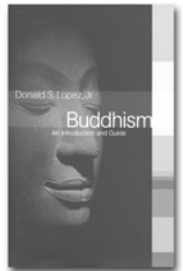
BOOKWORM



The Rulings of the Night: An Ethnography of Nepalese Shaman Oral Texts
Gregory G Maskarinec
Mandala Book Point, Kathmandu, 2000 (Reprint)
Rs 650
This book, based on exceptional fieldwork, makes an important contribution to the anthropology of language and ritual. Maskarinec shows how the words themselves illuminate the play between shamanic prayers and social reality in the Nepal Himalaya.

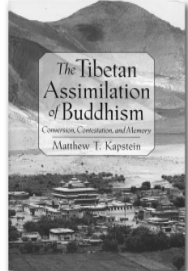


The Great Arc: The Dramatic Tale of how India was Mapped and Everest was Named John Key
HarperCollins Publishers, London, UK, 2000
Rs 780
The 1,600 mile Great Indian Arc of the Meridian (1800-1850) was the longest measurement of the earth's surface attempted. It made possible the mapping of the subcontinent, the development of its roads, railways and telegraphs. It has defined India as we know it.



Buddhism: An Introduction and Guide Donald S Lopez
Allen Lane
The Penguin Press, UK, 2001
Rs 1,300
Lopez explores different ways the final Buddhist goal of escaping death through the attainment of enlightenment: through meditation and devotion, or through simply recognising the enlightenment that is within us. Full of miraculous and humorous Buddhist stories, this book offers a fresh perspective on Buddhism.

The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory
Matthew T Kapstein
Oxford University Press, New York, 2000
Rs 1,500



Kapstein examines Tibet's eighth century conversion to Buddhism, the tensions that arose out of competing lines of transmission and interpretation and the manner in which Buddhism penetrated Tibetan religious thought to become a core component of Tibetan identity.

Courtesy Mandala Book Point, Kantipath

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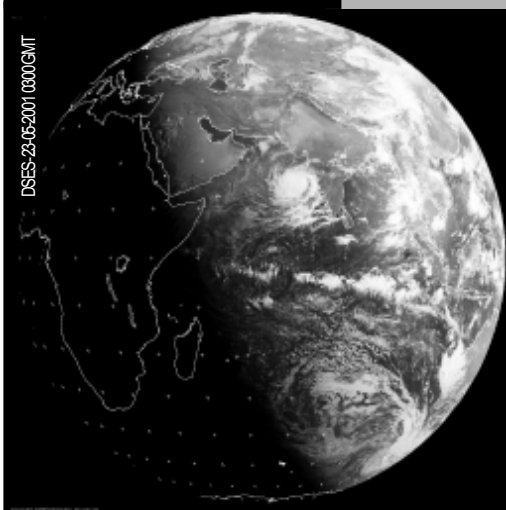
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NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



Take a look at that interesting cyclonic storm moving into the west coast of India—the precursor to the first monsoon showers currently lashing Kerala. The north-westerly fronts over the Himalaya have now come under the spell of this system and the clouds from the Tibetan plateau are being pulled away—hence the drop in precipitation last week. The present scenario will continue until we begin to see the effect of the Arabian Sea system over the weekend in the form of showers and thunderstorms. The tug-o-war between the westerlies and the moisture-laden winds from the south-east is beginning. The westerlies are still winning out. The monsoon will start when these winds from the Bay of Bengal become too strong to resist. All indications are that it will be a healthy monsoon, and will start mid-June in central Nepal.

KATHMANDU

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
29-17	28-17	28-18	29-18	27-17

HERITAGE

Tripurasundari



A NEPALI TIMES REPORT

There are many grand ancient temples in Kathmandu Valley. But thousands of Kathmanduites have forgone these wondrous reminders of the past to live in a concrete jungle. *Tripurasundari*, the Shiva temple flanked by the eye hospital in Tripureswor (which derives its name from the temple) on one side and the Bagmati river on another, is one such relic—thankfully, being brought back to life. The Malla-style three-storey pagoda temple was built 150 years ago as a tribute to Tripurasundari, the youngest wife of King Rana Bahadur Shah by Bhimsen Thapa, the queen's prime minister who also built Dharahara. The temple reeks of raw masculinity, with its numerous images of Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu and Bhairab. On the north flank of the courtyard is a huge green metal trident next to a statue of a nude standing Shiva, unlike the usual *lingam*. The west side has two bulls standing upon a stone pillar balanced on the back of a huge stone tortoise. On this pillar is carved the history of

the temple. A similar pillar on the south side carries a gold-plated statue supposedly of Queen Tripurasundari. From the south gate, the path curves towards the Bagmati. Starting this month, the Department of Archaeology has commissioned 12 woodworkers from Bungamati to work on restoring the middle portion of the temple. They will work under the supervision of

Punya Ratna Tuladhar, an old artisan involved in renovating over a dozen temples in the Valley. The artisans are busy copying the intricate designs and shapes of the once-splendid, now sadly termite-infested woodwork. According to the inscribed history, the temple was renovated in 1958. But mostly it was ignored, even

as the pagodas suffered cracks and the carved wooden beams fell off their posts. Local residents voiced their concerns and sent in requests for the department to do something, but to no avail. Finally this year, a Rs 3 million budget was set aside for the project. The estimated 3000 sq ft span of the roofs would require more than Rs 10 million if they were to be

gold-plated as before. "That is impossible right now," says Hiranya Vaidya, the chief archaeologist and conservation expert on the Tripurasundari Restoration Concern Committee. The restoration may not be complete, but it is heartening to see such efforts on the rise in the city. ♦

Kilroy's

Carlsberg

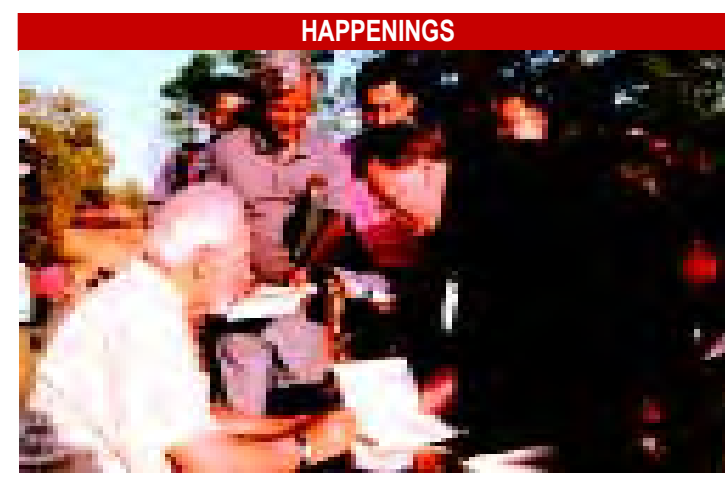
BBC on FM 102.4

Mon-Fri	0615-0645	BBC World Today
Sat	0615-0645	BBC Science in Action
Sun	0615-0645	BBC Agenda
Daily	2045-2115	BBC नेपाली सेवा
Daily	2245-2300	BBC नेपाली सेवा

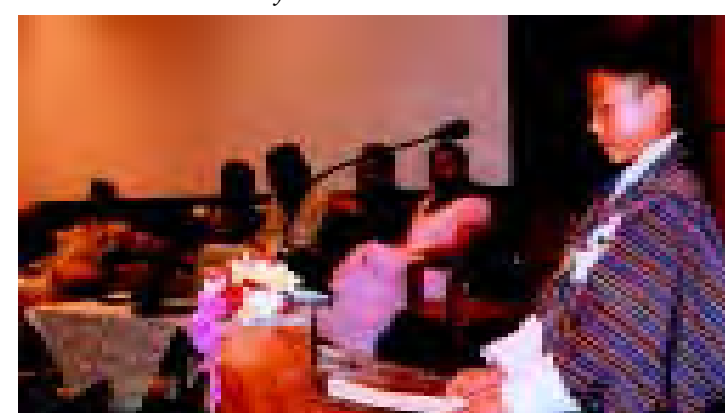


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TONI IN NEPALI: Toni Hagen's classic book on the geography and geology of Nepal (first published in 1960) is now out in Nepali. Hagen autographing the book at the launch on 18 May.



THE FUTURE: Twelve-year-old Kelzong Dorjee of Bhutan addressing the opening of a High Level South Asian Meeting on Child Survival organised by UNICEF at the Soattee Crown Plaza on 22 May.



MURLU AND VOOGEL: India's Minister of Human Resource Development, Murlu Manohar Joshi is welcomed at the Regal Suite of Soattee Crown Plaza by the General Manager, Stefan W Voegel.



Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Since all private and public toilets throughout the kingdom are going to be closed 27, 28, 29 and 31 May, this is as good a time as any to think about who you want to nominate for the Annual Most-Authentic Loo in Nepal Contest. The organisers have their septic tanks overflowing with aspirants for the coveted Golden Potty award—the highest honour a john can be bestowed in this land. This year's contest has taken on added significance because the whole country is going down the toilet, and also because the contest is being officially sponsored by the Nepal Tourism Board's "Amazing Nepal" Campaign.

Our tourism industry has finally woken up to the importance of bathrooms in boosting visitor arrivals. The Nepali loo could prove to be an enormous draw, especially for Indian visitors fleeing the loo in the torrid Indo-Gangetic plains every summer. (Best slogan entry:

Faeces of Nepal

"Visit Nepal: Our loos are cooler").

The criteria for entering your favourite loo are quite simple, really. Fill out the application form, taking care to provide as much graphic detail as possible about why you think your nominee is eligible, paying special attention to its bouquet (for example: sulphurous and cholera-like, with a musky aftertaste).

Olfactory attributes are measured in radial units: the radius from the epicentre at which the WC in question can still cure a person with chronic sinusitis. This year's entries once more includes the toilet at Nepalgunj Airport which was disqualified last year because it had bagged the Golden Potty ten years in a row and it would not be fair to the other candidates.

The Authority on Civil Aviation in Nepal, which has a nose for these things, has tried its best to keep the ammonia content at Nepalgunj airport roughly in the same parts per million concentration as the atmosphere of the Jupiter moon, Ganymede. But recent visitors have reported that standards in Nepalgunj are dropping. No longer does the ethereal, durian-like odour of deceased oysters assail the nostrils of dear and departing passengers.

Our national flag carrier has been offering a special promo to give visitors a whiff of Nepal even before they get here. Returning Nepali passengers immediately feel at home in the cabin aroma at Gatwick itself. Tourists leaving Nepal are also given a final reminder of the sights and smells they are leaving behind when they visit the men's room of the Tribhuvan International Airport Departure Lounge.

One way to measure if the john you are nominating is up to mark is to carry out the fool-proof canary test. In recent trials, for instance, a caged canary was asphyxiated with methane poisoning inside the VIP bathroom of the Central Secretariat of His Majesty's Government at the Singha Darbar. Another strong contender for this year's award is the toilet at Bir Hospital's Out-Patient Department, where a lake has recently formed because of dam construction involving certain unidentified floating objects. In the nearby ENT ward patients have been miraculously cured.

This year's Golden Potty award promises to be an exciting gala event at the Royal Nepal Academy Hall, which has my own favourite for this year's contest: a urinal with an arsenal of pisspots each with a warhead in the 20-25 megaton range. ♦

NEPALI SOCIETY



Bedtime

synergy. In four short months, *Nind ko pari* was made, and animation was back in Nepal.

Says Dipendra Gauchan, director of the video: "We (animation artists) were trying to get back together, and when this project came about, it became a turning point for all of us. For Nepal, this is a milestone in animation incorporating artwork, live shots and computer graphics." About a decade ago a GTZ project brought together 16 animation artists to create cartoons for Nepal Television. They're still the only trained animators in Nepal, but they've not had much work after the project expired. And now, as *Nind ko pari* puts children to bed, it may wake up a new generation to the possibilities of animation. The animators are the artist couple Sudarshan and Sunita Rana, Kriti Keshar Joshi, Rajesh Rajkarnikar and Rajendra Rana. The live shots were filmed by Manod Shrestha, and the film is edited by Bina Gauchan and Ram Prasad Joshi. And the song? Not, sadly, the

original, which was sung by Kamala Shrestha—the recording was badly preserved—but a new version by Manila Solang, arranged by Prakash Gurung. Renchin says, "This project fulfils my urge to share our dreams—Gopal's and mine—with the rest of the world, especially with innocent children who are born into an environment filled with strife, misery and deprivation. My mission in life is to create beautiful environments to provide food for the soul." The crew seems to have caught her enthusiasm. They say they wanted to bring back to us, and to children's literature and art in this country, an appreciation for life, for the joy in everyday tasks. The video, launched 25 May to mark Gopal Yonzan's fourth death anniversary, will be aired on Space Time's Channel Nepal, and Renchin also plans to travel to different schools in the Valley with the film. "That way I can also interact with the children, hear their remarks and share my views," she says. ♦

a fantastic Kathmandu night. Soothing background music as the camera trails over the city and angles down to a small house—a Disney-ish version of a typical Nepali village house. And this is where it begins, the story of Nunu, a fairy from the moon who sprinkles sleep dust over the city. But Nunu hasn't arrived yet, and the two little sisters who live here, Navashree and Navistha, are playing with their mother Shrijana, and asking her to tell them a story. And so she does, bringing them Nunu to make them happy and sleepy.

This colourful five minute journey through silhouettes of

Dharahara, pagoda temple tops, Swayambhu, dotted with lush plants, chirping birds, jumping fish, and hopping frogs is visualised around a lullaby composed by the late Gopal Yonzan when his first child was born in 1970. Interestingly this child, Shrijana Yonzan Singh, plays mother to her own two daughters in this live-animation, *Nind ko pari* (Angel of dream). This would have died out, like so many 30 year old dreams, but for the will and vision of Renchin Yonzan, Gopal's wife, who ignored time and budget constraints to undertake what many might have said was an impossible task. She raised the Rs 700,000 this project cost and got together a team with great



The Golden Potty

Thompson

Samsung