

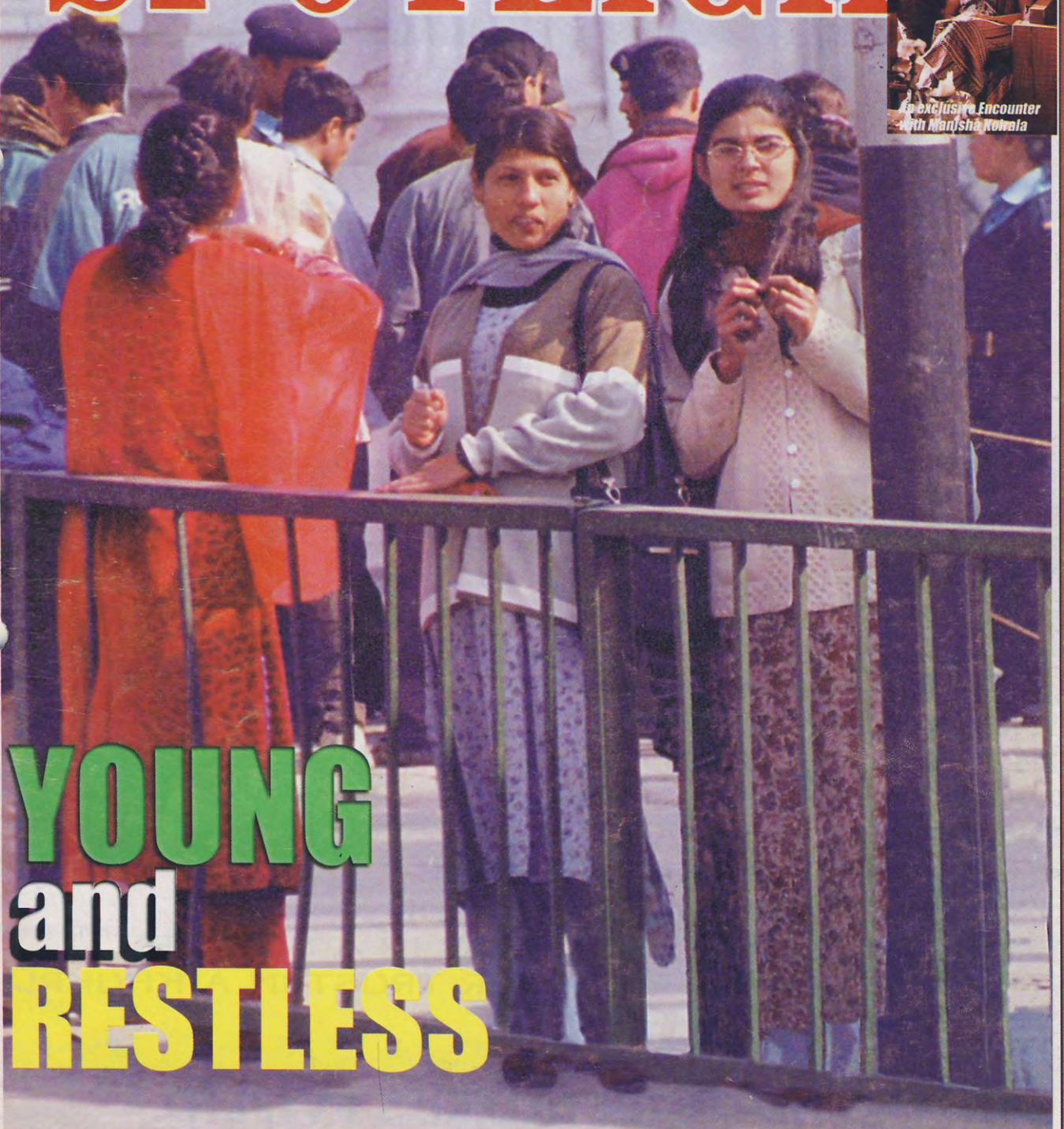
The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

Jan 19-25, 2001



Exclusive Encounter with Manisha Kowala



YOUNG and RESTLESS

- NC Convention
- Int'l year of Volunteers
- Earthquake tremors

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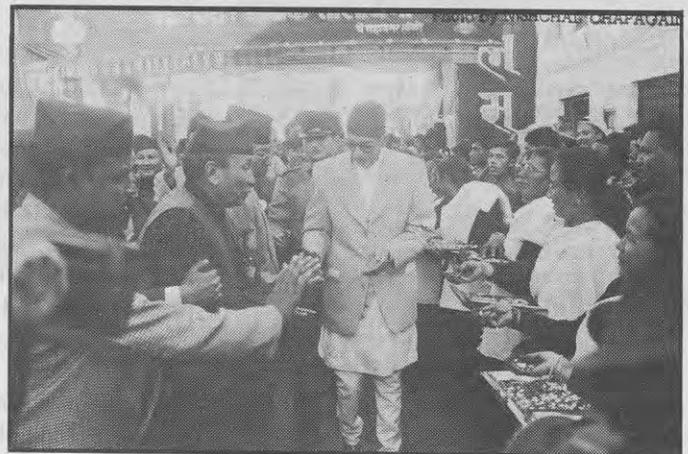
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COVER STORY: Young And Restless

Desperate but energetic, Nepalese youth are at the crossroads of change.

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CONGRESS CONVENTION : Koirala's Declaration

As the convention near, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala appears set for an overwhelming victory

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INTERVIEW : PRADEEP RAJ PANDEY

The CEO of Nepal Tourism Board, talks about the current situation of tourism in the country.

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SPOTLIGHT

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The creation of Armed Police Force to quell the Maoist rebellion is sure to turn out to be another blunder by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. No sane Nepali thinks that force should be used against the Maoists. We have been advocating peaceful dialogue all the time. A fifteen to twenty thousand strong armed force would entail huge recurring expenses apart from hundreds of millions in buying arms and ammunitions. Can the country afford it? But, in a country which is run by commission mongers, this could be another godsent opportunity to make some fast buck. Who really thinks about the good of the country? Moreover, there are some who think such a force, even a much bigger one, has become imperative in the context of imaginary threats from our southern neighbor as a result of the statement by a leading ruling politician. Even though we are impelled to laugh at such stupid figment of imagination, we know, Nepal is well equipped to defend its frontiers and also has some dependable friends. Be that as it may, Prime Minister Koirala must think twice, thrice and four times before deploying, the armed force. After all the Maoists are our kirths and kins. Instead, he must start punishing the wrong doers including himself, by resigning from the post he is holding. Surely he cannot be totally oblivious of the fate of corrupt politicians, near and far. His well wishers surely have not failed to apprise him what is happening to corrupt politicians around the world.

* * *

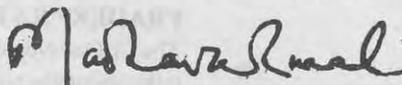
The Nepali Congress convention is starting before the week end. As all speculations portend Girija Prasad Koirala will again emerge as the strong man in the N.C. The opposition that he is facing in his party, at the moment, does not command a popular support. They are only some power hungry corrupt politicians. The leader of the dissidents claiming to be Nepali Martin Luther King with a "vision to lead" has forgotten his black record. But the Nepali people have not. Where will the country go under his leadership? What the Nepali Congress needs at this juncture is a totally new and young leadership with the cleanest of slate. As long some dynamic young men don't pluck courage and take over the leadership of the party, Nepali Congress does not have a bright future. Young men in Nepali Congress take note. Hit now, the iron is hot.

* * *

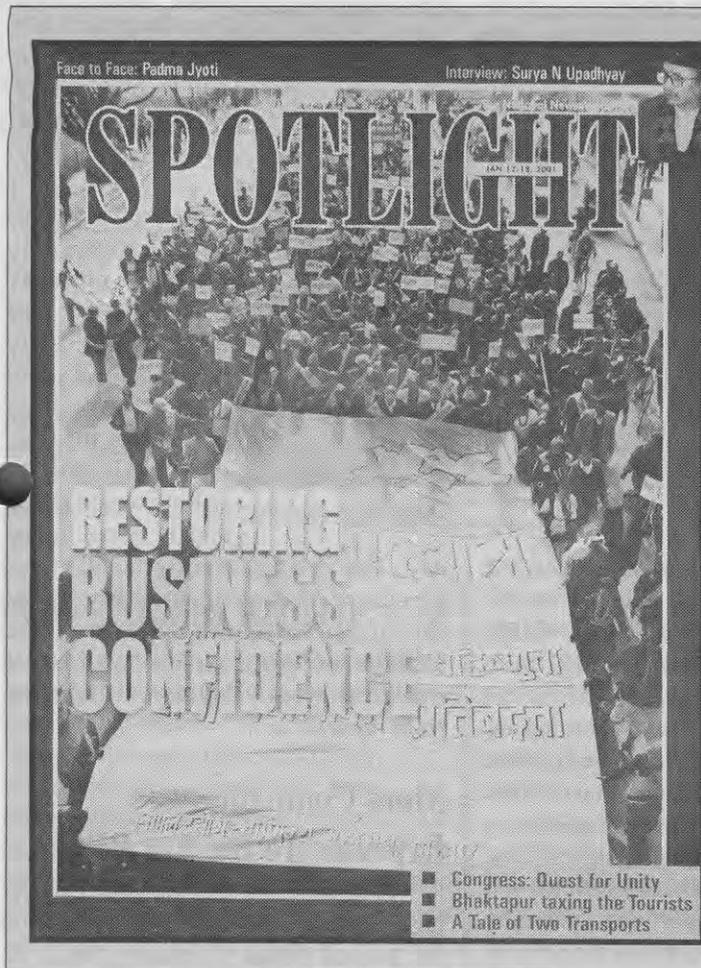
The Commission of Investigation for Abuse of Authority seems to be waking up. May be, it is still too early to become optimistic about its role. CIAA has started action against an official who is a small fry and less responsible for the ills plaguing the national flag carrier. There are more powerful and influencing persons who eat the cake at other's expense. There are even invisible hands that give hiccups to many. Can the chief expose these people? Or will he also limit himself to the poor bureaucrats?

* * *

The people's government in Rukum, Jagarkot and Salyan must make the Palace sit up. It is not a challenge to Girija Prasad Koirala only. It is a direct confrontation with **His Majesty's** Government. The Palace cannot afford to stay a silent spectator any more. If these kinds of developments are not nipped in the bud, the country will be destabilised and become a fishing ground for anti-nationals. The unscrupulous politicians will lose nothing. They will be the first to leave the sinking ship and enjoy their illgotten wealth in foreign lands. Where can the poor people and the Palace go? So, no more procrastination. Wisdom says one must not wait for fate to act.



Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Make The Choice

With reference to your cover story "Restoring Business Confidence" (SPOTLIGHT January 12-18), I would like to request Nepal's political leaders to give up their petty interests for the sake of the economic prosperity of the Nepalese people. As things stand today, the politicians have only two choices: they can either continue with their present conduct and push the country toward total disaster or change their behavior to embrace the opportunities that are knocking our door. The choice is theirs.

*Seema Gurung
Kuleshwor*

Constitutionally Defined Role", January 12-18) was very interesting. We would like to express, through your esteemed column, our high appreciation of the commendable beginning made by the CIAA to bring to justice those exploiting RNAC for their personal benefit? Executive Director H.B. Shrestha, whose suspension the CIAA recommended in connection with its probe, is a very small fish. There are very large fish, even man-eating sharks, lurking around.

The new chief of the CIAA has to gird up his loins and bring those sharks, however big and powerful, to book. This is the best opportunity for him to show his integrity and loyalty to the nation. The whole country will be most grateful to him. Even the suspended executive director can play a very important role. He must cooperate with the CIAA and expose the hidden forces that have been using him for their personal gain. If Shrestha can muster the courage to unmask the real mafia, the whole country will raise its voice to grant him pardon for any wrongdoing he might have committed.

*M.B. Shrestha & friends,
Naya Sadak, Kathmandu*

Business First

Economics drives today's world. Politics is taking a back seat to facilitate economic transactions. However, it is unfortunate that our leaders have not understood this elementary reality. Foreign investors are not necessarily bad for the country. They create wealth and distribute it by creating employment opportunities and through other avenues. Therefore, it is meaningless to attack foreign business interests during protests. It will not be in our national interest to do so.

*Ramesh Joshi
Sanepa*

Stop Bandhs

The innumerable strikes and bandhs over the years have done irreparable harm to the confidence of businessmen and investors. The ruling Nepali Congress deserves praise for pledging not to call any

bandhs in future. Left parties should follow suit. In fact, by calling frequent bandhs, the left parties are losing their political base. The people have had enough of these protests.

*Kamal Poudel
Bansbari*

Shocking Statement

We were shocked to read the statement of K.R. Malkani, a senior leader of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, regretting New Delhi's rejection of a so-called proposal from Kathmandu to incorporate Nepal into the Indian Union. Such a proposal is nothing more than a figment of Malkani's imagination. We are dismayed by his effort to twist the facts of history. Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru did receive a proposal to annex Nepal. However, it was not King Tribhuvan who broached the idea to

Nehru. It was Nehru's iron man Sardar Vallabhai Patel. Had Patel lived longer, Nepal would perhaps have gone to war with India. Fortunately for Nepal, Patel died early. Although we are living away from our motherland, our love for Nepal has not died. And we know that the proud Nepalese people can defend the independence of their country. We hope Indian leaders, who say they consider Nepal a friendly country, would not hurt Nepalese sentiments in future by making such concocted remarks.

*Govinda Man, Mohan Sharma
& Mamata Singh
Los Angeles, USA*

Catch Big Fish

Your interview with the Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) Chief Commissioner Surya Nath Upadhyay ("The CIAA' Has A

Bright Side

Often we hear of the negative aspects of Nepal. For once at least I thought I would point just how good things can be. On Jan. 14, I returned from a visit to Deughat where once a year there is a huge 'Mela'. A day where like in the Khumb mela, a dip in the river can wash away all sins. What impressed me was the great organization of the whole affair. Starting from directions to the place, parking, security, lodging, food and toilets, everything ran as smoothly as anywhere in UK - this despite most of the visitors being from pretty remote parts of Nepal itself. It turns out that local youth club played a major part in helping out and clearly did a good job.

*Dr. Pranab Gyawali
London (via E-mail)*

Nepal, India Agree On Flood-Control Measures

Nepali and Indian officials have agreed to start the construction of a 7-km-long embankment along the right bank of Rapti river to mitigate the problem of submersion on the Nepali side, reports said Sunday. The decision was taken at the end of the five-day 11th meeting of the Nepal-India Joint Committee formed to resolve the problem, in the Nepali capital Friday. The meeting also agreed to immediately construct about 2.5 km of the 15-km embankment along the right bank of Rapti river as proposed by the Nepali side and construct the rest of the embankment after further study, officials of the Department of Irrigation said. According to reports, the committee agreed on flood-control measures along the Rapti river in Banke district and Bagmati river in Rautahat and Sarlahi districts. Nepali and Indian officials also agreed to immediately start construction of an about 7-km embankment along the right bank of the river in Rautahat district and about 15-km embankment along the left bank of the river in Sarlahi district. A joint team also inspected areas submerged by the Rapti river and the site of embankment along the Bagmati to be constructed with Indian assistance. **RSS reports Jan. 14.**

EU And US Hail Progress On Bhutanese Refugees

The European Union and the United States have welcomed the recent understanding between the governments of Nepal and Bhutan toward resolving the decade-old Bhutanese refugee problem. In a press statement received here Saturday, the European Union said it welcomed the recent important steps taken by the governments of Bhutan and Nepal to resolve the question of verification of Bhutanese residing in refugee camps in eastern Nepal and the determination shown by the two governments to find a lasting solution through bilateral dialogue in a spirit of good neighborliness. The EU welcomed the prospects of a speedy verification process leading to the repatriation of refugees and the ultimate closing down



Refugees

of the camps. We will closely follow the work of the Ministerial Joint Committee and the Joint Verification Team, the EU said. In a separate statement, US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Friday that his country plans to continue working with all concerned parties, at their request, to facilitate a just resolution of the long-standing humanitarian problem of Bhutanese refugees. The United States has encouraged Nepal and Bhutan to resolve this refugee issue fully and fairly, and "we applaud their recent measures to do so." Recalling that the US government has long been a major contributor to the humanitarian needs of Bhutanese refugees through the Office of the UNHCR and the World Food Program, the statement said the US government was pleased to note that Nepal and Bhutan were moving to implement their recent agreement to resolve the long-standing problem. Nepal and Bhutan had agreed last month to begin verification of refugees within this month through a joint verification team. **Compiled from reports Jan. 14.**

Govt. Considering Reducing Public Holidays

The government is planning to scrap more than a dozen public holidays, Kantipur daily reported Saturday, quoting a highly placed source at the Cabinet Secretariat. According to the newspaper, the government was considering a proposal to slash Dashain holidays to five days

from the present nine and scrapping the public holidays on Gaijatra, Indrajatra, Rakshyabandhan, S r i Krishnajanmastami, S r i p a n c h a m i, F a g u p u r n i m a, Chaitedasain and Ramnavami. The government is yet to reach a final decision on whether the two-day weekly holiday in Kathmandu valley should be cut to one

day. The two-day weekly holiday was introduced in the capital valley on an experimental basis over a year ago. There are more than 140 public holidays in Nepal (including weekly holidays). **Compiled from reports.**

More Companies Expected To Bid For BPC

Officials have said they are expecting more bidders to buy majority shares of the Butwal Power Company (BPC). A total of six companies, including Independent Power Company of Britain, Intercraft of Norway, Pacific Hydro Company of Australia, Sanima of Russia and one company each from India and China have responded to a tender bid to sell 75 percent of the shares of the profit-making company. "We expect more bids before the deadline expires on January 31 this year," said Kiran Malla, general manager of the company. The BPC owns and operates the 12 MW Jhimruk hydropower plant and the 5.1 MW Andhi Khola hydropower plant. The company, which is supplying electricity to about 20,000 people in four rural districts in western Nepal, also owns shares in Khimti hydropower project, Nepal Hydro and Electric (P) Ltd. and Hydrolab Company. **Compiled from reports Jan. 13.**

Terai Bandh Passes Off Peacefully

The 'terai bandh' called by the terai-

based Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) ended largely peacefully Friday. A policeman and some demonstrators were injured during skirmishes at Parwanipur in Bara district during the 'bandh.' The clashes took place after police intervened to stop the demonstrators from pelting stones at speeding vehicles. Businesses and public transport came to a halt in eastern terai districts. There was no major impact of the shutdown in the western terai districts, reports said. The NSP had called the 'bandh' to protest against the targeting of Indian businesses and people of terai origin during the violent protests in the capital late last month. *Compiled from reports Jan. 13.*

Seven Maoist Rebels Killed

At least seven suspected Maoist rebels were killed during an encounter with police in the remote northern district of Kalikot Thursday, leading dailies reported. According to the reports, the rebels were killed during a nearly two-hour gunbattle with police at Phurkot. The police had reached the area after receiving reports that armed rebels were organizing an 'open meeting.' Police recovered locally made guns, socket bombs, explosives and bullets from the site. Meanwhile, unconfirmed reports said two Maoist rebels were killed in an exchange of gunfire with police at a village in Accham district Tuesday. Police said the rebels took away the dead bodies of their comrades. *Compiled from reports Jan. 12.*

19 Rhinos Dead In The Last Nine Months

At least 19 rhinos have died, six of them due to poaching, in and around Royal Chitwan National Park in central Nepal, over the last nine months, officials said. According to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), a total of 40 rhino deaths had been recorded last year. "We have fewer incidents of poaching this year because of countermeasures we have taken," said Narendra Babu Pradhan, assistant ecologist at the department. The DNPWC together with the World Wide

Fund for Nature (WWF), has set up anti-poaching units in and around Chitwan and Bardia national parks, home to Royal Bengal tigers, one-horned Asiatic rhinos and dozens of other exotic wildlife species. *Compiled from reports Jan. 9.*

Drastic Fall In Gold Imports

After the government's decision in this year's budget to authorize Nepal Rastra Bank to sell gold within the country, imports of the precious metal has fallen drastically, a news report said. In accordance with the budget provision, the Department of Mint (DoM) of Nepal Rastra Bank has been selling gold to the public since July last year. Damodar Prasad Sharma, chief manager at the DoM, said his department has been able to sell only 74 kg of gold so far. Traders say people are not interested in buying gold from the department because the price there is higher than in the open market.

According to the central bank, the import of gold in the first three months of this fiscal year has declined by nearly one-third compared to the same period last year. Nepal had imported gold worth Rs 7690 million in the last fiscal year. The government had decided to restrict imports by the private traders after most of the gold imported by Nepal was found to be re-exported to India because of the price difference. *Kantipur Jan. 10.*

RNAC To Increase Flights

State-owned Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RNAC) will increase the number of its flights on the international

sector and begin flying to new destinations from March this year, the corporation said Friday. In a statement, the scandal-ridden national flag carrier said it is going to increase its flights to New Delhi from the present 12 a week to 14 and those to Bangkok from two a week to three. The flights to Mumbai will be increased from three a week to four, those to Singapore from two a week to three and those to Hong Kong from three a week to four, the corporation said. With the induction of a Boeing 767 lease purchased from Lauda Air, an Austrian airlines company, in December last year, the RNAC has decided to fly twice a week directly to Osaka, Japan, with only a third flight stopping over in Shanghai. The RNAC is also spreading its wings to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where it will fly twice a week. The corporation is also planning two flights a week to Seoul, South Korea, via Shanghai. The airline serves the international sector through four Boeing aircraft in its fleet. *Compiled from reports Jan. 13.*

Institute Of Engineering Ranked Third In Asia

At a time of widespread disenchantment over the education system in Nepal, here is some good news. The Bangkok-based Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) has ranked Tribhuvan University's Institute of Engineering (IOE) third among Asia's top 10 engineering institutes. The ranking was made on the basis of judging the performance of the Masters Level students in 2000. The IOE had stood fourth and sixth among the ten best institutes in Asia in 1999 and 1998 respectively. Established in 1972, the IOE has produced 985 civil engineers, 64 electrical engineers, 61 electronic engineers, 46 mechanical engineers and 21 architects so far. A 20-year strategic plan has been formulated to develop the IOE as a center of excellence to produce more capable and efficient manpower, said Dr. Jib Raj Pokhrel, dean of the IOE. The IOE has 5,000 students, 500 teachers and 500 employees. *Compiled from reports Jan. 9.* ■



RNAC plane



Players of RCT club jubilantly raising this year's Birthday Cup.

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT, THE OUTGOING US SECRETARY of State, is to assume the chairmanship of the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Albright had served as vice chair of the democracy promotion organization when it was founded in 1983. "We will be fortunate to benefit from Madeleine Albright's leadership as the NDI responds to new opportunities and challenges in assisting courageous democrats throughout the world who promote peaceful political change in nondemocratic countries and work to consolidate pluralist institutions in new democracies," said NDI President Kenneth Wollack. The NDI has worked in Nepal since 1994 to strengthen the country's emerging democracy.

FRENCH INSTRUCTORS WILL BE TRAINING NEPALI guides for another five years. An agreement to this effect was signed by Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) president Tashi Jangbu Sherpa and Director of the Ecole Nationale Skiet d'Alpinisme (ENSA) Jean Bernard Paillisser in Kathmandu last week. French Ambassador Claude Ambrosini was present on the occasion. The French agency has been launching the training program since 1982. The ENSA will also provide a yearly scholarship to one aspirant Nepali guide in France. Similarly, one French instructor, accompanied by a doctor, will conduct a 15-day adventure-training course in Nepal each year, the NMA said.

STATE-OWNED NEPAL TELEVISION (NTV) CORPORATION entered into an agreement Wednesday with India's Bharat Electronics Limited to procure necessary equipment for satellite uplinking for NTV transmissions. NTV plans to put satellite uplink in place within July this year. Under the agreement, NTV will procure equipment worth Indian Rs. 5.53 million from India and equipment worth US\$ 462,000 from third countries. The agreement was signed by General Manager Durga Nath Sharma on behalf of NTV and by V. B. Srinivasan on behalf of Bharat Electronics.

THE US-BASED COMPANY, EURORIENT, HAS SENT A letter to the Department of Electricity Development of the Nepalese government this week saying it is unable to pay advance money in connection with the Arun III project. The company had,

however, committed to pay foreign currency equivalent to Rs 42 million as performance guarantee to get the survey license of the project only last month. Nepali officials said the US company had asked for change in the provision of mandatory performance guarantee. "We will stand on our condition despite their request," said Dr. Kishore Babu Aryal, director-general of the department. The attractive hydropower project in eastern Nepal remains shelved after the World Bank refused to finance it in 1995 amid protests by advocacy groups.

WORKERS OF HETAUDA TEXTILES CALLED A 'BANDH' (shutdown strike) in the industrial town of Hetauda Friday demanding payment of salaries. The factory has failed to pay salaries to nearly 1,200 workers for the last six months. Only two years ago, the government pumped in some Rs. 90 million to keep the factory running. Reports said the factory ran into trouble after its product could not compete in the local market. Cotton textile worth Rs. 70 million is lying at the factory's warehouses. The factory management has demanded Rs. 320 million from the government to buy raw materials, pay salaries and replace old materials and restart production. The workers have called for a 24-hour-long general strike in industrial town of Hetauda Friday and have also threatened to block traffic along the East-West highway.

THE CENTRAL WORKING COMMITTEE OF THE RULING Nepali Congress has decided to amend the party's constitution to elect half of its members in the proposed 37-member CWC. The proposed amendment will come into force after the party's 10th general convention in Pokhara next week endorses it. The convention is to elect a new leadership and members of the CWC. The party president will appoint the remaining 18 CWC members. Earlier, only five members were elected on regional basis to the 31-member CWC.

THE MINISTRY OF POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT has agreed to form a task force to study the demands made by transport operators. In a meeting with the transport operators on Tuesday, Minister of State for Population and Environment Shiva Raj Joshi said the task force will also have representatives from the transport entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs are protesting against the government's decision to ban vehicles older than 20 years from the capital from next year. Officials said they had taken the decision in order to reduce pollution and congestion in the bowl-shaped capital valley. The transport operators had threatened to organize nation-wide 'chakka jam' (strike) against the government's decision.

NEPAL RASTRA BANK (NRB), THE COUNTRY'S CENTRAL bank, intervened in the foreign currency market Friday by procuring US\$ 18 million (approximately Rs 1.33 billion), reports said. The bank had intervened because of excess liquidity in the market, officials said. Only last month, the NRB had procured US\$ 23.5 million from the market. Pramod Rizal, President of the Forex Exchange Dealers Association of Nepal (FEDAN), said stability of the Indian currency against the dollar and declining interest rates in the US are some of the reasons behind adequate dollar holdings of commercial banks. ■

"I have no major differences with the King."

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, in Himal.

* * *

"They will just pay tribute to BP Koirala and remember his dreams, talk about democratic socialism and reminisce the achievements of 1951, 1958 and 1990. In the end they will just fight amongst themselves and finish the convention with nothing new."

Khadga Prasad Oli, deputy leader of the main opposition CPN-UML, commenting on the forthcoming convention of ruling Nepali Congress, in The Kathmandu Post.

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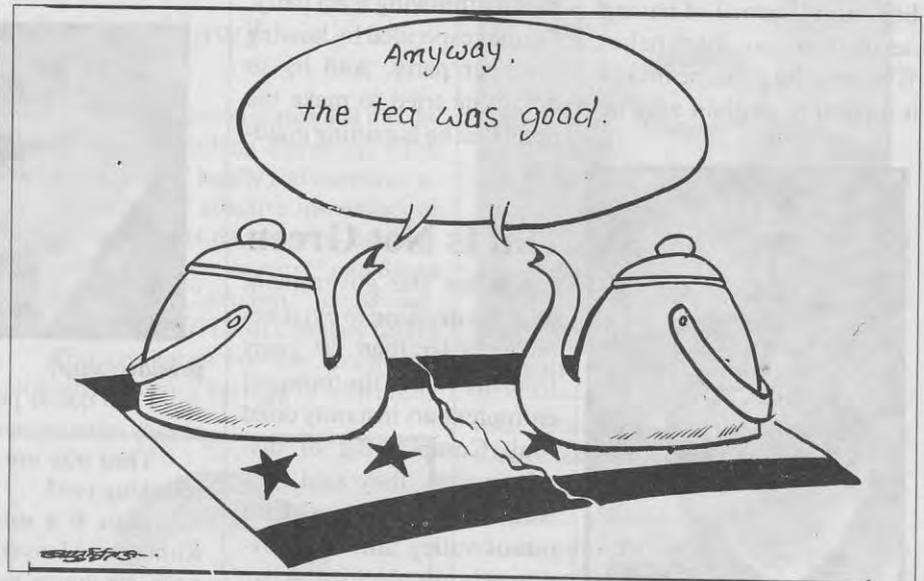
"Why would I want to split the party? I am the one who needs party unity most."

Sher Bahadur Deuba, former prime minister and leader of Nepali Congress, in Himalaya Times.

* * *

"The champions of multi-party democracy should never forgive Biswonath Upadhyaya."

Bamdev Gautam, General Secretary of Marxist Leninist, criticizing former



Chief Justice Upadhyaya for his controversial decision of 1995, in Jana Bhawana.

* * *

"Under the shadow of Mt. Machhapuchhre, Congress should think with a cool head and commit that they won't fight ever again."

Pradeep Kumar Shrestha, President

of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, on what Congress should do during its convention in Pokhara, in Bimarsha.

* * *

"The Bandhs and strikes have added to the cost of production and service in the country."

Diwakar Golchha, second Vice President of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and a leading industrialist, in Gorkhapatra.

* * *

"We shouldn't destroy ourselves in the name of nationalism."

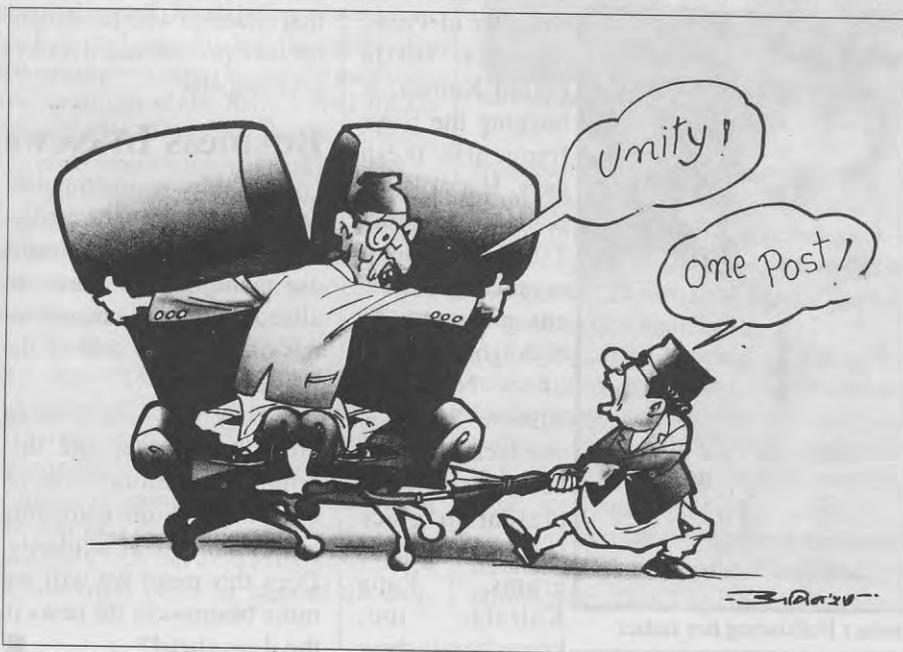
Manisha Koirala, Bollywood actress, commenting on the recent violence in Kathmandu regarding the Hrithik rumour, in Kantipur.

* * *

"Yes, I am the Helen of Nepal."

Bimala Shrestha, the pioneer Nepalese dancer, comparing herself to the legendary dancer from India, in Spacetime daily.

* * *



Himalaytimes

Budhabar Weekly

Single Living, High Thinking

It seems former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai is proud of having decided to stay a bachelor. Wherever he goes, he makes it a point to explain why he



Bhattarai : Blissfully alone

never got married. Attending a meeting organized to felicitate Bollywood actress Manisha Koirala and singer Udit Narayan Jha last week, Bhattarai advised Manisha to adopt spinsterhood and continue her work to bring wide recognition to the country. The reason? Citing his own example, Bhattarai explained that bachelors have much less to worry about in life than their married counterparts.

Dinner Diplomacy

Whether Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala knows it or not, his one-time protégé Sher Bahadur Deuba is no longer a child whose silence can be bought by a sweet. The former prime minister declared the other day that he is not someone who would be swept off his feet by a cup of tea. From a shy

man from western Nepal, Deuba has lately grown out of the shadow of Koirala to challenge him. Angered by Koirala's attempt to console him by throwing a tea party, Deuba responded by hosting a dinner party. And by so doing, he tried to make the point that he is gaining maturity.

Old Is Not Green

When the government took the decision to evict vehicles older than 20 years from the valley, the transport entrepreneurs instantly cried foul. Complaining of discrimination, they said they would not take their vehicles out of valley until the government also decided to ban 20-year-old motorcycles, airplanes and other conveyance. When it comes to pleading their case, some people can come out with strange arguments.

Papa's Daughter

Sujata Koirala, the only



Sujata Koirala : Following her father

daughter of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, is hogging the news frequently these days. Her Sushma Koirala Memorial Trust is seen organizing different programs to highlight the plight of Nepalese women. Sujata is one lucky lady, as her father is always present to grace the trust's programs. Papa Koirala, too, knows how to show

that relations with his daughter take precedence over everything else.

Business In News

Few businessmen and industrialists used to be media-friendly. But lately, it seems our money-makers have realized the importance of being on the right side of the fourth estate.

They are seen holding press conferences and disseminating information on everything from economic policy to national solidarity. Does this mean we will see more business in the news in the days ahead? ■

REVELATION

'Our Young Leaders Are Impatient'

— GIRIJA PRASAD KOIRALA



Nepali Congress President and Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala declared that he will step down from both positions within three years. Disclosing this, Koirala asked all his colleagues to bury their differences. Excerpts from his encounter with the press:

When do you plan to quit the prime ministership and party presidentship?

I will quit as prime minister and party president soon. I have already made my mind clear on that. As you know, I am getting old.

Then why are party colleagues like Sher Bahadur Deuba attacking you?

There is a struggle in the party to establish leadership as Kishunji and I myself are on the verge of handing over the reins to a new generation. Frankly speaking, our second-generation leaders have not shown any patience and courage.

Are you serious?

Look. Kishunji and I do not have any differences now. We are not fighting for any post. It is the second-generation leaders who have driven us to this position.

How do you see the upcoming general convention of the party?

The elections during the convention will introduce collective leadership in the party as more than 50 percent of central committee members will be elected by the general convention.

CIAA On The Move

The CIAA starts working under a new leadership. Is it acting within the principles of rule of law?

By KESHAB POUDEL

In a democratic set-up, respect for the rule of law by institutions guarantees the fairness in the functioning of state machinery. When an institution with enormous power starts to work arbitrarily, fear and panic tends to grip the public.

Soon after taking charge, the new leadership of the Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) started its job amid suspicion whether it was following the rule of law. Whatever the decisions and actions taken within the existing system, they must respect the rule of law as the constitution does not permit any institution to function in a high-handed manner.

"I am happy to see that the CIAA has started functioning, but that is not the final step in combating corruption. It must book the culprits and punish them in accordance with the existing law," said advocate Bal Krishna Neupane. "The latest action of the CIAA has enthused society that there is an organization that can fight corruption."

Others, however, see something wrong in the procedure adopted by the CIAA in suspending individuals before proving their guilt. In the Lauda Air deal, the commission asked the government to suspend the executive chairman of the RNAC, Hari Bhakta Shrestha. Following that recommendation, the government has suspended Shrestha.

Although the commission argues that Shrestha's continuity in his post may obstruct the investigation process, others see the process itself is not in accordance to with constitutional obligations.

Under Clause 19 (3) of CIAA Act 2048 B.S., if the CIAA finds a rational basis that a concerned officer, who is charged by the CIAA of corruption and misuse of authority, or an individual may destroy or demolish the evidence of corruption and his remaining in the post may disturb the investigation process, the CIAA can write to the government or concerned office to suspend the indi-

vidual. The commission argues that it is the sole body in controlling corruption. "The CIAA is emerging legally and constitutionally as one of the effective institutions to control and prevent the abuse of authority and corruption in the country," said Surya Nath Upadhyaya, CIAA chief commissioner. (See interview SPOTLIGHT January 12-18)

The constitution, however, has special provision to protect the right of individuals

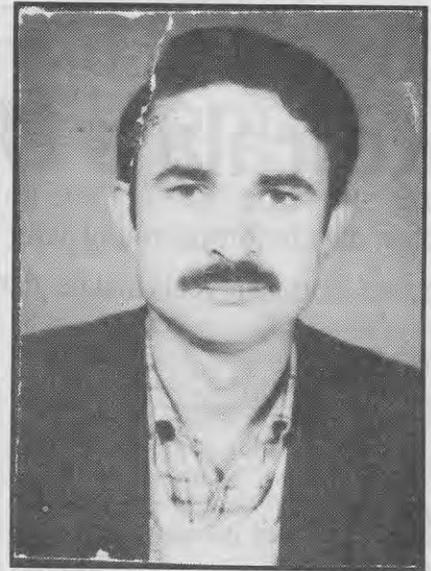


Shrestha : Need fair play

from the monopoly of the state. Article 14(3) of the constitution says: No person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself. In such a situation, how can the CIAA use the clause to force him to speak against himself.

If the person is later acquitted of the offence, lawyers ask, who will compensate for the mental and physical trauma he or she suffers in society. The CIAA's justification in having Shrestha suspended is, therefore, weak, according to lawyers.

The constitution guarantees the fundamental right of presumption of innocence till proven guilty. The CIAA is not a court of law



Neupane : 'Stick to rule of law'

itself because it is not the function of the CIAA to establish or absolve anybody of any guilt. There are two layers of court of law (Appellate and the Supreme Court) that have to rule against the individual before he or she can be termed guilty.

On the equally controversial issue of recruiting teachers, the CIAA intervened in the examination process. Although the interview of the teachers started following the mandamus ordered by the Supreme Court a few months back, the commission found no time to take note of the order.

"How can it intervene in the process when it is still in the process of completion?" asked Keshab Prasad Bhattarai, President of Nepal Teachers Association.

It seems interesting that the CIAA, vested with so much power, should prefer publicity to action to investigate the real culprit in cases of corruption and abuse of authority.

During the Panchayat days, the Commission on Prevention of Abuse of Authority used to send officials into panic as it had the right to both investigate, prosecute and hear the case. This is the reason the 1990 constitution clearly laid down CIAA as merely an investigation authority. In the last three weeks, the CIAA has already ordered investigations in two major issues including Lauda Air Deal and recruiting of teachers.

Experience has shown that the CIAA cannot be popular as long as the institution works arbitrarily. This is the reason it needs to work within the purview of the constitution and principles of rule of law. ■

CONGRESS CONVENTION

Koirala's Declaration

A few days before the ruling party's convention, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala reveals that he plans quit both posts within three years

By KESHAB POUDEL

At a time when his student-turned-rival Sher Bahadur Deuba was on a whirlwind nationwide tour to gain support of party workers, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala revealed that he would quit as party president and prime minister within three years.

In an exclusive interview with Rajendra Dahal editor of Himal fortnightly news magazine, Prime Minister Koirala said that he would hand over the reins of the party even earlier if the situation permitted.

Known as a strong party organizer, Koirala's decision to quit active politics stunned his party colleagues as well as rivals. Although no one has reacted to the prime minister's statement, the 78-year-old Koirala has indicated that he is in no mood to give up either position now.

"Within three years everything will be completed. The change may occur earlier if a leadership grows satisfactorily. Then, I won't have to wait for so long. If I quit politics, I will resign from both party presidentship and prime minister. For that reason, I have fixed a three-year timeframe," declared Koirala.

Koirala won the party president elections in 1996 defeating Chiranjibi Wagle. Koirala became prime minister in the first democratically elected government in 1991 following the defeat of former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai in the general election of 1991.

Ever since he jumped into the political arena after a labor strike at Biratnagar Jute Mill in 2004 B.S, Koirala has been taking part in active politics as a skillful organizer. Most of the leaders and workers who are in the rival camp once worked as close confidants of his. Be it Sher Bahadur Deuba, Khum Bahadur Khadka, Bijaya Kumar Gacchedar, Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Bimlendra Nidhi or Chiranjibi Wagle, Koirala knows their ability personally.

Koirala's declaration at this juncture of his political career is very significant, as he is in a position to win the party presidentship election. Although he has not given rivals any position in the existing cabinet, Prime Minister Koirala understands his limitations.

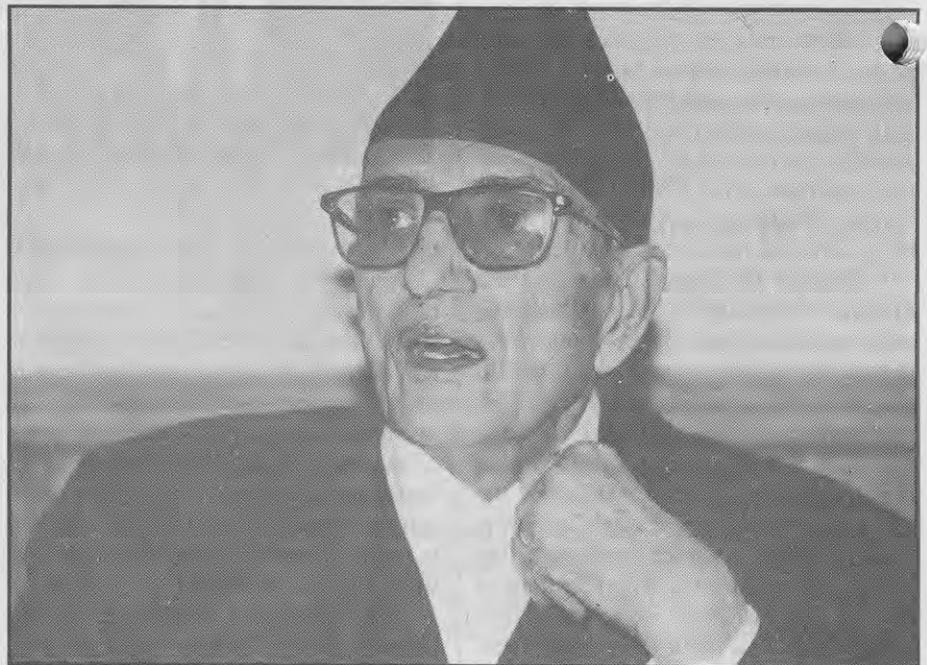
Known for his uncompromising stance in early days of his political career, Koirala has now established himself as a flexible and soft leader within and outside the party.

Prime Minister Koirala has avoided a direct confrontation with his rival and former protege Deuba in the aftermath of the recent parliamentary party election.

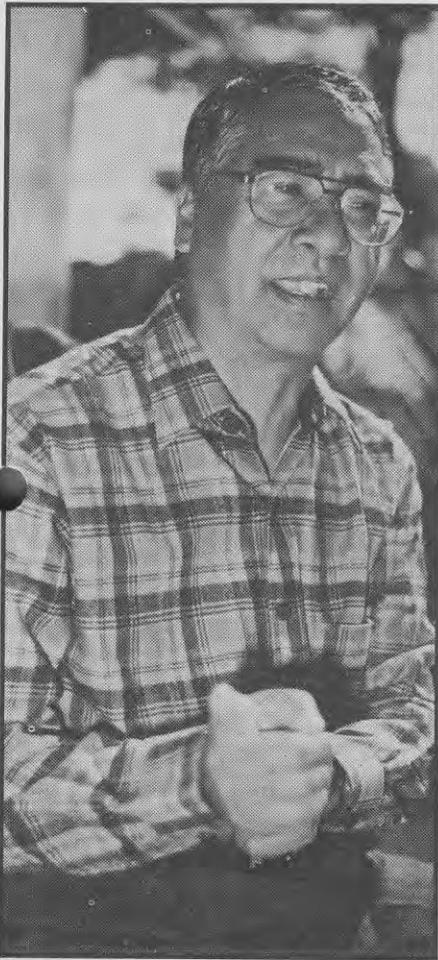
Regarded as a natural successor to the leadership in the Nepali Congress, Deuba has locked horns with Koirala just after the elections of parliamentary party, often using derogatory words.

A desperate Deuba uses every means to press Koirala to accept his demand, including the principle of one-man-one post, which Koirala has rejected. Backed by his unpredictable political guru Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Deuba is now trying to accommodate almost all anti-Koirala individuals under his umbrella.

Adhering to the time-honoured principle "the enemy of my enemy is my friend", Deuba feels comfortable shaking hands with anyone who opposes Koirala. From new Koirala nemesis



PM Koirala : Confident



Deuba : Fighting on

Khum Bahadur Khadka to sworn critics the prime minister like Bal Bahadur K.C, Chiranjibi Wagle, Purna Bahadur Khadka, Bimlendra Nidhi and Pradeep Giri, Deuba is on a crusade.

Strangely, Deuba's two-week whirlwind trip across the country did not change Koirala's position. The prime minister is not taking the challenge seriously. "I don't have to say anything on the election campaign. Frankly speaking, it is a race between members of the younger generation to establish themselves as the leader," said Koirala

As Congress is in the process of evolving a new rung of leadership, it is not easy for Koirala to declare any particular individual as the party leader. And Deuba, who has his own advantages and disadvantages, does not enjoy complete acceptability. ■

SHER AND SINGH Roars Of Two Lions

Sher Bahadur Deuba typifies the character of the late Kunwar Indrajit Singh

By KESHAB POUDEL

Although they are two leaders hailing from different generations, both Sher Bahadur Deuba and K.I. Singh will go down in Nepal's history as the lions that roared. Both hailing from the far western region, it is not a coincidence that their names mean lion in English (Sher and Singh mean lion in Nepali).

Even after a five-decade history of social and political transformation, the behavior of Nepalese politicians resembles that of leaders of the 1950s. Politicians make similar comments and remarks.

Deuba, who was mentored by the late B.P. Koirala, often shows that he is comfortable walking in Singh's footsteps.

Known as a popular orator who did not have any control over his tongue, Singh's speech used to spark controversies during his peak period in politics. Singh was sent to prison several times on charges of defaming the court.

Deuba speaks

In the last two months, Deuba has urged party workers to vote against slavery by voting for him.

- I want to end slavery in the party.
- A slave cannot speak the truth and cannot muster the courage to fight the Maoists.

- From today, I am no more a student of Koirala.

- My candidacy is against the familization of party.

- I am Sher Bahadur Deuba and I do not need anyone's blessing.

- The people and party leaders have already accepted me as the leader. Girijababu, too, must accept me. ■ ■

Singh usually began his speeches with fiery personal attacks rather than by raising any serious political issue of the day.

If one goes through Deuba's statements over the last three months, it be-

comes clear that he has left Singh behind when it comes to launching personal attacks.

Deuba, who is running for the presidency of a party that claims to have freed Nepalis from slavery twice, seems to forget his organization's past when he accuses Koirala of promoting slavery in the Nepali Congress. "Is he denouncing the historic role of the party by declaring that there is slavery in the party?" asked a political analyst.

"Deuba is a simple person of the far western region and he does not know how to use words diplomatically. His frank statements enhance his image," said a close Deuba colleague.

Deuba's recent statements and activities showed how slow the process of cultural transformation is moving. Knowledge and technology can be handed over slowly but not cultural change.

Singh speaks

Some interesting statements of K.I. Singh published in Nepal Ko Rajnaitik Darpan (Referendum and After) by Grishma Bahadur Devkota.

- There is no need for a referendum when such a large number of people are attending my speeches. Singh (Lion) always wants to live as the king of the jungle, not as the king of the prison. K.I. Singh is lion-hearted.

- In a situation when the King cannot listen, Pashupati cannot speak, where can we go. The people do not have courage, the leaders do not have ideas and the King is surrounded by three people. (Nepal Times 2036 Kartik 18)

- Matrika Prasad Koirala is Marwari Prasad Koirala who has built a big bungalow in Biratnagar.

- I am K.I. Singh, so I am not a grass eater. A lion never eats grass. (In 1979)

- My roar must be understood by the King. If he doesn't, I can explode. ■

FPAN

Strategic Plan

A leading non-governmental organization brings out a five-year plan focusing on reproductive health

By A CORRESPONDENT

It's time to reflect and re-orient its goal. The four-decade-old Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN), a pioneering non-governmental organization, is, hence, at the turning point.

Set up in 1959, six years before the government formally launched programs in the population sector, the FPAN currently offers services in 800 Village Development Committees in 34 out of 75 districts in the country. The FPAN services constitute nearly 30 percent of the national program in this sector.

In the beginning, the FPAN primarily focused on delivering family planning services, both permanent and temporary, to married couples. "As the concept was quite new, we had to integrate our programs with development packages," recalls Hari Khanal, deputy director general at the FPAN.

As the government has expanded its health network through length and breadth of the country, the FPAN has focused on those areas where health services are still inaccessible. "We have mobilized nearly 12,000 volunteers all over the country to provide services in the deprived, rural areas," said Sunil K. Bhandary, Immediate Past President of the FPAN.

To meet the new challenges, the Association has brought out a five-year-long strategic plan (2001-2005). Making the plan public here on Monday, newly elected chairman of FPAN, Chhatra Giri, said the strategic plan includes programs to attract more people toward family planning services, increase women's capacity in decision-making and fulfill the demand of repro-

ductive health services of the youth, among others.

Out of an estimated budget of Rs 229 million for the year 2001, the Association has allocated 37 percent of its budget for family planning, 37 percent for youth related programs, 9 percent each for administration and gender related issues. Its parent organization, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is also one of the main donors to its activities by providing assistance worth Rs 98.9 million this year. The Association plans to mobilize internal resources worth Rs five million.

The Association provided temporary family planning services to nearly 300,000 people and permanent family planning services to nearly 6,800 people in the year 1999. Besides, it also provided maternal and child health services to nearly 662,000 people, pathological services to more than 54,000 people and treatment to sexually transmitted diseases to nearly 8,000 people in 1999.

"We are now adopting a holistic approach and trying to increase women's participation at the policy level," said Subash Pradhan, general secretary of FPAN.

Besides services delivery, the FPAN has been involved in advocacy works in critical areas related to reproductive health. The Association had raised the issue of controlling immigration in the Panchayat days and had presented "Pregnancy Protection Bill" in the parliament to legalize abortion on health ground.

After the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994, the Association brought

NEPAL-BANGLADESH Fruitful Visit

Nepal and Bangladesh may have more economic interaction in the days to come thanks to the recent understanding. Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola and his Bangladeshi counterpart, Abdus Samad Azad, have agreed to remove customs duties on vegetable, fruits and other primary items exported from Nepal to Bangladesh. Bangladesh has also agreed to provide another route to Nepal to reach the Mongla port. According to Nepali Ambassador to Bangladesh, Madhu Raman Acharya, this route is a shorter one than the existing Kakarbhitta-Fulbari-Banglabandh route. He said an agreement has also been reached with Bangladesh to construct a broad-gauge railway line to facilitate trade through the new route. During his three-day visit to Dhaka last week, Bastola discussed issues related to bilateral trade, transit and tourism with Bangladeshi officials. Upon his arrival from Dhaka, Bastola said, "We have agreed to develop Birjung-Rohanpur (India) - Sindhbad (Bangladesh) broad gauge railway line as new route to facilitate trade between the two countries." He said both the countries shared common views on revitalization of SAARC. According to officials, Bangladesh has also agreed to allow private airlines from Nepal to fly to Dhaka. At present, only official airlines of Nepal and Bangladesh fly between the two countries. ■

out its decade-long strategic plan identifying reproductive health as one of the fundamental rights of the human being. Similarly, after the International Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the Association has been focusing on programs related to women and youth population. ■

EARTHQUAKE DAY

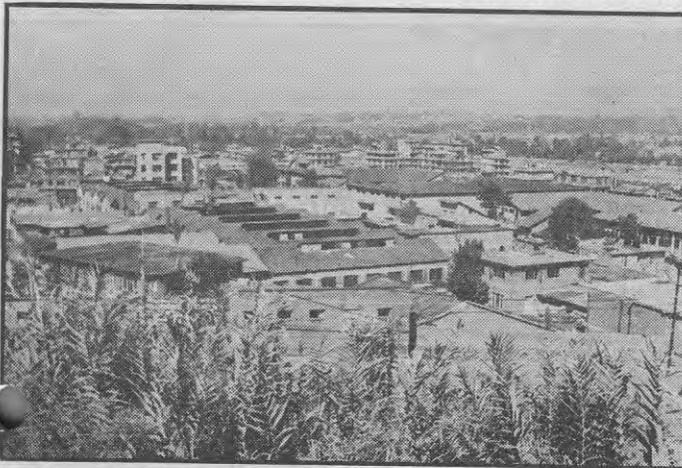
Tremors Of Concern

The country observes Earthquake Day without formulating plans to deal with the disaster

By A CORRESPONDENT

When a major earthquake hit the Central American nation of El Salvador last week, it sent shivers down the spines of Kathmanduites, who were busy celebrating Earthquake Day to remember the tragic tremor of 1934 that took more than 4,000 lives. They knew a similar fate could be waiting for them.

So when the people took to the streets



Kathmandu City : Vulnerable

in a rally on January 15, 2001 to mark Earthquake Day, the concerns on their face were real.

Thanks to the geological vulnerability of Nepal, there is a strong possibility of quakes occurring in this region. As the plate of the Indian subcontinent is still pushing the Tibetan plate, thereby giving rise to high hills and mountains, tectonic disturbances are always likely here.

Experts predict that if the tremor of the 1934 magnitude — estimated to be 8.4 on Richter scale — were to occur today, 70 percent of the houses in Kathmandu valley would be destroyed.

Amod Mani Dixit, an expert on earthquakes, says that since 67 years have

passed since the last major earthquake hit the country, there is every likelihood of a destructive quake occurring anytime.

If a major quake (above 7 Richter scale) were to hit the capital, the loss of life and property would be unimaginable. According to a survey by the Earthquake Technology National Society, more than 700,000 people would be rendered homeless and widespread destruction of physical infrastructure would occur if a major tremor shook the capital.

As the buildings in the valley are built haphazardly without following any norms, most of them are unable to withstand the pressures of the quakes. The Building Code formulated by the Department of Building two years ago is

not enforced at all.

With rows of houses crammed together in an unplanned manner, even a moderate tremor can prove highly destructive in terms of loss of life and property.

Worse, there is no disaster management plan. The hospitals and fire brigades are anything but prepared to take charge in times of crisis.

The officials at the municipality lament the absence of a central plan to tackle manage disasters like earthquakes. Even down to the grass-roots level, people have highly inadequate information on the ways of preventing heavy losses from such disasters.

BIRTHDAY CUP

RCT Is The Winner

The Ranipokhari Corner Team (RCT) emerged victorious in the recently concluded Birthday Cup Football Tournament, which was shrouded in controversy thanks to the existence of two national football associations — one supported by the government and the another by FIFA.

Organized by the government-approved All Nepal Football Association (ANFA), this year's Birthday Cup was participated by eighteen teams including three from India.

The RCT and the Belgaria Sports Club, Calcutta reached the final of the tournament held in January 15 where the former beat the latter 1-0 to seal its victory in the tournament after 27 years.

It was the spirited attempt by Ramesh Gyawali of RCT that helped the club win the game. He scored the sole goal that won the match for the domestic side.

In a stadium filled to capacity crowd, Gyawali's remarkable goal incited thunderous applause from the audience.

Nirajan Rayamajhi of the RCT club was judged the outstanding player for his 12 goals in the tournament. Mahendra Police Club and Manang Marsyangdi Club were the other two teams to reach the semi-finals. While the police were beaten by Calcuttans, Manang Marsyangdi relented before RCT.

Birthday Cup tournament is held every year in January to mark the auspicious birthday of His Majesty the King. ■

Like the proverbial ostrich that buries its head in the ground, hoping that the problem would disappear itself, the country's planners and officials are turning a blind eye to the impending disaster situation. Do they need a terrible tremor to actually shake them out of their slumber? ■

IYV 2001

Saluting The Spirit

Volunteerism is not a new concept in Nepal. What is needed is to recognize and promote it for national development

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

When I. L. Singh, a post-graduate student from Kathmandu, visited Pyuthan in the 1970s, he had strange concepts about his own country. After having spent nearly one year as a National Development Service volunteer at a local school, he came to understand the ground realities of Nepal. Upon his return home, he joined NDS as a coordinator and visited almost all of the country's 75 districts, most of them on foot. Having served in Sri Lanka as a United Nations Volunteer (UNV), Singh — who is now associated with UNICEF Kathmandu office — recalls how the concept of volunteerism literally transformed his entire life.

"The concept of volunteerism is not new in Nepal. Our forefathers have been practicing it for the past several centuries. But we seem to be forgetting those ideals now," said Singh.

By setting up Guthis, constructing pati and pauwas (public places for taking rest), building schools and health posts, Nepalis have exhibited that they may be poor in material terms but not in serving others. Pioneer poet Bhanubhakta chronicles the story of a 'ghansi' (grass cutter) who constructed a well so that people would remember him. Almost all the schools and colleges in the fifties and sixties were constructed with community support in Nepal.

As times changed, so have the attitude of the Nepalis. Though the number of non-government organizations and civil society groups has gone up after the restoration of democracy a decade back, the spirit of volunteerism is on the decline. The situation is such that people are not coming forward even to maintain local taps and repair local schools constructed

by foreign volunteer organizations.

"Volunteerism is not a new concept. All we need to do is to promote it as per the changing needs," said Simon Forrester, program officer at UNV, Kathmandu. Agreed Bhuvan Silwal, National Program Coordinator of the International Year of the Volunteers 2001, "We are devising a number of programs to invite participation and ownership at the local level."

With a view to promote the concept

A number of international organizations, including Peace Corps, JICA, VSO, MS Nepal, to name a few, are carrying out voluntary activities for the last several decades. Currently, there are 105 Peace Corps volunteers in Nepal, and more than 4,000 have served in the country over the last 38 years. Since the establishment of Japan International Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) office in Nepal in 1970, more than 700 young Japanese have worked in different key development sectors in Nepal.

Of late, a number of Nepali volunteers are also working overseas as UN volunteers. According to UN Kathmandu office, 32 Nepalis are working within the country and 87 are working abroad as the UN volunteers at present. "Nepal now occupies fifth place among UN volunteers," said Dr. Henning



Volunteers' Exhibition : Message of Solidarity

of volunteerism and recognize the contributions of volunteer organizations in promoting peace and development around the world, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the proposal of observing 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers (IYV). The year is being observed with a variety of programs worldwide by the government, non-government and volunteer organizations. (See: Box)

Karcher, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations system in Kathmandu.

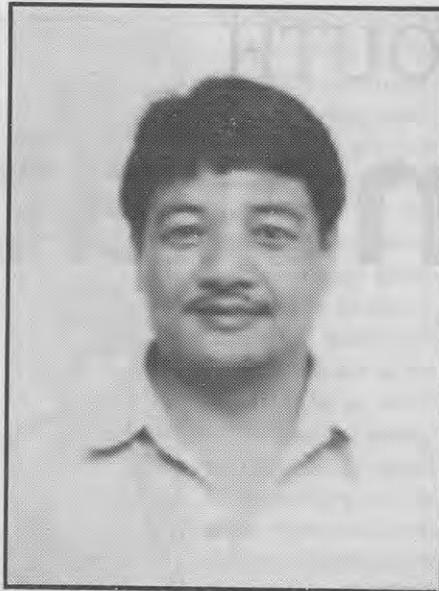
In order to revive the spirit of volunteerism among the young people and professionals, the National Planning Commission (NPC) is assisting the Nepal IYV National Steering Committee to start a National Development Volunteer Service (NDVS). The NDVS aims to place up to 200 volunteer development work-

ers on assignments throughout the country. "The volunteers have made great contributions in nation building," said Dr. Jagdish C. Pokhrel, member of NPC and chairman of Nepal National Steering Committee of IYV 2001. "We have got surplus of trained manpower in urban areas but nobody wants to work in the remote areas. So, we are planning to rope in such manpower to work in under-served areas as volunteers."

The IYV national steering committee has outlined four main objectives this year, namely recognition, promotion, networking and facilitation. To further enhance the recognition of IYV and volunteerism, UNV Nepal has produced a Nepali brochure and T-shirts and is planning to record a volunteer song. The committee began its campaign in remote villages in order to sensitize people about the positive qualities of volunteerism. Part of this plan includes a traveling volunteer exhibition to showcase Nepal's volunteer work throughout the country. "The committee will explore the potential role that the private sector can play in encouraging poor and underprivileged people to volunteer," said Silwal.

As political leaders have failed to inspire the Nepali society and social workers no longer draw the respect and recognition in the society, reviving the concept of volunteerism in the masses has come as a major challenge. In Sri Lanka, Dr. A. T. Aryaratne has been successfully launching the Sarvodaya movement by mobilizing voluntary labor. Nearly 30 percent of the total population of Sri Lanka are members of the movement. Voluntary labor is, however, seen as a form of exploitation in Nepali society.

Nepal has, however, developed some indigenous methods of voluntary activities. For example, nearly 40,000 Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) are providing primary health care services to women and children all over the country voluntarily. National health programs like Immunization Days have become successful in Nepal mainly due to contributions of these FCHVs. According to a recent USAID estimate, lives of nearly 40,000 children have been saved



Singh : Reviving Volunteerism

per year in Nepal thanks to the activities of the FCHVs. "Mere speeches are not going to help. The government should recognize and promote volunteerism in the country," said I. L. Singh, who is also coordinating the activities if IAVE (International Association of Voluntary) in Nepal. "We need to transform ourselves from power-oriented society to service-oriented society."

There are other challenges too. The concept of volunteerism could be the only way out to fill in the void in the Maoist-affected areas where the government has withdrawn most of its services in the far-flung villages and NGOs and International NGOs are being targeted by Maoist rebel themselves. "In such a situation, mobilizing volunteers is the only way to deliver services and provide humanitarian aid in case of emergency," said Shobhakar Budhathoki, who has served as a UNV in conflict-prone areas such as East Timor and Kosovo.

For a resource poor country like Nepal, volunteerism is perhaps the best way to motivate people to engage in development works and ensure judicious use of scarce resources. It is easier to preach but difficult to practice. What is needed is exemplary roles to be played by public personalities. If there could be some concrete initiatives in this regard, IYV 2001 could be termed a success. ■

IYV 2001 International Solidarity

Thousands of volunteers in around 82 countries have planned events for the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) in 2001 — the largest global celebration of volunteerism ever conceived. IYV National Committees have put in place a broad range of activities to promote and recognize the work of volunteers. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan launched the year-long activities amidst a function at the UN Headquarters in New York on November 28. These national committees form the backbone of IYV in the individual countries. IYV national committees will not only plan events, but they will also carry out voluntary service and conduct follow-up after the year. Members represent a diverse group, ranging from local volunteers to cabinet ministers.

The International Year of Volunteers 2001 serves as a platform to initiate government legislation and bring about new ways to strengthen volunteer action. In some African states, IYV focuses on the alleviation of poverty or the eradication of malaria. In Asia, there is a trend to document the history or tradition of volunteerism and develop corporate volunteerism. In the Americas, IYV comes alive in popular events, such as the Carnival in Brazil and a concert in Trinidad and Tobago.

The latest news and links to IYV National Committees are available online at www.iyv2001.org. The global IYV web site, created by Team IYV at the headquarters of the United Nations Volunteers program provides news of activities of national committees, research in volunteerism and stories of volunteers. Its goal is to help volunteers tap into national and regional networks of like-minded people. ■

NEPALESE YOUTH A Generation Of A New Era

More than seven million Nepalese in the 10-24 age group have grown up in a period of massive technological transformation and wide availability of education facilities. Though they are energetic and creative, they find themselves in a very stagnant job market. As policy makers are least concerned about their situation, Nepal's youth are losing their optimism.

By KESHAB POUDEL

If the number of young people queuing up at the Singha Durbar gate each afternoon is any indication, Nepal's youth are in the midst of a severe employment drought.

Although no one has studied how many of youngsters visit Singha Durbar after 2 p.m. each day, ministers and secretaries young men and women come in droves in search of jobs. "I have at least a couple of youngsters from my constituency each day coming for jobs," said Ram Bahadur Gurung, Minister for State for Water Resources.

Purnima Adhikary typifies the story

of the urban young. A 23-year-old undergraduate, Adhikary is trying to go to the United States or the United Kingdom for higher education. Born into a middle-class family in Kathmandu, Adhikary has access to many modern facilities, including the Internet.

"I want to go to the West to get quality education," said Adhikary, who has been accepted by a university in the United States.

Kushal Timilsina, a 20-year-old resident of Kathmandu, is a BBS student at the Universal Academy. The son of middle class parents, Timilsina, too, has access to modern amenities. But he is not satisfied. "The state has done nothing to mobilize

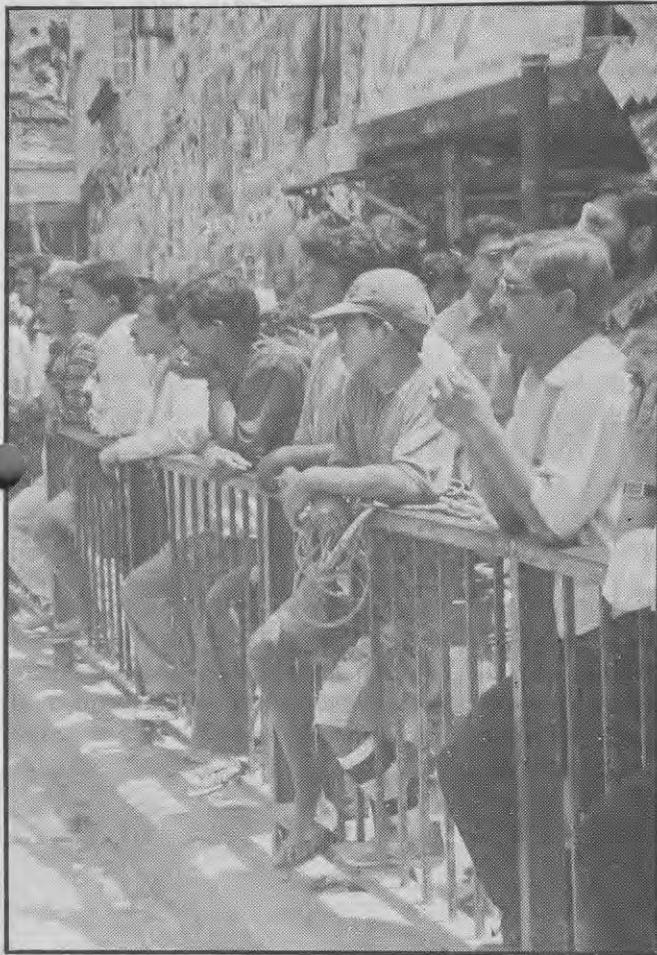
our potential and take advantage of our knowledge and skills," he said. "In such a sorry situation, what is the use of all that I have learned?"

The quest of Adhikary and Timilsina represents the broader picture of urban Nepal's desire to attain a better quality of life.

Rural youngsters, who are mostly semi-educated, are migrating to the urban centers of the country to fulfill similar aspirations.

"I want to meet the minister and ask him to get me a job in any government office," said Balchandra Dahal of Dailekh district.

These youngsters have many poten-



Nepalese youths : No one to guide them

tials as well as limitations. The youth are the future of the country. They are good as well as bad around the world. The young are the children of society but they are yet to be understood properly by policy makers. History has shown that children represent both problems and solutions. Whatever they may be, the youth inherit the country.

The young are exploited by political parties wherever they want to create trouble. From elections to demonstrations, political parties place a great premium on the participation of the youth.

"Education is one of the most important social variables which affects employment of the people. It directly affects the pattern of employment, occupation carried out by them and duration of work," said Parthibeswor P. Timilsina in a report titled "Employment Situation in Nepal". The more educated one is, the better his or her chances to go abroad or secure a better

job in Nepal.

According to demographic terminology, the population in the 10-24 age group is regarded as young or youth. But in the Nepalese context, those in the 16-35 age group are regarded as adults. Although a youth gets the right to vote at the age of 18, he or she is eligible for a citizenship certificate at the age of 16. According to the Public Service Commission, a candidate is allowed to apply for a government job until the age of 35. According to the Civil Code, a person reaches adulthood at the age of 16.

There are many hurdles in the days ahead for youngsters, but one can see hopeful signs in smooth transition. The youngsters are gradually replacing the older generation of

people in different walks of life and are establishing their own identity. Along with the dot.com business, the mass media, including newspapers, radio and television, are dominated by a growing herd of youngsters.

But there are areas of concern as well. Disparities between the urban and rural youth are growing. The urban youth receive the best possible education in the capital whereas the rural young are forced to study at government schools with traditional curriculum which produce little more than mediocrity.

The positive side of the urban youth is that they are equipped with all kinds of technological knowhow. But at the same time, this group of people, though in a small scale, is trapped in bad habits, including drug abuse.

As the number of educated youth is growing rapidly in urban areas, jobs are becoming scarce. Many Nepalis are re-

turning home with a foreign degree.

People belonging to the 15-34 age group form over a third of Nepal's total population. They are the most powerful group of people in terms of politics, economics and other factors.

In the 1960s and 1970s, few rural youngsters saw a school anywhere near their villages. The radio was a rare commodity then. Today, there is a school in almost every village and the radio is widely available medium of information and education. Television and computers are gradually penetrating the rural areas. Internet access, though for a few people, is available in many parts of the country.

This generation has had wide exposure to every kind of modern facilities. In many rural areas, people may not have seen a car, but they are familiar with telecommunication facilities. "Knowingly and unknowingly, society is transforming in a way that nobody was expecting," said sociologist Padma Lal Devkota. "Nepal's society is in transition as a large number of youth are at least literate or otherwise educated."

A large number of today's youth see life differently from what members of the earlier generation did. But no one has taken the aspirations and needs of these groups seriously. "The youth are gradually confronting new values, but the pace of life in many areas does not match their growing aspirations," said Devkota.

The problem of this powerful but unorganized group is that they do not get the kind of education and jobs they want. Many youngsters are roaming from one place to another in search of better opportunities. Only a few get the opportunities they want, while a large number of others are trapped in the political process.

According to a study, 300,000 young people enter the shrinking job market each year. Finding a place for them is one of the daunting tasks before the country. As major political parties, including the Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, other communist parties, and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, employ the youth as regular workers, the unemployment problem is somehow managed.

As long as the government fails to develop a long-term strategy, these youth

'Politicians Exploiting The youth'

— ANIL CHHETRI



Anil Chhetri, 26, a third year BA student in Tri-Chandra College, is also an youth activist.

What is the role of the youth?

The youth are the future of the country. They need to be molded in the

right direction.

What is the current situation of Nepal's youth?

I see youths molding their thoughts in a negative way. Some are willing to contribute to improving society but they remain overshadowed. Money plays a key role in shaping the future of the youth, but it is always scarce. However, some people use money to exploit youth power and create anarchy. When I joined college I suddenly became aware of the plight of the students and the disintegration of the education system by political parties.

I have seen people from urban areas not getting college admissions because they lack political influence or money. Corruption is a major setback for us. Why not try to let the youth focus on studies by freeing them from the clutches of exploiters?

What do you expect from the older generation?

The elders have gone through their youth, but today's young represent a whole different force. The elders have to understand the youth and vice versa. The youth in rural areas suffer the most because they'll have to survive in a much weaker and cruel world. The younger generation will always follow the elders and will always want to achieve something more. But some youth tend to envy the older generation. They have to realize that these people have achieved something to get where they are today.

How do you see the future?

The leaders of local elected bodies should take steps in guiding the youth. Awareness plays a vital role in protecting the youth from exploitation. Political parties and leaders have turned out to be in a hopeless state. The education system is in shambles even though people talk of quality education. I am worried that school children might be the next target for exploitation.

AS ■

cannot expect to get permanent jobs where they can put their knowledge to full use.

"If we handle this group of the population carefully, they can be a blessing for the country. If there are no programs, these energetic youth become a curse for the nation," said Dr. Ramhari Aryal, a population expert. "The youngsters are a group with high demands and high aspirations, so they must be tamed in accordance with the needs of the state."

Other agree that this population group is always vulnerable. "As the youth are creative and energetic, their psyche is always fertile and active. It is education and knowledge that tame their mind," said Dr. Murari Prasad Sharma, a psychologist. "The government needs to develop programs targeting this vulnerable segment of the population," said Dr. Sharma.

According to unofficial estimates, political parties hire youngsters through high schools, higher secondary schools and campuses. The aggressive introduc-

tion of radical ideas has already made the youngsters more violent and destructive. "Although a large number of Nepalese are still benevolent in nature, indoctrination of radical political ideology may change their behavior," said Dr. Sharma.

Migration among the youth is comparatively high. While the urban youth go to Western countries in search of a secure job and better life, their rural counterparts migrate to urban centers in search of better opportunities.

A study conducted by Bal Kumar K.C., Bhim Prasad Subedi and Yogendra Bahadur Gurung titled "Migration Pattern in Nepal: Streams, Characteristics and Reasons" showed that migration was largely dominated by young adults. About 55 percent of the total migrants are aged between 15-39 years. Out of the total migrants, only 40.0 per cent are literate.

Nepal Population Report 2000, published by the Ministry of Population and Environment, showed how a large seg-

Rural Youth Must Not Be Ignored'

A 23-year-old medical student, who identifies herself by the email address embolyus@hotmail.com, says she wants to be a successful doctor. She refused to be named or photographed because 'I don't like to be in the limelight'. Her motto is 'aim high'. She spoke to AKSHAY SHARMA..

What is the role of the youth?

The youth play a vital role in improving society. There seems to be a certain immaturity in Nepal's youth. We need to compromise on certain things in order to get the attention of the older generation. Both generations need to realize that they are actors in a stage. For example, the older generation may prefer to listen to bhajans because they need it now. But they need to realize that the music interests of the youth have changed with the times.

How is the environment for the youth?

The environment for the youth is discouraging in Nepal. The so-called Western influence in urban areas is only centered on copying Western fashion, music, eating habits, and so on.

What would you do to improve the situation?

We should not limit our focus to urban areas. In rural areas, where illiteracy is more rampant, people cannot distinguish between citamol tablets and vitamins. They don't understand that a full course of antibiotics has to be taken in order for the medicine to take the desired effect. Uneducated girls in rural areas fall prey to women traffickers. They come back from brothels with AIDS. A little extra awareness would probably have helped these girls to escape from the clutches of traffickers.

'We Have A Very Traditional Model For Youth Mobilization'

— Dr. JAGDISH CHANDRA POKHAREL

Dr. JAGDISH CHANDRA POKHAREL, a member of the National Planning Commission, says Nepalese youth need quality education and skill training to compete in the international market. Excerpts from an interview:

What are the challenges before Nepal's policy on the youth?

There are many challenges before our policy for the youth. In the new context, our programs are inadequate to mobilize the youth. Our programs are unable to meet the expectations of the youth and to harness their energy. The programs run by the Education and Sports Ministry are just meeting the need of a particular group of youth. Generally, we are unable to mobilize the youth in particular directions, although we are running some programs in the urban and rural areas. As a result, the youth in urban areas have improved quality in different fields.

How do you assess the direction being taken by young people?

All young people have certain directions and they have their own aims and anxieties. As the young in rural and urban areas have distinct lifestyles, efforts need to be made in different ways. The efforts of the government are not enough to mobilize youth. Two main institutions — political parties and educational centers — are responsible for mobilizing large number of youth.

What is your impression of political mobilization?

Political parties are exploiting the youth merely for political gain. As political parties have limited aims, youth cannot expect constructive contributions from them. Unfortunately, political parties have been doing nothing to equip the youth with technological skills.

If that is the case, why are not the youth massively taking part in activities run by political parties?

Today's youth have no choice other than joining politics. It is regular process to use the youth in politics but the question remains, what are the purposes of their use? Political parties must evaluate why they need to exploit the youth's energy. There are many youth

organizations run by political parties, but they are not giving any kind of skill training.

How do you see the role of the youth?

Following the restoration of democracy, the youth have lost track. During the Panchayat days, they had a clear goal — the restoration of democracy. Political parties used the youth as a weapon to attain their goals. We have a very traditional model for youth mobilization.

How do you assess the education system?

Our education system also has failed to build the youth properly. The education system does not teach courses of practical purposes. Rather, it further confuses the younger generation. The education system must teach a student where his place in society is. The education system completely fails to inject confidence in the youth. This has resulted in a deficit in the demand and supply of educated youth. While there is a shortage of manpower in the country, we are producing tens of thousand of educated unemployed youth in the street.

Are Nepal's youth confident?

The youth in the 20-25 age group do not have confidence in their education system and their life. Even students of good academic institutions are disoriented. Most of the youth become pessimists when they do not get their position in society. To give real education through work, we are now running the National Volunteer Service to mobilize the youth. The youth are very much eager to go to rural areas to serve the country.

How do you evaluate the quality of our youth?

In spite of a large number of young people with poor academic background, there are some good students. Unfortunately, the education system is unable to teach a student the challenges of contemporary society. Our classroom education is not at par with the country's demand. The job market is there but students with academic qualification are discarded. If we do not change the education system, the youth will have to lose their opportunity. The curriculum needs to be improved in a modern way.

Are the new generation of students capable?

The present youth are educated and aggressive. But there is a need to bring major changes in education system. There is a need for English language classes, computer literacy programs as well as problem-solving courses. One of the weakest parts of our education system is that we do not have a problem-solving attitude. Unfortunately, our education system is certificate-oriented, as it teaches students how to secure administrative posts like kharidar and subba. This only produces mediocrity. Our traditional tendency needs to be changed.

How do you view the disparity between the urban and rural youth?

Urban areas have many advantages over the rural areas. We are now trying to link rural schools with computer network. We need to give more knowledge in technology.

How much money does the government invest to prepare a youth?

The government spends on an average Rs 350,000 to graduate a student. We need to develop a practical as well as theoretical perspective.

What are the differences between urban and rural youth?

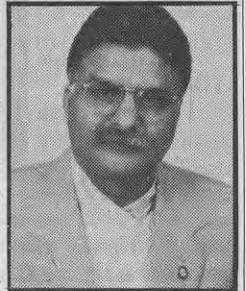
In urban areas, most of the youth have access to computer and Internet services. The youth, who form over 20 percent of the total population, must be given the opportunity to acquire knowledge.

How do you classify the youth?

There are three types of youth. Some want to fight, others are passive watchers, still others leave. A large number of Nepalese youth are very active. Many students are fleeing the country fed up with the conditions here.

What is the number of alienated youth?

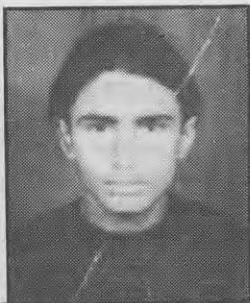
In the Nepalese context, only a small number of the youth are frustrated and alienated. The number of young people addicted to drugs is very nominal. ■



'Corruption Enemy No. 1'

— KUSHAL TIMILSINA

Kushal Timilsina is a 21-year-old student of Bachelor's of Business Studies at the Universal College, Lazimpat



What is the role of the youth?

I see the youth getting poorer every day. This may be the result of a lack of education, exploitation by various organizations, or something else. Awareness plays a key role in helping against the exploitation of the youth.

What are your hopes?

I want to create a good name for the people of Nepal and myself. We need to make the public aware of the deteriorating condition of Nepal's youth. I would like to do anything to see that is done.

Why?

Personality and money will help us get the youth out of the quicksand they are in now. Splitting them into political factions and using them will surely help the exploiters get their job done, but it won't do good for their conscience. Money certainly plays a vital role in uplifting the status of the youth.

How do you see the environment for the youth?

I'm frustrated with the education, environmental and economic system of the country. There needs to be a new approach to tackle this problem. There is a wide range of changes needed. But the disappointing thing is that the whole establishment looks corrupt.

What changes do you think are necessary?

The establishment needs to look at these problems more seriously. We can always start by educating the people. The future is always uncertain. I want to help change Nepal. The older generation needs to look at the younger generation as the wheels of the same chariot.

What do you expect the future to bring?

The economic condition in Nepal seems to have suffered a blitzkrieg. The Nepalese people will have to pay from their taxes for the recent conditionalities imposed by the World Bank.

What would you have done? What would be your first target?

I would ensure that there is full utilization of natural resources within the country without compromising the nation, its economic, geographical, social, cultural, environmental-related problems. I would target corruption. Improvement is necessary in every field. The bureaucracy needs to be overhauled and made more effective. ■

ment of the population has migrated over the last 30 years. According to the report, Nepal's urban population was only 3.6 percent in 1961. Within 30 years, in 1991, the figure increased by four times to reach 12.7 percent.

More and more youngsters are searching for places that would help them get better education and jobs. More than 200 students visit the United States Education Foundation each day for information on appropriate US universities. The British Council, too, gives counselling to youngsters. More than 100 youngsters visit the council each day to get information on higher education.

The pressure in the recruitment for the British Gurkha battalion also indicates that a large number of youngsters want to go abroad for a job. For a final recruitment of 200, more than 35,000 people attended different phases of the process.

Among the 4.3 million people in the 15-24 age group, Timilsina and Adhikary represent the few who can afford to go abroad. A large number of rural youth are not so privileged.

The population of Nepal is composed primarily of young people. Since the 1960s, Nepal has remained a country of the young. More than 42 percent of the population is today under 15 years of age. In 1971, the 10-24 age group comprised 29.5 percent of the total population. Today that figure has reached 31 percent.

"To inhere and entitle, most of the rights guaranteed under the laws of the country can be exercised at 16 years," said Attorney-General Badri Bahadur Karki.

The youth represent the new breed of extreme culture from a parody adulthood of teenage girls to the mystifying obsessions of alienated boys. Most of the children are carefully rafted in our own image, raised to reflect the values and given every chances to improve upon them.

Read about young people and despair for them. They are in perpetual crisis as every body wants to settle in new places wherever it may be. So everyone is in a desperate position to leave the native areas to have better position.

Most of Nepal's youngsters would love the chance to climb the tradition-bound seniority ladder in the companies.

However, only a few get opportunity and large number of youngsters are ignored. Timilsina and others are riding the crest of social change.

Nepal's traditional culture is now gradually changing and family values are disappearing in the get-rich-quick race.

These teens and twenty somethings are the advocates of change who are in a position to influence the society. But one thing is still unclear: what have the policy-makers thought about them. The new generation needs a better atmosphere. At the same time, the youth is rising and the rest of the society is bowing to it.

Youth are seen as trouble since any political force can abuse them to fight for their cause. From crime to drug abuse, youth are exploited.

Education for all helps to increase the literacy rate among the youth. The comparative figures of the last half-century shows that a large number of the youth has received educational opportunities.

At a time when the youth need the ideas, skills and talent for the future, Nepal's education system still follows the traditional method of learning and doing.

"We need to change our traditional pattern of education system and revamp it to suit the changing global context," said Dr. Jagdish Pokharel, a member of the National Planning Commission. "The curriculum has to change from reading orientation to problem solving."

The schooling system in Nepal mainly consists of primary (grade I-V), lower secondary (VI-VIII), secondary (IX-X) and higher secondary (10+2). From the extreme low of five percent in the 1950s, the literacy rate rose to 53 percent in 1997. Despite the gains, the literacy rate is still very low. More and more youth have got the opportunity to go to school. Although the government has announced a policy of free education, the challenge now is to provide education for all.

Youngsters are the future and hope of the nation but Nepalese policy-makers are yet to understand their potential to boost the country's economy. As long as the government fails to come out with a forward-looking strategy, the youth will have very little to do. ■



Village transportation : Untouched by modernity

GOVERNANCE

New Challenges

The British government is helping Nepal develop a system of pro-poor governance

By A CORRESPONDENT

Judging by the comments of senior civil servants on a program jointly initiated by the British government's Department for International Development (DFID) and Nepal's Prime Minister's Office, the project will have to face rough weather to finally achieve its broader target of developing pro-poor governance.

This may seem to be a challenging program for a country like Nepal where such efforts run either through the Ministry of Finance, the National Planning Commission or other agencies. If it succeeds, the program would bring substantial change in the concept of governance.

"The Prime Minister's Office is fully committed to execute the project in its

spirit," said Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, addressing a ceremony to mark the signing of the agreement.

As long as other agencies related to executing the program remain adamant, it may have to face difficult times every step of the way. "I don't see the rational of launching the program under the Prime Minister's Office," said a senior government official at the ceremony.

Although this is the first time a donor and the Prime Minister's Office have agreed to work together to carry out more effective programs for pro-poor governance, this effort may face more difficulties at the bureaucratic level.

For the first time in the development process, Nepalese experts have got the opportunity to prove that they are competent in initiating the development pro-

grams. Under the Enabling State Program (ESP), efforts will be made to correct past failure and to meet the challenges in the development sectors. "Achieving a significant shift towards pro-poor governance will take time as it is one of the difficult task," said Dr. Shailendra Adhikary, talking to the press before launching the program.

Launched by DFID-ESP the program is first of its kind where Nepalese experts and policy makers are allowed to design and execute the programs.

The role of the DFID is to support the program by providing funding for ESP activities and to support some of the projects that evolve out of the ESP process. DFID

will provide 19.5 million sterling pound over the next eight years.

According to the plan, around 800,000 sterling pound has been allocated annually for eight years to support the ESP process of developing project ideas and facilitating change advocates. Some 13 million sterling pound will be used over the first four years to support specific projects that are developed through the ESP.

"One of the objectives of the project is to employ Nepalese experts to develop the potential projects in the areas of pro-poor governance," said Dr. Shailendra Sigdel.

When governance is itself in trouble and confusion, one cannot expect better delivery in different sectors of society. Realizing the importance of pro-poor governance, DFID-ESP has launched this pro-poor governance scheme.

Despite five-decade-long efforts, Nepal's development activities are yet to achieve tangible results as a large number of the people are still below the poverty line. As there is lack of coordination among government agencies, donors dictate programs. ■

'We Have Been Running As Hard As We Can To Stay In The Same Place'

— PRADEEP RAJ PANDEY

PRADEEP RAJ PANDEY, is the Chief Executive Officer at the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB). Formerly, the Executive Chairman of RNAC, PANDEY spoke to KESHAB POUDEL and SANJAYA DHAKAL on the situation of tourism in the face of recent disturbances. Excerpts:

How do you find the overall scenario in tourism, especially since the recent spate of violence in the country?

The incidents were played up very much by the media. There was a lot of negative feeling about Nepal abroad even down to the people's level. As a result, during the whole year we had a shortfall. Despite the fact that for five months during the year Indian Airlines was not operating its flights, and despite the fact that there were various political disorders and strikes, we could still maintain third-country visitors at last year's level. Besides, many airlines are continuing to add flights. At the end of it all, we suffered a net shortfall of about 10 percent among those coming by air. If you combine the tourist arrival from both by air and land, the shortfall would probably be around 5 to 7 percent.

What objectives does the NTB have in this situation?

Our objectives are very simple. We have already said we don't have a magic wand to take care of every problem at one go. Our role is to inform the people in the affected area. After the Indian Airlines fiasco last year, we went to the Indian public to tell them we are not anti-India and we had nothing to do with going against Indian visitors. We have been doing this throughout the year as far as India is concerned. For other countries also we have been doing promotional activities. As I said earlier, despite the negative publicity, the tourists from third countries are coming here, which means that somebody is doing their job. That is what we are doing. This year also we are planning to do the same. At the end of it all, what we want to emphasize is that we have to keep our house in order. The other thing that I want to say is that the tourism sector is also equally sensitive to national issues. So, when we ask the political parties not to organize a bandh or anything, our focus is, why not exclude tourism from this? We, from the industry, are willing to carry the opposition messages if we have to. Let the buses operate, let the flights come, let people transfer so that for anybody who is coming here after planning for one or two years will not have to return back with bad experience. This is important as we found that most of the publicity for Nepal is from word of mouth. We are not a rich country and we don't have resources to go heavily into international publicity. It

will eat up our entire budget if we bring out four advertisements in Japan's daily newspapers. Our best advantage is the word of mouth publicity. But the word of mouth will only go if people have good experience here. We have met with all the political parties to tell this. Once people decide that Nepal is not a place worth visiting, it will require a very large amount of money, effort and time to bring the tourists back. In our talks with the political parties everybody seems committed.

How would these incidents affect tourism in the long term?

As a matter of fact, such negative things will affect only in the long term. I do not think this is affecting things much as yet. Another advantage of being an unknown country is people do not know about us as there is not a terrible amount of interest in us. So far it has not hurt us much. But since last year or so, the activities going on here, be it security or law and order, are going to affect us in the long term.

There's been talk of tourism being affected by a growing lack of security. But we see countries like Indonesia and Vietnam faring reasonably well despite their own problems. What do you say?

This is not totally correct. The glaring example could be Fiji whose entire economy depended on tourism. When problems started there last year, the entire tourism business came to a halt. They are having a very tough time bringing tourists back. Indonesia and Vietnam are countries facing similar problems. But one thing that I want to say is that everybody in Western countries, from where the tourists actually come from, knows about Vietnam and Indonesia. They don't know about us. It is easier for them to promote their country. But for us, it requires tremendous amount of money, you can't even imagine how much, to promote the country. Take, for instance, Australia. Everyone knows about Australia even in our villages. It spent more than 200 million dollars to promote the Sydney Olympics. But we do have other things to our advantage. We have the Himalayas, Mount Everest and we have people who have gone back to say Nepal is an excellent place to come to. No amount of money can achieve that. But if people continue to have bad experiences, we will lose that advantage.

How is the NTB looking at the ongoing tussle between the hoteliers and hotel employees regarding the latter's demand for 10 percent service charge?

I do not want to separate things. Everything is a part of the whole picture. Individual impact of each strike may not be as bad. But the cumulative impact, when everything is brought together, is going to create

Despite the negative publicity, the tourists from third countries are coming here, which means that somebody is doing their job. That is what we are doing.

big problem over the long term.

What are the board's achievements?

I can't boast and say that whatever increase that happened in 1999 was because of my work. What we try to do is organize marketing, we have managed to create an impact in the originating countries wherever we went. People are beginning to know about Nepal a little bit more. What we have managed to do in the face of all these negative incidents is run as hard as we can but stay in the same place. Because these negatives would pull us back if we don't do our marketing. This is in the international side. In the domestic sector also we have been doing many things. This year onwards we are putting lot of efforts in identifying new tourism areas, diversifying tourism in different parts of the country. We have identified 600 new areas within 50 districts of the country after a survey done with the help of District Development Committees. We have also carried out a need-assessment plan. We had interactions in Biratnagar for eastern districts, in Kathmandu for central districts and in Bhairahawa and Nepalgunj for western and mid-western districts. We are promoting local festivals. We don't provide money to local organizers but help them in promotion through radio, television and newspapers.

The NTB board does not have its full members. Has it affected NTB in any way?

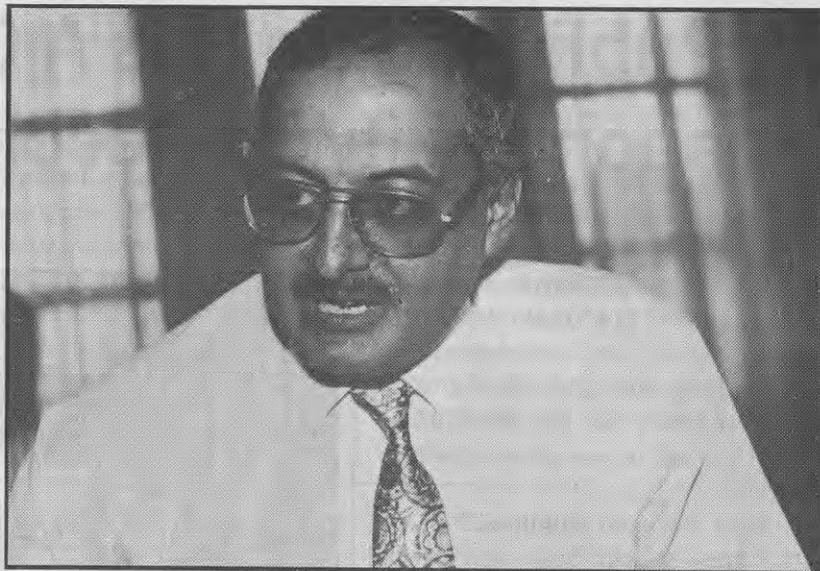
So far it has not but it will. In September the tenure of the previous board expired and a new board should have been in place. But fortunately the board had passed our annual budget and program of activities which we are following. So whether or not we have an immediate board is not relevant because we have internal audit system. But when crisis happens, for example what recently happened, we realize that something must be done. We have realized that we have to do our promotional activities all over again in India but that I cannot unless we have a full board. My authority is limited to execute what the board has approved. Technically, I can take a plan, get it approved and implement it. But we have always maintained that this board is a private sector dominated board and if private sector representatives are not in the board, it probably does not look right to take an emergency action plan, get it approved and change the plan that was passed before. So, in order to take strategic or emergency decisions, it is going to affect us but otherwise not.

What is the annual budget of the NTB and what percentage is spent on promotional activities?

It is 120 million rupees. Till last year there was a cap put by the government which did not allow us to spend more than 10 percent of the budget in administrative purposes.

What are the preparations for celebrating the Destination Nepal Year 2002?

The plans for the Destination Nepal Year 2002 are not yet finalized. But anyway, NTB's role would be limited to marketing and coordination. That's what we are for, we do not have the resources for the development of infrastructures. The plan for the Destination Nepal Year is still being studied by the ministry. We were asked to prepare it, which we did and gave it to the



ministry. Because the major part of the plan is concentrated in the development of tourism infrastructures for which the inter ministry and line ministry coordination is required. The marketing aspect of the plan, if at all it goes ahead, will be looked after by the NTB.

You said the cost of marketing Nepal in the international arena is highly expensive. Are there any alternate ways of doing that?

There are ways but we have made sure that we won't allow it. One way would be to invite film-makers, documentary-makers and news channels to come and shoot in Nepal and go back to show it. Of course, proper guidance should be there so that they will shoot the right thing, for which NTB is there. But again our policies are such that we don't encourage them. The Information Ministry requires royalties, national parks require royalties, they want to send their liaison officer who create more problem than help, police are not ready to provide security during the shooting. Our policies are such that we don't encourage non cash activities. I don't know whether I can comment or not but we made this representation to the Ministry of Finance by saying that as a matter of rule they may still keep the provision but why not make an exception and say if NTB recommends these channels certain things can be waived off. Unfortunately, nothing has happened in this direction as yet. Another way could be bringing in as many press people from around the world. But with media you have to be careful because it is not certain that everybody will write positive things only. Other than that is, of course, the word of mouth.

Do you see the need to diversify tourism in Nepal?

Yes, we feel that it has to be done. We started with the mountains first after the conquest of Mt. Everest, moved on to culture when people started to come here. Nepal was a leader in trekking and outdoor activities for others to copy now. All of these happened in '60s. From that we moved on to wildlife. So, now it might be time to identify new areas, which we are doing now. We have already identified 600 new areas. We are conducting studies with the help of VDCs, DDCs and local chambers of commerce and industry. ■

We have realized that we have to do our promotional activities all over again in India but that I cannot do unless we have a full board.

'A Public Figure Has A Greater Responsibility To Reconstruct Society'

— MANISHA KOIRALA

SPOTLIGHT's AKSHAY SHARMA caught up with MANISHA KOIRALA on January 11 at her residence in Maharajgunj. She spoke on her childhood, stardom, the Hrithik Roshan, Nepal's youth, among other subjects.

How was your childhood?

I grew up with Susla-ama (as she calls her grandmother, the wife of the late B.P. Koirala). She's the most graceful and strongest person I have ever known. She has had a great influence on my life. I spent the most confused part of my life with her in Banaras. When I first set out to do movies, she was the only person who said, 'Do what you feel like. Don't get bogged down by what people say about your ambition in life.' I want to grow up to be like her because she's still so graceful and beautiful at such an old age. I was actually a brat as a kid. (Chuckles). I grew up in Banaras and studied in Delhi. Everybody in the family used to get up every Sunday to go to the movies.

How did you go on to become a star in the world's largest film industry?

I asked a birthday gift from my mother. I emotionally blackmailed her and asked her to take me to Bombay on my birthday. I promised her that I would be back in a week. It actually started out with the Megawool advertisement. It was just a hobby at first. I was to do 'Pheri Bhetaula' and I did not take it so seriously. My approach to acting was commercial at first, and was paid a couple of thousand rupees that wound up as pocket-money.

How do you feel about what you are today?

I was supposed to go to medical school but ended up as an actress. Meena



Iyer, who is like a sister to me, helped me. She helped me meet people. I like being in front of the camera and on the stage.

Tell us something about the upcoming movie on B.P. Koirala.

They have involved me in the project. The movie is based on my grandfather. I will see to it that justice is done to portray him as he was in life. His childhood, thoughts, philosophy and life need to be studied thoroughly in order to get a better understand of him. They have given me a section in it. The film makers have

already decided on a team. But time will tell how good the research and the team is. Let's see how the researchers and scriptwriters do the job of portraying him and what he believed in. Let's hope the team does a good job.

You are also active in social work. What inspired you?

I'm a very sensitive person. I can't shut my eyes and ears when other human beings are being exploited and abused. Although I have an individual career that I have to pursue, I am the kind of individual who feels for human aspirations

and causes. I have become a public figure and that makes me more responsible to help properly reconstruct our society. I am currently working as a goodwill ambassador for the UNFPA, UNIFEM and UNICEF. I am also affiliated to other social issues like the campaign against women trafficking. I was a co-host at a program organized by Maiti Nepal in New Delhi when a Nepali woman came and burst into tears in my arms. I realized how exploited these women were.

Even though I knew that people were being exploited, and about problems like prostitution, I did not understand the gravity of the situation. Educating people and creating awareness can be the only answer to the problem. I attended a couple of events realizing that people wanted me to do something on the issue. At first, I had the attitude, like 'OK! I'll do the program', but then I understood the scale of the problem. These issues are hidden away in our society.

What are your plans for the future?

I have a lot of ideas brewing in my head, but there are delays at the bureaucratic level. By the time the process goes through the bureaucracy, I tend to feel dull.

What is the role of the youth in Nepal?

The youth should take responsibility for their own actions. If you are young and somebody you look up to or someone you seek guidance from doesn't give proper guidance, you end up doing something wrong. Human beings are born with the perception of what is good and what is wrong. What usually happens is that we end up blaming somebody else for the mistakes we make. But we have to realize that we are responsible for our own acts.

In Nepal, we need strong people to guide the youth. I would want the older generation to take the responsibility of guiding the youth on the right track. If the elders show the youth the right track,

they will automatically follow. The old and the young have to realize that they are the two sides of the same coin.

How do you feel about the recent Hrithik Roshan episode.

I was extremely hurt by the violence in which mostly students were involved. Even if the rumor were true, would we have been able to justify the violence in which Nepalis were killed? The youth acted in a violent manner that was totally against the character of the Nepalese people. We are known for our peaceful-

ness. Many foreigners have come to live in Nepal because they felt the people were nice. The youth may have been disappointed to some extent. And probably they were misguided. There could be so many elements behind the violence.

What are your pastimes?

I like to read. I love watching movies. I love sports. I like to spend time with my family and friends. Even though I don't have that much time I like to travel. ■

WORLD YOGA DAY

Disseminating The Message

When people across the world are turning to this age-old science, Nepalis continue to ignore it

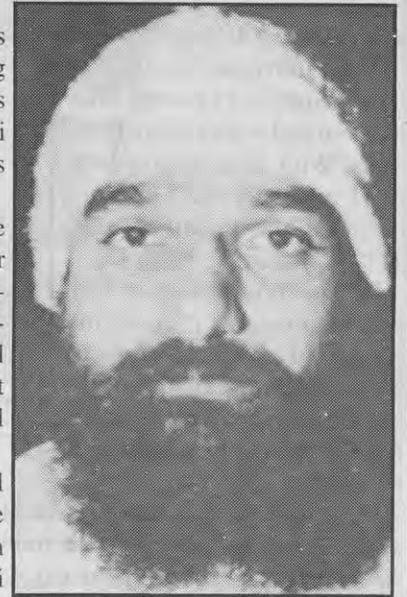
By A CORRESPONDENT

While imparting divine knowledge to his friend and disciple, Arjuna, during 'Mahabharata,' Lord Krishna defined Yoga as any work that is done efficiently. Maharshi Patanjali defined Yoga as keeping one's senses under control.

As hundreds of thousands of people the world over are adopting yogic techniques for their physical well being and spiritual attainment, people in Nepal, where this ancient science is believed to have been originated, still ignore it. As a bid to reverse this trend, the first World Yoga Day was observed in a beautiful village of Palpa in west Nepal 22 years ago.

Since then, the Day is remembered to recall the yogic teaching and disseminate the message world over. "Yoga is something that we can teach to the rest of the world," said Dr. Hari Prasad Pokhrel, founder director of the Institute for Natural Health at Old Baneshwor in the capital, who has been behind propagating the mission almost single-handedly.

"Yoga is the common property of the human kind and it can't be limited to certain religion only," said Pokhrel, addressing a function organized by his Institute here to mark the World Yoga Day (January 14). "There is no other way to work out balance among the living beings, life and the universe than Yoga," he said. According to Dr. Pokhrel, when there is conflict, whether in the office, in business or in house, we will not be following Yoga. "You can be a yogi spiritually even while discharging worldly responsibilities," he said. And, that is Yoga— an ancient knowledge based on scientific system to address modern ills.



Dr. Pokhrel : Yoga is the key

DEVELOPMENT

Partners In Progress

An organization works for development with the theme 'Helping People Give by Giving People Help!'

By AKSHAY SHARMA

An organization that comprises UN Volunteers, who have many years of experience in development, hopes to establish itself as a partner for progress in the mid-western and far western development regions of the country.

"Help Is Necessity But Not Facility" is the motto of the Human Environmental

League For Preservation HELP/Nepal. The organization has a regional office in Nepalgunj and an Internet website www.helpnepal.com.

HELP/Nepal has 15 advisory members, 14 partner organization and works in eight districts. With an executive body of 11 members and 57 general members, the organization has 411 volunteers.

"The organization conducts volunteer training program that consists of a three-month theory session and nine months of on-the-job training," says Madhav Raj Khanal, general secretary of HELP/Nepal.

It also organizes income-generation activities and skill development training for self-reliance and employment.

"We are also involved in conducting development-related activities for women, children,

youth, the elderly, disabled and orphans, and rural and urban poor people," says Khanal.

"The objectives are to reactivate women and children self-help group support

programs, non-formal education, awareness campaigns on health, water

supply, sanitation, environment, women and child rights and other issues," he adds

HELP/Nepal has strong networking and database profile of the two development regions. It is taking steps as change agent to advocate the changing development speed and scenario in the 21st century, which is the age of global citizenship and human welfare and well-being, according to experts.



Rural Children : Neglected

HELP/Nepal is standing in the front line by keeping its contract and is being assured from well wishers suitable development modules and strengths the organization requires for its field activities."HELP/Nepal hopes to bridge the gap between the community and community development frontiers" says an expert at the agency.

HELP/Nepal is committed to work in the regions for human resources development,

environmental and socio-economic developments in the rural areas."On top of that, it is careful to start advanced

social life, preserving social norms and values and controlling all the anti-social activities in the region," the expert says.

The agency is using its expertise in research management and cooperation to build the capacity of local NGOs and communities through action, research, demonstration, technology transfer, training, awareness campaign, among other things. It is also emphasizing institutional development, addressing their potentiality in the development process and coordinating with development agencies.

HELP/Nepal is the organization for the Human Environmental Preservation and Development through the human effort."This is a charity-oriented organization but also highlights how the volunteers work in the community and how the people perceive them," says Khanal.

The thought of human development is still on its way to prove its ultimate goal and the expected way of human relations. It is influenced by the culture, geography and level of development.

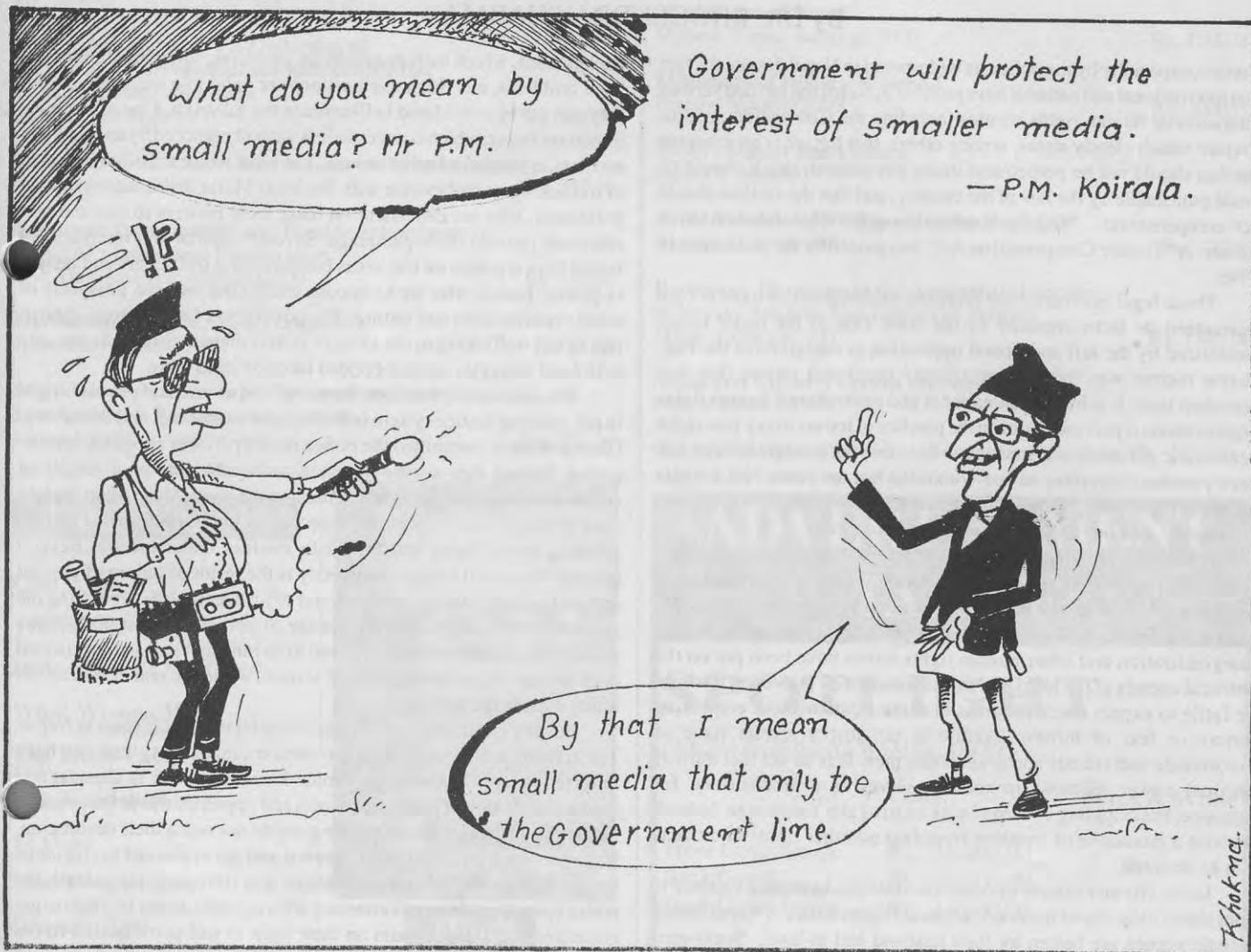
"Our background behind this organization is practical working experience and thorough understanding of the economically, educationally and traditionally exploited handicapped populace in extreme remote areas of the country," says Khanal.

"Our executives who were development planners and field workers are enriched in their

approach suitable to the heterogeneous geopolitical shape and feelings of the community and their so-called key informants. HELP/Nepal is a united effort for cumulative results and team spirit, which can play a significant role in development and also lead to a better future of the people." says Khanal.

If you want to apply, go to www.helpnepal.com on the Internet for details. If you are accepted, you will receive conformation from the organization. A \$ 200 fee will be charged for the organization's internal and external administrative procedures. ■

By M.S.KHOKNA



TRANSITION

APPOINTED: Lila Prasad Sharma, Joint Secretary at the Foreign Ministry, as Royal Nepalese Ambassador to the Russian Federation, by King Birendra.

ELECTED: Diwakar

Rajkarnikar, as president of the central executive committee of the Nepal Cancer Relief Society, by its 11th annual general meeting.

LEFT: Jayaprakash Prasad Gupta, Minister for Information and Communication, for New Delhi, India, for medical treatment of his family member.

FELICITATED: Manisha Koirala, Bollywood actress, by the Himali Cultural Group, for her contribution in promoting Nepal abroad.

AWARDED: Govinda Biyogi, senior journalist, with this year's Press Council Gopaldas Journalism award.

Journalists Narayan Wagle and

Ramesh Tiwari, with the Tarini Prasad Koirala Journalism Award.

Nepal Pavilion at the Industrial and Trade Fair held in Calcutta, India, with the special shield for its best display.

Saru Bhakta Shrestha, the litterateur, with Ganki Basundhara award. ■

Torture Mirrors Unequal Power Relations In Society

By DR. BHOGENDRA SHARMA

Torture, especially by the police, is widespread in Nepal despite the fact that international and national laws prohibit it. Nepal has ratified various international human rights treaties including the Convention Against Torture which clearly states, among others, that torture is an inhuman act that should not be perpetrated under any pretext, that it should be made punishable by the law of the country, and that the victims should get compensation. Nepal's constitution guarantees freedom from torture. A "Torture Compensation Act" was passed by the parliament in 1996.

These legal provisions are rendered meaningless as torturers are guaranteed de facto impunity by the state. One of the major issues capitalized by the left and liberal opposition to delegitimize the Panchayat regime was the horrors of state sponsored torture that was prevalent then. It is ironic that national and international human rights organizations report escalation in the practice of torture every year in the democratic period. It is disturbing to note that not a single torturer has been punished according to law within the last ten years. Not a single victim of torture has received compensation. This is not a good sign for our dignity, and our hopes for justice and prosperity.

It is high time that the civil society took this menace of torture seriously. It is thanks to vigorous advocacy efforts of civil society organizations that unjust social practices and processes such as domestic violence, bonded labor, girl trafficking, socio-economic marginalization and other human rights issues have been put on the political agenda at the local and the national level. However, it would be futile to expect much progress in these fields without combating torture or fear of torture. Torture is not just a private issue of unfortunate individuals and cruel policemen. It is an act that mirrors unequal power relations in society, serves as a precondition for injustice, has crippling consequences on struggles for change. Indeed, without a guarantee of freedom from fear no other rights of citizens can be realized.

Let us cite an example of domestic violence. Domestic violence is considered to be one of the major women's rights issues in Nepal. Many Nepali women are beaten by their husband and in-laws. Socio-economic dependence leads the battered woman to accept the cruel reality with silence. The popular saying that quarrel between spouses is like 'Paral ko Ago', that is, temporary and not serious, is an euphemistic device used by the patriarchal society to discourage abused wives to seek the much needed external support.

Even if a woman sums up the courage and dares to seek legal help through the police she is often ill-treated and sexually abused by the police themselves. The police try to take undue advantage from a woman whom they know has a vulnerable position at home. Battered women experience such humiliation, hear or read about them and are thus scared of reporting cases to the police. So we can draw the conclusion that seeking legal help or reporting to the police will possibly lead to ill treatment, abuse and even rape, which are all forms of torture. Until we make police stations free of fear for victims, we cannot think of abolishing or even minimizing violence against women.

Another example we can take is of girl trafficking. Many girls are being trafficked into India for forced prostitution. What fosters this? What hampers efforts to curb it? Different people forward different

explanations, which include economic problems, illiteracy, ignorance, legal problems, etc. Such explanations are valid to a large extent, but they can not be considered to illuminate the full truth. One of the most important factor, which is nevertheless virtually ignored by analysts and activists, is torture or fear of torture. The local police are often involved in trafficking or collaborate with the local Mafia. Even national level politicians, who are dependent on these local masters to run and win elections, provide them patronage. Several national and international media have reported on the nexus between local traffickers and people in power. Locals who try to oppose trafficking risk the prospects of arrest, incarceration and torture. The possibility of any serious opposition to girl trafficking in the villages is thus muted. Similar is the case with local struggles against bonded labor or child labor.

The relationship between the menace of torture and people's right to fair criminal justice system is perhaps the most direct and disturbing. Once a crime is committed the police do not perform adequate investigation. Instead they accuse innocent, vulnerable and poor people of committing the crime and present them to the court. More often the low caste and low class people are 'suspected' of committing crime and are arrested, incarcerated and forced to confess under torture. Several people who joined Maoist insurgency is the result of failure of present and past governments to bring torturer to justice thereby submitting the group that helps them to take revenge to police. At least 60% of the present prison population is believed to be innocent and are imprisoned only because of torture and fear of torture, while the real criminals are found outside the prison.

Poverty is definitely a very important human rights issue in Nepal. The (direct) relationship between torture and poverty has not been reflected upon in our society. People know that there is unequal and unjust distribution of power, resources and opportunities in the country. Numerous programs meant for the poor do not reach their destination. If the poor or the villagers try to protest and get organized to challenge the unequal power relations, the status quo (threatens to) unleash the police upon them. In an environment where people do not feel safe to get organized and stake a claim on their right to full participation in the events that affect their lives, it is simplistic to expect eradication of poverty or any other social change.

If we go to a certain village and ask the local people what is the main human rights issue in Nepal their answers may be poverty, trafficking or domestic violence but not torture. People do not openly discuss the issue of torture with anyone they meet due to the lack of trust. Sometimes there is an avoidance mentality among people who live under fear. Once an individual builds a rapport with these people and wins their trust, these issues come up. To win their trust, one needs to have genuine concern over their plight, and demonstrate commitment and courage to fight against the extreme form of injustice that is torture. The first step, especially for people who are fortunate enough to have been spared the horrors of torture, however, would be to try to imagine oneself as a victim for some time. Then, it should be easier to find out how far and wide the tentacles of torture reach. ■

Dr Sharma is chairman of the Alliance for Human Rights and Social Justice, Nepal (ALLIANCE NEPAL), E MAIL allhr@info.com.np

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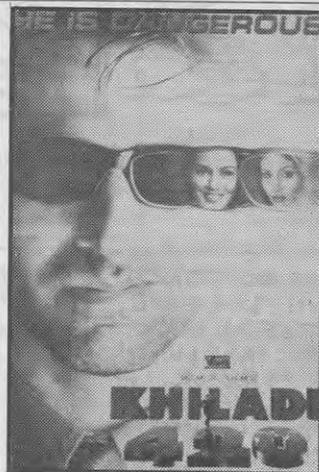
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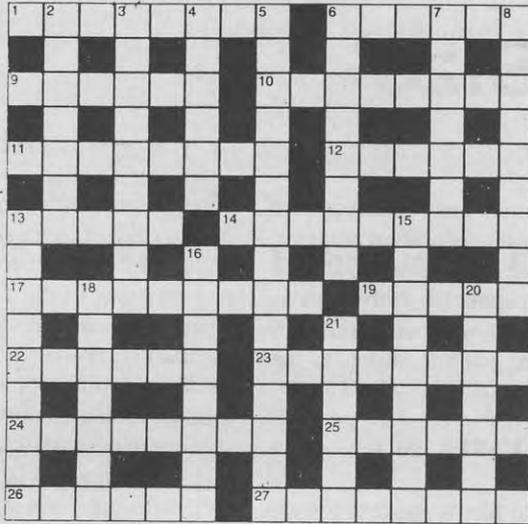
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CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. Start to harvest a crop, baling fine source of fodder (8)
6. Endlessly debate an event in The Field (6)
9. Help with part of chassic twisted (6)
10. Type of deer about and others you mentioned on reflection (8)
11. Symphony for the audience didn't fail the test (8)
12. Hound fool to put money on outsider? (6)
13. Result of joining worker's cooperative (5)
14. To live and die, on embracing the church, shows special devotion (9)
17. Journalist initiates a greater check on horses (9)
19. One side of London is stimulating (5)
22. Companion to Hardy given literary award (6)
23. Trespass, and fish behind small enclosure (8)
24. Sat back playing flute, pleasantly entertaining (8)
25. One nearly gets what Manuel says — it's most unusual (6)
26. Artist going to bank? Not very often! (6)
27. Start 15 in school, in a year? (8)

DOWN

2. Refrain, given a black mark (7)
3. Dressing in sheep's clothing, one was fired (9)
4. Island National Trust's kept intact (6)
5. Nominally in partnership (6-9)
6. Flunkey perhaps lurks behind group of people (8)
7. Against including typical German or French song (7)
8. Light accompaniment for this appearing reasonable? (9)
13. Furnish seating, and help tours otherwise (9)
15. Report sudden expansion (9)
16. Second shopping facility cook shows children? (5,3)
18. Horse appears right after some training (7)
20. Check numbers about to be significant (7)
21. Two officers arresting copper? VERY mysterious (6)

ACROSS : 1. Hayfield 6. Discus 9. Assist 10. Ungulate 11. Pastoral 12. Bassett 13. Union 14. Obedience 17. Hackamore 19. Spurs 22. Laurel 23. Encroach 24. Tasteful 25. Unique 26. Rarely 27. Detonate
 DOWN : 2. Abstain 3. Flintlock 4. Entire 5. Double barreled 6. Dogsboddy 7. Chanson 8. Sweetness 13. Upholster 15. Explosion 16. Small fry 18. Courser 20. Recount 21. Occult

SOLUTION

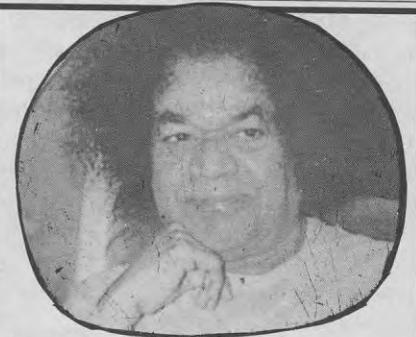
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“He who knows the secret of my divine birth and action, his body left behind, is never born again; he comes to me.”

SATHYA SAI BABA

'What Matters Is Policies And Programs, Not Size'

— J. BILL MUSOKE

J. BILL MUSOKE is the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Representative to Nepal. A Ugandan national, Musoke, 53, joined the UN system 23 years ago. He has served in several African countries as UNFPA representative. Before coming to Nepal, Musoke worked as UNFPA Representative to Nigeria, a country with a population five times larger than Nepal's. He talked to KESHAB POUDEL and SANJAYA DHAKAL on population control activities in Nepal. Excerpts:

How do you view the demographic situation in Nepal?

Nepal is characterized by a high population growth. It is also among the poorest countries of the world, with an estimated 42 percent of the population living under the poverty line. Other characteristics associated with Nepal are high mortality rates — the infant mortality rate is 75 per thousand births, the maternal mortality rate is a staggering 475 per thousand and the under-five mortality rate is 118. These figures are high compared to Nepal's neighbors. Nepal's population is also characterized by high unemployment and high fertility. The number of illiterate people is also on the high side compared to the neighbors and other developing countries. Besides, illiteracy among the female population is very high compared to their male counterparts. Women here tend to get a raw deal.

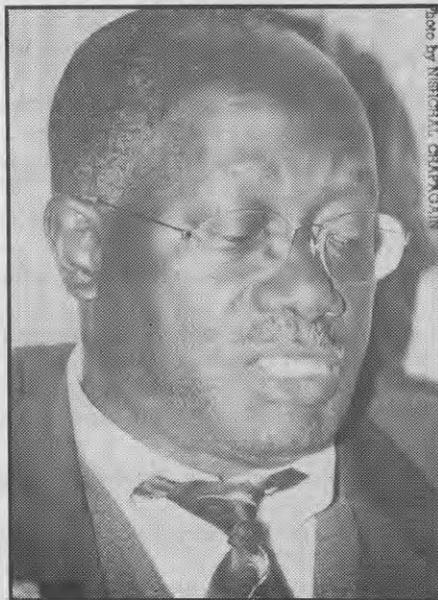
What problems do you associate with high population growth in the country?

If the population growth is very high, it is difficult to manage and gives rise to conflicts - both internal and external. Questions of land distribution also arise, as limited land has to be shared by more people. Regarding Nepal, most of the land is mountainous and very difficult to utilize. So, the piece of land that is left for sharing among a rapidly growing population is very small. Another problem is environmental degradation. Environment is a very tricky subject and the effects will go beyond Nepal. Anything that happens to the environment of the Himalayas in Nepal will have their effect in

neighboring countries that share the same ecosystem. Health and education are other aspects and all these are compounded by the economics of the population. If the population is poor, that means the education and health systems are going to suffer, as the government does not have adequate resources.

What does UNFPA do to control population?

First, I would like to make a correction. UNFPA does not control population; it advises countries how to manage their



population. Our mandate authorizes us to go to countries on the invitation of those countries. Then we assist the countries in identifying the problems, find solutions and mobilize resources. Since the UN population conference in Cairo in 1994, a new paradigm of population and development has emerged. Earlier, people associated population with family planning and control. We have moved a long way from that, and now we talk about population and development that encompasses all facets of development. Because of that, we changed the way we operate. So, when we go to assist a country, one area where we are involved in is advocacy. We tell the people

about the problems of population. We try to make policy-makers and parliamentarians understand the population problem. If there is a problem in the country, we suggest ways of allocating resources to manage the population. Talking to newspapers and media is also part of advocacy. The other area we look at is population policies - demographic statistics - for example, the population census - so that the country can have adequate and reliable data to take good decisions. Another area where we allocate resource in is reproductive health. Here, too, we have had a paradigm shift since the Cairo conference. It takes into account all aspects of women's development.

As Nepal is sandwiched between two countries that have a billion-plus people each, what strategies should it adopt to manage its population?

As a Christian, it reminds me the story of David and Goliath. David was small guy and Goliath was very big. Nobody thought David could fight Goliath, but he did. When you are a small country surrounded by big countries, it is very difficult to extricate yourself from geopolitical dictates. But a small country has a vision about where it wants to go and how it wants to manage its population, it can do so. The point here is that what matters is policies and programs, not size.

Before you arrived in Nepal, there were reports of corruption in UNFPA's Kathmandu office. What actions, if any, have been taken against those found guilty?

I am glad you brought up this subject. Corruption is a very unfortunate thing. The case you referred to not only affected the UNFPA office here but the entire UN system. As a result, the UN looked into this subject very seriously and took actions against those found guilty. Three people were dismissed from service, one was retired and one was found not guilty by the tribunal set up to probe the irregularities. Another one is still fighting the suspension. ■

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