

Feb 2-8, 2001



SPOTLIGHT



CRISIS IN PARLIAMENT

Is Fresh Election A Way Out?

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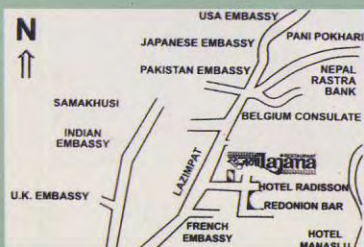
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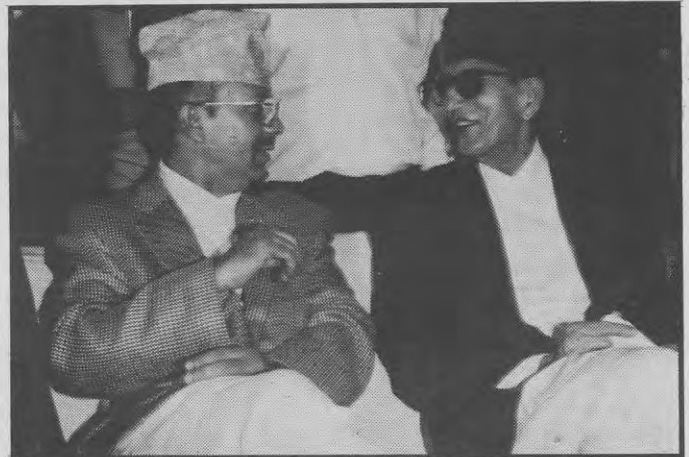
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COVER STORY: Preparing For Fresh Elections?

The main opposition plays a doubtful role by casting serious allegations against the Prime Minister but stopping short of demanding fresh elections

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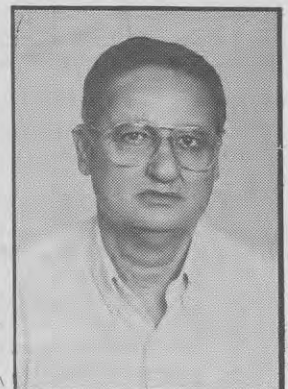
EARTHQUAKE IN GUJARAT : Convulsions In Kathmandu
Tremors in western India send shivers down the spine of Kathmanduites.

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INTERVIEW : KUBER SHARMA

President of Green Nepal Party Sharma says Nepal's revolutionary leaders have failed in the task of nation-building

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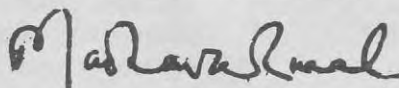
EDITOR'S NOTE

The recently concluded convention of Nepali Congress does not seem to have strengthened Girija Prasad Koirala's fragile position, neither as Party president nor as Prime Minister. As a matter of fact he should have been able to command an unassailable leadership by virtue of his party's absolute majority in the parliament and his strong showing in the party.

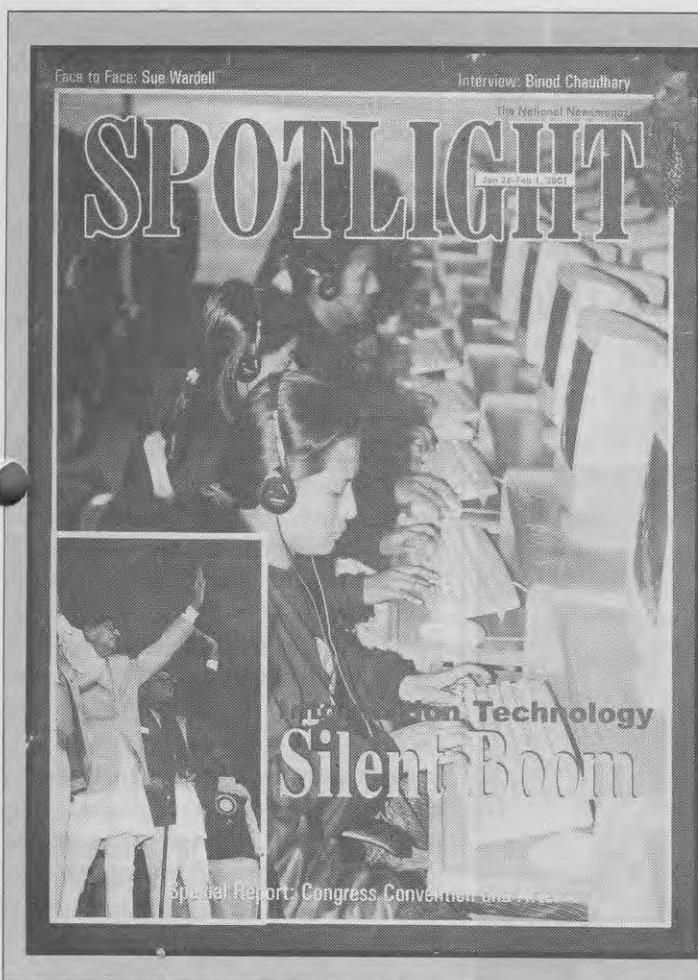
But the spate of demand for his resignation from the post of Prime Minister is rising steadily every day. Girija Prasad Koirala has lost all credibility. Except a handful of sycophants, a few close relatives and insignificant number of the mercenary party cadres, he would hardly find a man with a kind word for him. His commitment to root out corruption, ensure good governance and provide total security to the people has proved to be nothing but empty rhetorics of a power hungry corrupt politician. The charges he had leveled at his predecessor to oust him from the chair of the Chief Executive have boomeranged against him in a most devastating manner. If he had even a tiny bit of wisdom Girija Prasad Koirala should quit peacefully in the overall interest of the nation. But Koirala is made of different kind of stuff. He will not bat his eyelid to sacrifice his country's interest, if he can make his coterie happy. As such, he is not going to oblige his critics but use all means in his power to stick to the chair. Portents, as they are, signify bad days ahead. If there is any one who can save the situation from deteriorating, it is the king only. Although we do admire his patience and faith in constitutional monarchy, we do urge him not to forget that both sides have to play by the rule. If one party is bent on ruining the country, the other party cannot afford to stay a silent spectator. If he has certain obligation to preserve the constitution, he has even bigger obligation to preserve the integrity of the country and safeguard the lives and property of his twenty two million poor people. It need not be emphasized that the country and the people are bigger than the constitution.

* * *

The more than a decade old Bhutanese refugee problem, many may think, is on the way to be resolved. But, we would rather not come to such a hasty conclusion. Because, if Bhutan does agree to take back all the refugees, why did it drive them away from their home and hearth? It seems so unnatural. Even though she has agreed for spot investigation and has sent her first team, the resolution of the vicious problem does not seem to be easy. It is going to be a long drawnout and laborious process. That the Bhutanese refugees should have come to Nepal is in itself quite surprising. Without a contiguous border, even of Nepalese origin, the Bhutanese refugees should have stayed in contiguous India. But the first few batches of the refugees had reported that they were forced by the Indian Border Security Force to come into Nepal. And after that all those who were driven out of Bhutan followed the same course. The involvement of Indian B.S.F. in the influx of Bhutanese refugees to Nepal is indeed incomprehensible. But one thing is certain. India could play a very positive role in the speedy solution of this vexing problem if she agreed to use here good offices with Bhutan. But she insists this is a bilateral problem and must be resolved bilaterally. That India follows different pattern in her relationship with here two smaller northern neighbors is there for anybody to see. Where as India took an active role in pulling down the dictatorial Rana regime in Nepal more than fifty years ago in the name of introducing democracy, she is not only blessing the authoritarian regime in Bhutan but rather helping it to entrench the feudal rule. Such blatant discrimination is apt to generate serious misgiving. With her given clout on Bhutan, her refusal to intervene in the early solution of the refugee problem is bound to create doubts in the minds of Nepalese about here bona fide. Be that as it may, the SPOTLIGHT is terribly shocked at the vicious tragedy that has struck the people of Gujarat in the shape of the earthquake and would like to express heartfelt sympathy at the tremendous loss of life and property. ■



Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Less On Education

Your cover story on the sector did not cover the condition of computer education in the country. IT education is the most vital component of this sector which we cannot afford to miss. Unless we have adequate numbers of IT-literate manpower, our dreams of riding the worldwide wave cannot be realized. I hope your magazine covers more on IT education in the days to come.

Somnath Aryal
Kopundole

IT Wave

The cover story "Silent Boom" (January 26-February 1) gave vivid details of the situation of the IT industry in

Nepal. As things stand, it seems logical for Nepal to pursue the sector of IT-enabled services. The sector also promises to bring in huge amounts of foreign exchange. I hope the ongoing CAN Infotech show helps in this direction.

Anil Shrestha
Sanepa

More Employment

The information technology sector has the potentials to give employment to thousands of our educated youth. The government has to give serious thoughts to promote this sector as it can solve the problems arising from unemployment among educated youth. Opportunities do not knock the door twice. So we

After The Policy

Now that the government has come out with its IT policy, there are certain things it needs to do further. For starters, the government should introduce cyber laws to regulate e-commerce, which can do wonders for Nepal. The tax policy also needs a few changes to suit the demands of present-day IT revolution. New and more scientific tax laws need to be adopted for making e-commerce and e-payment practicable. And, above all, the government needs to implement what it has promised in the policy — and quickly.

Binod Kafle
Lagankhel

must not lose any time at all.

Dinesh Shrestha
Maharajgunj

Halo Of Democracy

Nepal is a country blinded by the halo of democracy. The pleasure of living in Nepal is that there is a never-ending political drama that is transparently empty to the core and quite hilarious. This is free for all citizens, but at a considerable cost to them in the long run. I have not had the pleasure to experience issue-based discussions or implementation of policies that affect or bring relief to the common man. The only thing that is eyes wide shut is political circus that is never ending with actors who are bent on destroying a nation in the name

of political clout, dynastic interest and rent-seeking tendencies.

Munna Dada
Lazimpat

Follow The Rule Of Law

While there is serious doubts about the honesty of Hari Bhakta Shrestha, the CIAA, too, should give him due opportunity to clarify his stand ("On The Move", January 19-25). It should follow the international norm of 'innocent till proven guilty'. But this does not mean it should not try and investigate the matter to establish Shrestha's guilt, if there is any. The primary thing is to follow the rule of law. Best of luck to CIAA.

Kamal Sharma
Chabahil

Terrors Of Tremors

Just two weeks after Nepal observed Earthquake Day, there was a devastating quake in India which reminded us of the disaster that could also strike us any time ("Tremors Of Concern", January 19-25). If a quake of a similar magnitude that hit India was to strike us, how would we cope with the aftermath. Has anybody thought about this? Surely, we are living at the mercy of Lord Pashupatinath.

Shaila Khanal
Maitidevi

CORRECTION

Please read maternal mortality rate as 4.75 per 1,000 instead of what inadvertently appeared in the interview with UNFPA Representative Bill Musoke (SPOTLIGHT, January 19, 2001). The error is regretted. -Ed.

Secretary-Level Talks On Reviewing 1950 Treaty

Foreign Secretary Narayan Shumsher Thapa is leaving for New Delhi on January 29th leading a Nepalese delegation to talk to his Indian counterpart regarding the review of 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the two countries. During the visit of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to India last year, it was decided that high-level officials from both countries would look into the matters regarding the review of several provisions of the treaty. Nepal has been calling for the review of the treaty as many of its provisions were inactive in the changed context. Three years ago, Nepal had also submitted its written desire of amending some of the provisions that it disagreed with. "We will discuss on all issues relating to 1950 treaty. We will put forth our views and listen to theirs," said Gyan Chandra Acharya, spokesman at the Foreign Ministry. He added that the two-day meeting will discuss all issues of bilateral interest. *Kantipur January 29.*

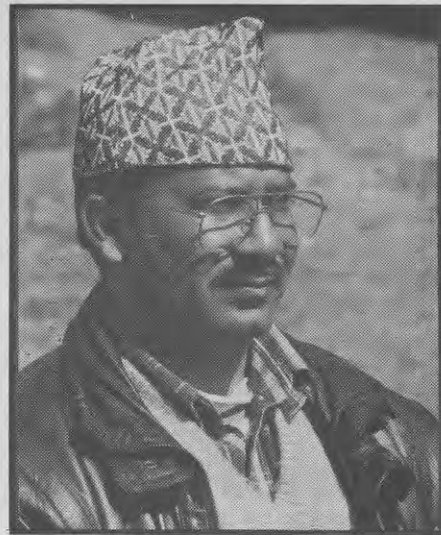
Viagra Illegal In Nepal

The Department for Drug Administration (DDA) has said that the sale of the anti-impotence drug Viagra is illegal in Nepal. The department's statement comes after a modified version of Viagra manufactured by Indian companies became available in the market here. "We don't allow the sale and distribution of Viagra as it is not a primary necessity for the Nepalese," said DDA chief Dr. Asfak Shekh. "Viagra and its substitute drugs are not free from side effects. Only those drugs which have fewer side effects will be allowed for sale in Nepal," he said. Even the Indian government banned the trading of Viagra some time earlier. But after the Indian Drugs Controller gave permission for the production of the drug, Indian companies have started manufacturing it under the trade name of "Penigra". "The use of Viagra and its substitute may have a negative effect upon Nepal's youth," said Dr. Rajendra Bhadra, sexologist. Medics here express fear that the

drug might be misused at a time when problems like "quick ejaculation" is on the rise among Nepali youth. Meanwhile, the Chemist and Druggist Association of Nepal has said they will never agree to the entry of Viagra and its Indian edition into the country. *The Kathmandu Post.*

Opposition Joins Hands Against Koirala

In a fresh attempt to dislodge Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, main op-



Nepal

position party UML has joined hands with the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP). After their meeting on Friday, the leaders of the two parties have decided to jointly seek Koirala's resignation. They have decided to present Koirala with a memorandum seeking his resignation prior to the winter session of the parliament slated early next month. Apart from the controversial Lauda air deal, these parties have also accused Koirala of failing to maintain law and order. The two parties have also agreed to seek support from small parties including the nine-leftists in their campaign. *Leading dailies report.*

WTO's Impact On Garment Sector

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has called for wide discussion on the possible impacts of World Trade Organization (WTO) and ways of minimizing them.

Addressing the 13th annual general meeting of Garment Association of Nepal (GAN), he expressed concern for the Nepalese garment sector which will cease to enjoy the current quota facilities after 2005 when WTO's provisions will fully come into effect. PM Koirala said the government was willing to sit down with the private sector to discuss the prospects and challenges of the WTO. He also revealed that the government was planning to privatize the Hetauda Textiles Industry soon. "I urge you to take over the industry and produce quality yarns so that they could be used for making clothes for police and army," Koirala told the Nepalese garment entrepreneurs. The total annual garment exports from Nepal was worth more than Rs 11 billion during the last fiscal year, a remarkable rise from Rs 5 billion the previous year. But garment entrepreneurs fear that the billion-plus exports could come down to mere millions if timely measures were not taken to make Nepalese garment industries competitive after the WTO provisions come into effect. *Compiled from reports.*

Police Kill Five Dacoits, Two Rebels

Police killed five dacoits who were reportedly blocking the Pathalaya-Nijga section of East-West highway early Wednesday with a view to looting night buses plying along the road. One person killed in the shoot-out has been identified. Deputy Inspector General of Police Sahabir Thapa said the police patrol team resorted to firing at the dacoits after they opened fire at them. Meanwhile, police said they have gunned down two rebels, one of them an area commander, in an encounter with Maoist rebels in mid-western district of Rolpa Wednesday. Police also arrested another area commander of the Maoists at Gharti Gaon in the same district with three guns and two socket bombs, reports said. *Compiled from reports.*

Web Conference On Political Violence In Nepal

A worldwide web conference on political violence in Nepal is to kick off

Wednesday, organizers said. Prof. Claude Bruderlien, director of Harvard program on humanitarian policy and conflict research, said the on-line conference will provide a platform for all the parties concerned to engage in a virtual dialogue and put their sides to the international audience. Talking to reporters here Wednesday, Prof. Bruderlein said such initiatives had been fruitful to bring the parties involved in political violence in other parts of the world too. He said some 60 participants, including representatives of the underground Maoists in Nepal, have also been invited to take part in the virtual conference. The conference can be accessed at www.preventconflict.org. *Compiled from reports.*

Minister Against Cartel

Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies Ram Krishna Tamrakar said that in the present context of open economy, it is wrong for the entrepreneurs to control competition by forming cartels. Addressing the second annual general meeting of Nepal Freight Forwarders' Association (NEFFA), Minister Tamrakar said for the economic development of a land-locked country like Nepal, the government supported the entry of foreign companies in the freight forwarding business here. He said that the government could not restrict foreign freight forwarders in the name of protecting Nepalese entrepreneurs as it was against the spirit of economic liberalization. NEFFA has been critical of any move to allow foreign freight forwarders here. It believes that their entry would hamper the interest of Nepalese freight forwarders. *Leading dailies report.*

Verification Team Visits Refugee Camps

Representatives from Nepal and Bhutan, on Friday and Saturday, visited all the seven camps of Bhutanese refugees in eastern Nepal as part of the agreement reached between the two governments regarding the verification of refugees. Earlier the Bhutanese side led by Dr. Sonam Tenzing and the Nepalese side led by Usha Nepal sat for a dialogue on Wednesday and Thursday to prepare for the verification

process. The refugees languishing at the camps heartily welcomed the verification team. The Bhutanese side even interacted with some refugees who seemed more than willing to talk to them. Meanwhile Usha Nepal talking to Nepal Television said the process was moving in the right direction. But it will still be few months before actual repatriation of refugees starts happening, she said. Currently around 1,00,000 refugees from Bhutan are languishing at camps in Eastern Nepal. The Beldangi camps in Jhapa alone are home to some 50,000 refugees. *Leading dailies report.*

Nepalese Lives Feared Lost In India's Quake

Hundreds of Nepalese are feared to have been affected by the devastating earthquake in Gujarat, India that has already claimed 15,000 lives. According to Kantipur daily, as Gujarat is one of the favored destinations of Nepalese workers, chances are high many of them could have been affected by the quake. As yet, there has been no news regarding the situation of Nepalese workers there. Nepalese ambassador to India Bhekh Bahadur Thapa has said that the Nepalese mission has drawn the attention of Indian authorities to this situation. "But till now we have no news," he said. *Leading dailies report.*

Privatization Of BPC In Turmoil

Three years have passed since the government decided to privatize the Butawal Power Company (BPC) and still there is no end in sight. Recently, the government has extended the deadline for applications (for purchasing BPC) for the fourth time since it called for it two months ago. The Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Finance Ramchandra Man Singh told Gorkhapatra daily that the deadline has been extended as per the request of some investors. "We extended the deadline so that we can talk with them on some issues. But this will be the last extension." Investors want Power Purchase Agreement between the Nepal Electricity Authority and the BPC, say sources. Till now, Independent Power Company from Britain,

Interkraft from Norway, Pacific Hydro Company from Australia, Sanima from Russia and two each from India and China have applied for the BPC. But if PPA materializes, there will be more investors interested to buy the company, say sources. *Leading dailies report.*

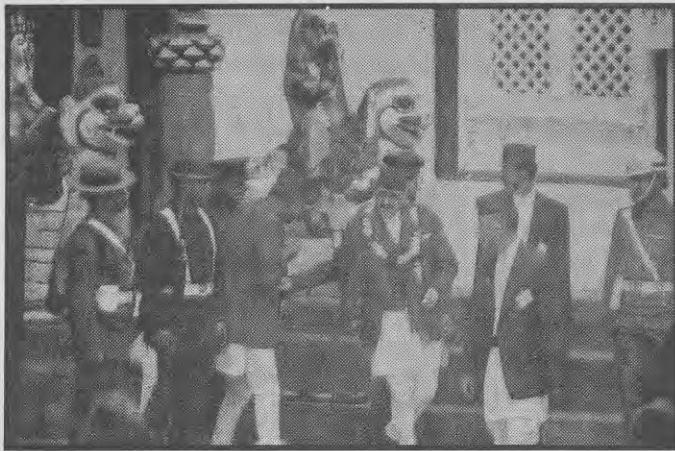
CIAA Interrogates Chataut

A day after his resignation was accepted, Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) conducted an interrogation lasting three hours with former Minister for Tourism and Civil



Chataut

Aviation Tarini Dutta Chataut regarding the controversial Lauda air deal. This is the second time the anti-corruption body has grilled Chataut after it first questioned him ten days ago. He had also faced the questioning by the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee regarding the deal. According to the investigation officer and CIAA commissioner Basudev Lamichhane, Chataut will be further questioned on January 26. Appearing after the marathon interrogation, an exhausted Chataut said he resigned with the objective to help in the investigation procedure. "My resignation, in no way, proves irregularities in the deal," said Chataut. The opposition parties had been asking for the resignation of the prime minister himself because the controversial air deal was approved by the cabinet four months ago. *Leading dailies report.*



King Birendra at "Basanta Shrawan" ceremony at Hanumandhoka

NEPAL RASTRA BANK (NRB), THE CENTRAL BANK of the country, has asked the finance companies that have been in existence for more than five years and are running in profit to issue shares within the next six months. The bank issued this directive to make the financial activities of these companies transparent and accelerate their businesses. According to a report in the Himalaya Times, the profit-making finance companies have to issue the shares within six months while those incurring losses will have to start preparing for the same. According to NRB, there are 48 different finance companies in existence and their combined capital is worth nearly Rs 1.49 billion — till the fiscal year 2000/2001. Compiled from reports

THE VISITING PRESIDENT OF ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB) Tadao Chino pledged the bank's assistance to the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA). Mr. Chino met with the chief of CIAA, a constitutional body formed to probe cases of corruption, on Thursday and promised assistance to the commission as its role was vital for good governance. According to CIAA officials, the commission is not well equipped to handle its job. It does not even have equipment like cameras and tape recorders. Apart from ADB, other donor agencies, too, are showing interest to assist the commission, say its officials. Leading dailies report

THE WINTER SESSION OF PARLIAMENT WILL convene on February 8, Thursday at 4:00 p. m. at Singha Durbar, Parliament Secretariat announced Wednesday citing a royal communique. King Birendra has summoned the 19th session of the Parliament as per the country's constitution, the Secretariat said. RSS news agency reports.

DURING THE FIRST FIVE MONTHS OF CURRENT fiscal year 2000/01, total government expenditure has decel-

erate due mainly to a deceleration in the growth of regular expenditure despite a significant growth in development expenditure, Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) said. During this period, budget deficit of more than Rs 4.1 billion was recorded, the Bank said. The rate of inflation, on point to point basis, was recorded at less than 3 percent due mainly to decline in the prices of food and beverages group. On the external front, exports registered a decelerated growth of 29.3 percent to Rs 24616.8 million. Exports to India grew by 38.1 percent whereas exports to third countries grew by 22.8 percent only. On the other hand, imports growth decelerated to 11.6 percent during this period from 38.2 percent over the same period last year, the central bank said.

THE COMMITTEE FORMED TO PROBE THE VIOLEN incidents of December 26, 27 and 31, which followed the rumors that an Indian actor Hrithik Roshan allegedly made disparaging remarks about Nepal and Nepalese people, submitted its report to Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Ram Chandra Poudel on Thursday. According to Home Ministry, the suggestions made in the report mentions the responsibility concerning the national security, rumor management, responsibility of the central security committee, management of security personnel, use of arms and ammunitions and review of the authorities. Meanwhile, in another development, the parliamentary Foreign Affairs and Human Rights Committee has decided to direct the government to suspend Shyam Prasad Mainali, Chief District Officer of Banke. The committee, in its report, has alleged Mainali of misusing his power in the shooting incident two weeks ago at Branch Central Jail at Banke that resulted in the death of two inmates.

CHARGE D'AFFAIRES OF THE EMBASSY OF JAP in Nepal Takamichi Okabe attended the headrace tunnel breakthrough ceremony held at the Kaligandaki A Hydro-electricity Project recently. Along with distinguished officials of Nepalese government, Okabe observed the construction activities of the 144 MW strong run-of-the-river project. The project will add its power to the present installed capacity of 389.57 MW

GERARD BAUMONT, THE HON. ROYAL NEPALESE Consul-General and Chairman of the French Chapter of the KMTNC, gave a reception on December 11, 2000 in Toulouse, France on the auspicious occasion of His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev's birthday. Royal Nepalese Ambassador to France Indra Bahadur Singh attended the event together with elite representatives of the City of Toulouse, which is the fourth largest in France and where the famous Airbus Company is located. A special welcome was accorded to Ambassador Singh by the mayor of the city Dominique Baudis, who also awarded the gold medal of the city to him. ■

“The government is committed to provide protection to export-oriented industries.”

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, addressing the annual general meeting of Garment Association of Nepal.

* * *

“One thing is sure, I won’t be a member of that cabinet.”

Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, in a light reaction to PM Koirala’s statement of reshuffling the cabinet in consultation with “friends”, in Space Time daily.

* * *

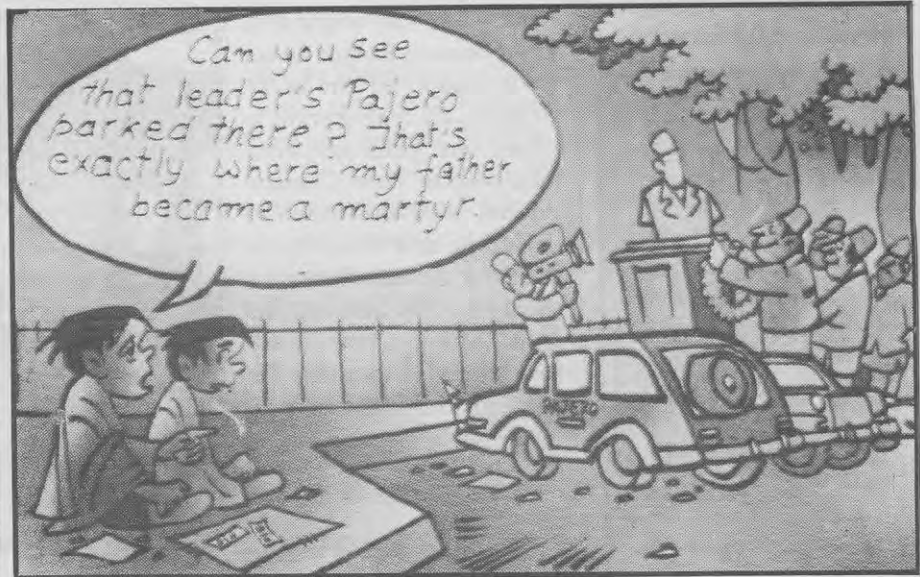
“We don’t want to see ISI, CBI or RAW active here. There should be a total ban on anti-India or anti-China activities from Nepal.”

Madhav Kumar Nepal, main opposition leader and general secretary of CPN-UML, in Himalaya Times.

* * *

“There is a mafia-like underworld active in Nepal today which wants to make quick money through wrong means. The country’s economy has gone to their hands in businessmen.”

Mohan Gopal Khetan, leading in-



Space Time

dustrialist, in Punarjagaran.

* * *

“The party will not interfere in the selection of student leadership.”

Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel, addressing the inaugural session of the convention of Nepal

Students Union (NSU) — the student wing of Nepali Congress, in Nepal Samacharpatra.

* * *

“The Maoists are but a small group of armed dacoits.”

Pradeep Nepal, member of the UML Standing Committee, in Gorkhapatra.

* * *

“We will never agree on the entry of Viagra and its Indian edition into the country.”

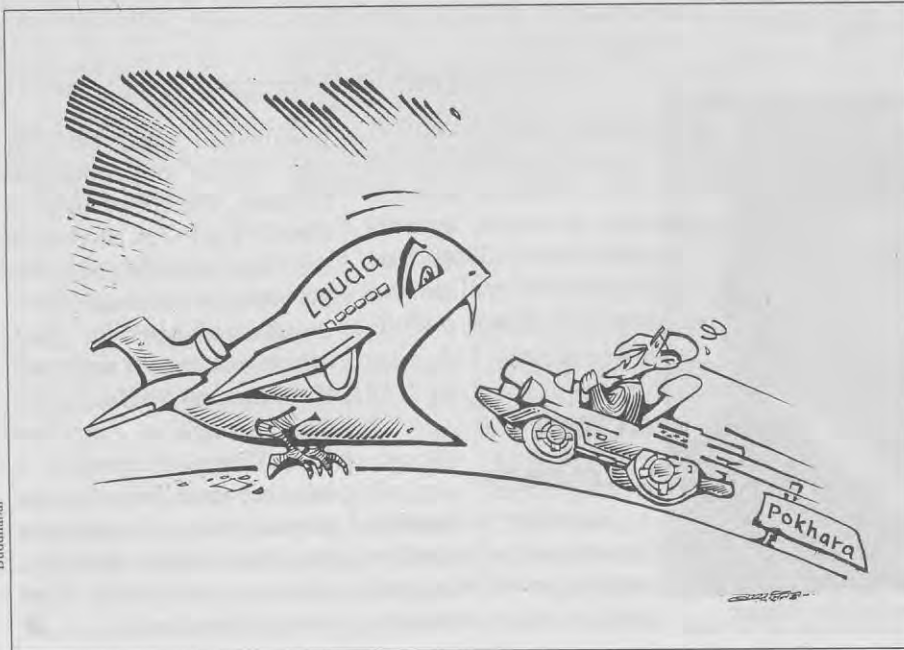
Paras Mani Baral, President of Nepal Chemist and Druggist Association, in The Kathmandu Post.

* * *

“I am tired of talking. To how many should I tell my story. I am really tired of telling the journalists about my own plight and that of the people from the remote regions.”

Thinley, the noted actor of Caravan, in Himalaya Times.

* * *



Buddhbar

Silent Deuba

Congress leader and former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba seems to have been exhausted by his three-month campaign for the Nepali Congress presidency. After returning from the party convention in Pokhara, Deuba



Deuba : Tired

has given the impression that he does not have anything to say. It is surprising to see a man who used loaded verbs and adjectives during the campaign so suddenly run out of words. While criticizing the "slavery" in the Nepali Congress and Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's role in perpetuating it, Deuba played all the cards he had. One might have to wait another month for the former prime minister to come up with his new political vocabulary.

Speaker Speaks

As soon as he returned from the Pokhara convention, Speaker of the House of Representatives Taranath Ranabhat declared that he would work as a neutral speaker. His declaration was understandable, as lost the

election to become a Congress Central Working Committee member. Speaker Ranabhat also ordered his colleagues in the house to maintain neutrality during the coming winter session. Underneath that neutrality pledge lies the fact that Ranabhat is very angry with Prime Minister Koirala for not having supported him in the elections. He compares this to events four years ago when then-speaker Ram Chandra Poudel won the election though Koirala's backing. If Ranabhat decides to remain a silent spectator amid all the noise the opposition parties have promised to make, the coming parliamentary session is bound to be uneasy for Koirala.

Gupta's Strategy

The silence maintained by Minister of Information and Communication Jaya Prakash Anand Gupta, a vocal Koirala loyalist, is intriguing. Known as one of the powerful members of the Koirala coterie, Gupta's low profile during the convention at Pokhara was totally out of character. His decision not to contest the party elections was



Gupta : Conspicuous silence

REVELATION

'My Films Represent Realities Of Nepalese Life'

— TULSI GHIMIRE



TULSI GHIMIRE, one of the renowned producers and directors of the Nepalese film, is a happy man. His latest production, 'Darpan Chhaya', was successfully screened for 51 days in eight theaters. Ghimire spoke to SPOTLIGHT on the reasons behind the smashing success. Excerpts:

How do you see the audience response to your new film?

I am happy that people liked my production. I am proud that I could bring a story that the audi-

ences liked.

What do you think is different in your films?

They are simply based on the realities of the Nepalese people. The stories is simple and they show our own culture.

At a time when few productions are able to attract audiences, what basic characteristics do you focus on?

As I told you, I don't try to copy the violent situations of Bollywood films. Darpan Chaya is a Nepalese film and presents the reality of Nepal. Fed up with incessant violence in movies, Nepalese audiences have accepted me.

How big is Nepal's film market?

It is a moderate market with an audience of about 10 million people. If you produce a good story, you don't have to worry about the returns.

viewed with concern. A former journalist who is adept in finding different ways of getting his message across, Gupta now appears to realize the power of silence in politics.

Actors Vs Climbers

Saturday witnessed Dasrath stadium packed to capacity crowd who had come to see an entertain-

ing football match between cine artists and mountain climbers. The crowd cheered their hearts out in support of their stars but in the end it was the group of seasoned climbers who conquered the game 4-2. It was a treat watching Karishma and Nir Shah using their feet against Appa and Kazi Sherpa. Meanwhile, it was once again the police who played spoilsport by charging their baton to the spectators who were only trying to get close to their stars. ■

SOUTH ASIA

Missed Opportunities

Prominent citizens say cooperation is the only way forward to avoid further conflict in the region

By BHAGIRATH YOGI in New Delhi

Has the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) been consigned to the history books? Not exactly, say prominent citizens and scholars in the region and abroad.

Set up in 1985, the seven-member club - which groups Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka - has found itself in hard times more than once. The latest tangle is the indefinite postponement of the 11th SAARC summit. That summit, scheduled to take place in Kathmandu in November 1999, was postponed at the request of India, citing political developments in Pakistan (read: military takeover).

"Though the SAARC summit could not take place other SAARC activities are going on," said Jaswant Singh, Foreign Minister of India, addressing the 50th congress of International Press Institute (IPI) in New Delhi early this week. "We have still to work toward fully realizing the economic concept of SAARC," he said.

Analysts say cool and often hostile relations between India and Pakistan are mainly responsible for the less-than-satisfactory performance of the regional body. The region is yet to overcome the shocks of the nuclear tests conducted in

1998 by India and later by Pakistan, both in the strategic sense as well as politically at the regional and international level.

"The tests were necessary given India's security needs and changing world scenario," said J.N. Dixit, former foreign secretary of India, addressing a session on "Conflict and tensions in South Asia" at the IPI Congress. He identified six elements responsible for

Analysts say cool and often hostile relations between India and Pakistan are mainly responsible for the less-than-satisfactory performance of the regional body. The region is yet to overcome the shocks of the nuclear tests conducted in 1998 by India and later by Pakistan, both in the strategic sense as well as politically at the regional and international level.

creating conflict in the region: problems of collective national identities, problems of development, problems of democracy, problems of nuclearization, internal contradictions of civil society, and asymmetry between India and its neighbors. "As Indian borders are contiguous to all six nations in the region, it has a special responsibility," said Dixit. "But it should not result in self-destruction for India."

Keeping aside the sensitivities of India, Pakistan and other countries in

the region, for that matter, growing militarization and conflict in this part of the world can't be sustained for long, say experts. Some even see room for optimism.

"By and large this region has settled down in a cooperative and non-conflict mode," said former Indian Prime Minister I. K. Gujral. "The future of both India and Pakistan lies in cooperation."

Scholars taking part in the discussions talked about what they described as "missed opportunities" for reducing tension in the region, which houses nearly one-fifth of the world's population. "The opportunities missed in South Asia have been enormous," said Sharin Tahir Kheli, a US-based scholar. "The absence of normal relations in this part of the world is almost legendary."

She referred to non-fulfilment of potentials created by Indian Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee's visit to Lahore, popularly known as the "bus diplomacy."

Some even argued that it paid to some sections of the people in the region to keep tensions and conflicts high. "The cold era may have ended in other parts of the world but it is still going on in this region," said I.A. Rehman, director of Pakistan Human Rights Commission. "Only a people's movement can unshackle our leaders from the utopia of non-

cooperation."

As people within the region continue to interact at different levels, there is growing pressure on the governments to shed their differences and come closer to chart out strategies to fight against such common enemies as illiteracy, poverty and unemployment.

The revival of a forum like SAARC would be an excellent opportunity for his. Unfortunately, nobody is in a situation to predict when the stalled summit might take place. ■

QUAKE IN GUJARAT

Convulsions In Kathmandu

The devastating earthquake that hit the western Indian state of Gujarat wakes up Nepalese officials

By KESHAB POUDEL

As Kathmandu lies in an active earthquake zone, the devastation in the western Indian state of Gujarat has come as a wake-up call to Nepalese officials. Officials in different ministries and non-governmental organizations see in Gujarat's tragedy a lesson on rescue and rehabilitation efforts.

Nepal has witnessed more than half a dozen big quakes in the last three decades. The great earthquake of 1934, which flattened many parts of Kathmandu valley, remains firmly etched in the minds of those who experienced it.

As Kathmandu valley is prone to earthquakes, Nepal needs to study the experiences of other places in order to minimize losses. Despite the fact that Nepal lies in an active seismic zone, earthquake preparedness has always received low priority.

Experts and officials understand that the risk of an earthquake has increased significantly since the last major one, but the government does not appear to be overly concerned.

Kathmandu valley can face massive devastation in a big earthquake. According to a study, more than 60 percent of the houses in the valley would be destroyed.

A quake above magnitude 7 on Richter scale could leave up to 700,000 people homeless.

Given the confusion in almost every sphere of emergency response today, there is a serious possibility of lack of coordination among organization entrusted with carrying out rescue and evacuation activities.

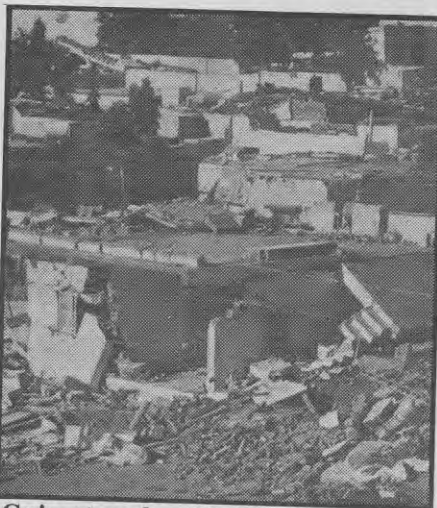
In the Gujarat case, local communities played an important role in rescuing and evacuating people trapped in collapsed buildings.

A study conducted by National Society for Earthquake Technology Nepal (NSET) showed that over 50,000 people would be

killed in an earthquake. The country needs to have medicines and doctors on stand-by to provide service to more than 150,000 patients.

"The Health Ministry has regular programs for disaster response. We are developing some emergency rescue packages for immediate treatment," said Padma Prasad Pokharel, secretary at the ministry.

The valley's infrastructure is more vulnerable to quakes. A big quake would dam-



Gujarat quake : Terrible aftermath

age more than 50 percent of lifeline services like electricity, telephone and drinking water supply.

Despite official claims, Nepal's preparedness level is poor in comparison to other countries that face similar risks. Although a Central Disaster Relief Committee exists under the home minister, no one seems know how it would work when faced with a real disaster.

If we recall historical events, the risk of a major earthquake is very high in the valley. Kutch faced a great earthquake of 8.3 Richter scale in 1819.

Although NSET-NEPAL is implementing a Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Risk Management Project, it remains to

take action on minimizing the risks from a large earthquake.

"The Kathmandu Municipality has already prepared a disaster preparedness plan for ward No 20," said Padma Sunder Joshi, chief of Urban Development Department Kathmandu Metropolitan City. "We will prepare such plans for other wards also."

Bhaktapur and Lalitpur municipalities are also planning to carry out campaigns to make the local population aware about earthquake and ways to minimize damage.

"I am strictly monitoring building construction work in the area and considering training local volunteers," said Buddhi Raj Bajracharya, mayor of Lalitpur Sub-metropolitan City.

Nepal lies between Tibetan plate in the north and the Indian plate in the south. Indian plate continues in a northward motion. In weak geological conditions, the intensity of the quake is amplified.

Geologically, the structure of Kathmandu valley is very weak. In Kathmandu, many houses are built without following the building code. Studies have shown that most of the houses in Kathmandu are like a 'death trap' — as if people are digging graves for themselves.

As Nepal does not have big hydro dam and industrial plants, there may not be much to worry about on that front. Kulekhani, which is one of the biggest reservoirs, is filled with water only during the monsoon until December. Other dams are run of the river projects which will not cause any damage except in terms of power supply.

"National calamities are a regular phenomenon and we are very much aware about the country's vulnerability," said senior official at the Home Ministry.

"I am scared to calculate the possible damage if there is a earthquake like the one that struck Gujarat. Almost all buildings will collapse and people will be trapped within their houses," said architectural engineer Bharat Sharma. "If we had sincerely followed the mitigation plan prepared after the 1934 earthquake, Kathmandu valley would not have had to be so scared by the very mention of earthquakes."

Seismologically, Nepal is more vulnerable. "First of all, we must remember that the quake will come without any notice. As we have a history of great earthquakes, there is a possibility of another quake occur-

ring any time. Thus, we must start effective work to minimize the damage and losses.

"Although other parts of the country are vulnerable, the geological composition increases the risk in Kathmandu valley," said Madhav Raj Pandey, chief of the National Seismological Center (NSC).

Valleys are at risk in the geologically volatile Himalayas where small tremors are recorded every day. The center recorded about 12,000 seismic events in 1998, including 8,000 regional tremors. In 1996 and 1997, the highest number of seismic activities were recorded by the center. According to geologists, there's a chance of a major earthquake hitting the Kathmandu valley before the year 2034.

Geologically, a quake is a regular phenomenon of earth and it is natural for a country like Nepal, where the young Himalayas are gaining height owing to many big and small faults within the territory.

According to geologists, the continuing northward motion of Indian plate at the rate of about 5 centimeters per year induced widespread deformation and faulting and thrusting of its rocks at the collision front, giving rise to world's highest mountains.

"Intense seismic activity in Asia and particularly along the Himalayan area is related to this ongoing process," said Pandey. "The seismicity of the Himalayas is the direct consequence of the ongoing process of faulting and thrusting."

The large-scale thrusting developed from north to south in the last 25 million years, giving rise to the main central thrust separating the lesser Himalayas from the Higher Himalayas. The main boundary thrust separates the lesser Himalayas from the sub-Himalayas of Churia range.

Theories show that bigger the magnitude of an earthquake, the greater its destruction potential. On the other hand, smaller the magnitude of earthquakes, the more frequent their occurrence. Kathmandu does not have frequent quakes so experts are expecting a bigger one.

Gujarat had some preparedness and possessed the capabilities to cope with such disasters. But a country like Nepal, which does not have a recent history of major disasters, needs to prepare itself for the big one. ■

FIRING AT JAIL

Death Without Cause

The police action at Banke shows how complicated it is to manage prisons

By KESHAB POUDEL

The report of the Human Rights and Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives on the killing of two prisoners at Central Banke Prison in Nepalgunj revealed the pathetic situation of the country's prison system.

Although the dispute started over the inmates' demand for cotton rugs instead of the ordinary blankets they were getting, it ended in the deaths of two prisoners.

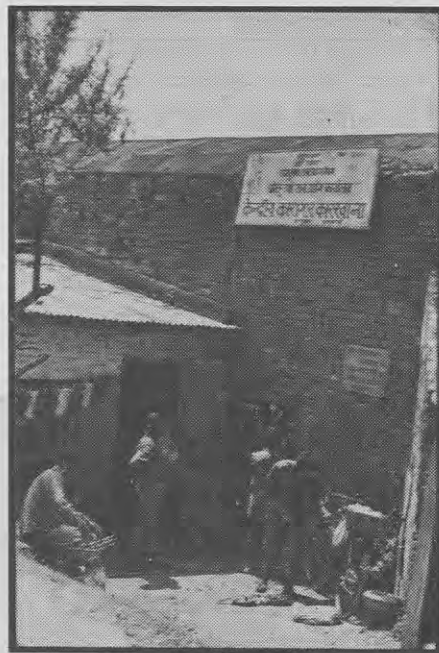
During a field visit by a team of the Human Rights and Foreign Affairs Committee, it emerged that the dispute started when a group of prisoners on January 6 rejected the ordinary rugs they were being given.

The following day, the prisoners came out with a list of 15 demands in order to make the prison habitable for human beings.

Among the 15 demands were arrangements for immediate supply of rugs and bed covers, construction of better sanitation, toilet and sewerage facilities, marketing of the inmates' hand-made products, regular supply of electricity, health check-up facilities, candles and lanterns, special treatment for patient with psychiatric disorders, regular supply of national newspapers, and renovation of the roof of the prison, which houses 187 inmates, including 14 women.

"The demands put forth by the prisoners were so basic that the local administration alone could have met them," said Som Prasad Pandey, chairman of the Human Rights and Foreign Affairs Committee. "This tragedy was the result of the inefficiency and negligence on the part of the district administration."

Police and administration insisted that they opened fire only after the prisoners turned violent and attempted to escape. "In a situation when prisoners took the prison under their control for a week, blocking officials from entering the facility, the administration had no option other than to use



Central jail industry : Threadbare facilities

force," said Chief District Officer Shyam Prasad Mainali. "Police opened fired following hours of violent resistance by the prisoners." Several prisoners were injured in the police action. "This is a gross violation of the rights of the prisoners, who were killed under an irrational order of the chief district officer," Pandey said. "We urged the government to suspend the CDO and other officials responsible for the incident."

Nepal's prisons are so neglected and so poorly managed that they hardly are fit for human settlement. Although many human rights organizations have studied the physical facilities of the prison centers and come out with recommendations, few policy- and decision-makers have had the time to read them.

A large number of today's members of the House of the Representatives and the National Assembly have lived in prison for different periods of time. However, no one has ever stalled parliamentary proceedings or introduced a resolution to press the government to improve prison conditions. ■

FOOTBALL

Messed Up

Amid the ensuing power struggle between Ganesh Thapa and Geeta Rana, Nepal loses the hard-won chance of hosting the World Cup qualifying round

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

It is official now. The worst fears of Nepalese football fans have come true. Nepal will no longer be hosting the World Cup qualifying round in March. Instead, the tournament will be played in Kazakhstan capital Almaty in April. The world football governing body FIFA snatched Nepal's chance to host the game and awarded that to Kazakhstan amid the unending row between Ganesh Thapa and Geeta Rana over whose ANFA is legitimate. The tournament would have been participated by Nepal, Iraq, Kazakhstan and Macau. This is a qualifying round for 2002 World Cup which is going to be held jointly by South Korea and Japan.

In the whole episode of this foul play, it was the referee (the government in this case), whose role was the most dubious. "It is now clear beyond a trace of doubt that the government is not interested in developing football," mourned Sanubhai Thapa, the captain of Jawalakhel Youth Club (JYC).

"While both Mr Thapa and Mrs Rana have previous football experience, there is no doubt that both were given their positions based on political allegiance. Football is not politics and must not be treated as such. We must ensure that football activity and regulation in Nepal is governed by a non-partisan organization and not an organization that will change with each new government. Only with an independent governing body can

the sport sustain itself throughout political changes," said Bikesh Shrestha, president of the Nepal Football Fan Club, a non-profit organization created to promote the sport and to build accountability in the sport's administration.

When Nepal was awarded the chance to host the tournament in 2000, it was hailed as one of the biggest triumphs of Nepalese football in its 50-year-old history. But now when that chance has been



Nepalese footballers : Marred by politics

snatched away, nobody is coming forward to take the responsibility.

The downfall of Nepalese football began in October last year when then All Nepal Football Association (ANFA) chief Ganesh Thapa went ahead unilaterally to hold new election — which was, interestingly, observed by representative from Asian Football Confederation (AFC) — despite protests from National Sports Council (NSC).

While Thapa was elected new ANFA chief, it was understandably de-recognized by the NSC, which in turn, made

school principal-turned-sports administrator Geeta Rana the head of ANFA ad hoc committee.

This led to a unique confusion in the country with two ANFAs in existence. Whereas Thapa enjoyed FIFA's blessings, Rana controlled the football infrastructures in the country.

"We were willing to host the tournament," said Rana, accusing Thapa of playing politics in making FIFA take away the tournament.

Thapa, on the other hand, contends that the ANFA (led by him) was willing to host the tournament had the NSC given them the permission to use Dasrath stadium. "Since we are the legitimate ANFA in the eyes of FIFA/AFC, there was no question of these associations awarding the tournament to Rana."

Though the arguments from both the sides hold water, it is unfortunate that they could not reconcile their differences in the face of such an important event. "When even traditional enemies like South Korea and Japan can come together to hold World Cup, there was no reason why Rana and Thapa couldn't have struck a deal in favor of the football," said a sports analyst.

As Thapa was given the seal of approval by AFC as well as FIFA, it is clear that they, too, are party to this whole affair. To an extent, they are also responsible for this vertical split in Nepalese

football.

"Now that very split has led to the relocation of the tournament. Nepal is without its tournament, its tourism revenue from visiting fans, and a boost for football in the public eye. We are clearly appalled by the situation," said Bikesh Shrestha.

Unfortunately, even as the FIFA has taken away the tournament, the government seems less than concerned. It is a pity that the politicians are decimating the very sports which the majority of their people love. ■

CHILDREN

Painful Picture

Despite firm government pledges and growing social awareness, child exploitation continues in all its tragic forms

BY AKSHAY SHARMA

Barsha Koirala, 12 and Karma Lama, 10, were shot dead by police on December 26 last year when the streets of Kathmandu erupted in violence against an Indian film star's alleged disparaging comments on Nepal. The two children were just spectators.

Similar cases of innocent children being caught in the crossfire were reported between 1990 and 1992. "We need to find the answers and review these problems," said Gauri Malla of Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN) during a recent program in Kathmandu.

One day last year, Dil Bahadur Budha, an 11-year-old boy from Dolpa, Shahartar VDC-4, was going about his daily chores. As he was moving around with his herd of goats, he stumbled on a bomb that exploded, instantly killing him, according to INSEC, an organization monitoring the state of Nepal's children. The surreptitiously placed bomb pointed to the involvement of the Maoist rebels. Dil was killed in a war he was no part of and probably did not understand. The report lists the deaths of 57 children caught in Maoist-police fighting.

Nepal has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The government and political parties have expressed their commitment to safeguarding the rights and interest of Nepali children. But little has happened beyond that.

Kapil Shrestha, a member of the Human Rights Commission said, "The brunt of all exploitation seems to fall on girls." Referring to the current status of children in Nepal, he said, "Our targets and priorities are not even comparable with Latin American countries."

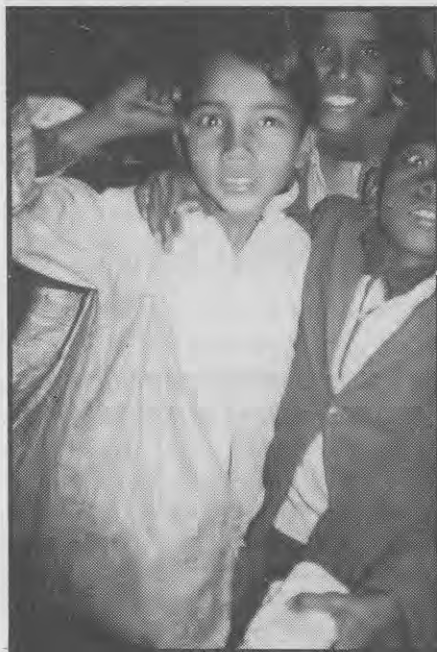
"One organization uses children as soldiers and the other chain victims who are sometimes children," said Shrestha. "We need to be responsible and responsive in the future. Will we fulfil our pledges and take steps towards the kind of future we want for our children?"

Two years ago, Man Kumar Chaule, 16, was watching a cultural program in Achham's Dachu's VDC-3 when a bullet struck him. INSEC blamed the police for the incident.

Nepal Bar Association's newly elected

president Sindhu Nath Pyakurel, spoke about how things are hushed up, especially when the children are not aware that they are being exploited. "The children need to be aware of their rights and they need to speak out if they are violated."

Dal Bahdur Oli, a six-year-old boy from Jajarkot, Dhime, Panchkatiya VDC, was killed along with his father, brother and sister in an encounter between the police and Maoists. The family, which ran a teashop, were innocent victims of a bomb hurled by Maoists.



Child workers : Crying for attention

"The youth suffer the brunt of all exploitation. He thirsts for education and food but what he really needs is security," Pyakurel said. NGOs and other organizations are making efforts to end such inequities, he added.

"A welfare state like ours needs to be aware of this problem. The government seem to have no program. We have laws but the government has yet to come up with a definite strategy," he said.

At the millennium summit of the United Nations last year, Nepal signed the optional Protocol to the Convention of Rights of the Child. The accord commits countries against

the recruitment of children as soldiers, slaves or forced laborers and to take firm steps to prevent their involvement in prostitution and pornography.

According to the International Labor Organization, Nepal has been selected as a test case in Asia of a program to eliminate child labor by the year 2005. While the results of the program won't be available for some years, CWIN officials say the adjustments and alterations made in 2000 point to a promising future for the rights of children in Nepal.

Human rights activists say blaming the Maoist insurgency alone for the violation of children's rights would not be helpful. There are other areas society has to look at. CWIN says 96 incidents of violence were directed at children last year. Twenty-six were murdered in family feuds. In another shocking aspect of the situation, 32 infants were killed immediately after they were born.

Experts say there were 126 cases in which family members, guardians, teachers, or employers tortured children. "A teacher of mathematics in Rayelechaur Boarding School at Pokhara punished 18 of his first-grade students by forcing them to eat human excreta just because they could not master the mathematical multiplication. Most of society believes in saving the stick and spoiling the child," said CWIN's Malla.

A teacher in a Bhaktapur school recently made five first-grade students to act like cattle and eat grass. An eighth grader in a prominent school in Kathmandu was severely beaten by his teacher for trying to cheat in the exams. Twenty-two students in Kathmandu were held captive for not paying tuition fees.

"These issues need to be dealt urgently by the government," a CWIN expert said. "We are focusing on the violation of civil rights in educational institutions," the expert said. At the program, experts also discussed the situation of communicable diseases among children and the risks posed by the massive hike in fees at the country's only hospital for children. Experts say the ratio between child patients and doctors is 1: 102,671.

In the area of ensuring the welfare of its most tender population, Nepal faces innumerable problems such as high child mortality, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, food shortages (especially in the mid-western Region), child marriage, gender discrimination, abuse, exploitation, trafficking, labor, discrimination against Dalit children, missing children, street children, among others.

As long as the exploitation of children remains politically, economically and socially profitable, beneficiaries will continue to block reforms. On the other hand, as long as the rights of children continue to be violated, these interests will gain stronger roots. ■



ADB Chief Chino (left) with Acharya : Fruitful visit

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK Continued Assistance

The largest multilateral donor to Nepal focuses on poverty alleviation programs

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

Weeks before the Asia Pacific Poverty Forum was to begin in Manila under the auspices of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), bank chairman Tadako Chino visited Nepal with the message: Poverty alleviation needs pro-poor, good governance.

During his visit to ADB-funded projects in the country, Chino was particularly interested in seeing the output of the projects with their likely impact in the lives of the poor, officials said. The biggest multilateral donor to Nepal, the Manila-based bank has assisted almost every sector of development in the Himalayan kingdom.

During Chino's visit, the ADB and the Nepali government signed agreements under which the bank agreed to provide Nepal loan and grant assistance for a number of development projects, including Melamchi. Deputy director at the ADB, Rajat M. Nag,

and Finance Secretary Dr. Bimal Koirala signed separate agreements, at the Finance Ministry last week.

Under the agreement, the ADB will provide a loan assistance totaling US\$ 138.3 million (approximately Rs 10.19 billion) to fund the Melamchi Water Supply Project (MWSP), Crop Diversification Project and the Corporate and Financial Governance Project in Nepal. Of this, MWSP will get the largest share (US\$ 120 million). The ADB has also agreed to provide a grant assistance of US\$ 3.3 million (approximately Rs 243 million) to Nepal.

"We are very happy to be a partner in Nepal's development," said Chino, addressing the signing function. "The bank is taking a lead coordinating role among the donors in the planning and implementation of the Melamchi project," he said.

Nepali officials appreciated the ADB's gesture. "We appreciate ADB's assistance in the form of concessional loans and tech-

nical grant assistance that has been instrumental in Nepal's development efforts," said Finance and Defence Minister Mahesh Acharya.

Late last year, the bank had extended a loan assistance of US\$ 35 million (approximately Rs 2588.2 million) to Nepal for the implementation of the Small Town Water Supply and Sanitation project. The project aims to improve the water supply and sanitation conditions of up to 50 small towns, benefiting about 600,000 people.

The ADB also approved a loan package of US\$ 10.6 million to reform and strengthen Nepal's financial and corporate sectors. The Corporate and Financial Governance Project comprises a US\$ 7.3 million loan and US\$ 3.3 million for six technical assistance grants from the ADB.

The assistance will also be used in establishing a National Judicial Academy, develop the payment systems and communications infrastructure for improved financial service delivery and prepare for the restructuring of state-owned financial intermediaries, among others.

The ADB's annual lending for public sector projects to Nepal has fluctuated considerably, because of the relatively small program and the lumpiness of some of the projects, especially those in the power sector. Average annual lending from 1994 to 1998 was \$87.6 million, just above the average indicative planning figure (IPF) \$80 to \$85 million during the period.

In 1999, the IPF was reduced to \$78 million because of the scarcity of Asian Development Funds. In 1998, ADB approved four loans, namely, Second Agricultural Program Loan, Community Groundwater Irrigation Sector, Rural Microfinance, and an engineering loan for Melamchi Water Supply, with the total amount of \$105 million.

In 1999, ADB lending program comprised one \$50 million project for rural electrification, distribution and transmission. The proposed program for 2000-2002 is formulated on the basis of the 1998 Country Assistance Plan, bank officials said. The major focus is on the agriculture sector. Areas that support agricultural growth and rural development have been given high priority in the form of support to physical and social infrastructure, governance, and environment.

As outlined in its Country Operation Strategy (COS), the ADB has been focusing on components like stakeholder involvement, sectoral road maps, civil service reform, progress in improving governance (including anti-corruption measures), and progress in strengthening the policy and institutional environment to make its assistance effective and productive.

The proposed lending program for 2000-2002 comprises 11 loans for \$350 million. The projects have been designed to improve economic growth, reduce poverty, increase human development, improve environmental management, and address key governance issues in the public and private sector. The sectoral focus of the program is consistent with the objectives of the ADB's operations in Nepal and assists in meeting the government's development priorities and commitment to sector reform, the ADB's role as a long-term development partner, and the assistance provided by other donor governments and agencies, bank officials said.

The new COS proposes that future lending to Nepal be linked to progress in addressing the major country performance issues that will improve the environment for both private and public investments. Future levels of ADB investments will be commensurate with the necessary development of the policy and institutional environment of the country to generate and sustain the desired development impact.

Average performance in the key areas would be consistent with an IPF in the range of \$70 million-80 million at the current level of ADF availability. Poor performance would result in a lower IPF or even no lending in a year. Good performance would indicate achievement of a policy and institutional environment conducive to the generation and sustainability of the desired development impact from higher ADB investment, the bank said.

With nearly half of its people living below the poverty line, according to a UN estimate, Nepal needs to work hard to channel such development assistance in the areas directly addressing the needs of the poor. By re-orienting its policies and assistance, the ADB is helping poor countries like Nepal in the region to fight against poverty - an insult to humanity in the 21st century. ■

NEPALESE PLAYERS In Search Of Greener Pastures

A national football player leaves for Japan, exposing the lack of opportunities for athletes in the country

By A CORRESPONDENT

Basanta Gauchan, the eminent national football player, has left for Japan, indicating the increasing frustration among even the established players in the country.

Gauchan recently left for Japan, supposedly for work, after he suffered a knee injury and could not play in the Birthday Cup last month.

He was awarded the best player in the last year's South Asian Federation Games held in Kathmandu. Gauchan is not an exception. National players like Narendra Shrestha along with three others, too, had "disappeared" en masse in Japan some four years ago when Nepalese national team visited there to play in a tournament.

"There is a tendency among players to go overseas because of the lack of

professionalism in the country. The pay here is very meager and it is hard for players to sustain in this field," said one sports commentator.

Take, for instance, the case of Bidhan Lama, the taekwondo player who had won bronze medal during the Seoul Olympics 1988 where taekwondo was made a demonstration game. In the successive Olympics Lama could not participate and he had to leave for the United States where he is currently associated with the team that coaches US Olympic team.

In the football sector, too, there are very few noted clubs in the country like Manang Marsyangdi, RCT, NRT and Friends' Club. They, too, do not pay good amounts to players. According to one player, even the best of the bests only get a monthly pay of little more than Rs 3000 from these clubs.

The sports analysts see a clear need for big business houses to sponsor football clubs like it is happening in India where beer baron Vijaya Mallya of UB Group sponsors teams like Mohan Bagan.

Following Mallya, many other business houses in India have started sponsoring other clubs. "Here, too, business houses like Chaudhary, Khetan and Golchha should come forward to help the sports sector," said an analyst. ■



Athletes in practice : Uncertain future

POLITICS

Preparing For Fresh Elections?

A cardinal rule of parliamentary democracy is that whenever the ruling party is unpopular, the job of the opposition is to force the government to seek a fresh mandate from the people. But the CPN-UML is single-mindedly focused on forcing Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala out of office. If the main opposition party is serious about its allegations against the Nepali Congress government, it must stop playing unconstitutional politics and demand fresh elections.

By KESHAB POUDEL

“We will not allow Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to enter the parliament building if he doesn't resign. We will stall the session until he quits,” said Pradeep Nepal, powerful CPN-UML standing committee member. (In a hitherto undenied report in Kantipur daily, January 25, 2001)

“The CPN-UML will stall the session of the House of Representatives until Prime

Minister Koirala resigns. The UML will launch a street agitation to force Koirala out of office. Analyzing the role of the Nepali Congress in current politics, our meeting concluded that the government has failed to control violence, killings and anarchy. Even the investigations of Public Account Committee reveal that the government was involved in massive irregularities in the Lauda Air deal. Under these circumstances, the CPN-UML has decided to ask for the resignation of Nepali Congress government. (The decision of the UML standing committee meeting pub-

lished in the CPN-UML-friendly Budhabar weekly, on January 24, 2001).

The UML is demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, criticizing his Nepali Congress for failing to deliver the goods and for not being able to restore law and order. The UML says that as long as the Nepali Congress remains power, the country will face many troubles.

Interestingly, UML leaders led by main opposition leader Madhav Kumar Nepal went to the residence of another senior Congress leader, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, on January 25 asking him to take the lead-



PM Koirala (second from right) with his colleagues : Tough terrain ahead

ership of the government. The unanswered question: If the Nepali Congress has failed to deliver, as the UML charges, how would the replacement of Koirala by Bhattarai or Sher Bahadur Deuba make a difference.

Strategy to Divide Congress

What if Prime Minister Koirala visits UML leader K.P. Sharma Oli and asks him to dislodge Nepal from the party leadership? Is this the brand of democracy the UML believes in and propagates? If not, on what grounds did the party leaders go to Bhattarai's residence? "It is clear that the UML's campaign is to depose Koirala under a sinister design," said a political analyst.

If the statement of the UML is any indication, it is pretty clear where Nepal's politics is heading in the forthcoming parliamentary session, which starts from February 9.

The constitution has specified several ways in which the prime minister can be changed. It is difficult to understand why the main opposition party is choosing an extra-constitutional method to do so.

Opposition's Demands

The opposition can demand the resignation of the prime minister because it is their privilege. But they cannot use extra-constitutional ways to force prime minister to resign. "It is the prerogative of the opposition to ask for the resignation of the prime minister and other ministers. It happens in

other countries, too. I take this in a very normal way," said Congress MP Dr Ram Sharan Mahat. "Going by their statements that they will resort to extra-parliamentary methods — such as forcibly stalling parliamentary proceedings — for the resignation of the prime minister, this is a wrong practice," he said.

Then what prompted the main opposition party to make threats of street action and disruption of the house to bring down the democratically elected government? There may be another hidden agenda. As the local bodies elections is approaching, the UML knows that it cannot defeat a united Congress.

"There are constitutional ways to influence the policies of the government and to build pressure on the government," said Dr. Mahat, who has maintained neutrality on the rifts within the Congress.

Stalling the parliament session and organizing street protests would only invite a constitutional deadlock. In a parliamentary democracy, the opposition has the obligation to criticize the government and to provide an alternative government through elections. Thus, the main opposition is known as the shadow government, which prepares programs keeping in mind that the electorate at any time might ask them to provide a better administration.

"We are shocked by the UML's present posture. We thought that despite being com-

munist the UML had matured into a responsible parliamentary opposition," said a Western diplomat, speaking on condition of strict anonymity. "We have been proved wrong and we will have to reconsider our opinion about them."

Added another diplomat from a neighboring country which has a long tradition of parliamentary democracy: "We also have had a communist opposition, but they have never been so irresponsible. If the communist opposition continues in this way, it will have no future."

Street demonstrations have their limits in effecting change of government or policies. After a point, they bring political instability. Demonstrations and agitations only negate the real aspirations of the people.

But UML leaders are adamant. "When Prime Minister Koirala refuses to listen to the opposition and continues to be involved in corruption, there is no other way we can force him to resign," said UML general secretary Nepal in Rajbiraj. "As the CIAA established his involvement in the Lauda Air deal, Koirala must go. We will stall the house and organize street protests to force him out of office," Nepal added.

Democracy matures with the setting of one precedent after another. If the Nepali Congress follows the precedents set by today's opposition, what can the UML expect if it happens to hold the reins of power tomorrow? The main opposition party's plan to disrupt parliament is contrary to the principles and practices of healthy democracy.

If the policies of the government have failed to bring change, the opposition can bring a vote of no-confidence or censure motion in parliament and use other constitutional avenues. If they want to take an extra step, they can press the government to call fresh elections.

Rejecting such suggestions, Nepal said: "We are opposing Prime Minister Koirala, not the Nepali Congress."

Demand Without Alternatives

In a parliamentary democracy, the opposition always demands the resignation of the prime minister after they are in a position to form an alternative government. At a time when the combined strength of all the opposition parties is 91 out of 205 members of parliament, what benefits do they expect by dislodging the prime minister? Moreover, even if Koirala does resign,

'We Are Going To The Street To Sensitize The Government'

— DR PRAKASH CHANDRA LOHANI

Dr. PRAKASH CHANDRA LOHANI, vice-president of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, is one of the prominent parliamentarians representing the opposition bench.

Are you demanding the resignation of the prime minister? What about the entire Nepali Congress government?

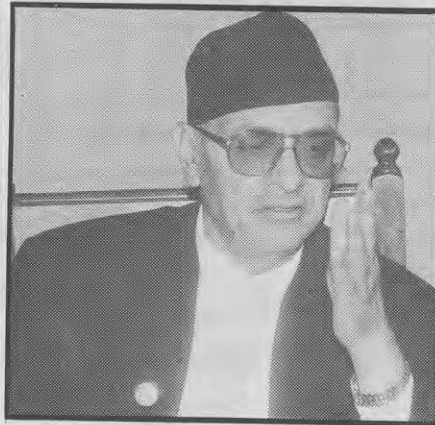
The country is in a chaotic situation now, as the law-and-order situation is getting worse, the administration is politicized and the community feels insecure. Corruption is rampant. The government has not been able to deliver the goods or restore law and order. The overall situation of the country is totally frustrating. The morale of the country is so low and the leadership of the Congress party has failed to respect the people's aspirations. Instead of doing something to improve the situation, the Congress leadership is working against the spirit of the constitution. Instead of doing something for the common people, the government is misusing national resources to strengthen the party.

As a leader of an opposition party, what do you think needs to be done?

There needs to be honesty on the part of the government and Congress leaders. They must do what they promised to the people. By trying to do something for the people, they can prove their efficiency. Unfortunately, the Nepali Congress is totally incapable of providing relief to the common people and to control corruption. There is corruption within the party and almost every minister is tainted.

Do you think you can remove the prime minister through your agitation?

There is a way to remove the prime minister through the constitutional process. We can change the prime minister through a no-confidence motion. Street agitation has its own limitations. When the government ignores the voice of opposition, we have no choice but go to the street. Democracy after all is a system where the voices of people must be heard. It is a political order that defines the working relations of different institutions. In democracy, checks and balances are very important. But the Nepali Congress government has destroyed very concept of checks and balances. The provision of impartiality is violated during elections and the concept of decentralization is ignored. The sys-



tem has not been operating because the ruling party has not respected the rule of democracy.

How do you see the role of the main opposition party, which is demanding the resignation of the prime minister, instead of asking for the resignation of the entire government?

One reason why democratic systems fail is because of docile opposition. In a democratic order, the opposition has a major role to play. When the main opposition is opportunistic in its behavior, the democratic order always suffers. Here I must say that the behavior of the CPN-UML is opportunistic. Past experience has shown that the UML even joins the government if it can find the benefits. They joined the government in 1998 and took all the benefits from Congress in the general elections. It showed its unique character by joining the government, leaving the field of the main opposition party empty. This kind of behavior encourages the Nepali Congress to act irrationally and irresponsibly. In that sense, the behavior of the CPN-UML is unprincipled and opportunistic. Strong alertness on the part of civil society and the public is needed to strengthen democracy. Except in a few urban areas, civil society is non-existent. So democracy always is in danger of being misused.

How do you see the decision of the CPN-UML to call street protests to dislodge the government instead of pressing the matter in parliament?

Street agitation is also a part of democracy. Even in the most advanced democratic coun-

tries, political parties use this method. When the Nepali Congress is unable to fulfill the aspirations of the people, when the government ignores the voice of the opposition in the parliament, street demonstrations are an alternative. I don't think we are trying to disregard the boundary line set by the constitution. We know there are provision in the constitutions for replacing the government, so we will not go beyond those limits. If the government does not show sensitivity to the opposition and does not listen to our voice in parliament, the street can be used as an alternative. We have a government which thinks that the majority is enough to rule the country. In that situation, opposition can call street agitation. We are going to the street to sensitize the government and pressure the government.

But some leaders of the main opposition party are saying that they will not allow the prime minister to enter parliament and want to replace the government through street agitation. As a leader of the second alternative democratic party, how do you look at this?

As far as the prime minister's entering the house is concerned, that come under the procedures of the parliamentary practices as he has right to enter parliament. The parliamentary game has to go on and we cannot just disrupt it. If such precedent is set, other parties may use similar tactics when you are in the government next time. We will try to avoid such things.

But your party is joining hands with the CPN-UML on the issue of the prime minister's resignation. How do you distinguish yourself from them?

In case facts establish that the prime minister is linked to the Lauda deal, the opposition has the right to demand his resignation and the right to stall parliamentary activities until he resigns.

As long as Nepali Congress continues to back Koirala as its leader, how can you force him to resign?

When Tarini Dutta Chataut can resign, what wrong in Koirala doing so?

What do you plan to do if the prime minister agrees to step down.

Congress has a majority in the parliament. We are not saying that we want to change the rules. The party that enjoys majority support forms the next government. ■

the parliamentary majority will still be with his Nepali Congress.

In a multiparty system of government, it is the political party which is to be blamed for failures, not individuals. If we go through the statements of the leaders of the main opposition party, it is difficult to fathom who or what they are opposing —

the party or person.

If they are opposing the Congress government, they have to ask for fresh elections. If they are asking for the resignation of Prime Minister Koirala alone, the opposition parties are interfering in the internal affairs of the ruling party. The opposition, too, needs to follow the norms and ethics of

political pluralism and representative government.

"We want to remove a corruption-tainted prime minister but not the party. If Prime Minister Koirala's involvement in the Lauda Air deal is established, he will have to quit," said Dr Prakash Chandra Lohani, MP and vice-president of the Ras-

'We Will Face The Opposition Unitedly'

— DR. RAM SHARAN MAHAT

Congress leader and MP Dr. RAM SHARAN MAHAT believes that opposition needs to play constitutional game. He holds the view that it is the party which can decide who will lead the government. Dr Mahat spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues. Excerpts:

Opposition parties are demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. As a member of the ruling Nepali Congress party, how do you see that demand?

In a parliamentary democracy, the opposition party can ask for the resignation of the prime minister. Going by news report and rumor, they want to stall the parliament to force the prime minister to resign. If that is so, it is not a healthy practice in parliament. If opposition is not satisfied with the functioning style of the prime minister, they have every right to ask for his resignation. It happens in other parts of the world also. But the opposition in Nepal has started a wrong practice by trying to force the physical obstruction in the parliament. It will be very unprincipled practice. Such actions help only those forces who do not believe in normal parliamentary practices. Whatever they do, the opposition parties should do within the ambit of established parliamentary practices and norms.

Does this challenge concern only Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala or is it targeted against the Nepali Congress also?

It is both. The prime minister is also leader of the parliamentary party of the Nepali Congress. At present, the country is facing many problems and the Nepali Congress is the only party which can give the nation a proper direction. It has to forge unity among the rank and file. The present situation is that the Congress is not a very united party. Perhaps the opposition wants to take advantage out of the situation.

Can the opposition dictate who should be your leader?

Not at all. It is the sole privilege of the members of the Congress party. It is not the business of the opposition to choose a particular person as the leader of the government. If



they are not satisfied with the functioning of the government, they can ask for the prime minister's resignation. They can also bring a vote of no-confidence in parliament. If they are not satisfied by the functioning of the government, there are various ways to check it. They can bring an adjournment motion, attention motion and motion on urgent public issue. There are many ways of drawing the attention of the government. If they follow the fair game, I don't have any complaints. If they play extra-constitutional methods, that will only strengthen the hands of forces who oppose the present form of government.

Opposition parties argue that the government has failed to restore law and order, curb corruption and control rising prices. How do you respond?

I agree with the fact that the present government has not been successful in tackle many challenges. The prime minister has not been able to fulfill the promises he made before coming to power last year. The law-and-order situation has deteriorated and good governance is only on paper. We have heard allegations of corruption such as the Lauda case. But if you go by the record of the last 10 years, it is the Nepali Congress which has made real accomplishments in the country. The country has achieved something under the leadership of three prime minister of the Congress. I personally worked under all the three Congress leaders. No party is as patriotic and

as committed to Nepal than the Nepali Congress.

Do you see anything wrong in the Lauda Air deal?

There seem to be some wrong doing in the Lauda deal because no rational and sensible management could have signed that kind of deal. You cannot justify the deal in an economic sense. It will be total disaster for the RNAC. There was no proper discussion before the deal was made. There was no serious discussion in the management board. It looks so expensive. You will see after a year how much money RNAC will lose. In the last month or so since the aircraft arrived, the airline has lost corrores. It was a bad deal to justify. But until proven, you cannot pass judgment. Similarly, the Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority is probing the issue. There are other institutions working on it.

What strategy does the Nepali Congress have to face the opposition?

At the moment, I am not in a position to say anything. But we will face the opposition unitedly. If they come out heavily, we will unitedly oppose it. Although we are not happy with the functioning of the government, we will discuss it within the party. We will not give any opportunity for the opposition to attack our party. If they come in an unconstitutional manner, we will respond accordingly.

What message have Congress workers received after the Pokhara convention?

After the Pokhara convention, many things have settled down. It is now in the hands of Prime Minister and party president Girija Prasad Koirala to ensure party unity. The real test of a leader's success lies in the balance he can create in the party. The leaders must rise above the factionalism and prejudices. The prime minister has to strike a balance among various forces in the party. In every party, there are various power centers, groups and sub groups. The leader must reconcile with them. The leader has to create unity and mobilize the whole apparatus of the party to achieve declared goals. Unfortunately, that has not happened in the past. I hope the party president will give justice to various factions in the party. ■

triya Prajatantra Party (RPP), which the UML is trying to enlist in its anti-Koirala fight.

The UML and the RPP also have a moral obligation to demand fresh elections when they see the government is unpopular. Interestingly, neither is making that demand.

Playing With Internal Politics

This raises a core political issue: Is it fair on the part of one party to seek the replacement of the leader of another? If the prime minister is corrupt, what does that say about the entire party? After all, the prime minister not only represents but is also working with the support of the

entire party.

"If the prime minister is involved in corruption, there is no reason to blame the party as a whole," said the RPP's Dr. Lohani.

If members are honest, how can it be said that the prime minister is dishonest? How can a dishonest prime minister be elected by honest members?

By their actions and strident rhetoric, the main opposition party wants to split the Nepali Congress. After the Pokhara convention, Congress came out with a message of unity. The opposition began demanding the resignation of Koirala only after he was re-elected overwhelmingly as party president.

Under the arithmetic of the current parliament, the UML is in no position to form an alternative government. The main opposition party knows that the best hope of going to power lies in seeking a fresh mandate from the people. Will UML leaders ask the prime minister to call fresh elections?

Failure of Congress

The UML's demand for the resignation of Koirala is justified on the ground of the poor performance of the government. There are failure in leadership and the people are restive. Out of pessimism, some are looking to extra-constitutional and undemocratic alternatives. In another manifestation of popular frustration, violence is increasing.

The disenchantment of the people in the street is seen in those bouts of nostalgia for the balance of authority and responsibility that was maintained by the earlier political system. Today's system is responsible to the people, but who bears the responsibility for all these things that have gone wrong?

Unemployment is a major national problem. A large number of educated people want to leave the country in search of better opportunities in Malaysia, Gulf countries, United States and other destinations.

Agriculture, the traditional backbone of the economy, has also been facing a major crisis because of rising prices of fertilizer and low prices for crops.

The price of fertilizers have risen by 100 percent over the last 10 years. Increasing costs of cultivation and decreasing rates of return have pushed the subsistence-level life of the average Nepali below the poverty line. In some places, starvation has become a looming threat.

In the midst of this national crisis, everybody looks towards the government and the prime minister. The government, however, looks at what the prime minister likes to look at. The power of the people to change the government is blocked by the five-year fixed tenure of parliament. On

the other hand, because parliament has a fixed tenure, the prime minister is always insecure and is unable to discipline members.

Senior Congress leaders, too, are criticizing the inefficiency and lackluster performance of the government. "There is economic depression in the country and the government cannot find relief by citing the world-wide recession. The government must bring clear policies to eradicate poverty and end unemployment," former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai told reporters at the Congress Central Office.

The opposition has to learn to press the government through constitutional ways. If the opposition does not see any hope in the current government, let the country go for another election. This would be much better than to paralyze the government of the day.



Khanal (left) with Nepal: Plotting to oust Koirala?

"The law-and-order situation is deteriorating and there is no sense of governance. We need to have a powerful government to deal with various problems," said Dr. Mahat.

In a parliamentary democracy, the majority party must rule and the minority must criticize. In the name of criticism, however, the opposition should not walk on the path of anarchism and obstructionism. "How can you visualize a political scenario in which the main opposition party obstructs the functioning of the government from within parliament and from the streets?" an analyst asked.

Insecure Prime Minister

The present government inertia has its roots in the insecurity that has gripped the chair of the prime minister. A person in the

prime minister's chair always feels insecure and shaky because he does not have the power to discipline his ministers and supporters in parliament. At the same time, he does not have the power to keep the opposition at bay by threatening to hold fresh elections. The result is a weak prime minister.

Even a decisive person like Koirala has proved to be weak because he has not been able to assert the authority of his office. The changed interpretation of the constitution has weakened the role of the prime minister. There is no consensus among politician that the prime minister needs to have the right to dissolve the house.

No one wants to restore this right because the opposition believes it can bargain with a weak prime minister on every issue. An effective prime minister needs strong authority to run parliament in accordance with the provisions of the constitution.

All these negative factors have gripped the country's politics. The fortunate thing in Nepal is that the opposition knows everything about governance because it has had stints in power.

It is difficult to run the government in a society where the per capita income is under US\$ 200 and more than half of the people are illiterate. But is it correct to destabilize the process just to capitalize on the resentment of the people?

The opposition should have confidence in the political process and the patience to wait and explore the possibilities within the constitution.

If you start blocking the prime minister from entering the house, who will listen to the members' criticism? Who will reply to their arguments? The people have every right to know from the government what programs it has for the nation's welfare? At the same time, the people have the right to know from opposition leaders where they intend to lead the country to.

Although Koirala appears to be influenced by bad advice from his family members, his daughter was rejected by an election officer he nominated. It seems the prime minister did not want to interfere in the election process. This is something unique in Third World democracies.

The core question: why has Koirala failed even with such a long experience in politics. In his first term, when he was

'It Is Our Duty To Oust A Tainted Prime Minister'

— BHARAT MOHAN ADHIKARY

Chief whip of the main opposition CPN - UML BHARAT MOHAN ADHIKARY is one of the powerful leaders of his party. He spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues regarding the latest strategy of the CPN-UML. Excerpts:



Are you asking for the resignation of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala only or the entire Nepali Congress government?

Right now, we are asking for the resignation of Prime Minister Koirala on the ground that he is involved in the Lauda Air deal. Since Congress has a majority in parliament, the party can nominate their leader.

How can a tainted person continue to be prime minister. We will also ask for the resignation of Nepali Congress government.

Is it a democratic practice to stall parliamentary proceedings?

If Koirala does not comply with our demand, we will not have any other option to stalling the house. As the main opposition party, it is our duty to free the country from a tainted prime minister. If Koirala resigns before the beginning of the winter session of parliament, we will allow the proceedings.

You party also says you will launch street protests seeking Koirala's resignation. Don't you think you can change the prime minister through parliamentary procedures?

We will use the street as well as parliament to press Girija Prasad Koirala to resign. In a democracy, street demonstrations can also be used as a method of oust the government. ■

inexperienced, the country suffered much. Because of a weak position, today even a strong prime minister fails to deliver the goods. Koirala knows the ins and outs of the country. He does not have the power to be assertive. He always has to compromise with opposition parties and members of his own party. That has turned politics ugly and unhealthy.

Has parliament become so irrelevant that the opposition has to go out on the street? Has parliament outlived its utility and failed? If so, the prime minister must have the courage to go to the people. He should not squander his authority just to remain the prime minister. He is morally and duty bound to the oath he has taken under the constitution.

At the same time, the opposition must not play politics in the affairs of another party. It must develop itself as an alternative to the government. If opposition leaders think things have become so bad, they should stop giving ultimatums to the prime minister and demand fresh elections? The opposition parties can demonstrate their solidarity by introducing a resolution in parliament urging the prime minister to dissolve the house and hold fresh elections. Expectations of joining a coalition government may benefit a few, but they are certainly not going to help democracy.

Failure of Party or PM?

If the prime minister of a majority government is unable to work, his cabinet colleagues also bear the responsibility. In totality, it is the failure of the party as a whole. Parliament is not divided between Prime Minister Girija Prasad and UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal. It is divided between the Nepali Congress and the UML. Let the UML make the Nepali Congress answerable for the prime minister's failures.

Unfortunate precedents were established in the past. The moment the prime minister sought the dissolution of the house, the leaders of the opposition knocked the doors of the palace arguing that they should be given the opportunity to form an alternative government. In the present scenario, if the opposition leaders have an alternative, let them demonstrate it. If they do not have alternatives, let them demand fresh elections. If they are not prepared to form the government or ready for new elections, they should not invite chaos on the street.

"Don't provide an excuse to the gov-

ernment to say that they were unable to deliver the goods by the obstructionism of the opposition," said a political analyst.

When the opposition prefers the street to parliament, people may be confused in the process. They might stop seeing the difference between democratic and non-democratic forms of government. Opposition to democratic and non-democratic governments are two different things.

Earlier, there was an undemocratic government. Today open and democratic elections are held periodically. Very soon, the elections to local bodies are going to be held. The time has come for the opposition to prepare for those elections and try to defeat the ruling party.

Two main leaders of the opposition party, including opposition leader in parliament, were members of the panel that drafted the current constitution. If they themselves are in no mood to accept the preamble of the constitution, what can they expect from future generations.

Historical Hangover

Every party in Nepal has a history of agitation against undemocratic systems. Nepalese parties do not seem to have been able to break free from this legacy even in today's democratic set-up.

The constitution has given a clear role to the political parties to participate and activate their desired role through peaceful means. However, today's opposition parties are caught in a time warp. They think they can oust a democratically elected government through the same methods they adopted to dislodge the Panchayat system.

The bad precedent of protests and violence to bring political change has come to haunt today's politics. If today's politicians start setting some good examples, tomorrow's leaders might be able to enrich the quality of politics.

How long are we going to say that our parliament is modeled on the British pattern? Will there ever be a model of Nepalese parliament democracy that we can take pride in?

Many people in Nepal and outside wonder when our politics starts getting some stability? Don't the opposition parties think they have a responsibility in this direction? If they do not change their brand of politics, their commitment to the parliamentary process will always be viewed with suspicion. ■

'The Arrogance Of Big Parties Has Created Problems'

— KUBER SHARMA

President of Green Nepal Party, KUBER SHARMA is the first chartered accountant of Nepal. After the restoration of democracy in 1990, he was elected to the House of Representatives as a Nepali Congress candidate. After the mid-term polls in 1994, he quit the Nepali Congress and floated his own party, to launch a crusade against corruption, among others things. The energetic leader spoke to SPOTLIGHT last week before leaving for Dang and Salyan as part of his efforts to build up a national base for his party. Excerpts:

How do you evaluate the recent general convention of the ruling Nepali Congress party?

It was a big 'mela' where the problems of the country were not discussed. It's a pity that Nepal's oldest and largest party has no solutions to the problems the country is facing today. The big gathering at the convention only showed its hollowness.

What about the money spent on the convention?

Well, there were two kind of costs. Direct costs included expenses on fooding and lodging for nearly 2,000 people over five days. The indirect cost included expenses involved in traveling to and from Pokhara from all over the country. Kathmandu's streets were empty because almost all government-owned vehicles were taken to Pokhara. This shows that a fabulous amount was spent in organizing the NC convention and there was rampant misuse of the government authority and resources.

Do you expect some change in the Koirala government's style of functioning?

What do you mean by change? If the leadership is the same, change has no meaning. Sycophants will come and go. As long as Koirala is the leader of the party and government, changes in the subordinate level have no meaning. You can expect changes in the physical faces or in compromises with the opposition. But the country needs change in the style of governance. The Nepali Congress government is known for bad governance. And I do not see any sign of change in that direction.

Why is Nepal still suffering from political instability although we have a majority government in place?

Every revolution brings political instability. To restore stability, it needs more sacrifice. In the period of struggle, there was no power, no authority and no material gains. But once the political forces reach power they have to resist their temptation, they have to con-

tinue their sacrifice. But that did not take place in case of Nepal. Rather, political leaders have added fuel to the fire. Corruption is rampant. Authority is slackened, indiscipline is prevalent everywhere. In countries where the post-revolution leadership is honest, capable and sincere, political stability has been sustained and economic development has taken place. Where leaders after the revolution have turned corrupt, the entire country has been doomed. I am very sad to say that our revolutionary leaders have failed in the task of nation building. They have proved to be corrupt and incompetent.

The government is going to set up an Armed Police Force through ordinance. Will it help resolve the Maoist problem?

There is a very old saying: violence generates violence. Wars have not solved problems and authoritarian governments could not suppress violent revolutions. Based on the historical facts, creating a paramilitary force in Nepal is not going to solve the Maoist problem.

What should be done to end the Maoist insurgency?

First, the democratic forces - those who believe in parliamentary democracy — must correct themselves. They must institute an anti-corruption drive. If necessary, they must penalize their own leaders and cadres. That will restore some public confidence in the leadership. Secondly, we must have economic programs that directly benefit the landless and the poor. Third, we have a caste system. The so-called lower caste people in our society have not benefited despite the liberalization of politics. We must have social upliftment programs for them. Backward castes and communities must be given opportunities in government employment, in education and in economic programs. That will give enough political support to the democratic parties to neutralize the Maoist violence.

How can the Maoist rebels be brought to the negotiating table?

The government has the responsibility to maintain law and order and create a congenial atmosphere in society. Therefore, the government should take initiatives to bring the Maoists to the negotiating table. The government should talk not only to big parties, but should also seek the support of the smaller parties. The powerful parties tend to forget that the trouble created in the country is an outcome of the activities of the small parties. To solve political problems, the cooperation of small parties must be sought. The arrogance of big

"The government should talk not only to big parties, but should also seek the support of the smaller parties. The powerful parties tend to forget that the trouble created in the country is an outcome of the activities of the small parties."

parties has not been able to solve the problem; rather, it has created more problems.

It is said that there is a need of an alternative democratic party in the country. How do you see the role of your party?

Of course, there is a dire need of an alternative democratic party. Unfortunately, in Nepal's 50-year-old democratic history, there has not been a formidable democratic party to challenge the Nepali Congress. The communist parties have become the alternative to the Nepali Congress. Communist parties, I must admit, are a large and formidable force in the country. But communism as a system has not survived in the world. Neither has it been able to deliver. So, a communist party can't be an alternative to the Nepali Congress. There is a need for an alternative democratic party. We are trying to build the Green Nepal Party as a party of honest and educated individuals committed to the welfare of the people and the nation.

Since the Nepali Congress government has failed to deliver, what alternatives do the people have?

When you sow a seed in the field, it germinates after some time. The seeds of change have already been thrown and the people expect that change will bring better results. The change that our society is going to face cannot be averted and that change is not going to be for the better because what you sow so you reap.

How long do you think your party will take to become a formidable force in Nepalese politics?

The world lives on hope and success lies in positive thinking. I am very positive because the country needs an alternative democratic party. The second thing, the Green Nepal Party is not just a party limited to Nepal. It is part of the Green Peace revolution of the world. If Green parties are coming to power in Europe, they will also come to power in Nepal. Our party has good contacts in more than sixty districts. In almost all the terai district we have already established a strong popular base. The frustrated people have welcomed our policies, specially anti-corruption drive. We have some resource crunch. Once we manage that we will be on our way to power.

What are the programs of your party?

First, we believe that corruption is the root cause of all evils. We will try our best to prosecute corrupt politicians. Second, we must have balanced development and we must have programs for the poor and backward classes. These programs should produce results in a short period of time.

Why is your party calling for a greater role for the constitutional monarch?

There are a lot of contradictions among the big political parties and personalities in the country about the role of the king. They say under a constitutional monarchy, the King has no role to play. The reality is quite different. The monarchy is the oldest, most stable and most popular institution in Nepal. All changes in the past have been with the concurrence of the royal palace. The monarchy has always been a signatory to agreements that have brought changes in Nepal. If you want to ignore the monarchy after the changes, that is not



possible. The efforts by the Nepali Congress, UML and even royalists to isolate the king from national politics have brought chaos in the country. Now everybody says the king should have more power. We say the king has certain powers within this constitution and he should exercise them.

How do you assess Nepal's foreign policy in the region over the last 10 years?

Nepal's foreign policy has been directionless for the last few years. If it has any direction, it has only one: like a river, it flows to the south. SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) has almost collapsed and Nepal could do nothing. Nepal is suffering from the pangs of Bhutanese refugees. In fact, they should have been refugees in India. Tamil rebels have made their base in Kathmandu. Afghan refugees, gold smugglers, drug smugglers, everybody has found shelter in Nepal. If the government doesn't know about these activities, then what is the use of having a government in the first place?

Do you really believe there is no future for SAARC?

Looking at the relations between the member nations and looking at the SAARC Charter - which stipulates that a summit cannot take place even if one member objects - this organization has become non-functional.

As both India and Pakistan have become nuclear, does this spell insecurity to the smaller nations of South Asia, especially Nepal?

Oh, yes, it's obvious. If two elephants fight, the grass is crushed. Any nuclear war is going to destroy all the countries in the region, not only the smaller nations. In foreign policy and statecraft, there is a policy known as balance of power. Since there are two nuclear powers in South Asia, Pakistan and India. This factor must act as a deterrent for both, and the smaller nations as well. ■

“The monarchy has always been a signatory to agreements that have brought changes in Nepal. If you want to ignore the monarchy after the changes, that is not possible. The efforts by the Nepali Congress, UML and even royalists to isolate the king from national politics have brought chaos in the country”

EXHIBITION

The Magnificent Seven

Artists from four countries hope to take their creativity across border

By AKSHAY SHARMA

Seven artists from the East and the West are meeting in Nepal to create works on Nepali paper, which they intend to exhibit around the world. An exhibition of the seven artists from four countries, entitled "Made in Nepal", was inaugurated by the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany Rudiger Lemp on January 25th at the Siddhartha Art Gallery.

"Seven different artists from four different countries, Nepal, India, Germany and the Netherlands, spontaneously decided to launch an exhibition from here in Kathmandu. Later on, and possibly in an enlarged form, this exhibition will then move to other locations around the globe," Lemp said.

"Globalization is a course nothing new in the realm of fine arts. That Kathmandu brought these artists together did not happen by accident. The visitor to this exhibition will easily discover the samples of the abstract works displayed. Individualistic as they appear, they embody the stimulating spirit of a unique country and its fascinating culture," Lemp said. The seven artists will work at their studio at Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal, until February 7.

Jac Gijzen, from Breda, Netherlands, sees art as "Ethereal expressionism in a new form of expressionist painting whose origin is through interaction with different cultures. I use the principles of the East (Buddhism and Hinduism) and make a fusion in the West."

"I was in Nepal in 1980 and I have been here 10 times. I invited some people to encourage interaction between cultures. In 2002, we hope to invite artists from China and Japan. To start in Kathmandu is historical... Kathmandu is one big pigment of colors," Gijzen told SPOTLIGHT.

"Art is the passion of my life," Gijzen says. Asked why the team chose Nepali paper, he says: "Our aim is to use Nepali pigments in Nepali paper. I spent 20 years of my life in art

and developed my skills. In 1980, I set out to see different cultures, to meet people and share experiences. It is very interesting to exchange eastern and western art."

On Nepali art Gijzen says: "The art of Nepali artists is very traditional. It is not good for the artist. They need to develop art forms because art transcends all boundaries created by man. People make boundaries, but artists don't see the boundaries."

Rob de Gaff is from the Hague, Netherlands. He works for balance in the opposites. A recurring theme in his works is found in chaos and order, which he translates in his concept into rhythmic structures.

Seven different artists from four countries, Nepal, India, Germany and the Netherlands, spontaneously decided to launch an exhibition from Kathmandu.

"When chaos surrounds me, I long for order. When everything is too structured, I need to create chaos and order, which cannot exist without each other. Both are elements in a process that rhythmically and according to fixed patterns encourage movement, change and renewal, leading to organic and dynamic order. My paintings and drawings are from my imagination of this process," he says.

Rolf A. Klüenter is from Buervenich, Germany. His works include paintings on black and thick handmade papers with rough borders. With irregular shapes, freak paper forms, shaped papers, black paper object and paper installations, he creates magic.

Lila Mookerjee, from Friburg, Breisgau, Germany, says: "As a painter, I am fascinated by different kinds of light. They influence color and form. When form is reduced, color

becomes more intensive and pure. Forms can appear and disappear. I feel closely related to the French painters of the 70s and 80s and the poetic visualization of Nico de Maria."

Peter Schenk, who is from Amsterdam, Netherlands, is working in mixing media on paper and canvas. "I like to travel and work in various places around the world, especially Asia. I am looking for places of spiritual importance, for beautiful landscapes and original people. This time I found the top of the world — Kathmandu," he says.

Schenk, a first-time visitor to Nepal, says: "All of us worked together and were influenced by each other's works. We used all the elements from Nepal." Speaking about his paintings and on why the team chose Nepal to begin exhibiting their shows, he says: "Gijzen, who has been to Nepal several times, told me about the country. I was impressed by the mountains - the theme of the painting "Clouds meets Mountains" - and the energy centered in Kathmandu."

Speaking about another of his works, "Himalayan Woman," Schenk says: "I was surprised when I saw these strong people and the attitude required to live and survive at that altitude."

Of "Three Spirits", he says: "I tried to portray something as free as a snake. No real job and no boss — just like an artist. "I started out to study art in 1968 and ever since 1972 I have been experimenting with art. It's a different language with no words. When you look at art, it touches your heart directly. Art is a universal language."

Prakash Chandwadkar, from Aurangabad, India, says: "I chose Nepali paper because there is a lot of possibility for an artist to experiment on. I am inspired by Nepal and have been here for three years. I like to work in Nepal, rather than in India. I have a studio at the Osho Tapoban, Nagarjun where they let me stay and paint. I have exhibited many of my paintings. I paint from my heart."

"Art is a visualization of a constant change. Painting is meditation; painting is the joy to get in contact with eternity and with the universal force. Color and movement express my being in the moment," Chandwadkar says. The team is planning another project called "Ten Artists: Ten Stations - Art Beyond Borders and Boundaries." Exhibitions will follow on to Amsterdam, Berlin, Bombay and Shanghai. The project "Made in Nepal - Art Beyond Borders and Boundaries" began on January 5 and will conclude on February 8 at the Nepal Art Council. ■

'Our Music Is Definitely Not For The Masses'

— UGRA KARMA

Death and music have been combined for centuries by artists in works like Schubert's famous "Death and The Median". Robert Strauss did a symphonic poem "Death and Transformation" in 1890. AKSHAY SHRMA of spotlight recently spoke to Sunil Dev Pant, an engineering graduate from Kathmandu University, who is the front man of UgraKarma, a death metal band. It claims to be the only group performing death metal live in Nepal. Members include Sunil (vocals/guitars), Aayush (lead guitar), Prashant (drums) and Roshan on bass.

Give us a brief history of Ugra Karma.

Ugra Karma was formed late last year, although the members were previously associated with other bands. I used to play the guitar and growled for a band at Kathmandu University. Aayush was the bass player for Yasht. He quit the band because of differences with the other members. Subash played guitars in many bands in school and college. Prashant also played for a few bands.

Our old bass player Roshan also used to play with Subash in their college band. Our first line-up was supposed to be me on vocals/drums, Aayush on bass and Subash on guitars. But later we decided to switch parts. The new line-up was me on vocals/guitars, Aayush on drums, Subash on lead guitars and we had Roshan on bass. With this set-up, we performed our first concert at Kathmandu Utsav 2000.

We even bagged the award for Best Rhythm Guitarist of the year. There we played a cover version of the band Gates of Ishtar and our own song, Bhandar khaal Parba. Then we took some time off. We again started practicing for the Shikhar Beat Contest. But this time, we changed our bass player and recruited Prashant who had come all the way from Hong Kong just to play with us in the contest.

We played cover versions of bands

like Children Doom, Sepultura and Dark Funeral. We have performed "Impaled Nazarine" and one of our own songs. As we were the first band to play death metal live here, Ugra Karma has started the first chapter in what may be called The Book Of Nepali Death Metal. And we hope our endeavors here shall make some more Nepali death metal bands to add more chapters.

How did you get the name for the band?

Ugra Karma is a Sanskrit term. Since our music/lyrics (our Karma) is Ugra, we thought this would be a perfect name for a Nepali death metal band.



Tell us about your musical influences.

My influences include Slayer, Unleashed, old black/death metal bands like Sepultura, Sodom, Sarcophago old Cannibal Corpse, Rigor Mortis, Dissection, Cranium etc.

Children Of Badoom, Dissection, Pantera have influenced Aayush.

Subash's influences are Children Of Bodom, Dissection, Criminal, Sinister, Sarcophago, Manowar. Prashant's are Sex Pistols, Gorefest, Pantera, Cannibal Corpse, Children Of Bodom

What is your approach to music?

We play death metal, which is definitely not for the masses. And I see no future in terms of popularity for this kind of music. But still there are a few head-bangers and fewer death-bangers, who we

hope, will keep the scene going. We don't care too much about what is right or wrong. We are not concerned whether 'normal' people like our 'extremely indigestible' music. We like it, so we play it. We play our music for a very small number of people who are into extreme death or black metal.

What do you go through when you schedule a show in Kathmandu? Well, Ugra Karma has not organized any show by itself. But we are seriously planning to put up a show by the end of February. It's really hard, especially for very non-commercial and underground bands like ours. But we are determined to organize a show soon.

Do you plan to release an album?

Right now we are more focused on the show, but we are thinking about getting a few songs recorded. But album? (Pause) We're not quite sure.

What is death metal music?

Fast and heavy guitars, barking/growling/shrieking/screeching-type vocals, extremely fast double-bass drums, lightning-fast solos and lyrics that deal with death, violence, sadism, Satanism, gore, atheism, nihilism, etc.

Why be influenced by Western music?

It's not about eastern or western music. It's about the type or genre of music. We didn't get into death and black metal because it came from the West. We play death metal because we like it. We listen to a lot of eastern bands. Bands from Japan, Thailand, and Philippines, for instance. We would have loved death metal even if it had emerged from Bhutan or the Maldives or Papua New Guinea. Death metal is universal. There are no geographical, racial, social, religious, or political barriers. ■

Visit Ugra Karma's website at <http://www.ugrakarma.net>.

'My Success Is The Result Of Hard Work'

— DEEPTI R.L. RANA

DEEPTI RAJYA LAXMI RANA heads the sales and marketing division of the Gokarna Forest Golf Resort. Born in 1977 in Kathmandu, Deepti finished her schooling from Little Angel's school and graduated from Tribhuvan University after receiving a diploma from International Polytechnic in Delhi. She was only 18 years old when she joined the project. Five years down the line, she is making news as much with her professional success as with her beauty. She says she is tired of giving interviews to journalists who, more often than not, concentrate on her personal rather than professional life. Deepti talked to **SANJAYA DHAKAL** solely on her profession and her success. Excerpts:

What led you to join the marketing sector?

I didn't think about joining this sector when I first joined the company five years ago. I just started this profession and, as it moved on, the project got interesting. It was a unique project to work on. That's why I am here now.

What are your responsibilities?

I look after sales and marketing, enrolling new members. I promote golf both locally and internationally. Basically, I concentrate on local membership.

How do you enrol members?

We started enrolling members two and half years back. When we started, I used to do site visits, one-to-one site visits, organize lunch sessions in Gokarna and concentrate on golfers, because it was a new designation which I was starting. I did a bit of PR also.

What kind of members do you have?

We have three kind of members - life, corporate and term memberships. Life and corporate memberships are valid for 25 years. Life membership costs Rs 500,000 while the corporate one costs Rs 550,000. The third one costs US\$ 1,500 per year. The memberships cover the family.

How is the market for golf here?

It has really picked up now. We already have more than 100 members. In the



beginning, it was a new thing for Nepal. There were not many golfers and we had a new standard golf course in the park. It was very hard to make members at first. But now I am happy it's picking up.

How are the facilities available at the Gokarna Forest Golf? Are they at par with international standards?

Yes, we have everything. There is a total underground drainage system. The grass has been brought from abroad. All our equipment, including the mowers and sprinklers, are world class.

There is a lot of hype about golf tourism. What do you say?

It's basically targeted for golf tourism in Nepal. I think Gokarna Forest Golf Resort is one of the most beautiful golf courses in the world. It is inside the jungle and we have lots to

boast about. We have also organized some international tournaments, which are going to help tourism in a big way.

What measures have you taken to attract foreign tourists?

We are also doing international marketing. We are tied up with the Le Meridien, which is an international chain. They are also doing the marketing for us through their international network of hotels.

Do you have plans to organize major international golf tournaments?

Oh, yes. We are working on that. Let's hope it materializes in the near future.

What do you think of the success you have achieved at such a young age?

It's the result of my hard work. I believe in God and working hard. I just put both these things together.

What are your plans?

I don't know. I have been here for five years and it has become like my own project. I am involved emotionally to this project. ■

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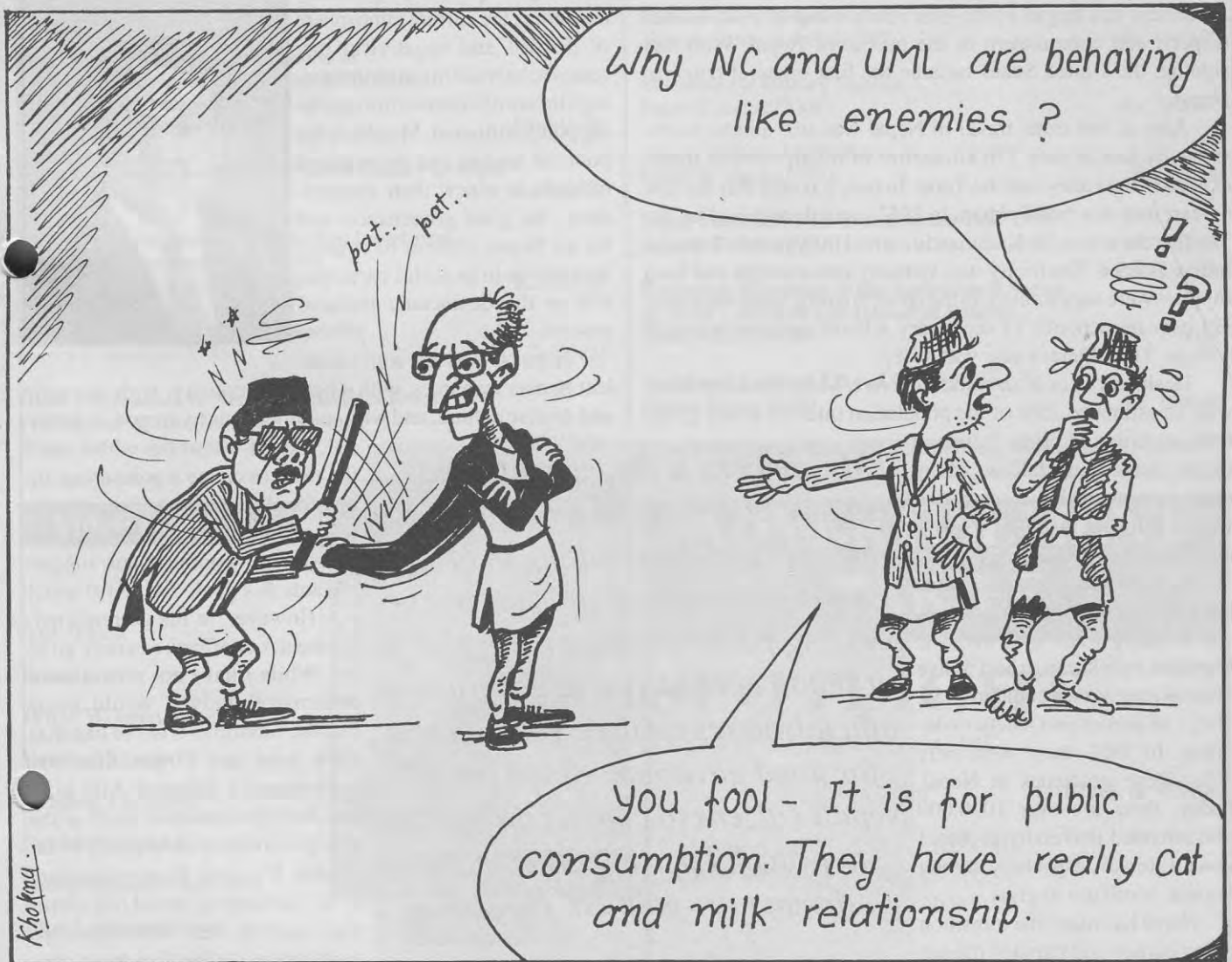
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TRANSITION

AWARDED : Actress **Sushila Rayamajhi** and actor **Shree Krishna Shrestha**, with the Harit Tara Puraskar.

SELECTED: Nepal, as the vice-chairman of Center for

Integrated Rural Development in Asia and Pacific, by the center's executive committee meeting held in Bangladesh.

ACCEPTED: The resignation by the Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation **Tarini Dutta Chataut**, by His Majesty the King, as per the recommendation of the

prime minister and in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990.

LEFT: **Narayan Shumsher Thapa**, Foreign Secretary, leading a Nepalese delegation, for New Delhi, India.

RETURNED: **Tadao Chino**, President of Asian Develop-

ment Bank (ADB), after completing his visit to the Kingdom of Nepal.

Dr. Mohammad Mohsin, Chairman of National Assembly, after leading a Nepalese delegation to the meeting of Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. ■

US Concerned Over Nepal's Insurgency

By RALPH FRANK, U.S. Ambassador to Nepal

On January 23, 1951, the United States and Nepal signed an agreement that began a fifty-year relationship of trust, mutual respect, and commitment to the people of Nepal. With that signing, the United States became the first bilateral donor to Nepal.

Also at that time, travel in Nepal was still almost exclusively by foot as only 376 kilometres of rough vehicles tracks existed in the valley and the Terai. In fact, it is said that the first ox-cart only reached Pokhara in 1953 - and that arrived by air. The first car arrived in Kathmandu carried in by porters from the Indian Border. Electricity was virtually non-existent and food supplies were very limited. In the entire country, there were only 321 primary schools, 11 secondary schools and one technical college. The illiteracy rate was 98%.

Health services of any kind were rare. Malaria was endemic with an estimated 25% of the population infected at any given time -resulting in prime farmland in the Terai lying fallow. Many other communicable disease also wreaked havoc, and life expectancy averaged 28 years.

In the last five decades, Nepal has built roads, hospitals, schools, and drinking water systems. The Nepalese people can expect to live twice as long as they could in 1951. They can also expect a better education. In 1951, there were only 300 college graduates in Nepal. Today, there are over 1000,000 who attended university in Nepal alone. Literacy, especially among women, continues to grow.

Nepal has made the transition to democracy and pursued market reforms. Thousands of forest/water users groups are now managing the resources they depend on, and the income of many family farm families has tripled through high valued crop production.

One can note from my examples that Nepal has made incredible progress in a relatively short period of time, and the United States is proud to be a part of the efforts that have resulted in this dramatic progress. But as we all know, Nepal continues to face dramatic and substantial development challenges. Bilateral programs have helped eliminate malaria from the Terai, double life expectancy, and improve literacy in Nepal.

I wish to take just a moment to comment on what I regard as a cloud hanging over current development efforts, and to make an earnest and heartfelt plea for an improved national dialogue that will facilitate future efforts.

As perhaps you can guess, my concern is the current atmosphere of distrust and negativism that seems to be resulting in an increasing climate of violence in expressing political dissent. My plea is for political leaders and government officials to renew their commitment for good governance, and for all Nepali citizens to commit themselves to peaceful participation in the democratic political process.

Nepal is blessed with excellent human resources, with a beautiful country, with an exotic and diverse culture, and with a tremendous hydropower potential. Indeed, Nepal has within itself the tools to create a prosperous future for all Nepalis. And we and the rest of the donor community are anxious to continue our support towards this goal.

However, in the current environment, our efforts can only go so far. While I have not seen a comprehensive study, I would guess that the economic costs of bandhas each year are larger than my government's bilateral AID budget. And the economic costs of the anti-government insurgency is far greater. It's been found elsewhere in the developing world that countries succeed best in the development process when they have chosen

sen elected, representational democracy as the form of government: when they have developed strong democratic institutions, including an independent judiciary and a free press: and when they have a vibrant opposition that is free to engage in peaceful, constructive, non-violent protest.

So the most fervent hope I have - during this 50th anniversary year of development cooperation between our two countries - is that it be a year of peace and goodwill so the benefits of American assistance can be extended to all of Nepal's citizens. We look forward to continuing our enduring partnership with the people of Nepal, and support their efforts to achieve enduring economic and social progress. ■

Excerpts of the speech delivered at the function to mark USAID/Nepal 50th anniversary celebration.



My concern is the current atmosphere of distrust and negativism that seems to be resulting in an increasing climate of violence in expressing political dissent. My plea is for political leaders and government officials to renew their commitment for good governance, and for all Nepali citizens to commit themselves to peaceful participation in the democratic political process.

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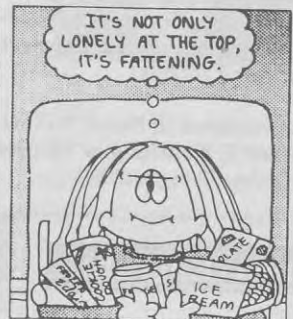


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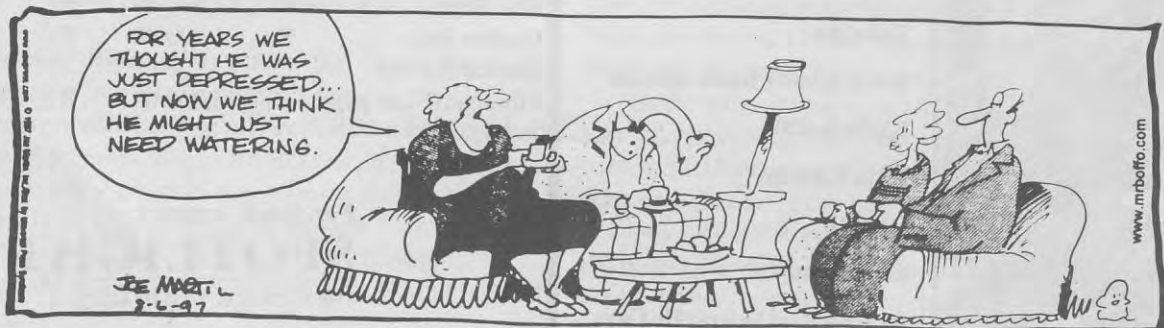
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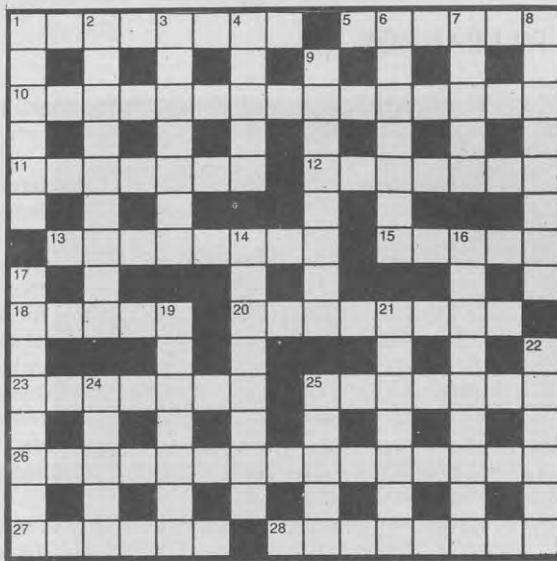
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ACROSS

1. Maintain boy's about to become independent-minded (8)
5. Nervous leaders of army facing assault (6)
10. Retrospective of passion play (4,4,2,5)
11. Jet's designer had to make repeated cuts (7)
12. Alcove for statue made of clay, intrinsically effective (7)
13. Joker, say, can be a match for any character (4,4)
15. No end of sweat, using this tool? (5)
18. I must leave recount, to return after an interval (5)
20. Attractive fields taking long to cross (8)
23. Cut corners in room that's fine for bachelor (7)
25. Conductor's strange variation (7)
26. Admitting recreation I preferred for a spell? (15)
27. Old fool injecting almost extinct bird with preservative (6)
28. Lack of air sounded a difficulty where highest peaks are (8)

DOWN

1. Find a wife in orican country or another (6)
2. I'll shoulder my equipment, stay with the leader, and make notes (9)
3. Given some money back as disputant switches sides (7)
4. Secret source of timeless prestige (5)
6. Flatter type of fabric (7)
7. What green may mean, in painting's special language (5)
8. Delighted, possibly having ended on the rocks, welcoming rescue craft (8)
9. Idle dogs resolved to knock off (8)
14. First appearance of Hook, or second, in theartre (8)
16. Two types of wood that may be used for kindling (9)
17. Parliamentary officer threatening the bar (5,3)
19. One clarifying limits of rule right to support penalty? (7)
21. Withdraw as reaction to superficial irritation (7)
22. One-time goddess describing progress in AA? (6)
24. Somewhere to sleep, when starting a course (5)
25. In South Africa, general signs of pollution (5)

ACROSS : 1. Maverick 5. Aftaid 10. Look back in anger 11. Whittle 12. Lunette 13. Wild card 15. Larhe 18. Later 20. Pleasant 23. Chamfer 25. Sargent 26. Reconstructible 27. Dotard 28. Asphyxia
 DOWN : 1. malawi 2. Violinist 3. Rebatd 4. Cache 6. Flannel 7. Argot 8. Darkened 9. Dislodge 14. Aspirate 16. tinderbox 17. Black rod 19. Rifiner 21. Stratch 22. Athena 24. Ascot 25. Smuts

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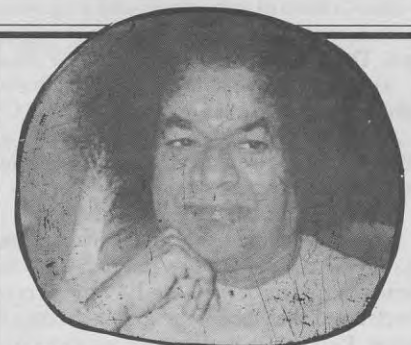
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 soil of Dharma with
 fertile sub-soil
 o f Veda.”*

SATHYA SAI BABA

Classification Of Newspapers And Magazines In Nepal

By YUBA RAJ PANDEY

There are different ways of classifying newspapers and magazines in different countries. In most countries, only circulation figures matter. In Nepal, newspapers and magazines are evaluated on the basis of criteria that give importance to many other areas. Circulation receives 40 percent weightage.

The audit committee of circulation of newspapers and magazines consists of the following members, according to Article 10 of the Press Council Act 1992 and the tradition developed by government decisions made after the adoption of this act:

- i) Press Registrar (presently, director-general, Department of Information) — chairman
- ii) Representative, Ministry of Information and Communications — member
- iii) Representative, Press Council Nepal — member
- iv) Representative, Auditors' Association — member
- v) Representative, Nepal Association of Advertising Agencies — member
- vi) Representative, Nepal Chamber of Commerce — member
- vii) An official designated by the Press Council — secretary

The nomination of representatives of the Auditor's Association, Nepal Association of Advertising Agencies and Nepal Chamber of Commerce as members of the committee has become a tradition following decisions made by the government. Similarly, the president of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists is requested to attend the committee's meetings. The followings are the functions, duties and power of this committee:

- i) To determine the number of publications on the basis of the circulation of newspapers and magazines and keep up-to-date records.
- ii) To classify newspapers and magazines on the basis of specific criteria, including the circulation or number of publications.

According to Rule 17 of the Press and Publications Regulation 1993, the classification of newspapers and magazines is made on the basis of reports submitted by the Office of the Press Registrar and Press Council Nepal. The following is the procedure for classification.

- a) The audit committee of circulation evaluates and classifies the publications and gives its report to the Press Council.
- b) The Press Council approves the report and sends it to the Ministry of Information and Communications through the Department of Information for the government's approval.

Criteria of Evaluation or Auditing:

The audit committee of circulation evaluates newspapers and magazines on the basis of criteria developed by the committee itself. This criteria was first made public in 1998 by the committee. If the criteria has to be changed, then the committee has to take a decision for the necessary changes. But such changes are not made during the period of evaluation. If the evaluation has begun, then any change in the criteria is not made before the completion of the work being evaluated.

Evaluation is made in the full marks of 100, which have been allocated in the following way:

Sphere/Area Mark Allocated Guidelines for marking

Part I (60 marks): This part of the evaluation is made by the secretariat.

Circulation: (40) — 2 marks for each 100 copies. Papers that publish more than 19,000 copies per issue get 40.

Code of conduct (10) — One mark is deducted for every breach of the code of conduct.

Regularity: (5) — One year of regular publication in not less than the number of issues stated in the regulation gets one mark.

Pages: (5) — Each additional page over the minimum pages required according to the law receives one mark.

Part II (40 marks) — This part is evaluated by examiners appointed by the committee. The examiners are often appointed from among people having made contributions in the field of journalism.

Subject matter: (10) — Balance in news, diversity, newsbreaks,

analysis of the subject, reliability, originality, coordination of advertisements, relation of heads and subheads, investigativeness are 10 elements that get equal value.

Language: (10) — Word use, sentence structure, language fluency, editorial and grammatical correctness are five elements that get equal value.

Layout: (5) — Presentation of letters, pictures, columns and highlights are four elements that receive equal importance.

Printing: (5): Out of 5 marks, 2 is allocated for printing techniques and 3 for quality. Letterpress printing receives 1 and offset-press printing 2. Errorlessness, clarity and size as well as the pace between words and sentences are three equally important elements in measuring the quality.

Article: (5) Originality, structure, investigativeness, diversity and the relation of heads and subheads each get 1 mark.

Photos: (5) — color, place, originality, human interest and cotextuality get equal value.

If newspapers and magazines are available on the Internet, they receive an additional four marks. For example, if a newspaper gets 63 marks out of 100 and that publication is also available on the Internet, then its total reaches 67.

Similarly, if the code of conduct monitoring sub-committee of the Press Council finds that certain papers are violating the basic norms and values of journalism, then it may recommend the subtraction of a maximum of 10 marks from total obtained by such newspapers. The classification is based on the reduced marks.

Newspapers and magazines are classified into four classes on the basis of the marks they obtain. The minimum marks required for each class are:

- a) Group A (Ka) 65 percent
- b) Group B (Kha) 50 percent
- c) Group C (Ga) 35 percent
- d) Group D (Gha) Less than 35 percent

The following additional conditions should also be fulfilled:

- a) At least 10,000 copies per issue must be published to be included in Group A.
- b) Fulfillment of conditions on minimum size and page numbers defined by Rule 7 (1) of the Press and Publication Regulations 1993 is mandatory for Group A and B.
- c) Fulfillment of at least one condition — either size or page number — is necessary for Group C.

Fulfillment of the conditions of publishing the minimum issues in one year as defined by Rule 7 (2) of the Press and Publication Regulations, 1993 is mandatory for evaluation and placement in Group D. Daily newspapers are required to publish at least 300 issues and weekly newspapers have to publish at least 40 issues in a year. Half-monthly, monthly and bimonthly papers or magazines have to publish 20, 10 and 4 issues respectively.

People in developing countries think every system adopted in developed countries is better than their own. That is why many in the profession want to borrow the western system of auditing circulation. However, this tendency is also what keeps developing countries away from new inventions and contributions. When I was in India last year, Ajit Bhattacharya, chairman of the Press Institute of India and Editor's Guild of India, was found to have been influenced by our system of classifying newspapers.

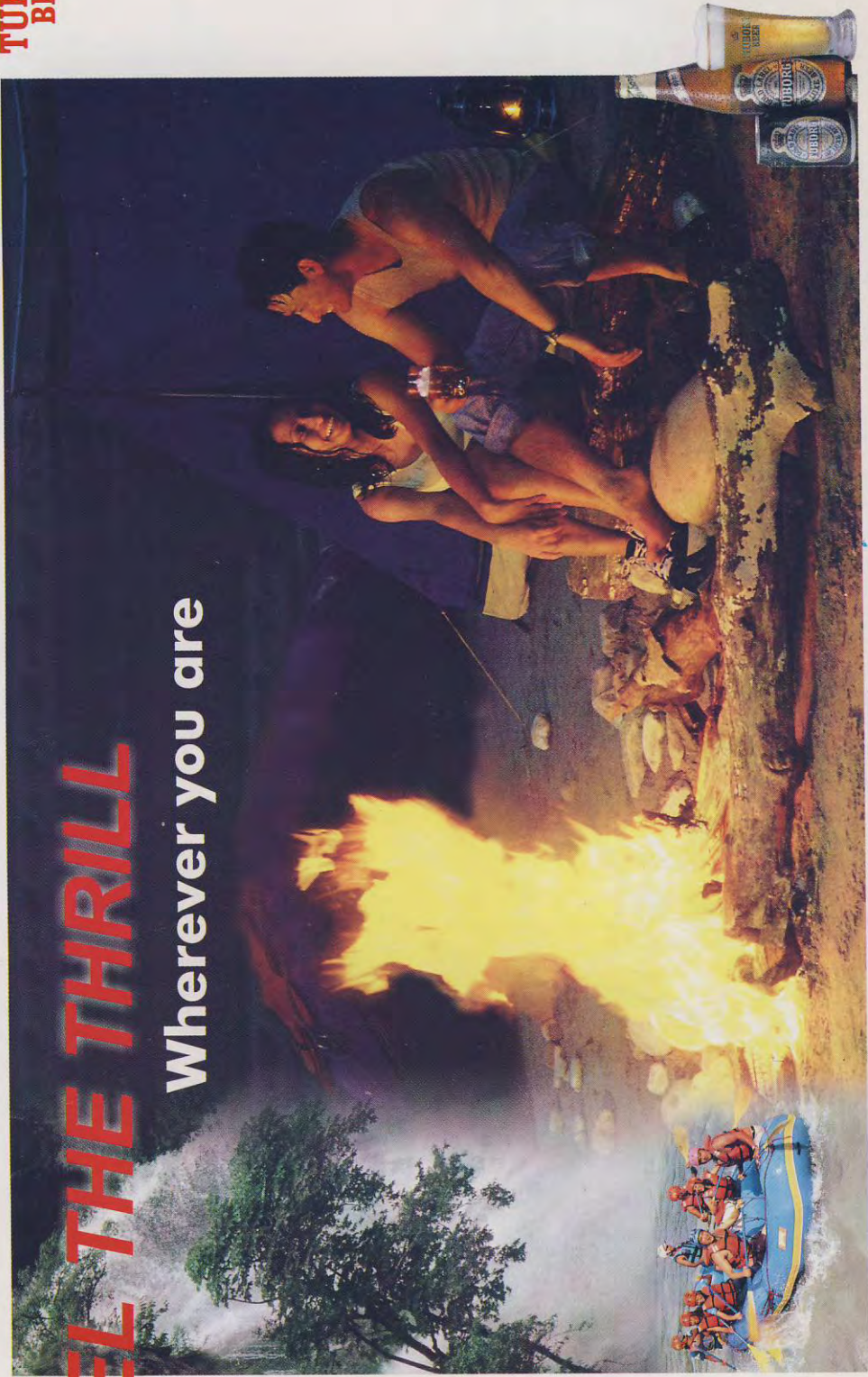
There are certainly some merits in our system and we should recognize them in the process of improving the system. The tendency to regard a system as good only when it satisfies one's needs and wishes has become a culture in our country. If we are able to pull ourselves out of this culture, the evaluation system can also become more objective and reliable. ■

Pandey is Director-General of the Department of Press Information

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