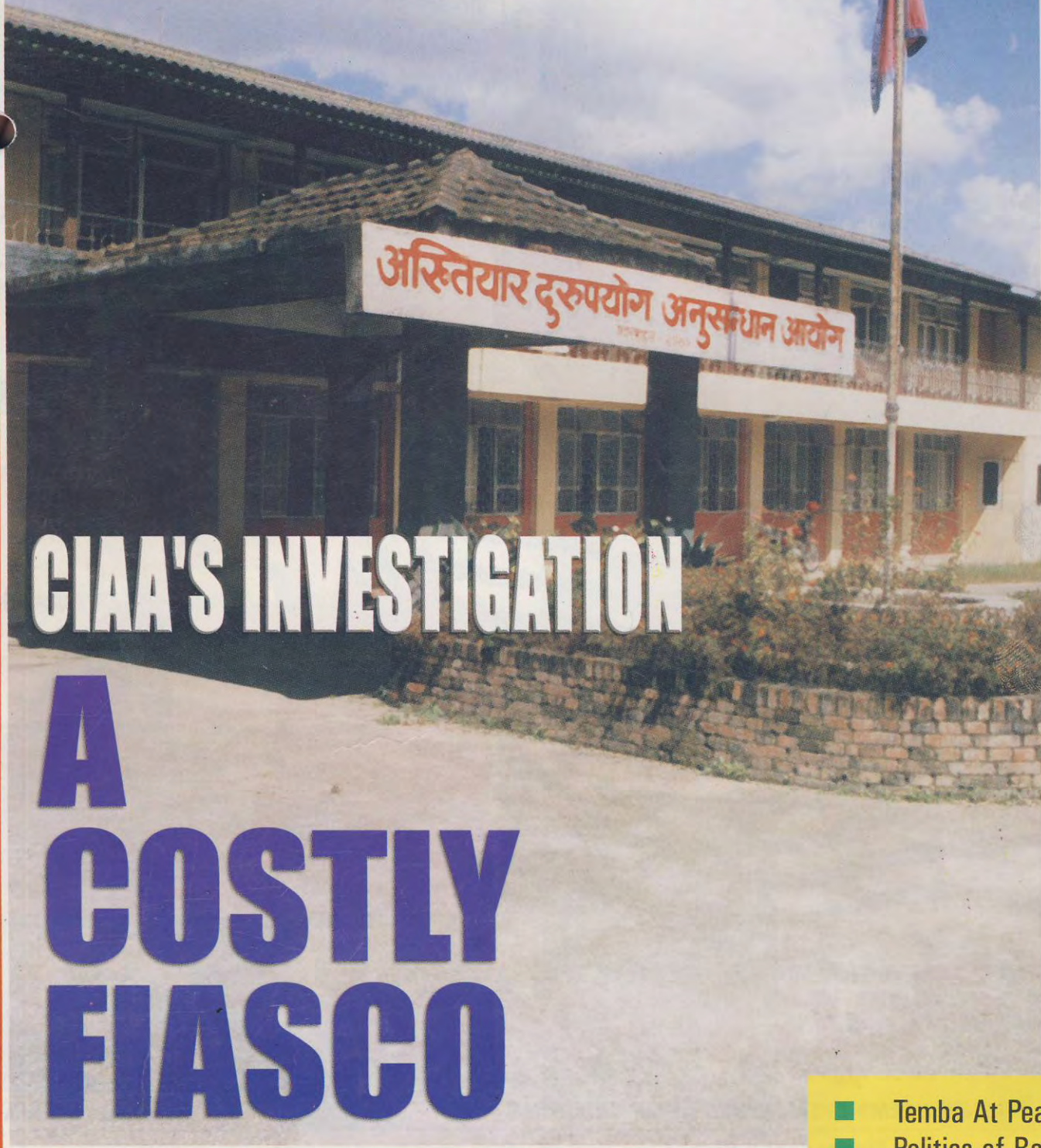


The National Newsmagazine

# SPOTLIGHT

1-7, June, 2001



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# A COSTLY FIASCO

- Temba At Peak
- Politics of Bandh
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## COVER STORY : A COSTLY FIASCO

The constitutional anti-corruption body files cases of corruption against a former minister and top RNAC officials on the basis that the airlines is incurring heavy losses due to the Lauda airplane.

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## BANDH POLITICS : Great Leap Backward

The 3-day general strike called by six leftist parties including the UML fails to win public support.

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## ENCOUNTER :

### Leyla Tegmo-Reddy

Chief at ILO office Nepal, Leyla talks about the major labor issues facing the country.

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# SPOTLIGHT

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## Chief Editor And Publisher

Madhav Kumar Rimal

## Editor

Sarita Rimal

## Managing Editor

Keshab Poudel

## Associate Editor

Bhagirath Yogi

## Senior Reporter

Sanjaya Dhakal

## Reporter

Akshay Sharma

## Design and Layout

Jyoti Singh

## Photographer

Nishchal Chapagain

## Art

M.S. Khokna

## Legal Advisor

Advocate Lok Bhakta Rana

## Marketing/Advertisement

Sarita Rimal (USA)

## Marketing

Madan Kaji Basnet

Navin Kumar Maharjan

Madan Raj Poudel

## Editorial Office

GPO Box 7256, Baluwatar, Kathmandu,

Tel : (977-1) 423127, Fax : (977-1) 417845

Chief Editor's : 435594

E-mail : spot@mail.com.np

Internet Add: <http://www.nepalnews.com/spotlight>

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Kamal Pokhari, Ph : 410772, Fax : 432872

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

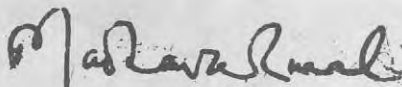
The decision of the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority on the Lauda Air corruption case has come as unique in the history of the nation's administration. The chief of the CIAA would have created history had he plucked the courage to indict the Prime Minister unambiguously. Although he has warned the Prime Minister, by failing to book him for more fitting punishment, Upadhyaya might have tried to exhibit his real concern for his own personal safety and inherent distrust in the judicial system of the country. It could even be interpreted as a clean hint to the Prime minister to step down. Since warning is also a form of punishment, no person occupying such a high position would have stayed there after the pronouncement of the judgement. But Koirala is made of totally different stuff than ordinary mortals. Laws applicable to other humans are not applicable to him. And morality is a virtue totally unknown to him. Such, the ordeal of the millions of poor Nepalis do not seem to be over. Since there is no savior who can deliver them from the evils they are facing, there is nothing they can do but endure.

\* \* \*

Nearly after two long years India has taken the initiative to start dialogue with Pakistan. Even though political situation in Pakistan has not changed, the Indian statesmen now think they can sit down with the military ruler of Pakistan for talks. General Pervez Musharraf, the chief executive of Pakistan suddenly seems to have gained stature in the eyes of the Indians. What has spurred the Indians to change their mind is not that important if they can restore some normalcy in their bilateral relations with their arch enemy. India's refusal to attend the SAARC Summit two years ago after the General took over the reins of government in Pakistan has plunged the SAARC into an abyss. This has proved to be a big setback for the smaller and poorer nations of South Asia who believe that SAARC can play a very effective role in their speedy economic development. India's obdurate stand in the holding of SAARC Summit has rather confirmed the lurking apprehensions about her lukewarm interest in the organization. With the possible change in her attitude it can be hoped that SAARC Summit might take place sometime soon. Since the crux of the matter is normalization of Pak-India relations all eyes are focussed on the imminent meeting of the top executives. Unfortunately, certain statements by Indian leaders on Kashmir coming before a date for dialogue had been agreed to are being considered ominous. And Kashmir is the issue on which many talks between the two feuding countries can flounder. The denial of the fundamental rights to the Kashmiris to choose their destiny is the most sensitive issue on which Pakistan can, perhaps never, compromise. As such, what the two leaders are going to talk about fruitfully is indeed very hard to guess correctly. May be, this meeting will contribute to keep the doors open for future dialogues.

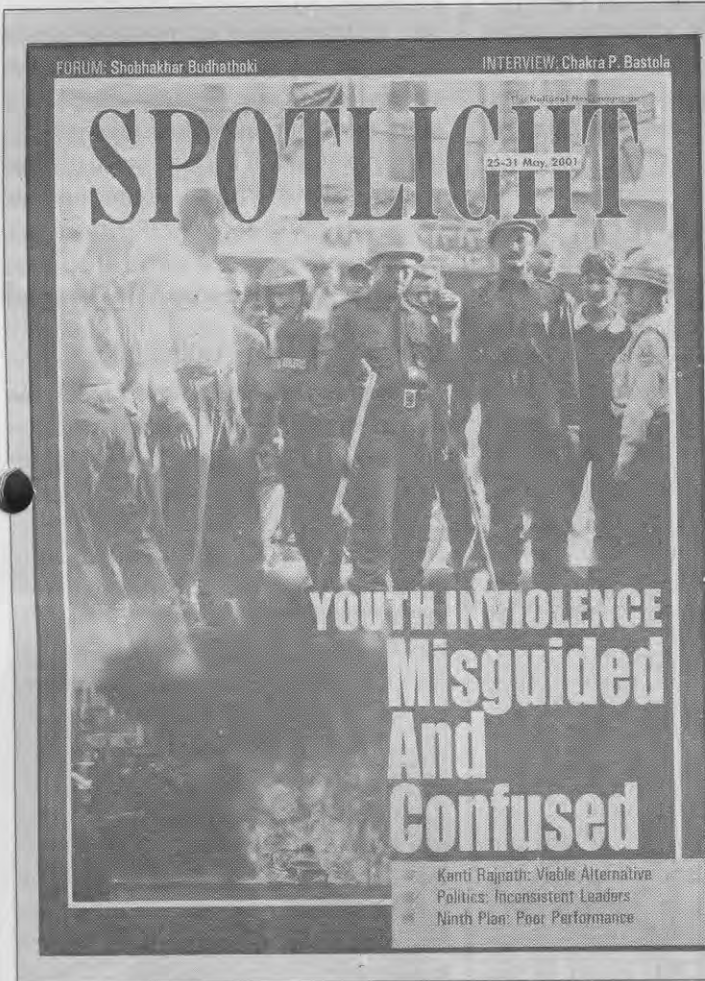
\* \* \*

The three-day bandh passed off comparatively peacefully. Except a few stray incidents no news of mass destruction or loss of lives have been reported. Despite the fact that the whole nation was against the bandh and there was very little public enthusiasm in its favor, the three day bandh was almost total. If the fear of vandalism, arson, looting and loss of lives kept the smaller traders and shopkeepers away from their jobs, the conspicuous failure of the security forces to provide adequate protection to the public at large concretely contributed to the totality of the bandh. It even generated the impression that the majority of the security personnel were much averse to using force against the bandh organizers. A couple of senior security officers, on condition of anonymity, confided to this scribe that it was time for the inept government to fall. The worst-affected people were the hand-cart pullers. They had to go almost hungry for three days. The one thing that this bandh has produced without any ambiguity is the feeling that no party emerges as the winner, and bandhs are not the right tools to pressurize the Nepalese politicians, specially a politician like Girija Prasad Koirala. ■



**Madhav Kumar Rimal**

Chief Editor & Publisher



## Disturbing Development

The cover story "Misguided and Confused" (SPOTLIGHT, May 25) about the growing involvement of our youths in violent activities was an eye-opener. This sinister development is the result of our political leadership's failure to groom country's youth in a proper manner. The politicians are so crooked that they are happy to misguide their own citizens. Whether in the name of a particular political ideology or something else, Nepalese youth are being recklessly misused by characterless politicians.

*Samir Budhathoki*  
Kalanki

can launch a revolution. Whether this shutdown fulfilled their desire or not, it did give a weeklong holiday to our school-goers. These students are going to remember the revolutionary holiday for the rest of their lives.

*Shree Krishna Thapa*  
Jyatha

## Changing Taste

The increasing number of one-stop shops in the capital suggest the conspicuous change in the habit of our shoppers ("Shop Till You Drop", SPOTLIGHT, May 18). The Nepalese consumers are developing new tastes. They now do not want to shop around the whole New Road neighborhood to buy a pair of shirts. They enjoy shopping to their fullest in departmental stores or supermarkets. While this change in behaviour is seen among upper middle class and elite consumers at present, the trend is fast catching up with the middle class families, too.

*Rakesh Shakya*  
Patan

## Bridle The Energy

Youths are the energy of any nation ("Misguided And Confused", SPOTLIGHT, May 25). If the powerhouse of a country is shut down, the whole nation will be plunged into darkness. Instead of harnessing the youths' spirit, the so-called leaders of this country have exploited them to the fullest. While a section of youths have been given guns to kill their own brothers and sisters in the name of Maoism, another group is armed with stones to vandalize public property in the name of politics. What is going on? Isn't there anybody left among our leaders who can bridle this breed of violent youths?

*Deepak Subedi*  
Jamal

## Breakdown Of Youthfulness

While their counterparts in other countries are working hard for development, Nepalese youths are in a state of confusion ("Misguided And Confused", SPOTLIGHT, May 25). There is no role model in society today whom our youths can look up to. The systemic breakdown of youthfulness is going to hurt the nation further. Countries can do wonders if the spirit of their youths could be tamed for positive development.

*Jeevan Gurung*  
Kopundole

## Create Employment

The growing participation of youths in violence is the result of the lack of employ-

ment and other social activities that could have kept them busy ("Misguided And Confused", SPOTLIGHT, May 25). The frustration that has engulfed the unemployed youths makes them highly vulnerable to exploitation. Besides, the constant feeding of news of corruption and violence in the country will indeed have an effect on the psychology of the youths.

*Binaya Karki*  
Koteshwor

## Revolutionary Holiday

The decision by the revolutionary students to forcibly close down the schools is bound to give them a bad name ("Vigilante Injustice", SPOTLIGHT, May 18). No sane person can agree that closing down schools

## Success Story

The astounding success of the music album by Khem Raj Gurung has once again underscored that typical folk-based music are the most liked ones in the country ("Winning Nepali Hearts", SPOTLIGHT, May 18). Though it is sometimes reported that Hindi and English music are encroaching upon our culture, the success of Gurung's album suggests that Nepalese still are deeply attached to their roots. What other meaning can one draw from a group of youths dancing spiritedly to Gurung's song—a scene that is routinely seen at wedding parties, picnics and so on at every place around the country?

*Nabin Shrestha*  
Battisputali

## Demonstrators Vandalize Press Vehicles

On the first day of the three-day nationwide general strike, activists belonging to the six left parties forced the office of the Biratnagar branch of the government-owned daily Gorkhapatra to close down on Sunday, Gorkhapatra reported. A group of about a dozen youths barged into the office in the morning, threatened the staff, locked the office



A scene of the strike

and took the key with them. They also threatened that they would vandalize the office if the office were not closed for three days. Himalaya Times daily reported that left demonstrators in Kathmandu vandalized half a dozen bicycles used in distributing the newspaper on Sunday. They also threw stones at the motorbike used by its reporters covering the strike and misbehaved with a reporter belonging to Yugasambad weekly, the daily said.

Similarly, Nepal Samacharpatra daily reported that organizers of the bandh misbehaved with its two staff and a report and vandalized three motorbikes in the eastern town of Biratnagar early Sunday. The daily said left activists obstructed five people distributing its newspaper and manhandled a motorbike used by a reporter in Kathmandu. Kantipur daily reported that left activists blocked six of its distributors in Pokhara from distributing the newspaper and misbehaved with a reporter with state-owned Radio Nepal. Such incidents

took place despite the left parties' public announcement that they would not disrupt movement of essential services, including the press. *Compiled from reports.*

## Maoists Loot A Bank, Prachanda Criticizes UML

A group of Maoist rebels detonated a grenade at the sub-branch office of the Agriculture Development Bank at Mayanglung in the eastern hilly district of Tehrathum Saturday night, destroyed important documents and looted more than Rs 300,000 in cash, RSS news agency reported. Meanwhile, in a statement, chairman of the underground Maoist party, Comrade Prachanda, referring to a parliamentary committee's decision

implicating a UML leader in the China South West Airlines lease deal, has accused the main opposition party of moving towards moral degeneration and corruption.

In a statement issued Saturday, the top Maoist leader heavily criticized the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority for failing to book Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala in connection with the Lauda Air deal, saying: "It has proved that this (parliamentary) system can't root out corruption," Nepal Samacharpatra daily reported Sunday. *Compiled from reports May 28.*

## AI Calls For End To Violence

The London-based human rights watchdog, Amnesty International (AI), has renewed its call to both the Nepalese government and Maoist rebels to stop killings and violence. In a statement issued Sunday on the occasion of its 40th anniversary, the AI has urged the rebels to

honor instruments of international human rights, including the Geneva Convention on prisoners of war. Similarly, the AI has urged the Nepal government to respect the principle of rule of law and not to indulge in extra-judicial killings. *Kantipur May 28.*

## Rebels Abduct Former MP, Demand Release Of Their Colleagues

A group of armed Maoist rebels abducted former Nepali Congress legislator and president of the party's Pyuthan district unit, Mukti Prasad Sharma, Tuesday evening from his house in the mid-western district, reports said. Kantipur daily quoted an unnamed highly placed source in the Maoist party as saying that the rebels would release Sharma only if the government made public the whereabouts of five Maoist leaders and activists, and released them within the next three days.

The party has demanded the release of Dandapani Neupane, Milan Nepali, Iswori Dahal, Matrika Yadav and Lokendra Bista in exchange of the release of Sharma. "If the government did not release them within three days, its consequences could be very grave," the source warned. Reports say the whereabouts of some of the Maoist activists in the list, including Milan Nepali, are still unknown. Meanwhile, the Nepali Congress central office has condemned the abduction and has demanded that the government take strong steps to ensure release of Sharma. *Compiled from reports.*

## People Demand Continuation Of Gardep Project

Hundreds of local people took out a rally at Tamghas, headquarters of the western district of Gulmi Tuesday demanding the continuation of the Gulmi-Arghakhanchi Rural Development Project (GARDEP). Kantipur daily reported Wednesday. The fate of the project remains uncertain after a group of armed Maoist rebels burnt down a vehicle owned by the European Union-assisted project a few weeks back at Rupakot in Gulmi district. Local leaders belonging to the

ruling Nepali Congress, main opposition UML, Rastriya Jana Morcha and consumer groups denounced the violent act by the insurgents and demanded continuation of the project which they said was benefiting thousands of people in the backward hilly districts of the country. The local consumer group has also sent a petition to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, through the local District Administration Office, to ensure continuation of the project. *Compiled from reports.*

**‘Direct Talks Likely’**

Rejecting the call for all-side meeting to resolve the Maoist problem by self-appointed mediators, Deputy Prime



Prachanda

Minister Ram Chandra Poudel has said the government is in favor of “direct talks” with the rebels.

Addressing a program organized by the Amnesty International Nepal chapter here Tuesday, Poudel came down heavily upon the ‘People’s Committee for Peace Initiatives’ headed by Padma Ratna Tuladhar and alleged the committee of using the ‘dialogue as a means for propaganda,’ Kantipur daily reported. “The government is ready for talks and the rebels, too, are ready. Then

why don’t talks take place, people are at their wit’s end,” the DPM said. Poudel, however, did not explain how the direct talks would be held between the government and rebels. *Compiled from reports May 23.*

**Activists Demand Ban On Old Vehicles**

Activists and experts from South Asia have called on the governments in the region to phase out old vehicles, improve the quality of gasoline fuels and promote natural gases so as to improve the deteriorating air quality of South Asia’s growing cities.

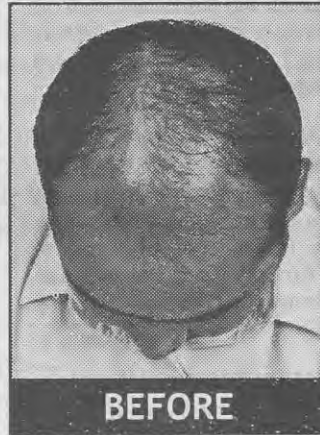
They said each country in the region was paying a high cost for their indifference. Hilal A Raza, the director-general of the Hydrocarbon Institute of Pakistan said Pakistan’s economic cost of environmental pollution has been estimated US\$ 1.8 billion annually.

“The problem in this part of the world is that vehicles older than 20 or even 30 years are running in the streets. They have to be phased out, and emphasis should be given to natural gas-run vehicles, which cause little or no pollution,” said Raza. Experts also voiced their concerns on the condition of the roads and infrastructure in South Asian cities. A group of experts are taking part in a regional meeting in the Nepali capital. *Compiled from reports May 23.*

**19-Member ‘People’s Govt’ : In Rolpa**

The underground Maoist party has formed a 19-member ‘people’s government’ in their stronghold in mid-western district of Rolpa amid a public function attended by thousands of people on May 16, Janadesh weekly, said to be close to the Maoists, reported Tuesday. The weekly has given the names of all 19 members of the ‘people’s government’ headed by Santosh Budha Magar. The government has a representative from ‘people’s militia’ and two women members. The weekly said the eight-hour long declaration ceremony was attended by old people, young, women and children alike. Senior government officials, including Inspector-General of Police Pradip Shumsher JB Rana, inspected the mass meeting by making four or five rounds aboard a helicopter, the weekly reported. *Compiled from reports May 23.*

**BALDING?**



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**The Bhoto Jatra festival of Rato Machhindranath in Jawalakhel**

**THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WELFARE** and the International Labor Organization (ILO) have signed an agreement on matters relating to consolidation of the Ministry efforts to check girl trafficking. The agreement is to extend the programs run jointly by the Ministry and ILO between 1997 and 2000. The agreement includes reviewing the national working plan, newsletter publication, establishment of resettlement centers, strengthening of the information exchange and education unit and collection of data through a computerized system in the ministry. The agreement also includes programs related to consolidation of the district committees in 26 districts recording high incidence of girl trafficking, running of special programs in the bordering districts of Jhapa, Parsa, Rupandehi and Banke and establish vigilance groups at the village level. Secretary at the Ministry Urmila Shrestha and ILO country director for Nepal Leyla Tegmo Reddy signed the agreement under which the ILO has agreed to provide an assistance of US\$112,970 for the programs.

**THE RASTRIYA PRAJATANTRA PARTY HAS ASKED PRIME MINISTER** Girija Prasad Koirala to resign immediately on moral grounds to end the current political stalemate. In a statement, the party said the decision taken by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority in connection with the Lauda Air deal clearly indicates that the council of ministers was involved in corruption, RSS news agency reported.

**LAKPA SHERPA HAS BECOME THE FIRST NEPALI WOMAN** to climb Mt. Sagarmatha from both sides, reports said. Lakpa reached the top of the highest peak in the world last Wednesday from the Tibetan side. Earlier, she had climbed the mountain from the southern side. Similarly, Erik Weihenmeyer has become the first blind climber to scale the world's highest mountain. According to Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation and Culture, Erik reached the summit last week.

**THE NEPALESE GOVERNMENT HAS DEPLORED THE DECREE** reportedly passed by the Taliban regime of Afghanistan requiring the Hindu community to adopt a dress code. In a statement issued here Wednesday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it is a reprehensible act, which defies all norms and universal principles of human rights thereby isolating the Hindu minorities living together in amity with Muslims in Afghanistan.

**A TOTAL OF 37 CLIMBERS SUCCEEDED IN SCALING THE** world's highest peak within the last two days, officials said. Among

them, 34 climbers including 15 Nepali Sherpa guides reached the summit on Wednesday. According to the Ministry of Culture, Civil Aviation and Tourism, two American climbers and one climber each from Canada and Turkey along with Sherpa guides reached atop Sagarmatha Wednesday. On Tuesday, a Spanish expedition of three climbers reached the summit by another route. All these climbers were the first climbers of the highest peak in this season.

**OFFICIALS HAVE SAID THE JOB OF DISTRIBUTING LAND** to former Kamaiyas (bonded laborers) has been completed in the mid-western districts of Dang and Banke while the process is under way in Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts. The Ministry of Land Reforms and Management announced Wednesday that work of land distribution is over in the two districts. Similarly, 1,123 families in Bardiya, 870 families in Kailali and 1304 families in Kanchanpur have been resettled so far, the ministry said. The government had declared 'kamaiyas' free from debt bondage in July last year but is facing criticism for its dilly-dallying in rehabilitating them.

**A KATHMANDU UNDERSTANDING WAS ADOPTED WEDNESDAY**, urging the governments and other concerned agencies to invest on children, at the end of a two-day South Asian High Level Meeting on Investing on Children. The meeting organized that governments, the corporate sector, civil society, communities, young people, international organizations and media need to work jointly to ensure adequate, timely and productive investments in fulfilling the rights and achieving the well being of all children in South Asia, and in strategies toward poverty alleviation. The meeting was held Tuesday and Wednesday with participation of the political leaders, corporate leaders, and 17 selected children and young people from seven South Asian countries. It noted the progress South Asian countries are making in the field of protection of child rights but said there is still much to be done to attain most of the goals related to young people's survival, health development and protection through access to quality basic social services.

**NEPALESE EXPORTS TO THIRD COUNTRIES (OTHER THAN India)** have gone up by more than 9 percent during the first nine months of the current fiscal year compared to the same period last year, reports said. According to Trade Promotion Center (TPC), Nepalese exports to the third countries during this period reached worth Rs 22.38 billion. The major export items from Nepal include carpet, garments, pashmina shawls, lentil, tea goat hide and the hide of other animals, paper products, electrical transformer, buttons and handicrafts. The TPC said that there was over 59 percent rise in the export value of pashmina shawl during the period touching Rs 3.81 billion. Similarly, the export of lentils to the third countries increased by 51 percent during the review period. The export of woolen carpet, however, went down by 14.3 percent during this period, the center said.

**THE BUDGET DEFICIT HAS WIDENED BY 35 PERCENT IN** the first nine months of the current fiscal year 2000/2001, a new report said. According to Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), total government expenditure registered a comparatively higher growth of nearly 24 percent amounting to Rs 43865.6 million as against a growth of 11.6 percent during the same period last year. Of the total government expenditure, regular expenditure, development expenditure and freeze expenditure increased by nearly 29 percent, 13.7 percent, 5.3 percent respectively. On the external front, exports registered a decelerated growth of 21.5 percent to Rs 43441.0 million during the review period compared to a growth of 37.6 percent during the same period last year. Exports to India and third countries have decelerated by 35.1 percent and 11.9 percent respectively. The rate of inflation, on point-to-point basis, was recorded at 2.2 percent, mainly because of the decline in the prices of food and beverages group. The overall balance of payments recorded a surplus of Rs 4993.4 million, the bank said. ■



“If we make full use of the remaining three years, people will once again give a majority to the Nepali Congress in the next election.”

*Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, former prime minister, in Space Time daily.*

\* \* \*

“Security organs are mobilized in all civilized countries that have a democratic system.”

*Ram Chandra Poudel, Deputy Prime Minister, justifying the government's decision to mobilize the army as a part of the Integrated Security and Development Plan, in Himalaya Times.*

\* \* \*

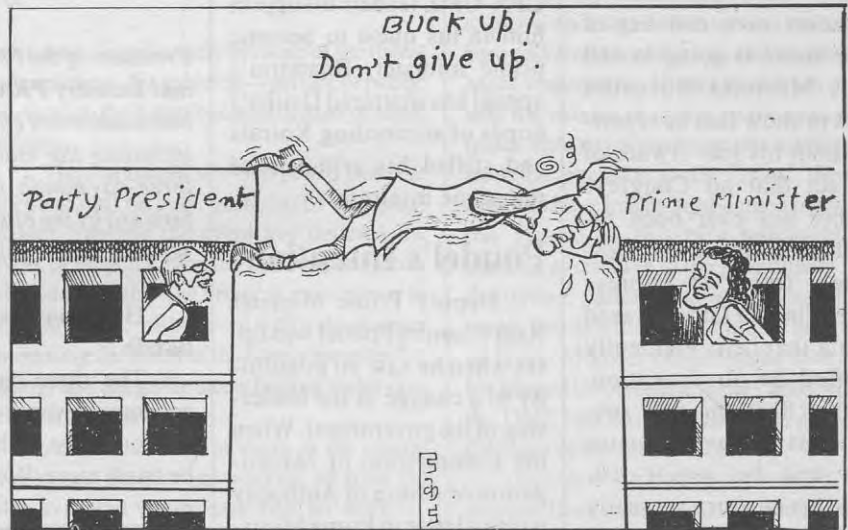
“In the name of freedom, some newspapers, published from illegally earned money, always drive the government into the corner by carrying reports that denigrate the government and assassinate the character of individuals.”

*Pushkar Nath Ojha, Minister of State for Information and Communication, speaking at a program organized by Nepal Press Union in Morang, in The Kathmandu Post.*

\* \* \*

“The Rastriya Prajatantra Party does not support the street strike organized by the CPN-UML.”

*Pashupati SJB Rana, former minister and leader of the Rastriya Praja-*



*tantra Party, in Bimarsha.*

\* \* \*

“Because the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) gave the report without studying the facts, we had to form a committee to do so.”

*Pradeep Nepal, leader of the UML, on why his party had to form a separate committee to look into the China South West deal even after the PAC*

*implicated a former UML minister, among others, in irregularities in the deal, in Space Time daily.*

\* \* \*

“There is no alternative to democracy anywhere. It is the best system in the world and India always works in favor of strengthening this system.”

*Murali Manohar Joshi, Indian Union Minister for Human Resources Development, who recently visited Nepal, in Bimarsha.*

\* \* \*

“I see the mobilization of the army at custom points as an indirect deployment of military in the border area. When the military is stationed at custom points, they are bound to look after the country's borders.”

*Buddhi Narayan Shrestha, former director-general of the Department of Survey, in Jana Aastha.*

\* \* \*

“We do not fear social rebuttal.”

*Rekha Dhakal, a young lady from western Nepal who created a storm in the local community by marrying another lady, in Space Time daily.*

\* \* \*



Jana Aastha

## Busy Minister

Minister of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Omkar Prasad Shrestha is busy these days attending meetings at the ministry and departments under him. As his tenure as a member of upper house is going to end soon, Minister Shrestha wants to show that he is serious about his job. Aware of the fact that no Congress member has ever been re-nominated, Shrestha is desperately trying to impress Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala that he is eminently qualified to be an exception. Whether Shrestha will succeed in his endeavor remains to be seen, but senior officials at his ministry are really sweating it out.

## Sullen Deuba

Second-generation Congress leader and former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba seems to have become tired of asking Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to resign in connection with the Lauda Air deal. As soon as



**Deuba :** Tired of demanding

Deuba's mentor, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, revealed his own ambitions to become prime minister again, Deuba has suddenly toned down his speech. At a recent public meeting, Bhattarai urged CPN-UML leaders to support him in his quest to become prime minister. Bhattarai's appeal has shattered Deuba's hopes of succeeding Koirala and stifled his criticism of the prime minister.

## Poudel's Intention

Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel was upset when he saw no possibility of a change in the leadership of the government. When the Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority wrote a letter to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala seeking clarifications on the Lauda Air deal, Poudel was said to have suggested that resignation was the only choice before Koirala. According to Poudel associates, the deputy premier even provided clear indications that he was all set to succeed Koirala. The way things are going, Poudel has valid reasons to be upset. Regardless of whether the deputy prime minister ever gets the top job, Poudel's current intentions were badly exposed.

## Double Standard

Opportunism seems to be a binding element in the CPN-UML. This must be why leaders of the main opposition party use words and phrases to suit their interest. CPN-UML leaders know how to fool the people. In the last 10 years, they have been successful in projecting an im-

## REVELATION

# 'Politicians Should Do Away With Bandhs'

— PRADEEP KUMAR SHRESTHA

*President of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry PRADEEP KUMAR SHRESTHA and his team had made every effort to encourage the leaders of six left parties, including the main opposition CPN-UML, to withdraw their three-day bandh. But the organizers rejected the arguments put forward by the business community. Shrestha spoke to reporters recently on the fall-out of the bandh. Excerpts:*

### How do you see the consequences of the three-day Nepal bandh?

The three-day strike seriously damaged the Nepalese economy. Even a one-day general strike or bandh costs Rs 700 million a day. If the agriculture sector is included, the loss will be much more. We have argued time and again that bandhs have many negative effects on the economic sector.

### Which sector was most affected by the strike?

The tourism sector, export front, and other industries have suffered a lot. Other manufacturing industries have also faced a similar crisis. We are now looking for ways to compensate for the loss.

### But the main opposition and other left parties argued that they were compelled to call the general strike. How do you look at their argument?

We are not asking political parties to renounce their right to protest. Our request is that they should search for alternatives to the bandh. There are many other ways to protest against the government. We also request all political parties, including the leaders of the main opposition CPN-UML, to do away with activities like bandhs.

age among the masses that only they are honest. After the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) came out with its verdict on China South West Airlines deal, CPN-UML leaders have found themselves in a dilemma over how to contain the damage. In a secret meeting of the politburo, the party decided to do three things: form another investigation committee, urge former minister and central committee member Bhim Rawal to re-

sign, and condemn the decision of PAC. Interestingly, two politburo members, K.P. Sharma Oli and Ishwor Pokharel, who signed the PAC report, shifted their stand at the party meeting. For a party that called a three-day Nepal Bandh on the ground that the PAC implicated Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala in the Lauda Air deal, the CPN-UML's reaction to the involvement of its own members would be worth watching. ■

# THREE-DAY STRIKE

## Great Leap Backward

The main opposition party's gamble to regain its constituency may have backfired

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

Immediately after the restoration of democracy in 1990, Nepalese politicians talked about making their country another Singapore within 10 years. More than a decade later, they are competing to turn Nepal into a Bangladesh — at least in terms of organizing strikes and 'bandhs'.

The three-day nationwide general strike called by six left parties, including the main opposition Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML) party, was a grand success, according to the organizers. Schools, colleges and businesses

remained closed largely because of the threat of vandalism. No vehicles — private or public — were on the streets because of fears of stone pelting.

The communist activists pelted stones at medical staff on duty, misbehaved with journalists covering the event and deflated the tyres of bicycles carrying newspapers. They stoned to death a bus driver at Parwanipur in central Nepal, misbehaved with a shopkeeper mourning the death of his family member in Dang, and allegedly threw boiling water on a child in Sunsari.

As thousands of laborers in the capital valley and daily-wage workers all over the country had no work — and, hence, no money to buy food — left activists were disrupting examination centers and forcing government offices to close down. Life for the common people was in perfect disarray. "If elections were held today, the UML would lose a majority of the seats it holds," said a political analyst gauging the public mood.

So, what did the six left parties in general — and the UML, in particular — gain out of this massive exercise? "You can't expect results (from such strikes) overnight. But the results may be seen after some time," said leader of the main opposition and UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal. "The unprecedented success of the bandh has vindicated our stand."

At a time when the underground Maoist party is calling the shots from its remote base, the biggest gain for the UML may have

been in re-establishing itself as the mainstream communist force in the country. By agreeing to go the extra mile (by calling a three-day strike for the first time in the history of Nepal), the UML has been able to rally nine left parties around it. Even its foes, the splintered Marxists-Leninists (ML) and the Maoists extended 'moral' support to the strike.

Similarly, the UML leadership was able to prove once again that it has a nationwide base and could mobilize its cadres at one go. More importantly, it may have been able to stop the exodus of cadres to the radical fold (read: Maoists), if not being able to bring them back. Despite such visible 'gains', the UML seems to have lost its hard-earned property in this gamble — that of a responsible and credible alternative to the government. After disrupting parliamentary proceedings for nearly two months demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala for his alleged involvement in the Lauda Air deal, the UML had taken to the streets along with different communist outfits.

By following the popular maxim, "When you can't beat your enemy, discredit him," the UML, to a great extent, has been able to depict Congress strongman Koirala as the villain of the Lauda Air deal. Though the Supreme Court and Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) could not come up with any concrete evidence to prove the premier's involvement in the case, the latter gave enough ammunition to the opposition to continue its tirade against the beleaguered premier. (See cover story)

With the elections for local bodies only a year away, the UML wants a weak government at the seat of power in Singha Durbar. "The present UML leadership knows very well that their party can't gain majority in the local and parliamentary elections as long as Koirala holds the reins. Hence, their one-point agenda is to throw him out," said a source close to the UML. The faction-ridden ruling party and an emboldened opposition will be face to face once again in the floor of parliament next month. Although Koirala so far has been able to withstand pressure from within his party and outside, he may have a tough battle ahead. Facing internal dissension and outside pressure, Koirala has few options before him. If pushed to a dead-end, he could take some drastic steps — including the dissolution of the parliament and announcement of mid-term polls. It might fulfill the ambitions of those aspiring for power sooner than later, but could push the country into one more phase of instability. But, then, who cares? ■



UML leaders : Unpopular bandh

## CHINA SOUTH WEST DEAL

# Double Standard

After the parliamentary committee's decision on another controversial air deal, the infighting within the UML has come to the fore

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

At a time when it was fighting an all-out battle to oust Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, the House of Representatives Public Accounts Committee (PAC)'s decision implicating a former UML minister took the wind out of the main opposition party's sail.

What a turn of events? The UML

Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation, the PAC said there were evidences of irregularities during the fourth and ninth deal. "Though all the deals with CSWA were irregular, these two long-term deals were even more irregular, ill intentioned and against the interests of the RNAC," declared the PAC.

Interestingly, UML central committee member Bhim Rawal headed the aviation ministry during the fourth deal whereas Nepali Congress leader Tarini Dutta Chataut (who has also been implicated in the Lauda deal) held the aviation portfolio during the latest deal. During the one-year long fourth deal beginning March 4, 1999, a Boeing 757-200 aircraft was leased though the detailed study of a separate aircraft (Boeing 767-200 ER) were done, no sealed tenders were invited and the plane was hired on 'wet lease' instead of the board decision to hire the aircraft on 'dry lease' among others, the PAC report said. The ninth deal beginning September 26, 2000 also violated the directives given by the cabinet secretariat and CIAA, the PAC report held.

The UML expressed dismay over the unanimous decision made by the PAC implicating Rawal in a deal to lease purchase a wide-body jet from the CSWA. Interestingly, a committee led by UML leader Subash Nemwang made the decision. Rawal has resigned from the central committee and has offered to quit the general membership of the party, if found guilty.

The PAC decision helped, all of a sudden, to bring to the fore long-brewing internal rivalry within the UML. Influential party leader, K. P. Sharma

Oli, and standing committee member Iswor Pokhrel, were also members of the PAC that passed the judgment against its own leader. While Pokhrel offered to resign from the parliamentary committee, Oli decided to stick to his guns, and, hence, face the wrath of the rival faction led by party general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Two statements within two days criticized the PAC decision terming it as "arbitrary and incomplete". The party set up an inquiry tribunal headed by former finance minister Bharat Mohan Adhikary to look into the PAC decision. Party spokesman Pradip Nepal went on to say that Oli had made a mistake by defending the deal and that he had the old habit of refuting 'unanimous' party decisions. Oli, in turn, saw the remarks targeted against him and made by the outspoken spokesman "in his personal capacity".

The UML's move also sparked a sharp reaction from the high-profile PAC members. "The UML kept our decision regarding the Lauda Air deal in high esteem and criticized the government for defying the decision of the 'mini parliament,'" recalls Rastriya Prajatantra Party leader and PAC member Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani. "Now, they are questioning our verdict in a similar case." Added Hridayesh Tripathi, another PAC member and general secretary of Nepal Sadbhavana Party, "This is certainly a case of double standard on part of the main opposition party."

While the issue may prolong within the main opposition party, UML leaders are cautious enough not to let the controversy drag into public for too long. "I will not make this an issue in public," said Oli, general secretary Nepal, too, maintained that such misunderstanding could be sorted out within the party forum. However, the different standards employed by the main opposition in dealing with different cases, as per its party interests, are least likely to be wiped out from the popular memory anytime soon. ■



Rawal : Comrade in trouble

has been spearheading the campaign against Koirala accusing him of involvement in the Lauda Air deal on the basis of a PAC report. But a similar report made public by the parliamentary committee, headed by its own legislator, was enough to incur the dismay of the main opposition party.

After probing into a total of nine deals between the China South West Airlines (CSWA) and the state-owned

## CONGRESS POLITICS

# Windfall For Koirala

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala gains much-needed strength from the recent turn of events

By KESHAB POUDEL

A politician who fears popularity cannot be popular. This century-old remark of Napoleon may be true about many politicians today, including Prime Minister Koirala.

As Prime Minister Koirala considered resigning last month, hoping to retain his popularity, his political career was almost on the edge. Had he stepped down, he would have ceased to be a key player of Nepalese politics.

Politicians in different parts of the world take calculated risks to maintain their centrality in politics. Prime Minister Koirala's decision to retain his position seems to have been influenced by similar considerations.

The ongoing political and other developments seem to have helped Prime Minister Koirala strengthen his position.

This turn of events has less to do with Koirala himself or his party. The CPN-UML and five left other parties have contributed to pacifying the unpopularity of the Congress.

Although a faction within the Nepali Congress led by former prime ministers Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Sher Bahadur Deuba and other opposition parties continue to gang up against Prime Minister Koirala, they have been unable to unseat him.

It is becoming apparent that opposition simmering from within and outside the party does not make any difference to the equations of Prime Minister Koirala.

Prime Minister Koirala was said to have considered resigning after he received a letter written by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Au-

thority seeking clarifications on the Lauda Air deal.

The three-day bandh called by the main opposition party was unable to draw public support for their case. Instead, it created anger against the organizers.

The decision of the House of Representatives Public Accounts Committee (PAC) indicating the involvement of



PM Koirala : Unruffled

CPN-UML leader and former minister of culture, tourism and civil aviation Bhim Rawal in irregularities while leasing a China South West Airlines aircraft for RNAC came as a big jolt to the CPN-UML and the other left parties that called the three-day general strike.

Then the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA)

indicted 10 people, including former minister Tarini Dutta Chataut and two chief executives of Lauda Air on May 25, 2000. In the case of Prime Minister Koirala, the CIAA issued a stricture advising him to be alert not to allow others to abuse authority and commit corruption in future.

On the same afternoon, a full bench of Supreme Court dismissed a writ petition filed by Gopal Shivakoti "Chintan" on the ground that it does not have valid reasons to order the cancellation of the Lauda Air deal.

From a legal point of view, the decisions delivered by the Supreme Court and the CIAA gave relief to Prime Minister Koirala. After the decision of the PAC on the China South West Airlines and the response of the CPN-UML standing committee to the decision, Prime Minister Koirala was suddenly out of the picture.

Even Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel who was said to have switched his loyalty away from Prime Minister Koirala, has now changed his mind. Even Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola was said to have requested Prime Minister Koirala to resign.

The dual posture adopted by Poudel and Bastola may prove costly to their career. As Prime Minister Koirala is said to be unhappy with the performance of the Home Ministry, Poudel may be transferred, with Khum Bahadur Khadka possibly given charge of the home portfolio.

The three-day Nepal bandh turned out to be a blessing for the unpopular Koirala government. The bandh called by the main opposition party neutralized the unpopularity of the Nepali Congress government.

At a time when the government was losing support because of its poor performance and the sustained attacks on Prime Minister Koirala, public attention has shifted from the ruling party to the opposition.

Whether it was a coincidence or otherwise, this turn of political events is gradually strengthening Koirala's position. ■

## TRAFFIC SAFETY

# Road Rage

As Kathmandu witnesses a surge in accidents, rash driving comes under sharp focus, as does the congestion in the city's roads

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

**M**ay 22, 2001. It was around 5:30 in the morning. Two buses coming from the outskirts of Kathmandu were speeding neck-to-neck carrying scores of passengers. As they roared through New Baneshwor, the bus ahead suddenly slowed down. The one following it had to brake fast. As the Ba 1 Kha 6351 minibus coming from Panauti screeched to a halt, it swerved to the right and toppled in

Keshav Prasad Baral, Senior Superintendent of Police at the Valley Traffic Police Office. "The lack of caution, patience and responsibility on the part of drivers lead to accidents," Baral said.

Stashing passengers way beyond the capacity of the vehicle is a regular phenomenon in the public transport system. Minibuses, whose normal carrying capacity is less than 30, are found ferrying 50 to 60 commuters at a time. "This over-loading is a dangerous trend."



**Traffic jam :** Persisting problem

the middle of the road at Babar Mahal. Three people were killed on the spot. One died in the hospital. Thirteen were seriously hurt.

Welcome to the streets of Kathmandu valley. From overloading to rash driving, coupled with traffic congestion, the roads of the valley are gaining notoriety. In the last month alone, the city had to witness the needless deaths of more than 30 people in different road accidents.

"I find reckless driving as one of the main reasons for accidents in Kathmandu," said

Transport entrepreneurs encourage overloading. They can make more money by ferrying passengers beyond capacity because, if caught, the fine they would be imposed would be a nominal one. "There are rules and regulations but the drivers find it convenient to flout them," Baral said. The most the traffic police could do is impose a fine of up to Rs 200 on offenders.

The traffic police say there is no special reason for the sudden surge in accidents. Most accidents in the valley happen at intersections.

According to a report by the Traffic Engineering and Safety Unit at the Department of Roads, the frequency of accidents is at the peak at 4 pm followed by 8 am. Pedestrians are the ones who are most at risk, followed by motorcycle riders.

"We don't have a planned road network. The intersections and crossroads are at dangerously close intervals. There are no sidewalks for pedestrians and even where there are sidewalks, people choose to walk in the road instead," said Sunil Poudel, chief engineer at the unit. The accidents in the valley, according to Poudel, are the result of over-speeding, overloading and traffic indiscipline.

The places in Kathmandu that witness accidents frequently include Teen Kunj, Koteswor, Harihar Bhawan, Putali Sadak, Ring Road and many other intersections. While nocturnal mishaps are more frequent on the Ring Road, Kantipath and Naya Baneshwor observe accidents because of over-speeding.

Another disturbing situation about Kathmandu's traffic is the burgeoning vehicle volume. More than 156,000 vehicles are registered in Bagmati zone alone (out of which more than 150,000 ply in the valley) from the countrywide total of 277,000. "The load carrying capacity of valley roads is around 120,000 vehicles per hour. But we find 40,000 more vehicles plying them," said Baral.

Baral suggests that there should be more stoppages and bays to give respite to the vehicle flow in the valley. "Otherwise, every time some vehicle slows down or stops, there is going to be trouble."

"We are seriously looking at the growing traffic accidents in the capital. All of the concerned agencies including the traffic police, Department of Road, Department of Transport Management, municipalities, bus entrepreneurs have to have better coordination to prevent accidents," said Sushil Agrawal, technical director at the Department of Transport Management.

The government also has formed a National Road Safety Committee headed by director-general of the Department of Roads to look after the traffic problems. But the committee is yet to show its results. Still coordination is as elusive as ever. While the Department of Transport Management registers vehicles, the regional police office gives license to drivers. It is the Department of Roads that is entrusted with the responsibility of posting road signs and municipalities that install street lamps. Finally, the traffic police are expected to manage the vehicles in the road, where the telecommunication and sewage offices take turns digging round the year.

Mass Transport System The growing flow of passengers, too, is posing a big problem for Kathmandu, which has limited opportunities of expanding the road network. "It is next to impossible to expand the road network inside the valley. It is difficult to demolish houses to build roads. The only thing we can do is manage the existing network optimally," said Poudel.

According to Poudel, the ultimate solution to Kathmandu's traffic problem is the mass transportation system. "Take for example the stretch of road at Kantipath, it is found that 126,000 people, on average, travel through it each day. Now imagine how many three-wheelers or minibuses you will need to ferry them. Unless mass transports like trolley-buses are introduced and other smaller vehicles barred, the problem of congestion and hence, accidents, will not abate." He recommends taking smaller vehicles to outskirts of valley, where the passenger flow is still not very big. Other experts, too, believe it is high time the government introduced a system of mass transportation in Kathmandu. All big cities in the world have the system, they say.

Last year the government did try to phase out the 20-year-old vehicles from valley but it later buckled under pressure from entrepreneurs. "It is silly of the authorities to try and bring such overt regulations. What they could have done is to introduce pollution-control measures and tax and other kind of disincentives to herd them away," said an environmentalist. Traffic police have already indicated to the government officials that they would not be able to manage the roads if the authorities continued to register new vehicles without whisking away the old ones. That apart, there is an urgent need to modernize the traffic management system in Kathmandu. "At present we have traffic signs at only eight places in the valley, most of which are three-decades old. A study done two years ago had recommended posting such signs at 15 more places," said Poudel.

Recently, the Department of Roads had entered into an agreement with the Japan International Cooperation Agency to install traffic signs at ten places including Kalanki, Koteshwor, Teen Kune, Naya Baneshwor, Maiti Ghar, Putali Sadak, Keshar Mahal, Kalimati, among others. "Work will start this September and be completed within two years," he said.

As Kathmandu's streets are turning into junkyard with an ever-increasing number of vehicles, the only way out through the present mess seems to be the introduction of mass transport system at the earliest. ■

## HORSE RIDING

# Galloping In Kathmandu

The country's first horse-riding center opens in the erstwhile Singha Mahal complex

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Until a week ago, Kathmanduites interested in equestrian sports had no place to go. With the opening of the Chandra Riding Center, they can now happily gallop around atop thoroughbred Arabian horses in the heart of capital.

The center has started offering riding courses at the old Singha Mahal complex in Thapathali with full facilities for training novices as well. The Singha Mahal, previously the residence of late princess Rama Rajya Laxmi Devi Rana and the late commanding general Singha SJB Rana, owned the stables with the finest specimens of trained Arabian horses.

With the objective to revive the glory of the Singha Mahal, the great grandson of Singha SJB Rana, Rajeev Bikram Shah, joined hands with retired Lt.-Col. Shishir Chandra Shah and retired Capt. Chandra Prasad Kandel to make horse riding, which was limited to the army and police, available to civilians.

"Our primary objective is to introduce the sport of horse riding to the people of Kathmandu," said Rajeev Bikram Shah, one of the partners of the center. Shah's wife, Rajkumari Shivani Shah, who hails from Jaipur, India, is herself a skilled horse-rider.

Shah believes that if the sport takes off, there is a great scope for developing it at a national level, as equestrian sports regularly feature in international tournaments, including the Olympics.

The center currently has six thoroughbred horses with an equal number of instructors drawn from the army, including retired cavaliers.

One of the brains behind the center, Shishir Chandra Shah, who just recently

retired from the army, said, "My love with the sport and my deep attachment with horses were responsible for driving me into opening this kind of center." An experienced cavalier with international exposure, Shah had provided horse-riding lessons to Prince Nirajan and Princess Sruti.

The center has been opened with an initial investment of Rs 2.5 million.

There are provisions for individual,



Horses at the center: Good news for Kathmanduites

family, corporate, institutional and session membership at the center. The cost of membership ranges from an initial deposit of Rs 10,000 to Rs 24,000 and monthly fees of Rs 3,000 to Rs 5,000. Walk-ins can ride the horses (for half an hour to forty five minutes) for Rs 750. "In case of bulk membership from schools or offices, we can provide discounts," said Rajeev Bikram Shah.

The center aims to have an initial membership of at least 30-35 people. "We have had some enquiries and seven persons have already confirmed their membership," Shah said.

Apart from giving an opportunity to civilians to fine-tune their equestrian skills, the center could also develop itself as a new attraction to tourists looking for adventure. ■

# NEPAL-INDIA Ground Realities

By acknowledging that India wants Nepal to maintain close ties with China, the southern neighbor may be sending positive signals

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

Within a fortnight of the visit by Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji, Indian Ambassador to Nepal Dev Mukherjee has said India would not object to closer ties between Nepal and China.

Addressing a 'Face to Face' program organized here last Saturday, Mukherjee rejected media reports saying that India had objected to the agreement between Nepal and China to open a new trade route along Rasuwasyaprubesi to the Tibet autonomous region of China. Nepal shares a 1400-km border with China and a more than 1700km common, open border with India. When the Kodari highway, the only link with Tibet, was constructed in the sixties, India was said to be unhappy though it had not registered any formal complaint. Within a few months, Nepali Congress leader Subarna Shumsher, while in exile in India, raised arms against the then Panchayat regime.

Things may not be the same four decades down the road. With both China and India trying to improve relations, Nepal is bound to benefit from new developments, say analysts. "One should not look at great states like India and China in terms of their military strength only. Both India and China are emerging economies and must develop economic ties between them," said Yadav Kant Silwal, former secretary-general of SAARC. "The enhanced trade between India and China would also benefit Nepal. Moreover, this may indicate some shift in Indian perception."

Such shift is also evident in the recent proposal by Indian Premier A. B. Vajpayee to invite Pakistani military ruler, General Musharraf, to discuss the issue of Kashmir, among others. Though critics warn against too much optimism about the tete a tete between the two rivals expected to take place sometime late next month, the political significance of the meeting for the whole region could not be understated. "The state of Indo-Pak relations is very crucial for the entire

South Asia," said Silwal. "Though long-standing issues like Kashmir may not be resolved overnight, the very fact that General Musharraf and Vajpayee are going to talk directly is a quite significant development."

According to Silwal, given the supportive international situation and internal compulsions India and Pakistan can't harbor enmity against each other for long. "With menaces like international terrorism and drug trafficking shifting to South Asia from the central Asia and Middle East, India and Pakistan must come closer," said Silwal. "Culturally, linguistically and ethnically, South Asia is one. China knows it quite better and is behaving accordingly."

Indian ambassador Mukherjee also hoped that easing of tensions between India and Pakistan would help re-start the now stalled SAARC process. "Though I can't tell exactly when the summit will reconvene but I am sure it will take place soon," said the envoy. He also pointed toward different ministerial level meetings taking place under the SAARC umbrella.

The 11th SAARC Summit, due to be held in Kathmandu in November 1999, had been postponed at the request of India. Obviously, India did not want to share a forum with the military ruler of Pakistan. "Our commitment to democracy remains firm but it is in the interest of all to improve bilateral relations (between India and Pakistan)", Mukherjee explained.

Coming back to bilateral relations between Nepal and India, Mukherjee expressed hope that bor-

der disputes between the two countries would be resolved after a joint technical team completes its works by 2003. Reiterating his government's sensitivity toward anti-India activities from the Nepali soil, the envoy said there had been several cases of foreign diplomats caught in Kathmandu with fake currency notes and explosives. "So, all this is not only the creation of media," he added. He, however, did not say anything about the role of the Nepalese government in curbing such activities. Nepal has been saying that it will not allow its soil against any of its neighbors.

Responding to another question, the Indian envoy said India too was suffering from Maoist insurgency in the states including Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. "We hope Nepal will be able to resolve the problem internally," said Mukherjee. Nepali officials say Maoists here are receiving training and supplies from Nepal and have been making use of the common, open border to their best. The deployment of Royal Nepal Army personnel along the Nepal-India border is seen as a measure to cut off such channels the efficacy of which is yet to be assessed.

Analysts say Nepal's geo-political situation would continue to give her strategic importance in the region. No leadership in Nepal can commit the folly of playing one neighbor against the other to fulfill its vested interests. But as long as major military powers in the region continue to flex their muscles for military and political supremacy, instability in this Himalayan kingdom is least likely to subside, they say.

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# EVEREST EXPEDITION Spring Of Records

Mount Everest summiteers have returned to the base camp with a bagful of firsts

By A CORRESPONDENT

Although the current mountaineering season kicked off with depressing news, it has witnessed some positive developments. At the outset of the season, on April 29, Babu Chhiri, the 35-year-old Sherpa from Solukhumbu district, died after he fell 200m down a crevasse at the Base Camp II, situated at an altitude of 6,500m, while taking pho-



**Mountaineer Temba :** Perseverance pays

tographs, his second passion after climbing mountains.

This year's mountaineering season sprung many records, including the first climb by a blind person, the youngest and oldest mountaineer, the first father-son conquer and the first Nepali woman to climb the mountain twice.

Temba Chhiri, the 16-year-old boy

who lost four fingers of two hands last year during his failed attempt, succeeded in setting foot on the summit this year, becoming the youngest person to do so.

Sherman Bull, a physician from Connecticut, became the oldest person to climb Everest. The 64-year-old American also shared another record by conquering the mountain along with his son, Bradford, 37.

Another American citizen, Arrik Wainmair, became the first blind person to reach the Everest summit.

Lakpa Sherpa, the first Nepali woman to return alive from the Everest summit, made another record by climbing it for the second time this year. She has climbed the peak from both the Nepali and Tibetan sides.

After the first successful bid to the Everest summit by Tenzing Sherpa and Edmund Hillary, more than 2,000 climbers have scaled the world's tallest mountain.

If an individual has the determination to do something, nothing can hinder his way to achieve success. Temba Chhiri is the latest case in point.

Despite his physical weakness, the young Sherpa from Rolwaling Vil-

lage Development Committee of Dolkha district broke the record set by Sambhu Tamang 28 years ago when he reached the Everest summit at the age of 18.

Temba Chhiri decided to climb Everest after another Nepali teenager, Arbinda Timilsina, abandoned his attempt at the age of 14 just 28 meters below the summit because of bad weather.

Rolwaling Village Development Committee has produced many mountaineers who have set diverse records in climbing. Temba Chhiri grew up inspired by these stories and records set by the people from his neighborhood.

The determination of Temba Chhiri never died even when he lay on a bed at B&B hospital when an operation was performed to remove four of his fingers. A few hours after the surgery, when this scribe met him at his post-surgery room, Temba had expressed only one wish: to climb the Everest. ■

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### SPOTLIGHT

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GPO Box : 7256, Baluwatar

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# CIAA INVESTIGATION A Costly Fiasco

The charge-sheet filed by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) at the Lalitpur Appellate Court following its investigation into Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation's agreement to lease an aircraft from Austria's Lauda Air exhibits the CIAA's incompetence in conducting a criminal investigation. Despite an eight-month probe, the CIAA appears to have been unable to bring charges based on any substantial evidence of corruption and abuse of authority on the part of RNAC officials. Although the case is sub judice, the probe is based on narratives and make-believe stories rather than on sound investigation. The 47-page charge-sheet seems to be no more than a bundle of papers prepared to defame Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

By KESHAB POUDEL

**F**rom its preliminary investigation to the filing of the charge-sheet at Lalitpur Appellate Court on Friday, May 25, against 10 people in connection with Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation's agreement to lease an aircraft from Austria's Lauda Air, the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) seemed to be influenced more by media stories and political currents rather than by the rigors of criminal investigation.

According to defense lawyers, the

CIAA's charge-sheet represents no more than a bundle of reports full of contradictions and confusion with insufficient evidence to secure convictions against the 10 accused. "The charge-sheet is a legal fiasco, as it does not have the basic evidence to prove its charge," said advocate Sushil Panta, a defense lawyer. "It is simply a narration of events."

Because of delays in the probe and the glaring lack of legal minds in the CIAA, the country has had to face several rounds of political instability and disturbances. Although the CIAA report does not contain legal arguments that could

stand in court, it does provide ammunition to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's rivals. Specifically, it has helped the main opposition communist party, the CPN-UML, at a time when its one-point street campaign to oust Koirala was fizzling out.

More than exposing corruption and checking abuse of authority, the report has set a very bad precedent in terms of constitutional and legal practice. The Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990 and the CIAA Act 1991 clearly lay down the commission's investigation duties and role. With the bad experience of the CIAA's all-powerful predecessor, which



CIAA : Corruption or commercial loss?

had the power to investigate, prosecute and judge, the framers of the present constitution limited its rights and left it to parliament to decide what powers should be allocated to the commission in the process of investigation.

During the investigation process, however, the CIAA seemed to be inspired by the arbitrariness of its predecessor. Article 98(4) of the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990 says: Subject to this constitution, other functions, duties, powers and procedures of the CIAA shall be as determined by law. Under this article, the authority of the CIAA is limited to the act and it leaves parliament to decide what type of authority it wants to hand over. (See Box)

Charge-sheet Against Accused" One cannot be punished on charges of loss and profit made in an organization of a business nature. In a commercial organization like RNAC, loss and profit are natural

features of regular operations. Increasing loss does not constitute criminality.

The CIAA can charge a person with corruption and misuse of authority if he or she commits a crime in making the aircraft deal and secures material and other benefits personally or for others. The CIAA is, however, silent on such key issues as how any commission was obtained and how the accused tried to manipulate the agreement for personal benefit. The commission has not specified the clauses of the agreement that have allegedly paved the way for irregularities. It has simply used high-sounding words against corruption.

The section of the law under which the charge-sheet has been framed should specifically mention the laws that have been violated. "Unless this is stated clearly in the charge-sheet, it is not possible to prove guilt. By just citing the clause or articles, one cannot prove guilt. One needs to submit evidence," said a lawyer.

Nepal's anti-corruption act doesn't envisage punishment for anybody for errors of judgment. There must be violation of the law knowingly, intentionally or wilfully with a view to securing monetary or any other material benefits for the person or for somebody else. According to the charge-sheet, none of the accused seems to have been found making any gain in terms of money and material from anybody.

The airline has lost money running an aircraft it leased. The chairman accused of contributing to such loss was suspended by the order of the CIAA itself. Had the executive chairman been allowed to con-

tinue in office to operate the aircraft, he might have created conditions leading to profit.

How much money was paid in commissions? Who were the recipients? These questions have not been answered in the charge-sheet. The accusations are based on the losses incurred by RNAC, not on commission paid and received. The loss has been calculated based on the costs incurred by RNAC just after the Lauda aircraft started flying.

The CIAA charge-sheet clearly shows that if it the aircraft had made profit, nobody would have been charged with corruption. "What happens if RNAC goes on to record a profit in remaining period of Lauda contract?" asks another defense lawyer on condition of anonymity.

If one accepts the CIAA's logic, profit would constitute no abuse of authority or corruption whatever the irregularities may have been committed before the operation. "Is this a standard of fixing criminal liability on any official?" asks another lawyer.

Although the CIAA charge-sheet is based on Clauses 7(1), 7(2), 8, 14 (a), 16 (a) and 29 of the Anti-Corruption Act 1961, it does not contain sound arguments to establish guilt. By applying this clause, the CIAA demanded compensation of Rs 38,097,6731 incurred by the RNAC from the 10 accused.

This figure represents the loss incurred by the RNAC in the first six months of the operation of the Lauda aircraft. It demands imprisonment of a maximum of six years to each of the accused persons with recovery of the lost money.

The CIAA charge-sheet demanded from the court to recover the loss amount proportionately from the accused. The commission filed the case against executive chairman Hari Bhakta Shrestha, board members Tirtha Lal Shrestha, Siddha Raj Joshi and Gaurinath Sharma for corruption committed under Clause 7.2 and demanded compensation and penalty for losses incurred by the RNAC under Clause 29.

In the case of executive chairman Shrestha, the CIAA has demanded additional punishment under Clause 14(a) of the act. It also charge-sheeted the chief executive officer of Lauda Air Andrea

Molineri of Italy and Otmar Lenz of Austria under the Clause 8 of the act.

In the case of former minister of culture, tourism and civil aviation Tarini Dutta Chataut, the CIAA has sought maximum punishment under Clause 7.1 and demanded the recovery of loss under Clause 29 of the act. For the employees of the RNAC, including Director of Finance Department Upendra Prasad Upadhyaya, acting chief of the Marketing Department Ram Raj Upadhyaya and officiating Corporate Director Pushkar Wagle, the CIAA has cited Clause 16(a). As for other six directors, the CIAA warned them to take care in future while performing the duties.

While filing the case, the credibility of the CIAA has come under question, especially in view of its failure to charge-sheet the agent for Lauda Air in Nepal, Dinesh Lal Shrestha. The CIAA's commissioners were split — three in favor and two against — on indicting the Lauda agent. Criminal law experts say that by not charging Shrestha, the CIAA has weakened its case and jeopardized its impartiality.

If the CIAA's standards in the Lauda Air case are applied to other government corporations, almost all executive chairmen would have to face the fate of the RNAC officials. In RNAC's case, how can the CIAA charge executive chairman Shrestha and his team when they were suspended just a month after the aircraft began flying?

The commission can seek the suspension of any civil servant under Clause 19(3) of the CIAA Act 1991, considering that the person may destroy evidence if he remained in office. However, how can Shrestha be held responsible for incurring losses when he was suspended by the government under the recommendation

of the CIAA?

#### Nepalese laws on corruption

Three elements must exist for an action constitute a crime under the Anti-corruption Act 1961: violation of law, obtaining money or material benefit, and loss to some institutions, public servants and other private persons if they act in collusion. The accusations need to stand in two layers of court, the appellate and Supreme Courts, before the accused receives imprisonment between two and six years or a fine or both. (See Box)

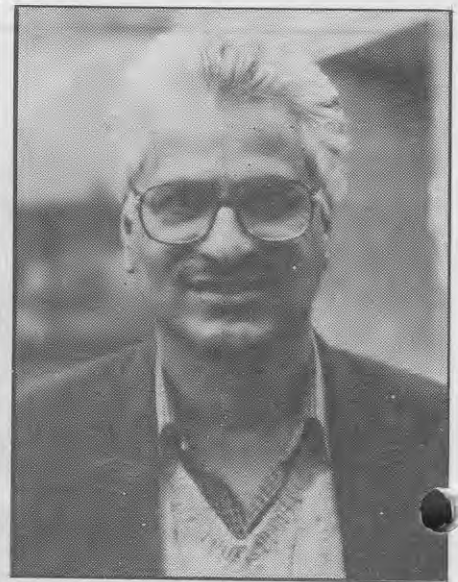
It is a very tough job to establish a case of corruption, as it requires minute investigation and expertise in the investigation process. The act does not consider it a crime if some individual commits a mistake unknowingly.

#### Contradictions Within CIAA

The past few months' working style of the CIAA shows that it can take any decisions and any action to undermine its constitutional and legal boundaries. In the Lauda Air deal, the commission itself indulged in constitutional and legal controversy.

If one observes the interviews and comments of the commissioners, contradictions are clearly visible. Within the commission, there seems to have been major differences over many issues. Even to acquit Lauda Air's local agent Dinesh Lal Shrestha, the commissioners were split. Commissioner Madhav Dutta Bhatta disclosed that until the last minute, four commissioners, including Chief Commissioner Surya Nath Upadhyaya, supported the decision to acquit Shrestha. But the chief commissioner decided to join Commissioner Krishna Ballav Kafle at the last minute.

From the very beginning of the Lauda investigation, the intention and actions of the CIAA seemed to have been influenced



Chataut : Vanishing act

by the opposition political parties and the media. The CIAA, for its part, made little effort to investigate corruption and abuse of authority in the process of obtaining the aircraft, spending most of its time looking for the possible involvement of the prime minister.

Former minister Chataut was said to be forced frequently by the investigation officer and commissioner Basudev Lamichane to implicate the name of Prime Minister Koirala. Commissioner Lamichane lent some credence to such reports when, speaking to journalists on May 25, he hinted at the involvement of the prime minister. Commissioner Bhatta adopted a different stand on the issue.

As the CIAA found itself influenced by political propaganda, it missed the real track of the investigation. Had it done its homework properly and conducted a thorough investigation, the CIAA would not have had to end up presenting a weak case relying on the losses incurred on operating the aircraft.

#### Politics to Drag Prime Minister

The CIAA seemed to have made all manner of efforts to drag Prime Minister Koirala into the case. When it failed to link Koirala, the commission accepted the changed statements of former executive chairman Hari Bhakta Shrestha and Tirtha Lal Shrestha, contrary to existing legal provisions and norms. The Shrestha duo's volte-face, which was said to have been

### What the RNAC Act says

Clause 13 of Chapter 3 of the RNAC Act says: Under this act or regulation prepared under this act, the duty, function and authority of the RNAC is to operate safe secure, reliable air service. It can use its authority to develop profitable air services providing possibly cheaper prices. By not going against the supremacy of authority under the (2) subclause (1), the corporation can exercise such authorities to operate air service or to fly aircraft and all kinds of operation of air service with business or other objectives.

inspired by Nepali Congress dissidents, was used as the plank to seek clarifications from Prime Minister Koirala.

When Koirala strongly challenged the jurisdiction of the CIAA and declared he would expose the "conspiracy" and "subversive actions" against him, the CIAA eventually withdrew from its effort to drag in the prime minister. But the commission still advised him to remain alert in future so that such incidents do not recur.

By seeking clarifications from the prime minister, the CIAA provided ammunition to Koirala's political rivals in the ruling party and outside. The three-day Nepal bandh was largely a by-product of the CIAA's immature and irresponsible action.

The press statements of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party and the six-party communist alliance prove the political motive of the CIAA stricture. "The CIAA stricture has shown the involvement of Prime Minister Koirala in the air scam. Morally, Koirala has to resign now," said a press statement issued by the Kamal Thapa, spokesman for the RPP. The CPN-UML expressed a similar view. "The CIAA has shown that Prime Minister Koirala is involved in the scandal," it said.

Koirala supporters are clearly infuriated by the intention of the stricture. "If the commission found Koirala's involvement in the case, why did it acquit him?" asked senior advocate Mukunda Regmi, one of the members of the Constitution Drafting Commission. "The commissioners' actions seem to have been inspired by politics, not by the constitution and rule of law. Otherwise they would not have asked such silly questions to the prime minister."

Under Clause 4(4) of the CIAA Act, policy decisions of the cabinet are excluded from the jurisdiction of the commission. But in the Lauda Air deal, the commission even encroached upon the jurisdiction of the cabinet. The first letter was issued under the Clause 19(1)b of the act asking the prime minister to help in investigation by clarifying certain facts and issues, which did not constitute a charge.

But in its final decision, the CIAA

said there was an offense of corruption committed by certain officials (not by the prime minister himself). How could the commission point an accusatory finger to the prime minister without giving him the opportunity to explain and defend himself? The CIAA's finding is on corruption but it points to the prime minister on improper conduct, which Article 98 of constitution does not permit. If the finding is correct, and the conclusion is wrong, that means the application of the law is wrong. If the law is correct, then the finding is wrong.

According to legal practice, the CIAA must come to a finding that some individuals committed certain misconduct. Then, the CIAA asks him to clarify giving

sufficient time to defend. Only after that can the CIAA pass such strictures. "In the prime minister's case, the CIAA has not done anything like that," said a close associate of Koirala.

"One of the fundamental principles of justice is that what one failed to do directly, one cannot do indirectly. When CIAA has failed to find any evidence against Koirala, they passed such an illegal and unconstitutional stricture damaging very authority of high office of the prime minister and scandalizing Koirala's political career," said a lawyer for the prime minister.

The CIAA cannot write a letter without conducting an investigation and finding facts on the question of mala-fide

## What Anti Corruption Act 1961 Says

**Clause 7.** Punishment and penalty for a civil servant whose actions help to procure illegal profit or loss with bad intention:

1. A civil servant in a government service himself or other persons with mal-intention of making illegal profit or in incurring illegal damage intentionally and wilfully to the country, the King and His Majesty's Government or government-owned cooperation shall be subject to punishment under this clause. Any civil servant who violates Nepal's law intentionally and wilfully, and wilfully and intentionally violates oath, agreement, terms with His Majesty, His Majesty Government or abuse of government facilities or abuse of authority or making material and benefits for self or makes efforts, is subject to punishment of between one and three years in prison.

2. A civil servant who is not in government service can be punished between six months and two years in prison for committing an offense under Clause 7.1.

**Clause 8.** Punishment and penalty for those persons who act with mal-intention to incur loss and to accumulate illegal profit:

A person, except a civil servant, who obtains illegal profit for himself or others through the country, His Majesty, His Majesty's Government or an officer under a government undertaking or partial undertaking or violates the condition of oath, agreement, contract, license, Letter of Credit, permit or makes an efforts or commits wilfully and intentionally abuse of authority can be imprisoned between three months and three years or fined, or both in accordance with the crime.

**14(A). Additional punishment:** A person is holding the position of an official of constitutional bodies, an official nominated or appointed by the king, a special class officer, head of the government undertakings, general manager or higher will receive a punishment of an additional five years to that allotted in the other clauses.

**16(a) Punishment for the attendant:** Under this clause, a person who is a supporter of the accused will receive half of the punishment committed by his mentor.

**29. Compensation and limitation of penalty:** Whatever is written in the other clauses of the act, if any person commits the crime punishable under Part 2 by taking illegal benefit for himself or other or incurs loss to others, the penalty should be recovered from such an individual. Unofficial Translation of the Anti-corruption Act 1961.



**Appellate Court :** Focus of attention

actions coupled with abuse of authority against the prime minister. The case investigated by the CIAA was entirely confined to abuse of authority related to corruption where the prime minister was never charged and never asked any questions.

The CIAA's activities have given a disciplined parliamentary party like CPN-UML an opportunity to call mass protests. The party, which boycotted the winter session of parliament, is already on the streets. "We will not abandon our agitation until Koirala resigns, whatever the cost the party has to pay," thundered CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal.

The commission does not see the stricture as an indictment. "We just forwarded the stricture to Prime Minister

Girija Prasad Koirala urging him not to pave the way for similar actions in the future," Commissioner Bhatta told journalists. "The commission has not found any evidence to prove Prime Minister Koirala's involvement."

#### **Irresponsible Politicians**

By evading arrest, former minister Chataut has proved how irresponsible politicians can be. Although most of the team members who supported his efforts to lease an aircraft were in prison Chataut found enough time to hide somewhere in the capital. Going to jail does not have an adverse political impact on the personality of the minister. Chataut has lost a major opportunity to prove his innocence.

It is said that senior RNAC executive officers were detained following the statement recorded by the executive chairman and board members. Even in their last written statement, executive chairman Shrestha and board member Shrestha who signed the agreement with Lauda Air urged the commission not to make them the scapegoats.

#### **Violation of Individual Freedom**

The CIAA has shown that it is an institution operating on arbitrariness, least bothered about human rights and rule of law. In its cases against the Shrestha duo, the CIAA demanded deposits of Rs 50 million each late in the night. When they failed to bring the money, the two were sent to prison.

In same manner, the CIAA sent police to the homes of former board mem-

bers Siddhi Raj Joshi, Gaurinath Sharma and senior RNAC officer Pushkar Wagle at 2am on May 25 to arrest them without warrants. They were kept at a police station until midday when the CIAA filed a case in Lalitpur Appellate Court.

"We don't know what happened to them," said Commissioner Bhatta, when reporters sought details on the circumstances of the arrest. But police sources revealed that the action was taken on the direction of the commission.

Even after filing the case at the Appellate Court, the commissioners chose to speak on a sub judice matter.

The CIAA drama on the Lauda deal shows how the country and people have to suffer by making an unaccountable body powerful. The CIAA's conduct in this case shows that it still has a hangover from the past when it ruined the country's best lot of politicians and bureaucrats, including former prime minister Dr. Tulsi Giri, Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa and Kul Sekhar Sharma, Devendra Raj Upadhyaya, Lok Bahadur Shrestha and others.

#### **Political Propaganda**

This act of omission and commission on the part of the CIAA has led to the belief that so-called Lauda corruption scandal was nothing but a political story aimed to destabilize the political process in Nepal.

The legal and constitutional competence of the CIAA is in serious doubt. As there is no place to seek justice for the injustices perpetrated by the CIAA, many individuals have had to go in detention. Although the CIAA ultimately filed a case in the court, the time and resources taken by the investigators ultimately proved to be futile. "It seems they were guided more by the media and political propaganda rather than by the need to institute efficient investigation techniques required for such white-collar crimes," observed a lawyer.

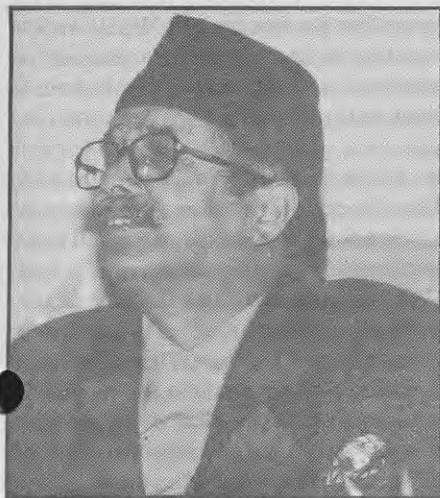
After leaking information to the press at each stage of the investigation process, the CIAA began prosecuting through the newspapers even before it filed a charge-sheet. The decision to charge the two Lauda Air officials without securing their presence in Nepal was a legal blunder. Sources said the two Lauda executives

were named in the charge-sheet because of certain personal grievances of one of the commissioner who had traveled all the way to Vienna in connection with the investigation. It was ridiculous to implicate two foreigners as respondents without mentioning any specific omission or commission on their parts.

"How can the CIAA indict the foreign citizens without securing their presence in Nepal and recording their statement. If these foreign citizens decide to prosecute concerned authorities on defamation, HMG may have to pay millions of dollars in compensation," one legal analyst said.

#### Loss to the RNAC

Because of the controversy over leasing aircraft, RNAC has already lost its international image. The situation now is that no one is ready to provide aircraft to the national flag carrier. Nobody knows the



**Upadhyaya** : Last-minute shift

motives of the CIAA and the Public Accounts Committee in probing the issue of aircraft leasing. The law is clear about the full autonomy of the RNAC in conducting its business, but why does the CIAA always draw the government into controversy?

Have not the CIAA's investigation and reinvestigation and the constant propaganda by the media and political opposition ruined the reputation of the RNAC? Who is going to take the responsibility and rescue RNAC from probable bankruptcy?

By indicting RNAC's senior officers and issuing warnings to other, the CIAA has pushed the RNAC into a position

### Under Article 98 of the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990, the functions, duties and powers of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority:

98(1) The commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority may, in accordance with law, conduct or cause to be conducted inquiries into, and investigations of, improper conduct or corruption by a person holding any public office: Provided that the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority shall not have jurisdiction over the following officials:

(a) Any official in relation to whom this constitution itself separately provides for such action: and (b) Any official to be prosecuted under the Army Act.

98(2). If the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority finds, upon inquiry or investigation carried out pursuant to Clause 1, that any person holding public office has misused his authority by improper conduct, it may admonish such person, or forward a recommendation to the concerned authority in writing for taking departmental or any other necessary action.

98(3) If the commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority finds, upon inquiry or investigation carried out pursuant to Clause 10, that a person holding any public office has committed an act which is defined by law as corrupt, it may bring or cause to be brought an action against such person or any other person involved therein in a court with jurisdiction in accordance with law.

98(4) Subject to this constitution, other functions, duties, power and procedures of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority shall be as determined by law.

where nobody will bear any kinds of risk and responsibility in the future. "After the recent case, we are relieved now by taking any kinds of responsibility and risk. I will never make any recommendation even if it will benefit RNAC," said a senior executive on condition of anonymity.

Although the commission prepared nine files consisting of 2,192 pages including a 46-page charge-sheet, they are no more than a legal and constitutional prank. The Lauda Air investigation has proved to be one of the country's most costly fiascos.

#### Bankruptcy of Legal Arguments

The indictment presented at the court is a mirror of legal and constitutional bankruptcy. At a time when the CIAA is locking horns with the Attorney-General's Office, the legal brain of the state, such legal and constitutional lapses are inevitable.

"The document produced before the court shows the bankruptcy of legal knowledge and drafting skills of the CIAA. The commission has three persons with legal background, including the chief commissioner who also held the post of member secretary of the commission that drafted the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal

1990," said an analyst.

"The document seems to be badly drafted and haphazardly narrated, having no relevance to the law regarding corruption and punishment. The commission declared that the accused officials have committed corruption by wilfully violating the laws of the country but there is no specific evidence on which laws have been violated," he said.

The CIAA press release, legal experts argue, can be considered as contempt of court. "As long as the investigation was going on, the CIAA commissioners were free to comment on anything about the case, but it was very unwise their part to hold a press conference and release a press statement. It became a sub judice matter after the submission of the case. If the law of contempt is strictly applied, would the commissioners be immune?" one legal analyst questioned.

In the end, the eight-month drama has produced little of value in curbing abuse of authority. By presenting a weak case, the CIAA has shifted the burden to the court and the government attorneys. If the Lauda Air case falters from here, the CIAA, as usual, will start blaming the court and government attorneys. ■

# 'The Problem Of Child Labor Is A Vicious Cycle'

— LEYLA TEGMO-REDDY

*LEYLA TEGMO-REDDY, country director of the International Labor Organization, has been working in Nepal for a year. Tegmo-Reddy, who joined the ILO in 1980, did her master's in development studies from the University of Geneva. Before her appointment in Nepal, she held various positions at ILO headquarters in Geneva. She also served as deputy director at the ILO's New Delhi office, which covers the India and Bhutan programs. Tegmo-Reddy spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues related to the work of ILO. Excerpts:*

## **How do you assess the programs run by the ILO in Nepal?**

We have a number of very well-received programs covering many key areas related to the world of work in the country and all targeting the attainment of "decent work". Decent work is what the ILO is promoting worldwide, it means work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. In Nepal, we have been working since 1995 on the elimination of child labor, and we are certainly a lead agency. There has been a lot of success in the sense that before 1995, there was very little awareness about child labor. Before you start a process of change, you really need to work, discuss and engage with people from the grassroots level to the top echelons of governments. This helps to make people provide their insights into a complicated issue and develop commitment and a sense of partnership. In addition, you need to design innovative programs and conduct different types of activities in order to be able to see the kind of things that work and those that do not. Based on our experience of the past six years, we are launching a major new Time-Bound Program that will focus particularly on the elimination of the worst forms of child labor (trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation, bonded child labour, ragpickers, domestic child labour, porters and children in the carpet industry and mining).

## **What are the worst forms of child labor?**

The ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, which was adopted by the International Labor Convention in 1999 and has already been passed by the cabinet, is in the process of ratification by parliament. The convention identifies different types child labor considered as "worst": trafficking, bondage, forced labor, using children for prostitution and pornography, and for illicit activities like drug trafficking. Nepal is one of the three pilot countries selected for the time-bound programs. The other two countries are Tanzania and El Salvador. Nepal has been selected because of

the commitment it has expressed both at the best practices conference that was held in Washington D.C. and at the International Labor Conference. We have been working very closely with partners in Nepal to identify the exact shape this program will take. We started the process by having regional conferences in the five development regions of Nepal that were supported by a gender-mainstreaming workshop. During consultations with District Development Committee officials, employers, trade unions and civil society, including NGOs, and other UN agencies like UNICEF, we identified some key strategies and focus areas and developed a partnership approach, because the ILO cannot do this job alone. We received full commitment from all actors. For the first time in Nepal, we also conducted qualitative and quantitative research on five sectors defined as worst forms of child labour as well as research on legislation, poverty, education and best practices.

We then had individual meetings with the trade unions and employers and a national stakeholders' consultation with some 100 participants from all walks of life. A programming mission is arriving in mid-June and will include specialists from ILO's headquarters in Geneva and our Regional Office in Bangkok to supplement our own specialists here. They are going to define the specifics of the program including exactly which districts should be targeted based on the criteria established at the stakeholders' consultation. The program will start in a few months.

## **As you have been working here for a year, how do you see the child labor problem in Nepal?**

It's a serious problem. One of the key issues that is raised is that children work because of poverty. But child labor also perpetuates poverty as child workers start working at a young age which stunts their development and robs them of their future. As adults it is difficult for them to find a productive job, or "decent work", as they are either illiterate or have limited schooling. It is a vicious cycle as the children of former child workers have to face similar realities. The ILO wants to stop this vicious cycle and we have learned many lessons in our past years on what works.

## **There is a feeling among some Nepalis that western donor countries exaggerate the child labor issue. How do you look at this perception?**

Judging from my contacts, I'd say that Nepalis would like to see healthy and educated children and they see their children as holding the future of this beautiful country. I think sometimes there might be

*"In Nepal, we have been working since 1995 on the elimination of child labor, and we are certainly a lead agency. There has been a lot of success in the sense that before 1995, there was very little awareness about child labor."*



some confusion about the difference between helping at home while going to school and work that is hazardous and tedious and prevents a child from having a childhood. Helping within a family for a few hours a day and going to school is all right. If schooling could be adjusted so that children could help during the peak agriculture season, as often important to families, that would be good as long as the children are not allowed to do harmful jobs such as spraying dangerous chemicals and pesticides or carrying heavy loads and that they don't have to work too many hours.

Helping parents for couple of hours is a part of socialization. But when one prevents children from going to school and forces them to do harmful work, then it turns into exploitation of the child. Children are sometimes used because they are less apt to ask for decent remuneration and yet there is much unemployment and underemployment of adults.

**So many child laborers have been evacuated from the carpet factories. Are you supporting the process of rehabilitation of such children?**

We are working very closely in rehabilitating children from the carpet sector and giving them non-formal education to enable them to enter formal schooling or have other options, as well as linking them back to their parents through counselling and other efforts. The organized sector is now dealing with the issue well, but there are still child labor problems in the informal sector. We are working to reach out to these children. In fact, carpet factory owners in Nepal have become aware about the problems of child labor and are working hard. Consumers abroad are also pressing them.

**There are many national and international organizations working in the area of child labor. What makes your programs different?**

Maybe I should start by saying that we are working together with many of these organizations. The ILO has a broad experience in child labour elimination programmes, using a variety of different approaches. We are working with trade unions, employers and the government as well as NGOs and the workers. We are also working closely with UNICEF and other UN organizations. But there is a need for even better collaboration. We are now mapping the areas where various agencies are working, both geographical and in terms of approaches, to strengthen our partnerships and programs for the benefit of the thousands of Nepalese children who are trapped in the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

**What is your experience working with local NGOs?**

We work very closely with local-based organizations, including NGOs. We have implemented about 70 action programs in collaboration with the local organizations and have seen positive results and commitment. In addition to the NGOs, trade unions and FNCCI, we are also working closely with the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Women, Children



and Social Welfare. We are also working with the Ministry of Land Reform and Management on the Kamaiya issue. We are now closely looking at developing new rehabilitation, counselling and reintegration approaches. One key focus area is on children trafficked for sexual exploitation. These are children who face extremely difficult situations. Rehabilitation has to focus on the individual and training for a future has to be linked to the demands of the market, otherwise reintegration into society will be difficult.

**As country director of the ILO, how do you see the performance of your office?**

I am very satisfied with the performance of the organization in Nepal. Our staff are very technically capable and efficient in developing and running programs and are a true pleasure to work with.

**What other programs are you involved in?**

We work closely with the trade unions and employers organizations to strengthen their capacities and to promote partnerships in development, or what we call promoting "social dialogue". We have programs on rationalizing vocational training, youth self-employment. Start and Improve Your Business, occupational safety and health and on the rehabilitation of former Kamaiyas. We are also working on the economic empowerment of women.

**Following the restoration of democracy, we have seen many disputes between trade union leaders and industry owners. Do you have any specific programs to end such conflicts?**

We have a number of programs such as a project on tripartism and social dialogue in action, where for the time being we have been working at the enterprise level. Now we are going to the sectoral and geographical levels and will undertake actions at the national level with our partners in the government, trade unions and FNCCI. While seeking to promote good relations, we need to see more trust. I think through discussion and dialogue so many industrial problems can be resolved, or even better, avoided. ■

*"Helping parents for couple of hours is a part of socialization. But when one prevents children from going to school and forces them to do harmful work, then it turns into exploitation of the child."*

## BHARATNATYAM

# Dances With A Depth

The Royal Nepal Academy hall echoed with lyricism, symmetry, sinuosity, precision, and poetry on May 25

BY AKSHAY SHARMA

“**T**he ticket already says ‘no photographs allowed’,” the security officer told SPOTLIGHT at a program entitled “A Bharatnatyam recital” at the Royal Nepal Academy hall on May 25. This cautionary note was perhaps also meant as a statement on the excellence of artiste Alarmel Valli’s caliber.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations has been organising various cultural programs like this. Previous shows featured such artistes as Zakir Hussain and Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasiya, making the series a class of its own.

The audience acclaimed Valli for her exquisite dances that evening. Amrita Singh, a dancer, said, “fascinating” when asked how she liked the item that was put on.

“She is the foremost exponent of Pandanllur tradition in Bharatnatyam. She is also hailed as a creative artiste, who brings to every one of her items depth, intensity and naturalness,” said Jolly Silwal, a Bharatnatyam fan.

“She not only is a paragon in the circle of dance lovers. She also the essence of the subject dance as well,” Silwal added.

Trained by the renowned father-and-son duo, Shri Chokkalingam Pillai and Shri Subbaraya Pillai, Valli’s performance suggests that she has enriched, extended and paved new paths on the frontiers of her dancing tradition.

Her style is unique and has been literally called “an effortless synchronization of apparent contradictions: linearity and lyricism, symmetry and sinuosity, precision and poetry.”

“The images will stick in my eyes forever,” said Poonam Risal, another dance lover.

The highlight of any Bharatnatyam recital is that the “vernám” combines the

two most important aspects of Indian dance — Naritta (abstract technique) and Abhinaya (expressive delineation).

The rhythmic sequence of great intricacies and variety alternate with expressive passage, interpreted by the dancers with hand gestures called (hastas). The theme is initially rendered in its literal sense. Then, step-by-step the dancer develops, elaborates and embroiders with



**Danseuse Valli:** Flowering performance

the theme by drawing freely on her own imagination and creativity, to make the subject come alive.

Though essentially a love poem, it signifies that the vernám can be interpreted at two levels — the physical and spiritual. The heroine is not only the woman yearning for her beloved but also a devotee of the Lord. The inner essence of vernám is thus a philosophical one.

In this vernám, the heroine speaks of her love for Lord Shiva and tells her friends that she yearns for a glimpse of her be-

loved, Lord Nataraja. So intricate and intense, she sees him everywhere in her longings. In the splendid and spectacle of the rising sun, she sees him as the cosmic dancer, with whose rhythms the Universe comes into being.

In the darkness of the rain clouds, she sees him as Neelakantha. This is the myth that describes the churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons, using Mount Mantara as the churn and the serpent Vasukhi as the rope. Divine Goddess and wondrous objects emerged from the ocean. But there also arose a deadly poison that threatened to engulf the whole world. Lord Shiva swallowed the poison to save the world; hence, he became known also as Neelakantha as his throat turned blue. Because when Parvati, his consort, his throat in a desperate attempt to prevent him from doing so.

Valli’s other item was the water song (The nectar of life). The dance was composed for the festival of dance soloists as a part of the Venice Biennale in October 1999. The poem, written for the occasion, uses water as a metaphor for the journey of life. Beginning with the birth of rain through the union of the sun and the ocean, and their child the cloud maiden with the wind god. With the rain there comes the image of splashing, leaping mountain streams, skipping lightly along like a merry young girl, then of the broad, plentiful river, like a comely woman clothed in flowers. Both blend into the image of the waters that make hills of valleys and valleys of hills.

The water ebb and flow like knowledge and wisdom, joy and sorrow, loss and gain that make up the fabric of human life. As mortals evolve spiritually and seek union with the Supreme, so do the waters give to the life to the earth, merge with the vast ocean and rise as vast veils vapors, and complete the cycle of life.

The fourth item was “Unnuneer Vikkinaán” — a poem from the Kalithogai, an anthology of poetry of the sangam era, which goes back to some 200 years that is considered the golden era of Tamil literature and poetry. The poem captures the first stirring of romantic feelings in a young girl. The transition from childhood to adolescence. Ironically, the handsome young man who now attracts her is no other than the tormenting little scapegrace of her

childhood days. She confides to her friend "Do you remember the little rouge that used to torment us so, snatching flowers from our hair, destroying the sand castles we built and running away with the stripped ball we used to play with?"

"The other day, my mother and I heard a stranger at the door, asking for a drink of water. 'Take to him in this golden goblet,' said my mother and unsuspecting I went along. Suddenly the stranger caught my hand in a grip that hurt. 'Ma' I cried out, 'just see what he has done!' And she came running out in alarm.

"But then I recognized him — that rogue! 'He choked while drinking so I cried out to you,' I said, trying to shield him from my mother's anger. And, while she stroked his and patted his back in concern, that mischievous wretch shot provoking glances at me and made me laugh."

The fifth item was "thilana" which was a joyous sequence of pure dance and movements, which combines complex and intricate footwork with varied rhythmic patterns and was a "fitting finale to the Bharatnatyam performance. As it is with the vernam, there are many thilanas composed in different ragas or melodies and different talas or time measures.

Valli studied from the eminent musician T. Muktha, of the renowned Shanammal's School of Music. Valli explores the ideal of dance, as a visual music — to express the distinction between the literal translations of lyrics into body language and the mature evolved transmutation of music into movement.

As a critic writes, "An Alarmel Valli or Suzanne Farrel can literally embody infinite subtleties of the emotions, intricacies of design, glimpses of the divine. They can, momentarily at least, wrench the order out of chaos."

Valli who has won her laurels several times over major cultural festivals in other parts of the world has added another feather on her crown here. She was accompanied by Lata Ramchand (vocals), C.K. Vasudevan (Nattuvangam), M. Shaktivel (Mridangam), Sitaram Sharma (Violin), G. Raghuraman (flute), Gautam Bhattacharya (lights). Indian Ambassador Dev Mukarji provided the photographs to us. ■

## PHOTOGRAPHY

# Images Of Change

Young Nepali photographers are coming into an arena dominated by an older generation

BY AKSHAY SHARMA

**W**e all enjoy taking and looking at photographs once in a while. With improved quality of cameras and films, the professional job of a previous generation is within the reach of today's amateurs.

Photography has long been an amalgamation of art and science. The technology and the setting may change, but the end product still depends on the finesse with which these attributes are blended. "A conceptual diagram of the moment a subject is recorded on color film. Light from the multi-colored subject passes through three layers of light-sensitive material on the film: the top layer is sensitive only to the other part of the subject, the next layer is sensitive only to the second part," says Purba Lama, of Express Studios, New Road.

"While the third layer is sensitive only to the third layer. When the film is developed, their respective complementary colors of yellow, magenta and cyan are produced. This is the color negative," he explains.

A color negative, therefore, does not give us true color representation. Further work is required before we can fully admire our photograph. When light passes through the color negative and on to the color print, three light-sensitive layers on the print work in a similar way to layers on the color film.

Thus, when the print is developed, the complementary colors of the colors in the negative are produced. "This gives a positive image," says Rajendra Shrestha of Bajra Art Studios in Putali Sadak.

Young Nepali photographers are coming into an arena dominated by an older generation. Asked what future he sees for emerging Nepali photographers, Ashesh Dangol, a member of "The Neo-Generation", says, "If you want to be a professional and pursue the field seriously, there is definitely a bigger scope in photography today."

Ashesh adds: "Photographers in Nepal

do not take their work seriously. And the general public would rather just snap away with automatic cameras and hang then on the wall instead of buying photographs these days."

"I have been taking photography seriously for one and half years after the team was registered," he says.

"The Neo-Generation" also includes Prashanta Shrestha, Kishor Maharjan, Kusal Bajracharaya, Chandra Man Maharjan, Manil Shahi and Bhuwan Bhochibhoya.

Asked what drew him to photography, Ashesh says, "My brother was very interested in photography. My father had bought my elder brother a Pentax camera. I can't remember the model. That was the first camera that I used."

"I admired my brother's photographs, especially his night photography. Even when I was in school, I used to spend all my lunch money on buying postcards," he remembers. "At first 50 percent of my photographs was spoilt. But one learns from experience. I remember I used to use a Rollei camera."

Rollei has certain features that are quite unique compared to other cameras. It's fully manual and the flash is attached at the bottom of the camera, unlike other ones that have their flashes on top.

"I always used to admire my elder brother's photographs and wonder how he shot them. My target is to do something for Nepal besides enhancing my own skills," Ashesh told SPOTLIGHT. "Photos help give us the true insight to Nepali culture. Our culture seems to be disintegrating. The panoramic scenes of Nepal are truly worth being photographed."

Today more people are using the camera in many more ways than, say, 10 years ago. Experts suggest than nine out of

ten people handling the camera are either convinced of their artistic bearings, or are professional photographers or are confident of the potential photographers lurking behind them. ■

# DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE Evolutionary Nature

Prominent experts discuss the enormity of the challenge of democratization

By KESHAB POUDEL

In the decade since the restoration of democracy in Nepal, hundreds of books and articles have been published on underpinnings of pluralistic governance as well as different methods of achieving the objectives enshrined by the constitution. Whatever intellectuals and political pundits say about the current state of democracy, our institutions have their own way of operating. This realization is vital to advancing the debate on our democratic future.

Democracy is a long process that presupposes certain inherent qualities for success. However, many of our intellectuals and politicians seem to have little patience for the process of social evolution to unfold.

Instead of acknowledging the ground realities of our context, many experts and analysts want to teach lessons on the values of democracy and good governance as if it were an overnight process. After publishing books and articles, many intellectuals tend to consider their job complete.

Actually, democracy is an ongoing process of debate and discussion on different issues among various segments of society. Instead of making constructive suggestions on ways of bolstering our democratic pillars and learning from the pitfalls, most academic writings tend to single out the government for criticism.

This book is compilation of papers and proceedings of the discussions at a recent seminar on Nepal's decade-long experience with democracy. While some of the articles are highly thought provoking, others seem to have assumed an air of formality.

An important strength of this book is that it contains some very interesting articles written by prominent personalities at forefront of Nepal's current democrati-

***A Decade of Democracy in Nepal***  
 Edited by Achyut Bahadur Shrestha,  
 Sachinanda Srivastav and Indra Prasad  
 Pokharel  
 Published by Study Center for Good  
 Governance and Democracy and Friedrich  
 Ebert Stiftung  
 Pages: 245

zation process. From the creation of a democratic culture to the basic tenets of the constitutional debate on good governance, the scope of the analysis is comprehensive.

As a non-government organization supported by all national political parties, the center has tried to prove that its functions and role are different than those of other groups. The basic question the book asks is: how successful have we been in our quest to bring meaningful change?

Nepal's experience has shown that changing the constitution alone is not enough to bring changes in the behavior of people. Far-reaching change requires properly functioning basic institutions and a clear tradition of upholding the validity and pace of change. When democracy was restored in 1990, few people had real-

ized that democratization would turn out to be such a long process. The current disenchantment with the political system is just a reflection of the lapses bred by expectations raised primarily by the newly ascendant leadership.

Eminent constitutional lawyer Ganesh Raj Sharma, advocates Bharat Raj Upreti and Ram Chandra Bhattarai, political scientist Dr. Ganga Bahadur Thapa, journalists Ram Pradhan and Jan Sharma, and former secretary Dwarika Nath Dhungel have contributed articles to the volume.

Achyut Bahadur Shrestha, Rajbhandary, Shailendra Sigdel and Ghana Nath Ojha, Pawan Kumar Ojha and Mihir Kumar Thakur present cogent views on various issues. Journalist Dhruba Adhikary and Dr. Govinda Koirala discuss salient features of the problems and prospects of our democratization process.

At a time when the national mood is gripped by deepening cynicism and gloom, the book helps to identify the challenges to democratic governance in Nepal and explains the evolutionary nature of the process. ■

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By M.S.KHOKNA



**TRANSITION**

**LEFT: Keshav Sthapit**, mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan Corporation, for Shanghai, China, to take part in a meeting of mayors from the Asia Pacific region.

**RETURNED: Murali**

**Manohar Joshi**, Indian Union Minister for Human Resources Development, after a short visit to Nepal.

**ARRESTED: Hem Narayan Yadav**, UML MP, by police, on charge of manhandling the district education officer of Siraha district and vandalizing the office. He was released later.

**SUCCEEDED:** A seven-member expedition team of the Indian army, in scaling Mount Everest.

**AWARDED: Temba Chhiri Sherpa**, the youngest Everest, with the Pasang Lhamu Outstanding Youth Award, by the Pasang Lhamu Mountaineering Academy, for

his unique feat.

**DEPLORED:** His Majesty's Government of Nepal, the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan, for enforcing the minority Afghan Hindus to wear yellow identification marks, saying that would trigger further communal discrimination.

# 'We Have Been Providing Efficient Service With Our Limited Resources'

—Dr. RAM PRASAD SHRESTHA

*Dr. RAM PRASAD SHRESTHA, director of Bir Hospital, has made major efforts to improve the country's oldest hospital during the last one-and-half years. Shrestha, a surgeon who has worked for more than three decades in hospitals in different parts of the country, spoke to SPOTLIGHT about his experience in Bir Hospital. Excerpts:*

## **How do you assess your performance as director of Bir Hospital?**

Well, when I took over this responsibility, I accepted it as a challenge. I expected to get all-out support from various sectors to perform my duty. I have been able to gain much-needed support. I have worked for more than 30 years in this sector. My professional journey started from a health center which took me to a district hospital, zonal hospital, regional hospital and now to my current position. I accepted this position because I felt I could put my experience to good use.

## **How do you find the response of your colleagues and government officials?**

I feel encouraged by all my colleagues and the ministry. I am very grateful to all of them for their valuable support. Over the past few years, there have been various flaws in the system. From sanitation to discipline, everything has declined. It is not easy to be director of Bir Hospital, as there are many challenges and problems. I do not want to analyze all kinds of elements but I am making efforts to make this hospital a more credible and efficient institution.

## **Patients see tremendous improvements in the hospital management. How do you evaluate the changes that have taken place over the last year?**

I am not the person to judge the changes in the hospital. I am happy to know that patients realize there have been changes. All I can say is that I am making efforts to improve the situation.

## **What are the challenges before Bir Hospital at present?**

We have many problems and challenges. One of the major challenges is the lack of beds. The main building of the hospital, with

a capacity of 300 beds, was built 32 years ago with assistance from USAID. In the last 32 years, we have added only 90 beds. In 32 years, the country's population has doubled — and the population of Kathmandu valley has increased by many hundreds times — but the capacity of Bir Hospital has not expanded. For rich people, there are many hospitals inside the country and outside. The Bir Hospital is serving the poor strata of the people from inside the valley and outside.

## **How congested is the hospital?**

Annually, more than 4,000,000 people visit the outpatients department and 60,000 attend the emergency unit. From simple to major surgeries, the hospital has a caseload of 5,000 a year. Because of low capacity and lack of facilities, we are unable to provide services to all. This is disappointing.

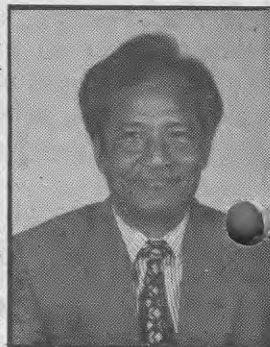
## **What is the annual income of the hospital?**

As you know, Bir Hospital is a government hospital. So there is no question of making a profit. We have to provide 320 beds for the poor free of cost. Only 18 percent of the bed, or 70, are payable. Patients on free beds do not have to pay anything for medicine and meals. In such a situation, either we need adequate government subsidies or have to search for other ways of raising resources. Bir hospital is a service-oriented organization to provide medical facilities for the poor strata of the population.

## **What facilities have been added during your tenure as director?**

I have made small efforts to make changes in the hospital. We have already started extrapulmonary and pulmonary services and DOTS service to TB patient. The medical gastroenterology unit has started opening every day. A female ortho ward has opened with eight beds. New facilities have been added in the pediatric ortho bed. In general surgery of female ward, 12 beds have added. In the post-operation ward, we have put monitors and with high-dependency bed. I am very proud to say that the doctors and surgeons in the hospital performed an open-heart surgery and valve replacement and coronary artery bypass sur-

gery. This is one of the major achievements of Bir Hospital. We have also introduced auto-analyzer equipment in the blood test. For kidney transplant, we have already sent the



technical regulation to the Health Ministry. A CT scanner has already been shipped from Japan, which we expect to arrive very soon.

## **What about the acute burn ward?**

For the last four years, because of many reasons, the acute burn ward could not be completed. The building of the acute burn ward is now nearing completion.

## **How do you view the frequent strikes in the hospital? Won't this damage its credibility?**

Such frequent strikes are unfortunate and disturb our efforts. During the recent strike called by nurses, we were able to reach an early compromise.

## **What is the status of the proposal to develop Bir Hospital as a post-graduate institute?**

A detailed study has already been made to establish a postgraduate institute in Bir Hospital. We have already presented the proposal to the ministry, which has given us a positive response.

## **What do you need to do to improve the overall situation at Bir Hospital?**

In the last one year, I have made many efforts to improve the physical, economic and other conditions at the hospital. I have seen some positive signs. However, it is not adequate. One of the major achievements of the hospital is that we are gradually gaining our earlier reputation and credibility. At a time when all other hospitals and health foundations are operating on bigger budgets than Bir Hospital, we have been able to provide efficient service. This is a major achievement. ■

*Now In Town*

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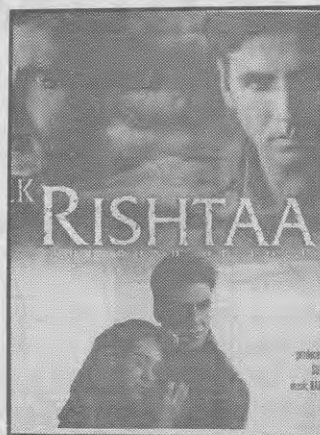
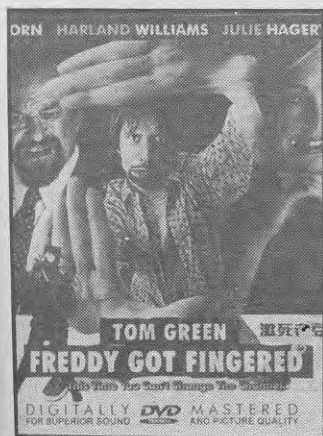
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- One Night MC. Cool's
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- Driven
- Secret
- Say It Isn't So
- Tom Cats
- Cast Away
- Freddy Got Fingered



**Hindi**

- Ek Rishtaa
- Albela
- Jodi No. 1
- Pyar Tune Kya Kiya
- Rahul
- Kasoor
- Daman
- Chori Chori Chupke Chupke
- Jlghan
- One 2 Ka 4

(Source : Super Star Video, New Road)



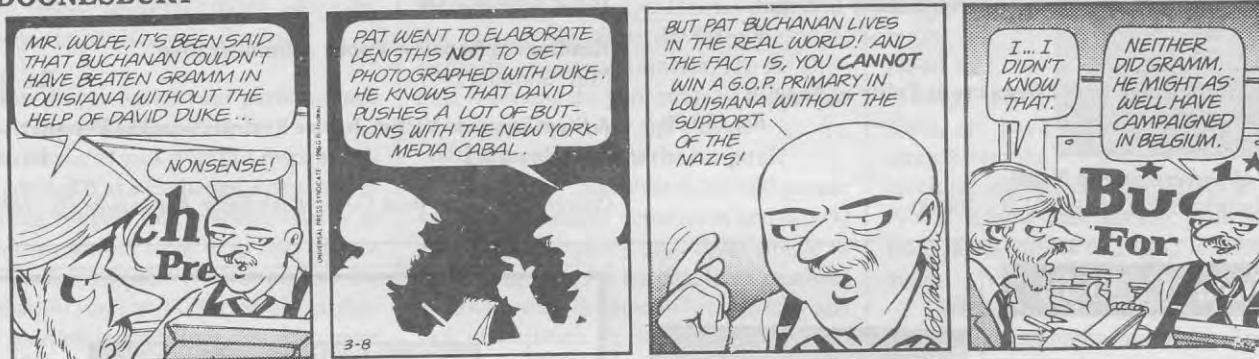
"Do not yearn for physical joy and, by so doing, discard the more permanent joy of inner calm and contentment."

- SATHYA SAI BABA

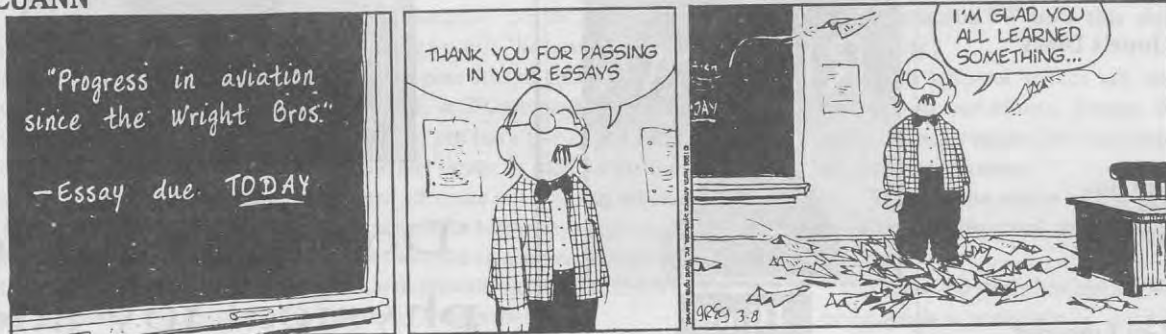
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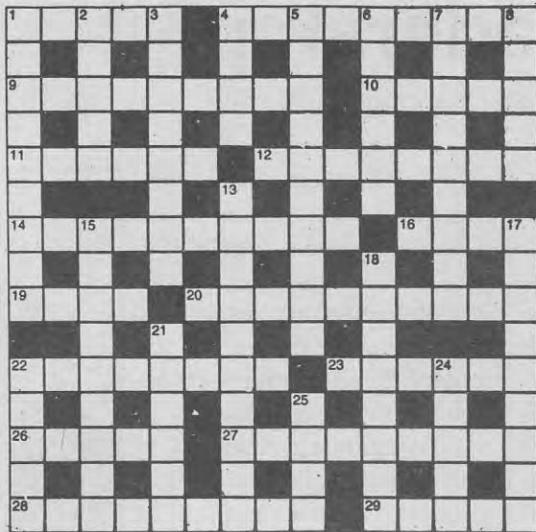


JUDGE PARKER





# CROSSWORD



## ACROSS

1. Governor associated with tyrannical power (5)
4. Ill-shaven bum in state capital (9)
9. Consider covering pit over at front of former cinema (9)
10. Port — a little drop given to Rear Admiral (5)
11. Insect found hawthorn sharp (6)
12. Fish source in London location (8)
14. Call one in rocket base (10)
16. Incentive to work nowdays (4)
19. Leave be, not having succeeded (4)
20. Background notes? (5,5)
22. Run down? Halitosis might be a sign of it (8)
23. Fury as a colleague reader rejects first bit of research (6)
26. Haircuts — short back and sides? (5)
27. A special tour abroad ending in Provence — via this? (9)
28. Bad publicity when Tony conningly takes in almost all Conservatives (9)
29. Audibly state American chap (5)

1. The result of a domestic shooting (4,5)
2. Broadcast in on song (5)
3. Bird soars up over obstructions and drops (8)
4. River that rises in Darjeeling (4)
5. Dart kept by scout leader as a weapon (3-7)
6. Exotic vindaloos, not convenience food (6)
7. Scold us for shurring and appearing randy (9)
8. Game's up — one's received the message on-screen (1,4)
13. Band accepts endless ribbing? That's entertainment! (10)
15. Meaning of political spokesman's words? A bit wel, but deep underneath (9)
17. Qualified woman loves going round court wearing costume (9)
18. I'm getting pennies, pounds and gold sovereign as a beggar (8)
21. Reveille made soldier get up and exercise night? (6)
22. Refuse to delare weapon (5)
24. Please go like a steam train! (5)
25. Elizabeth going topless for a painter (4)

**Across:** 1. Herod 4. Nashville 9. Multiplex 10. Accra 11. Mayfly 12. Shadwell 14. Visitation 16. Goad 10. Exit 20. Piped music 22. Badmouth 23. Alecto 26. Trims 27. Autoroute 28. Notoriety 29. Rufus  
**Down:** 1. Home movie 2. Relay 3. Driblets 4. Nile 5. Six-shooter 6. Viands 7. Lecherous 8. E-mail 13. Striptease 15. Spindrift 17. Doctoress 18. Implore 21. Rouser 22. Baton 24. Chuff 25. Ety

## SOLUTION

# BRIDGE

**NORTH** 3-9  
 ♠ 3 2  
 ♥ A Q 10 3  
 ♦ 6 3 2  
 ♣ 8 6 5 4

**WEST**      **EAST**  
 ♠ J 9 8 5      ♥ —  
 ♥ K 8 5 2      ♦ J 9 7 6 4  
 ♦ 10 9 5      ♠ A Q J 8  
 ♣ J 9      ♣ Q 10 3 2

**SOUTH**  
 ♠ A K Q 10 7 6 4  
 ♥ —  
 ♦ K 7 4  
 ♣ A K 7

Vulnerable: Both  
 Dealer: South

The bidding:  
 South West North East  
 2♣\* Pass 2♦\*\* Pass  
 2♠ Pass 2NT\*\*\*Pass  
 4♣ All pass  
 \*Artificial and forcing  
 \*\*4-7 HCP  
 \*\*\*Balanced without three spades

Opening lead: Diamond 10

**“Good or bad fortune usually comes to those who have more of the one than the other.”**

— La Rochefoucauld

Today's interesting duplicate deal brought good fortune to some, bad luck to others. Success of failure rode with how declarer handled his bad breaks.

West led his diamond 10 to East's ace, and East returned the queen. South won his king and tried trumps, East's discard bringing bad news. Added to the horrible trump development was South's heart void. Apparently South has to cope with a trump loser and three minor-suit losers.

Those who relied on hopes of a defensive error were not rewarded. They played four rounds of trumps, giving West his natural trump trick. West led a diamond to East's jack, and East switched to a fourth-best club deuce. Knowing South held seven spades, three diamonds and three clubs, West "saw" South's heart void. And when South ran the trumps, West warned partner to hold clubs by discarding his heart king. Eventually, South conceded a club, sending the game one down.

The successful declarers adopted a legitimate line of play. Instead of continuing in trumps, they conceded a diamond at trick four. East won and shifted to the same club deuce. However, barring a falsecard, this time South had the count. It didn't matter whether East's club deuce was truthful or not — South's only chance rested with West's holding five minor-suit cards. So South cashed his black-suit winners and gave West his trump trick. West had to lead a heart to South's "dead dummy," and South made the best of his luck — both good and bad. ■

# Print Media: Changing Character And Readership

By YUBA RAJ PANDEY

If people were asked to prepare their own lists of sectors that have developed the most in the 11 years since the restoration of multiparty democracy, journalism would perhaps top most of them. The size, shape, scope and significance of journalism in Nepal appear to have been changed during these years. The total number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals registered has increased by more than 150 percent. Broadsheet daily newspapers from the private sector are the new features of contemporary journalism. FM radio stations and private TV channels are also new elements of the modern media. The print media sector has emerged as an important source of employment for the well-educated. This sector has also started attracting the money of businessmen and industrialists. Journalism is transforming itself into a form of industry in our country.

This transformation has brought about many changes in journalism trends. Some years ago, people used to read weekly newspapers to keep abreast of current events. Nowadays, they have begun to read daily newspapers, especially the broadsheet newspapers brought out by the private sector. Most of the weekly newspapers in Nepal are known for their political alignments. Out of 10 major weekly newspapers in Group A according to the recent classification made by the Audit Committee of Circulation, nine are believed to be supporters of specific political parties or views. The situation is not much different in case of the other weekly newspapers. That is why most readers of a specific weekly newspaper happen to be supporters the specific political ideology the publication espouses.

More specifically, if a weekly newspaper appears close to a specific political party, people close to that party prefer to read that newspaper, while people supporting other political parties often avoid it. Very few weekly newspapers command a readership transcending party affiliations.

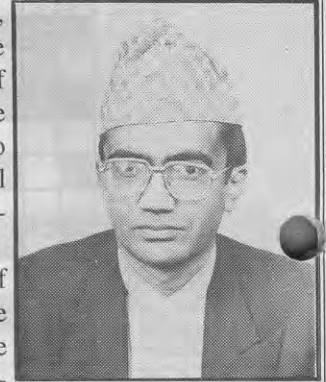
This leads us to the conclusion that people prefer to read daily newspapers for news and weekly newspapers for political analysis and comments. However, broadsheet daily newspapers also include opinion pieces that analyze political views and events and put them in perspective. This has created a special situation that makes readers unable, to some extent, to find the difference between daily and weekly newspapers. This similarity has become a great threat to the existence of weekly newspapers. Newspaper readers in Nepal are gradually clustering around daily newspapers, especially private-sector broadsheet papers. According to a study, total newspaper circulation in Nepal is about half million a day. The daily newspapers cover nearly half of this circulation. However, daily newspapers represent fewer than twenty percent of the total newspapers

published in the country. Thus, less than twenty percent of the publications attract about half of the total readership. The struggle of eighty percent of newspapers to attract the other half of the total readership has become a prominent feature of our print media.

This growing popularity of daily newspapers appears to have given birth to a new scenario in the print media sector. Recently, a famous and well-known weekly newspaper called "Naya Karent" has started to be published in magazine form. Big houses have also started to show interest in publishing magazines. Certain new publications like "Himal" fortnightly magazine have become more popular and have been able to attract more readers in comparison with many of the well-established weekly newspapers. This symbolizes the emergence of a new trend in the Nepalese print media.

Seeking information from Internet websites also has become a hobby among city elite, especially those of Kathmandu. Opinion polling through the Internet has also begun to become a matter of interest for Nepalese elite and intellectuals. But only a small portion of the total population access to information disseminated by Internet websites. Thus, seeking or disseminating information through the Internet appears remote for the majority of Nepalis. The introduction of Internet technology has also given birth to a new trend in the field of Nepalese journalism. Most of the popular Nepali newspapers and magazines are available on the Internet. As a result, those who have access to the Internet have begun spending less money on buying newspapers. However, this does not mean that on-line journalism has become a major trend of Nepalese news consumers.

The introduction of new technology has only given birth to a new trend in journalism. Thus, journalism in Nepal has become an area developed and changed very rapidly after the promulgation of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990. When we talk about the print media, we see that changes occurred in the readership of newspapers have brought changes in the trends and nature of the journalism itself. Similarly, the changes in the trends and nature of journalism also have brought changes in the readership of newspapers and magazines. ■



*Pandey is Director General at the Department of Information*

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