

# SPOTLIGHT

20-26 July, 2001



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- RNA Gheraoes Maoists
- Vajpayee-Musharraf Summit
- Human Development Report
- Poudel's Resignation

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Nepalese TV channels face tough challenges to survive in the cut-throat competition of satellite broad casting.

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**AGRA SUMMIT : Moving Nowhere**  
Contrary to expectations, the much-hyped Vajpayee—Musharraf summit fails even to come out with a joint statement.

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**RNA GHERAOES MAOISTS : Operation Nuwagaon**

For the first time since they launched "people's war" six years ago, the rebels find themselves face to face with the military.

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# SPOTLIGHT

THE NATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

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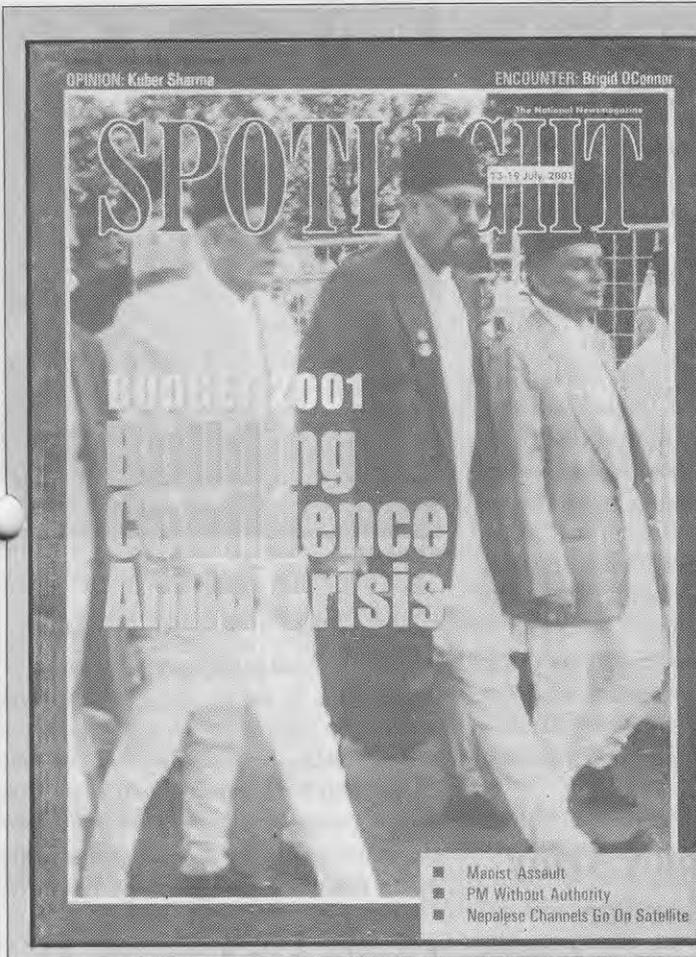
## EDITOR'S NOTE

The deployment of the Royal Nepal Army against the Maoists has generated acrimonious debates in Kathmandu. A section of the ruling political party has breathed a sigh of relief thinking that the Army will now shoulder the whole responsibility of containing the Maoists and they will be able to devote all their energies in pursuing gainful activities. Since the overwhelming majority of Nepalese are not in favor of involving the army as long the present government is in power, they feel absolutely assured that this deployment is on an ad hoc basis only. Indeed, the army is not a piece of decoration and must be used in the greater interest of the country whenever required. But, in a situation when the government has failed to act in accordance with the nation's constitution, even violating the directive principles, it becomes the duty of the King to preserve and protect the constitution as empowered by clause (3) of article 27 of the Constitution. We have, time and again asserted that the country is bigger than any constitution and all constitutions can be sacrificed without any ado to preserve the integrity of the country. Consequently, we do again exhort King Gyanendra to act. Dismiss the corrupt and inefficient government whose very loyalty to the nation has become suspect, appoint a caretaker government of honest and patriotic people, dissolve the House of Representative and hold another general elections within one year. The situation in the country demands that the King must lose no time to declare an State of Emergency in accordance with clause 1 of Article 115 of the constitution, try all the corrupt politicians and put them behind the bars. Except a few handful of those corrupt politicians who have sucked the country dry in the last eleven years, the whole country will support the King. Since the Maoists are more patriotic than these unscrupulous politicians who have taken the country to the brink of the precipice, they can be brought to the dialogue table. And there is no reason to doubt that the leaders of the Maoists are not amenable to peaceful resolution of their problem. The Maoists do not want any confrontation with the King and the army. Even late King Birendra was totally averse to using force against the Maoists. The nation cannot afford to pursue measures that might push the country towards a civil war. At this critical juncture in the history of our poor country, King Gyanendra needs some wise counsels. And we have seen how the sycophants that surrounded late King Birendra wrought the havoc upon our nation. He must get rid of such sycophants without delay and find people who are loyal, upright and patriotic. Since time and tide wait for no man and procrastination always begets disaster, we do believe, King Gyanendra will pull the country out of fire. He will not hesitate for a moment to rise upto the occasion and thus prove his mettle.

\* \* \*

The historic summit between the leaders of Pakistan and India could not produce a historic result. That the Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee had taken a very courageous gamble by inviting the arch enemy for a dialogue was indeed, a very statesman like behavior. And equally gracious was the response of the Pakistani leader Pervez Mushrraf. But, as apprehended by us, the talks had to flounder on the hard rocks of Kashmir and it did. Not to say anything about a powerful nuclear nation like Pakistan, even smaller countries like Nepal and Bangladesh have experienced these kinds of frustrations in their negotiations with their big and powerful neighbor. If Bangladesh has started to assert, Nepalese statesmen have yet to learn how to stand up. It is, indeed, very difficult to counter the very powerful and most expensive external publicity of the Indians. But, if we still fail to educate the world opinion about the factual happenings in our part of the world we will have to stay at the receiving end all the time. And Nepal has been paying very dearly with her ravaged economy. The resolution of the problem of Kashmir is the core issue for bringing any semblance of normalcy in South Asia. And it will never be solved by only bilateral negotiations between Pakistan and India. As long the United Nations do not shrug off their lethargy and take up the issue in real earnest, South Asia, one of the poorest regions of the world, will keep on lagging behind. And SAARC will stay as imponent as ever. ■

**Madhav Kumar Rimal**  
Chief Editor & Publisher



## Partisan Interpretation

Apropos your cover story "Building Confidence Amid Crisis" (SPOTLIGHT, July 13), it appears that our politicians are only focused on partisan politics. They never agree to anything except maybe when it comes to increasing their salaries and benefits. After Finance Minister Dr Ram Sharan Mahat presented the budget, lawmakers from ruling party were all praise while those from the opposition left no stone unturned in castigating it. What is this? Isn't there a single point in the budget on which the ruling and opposition parties could have agreed?

*Ramesh Shrestha*  
Manbhawan

cal ("A Hornet's Nest", SPOTLIGHT, July 6). It is ridiculous that they have recommended against registering private schools under individuals. This amounts to infringing upon the constitutional right of a citizen. Everybody is allowed to practice their profession in full freedom. Besides, as liberalisation is the professed policy of the government, stopping private individuals from opening school seem quite misplaced.

*Sunil Tuladhar*  
Bangemuda

## Take Action

Apropos your article "Ticking Time Bomb" (SPOTLIGHT, June 22), unless the country takes some strong action, the HIV/AIDS epidemic could severely affect us. Since even the United Nation recently organized a special session to deliberate on this disease, there should be no doubt how dangerous the pandemic can prove to be. The authorities have to do their level best to nip this disease in the bud.

*Santosh Dhungana*  
Sina Mangal

## Security Is The Issue

Without peace and security in place, the budget will not be able to achieve any of its targets ("Building Confidence Amid Crisis", SPOTLIGHT, July 13). Although the government aims to mobilize more than Rs 50 billion in revenue, our industries and businesses are feeling the heat of insecurity and are virtually in a state of confusion, if not panic. If the situation does not improve soon, the revenue target will fail miserably and lead to the total failure of the budget's goals.

*Sudarshan Bista*  
Kalimati

until there is a situation of peace in the country that is vital for its implementation ("Building Confidence Amid Crisis", SPOTLIGHT, July 13). With Maoist rebels getting stronger and more violent by the day, the government does not have an easy task. For the finance minister, the implementation of the budget means much more. In this age of a dearth of leaders, Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has been quietly progressing in the midst of Nepali Congress stalwarts. Now is the time for him to show his mettle and lay claim to the Congress leadership.

*Nabin Chalise*  
Gairidhara

## Minister's Mettle

It would not make much difference whether this year's budget is well balanced or not

## Budget Blues

It must have been mentally challenging for the finance minister to present this year's

budget ("Building Confidence Amid Crisis", SPOTLIGHT, July 13). Business confidence is at the lowest ebb, the law-and-order situation has faltered and the country is yet to recover from last month's royal tragedy. Amid all these crises, even coming out with a budget must have been a nightmarish task. Now that he has presented the budget, the bigger challenge before Dr. Mahat lies in its implementation. He will need the help of all Nepalis in achieving the budget's target in a time of national crisis like this.

*Janak Bhandari*  
Sitapaila

## Illogical Suggestion

Some suggestions of the recently launched education panel report seem highly illogi-

## Rescue Tourism

Everything is turning against the fragile tourism of the country ("Downward Spiral", SPOTLIGHT, June 15). From recurring violence and frequent shutdowns to the royal tragedy, the sector has been ravaged from all angles possible. In these circumstances, one should not expect the Nepal Tourism Board alone to be able to control the damage and put the sector on the track to recovery. People from all walks of life, especially politicians, have to support the board's attempt to save the nation's economic mainstay.

*Gautam Khadka*  
Paknajole

## 'Nepal Bandh' Passes Off Peacefully

Despite fears of widespread violence, the 'Nepal Bandh' (nationwide shutdown strike) passed off largely peacefully all over the country Thursday (July 12), reports said. Life remained disrupted in the capital Kathmandu, as vehicles stayed off the streets and most shops remained closed. Riot police were manning the streets and



Poudel

only police vans and ambulances could be seen on the roads. Reports said a group of unidentified people burnt down a night bus bound to Kakarbhitta from Kathmandu in eastern Nepal early Thursday. Maoist rebels mounted attacks against several police posts in remote hilly districts killing two policemen (one each in Rolpa and Baglung) and abducting more than 70. In a statement, the chairman of the Maoist party, Comrade Prachanda, thanked the people for making the 'bandh' a success. His party has also taken responsibility for killing a senior police officer in Dang and attacks at a police post in Rolpa, among others. Prachanda further said 'people's actions' will continue in the days to come. *Leading dailies report July 13.*

## Where Are The Maoist Leaders?

A day after Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Ram Chandra Poudel

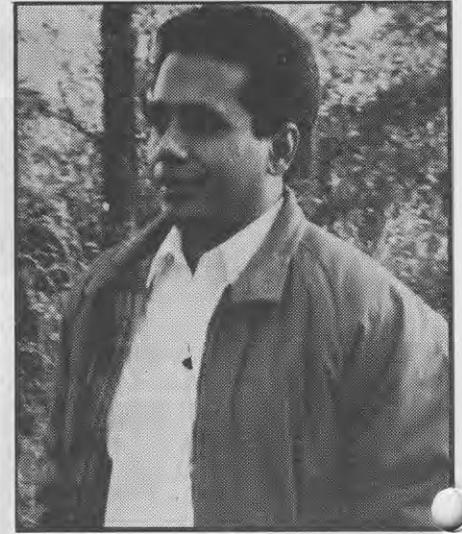
claimed that senior Maoist leaders were taking shelter in India, a senior Home Ministry source has said most of them are within the country. According to the source, recently Maoist leaders Comrade Prachanda and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai were reported to have been in Chitwan district to take part in the underground party's central committee meeting. Both of them visit India frequently. According to intelligence reports, senior Maoist leaders Mohan Baidya alias Comrade Kiran and military strategist Ram Bahadur Thapa alias Comrade Badal are believed to be working from the capital. Another Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara is said to be overseeing party's operations in Rukum and Rolpa districts whereas two senior leaders, C. P. Gajurel and Haribol Gajurel, frequently travel between Nepal and India as part of their party's works, agencies said. On Thursday, Poudel said the government was looking for the Maoist leaders and would arrest them as soon as they were found. *Rajdhani July 13.*

## India To Deploy Army Along The Border

The Indian government has decided to deploy its paramilitary force along the Nepal-India border beginning July 20 to control cross-border crimes, reports said. "The main objective of deploying the paramilitary force is to control cross border crimes and illegal supply of arms," said Deputy Superintendent of Police Sushil Kumar Thakur in Raxaul. Sources said the Indian government has already deployed its army along the major western parts of the Nepal-India border. The Indian side is planning to mobilize its force from Balmikinagar of Nawalparasi district in the west to Jogbani in the east along the Nepal-India border. Recently a final survey was completed to deploy the force along the 240-km long border from Balmikinagar to Kisangunj. *Compiled from reports July 15.*

## Ravi Bhakta Fleeted New FNCCI President

First Vice-President of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and



Shrestha

Industry (FNCCI), Ravi Bhakta Shrestha, has been elected to the post of President of the FNCCI. In the elections held for the post of President of the apex private sector body Tuesday, Shrestha has been elected unopposed for a period of two years. The annual general meeting of the FNCCI is to elect members to the new executive committee this week. *Compiled from reports.*

## Lauda Air Agreement May Come To An End

The controversial agreement between state-owned Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RNAC) and Lauda Air of Austria regarding the lease purchase of a wide-body aircraft is likely to be terminated next week, reports said Thursday. The top anti-corruption agency, CIAA, has filed cases against ten officials, including two from Lauda Air, alleging them of involved in irregularities while entering into the deal late last year. Meanwhile, a new controversy has erupted between the two sides after the RNAC officials refused to pay US\$ 26,000 as demanded by Lauda Air as medical expenses of its crew. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reported.*

## NHRC, KMTNC Denounce Attacks

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has condemned the recent killings of police personnel in three

remote mountain villages of central Nepal by the Maoist rebels. In a statement issued Tuesday, the commission termed the Maoist attacks as "gross violation of human rights." Saying that there has been violation of human rights from the government as well as rebels, the commission has urged both sides to maintain restraint from committing further human rights violations. In a separate statement, the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) has condemned the recent unprovoked attacks by a group of armed youths calling themselves Maoists on the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP). The Trust condemned attacks on its offices at alekharka and Pokhara in western Nepal early this month and expressed hope that environmental institutions like it working for the people would not be subjected to unnecessary harassment in the days to come. King Gyanendra heads the Trust, internationally acclaimed for its conservation activities. *Compiled from reports.*

## Earthquake Hits The Country

A powerful earthquake measuring 5.9 on the Richter scale hit the western and central parts of the country Monday night. The tremor was epicentered near the district headquarters of Gorkha in Western Nepal and lasted for 10-12 seconds, according to the Department of Mines and Geology. Details of damage to life and property were not available immediately. Kathmandu residents felt the jolts at 9:57 p. m. Monday. *Compiled from reports.*

## Nepal Grindlays Renamed As Standard Chartered

Nepal Grindlays Bank Ltd. a joint venture that began its operations in January 1987, has been renamed as Standard Chartered Bank Nepal Ltd. from Monday (July 16). According to a press release issued by the bank, the change in name has been brought forth by the acquisition of ANZ Grindlays Bank Ltd. from the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group P.L.C. from July 31, 2000. With this acquisition, a change has been brought in the ownership of the share of Nepal

Grindlays Bank Ltd. 50 percent shares of Nepal Grindlays Bank Ltd., previously owned by ANZ Grindlays are now owned by Standard Chartered Grindlays Bank. Nepal Bank Limited holds 33 percent of the remaining shares, while the rest 17 percent shares are commanded by the general public. Standard Chartered is the world's leading emerging markets bank with 570 offices across more than 50 countries primarily in Asia, the sub-continent, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, the bank said. *Compiled from reports.*

## FNCCI Welcomes The Budget

The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) has welcomed the budget for the next fiscal year 2001-02 presented by Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat in the parliament Monday. In a statement, the apex Chamber said the budget has made attempts to gear the economy toward the right direction by boosting investment through measures such as rehabilitation of sick industries, decrease in the interest rate on loans in specified fields, preference to the domestic products in government purchases and reduction in the duty on import of certain capital goods. It has also taken the budgetary provision of authorizing the director general at the Department of Industry to approve foreign investment up to Rs 100 billion as a positive development. Saying that with the increase in the power vested in the tax administration



Dr. Mahat

as transparency is bound to decrease, the FNCCI has said the exemption on income tax for a person and a family is inadequate. *Leading dailies report.*

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Sancharika

Police wielding batons at students who thronged at Gorkhapatra Corporation wanting to know about their SLC results published in Gorkhapatra daily

**A STRONG EARTHQUAKE MEASURING 5.9 ON THE** Richter scale hit Nepal Monday night (July 16) at 9:57 pm. According to the Department of Mines and Geology, the quake had its epicenter at the Gorkha district. Residents of the capital rushed outside their homes in fear after they felt the tremor. There were no immediate reports of destruction or casualty though some newsreports said few persons were injured after a house collapsed in Dhading district. The tremor was followed by another moderate one measuring around 4 richter scale in the early Tuesday morning — with epicenter in Lamjung district. Meanwhile, another quake had hit early Thursday (July 12), officials said. According to the Department of Mines and Geology in the capital, the quake — that had its epicenter at Gaja village at the borders of Bajhang and Bajura districts in far-western Nepal — struck at 1:30 a. m.

**MAOIST REBELS HAVE RELEASED FORMER NEPALI** Congress lawmaker and a human rights activist, Mukti Prasad Sharma, in Pyuthan district Thursday. Sharma was abducted by the rebels from his own house in the same district some six weeks back. Early this week, the rebels had abducted another former Congress MP, Devraj Joshi, from the far-western district of Bajura.

**THE PARLIAMENT ON FRIDAY PASSED THE CRU-**cial Accounts Bill, presented by Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat. It will allow the government to borrow and spend from the government exchequer until the budget for the next fiscal year is passed by the legislature. The left opposition parties boycotted the voting on the bill. Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat presented nearly Rs 100 billion budget estimates for the year 2001-02 in the parliament last Monday.

**OFFICIALS HAVE CLARIFIED THAT THE VIETNAM-**ese ship carrying fertilizer, that sunk in the Bay of Bengal last Tuesday did not carry cargo for Nepal. Earlier, a news report carried by the Associated Press said the ship carrying fertilizer for Nepal from China had sunk. All 30 crew members aboard the MV Lucnan were rescued by Coast Guard ships and are safe, a spokesman for the Calcutta Port Trust said. The ship was carrying 11,000 tons of ammonium phosphate and 2,500 tons of other fertilizers.

**COMMUNIST PARTY OF NEPAL (MAOIST) HAS CON-**firmed the death of nine Maoist guerrillas, including five women, in raids at Nuwakot, Lamjung and Gulmi districts last Friday. At least 40 policemen and a civilian were killed in the Maoist attacks. Police had suspected that up to two dozen rebels may have been killed during the fierce gun battle. A statement issued by Comrade Baldev (not real name), in-charge of military headquarter of central regional bureau of the underground party, blamed the police for the death of a rural woman in Lamjung district, Naya Sadak daily reported.

**THE LANDLESS SQUATTERS PROBLEMS RESOLU-**tion commission has provided land to 2,761 landless squatters and unplanned settlers in 33 districts by mid-July, this year. The commission provided land free of cost to landless squatter families. At the same time, revenue of Rs. 16.1 million was raised by selling land to the unplanned settlers, the Commission said. The landless squatters cannot sell the land provided by the commission for 15 years and the unplanned settlers for ten years, according to officials.

**THE GOVERNMENT IS FORMULATING A NEW POLICY** for population management in the country, a senior official said. Minister for Population and Environment Siddha Raj Ojha told a program organized to mark the World Population Day here Wednesday that the policy would be made public soon. Saying that factors like illiteracy, poverty, religious superstition and unemployment have led to uncontrolled rise in the population of Nepal, Minister Ojha said the pressure of population growth could be lessened through the enhancement of women's literacy in the country. ■

## Equal Rights On Property

With the objective to inject factually-backed logics in the ensuing public debate regarding equal rights to daughters on parental property, Sancharika Samuha, an organization of women activists, had recently conducted a pilot research at some places in Nepalgunj. The focus of the research — conducted by interviewing 100 households each from Jayaspur VDC and Nepalgunj municipality and different target groups — was to point out the implication of the will system and cross border marriages in the equal property rights. The debate on giving daughters equal rights on ancestral property has been going on in the country after the restoration of democracy in 1990. But many have raised concern about giving equal right citing that may invite more ills among the Nepalese communities living in border areas where cross border marriages are commonplace. Speaking at the program to release the report of the pilot research, Dr. Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan, research consultant, said that although the will system is the best option in the long term, its introduction at present circumstances could trigger more discrimination against women. "As far as cross border marriages are concerned, we chose Jayaspur VDC, where the incidents of such marriages are said to be frequent, and found out that less than 25 percent of the families there had marriage links across the border," he said. "We found that incidents of cross border marriages were on the wane due to various reasons." He added that it was merely the public perception that was responsible for the hype generated on the issue. The preparation of the report was supported by SNV-Nepal. ■

“Everybody is asking for my resignation. But what after that?”

*Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, expressing displeasure at growing calls that he step down, while addressing a seminar of bureaucrats.*

\* \* \*

“The Prime Minister did not pay attention to my proposals for improving the country’s condition.”

*Ram Chandra Poudel, explaining why he resigned as Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, on BBC Nepali service.*

\* \* \*

“He has asked to let him resign voluntarily. That means he is going to do so.”

*Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, senior leader of the main opposition Unified Marxist Leninist, expressing optimism that Prime Minister Koirala will step down, in Drishti.*

\* \* \*

“Had all the communist forces united after the recent incident in the Royal Palace, a republic could have been set up.”

*Nara Bahadur Karmacharya, leader of the radical leftist Unity Center, in Bimarsha.*

\* \* \*

“Gajendra Narayanji does not need any reason. He dismisses anybody he wants to anytime.”

*Rameshwor Raya, the leader of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) who was recently ousted as party vice-president by NSP chief Gajendra Narayan*

*Singh, criticizing his high-handedness in dealing with the party affairs, in Jana Bhawana.*

\* \* \*

“The business and industrial sector is passing through a very bad phase thanks to the lack of security and political instability.”

*Rabi Bhakta Shrestha, newly elected president of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in Chhalfal.*

\* \* \*

“All the political parties here are affiliated to foreign (forces).”

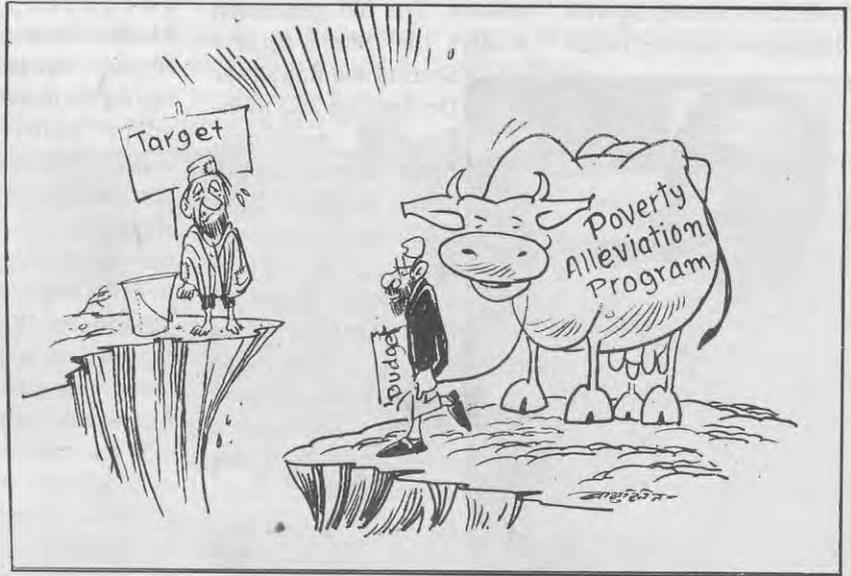
*Prakash Gurung, a boxer-turned-social activist who heads the newly formed Nepal Patriotic Association, in Jana Bhawana.*

\* \* \*

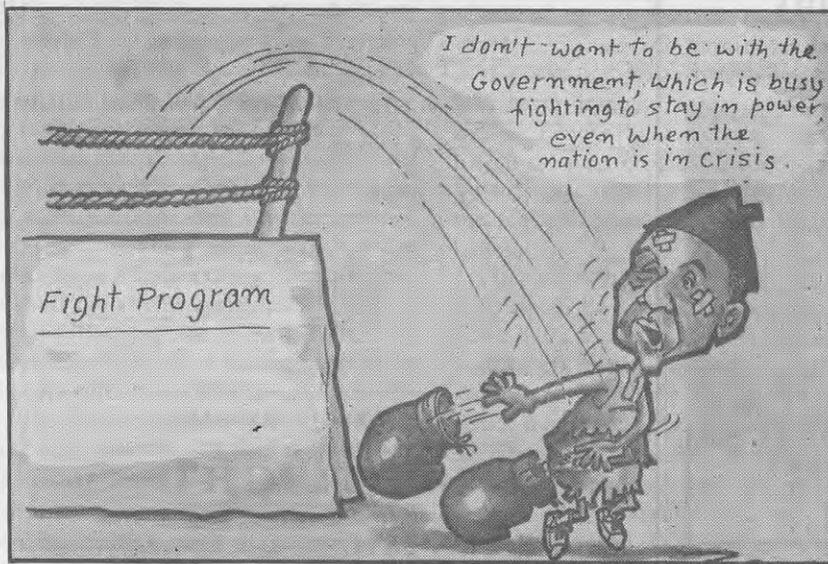
“Our country is already 200 years behind developed nations. On the top of that, frequent Nepal Bandhs have hit all sections of society.”

*Kumar Basnet, popular folk singer, in Gorkhapatra.*

\* \* \*



Budhanur



Himalaya Times

## Man For All Occasions

Former House of Representatives speaker Daman Nath Dhungana is known as a personality of great versatility. He has the ability to perform all kinds of duties in keeping with the demands of society. Inside



**Dhungana :** Anywhere, everywhere

the Supreme Court, Dhungana is a senior advocate who pleads landmark cases. Outside he remains a political activist who opposes many of the things the government is doing. As a former speaker, Dhungana addresses countless seminars and heads a leading organization involved in promoting parliamentary and democratic values. In view of his multifaceted role, some intellectuals recently bestowed a new title on Dhungana: Man for All Occasions. Although he has left the Nepali Congress, he was described as a left-Congress when he addressed a Maoist rally in Butwal recently. Doesn't it seem like the word versatile was invented to describe Dhungana?

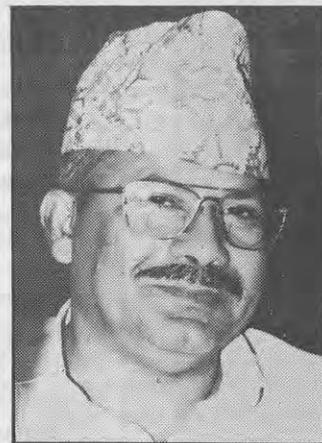
## Sanskrit And Politics

Students of the former Sanskrit Pathsala (Old Sanskrit School) share many characteristics. The school has produced many luminaries of Nepalese politics. The old generation leaders like Shree Bhadra Sharma and Rajeshwar Devkota are still in influential positions. From former deputy prime minister Ram Chandra Poudel to former Congress spokesman Narahari Acharya to former Congress minister Chiranjibi Wagle, a new generation of leaders has thrived on their Sanskrit education background. Unlike the previous generation, today's leaders have the ability to speak for others, not merely for themselves. Be it Poudel, Acharya or Wagle, the interest of others is what

comes first.

## Opposition Adaptability

Among the prominent characteristics of Nepal's op-



**Nepal :** Quick adaption

position leaders is their ability to speak in accordance with what the public wants to hear from them. CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal ranks among the more adept politicians of this genre. When his party boycotted parliament, it was to pave the way to facilitate the passage of the annual policies and programs of the government. When Nepal participated in a talk program along with other left parties, Nepal asserted that this decision was made in his capacity as the leader of opposition. By speaking from all sides of his mouth, our comrade-in-chief can adapt himself to any situation.



**Sharma :** Truce, now

## Cease-fire In RPP

Leaders of the Rastriya

Prajantra Party (RPP) seem to have declared a truce or sorts. This may be the reason why the guns that roared during the upper house elections have fallen silent.

Although some leaders are still accusing others of being 'mandales' (the stinging epithet bestowed on hardline panchas during the ancien regime) the lull is palpable.

However, as the leadership in the party is so unpredictable, nobody knows who will be the next to switch camps, triggering a new volley of fire.

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# INDO-PAK SUMMIT Moving Nowhere

The failure of the much-hyped summit may have far reaching impact across the South Asian region

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

He came. He saw. He could not conquer. The much-hyped summit between Indian Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee and Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf (July 15-16) failed to arrive at any fruitful conclusion. So much so that the 'historic' Agra Summit between the two leaders concluded abruptly late Monday even without issuing a joint statement.

Started on the backdrop of high expectations in the region and abroad, the summit was expected to kickstart a peace process between the two hostile neighbors in South Asia. Ironically, after the failure of famous bus ride to Lahore, it was Vajpayee who extended invitation to Musharraf—the person alleged to have masterminded the Kargil conflict in 1998—for a summit.

As soon as General Musharraf accepted the invitation, intelligentsia, media and people at large started speculating about the outcome of the summit. Though the summit provided both the leaders an opportunity to divert public attention from their domestic problems and know each other's mind through extended one to one meetings, perhaps their domestic compulsions were too cumbersome to help work out a breakthrough.

A determined General, Mr. Musharraf had made it clear right from the beginning that his priority was to discuss the issue of Kashmir with the Indian government. "If I had to give up the issue, I would better buy the Neherwali haveli (where he was born) and settle here," Musharraf told reporters in Agra. For Vajpayee, issue of cross-border terrorism in Kashmir was much more important. While India blames Pakistan of supporting Islamic militants in carrying out a 'pseudo war' in Kashmir, Pakistan blames India of imposing a virtual military rule in Kashmir against the wish of the Kashmiri people.

The two countries—that have fought three wars (excluding Kargil conflict) over the last five decades—are classic examples of hostility and animosity. India blames ISI—the Pakistani intelligence agency—of spread-

ing its tentacles in as far as Nepal and Bangladesh to launch terrorist activities within India, Pakistan believes that India is out to declare it as a failed state. Ever since both the



Musharraf and Vajpayee : Carrying the burden of history

Photo : TOI

countries—with millions of people living below the poverty line—acquired the status of nuclear powers in 1998, South Asia is seen as one of the most volatile regions in the world.

Critics say there were three major stumbling blocks leading to the failure of the Agra summit. i) the unifocal approach of Pakistan, ii) Indian stress on cross-border terrorism, and iii) Indian stand that it could not negate on the previous agreements like Simla and Lahore.

Despite such hurdles, it will be too early to write off the possibility of restoration of peace in the region, say analysts. "How can you expect a breakthrough to end 50-year-old dispute in just two days?" asked Yadav Kant Silwal, former general secretary at the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu. "Of course, they could have initiated a time bound process for easing bilateral relations." Agreed Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh, "I will not

term it a failure. It is yet another step in our march toward finding peace between the two countries."

One of the victims of escalating tension between the two countries had been the 11th SAARC Summit. Scheduled to be held in Kathmandu in November 1999, the summit had been postponed indefinitely as per the request of the Indian government in October the same year immediately after General Musharraf became the chief executive by sacking the popularly elected government of Nawaz Sharif.

Though the Agra talks may have failed to yield substantial results, they may have helped

to ease persisting tension to some extent. It could also give an opportunity to restart the now stalled SAARC process. Despite pressing domestic problems, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala sent separate messages to both the leaders wishing the success of the summit. "Regional cooperation is the most prominent phenomenon in the 21st century," said Silwal. "So, Nepal should now start initiatives to resume the SAARC summit without losing further time."

Reports said premier Vajpayee has agreed to visit Pakistan to continue talks between the two countries. It will not only give continuity to the Agra Summit, it will also open channels for mutual consultations at the highest level—one of the most important measures for building confidence. People in India, Pakistan and the entire region would like to see that the next summit—if it takes place soon—will not remain only as a splendid photo-up in the grand setting of Taj Mahal. ■

# HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2001

## Glimmers Of Hope

Despite growing violence and chronic political instability, Nepal has been able to improve its position in the Human Development Report 2001

By KESHAB POUDEL

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times... It was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, and it was the winter of despair. We had everything before us; we had nothing before us.”

Charles Dickens’ opening paragraph in “A Tale of Two Cities” mirrors the situation of Nepal, which is passing through a mixture of good and bad times. At a first glance, Nepal’s situation, characterized by the spread of Maoist violence and rampant lawlessness, leaves little room for hope. If not checked in time, these ills are bound to impede the country’s march toward greater freedom and prosperity.

However, there are also good times. Nepalese society is making progress, particularly in the areas of health, education,

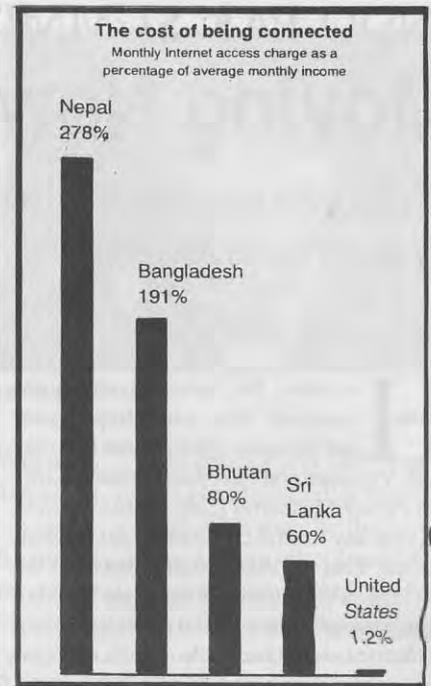
gender equality and expansion of infrastructure. More people live in freedom and there are more families that are educated. A greater number of children can read and write. More women can work and more people have a stake in the economy.

Imagining such positive progress in today’s circumstances may seem to be very difficult for many. However, countless Nepalis and foreigners have been leading the process of change through by mobilising non-governmental organizations, civic society, and community participation. The result: Out of 162 countries ranked by the United Nations according to their level of human development, Nepal ranks 129th.

If the disclosure of the Human Development Report 2001 is any indication, Nepal can hope for a prosperous future, provided it could improve the law-and-order situation. According to the report, Nepal’s HDI 0.480 in 1999 puts the country at 129th place out of 162 countries.

Over the last 25 years, Nepal has been making steady progress in human development. In such categories as poverty index, gender-related development, progress in survival, priorities in public spending and technological achievement, Nepal has made relatively good progress.

Prepared by the United Nations, the HDR 2001 has evaluated the performance of various countries of the world assessing social indicators like health, education, gender, life expectancy and



expenditure in the social sector.

Nepal’s Human Development Index trend shows considerable progress in different social sectors. Between 1975 and 1999, the index mark has nearly doubled — from 0.292 to 0.477. If we make a comparison with other countries of the region, the growth has been very steady.

In India, it was 0.406 in 1975 and 0.571 in 1999. Bangladesh had an HDI of 0.332 in 1975, which has reached .470

Nepal has seen progress in life expectancy, infant child mortality rate, and infant mortality under 5 years of age and literacy rates. “In Nepal, a child born in the 90s can expect to live 14 years longer than could a child born in the early 70s. The infant mortality rate decreased from 165 in 1970 to 75 in 1999, the under-five mortality rate decreased from 250 in 1970 to 104 in 1999. Over the last twenty-five years, Nepal’s HDI has been steadily increasing, reducing the gap with neighboring countries,” said Alessandra Tisot, United Nations Development Program Resident Representative.

Despite such impressive achievements, nearly 10 million Nepalis live in absolute poverty, 47 percent of the population consumes less than the minimum level of dietary energy consumption and more than half of those over the age of 15 are illiterate.

**HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2001**

*Technology networks are transforming the traditional map of development, expanding people's horizons and creating the potential to realize in a decade progress that required generations in the past*

**MAKING NEW TECHNOLOGIES WORK FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

Among South Asian nations the Maldives, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh rank 77th, 81st, 115th, 127th, 129th, 130th and 132nd respectively.

According to the Human Development index, Nepal ranks ahead of Bhutan and Bangladesh in the region. Nepal's life expectancy is 58.1 at birth, adult literacy rate is 40.4 percent, combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio is 60 percent, GDP per capita (PPP US\$) 1237, life expectancy index is 0.55, education index is 0.47, GDP index is 0.42. If the country succeeds in increasing male life expectancy, female literacy and total literacy, its situation may dramatically change for the better.

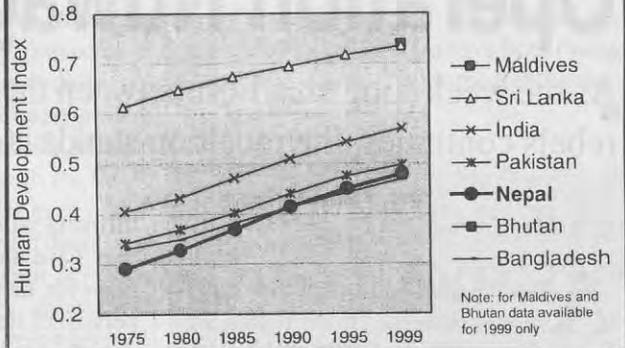
One can see inequality in income and consumption, as there is growing disparities of haves and have-not. "Despite so many hindrances and complications, we have been able to achieve some progress in various areas," said Prithvi Raj Ligal, vice-chairman of the National Planning

Commission. "Had the situation remain peaceful, the country's would have been in a much better position. Our aim now should be to move the status from low human development group to medium human development," he said.

Nepal's population growth is still high. In the last 25 years, Nepal's population nearly doubled, from 13.1 million in 1975 to 22.5 million in 1999. Fertility rate per woman is 4.8, which is still higher than other countries of the region. In commitment to health, access, services and resources, things are yet to improve satisfactorily. Only 20 percent of the population has access to essential drugs and 27 percent of the people are using adequate sanitation facilities.

The infant mortality rate has declined from 165 per 1,000 in 1970 to just 75.

**HDI Trends in SAARC Countries  
1975 - 1999**



Nepal's maternal mortality rate, at 540 per 10,000, is still higher compared to other countries in the region.

Nepal's overall progress was steady between 1980 and 1990. Had it followed that pace, the country would have moved from low human development to the medium range. With the restoration of democracy in 1990 following a violent movement, Nepal's social-sector development has been destabilized. The country has faced chronic political instability and an upsurge in violent activities especially after 1996.

In the areas of life expectancy, infant mortality and adult literacy, Nepal has made significant gain over the last 30 years. When Nepal embarked upon the modernization process 51 years ago, the country's economic and other indicators were abysmally low. Life expectancy was 27 years and the overall literacy was 1 percent.

Although progress in the areas of life expectancy and adult literacy have been slow, the limited changes the indicators have brought are nevertheless significant. "We are planning to introduce more effective and strong programs in the country to accelerate the process of change in much faster rate than before," said Minister for Science and Technology Surendra Prasad Chaudhary.

The message of HDR 2001 — the theme of which is Making New Technologies Work for Human Development — Nepal can make a lot of difference, provided it succeeds in establishing a stable political atmosphere and reinforce the government's commitment to social-sector development.

## Highlights From The Report

**Human Development in Nepal:** Nepal's HDI of 0.480 in 1999 puts the country in 129th position out of 162 countries. Over the last 25 years, Nepal has been steadily progressing in human development.

**Human Poverty Index:** Nepal's HPI is 44.2%. In terms of the HPI, Nepal ranks 77th out of 90 developing countries

**Gender -Related Development:** Nepal's GDI is 0.461, ranking it 120th out of 146 countries Nepal is one of the few countries in the world where female life expectancy is lower than that of males. Only three countries out of the 146 considered have lower female literacy rates than Nepal (22.8 percent for women age 15 and above versus 58 percent for men in Nepal in 1999)

**Progress in Survival:** Life expectancy at birth in Nepal in the period 1970-1975 was 43.3 years. In 1995-2000, it increased to 57.3 years. The infant mortality (per 1,000 births) decreased from 250 in 1970 to 104 in 1999.

**Priorities in Public Spending:** Public expenditure on education, as a percentage of GNP, increased from 2.2 percent in 1985-1987 to 3.2 percent in 1995-1997. Public expenditure on health, as a percentage of GDP, increased from 0.8 percent in 1990 to 1.3 percent in 1998. While these rates are comparable to those of Nepal's neighbors, they are still low.

**Technological Achievement:** Nepal is ranked 69th out of 72 countries according to the Technology Achievement Index. This new composite index focuses on creation of technology, diffusion of recent innovations, diffusion of old innovations, and human skills. Nepal ranks behind some SAARC neighbors. Sri Lanka is placed 62nd, India, 63rd, and Pakistan, 65th. Bangladesh, Bhutan and Maldives were not ranked.

Nepal's health net has 150 user points around the country, reaching 500 health professionals and getting 300 hits a day on its Website.

# MAOIST INSURGENCY

## Operation Nuwagaun

As the week-long stand-off between the security forces and rebels continues, the rebellion stands at a turning point

By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**fter the abduction of 70 police personnel from the Holeri Police Station by Maoist rebels, the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) has for the first time joined search-and-rescue operations against the insurgents.

As the stand-off between the army and Maoists continues, a group of human rights activists have reached Rolpa to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

"We will bring the Maoists and the security personnel on the table for negotiations to end the siege peacefully," said Sudip Pathak, president of the Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON) before leaving for the mid-west. "The Maoists have already shown their willingness to start negotiations with the government."

The Maoist are demanding the release of their leaders and workers held in

different jails in exchange for the police they have abducted. The government is, however, demanding the release of police personnel along with their arms unconditionally.

As the standoff continues, major political parties have called upon both the government and the Maoists to exercise restraint and have urged the rebels to release all the police personnel. The government is also pressing the Maoists to release the captives and ensure safe passage for them. For the Maoist insurgents, releasing the police would have implications for their survival as a movement.

Amid the growing debate over the mobilization of the army, some former army chiefs came out in support of the government's decision. "Army is an integral part of the government and it can mobilize them if the need arises," said Guna Shumsher JB Rana, former chief of army staff of the Royal Nepalese Army.

The latest episode also brought to an end to the debate on whether a popularly elected government could mobilize the army. As per the country's constitution, King can mobilize the army upon the recommendation of a three-member National Security Council headed by the Prime Minister. (Other two members include Defense Minister and chief of the army staff.)

No clear picture of the situation in Nuwagaun has



**Koirala : Tough days ahead**

emerged, but the place is said to be a major training base for the Maoists in their stronghold of mid-western Nepal. The army located the area when Maoist-fired bullets hit low-flying army helicopters, injuring three army men onboard.

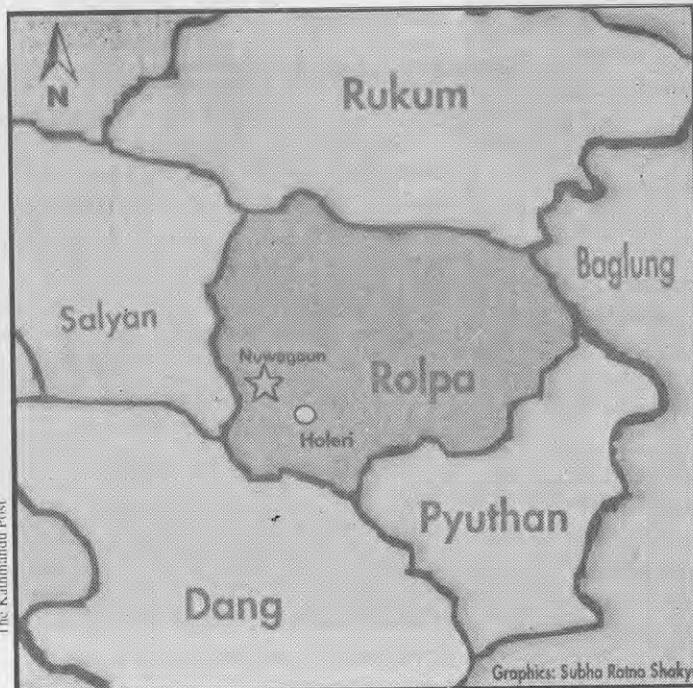
Soon after the attack on the army's helicopters, the RNA started to drop additional forces in the area. The RNA has already dropped special commando forces over there. It is said the number of security forces in the area is over 2,000.

Till the time of writing this story Wednesday, security personnel were still cordoning Nuwagaun and the surrounding areas. The RNA began its operation swiftly on Friday following the abduction of 70 police personnel from the Holeri Police Station a day earlier.

RNA personnel are now surrounding the Maoists' Nuwagaun base where the rebels are believed to have placed the abducted police personnel. As the stand-off between the RNA and the insurgents continues, nobody knows how the impasse will end.

"We just want our abducted police personnel back with their seized weapons and other materials," said a spokesman at the Home Ministry. "If Maoist continue to take police personnel hostage, the security forces will be compelled to take action against the insurgents."

Following the violent attacks by Maoist insurgents at three police posts



The Kathmandu Post

early this month, killing 41 personnel, the government finally called out army to quell the Maoist rebellion.

The RNA and government were at loggerheads over the issue of army deployment. In September last year, then home minister Govinda Raj Joshi had resigned, alleging that army did not help the Home Ministry in cordoning the guerrillas who had devastated Dunai, the district headquarters of Dolpa. The rebels have looted millions of rupees from a local bank and killed 15 policemen in one of their deadliest attacks.

Interestingly, Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Ram Chandra Poudel resigned after the government's decision to mobilize the army in search and rescue



**Prachanda** : Fight to finish?

operation saying that the rebellion could not be brought to an end by mobilizing police and army. Interestingly, Poudel was one of the key architects of the Integrated Security and Development Program (ISDP) that aims at mobilizing army as a back-up force in the development programs. (See: A Separate Story) "Poudel's exit shows how strong were the forces within the government that were blocking it from mobilizing its own security organ to quell the rebellion," said an analyst.

Amid reports that an influential former ambassador of a neighboring country was in town after the army entered the Maoist strongholds of Rolpa, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala urged the business community, among others, to persuade the Maoists to find a solution within

the country. "Please tell them (the Maoists) that we should find a solution (to the insurgency) within the country and should not have to seek foreign help for the same."

War-raging Maoist leaders, however, looked adamant. In a highly provocative article published in Kantipur daily on Wednesday, chairman of the underground Maoist party, Comrade Prachanda, said his party would not hold talks with the fascist clique led by GP Koirala. He even urged the army personnel to join with them.

Those watching the recent developments say the use of army against the Maoists may prove to be a turning point in the violent rebellion that has cost nearly 2000 lives since 1996. If the government becomes able to free the abducted police personnel from the Maoist 'capital' of Rolpa, it will push the morale of the rebels to all time low. Through a sustained counter-insurgency operations along with development packages, the government could win hearts of local people and isolate the insurgents from them, analysts say.

Given the strategic geo-political location of Nepal, any kind of instability or insurgency in this Himalayan kingdom can't sustain for long as it starts hurting the security interests of one of the two bigger neighbors of Nepal. "The insurgency in Nepal has stretched too long and may come to a turning point sooner than later," said a strategic analyst.

Known for their 'hit and run' tactics, Maoist rebels had been targeting the ill-equipped, isolated police posts in remote hilly districts right from the beginning. As the government is yet to raise the Armed Police Force and the army was said to be unwilling to be drawn into a domestic conflict, the insurgents had a field day in unleashing terror. But recent developments may change the scenario entirely.

Meanwhile, the chronic power struggle within the ruling party and crisis of confidence between the ruling and opposition has not helped the matter. Amid repeated call for his resignation, Prime Minister Koirala has exhibited his commitment to face all kinds of challenges—from within the ruling party and without. It is almost clear that by managing to

deploy army against the rebels, he has scored a political mileage against his detractors.

Whatever the eventual result of the army's deployment, it has boosted the morale of the police who have been facing one defeat after another in the fight against the insurgents. ■

## ABDUCTION

# The Favorite Game

For the Maoist insurgents, abducting civilians and security personnel seems to have become the favorite game. Here are few examples. In exchange of the release of Thule Rai, deputy superintendent of Police abducted by the Maoists a couple of years back, the government released Dev Gurung, central committee member of the Maoist party. Similarly, in exchange for the release of Shyam Nath Kashyap, a local Nepali Congress leader in Arghakhanchi district, the authorities released Thakur Nepal and Suman Gharti, two Maoist workers. Only a couple of months back, the rebels abducted former Nepali Congress MP, Mukti Prasad Sharma, from his house in Pyuthan and released him early this month in exchange of the release of a senior Maoist activist, Lokendra Bista, who was in jail since 1995. They freed former Minister Reg Bahadur Subedi after keeping him into their custody for several months. In the meantime, rebels have abducted former Nepali Congress MP from Bajura, Devraj Joshi, and are said to be negotiating for the release of some of their workers. The rebels still hold in their custody nearly 100 policemen and a number of civilians, said reports. "Human abduction should not be made a subject of trade. It is crime against humanity," said Krishna Pahadi, chairman of Human Rights and Peace Society (HURPES). "Unfortunately, the Maoists are giving a bad name to human rights movement and portraying rights workers as a supporter of violence and brokers." ■

## CONSULTANCIES

# Selling Education

Kathmandu is swarming with consultancies claiming to show the way to foreign colleges and universities

By AKSHAY SHARMA

The lines outside the visa sections of western embassies in Kathmandu give a clear idea of the direction most Nepalis prefer to travel along these days. A substantial number of the young people in those lines are tightly focused on their objective: a western education that sells around the world.

In response to this voracious appetite for information and advice on ways of getting into colleges and universities in the

consultancy in Durbar Marg. "Most students are not aware of the documents embassies require to process a visa application."

Economic uncertainty, declining educational standards and a gripping sense of apathy and alienation have joined hands to encourage Nepali youth to at least consider going abroad for studies. The lucky ones are accepted and receive scholarships, while others struggle along to earn their degrees. Still others simply quit studies and look for a job.



Students in education fair : Search for quality

West, education consultancies have proliferated in key Kathmandu localities. The newspapers are full of their advertisements and some make promises that simply sound too good to be true.

"Many people usually end up being exploited by consultancies that demand huge sums of money and make false promises of visas," says Saroj Shrestha, chief coordinator of International Links, an educational

Academic administrators overseas are familiar with the respect Nepalis accord to foreign education. "There are advertisements in newspapers of experts from foreign universities that have set up shop in Kathmandu's five-star hotels," says Binay Thakur, assistant director of International Links. "Quite a few western colleges have affiliates in Kathmandu, which obviously is targeted at the rich. Education is being sold

like any other product," he says.

Prakash Babu K.C., director of International Links, says between 40 and 60 people visit his consultancy each month. "We provide free counseling to those who have their hearts on going abroad for studies," says. "If they are still interested, we give them a choice of colleges to apply to in keeping with their budget," he says.

The destination of choice is the United States. "To study in Japan, you need to learn the language first," Saroj adds. "I have seen some people return from Japan with bundles of cash. But most people prefer the United States, which perhaps shows that they are focused on studies." Adds Prakash: "Britain allows foreign students to work 20 hours a week, which has made that country another center of attraction among Nepalis lately."

Not all advisers are capable of — or even intend to — give the right kind of advice. "In consultancies I've worked before, there was a fair amount of cheating going on," Prakash says. "They were advising people on ways of getting fake Indian certificates. I pondered the scenario and thought of opening a consultancy myself."

Some people are glad that he did. "I was flipping through the newspapers one day and saw this [International Links] advertisement," says Syed Nawed Shah, a software programmer who is planning to go to Canada for further studies.

Syed completed his bachelor's degree from NED University in Karachi, Pakistan. "I have looked around and gone to other consultancies before. But if you are looking for free and good counseling, this is the kind of place you'd want to go to."

Asked how he feels about people going abroad and staying there, Prakash says, "The United States and other countries have a policy of keeping the intelligentsia. Moreover, why should the person come back when he or she has so many facilities there?"

"If people come back, they have no secure job. They cannot afford to open a hospital if they have studied medicine. Besides, they'll already have been culturally influenced. And everybody wants to be No.1 in life."

In a world where education is sold aggressively and in a country where con artists have thrived on other people's money, the cardinal rule of marketing—buyer beware—may come in handy as a precaution. ■

## SLC RESULTS

# Low Pass Rate

Only one third of the examinees are able to cross the 'iron gate'

By A CORRESPONDENT

The results of this year's School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examinations — regarded as iron gate among Nepalese students — came as shock to two third of the students.

Among the 2,13,807 students who had sat for the exams three months ago, only 31.62 percent managed to pass. The low pass rate has raised the eyebrows of many. Last year the pass rate was around 45 percent.

"With such a low rate of passing students, a big lump of government's investment on education has gone waste," said a principal of private school.

As the government spends around ten percent of its total expenditure on the education, such low passing rate means that its investment has not been utilized properly. The reason behind this could be many including quality of teachers, teaching-learning environment or the syllabus.

Others like Sahadev Bhatta of the Office of the Controller of Examinations, which conducted the exams, believe that the newly introduced stringent rules about checking exam papers and addition of a subject — stretching the total marks from 700 to 800 — could have affected the pass rate.

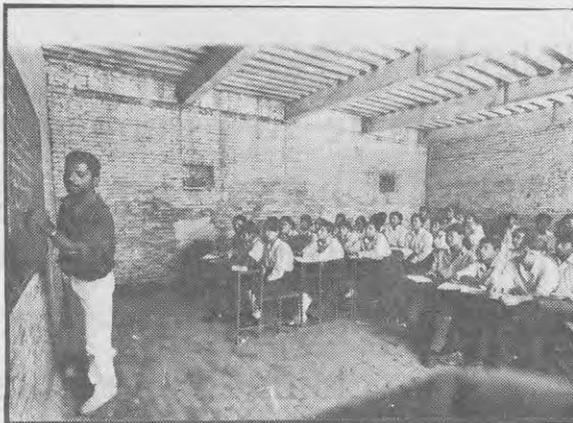
This year the office introduced the system of coding and decoding, parallel set of question papers in compulsory subjects and decentralization of evaluation centers.

Whatever be the reason, the high failure rate is sure to hit the youths already

plagued by uncertainty and lack of employment opportunities. Some even go to the extent of saying that these students who have failed and have nowhere to turn to could be lured by violent elements.

One remarkable feat of this year's SLC was that both the toppers (boy and girl) belonged to schools away from the capital. Earlier the schools of Kathmandu used to dominate the toppers' list.

Swachhanda Sangmen, of Bidur English Boarding School, Bhadrapur, Jhapa topped the list securing 714 marks —



**School students :** Who is to blame for poor results?

89.24 percent. Among the girls, Ramila Shilpakar of Everest Boarding School, Bhaktapur, topped securing 686 marks — 85.74 percent.

According to the Office of the Controller of Examinations, of the 2,13, 807 students who sat for the exams, 1,60,123 were in the regular group while 52,884 were in the exempted group. The number of boys were 1,23,252 and girls were 90,555.

This year the results of the SLC were published more than three months after it was taken in April. Due to this delay many ten-plus-two colleges had already started enrolling students on a provisional basis. ■

## GREEN NEPAL PARTY Successful Convention

A two-day second general convention of the Green Nepal Party calls for rooting out corruption from politics

Although the two-day general convention of the Green Nepal Party (GNP) was a small gathering of people, it sent a strong message in political circles that it is the only party that follows the rules of transparency and accountability.

Unlike the conventions of the big parties, the GNP meeting was devoid of fanfare and disputes. It has shown the way to the other big parties that small is always beautiful when it comes to propounding new concepts.

Founded four years ago through the initiative of Kuber Prasad Sharma and other like-minded politicians, the GNP has now been able to generate hope among the small parties that they do have a future. "Hariyali Nepal Party should lead the movement to reunite all small parties for the benefit of the country," said Dr. Meena Acharya, general secretary of Nepal Praja Parishad, the oldest political party of Nepal.

From former prime minister Kirtinidhi Bista to former speaker Damannath Dhungana and from the first general secretary of CPN-ML and left intellectual C.P. Mainali to RPP-Nationalist leader Rajeshwor Devkota, politicians of all hues hailed the role of GNP in the current national political context.

Leaders from small parties like Hemanta B.C of Communist Party of Nepal United, Lok Narayan Subedi of the Communist Party-Marxist and K.B. Shahi of Samyukta Prajatantra Party also emphasized the need to strengthen unity among small parties.

Chaired by president of GNP's high command and founding chairman Kuber Sharma, the newly elected chairman of the party, Badri Prasad Khatiwada, urged other parties to join the GNP's campaign against corruption. The second general convention elected a seven-member high command with Kuber Sharma as president and Badri Prasad Khatiwada as chairman of the party's central committee.

## SATELLITE TV TRANSMISSION

# Finding A Place In The Space Age

As state-owned Nepal Television (NTV) and the private-sector Channel Nepal Network scramble to establish themselves in space, the focus is on the important, but seemingly neglected, issue of the kind of programs plan to offer to an expanded audience. Already plagued by a credibility crisis and low-standard programming, will Nepalese television channels be able to grab the attention of viewers beyond the national frontiers? Are the channels willing to invest in content development? Or will they just fizzle out in the cut-throat cable competition raging in a region where even making their presence felt would be an uphill task?

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

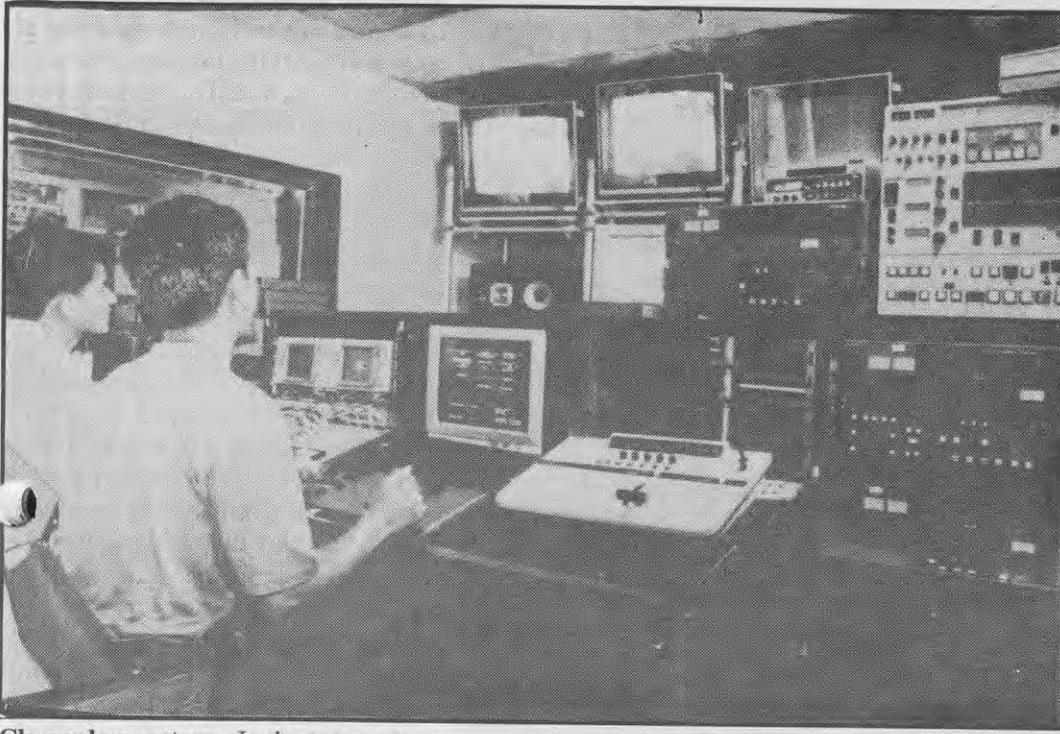
It is a regular Friday evening (July 13). Nepalese households are, as usual, glued to their television sets watching the 325th episode of "Hijo Aajaka Kura" - the satirical drama based on social events and incidents - on state-owned Nepal Television (NTV). The only difference is that Nepalis residing in their

homeland are now not alone in accessing this much-acclaimed serial. From workers in Qatar and South Korea to Nepalis in Hong Kong and Singapore and, of course, the large Nepali-speaking community in India, millions of more viewers can have real-time access to the show, thanks to NTV stepping into the satellite age.

NTV began satellite transmission on

Wednesday July 4, 200. The channel is linked with the American IntelSAT that extends its footprint across Asia.

Not to be outdone, the private-sector Channel Nepal Network, which has been waiting for the government's green signal to uplink its programs from Nepal itself, pre-empted NTV's pioneering venture by uplinking from Thailand via ThaiCom satellite the previous day.



**Channel operators :** In the space age

In a matter of two days, just as many Nepalese channels stepped into the space age. The fact was received well by the people.

The demand for Nepalese satellite TV channels has been made for long. Given the geographically difficult terrain of the country, it was not only a commercial fad for the state-owned NTV reach out to satellite.

"Tall hills and mountains punctuate our terrain. Broadcasting through a terrestrial system will mean that our signal will be disturbed by these geographic barriers, making it impossible for us to cover the whole of Nepal," says Durga Nath Sharma, general manager of Nepal Television. "Going for satellite transmission was the obvious choice for us."

NTV had been planning to go for satellite transmission for the last five or six years. But it was after the series of negative publicity that Nepal received through foreign satellite channels in the aftermath of Indian Airlines Flight 814 hijack and the Hrithik Roshan episode that the authorities began to sit up and give serious consideration to the plan.

"In less than one and a half years of planning, we have been able to uplink

with the satellite," says Sharma.

Meanwhile, Channel Nepal, owned by Space Time Network - the largest cable operator in the country - had also been working to launch satellite broadcasts. In fact, had it not hit a series of snags, it could well have been doing so since mid-April.

First, the channel was denied a license during the tenure of Jaya Prakash Gupta as communications minister. After Gupta's successor, Shiva Raj Joshi, finally granted the licence, the frequency management division at the ministry came up with more hassles. The channel was made to stop all preparations to go for satellite transmission at the last minute after the division said it had to conduct "final inspection of its equipment."

Pushed to the wall by official stalling, the channel operators decided to uplink their programs from Thailand. The channel is currently said to be transporting its programs to Thailand from where it is uplinked to ThaiCom, a satellite with a global beam. "Our programs can be seen from anywhere in the world," said Bahadur Krishna Tamrakar, chairman of Spacetime Publications, a sister organization of Spacetime Network,

which owns the channel, in *The Kathmandu Post*.

Channel Nepal officials also criticize the government for dilly-dallying with their "equipment inspection" procedure, thereby causing them to invest more unnecessarily for their transmission from Thailand.

Among the two channels that have simultaneously gone for satellite transmission, Channel Nepal will focus more on entertainment while NTV, being the government media, will have more social obligations.

#### What To Show?

Even as the two Nepalese channels are now available via satellite, the greatest concern is how they are going to survive in the competition.

"We have seen the likes of

Jain TV and ATN step down from satellite transmission after failing to impress the audience. What is the guarantee that same thing may not happen to NTV tomorrow, if it does not polish its programs soon?" asks Tapa Nath Shukla, a former general manager of NTV.

All agree that programming content becomes the point of primary concern once a television channel goes on air. "In the satellite channels, software is even more important. What will they show? How will they attract new viewers?" asks Yadav Kharel, a prominent movie director and chairman of Nepal Film Development Board.

Nepalese television channels are not exactly known for entertaining programs. Apart from a handful of shows like "Hijo Aajaka Kura", "Geetanjali" and telefilms, NTV does not have any audience-grabbing programs to boast of. In urban areas where the cable lines have made large inroads, NTV is among the least favorite channels. "In the age of MTV and Star TV, very few youngsters are found watching the national channel," says Sagun Shrestha, a youth from Patan.

"The programs of NTV are neither very good nor very bad. We know we

# “The Danger Is Our Presence May Not Even Be Felt”

— RAJENDRA DAHAL

*RAJENDRA DAHAL is the editor of Himal fortnightly magazine. He talked to SANJAYA DHAKAL about the likely impact of satellite transmission of Nepalese channels on the development of the media in the country. Excerpts:*

**Now that two Nepali channels have gone for satellite transmission, do you think our voice will be heard across the border?**

Voices do not travel due to two reasons. One is the hardware, technology part. Now we have this facility to our avail. We have the hardware part and we can send our satellite signals. But the other thing is the software part. What are we going to transmit? If our programs are not qualitative, if we cannot give proper voice, it may not pay.

**Indian satellite TV channels have been accused of providing distorted views of events in Nepal. Will Nepali channels be able to provide a balanced version?**

I don't think the charges levelled against Indian media will be levelled at our channels because though we might have larger reach, we may not cover foreign issues. Moreover, there is a danger that our presence may not even be felt across the border. Besides, it would not be fair to compare our channels with BBC, CNN, Doordarshan or Star TV. It would not be wise to have high expectations.

**How do you think our current affairs programs should be?**

There is a lot of challenge there. The biggest challenge is the language. At least, we could make programs in English. Since our media have not perfected even in the local language, it is difficult to provide quality programs in English and other languages.

**How would this affect tourism promotion?**

Not much, directly. There could be some response in India. We could address Indian tourists by showing promotional programs in regional languages. The only thing we can do is ensure the flow of proper information. As far as Japan, West Europe and America are concerned, there is little chance of even making our presence felt.

**What kind of impact will it have on media development?**

This has provided a big opportunity. So, as far as media development is concerned, this will have positive impact.

grams by buying time on NTV. “The concerned authorities now must give attention to uplift the facilities. There has to be studio, technical equipment as well as generous remuneration to pump life into our software content.”

Shah, an acclaimed actor and director, says if such facilities are provided, there are many things that could be done to improve Nepalese television programs. “For example, there are subjects like Jung Bahadur and stories like ěSeto Baghi on which very good serials can be made.”

As far as NTV is concerned, many believe the channel may not be able to project itself as a source of wholesome entertainment given its social and other obligations. But Channel Nepal, which is fully own by the private sector, could fill the gap.

The opening of the satellite flood-gates also means a growth of opportunities for creative artistes. “Be they musicians, directors or artistes, everybody can reap benefits,” says Sharma. He also sees the possibility of roping in talent from the Nepalese film industry. “When the likes of Amitabh Bachchan are doing quiz shows on the small screen in India, it only proves how vast this sector has become. We will also like to welcome Nepalese artistes in similar ventures.”

**Will The Presence Be Felt?**

Another concern media-watchers have been expressing is that although Nepalese channels have been uplinked, will they be able to make their presence felt among the international audience? The critical issue is, how will the audiences know that Nepalese channels are

have a long way to go in showing quality programs. We are definitely serious about launching new programs to attract a wider audience following the satellite transmission,” says Sharma.

According to Kharel, the time has come for the channels to invest seriously in programs. “There are lots of creative people. These channels will have to tap their potential,” he says.

Agrees Nir Shah, a former chief of NTV and currently the boss of Shangrila Channel - a private-sector network that has been broadcasting entertainment pro-



Channel Nepal transmission : Wider reach



**Satellite antenna** : Catching the glimpse of world

available and, more importantly, will they be inclined to receive it? Already there are hundreds of popular satellite channels- one more or one less is not going to make any difference in the way remote controls are flipped in homes.

From language to presentation, Nepalese channels will have to face difficulties in setting up their identity.

There is a general misconception that once NTV or Channel Nepal has uplinked to a satellite, their programs would automatically be seen in households.

But the reality is that, as these channels are digital, their signals have to be first decoded and only then can they be received by dish antenna.

"This is where the role of cable operators comes in. If our channels want to be viewed widely, they will have to undergo agreement with big cable operators in India and elsewhere. Even within Nepal, NTV should reach into similar agreements with cable operators, who are now active even in villages like Jumla and Namche," says Shukla.

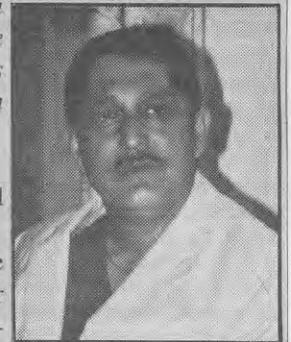
Sharma agrees. It is not expensive to have a decoder for cable operators and if some of them cannot afford it, we will seek financial support from agencies like District Development Committee (DDC) to buy them the decoders, he says.

#### **Countering The Foreign Media**

## **“Software Development Is The Bigger Challenge”**

— YADAV KHAREL

*YADAV KHAREL is the premier director and the chairman of Nepal Film Development Board. Kharel sees the satellite transmission of Nepalese channels as both an opportunity as well as challenge. Excerpts from his conversation with SANJAYA DHAKAL:*



### **What kind of content should our newly launched satellite channels broadcast?**

I find the software content as the bigger challenge. We have the base to reach a larger audience. But what do we offer them? When even the present programs, which are tailor-made for certain segments of our population, are being criticised as low quality, how can we satisfy the bigger audience. The new audience will be the people of Nepalese origin living in foreign countries and foreign citizens having an interest in Nepal. The programs will have to be made to cater to their taste. Besides, there should be programs of interest to our workers living in places like Japan, Qatar. Diversity in content including culture, geography, special information, news, views and so on has to be developed.

### **How can the content be improved?**

I find that everybody's attention is concentrated on going to satellite. Nobody is serious about what after that? I don't know of the homework they have done in this regard. More investment and more labor are required for software development. They will have to tap creative people.

### **How will this affect Nepal's film sector and artistes?**

By giving bigger reach and coverage, definitely, it will have positive impact. Our films' identity can flourish. Proper marketing will result in good yields to all of us artistes and film-makers.

# “The Most Important Thing Is To Establish Credibility”

— DURGA NATH SHARMA

**DURGA NATH SHARMA**, general manager of Nepal Television (NTV), takes pride in having started satellite transmission of the national television channel. He spoke to **SANJAYA DHAKAL** about the technical, investment and software-development challenges of taking NTV to a global audience. Excerpts:

## Why was satellite transmission important? What kind of technology is in use now?

For a mountainous country like Nepal, satellite television is the best option to carry the footprint to every nook and corner. We have been trying to uplink our channel via satellite for many years. I am happy to say that this has finally materialized within less than a year's preparations. Until now, our transmission was thrown terrestrially from our Singh Durbar station. We had a mother station at Phulchowki hilltop, which relayed the transmission to other parts of the country. Being a terrestrial transmission, the high hills proved to be barriers and, though we had relay stations scattered across the country, the quality of picture that reached viewers in, say Ilam, became extremely poor. Now, we have piggy-backed on Nepal Telecommunication Corporation (NTC) to make use of the IntelSAT (to which NTC is a signatory). Our transmission now travels from Singh Durbar to the Balambu-based Sagarmatha Earth Station, which is owned by the NTC, via optical-fibre placed underground. The digital signal is thrown up 36,000 km to the satellite transponder at 66 deg E 9 Mhz, which then throws it back to earth. This signal can be received by a satellite receiver. But there is confusion among people here that this satellite signal will be automatically received by their TV sets. That is not so. You have to have a receiver and decoder to catch the signal. In fact, we are trying to build enough Low Power Transmitters (LPT) around the country so that people can receive our signals without a receiver. That will mean the people would not have to pay a single penny to watch our satellite signals. At present, we have 11 such LPTs. We are constructing seven more within the next two years. But they will not be enough. We need at least 30 LPT stations to be able to provide our transmission across the country. Another thing is, we could also have introduced the latest technology called Direct To Home (DTH). But it would have been expensive and each individual home would have been required to spend extra money to receive signals this way.

## What are the major benefits of transmitting through satellite?

There are three important benefits. The first is quality. Earlier, the quality of NTV was not very good. Its signals were poor even within the capital valley. Every time there was a risk of lightning, we had to shut off the Phulchowki station, thereby plugging off our transmission

beyond the valley. Now this problem has been resolved. The second benefit is that our footprint now covers the whole of Nepal. If you have a dish antenna, you can watch NTV from any corner of the country. As we have cable operators even in villages these days, it would not be expensive for them to buy a decoder worth seven or eight thousand rupees to receive our signals and distribute them to individual homes. We even may not want royalty from them. The third benefit is that now we have crossed our national boundary. Our footprint now covers Asia — Japan, China, Mongolia, SAARC countries, Singapore and Middle East. Our transmission is via regional beam.

## What was the investment required for satellite transmission and how did NTV manage to raise it? How do you plan to recover your costs?

The satellite transmission required an investment of Rs 100 million. We received Rs 50 million from the government and obtained another Rs 50 million as loan from the NTC. The cost of equipment and others was around Rs 45 million. Wherever possible, we have shared equipment with the NTC to save costs. Every year, we will have to pay Rs 25 million to the IntelSAT as rental charges for the transponder services. By going for satellite transmission, our costs have definitely increased. We plan to recover the costs by increasing ad tariffs. Since, now our footprint has increased, I am sure Indian companies, for whom Nepal is a good market, will find it cheaper to promote their goods through NTV. Likewise, we have decided to increase by 20 percent the charge we have imposed on private time-buyers like Divyadrishti and Shangrila. This year our revenue target was Rs 120 million but we are going to collect Rs 150 million. And this is all without any aggressive marketing. I am sure with rigorous marketing we will be able to increase our revenue to Rs 200 million next year.

## A difficult part of satellite transmission would be improving the programming content, how is NTV looking at this facet?

Exactly, you can get latest hardware by paying money. It is more challenging to develop quality software. At present, I agree that all programs of NTV are not up to the mark. There are some sponsored programs that are doing really well, but others are not good enough. We are serious about this. We plan to continue with the sponsored programs and replace others. In fact, from next month, we will be introducing programs like “Nagad Paanch Lakh” to provide a new look. Our news and current affairs programs will also be improved. We will increase news time and introduce live interviews as well. We are also planning to increase our transmission time to 24 hours. But we need the help of the private sector for this. We will sell our time to them. Currently the slot after

11pm is available for sale. We are receiving some proposals, too.

## What about the metro channel?

As a national television, we have certain social and other obligations. So it has been felt that we need a separate metro channel to cater to our viewers. This entertainment channel will run commercially. The Chinese government shown willingness to help us in this regard by providing grant assistance. From September this year, they will be constructing a modern 300sq.m. station and 72-meter-high tower within our premises on turn-key basis. In the beginning this channel will be limited to Kathmandu Valley with the prospect for satellite uplinking after that. It will be completed within one or one and a half years.

## Does NTV plan to join hands with cable operators to actually make its presence felt?

As far as Nepal is concerned, the government policy is such that the cable operators have to compulsorily air national channel. Besides, as it is not expensive to install decoders, this should not be big problem. In villages too, the local District Development Committees (DDC), can provide fund to the cable operators to buy decoders and things like that. We have talked with DDC people regarding this and they seem positive about the idea. As far as foreign countries are concerned, we are having numerous responses. People from Hong Kong have approached us.

## People think NTV will now be able to counter negative publicity from foreign channels.

It would be wrong to think so. You cannot compare the reach and penetration of BBC, CNN or Star TV with NTV. Definitely, we will provide Nepali version of events and news. We will be doing our best to preserve our national identity. We will be transmitting programs promoting tourism and culture. Definitely, aware people will watch our side of the story but that may not be true in general. The most important thing is to establish credibility. Otherwise, it will make no difference. This depends on how the government wants to proceed with NTV. Whether it wants to make it a mere parrot or give certain leeway.

## How will our artistes benefit from satellite transmission?

This is the age of television. Even in India you see cinema superstars working in television because of its reach and coverage. So the transmission will have positive impact on our artistes, too. If they want to come to the small screen, we will welcome them. ■



body is listening is altogether a different matter.

Besides, the Nepalese channels are yet to develop the culture of reporting on current affairs. As yet, most current affair programs broadcast through NTV are alleged to be drab and listless. NTV boss Sharma says that the channel will now increase the time of news and also include live interviews to give them a new look.

"It will be naive to think NTV will be able to counter the foreign media reporting. Our coverage and reach cannot be compared with that of established channels like BBC, CNN or Star TV," he says, adding, "However, we will definitely be able to show our side of the story."

Sharma also believes that establishing credibility will be of crucial importance. "We cannot afford to lose credibility in this age of competition."

#### Advantages And Benefits

Tourism may be one sector that could gain immensely from our television going global. The possibility of launching international promotion campaigns becomes more convenient with the national television channels going on satellite.

NTV has reached an understanding

## New Programs In The Offing

After going on satellite, state-owned Nepal Television (NTV) is working hard to give a new look to its program packages. While it has already sold some of its afternoon time to private sector, it is also planning to do the same with its night-time slots. From the beginning of Shrawan (mid-July), the NTV will be broadcasting some new programs to attract audiences. The foremost among these programs is the "Nagad Paanch Lakh" (Cash Five Hundred Thousand). This is the Nepali version of Star TV's "Kaun Banega Crorepati". Here ace comedian Madan Krishna Shrestha will be taking the place of Amitabh Bachchan. Likewise, the television serial on "Seto Bagh" (White Tiger), an acclaimed historic novel by Diamond SJB Rana, by ace director Nir Shah and another serial on the life story of Jung Bahadur Rana are also in the offing. NTV is also planning to dub programs of Discovery and National Geographic Channels as well as the popular Finnish cartoon show "Mommins". The private time-buyers like Shangrila's Day TV is also planning to build more quality software programs to cash in the satellite expansion. The private sector Channel Nepal has also been airing Nepalese films and entertainment programs. At present the channel is on for about six hours a day. The time will be stretched in near future, its officials say.

with the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) for producing quality promotional programs. "In fact, we have already made a couple of such programs and we will continue to do that," says Sharma.

Destination promotion through Nepalese channels can be both easy and cost-effective. But the problem here also lies in language.

Many say that satellite transmission would not directly contribute to tourism,

as far as markets such as Japan and western countries are concerned. But, they add, that it could help attract Indian tourists. According to Dahal, the Nepalese channels could produce specifically designed promotional items in local Indian languages to target the regional audiences.

Apart from tourism, these channels can also help in fostering Nepali's traditional culture and heritage and introduce them to the world. Above all, the channels can help to flow proper information at times of crisis.

In this age of communication technology, the fact that Nepal was so late in launching its channels on satellite speaks volumes about how close we are with latest technologies. Though late, Nepalese channels have now stepped into the satellite age. It is now up to the concerned authorities how to make Nepalese channels popular with an expanded audience.

Investing in television software is also a sound financial move as popular channels can have no dearth of advertisers who are willing to part generously with their money in order to be heard and seen. Conversely, if software is not properly developed, Nepalese satellite broadcasts will have no meaning as the viewers, already used to surfing channels, are bound to skip them. ■



A scene of Nepali film : Will they attract more audience?

FNCCI

# Security First

The apex private sector body demands secure environment to run businesses

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

Sharing popular concern for deteriorating law and order situation in the country in the wake of Maoist insurgency, business leaders, too, have emphasized that security environment was the prerequisite to run industry and businesses in the country. Addressing the 35th annual general meeting of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, outgoing president of the FNCCI Pradip Kumar Shrestha said that the political bickering, instability and the worsening law and order situation have dealt a very heavy blow to the economy, especially on trade and industry. "Not only to induce positive changes but even to arrest the downward slide, we need to put the economy in the life support system," he added.

Responding to business community's concerns, Prime Minister Girija Prasad

Koirala said his government gave top priority to provide security to industry and businesses. Koirala said the 14-point agenda for national consensus put forward by him gave top priority for national reconstruction through economic development. "All the political parties agree verbally on the proposal of not organizing strikes, bandhs etc. for the next ten years, but refuse to put it in black and white," he said.

Newly elected President of the FNCCI, Ravi Bhakta Shrestha, too, blamed political parties for not coming to consensus over the economic agenda. "Can unemployment be reduced and living standard of the people be raised in the absence of economic activities," he asked, amid applause of his colleagues. "Nepal has lagged far behind in the worldwide marathon of economic prosperity. Instead of taking benefit from windows of opportunity, we are busy in creating doors of poverty," Shrestha said. Only if the poli-

ticians listened.

With representation from 85 district and municipal chambers from 69 out of 75 districts in the country, 50 commodity/sectoral associations, nine bilateral chambers and more than 400 business units as associate members, FNCCI has truly acquired the shape of a representative, national organizations of the business community over the years. It is, however, yet to develop into a professional body of Nepalese private sector, say critics.

Especially after the restoration of democracy and successive government's policies to provide greater role to the private sector, FNCCI is in the limelight for its national role and international relations. The FNCCI now has working relations through the Memorandum of Understanding with 28 foreign chambers and federations. FNCCI delegation accompanied late King Birendra during his state visit to China and Prime Minister Koirala during his official visits to France and India. It has also got working relationships with Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

"Be it iron removal of special additional duty in India or be it in renewal of Nepal-India Trade treaty, our initiatives with support from our counterparts like CII and FICCI have helped to turn the environment positive," said Pradip Shrestha. "The efforts of our counterparts in China, ACFIC, have been supporting us in our efforts in attracting investments and tourists from China as well as promoting Nepalese export to China."

Meanwhile, FNCCI leaders looked quite concerned about the possibility of a rival organization coming to challenge them. "We should look for unity in diversity, not the other way round," said Ravi, pointing toward the proposed Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI), a brain child of noted industrialist and former President of FNCCI, Binod Kumar Chaudhary. Chaudhary has already clarified that CNI will not be a rival to FNCCI. In its 35th year, it would be better if the business leaders sit together and agree to strengthen the apex chamber that has gained good reputation even abroad. Only a strong tree can yield sweet fruits. ■



PM Koirala inaugurating FNCCI meeting : Business interests

## INTELLECTUAL DEBATES

## Where Are They Leading Us?

With their incoherent and inane arguments, Nepali intellectuals are pushing the people towards greater uncertainty

By KESHAB POUDEL

**I**s it possible for an individual to address four or five diverse public events like seminars, talk programs and public meetings in a day?

If Nepalese intellectuals and professionals are taken as a model, it is not impossible to go on endlessly stretching your thoughts in keeping with the times. Whatever the themes of the programs, this emerging tribe has the time and inclination to address and attend.

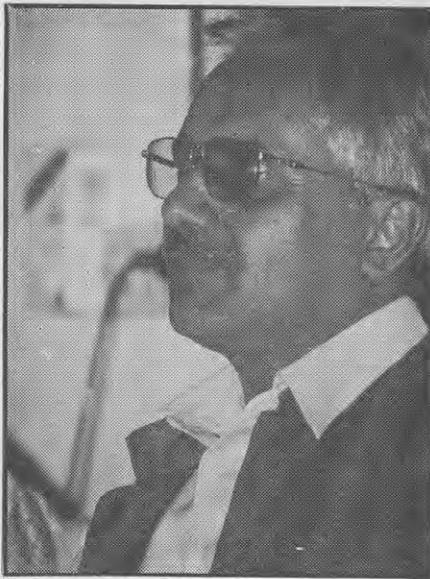
On Sunday, July 15, three different seminars were held in Kathmandu. However, most of the speakers came from the same group of professionals. In the seminar and lecture circuit, people like former speaker Daman Nath Dhungana, former minister Padma Ratna Tuladhar, former Nepali Congress spokesman Narahari Acharya and CPN-UML leader Jhalnath Khanal are familiar faces. Accompanying them are professionals like Professor Dr. Lok Raj Baral and president of Nepal Bar Association Sindhunath Pyakurel.

From human rights to political discussions and from media ethics to legal and constitutional issues and from gender equality and girl trafficking to corruption, a particular breed of people seems to have thrived. The virtual monopoly ministers held over public meetings has been broken by a group of professional speakers who seem to be feverishly counting the number of meetings they manage to address in a day.

In this domain, consistency is not required. The arguments advanced at one seminar can change at the next gathering a couple of blocks away. The same speaker can celebrate the spirit of the *Jana Andolan* that restored democracy at one seminar and challenge the constitution at the next. Acclaimed professionals have the ability

to express conflicting opinions over several meetings in the same day.

Congress Central Committee member Narahari Acharya, for instance, addressed a morning seminar stressing the need to amend the Succession to the Throne Act. Acharya, whose party claims to be the messiah of parliamentary governance, constitutional monarchy and human rights, even agreed to go to any extent to change the constitution at another session organized to discuss an alternative political system.



**Acharya** : Intellectual woes

It's not only politicians who have the flair for saying what the audience wants to hear. At one meeting, a professional demanded the introduction of a proportional representation system to save the current policy while calling for an alternative to parliamentary democracy at another gathering. "There is an alternative to every political system," said Professor Lok Raj Baral, one of the die-hard advocates of multiparty democracy during the Panchayat decades.

While addressing seminars and talk programs, professionals and intellectuals seem to be unaware about the chaos their comments are capable of triggering. While calling for amending the constitution and abolishing the political system altogether in the same breath, they ignore the destabilizing effects of their words on society.

A person who drafted the current constitution, which enshrines the parliamentary system as an unchangeable feature, has already demanded that it be scrapped. "If the country so demands, it should scrap constitutional provisions," said former speaker Daman Nath Dhungana addressing an interaction program organized on Saturday morning to debate the Succession to the Throne Act. "Parliamentary system is not a only democracy but it has many alternatives," former speaker Dhungana said in an address to another seminar on "Present Political System and Future Strategy" organized by Nepal Contemporary Studies Center.

The majority of intellectuals and professionals of Nepal have a fertile imagination and can be remarkably innovative. They can instigate the common people against a society based on order regardless of the consequences. Similarly, they can pacify discontented people in keeping with the political requirements of the moment.

The recent activities of some professionals show that they have already captured the public dais from politicians. In a society undergoing an extraordinary transition from tradition to modernity, the old aristocracy has been transformed into a new class of intellectuals.

Nepal provides a typical example of the emergence of a new class that has no economic characteristic. It is a class in itself by virtue of its learning and training. It has access to governance and finds its interests lie in the perpetuation of political chaos.

Our intellectuals and professionals seem to be ardent adherents of Maoism in that they believe in the Great Helmsman's dictum: "Let a hundred flowers bloom, hundred thought flourish." They just don't seem to care about how intellectual chaos could harm the country. ■

## REPORT ON COURTS

# Doing Justice

A report presented by the Court Management Committee recommends various steps to improve facilities in the judiciary

By KESHAB POUDEL

**W**ith the promulgation of the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990, the role and responsibility of the Nepalese judiciary have drastically changed. The Supreme Court has been enshrined as the final institution to interpret the constitution and safeguard the rights of the citizens.

Technically and physically, one can see drastic changes in the court. The bench systems have been systemized with the service of well-qualified bench assistants to the judges.

Whatever the role the constitution has given and whatever new systems have been introduced, the traditional working pattern the court is yet to change, legal analysts argue.

The present system in the judiciary, some lawyers argue, is much worse than the earlier days when judges conducted their affairs with fewer physical and technical facilities.

Adding new facilities to the court alone is not enough to change the situation, critics say. What is required is commitment and sincerity on the part of all the judges in the court system.

At a time when everyone is talking about the need for more efficient and well-equipped judiciary and an effective justice system, a Judicial Strengthening Committee headed by secretary at the Judicial Council Secretariat Kashi Raj Dahal has presented a report to the government.

The 500-plus page report deals with such diverse issues as the physical, manpower and financial constraints of the courts. The committee evaluated the situation after intense research and study of the various courts of the country and reveals the constraints and

limitations they face.

One of the important recommendations of the panel is refining the existing procedural law, particularly in the areas of service of summons, registration of the petition, court management, examination of witness and execution of the judgment.

Lawyers complain that the justices



**Supreme Court :** Will the report be implemented?

and judges should read the entire judgment at the time of delivering it. In the early days, the justices and judges used to deliver written judgments with full text of verdict.

Now most of the justices write the judgment a few months after delivering their verdict. Even in many important cases, justices and judges write their judgment months after deliberations.

The committee also discusses the physical infrastructure, financial position, manpower and challenges of the 75 district courts, 16 appellate courts and

the Supreme Court. After intense study and discussions with various government agencies, the committee also recommends improvement measures.

Apart from issues related to the recruitment, training and promotion of the judges and employees of the courts, the committee discusses the role of the government attorneys. It also recommends ways of improving the professionalism of government attorneys.

At a time when the Supreme Court is overloaded with cases, the committee proposes a system to use the appellate court as the final court to settle petty disputes. The apex court should be signed matters related to the interpretation of the constitution.

"The committee report will help to enhance the physical and other capabilities of the judiciary," said Dahal. "I am very happy that the government for the first time has sanctioned development budget to the court as per the recommendation."

Courts need library and all kinds of modern facilities, including the Internet access, but it is the judges who have to prove that lack of such facilities hamper the quality of decision making and judgment. Regardless of the political system in existence, the Nepalese judiciary has always protected the rights of the individual. The court has always worked to check the highhandedness of the executive by issuing various kinds of orders.

Despite having been entrusted with many important responsibilities under the present constitution, the judiciary lacks proper physical and other infrastructure. Facilities like libraries and chambers are virtually non-existent.

As everyone is talking about the lapses in the judiciary and lack of support system for the judges to improve the quality of judgments, the Dahal committee report can be expected to bring certain positive changes. Even before publishing the report, the government has already sanctioned development budget to the judiciary. How the courts work to improve the situation remains to be seen. ■

## RELIGION

## Time Factor

How far should rituals and traditions go in adapting to the moment in order to maintain their relevance?

By AKSHAY SHARMA

“In marriage, the pandit is not the lawmaker,” says 26-year-old Sameer Rana. “It is up to the couple to make their own decisions.”

“I recently bought a pote (a garland of beads worn by married women) got into a big brawl with my parents,” says 19-year-old Pavitra Aryal, who was nowhere near getting married. “Why should I have to care about rituals that were made generations ago?”

Such questions arise when traditions and customs collide with contemporary realities. For a long time, the Vedic philosophy that has guided social life was memorized and passed on from generation to generation before it was written down.

Along the way, some features got lost while others became outmoded. Many simply refuse to go away. Clashes over customs are at the center of the generation gap urban society talks so much about these days.

“We need to adapt our traditions to the times so that the younger generations continue to follow it,” says 79-year-old Pandit Suryanath Upadhyaya. “People can’t be expected to adhere to rituals they don’t believe in.”

In “Before the Beginning and After the End”, Rishi Kumar Mishra writes: “Access to the answers of the Vedas would open up a quantum leap into a world of new truths and new experiences, and the study of the knowledge contained in these texts should also help in understanding the founding principles of one of the most ancient civilizations in human history.”

He translates an older saying from the Vedas: “All forms are made of Rik

(the first Veda), all motions spring from Yaju, all luminosity is a manifestation of Sama and from all these evolve all creation. Together, these could indicate to us the establishment of an enduring harmony and happiness in our planet.”

Such esoteric and high-flown expressions often intimidate young seekers



A wedding ceremony : Changing tradition

of the truth. However, those who simplify the tenets of religion and tradition in keeping with the times seem to be winning followers. “I like to watch the TV program of Swami Anumbhawanada, which is aired by the Shanker Channel,” says 28-year-old Abhiruchi KC. “It’s the way he teaches us to look at things, always treating other humans with respect. You don’t get the same experience by watching the Ramayana or Mahabharat on TV.”

People have used various means such as yoga and sadhana to attain spiritual

succor. “We find interpretations of life in the Bhagavad Gita,” says Krishna Panta. “As Lord Krishna advises Arjun before the Kurukshetra battle, we should strive to balance our life. Such interpretations of life are worth studying.”

Those averse to making outward appearances of religiosity are nevertheless inspired by the mystique of the gods and goddesses. “Although I don’t bow down in front of idols, I do admire them,” says Ajit Shrestha. “Our gods have four or five hands. For example, Goddess Saraswati has four hands. She has a musical instrument in one, a book in another, a flower in the third and a weapon in the fourth. The message is that music is part of knowledge, the book speaks of

itself, the flower tells us to look at life in a certain way. The weapon may have some meaning.”

Ajit adds: “The image of Lord Shiva with a snake around his neck says that the world is so full of intrigues that you have to be strong enough to do as his statues portray.”

For Pandit Upadhyaya, the essence of religion is always striving to do something good for society and abstaining from things that could land you in trouble. Now, how much simpler can religion get? ■

## BOOK

# Globalization Guide

Experts explore the role of the World Trade Organization in the context of globalization and offer a road map for Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

Despite shortcomings in the organizational process to protect the rights of the least developed countries from tough competition, Nepal has to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) to survive in the global marketplace.

Experience has shown that no country can remain and island unto itself. Accordingly, Nepal requires a coherent approach to integrate itself with the global market.

Nepal, which is in a critical phase of diversifying trade with various countries of the world, is facing a tough challenge over how best to protect the benefits it is getting as a least developed country. After the full implementation of the WTO regime, no country can hope to survive economically without joining it. Membership of the WTO would also affect the short-term benefits of the country.

At a time when the country is in the midst of this dilemma, a group of Nepalese and foreign experts has tried to explore ways in which Nepal can maximize its benefits. Published by Nepal Foundation for Advanced Studies (NEFAS) and the United States Embassy, Kathmandu, the book "WTO, Globalization and Nepal" has proposed a blueprint for Nepal.

"There can be no doubt that a significant benefit accruing from the WTO membership for countries like Nepal would be the Dispute Settlement Body, a potentially invaluable tool which can

put smaller economies in a stronger position when negotiating trade disputes with larger economies," says Ananda P. Srestha, executive director of NEFAS.

Based on a one-day seminar on the WTO, the volume compiles papers presented by renowned Nepalese econo-

*WTO, Globalization and Nepal*  
 Published by Nepal Foundation for Advanced Studies (NEFAS)  
 Edited by: Ananda P. Srestha  
 Pages: 125  
 Price: Undisclosed

mists and experts on the subject. Their views help to clarify the challenges before Nepal in world trade.

In his paper "Globalism, Globalization, Glocalization and South Asia", Madhukar S.J.B. Rana discusses the historical evolution of concepts like globalization, including the culture and tradition of South Asian nations. He argues that the culture of particular societies always determines their overall policy framework.

Social and cultural acceptances are important in the context of globalization. Culture may be classified as isolationist, protectionist and cosmopolitan depending on their degree of openness to others. That, in turn, explains the extent of tradition and modernity

within a culture — whether it is static or dynamic.

When everyone is concerned about privileges and benefits for the least developed countries, Patrick Marcrory in his article "WTO, Dispute Resolution and LDCs" highlights that the LDCs would also stand to benefit from the WTO regime.

Others express concern about social security after Nepal joins the WTO. Dr. Gunanidhi Sharma in his article "WTO, Globalization and Social Security" opposes the idea of joining the WTO without declaring any resolution from the WTO.

Former ambassador Dr. Durgesh

Man Singh elaborates on the foreign policy implications of WTO membership. He also stresses the need to see how Nepal can maintain its relationship with neighboring countries in business and trade.

Kishore K. Guru-Gharana, Ramesh Bikram Karky and Navin Chhetri highlight various challenges of the

globalization process and the role of the WTO. ■

## Social Satire

*Anuhar Ta Baru Kagaz Kai Bhaye Hune*  
 Written by Lava Gaunle  
 Published by Lava Gaunle  
 Price : Rs 151 (individual),  
 Rs 501 (institutions)

What kind of poets would bureaucrats make? Well, they make very sensitive ones if the recent book by Lava Gaunle is any indication. Gaunle, a section officer at the Cabinet Secretariat, has come out with a collection of short poems, songs and gazals.

Gaunle's poems are short but they are a sure-hit jab at the contemporary Nepalese society. From social anomalies to love and from politics to history, his poems reflect all kinds of feelings.

Some of his poems are very pensive while others are written in a funny mood. Gaunle proves his literary mettle from the collection. Indeed, he shows good prospects. ■



**TRANSITION**

**ACCEPTED:** The resignation tendered by Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister **Ram Chandra Poudel**, by His Majesty the King, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

**ASSIGNED:** Foreign Min-

ister **Chakra Prasad Bastola**, the additional portfolio of home, by His Majesty the King, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

**APPOINTED:** **U Ne Win**, as the ambassador of Myanmar Federation to the Kingdom of Nepal.

**ELECTED:** **Rabi Bhakta Shrestha**, the first vice

president of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), as the president of the FNCCI, unopposed.

**LEFT:** Chairman of Public Accounts Committee (PAC) **Subas Nemwang** leading a delegation of MPs **Hridayesh Tripathy**, **Ramesh Lekhak**, **Shiva Bahadur Deuja**,

**Buddhiman Tamang**, **Dilliraj Sharma** and PAC secretary **Som Bahadur Thapa** to a visit to North Korea.

**AWARDED:** The International Center for Integrated Mountain Development, with the President's Award recently, at the 2001 ESRI User's Conference in California, USA. ■

# KRISHNA PRASAD PANTA

## Modernization Advocate

The legal fraternity loses a luminary who continued his pursuit for human welfare even after his death

By AKSHAY SHARMA

**K**rishna Prasad Panta, the eminent lawyer who had a brief stint in politics and business, died on Thursday at the age of 69. He was suffering from heart, kidney and stone ailments, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

A legal luminary who rolled back frontiers in the quest for modernization, Panta maintained that legacy even in death. He donated his body to the study of medical science. Dr Rajesh Panta, the late lawyer's



**Panta :** Remarkable life

youngest son, told a vernacular weekly, "It was our duty to do what father wanted. He thought that even after his demise, his body should be used for the betterment of humanity."

His tuppi was cut an hour before he died, making him a sanyasi (hermit), according to his wishes. In that way, he could side-step the Hindu tradition of cremating the body.

"Eight months ago, he argued so forcefully against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act that had been sent by King Birendra for the Supreme Court's opinion," recalls a colleague. "That was a time he had

to undergo dialysis up to four times a day."

Panta, who put the spotlight firmly on modernizing Nepal's legal system, remains an inspiration for up-and-coming lawyers. Born in 1932, at Gyaneshwor, Kathmandu, Panta served as president of Nepal Bar Association. "He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but he was always on a quest for knowledge," said a colleague.

Panta graduated from Benaras Hindu University in political science and went on to pursue his studies at New Delhi. He enrolled for a Ph.D., but could not complete his studies.

He married at the age of 11 and had his first child at the age of 14. He joined Nepal Law Firm in 1962 with veteran lawyers like Krishna Prasad Bhandari and Kusum Shrestha. "He had a flair for advocacy. He soon emerged as prominent young lawyer with his wit and analytical mind at a time when the legal profession was still in its rudimentary form," a colleague recalls.

"He was interested in a variety of things. He tried everything from contesting elections to a starting his own business. But he couldn't succeed outside the bar."

Panta contested the graduate constituency election to the Rastriya Panchayat in 1971 but lost. "He later became a minister for 45 days, but there was a drastic change in his behavior," a friend remembers. "He had great political ambitions but it was not a bed of roses for him. His performance in politics was not recorded as a success."

In 1971, he became a member of the Judicial Council and was involved with the "Gaun Pharka (Back to the Village) campaign of the panchayat days. He returned to the legal profession in 1979

after the announcement of the national referendum, starting another phase in the modernization of the legal system. "As an eminent second-generation lawyer, he played an outstanding role in enriching the legal profession. He was and will remain an icon," a friend says.

"It was his folly to have dabbled into business at the peak of his career. And, as it is with so many others who get into politics, his career later as a lawyer was affected," observes senior advocate Ganesh Raj Sharma, a close friend of Panta. "We were on the same mission and I respect him for that," Sharma says.

"He was crazy about food and loved Urdu poetry. He was a very social person and was very close to his family. He loved playing cards," Sharma remembers. Panta was considered by his colleagues a masterful juggler of words. "He had strong persuasive powers along with a rich vocabulary. He was very diligent in his work. He was cut out for the legal profession," a friend remembers.

Among the many moments that brought him into the limelight were the Tanakpur case, the case against Dr. K.I. Singh and the release of Rishikesh Shaha. "The Shaha case was a tough fight indeed, and we had no ground to stand on. There were no laws then to release Shaha, but Krishna Parsed Panta convinced the court to release him." ■

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(Source : Himalayan Book Center, Bagh Bazar, Kathmandu, Ph : 242085)

**Video (English)**

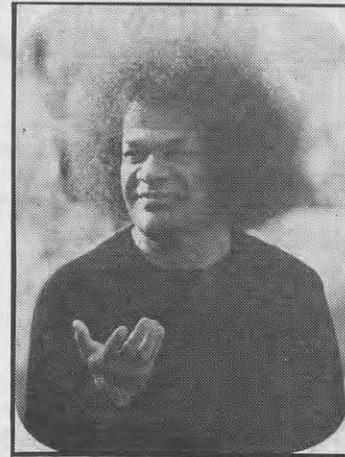
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- Dr. Dolittle II
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- Tom Raider



**Hindi**

- Aks
- Tum Bin
- Bas Itna Sa Khawaab Hai
- Mujhe Kuch Kehna Hai
- Love Ke Liya Kuch Bhi Karega
- Pagalpan
- Gadar
- Lagaan
- Avgat
- Ek Rishtaa

(Source : Super Star Video, New Road)



*“Life is just a chance  
to see for yourself  
your beginning and  
your end.”*

**- SATHYA SAI BABA**



**GASOLINE ALLEY**



**ERNIE**



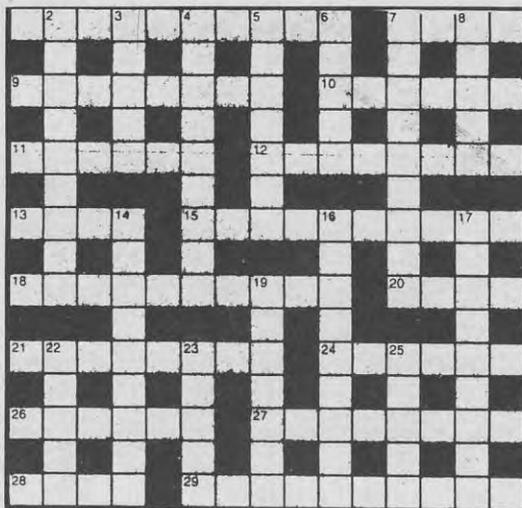
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**MARY WORTH**



# CROSSWORD



## ACROSS

1. Make critical comment, with publicity, on a game (10)
7. Robin Hood, for one, was more cunning than this (4)
9. German — like Berlin, for example (8)
10. Unhealthy state? Certainly (3,3)
11. Odd turn of phrase for form master? (6)
12. Food store? True, in a manner of speaking (8)
13. Recommendation to strike (4)
15. Popular protest about despicable person in charge (10)
18. With code reversed, letters misdirected to NY address (4,6)
20. I'd heard, but not seen? On the contrary (4)
21. A vessel out on its own? That's a joke (3-5)
24. Fruit couples initially collected from town market together (6)
26. WWI leader misidentified in terms of nationality? (6)
27. Extremely fine transport organization led by Henry (8)
28. For sound, sensible reasons (4)
29. Humor head before case in which evidences provided (7,3)

## DOWN

2. Sort of love that can never last for long? (9)
3. Finally clear away part of litter after short time (3,2)
4. Cast doubt on record run? Correct (9)
5. It could make me a lord (7)
6. Test pilot (5)
7. Make light of everything I have taken up and consumed (9)
8. Support for one behind university's position (5)
14. Beat up with chain, of course, by the seaside (4-5)
16. Have little spare time to make fettuccini? (3,2,4)
17. Written in Latin, at full length — No. 16 possibly? (2,7)
19. Within which, we hear, corn's heated (7)
22. Statesman, former of a novel partnership (5)
23. Expertise in speaking? Certainly not! (5)
25. Chap as good as misses, it's said (5)

## SOLUTION

**Across :** 1. Animadvert 7. Arch 9. Composer 10. Ill say 11. Shaper 12. Delivery 13. Plug 15. Democratic 18. Wall street 20. Eyed 21. One-liner 24. Tomato 26. French 27. Hairline 28. Whys 29. Witness box

**Down :** 2. Neophilia 3. Mop up 4. Discredit 5. Earldom 6. Trial 7. Alleviate 8. Chair 14. Golf-links 16. Cut it fines 17. In extenso 19. Earshot 22. North 23. Nohow 25. Miles

# BRIDGE

<b>NORTH</b> 3-16			
♠ J 9 4			
♥ J 10 6 5 3			
♦ 10			
♣ A 9 5 3			
<b>WEST</b>		<b>EAST</b>	
♠ A Q 3 2		♠ 6 5	
♥ 9 4 2		♥ Q 8 7	
♦ Q J 8 5 4		♦ 9 7 3	
♣ 10		♣ Q 8 7 4 2	
<b>SOUTH</b>			
♠ K 10 8 7			
♥ A K			
♦ A K 6 2			
♣ K J 6			
Vulnerable: Both			
Dealer: South			
The bidding:			
South	West	North	East
2 NT*	Pass	3 ♦**	Pass
3 ♥	Pass	3 NT	All pass
*20-21 HCP			
**Transfer			
Opening lead: Diamond queen			

## "I hate it in friends when they come too late to help."

— EURIPIDES

"We beat him if you continue diamonds at trick two," observed East.

"I could have used a little help at trick one," replied West. "Why didn't you encourage me to continue?" With declarer marked with most of the honor cards, West did well to lead his diamond queen. Had he led fourth-best, dummy's 10 would have won, and South would have had an easy time.

Unfortunately, East played his diamond trey at trick one, signaling an odd number of diamonds. Fearing South had the nine, West switched meekly to his club 10, and the defense collapsed. South won his club jack and switched to spades, willing to lose two spade tricks. West won his queen, but the defense could no longer prevail. With his two diamond stopper intact, South developed two spade winners to make his game.

Against no-trump contracts, third-hand play requires partnership agreement. In today's example, most signal attitude, others play second-highest card (Foster Echo), and a few give count. However, given West's lead of the queen, East's nine was an enormous card when the 10 appeared in dummy. Clearly, regardless of partnership agreement, it was time for an encouraging signal at trick one, and East's contribution of his trey was a futile gesture.

After East encourages with his seven (even the nine would work here), West can lead another diamond without risk, and the defenders win the race for five tricks.

# Making New Technologies Work For Human Development

By ALESSANDRA TISOT

The first Human Development Report, commissioned by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1990 came at a time when concern for balancing budgets and payments seemed a higher international priority than concern for people. The Human Development Report series has advocated a shift in the development debate away from the sole concern with economic growth, towards a balanced concern for equity, sustainability, productivity and empowerment.

The report's signature trademark, the Human Development Index (HDI) continues to assess progress not in terms of income alone but also in terms of capabilities for human development.

In Nepal, a child born in the late 90s can expect to live 14 years longer than could a child born in the early 70s. The infant mortality rate decreased from 165 in 1970 to 75 in 1999, the under-five mortality rate decreased from 250 in 1970 to 104 in 1999. Over the last 25 years, Nepal's HDI has been steadily increasing, reducing the gap with neighboring countries.

Human development challenges remain large in the new millennium. Unacceptable levels of deprivation in people's lives across the world still prevail. In spite of all the impressive achievements, in Nepal, nearly 10 million people live in absolute poverty, 47 percent of the population consumes less than the minimum level of dietary energy consumption and more than half of the adults over the age of 15 are illiterate.

One of the goals of the Human Development Reports is to record the progress, and the setbacks, to the furtherance of human capability and creativity, as well as to analyze how advances have been achieved, what kinds of policies are the most effective, what forms of action have led to results, and what kinds of tools are at hand. This year's report is no exception.

Focusing on the theme of "making new technologies work for human development," the report is about how people can create and use technology – information and biotechnology in particular – to improve human lives, especially to reduce global poverty.

At first glance, such a theme could incite suspicion or skepticism. "Technology" enjoys a reputation for being expensive, inappropriate, foreign fixes that take no account of local development realities. Furthermore, the focus on "new" technologies may surprise some, especially in a country like Nepal where many "traditional" technologies have yet to reach many parts of the population.

However, possibilities for promoting human development through today's technological transformations are tremendous, in developing countries as well.

We live in a time of a new discovery, with enormous structural shifts in the way science is carried out, and unprecedented networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities brought about by the falling cost of communications, with new potentials for accelerating human development.

—The cost of transmitting a trillion bits of information from Boston to Los Angeles has fallen from \$ 15,000 in 1970 to 12 cents today.

—E-mailing a 40-page document from Chile to Kenya costs less than 10 cents, faxing it, about \$ 10 and sending it by courier \$ 50.

—Structures of production and other activities have been reorganized into networks, moving from a 'vertical integration' to 'horizontal integration' through networks.

—Genetics is now the basis of life sciences with much research in pharmaceuticals and plant breeding.

—Creativity and entrepreneurship in Brazil, India, Thailand, Niger have already developed software for illiterate users and low-cost, solar-powered wireless devices.

—Grameen telephones in Bangladesh allow individuals, schools and health centers to access information. Studies suggest that a single call provides savings of 3-10 percent for the average family's monthly incomes,

benefiting poor households by replacing the need to collect information through more expensive channels.

Just to mention an example from Nepal: the Healthnet project has 150 user points around the country, reaching 500 health professionals and getting 300 hits a day on its website.

Technology has indeed been a tool for development. It has been central to human progress over the past century – whether it be in the first use of penicillin or the spreading use of vaccines, or in adopting the printing press or a computer – and must be a part of the agenda for the present century as well. And while "older" technologies must not be brushed aside – some "new" technologies often require building on access to and knowledge of "older" technologies – today's technological transformations, inextricably intertwined with the effects of globalization, are changing the world we live in, and none of us can afford to ignore these changes.

There is no denial of the fact that new challenges accompany these new opportunities. Technology is not neutral.

The market alone will not produce the technologies needed for development or deliver them to the people who need them.

In the face of such concerns, why adopt new technology? The authors of the report argue in favor of three main reasons:

1. The potential benefits are enormous.
2. The costs of inertia versus costs of changes can be considerable.
3. The potential harms can be managed.

The Human Development Report 2001, like its predecessors, is a call to action on many fronts, both global and national. On a global level, more public funding is necessary combined with public policy motivating creative partnerships among public institutions, private industry and non profit organizations. UNDP is participating in these global efforts, as one of the leading agencies collaborating in the Digital Opportunities Task Force (DOT Force). UNDP has been stressing the ICT divide discussion into a core development issue by emphasizing the new mechanisms and opportunities that these technologies provide to address development goals.

On the national level attention should be focused:

1. On the potential benefits of the network age (new vaccines, crop communications), how these benefits could be adapted to local conditions and through what means (networked research, public-private collaboration).

2. On the need to create proactive policies to stimulate innovation since we can expect that ECT will continue to shape global economic development, empowerment and access to knowledge, and that biotechnology will continue to influence global agricultural and pharmaceutical developments. Reforms to make telecommunications competitive, to promote links between universities and industry, to promote venture capital could all contribute to the establishment of a conducive development environment.

Developing countries' attention should focus on the policy implications deriving from world-wide debates on new technologies, such as access to patented HIV/AIDS drugs and access to the Internet, to the risks involved in using transgenic crops and the risk of being marginalized from the emerging network age. These issues have consequences for beyond technical concerns, touching upon property rights agreements and risk assessment and management.

The new "network" age requires us all to extend our efforts in order to continue to address the needs of the most deprived populations, using "older" or "newer" technologies as appropriate, while at the same time encouraging innovation and creativity, and the reinforcement of national capacity, in order to minimize the risks involved and maximize the potentials for human capabilities to be gained from new technologies. ■

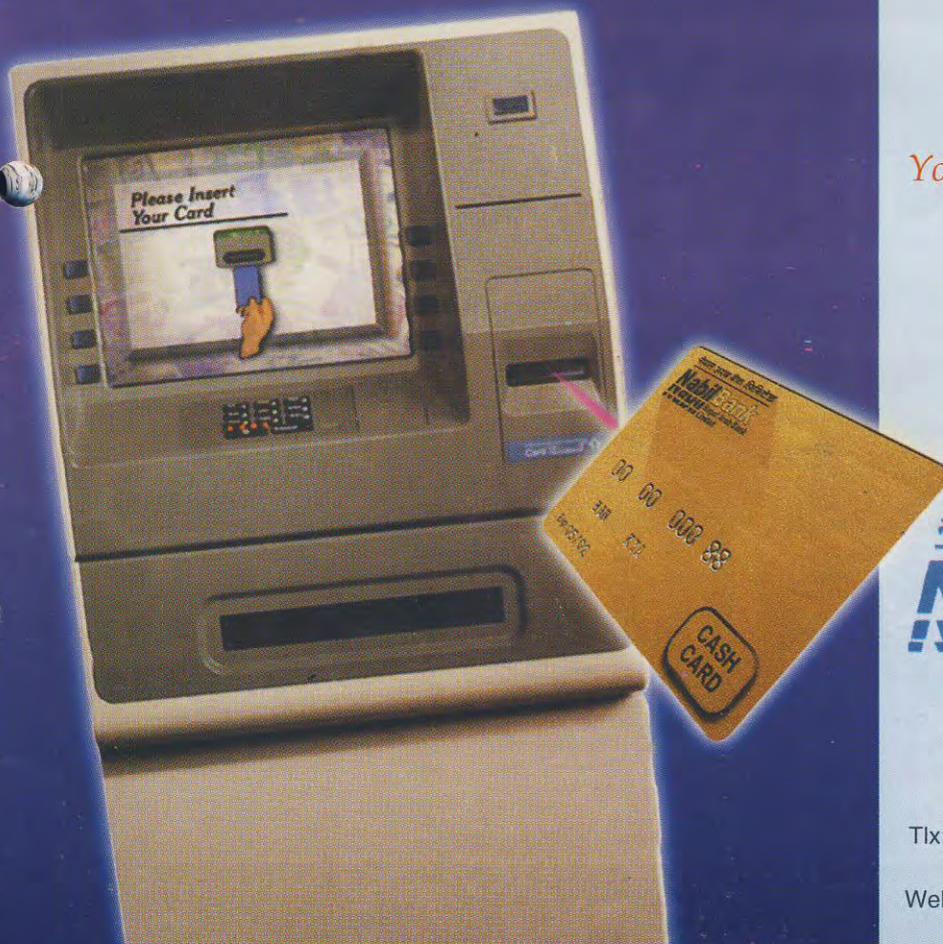
*Ms Tisot is the Resident Representative of the UNDP in Nepal*

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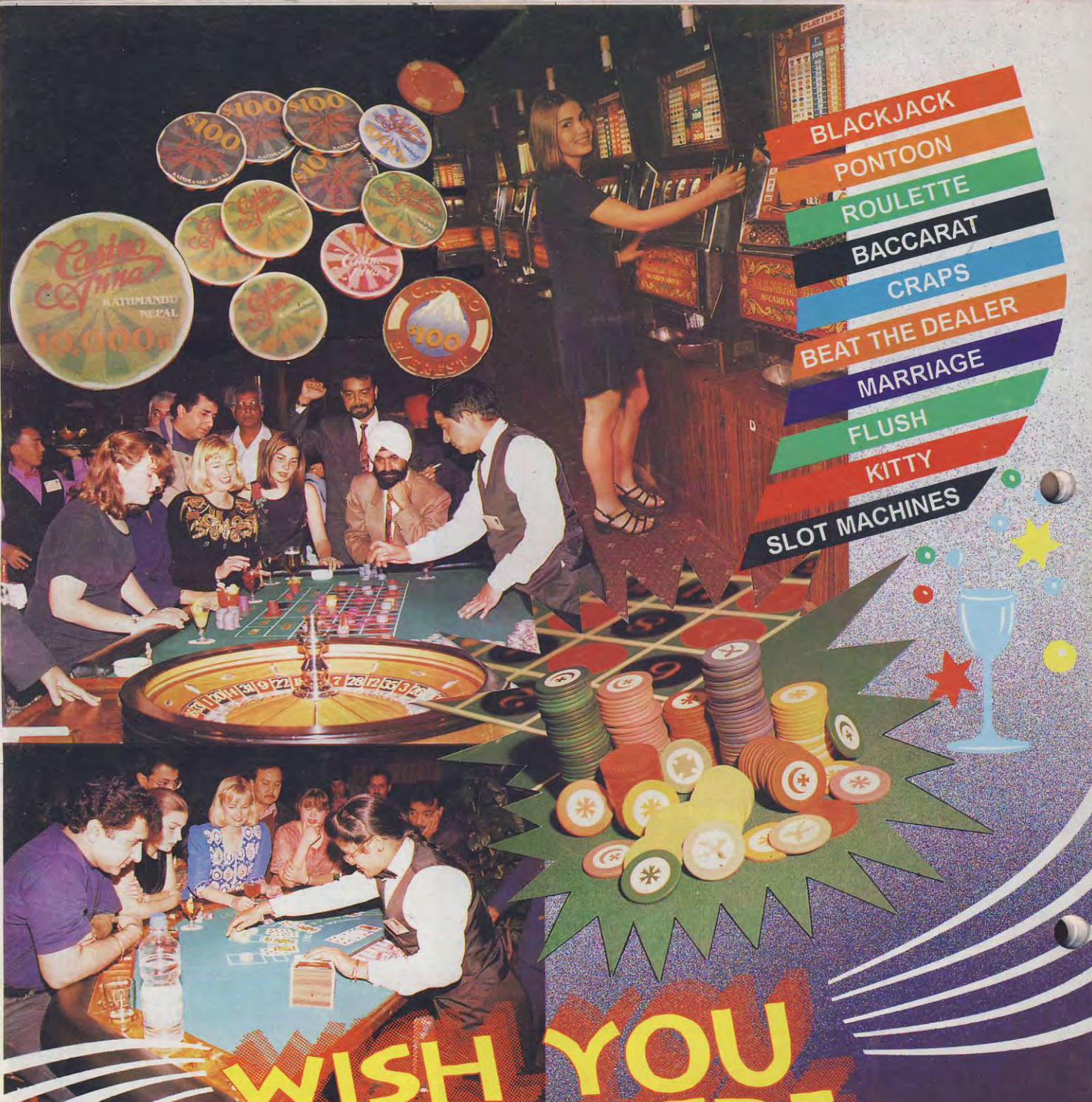
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