

The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

28 Dec-01-Jan 3, 2002

INSTITUTIONS

VACUUM OF

LEADERSHIP



- Game of Consensus
- Deuba In Distress
- Folk Music: Growing Market
- SAARC: Final Preparation

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COVER STORY : VACUUM OF LEADERSHIP

Lack of competent human resource have rendered all spheres of state institutions virtually ineffective.

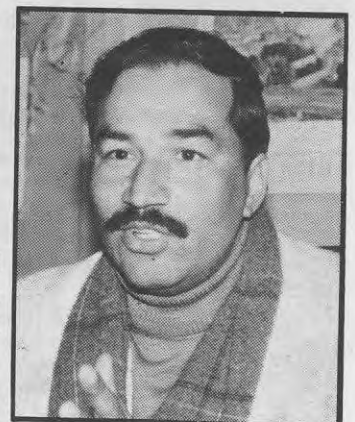
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NATIONAL GOVERNMENT : Unparliamentary plea

The call for national government, the provision of which does not exist in the constitution, sows confusion.

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INTERVIEW:

Kamal Thapa

Former foreign minister and RPP leader Thapa talks about the upcoming 11th SAARC Summit.

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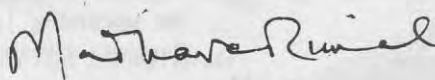
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EDITOR'S NOTE

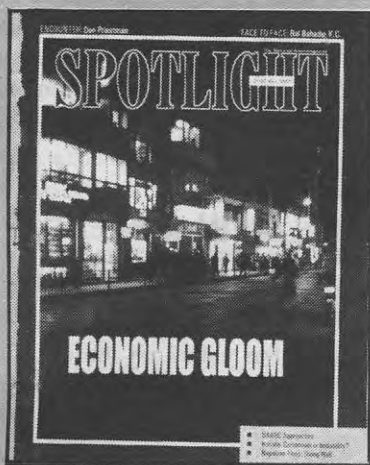
Just a little more than a week to the eleventh Summit of the SAARC, the Deuba government seems very busy with the beautification and sprucing up of Kathmandu, the venue of the Summit. The work being done on a war footing would definitely cost a lot more than it would in normal way. But, there is always some special method in the working of HMG of Nepal. Since we all are aware of the causes of such working, it needs no elaboration. It was, indeed, necessary that Kathmandu roads got a face lift for this regional meet. Even though Kathmanduites do not deserve the luxury of smoother roads, the special guests that would visit the capital for the Summit could not be put to severe physical discomfort on account of the bumpy roads. Not that this temporary luxury for the Kathmanduites due to the face lift of the roads has not benefited some contractors, some bureaucrats and some politicians in the form of a windfall. Whether beautifying the city by tearing down buildings providing negligible compensation to the owners is going to impress the visitors that Nepal, after all, is not so poor as they thought, is hard to say. But, it may not be irrelevant to quote a humorist friend who has compared this make shift beautification of Kathmandu with that of adorning an old whore. He further confided to me that Prime Minister Deuba should have used this emergency to book some of his corrupt colleagues. This would have helped him to earn some iota of respect from his own countrymen and would also have added some genuine legitimacy to the role of the leader of the nation's delegation he is going to play in the Summit. Whether he will get another opportunity to host such a Summit and to rub shoulders with the dignitaries from the SAARC countries no one knows. But, we do hope he will be able to rise upto his full height the country has bestowed upon him and work to augment, preserve and safeguard the honor of the country he represents by behaving in a manner commensurate with his high position. This is a unique challenge for Deuba to prove his diplomatic attainment. Whether he can conclude this chilling summit with warmth and bonhomie is yet to be seen.

* * *

Kathmandu is hubbing with the move for a "Greater Democratic Unity" with the idea of forming a coalition government of all parties represented in the parliament. Since this move is being initiated by greedy and corrupt politicians spoiling for grabbing power once again, the country seems not at all interested in the sinister machinations. The top priority in the country, at the moment, is to bring down the insurgency of the Maoists. And the Royal Nepal Army has been assigned of doing the job. If the Nepalese politicians had any love for their country, they would all unite and cooperate with the Royal Nepal Army to end the bloodshed that is plaguing the country. If Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has learnt any lessons, he would not delay in promulgating the ordinance that would authorize the government to nab perpetrators of corruption howsoever high and influential. If the Prime Minister fails to act, he would only be inviting trouble for himself and his colleagues and other corrupt politicians. We trust, he is not unaware of the dangers lurking round the corner. With the overwhelming majority of the poor populace being totally disillusioned with the workings of the anti-national and corrupt multiparty democratic governments, Deuba has no option but to cutdown his party colleagues and other politicians to their size, cleanse the administration, stand up to the challenges emanating from the neighborhood and enthuse the people with a new vigor and nationalism. This could be a very tall for a man like Deuba. Failure may spell danger for democracy itself. ■



Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Odds All Around

Nepal's economy probably never had to face the adverse situation it is confronting today ("Economic Gloom", SPOTLIGHT, December 21). The tourism industry, the prime source of foreign exchange, is in the doldrums. The manufacturing sector is also in shambles. The carpet, pashmina and garment industries are facing tremendous difficulties even to survive. In such a situation, only a miracle can save the Nepalese economy. The job of the finance minister is the least envious one today.

Suresh Karki
Gaushala

Time For Discipline

The state of emergency does not necessarily have a negative effect on the country's economy ("Economic Gloom", SPOTLIGHT, December 21). If used judiciously, the situation is favorable to enforce fiscal discipline. The authorities can make use of the emergency to tame wayward businesses. The additional resources required for security can be generated by controlling revenue leakages. Moreover, improved security could lead to increased production and create an atmosphere conducive to overall economic development.

Krishna Shrestha
Gwarko

Aid Counterproductive

Although the government appears keen on mobilizing foreign assistance to sail through the present crisis, such a course

could prove counterproductive in the long run ("Economic Gloom" SPOTLIGHT, December 21). Nepal has become dependent on foreign assistance for far too long. As long as we get assistance, we lose the incentive to work hard. Crises and problems are a part of every nation's growth. At some point in history, each nation has to face its moment of truth. We have to learn to solve our problems ourselves. If we can do that now, it will go a long way toward instilling a sense of confidence among Nepalis.

Hitesh Baidya
Samakhusi

Look Within

The private airlines of the country do not need to go for international flights yet ("A Costly Decision", SPOTLIGHT, December 14). There is a lot they can do in the domes-

tic sector by way of improving and expanding flights. Given their inadequate expertise, they are bound to suffer big losses if they are allowed to fly on international routes.

Dipesh Gautam
Maharajgunj

Why Not?

If our private airlines want to fly on international routes, why not let them do so? ("A Costly Decision", SPOTLIGHT, December 14). What is the problem here for Nepalis? If the sector is not profitable, the airlines themselves will decide to withdraw. As long as they remain convinced that they can sustain international flights, let them go for it. In case they succeed, they will be making the country proud.

Biswo Manandhar
Kalimati

No Model Will Work

Recently I happened to read an article by noted intellectual Dr. Mohan Man Sainju in Kantipur daily regarding whether Uganda could serve as beacon for Nepal's poverty alleviation. Since Sainju commands much greater respect in Nepal than the corrupt politicians his concerns should not be taken as rethorics. But the moot point is who will copy Uganda? These same corrupt politicians? No Dr. Sainju, you don't need to copy any nation to alleviate poverty in your country. You need honest and patriotic politicians. When your prime ministers and ministers are all tainted men no ideal can serve as model for Nepal's poverty alleviation. If you can, do fix some men of integrity to rule the country.

Mathura Prasad
Kalanki

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Maoists Must Disarm: Army Chief

Chief of the Army Staff of the Royal Nepalese Army General Prajwolla Sumsher JB Rana has said his forces would destroy the Maoists if they did not surren-

der their arms to the government. In an exclusive interview with state-owned Nepal Television Monday evening, General Rana admitted that the army had gone on the offensive after the insurgents attacked an army barrack in Dang last month and looted a huge cache of weapons and ammunition. "It is our duty to retrieve the weapons they seized from our (Dang) barrack on November 23," said Gen. Rana. Donning his uniform, Gen. Rana told 'Disha Nirdesh' program that the Maoists had made a mistake by provoking the army, which was only acting as a supporting force in the integrated security and development programs. "The operation against terrorism is going extremely well," said Gen. Rana. He urged the Nepalese people to inform and support the security agencies in the campaign against the Maoists. "National security is a matter of concern for every Nepali, not only the army," he added. *Compiled from reports Dec. 18.*

operations in Rolpa, Gorkha and Dolakha districts, security forces seized a huge cache of arms and ammunition, the ministry said. *Compiled from reports December 19.*

Deuba Seeks Donors' Help

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has called on the donor community to support Nepal's development activities at a time when the government is engaged in an all-out war with the Maoist insurgents. Addressing a gathering of representatives of Kathmandu-based diplomatic missions and donor agencies here Monday, Premier Deuba said a slowdown in trade, tourism and industrial production had severely hit revenue mobilization. Poverty is growing and economic activities are diminishing because of terrorist activities, he said. The prime minister sought the donor community's support in the government's efforts to promote development works and generate employment in the insurgency-affected areas. He also sought donors' support in humanitarian relief works to disadvantaged groups and women and children directly affected by the conflict. According to Dr. Shankar Sharma, member of the National Planning Commission, the donor community expressed full support to the government.



Army Chief Rana

TU Facing Cash Crunch

Tribhuvan University, the country's oldest institution of higher learning, is facing severe financial constraints, a newspaper reported. The government could provide only Rs 1.2 billion out of the Rs 1.52 billion demanded by the university, the report said. Amid difficulties in providing salaries and benefits to its more than 14,000 employees, the TU has cut down staff allowances. Even then, the university could not save more than Rs 50 million a year, said Nilkantha Lal Shrestha, registrar at the university. In 61 campuses affiliated to the TU, over 4,000 teachers and staff are working as temporary or contract employees. "We are not in a position to reduce temporary staff at a time when the affiliated campuses are demanding more teachers," said Shrestha. *Nepal Samacharpatra Dec. 17.*

Two Civilians Hacked; Two Maoists Killed

A group of Maoist guerrillas hacked to death Surya Prasad Dawadi, a 75-year-old Nepali Congress worker, and Shiva Prasad Adhikari, 28-year-old schoolteacher, Monday evening. Both were the residents of Hansapur VDC in the western district of Gorkha. Dawadi's wife, who was seriously injured in the attack, was airlifted to Kathmandu for treatment, Kantipur daily reported. Meanwhile, the Defense Ministry said Tuesday that two Maoist insurgents died in separate encounters with security forces in Surkhet and Mugu the previous day. During search



Deuba

der their arms to the government. In an exclusive interview with state-owned Nepal Television Monday evening, General Rana admitted that the army had gone on the offensive after the insurgents attacked an army barrack in Dang last month and looted a huge cache of weapons and ammunition. "It is our duty to retrieve the weapons they seized from our (Dang) barrack on November 23," said Gen. Rana. Donning his uniform, Gen. Rana told 'Disha Nirdesh' program that the Maoists had made a mistake by provoking the army, which was only acting as a supporting force in the integrated security

programs. They urged the government to set clear priorities for economic development. The donors criticized the government for what they described as lack of full commitment to implement good governance programs, expedite economic reforms and control corruption. Dr. Sharma said the government had not made a request for a specific sum or identified projects for assistance. *Leading dailies report Dec. 18.*

Two Journalists Released

The authorities have released Bandhu Thapa, publisher of *Deshanter* weekly, and Gopal Budhathoki, editor/publisher of *Sanghu* weekly, without filing charges. Thapa and Budhathoki had been detained at the military barracks at Chhauni for nearly 24 hours for interrogation in connection with news reports their newspapers had carried. Reports said the journalists have been told to report to the authorities when required. Media organizations had condemned the government's decision to arrest the journalists and demanded their immediate release. *Compiled from reports Dec. 19.*

'Operation Can Succeed Only If Border is Sealed'

Dipta Prakash Shah, a retired brigadier general of the Royal Nepalese Army, said the military operations to contain the Maoist insurgency could succeed only if Nepal's open border with India was sealed. In an interview, Shah, a royal nominee to the National Assembly, the operation could succeed within six months if the border was sealed. "There is a need to regulate and control Nepal's borders (both in the south and north). If the problem is prolonged and army fails to get political support, an unfortunate situation could arise," he said. Describing the morale of the Royal Nepalese Army as high, Shah said the soldiers would never lag behind in protecting the country and fighting for the nation's interest. Responding to a question, Shah said the army would definitely return to the barracks after accomplishing its job. "To say that there is a possibility of regression is nonsense," Shah said. *Budhabar, Dec. 12.*

'Emergency To Be Lifted After Job Done'

A senior government official has hinted that the national state of emergency would continue as long as it takes to achieve its objectives. Talking to reporters here Sunday, Minister for Information



Gupta

and Communications Jaya Prakash Prasad Gupta said the government did not intend to prolong the state of emergency unnecessarily. "This situation will continue until the security forces complete their job of disarming the Maoist insurgents," said Gupta, who is also the spokesman of the government. The minister said the government could consider resuming peace talks with the Maoists only if they surrendered their arms and money looted from banks and agreed to work within the ambit of the present constitution. Answering a question, Gupta said there were no differences of opinion between King Gyanendra and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba as reported by sections of the media. *Leading dailies report Dec. 17.*

Court Bans Garbage Dumping

In what is seen as a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court on Monday has ordered the government and concerned agencies not to dump garbage on the banks of the holy Bagmati River. Responding to a writ petition filed by three lawyers last year on behalf of the Pro-Public, an NGO, a joint bench comprising justices Krishna Jung Rayamajhi and Gyanendra Bahadur Shrestha held that such dumping should be done only after completing an environmental impact assessment. *Space Time* daily reported Tuesday. They also criticized the government, saying that it was not serious toward properly managing solid waste in the capital. General Manager of the Solid Waste Resource Mobilization and Management Center Devi Nath Subedi said temporary arrangements have been made to dump garbage in other areas. He said nearly 300 metric tones of garbage produced from Kathmandu and Lalitpur municipal areas daily could be properly dumped as soon as the access road to the land fill site at Okharpouwa in Nuwakot district was completed. Subedi said the court verdict would not hamper solid-waste management on the eve of the 11th SAARC summit due to be held in the capital early next month. *Leading dailies report Dec. 19.*

Amihai In Kathmandu

Mordehai Amihai, Director South and South-east Asia Division of the Government of Israel was in Kathmandu recently. During an informal talk, Amihai said he was here exploring the possibilities of expanding trade relations between Nepal and Israel and sharing Israel's technical expertise with Nepal. Dwelling upon Nepal's friendship and support during the earlier years, Amihai said Israel always valued Nepal's friendship and shall ever remain grateful for her support. Amihai met many officials and businessmen during his short stay here.



Christians offering prayers at the Assumption Church on the Christmas Eve

NEPAL RASTRA BANK (NRB), THE COUNTRY'S CENTRAL bank, is to take punitive action against several commercial banks for violating its directives. Banks that have borrowed amounts more than their investments and those functioning as private companies despite being licensed as public limited companies will face punitive action, official sources said. The central bank's action, however, will not affect depositors' interest and the overall national economy, the sources said. The NRB has already sent warning letters and sought clarification from the commercial banks in this regard, reports said.

INDIAN PRIME MINISTER ATAL BEHARI VAJPAYEE WILL not hold a bilateral meeting with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf on the sidelines of the SAARC summit in Kathmandu early next month. "The question of talking to Pakistan given its attitude and unresponsiveness in taking action against terrorist groups operating from its soil against India really doesn't arise," an Indian Foreign Ministry official told reporters in New Delhi. Nepali officials have, however, said the escalation in India-Pakistan tensions would not affect the SAARC summit's regional agenda. According to officials, the summit is expected to endorse regional agreements on poverty alleviation, terrorism and trade. Preparations are also under way to sign regional conventions on prevention of trafficking of women and children and on the welfare of children.

THREE MAOIST INSURGENTS, INCLUDING A DISTRICT commander of Palpa, have been killed and dozens others arrested in 'cordons and search' operations launched by the security forces, reports said Friday. Likewise, two Royal Nepal army personnel lost their lives in an ambush laid down by the Maoists at Deurali in their stronghold in Gorkha district. The army has intensified aerial operations after the incident. In a separate incident, a powerful bomb explosion severely damaged the house of Minister of State for Water Resources Narayan Sharma Poudel at Gunjanagar in Chitwan district Wednesday night. No one was injured in the attack. Police have arrested over a dozen people for interrogation.

A HUMAN RIGHTS BODY HAS URGED PRIME MINISTER Sher Bahadur Deuba to make public the whereabouts of people arrested since the declaration of emergency late last month. Human

Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON) said journalists, human rights activists, lawyers, teachers and innocent people have been arrested since November 26. HURON has urged the government not to arrest innocent citizens and to protect them from the operations of the security forces.

ALL THE JUDGES AND JUSTICES IN THE COUNTRY HAVE declared their property with Judicial Council, a leading daily reported. Supreme Court Chief Justice Keshav Prasad Upadhyay said the move would help promote transparency in the judiciary and control corruption. The move came amid growing criticism of rampant corruption in the judiciary.

FIVE MAOIST INSURGENTS WERE KILLED AND 21 SUS-pects arrested Thursday as security forces continued their cordon and search operations in different parts of the country. The security personnel arrested 24 more people in six districts on Friday. According to Defense Ministry, three Maoist insurgents died in Gorkha including a team commander of their militia, Radhika Adhikari. Two other insurgents died when they reportedly tried to escape from the custody of security forces. In a separate incident, suspected Maoist terrorists shot dead Dip Narayan Chaudhary, a police constable, posted at Mainapur ilaka police office in mid-western district of Bardiya Saturday morning. Chaudhary died on the way to Nepalgunj. A search is being conducted for the Maoist insurgents, police officials said.

MAOIST REBELS DESTROYED THE AGRICULTURE SER-vices Center at Deurali VDC in Nuwakot district last Thursday, according to Rajdhani daily. The newspaper quoted Agriculture Development Officer Narayan Prasad Khanal as saying the insurgents also set on fire windows and doors of the government-run center. The rebels disrupted communication links by snapping the line of the only public call office of the Nepal Telecommunication Corporation at the same VDC in the district.

THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AND the World Wildlife Fund have signed an agreement to run a landscape level bio-diversity conservation project. Under the agreement, the two organizations will work together to formulate a joint program for landscape level bio-diversity protection in the western terai region of Nepal and in the eastern hilly region. The program will comprise bio-diversity management along with income-generating programs with the participation of the local people.

THE FEDERATION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND Industry (FNCCI) has welcomed the liberal monetary policy measures announced by the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) on Thursday. The FNCCI said it hoped that the liquidity flow of nearly Rs 2 billion expected to be pumped in the market as a result of the cuts in cash reserve ratio would have some positive impact on the economy provided the capital was invested in Nepali industries. The apex private sector chamber also welcomed the cuts in the interest rates of export credits and refinancing rates as 'positive step'. It urged the government to implement the policy measures effectively and ensure that industries have easy access to such credits. The NRB had announced cut in the cash reserve ratio, bank rate and refinancing rate by up to two percent in order to prop up the economy. ■

“In the game for power, there is no need for consensus.”

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, denouncing the call for national government and consensus by his party president Girija Prasad Koirala, in Kantipur.

* * *

“I never said that there is a need for a national government. The media distorted my statements.”

Girija Prasad Koirala, former prime minister, rejecting media reports that he was attempting to pull down the Deuba government by calling for national government and broad consensus, in an interview with BBC Nepali service.

* * *

“Maybe Girija Prasad Koirala can see victory for himself in the defeat of Sher Bahadur Deuba. A habit developed over decades may not go away in a single day. But this habit is suicidal at present.”

Jaya Prakash Gupta, spokesman of the government and Minister for Information and Communication, speaking at a program organized by Press Chautari, in Drishti.

* * *

“We will pay the tax only if the private schools are included in the Education Act and they are levied certain percent of tax to be collected in a fund.”



Sitaram Maskey, general secretary of Private and Boarding Schools Association of Nepal, challenging the government's drive of collecting tax by stating that the private schools would not pay the tax under the Company Act, in Nepal Samacharpatra.

* * *

“Up to 25-30 percent of the development expenditure of the present budget

could be cut and allocated for increased security expenses.”

Bijaya Kumar Gachhadar, minister for Water Resources, talking to media.

* * *

“The tension between India and Pakistan is the main reason why the SAARC couldn't move as desired. But this does not mean we do not need SAARC.”

Shailendra Kumar Upadhyaya, former foreign minister, in Deshanter.

* * *

“The warm treatment tourists get here attract many women who are fed up with the western dating scene.”

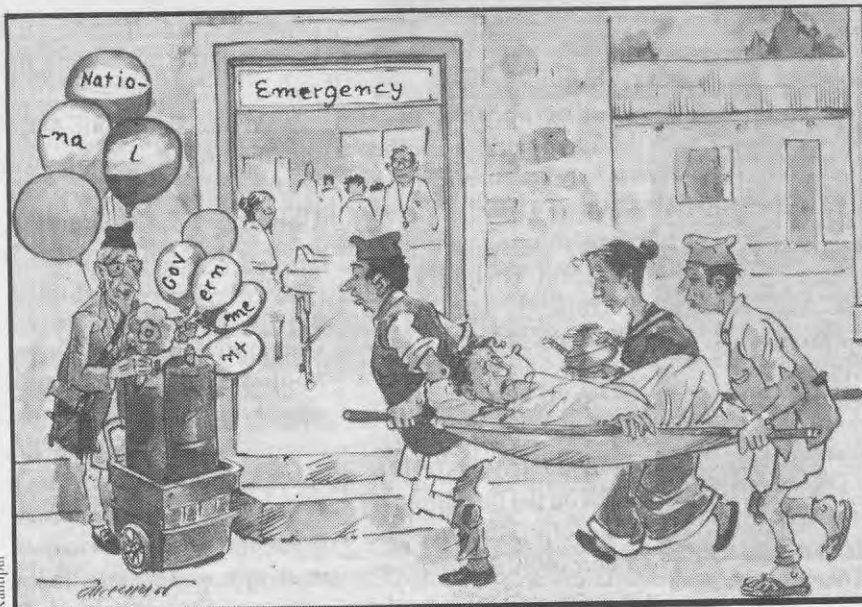
Bimal Naharkee, of Eco Treks, on what draws the westerner to a Nepali suitor that some of them marry the local boys, in The Kathmandu Post.

* * *

“I don't have any regrets. Rather, I am enjoying it.”

Tenjin Dolver Lama, a 23-year-old post-graduate in Buddhist philosophy, who is actively engaged in modeling, in Rajdhani.

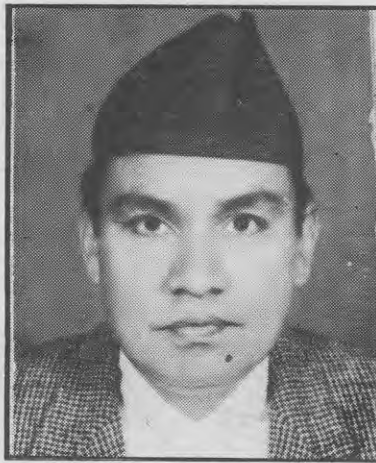
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Kantipur

Unusual Unanimity

CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal and his deputy, K.P. Sharma Oli, are usually at loggerheads when it comes to expressing views on burning national issues. In one of their rare moments of unanimity, Nepal and Oli stressed last week that it is the responsibility of political parties to evaluate the consequences of the imposition of the state of emergency. Few would disagree with the duo's discourse on democracy. But would the comrades take similar responsibility for the mess the emergency is intended to



Khadka : Security woes

dergo tighter checks amid the probing gaze of security officers. Some ministers and senior officials are still used to the old ways and try to enter the secretariat premises without providing proper identification. For instance, it took the intervention of Home Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka to allow his minister of state into the office. How many people can count on the support of the boss?

Positive Premier

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is busy these



Nepal : Rare meeting of minds

correct? As representatives of the main opposition party, Nepal and Oli might find it convenient to pass the buck on to the ruling Nepali Congress. But can they evade full responsibility after having enjoyed the privileges and benefits that come with being members of the shadow government?

No Entry

After the imposition of the state of emergency, the government has fortified security in and around Singha Durbar. Visitors have to un-

days meeting people and visiting places. Following the imposition of the state of emergency, Deuba has found time to hear the complaints of organizations and political parties.

An interesting feature of Deuba's interactions is the common response he has ready for all kinds of grievances. While meeting with officials of the Human Rights Commission, the prime minister pledged to increase the organization's annual budget.

When Deuba met with leaders of opposition parties, he wasted little time in endorsing their suggestions. The state of emergency seems to have instilled a positive attitude in the prime minister.

Fertile Mind

Narhari Acharya, a member of the Nepali Congress Central Working Committee, has proved time and again that he possesses a fertile mind. The problem, however, is that his imagination

often triggers controversies the country could do without. When Acharya was the spokesman of the ruling party, he pushed his personal views as party policy. Former prime minister and party president Girija Prasad Koirala tolerated Acharya's proclivity for a long time.

But Koirala's patience ran out when Acharya made controversial remarks on the institution of monarchy, forcing the Congress chief to remove the party spokesman. At a

time when leaders of his own party are reluctant to disclose their property, Acharya has been demanding transparency in the palace's property. Don't you think Acharya could work wonders for his country if he employed his creativity to resolve the real issues of the day?

Gautam's Vow

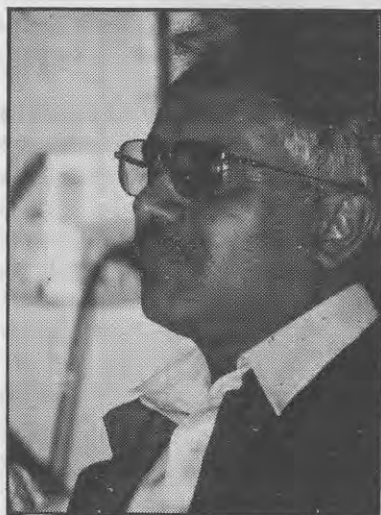
CPN-ML leader Bam Dev Gautam has declared that he would not join the CPN-UML until some of his former



Gautam : On his own

comrades publicly apologized for their role in splitting the party.

At a recent public meeting, the firebrand communist leader repeated that stand. But UML leader K.P. Sharma Oli, no less incendiary when it comes to speaking his mind, appeared not to notice Gautam's presence. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba turned out to be more sympathetic. After finishing his speech, the prime minister sat in the middle of the two comrades and raised their hands, in an apparent reconciliation effort.



Acharya : Loud mouth

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Unparliamentary Plea

The constitution does not envisage a national government, but it remains a favorite ploy among some politicians

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

National consensus is one of the most used words in the lexicon of Nepalese politicians. Nepali Congress supremo Girija Prasad Koirala is particularly fond of the two words. More interestingly, the former prime minister has the habit of calling for national consensus but never being able to actually forge it.

When Koirala resigned from the prime minister's post in July in the midst of mounting opposition from within his party and outside, it was after national consensus eluded him.

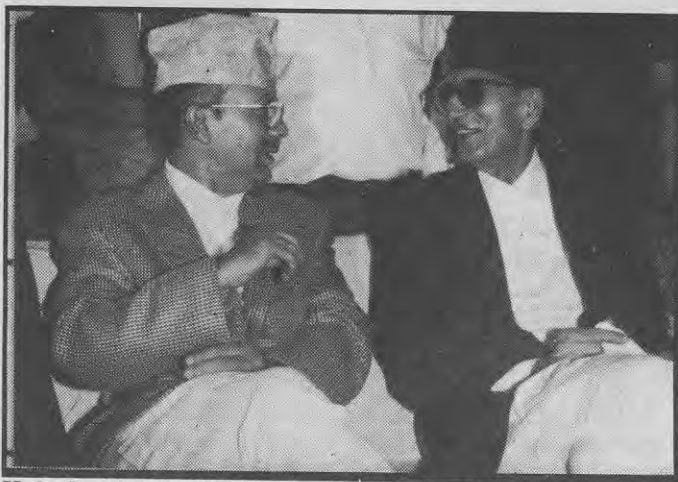
Now, when his one-time protégé and current prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba seems to have forged a broad consensus, Koirala is back in his old game by calling for broader democratic alliance and a national government. While the phrase itself sounds convincing, its reverberations are bound to have a destabilizing effect on the government at a time when the country is in a state of emergency.

Stranger still, the opposition parties, the very ones that treated Koirala like a pariah only a couple of months ago, are now joining his bandwagon. Surya Bahadur Thapa, the president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party, has already supported his call for national government. "The problems of the country are so immense that a government of single party will not be able to solve it any more," he says. Likewise, the main opposition Unified Marxist-Leninist, too, has lent a friendly ear to Koirala's utterances.

Interestingly, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 does not have any provision for national government. The proponents of this apparently unconstitutional idea have failed to convince the people the need for the national government. Deuba

government was able to take all (Congress and opposition) along when it declared the state of emergency a month ago and launched strikes against terrorists. His move has been endorsed by international community, including Nepal's neighbors. Even the people are with him. "So, where is the need for national government? Does Koirala and his company mean that the relevancy of the strikes against terrorists have ended?" asked a political analyst.

For their own part, the opposition parties, mainly the communists, are sowing more confusion by making contradictory statements against the imposition of state of emergency.



Koirala (right) with Nepal : Brewing instability

Initially, all were in favor of its imposition and now they are calling for ending it soon. "How can the state of emergency be withdrawn so soon? Do they mean that the army should withdraw before completing its task? If so, are they willing to take responsibility of the aftermath?" asked the analyst.

All this is happening in Kathmandu just when the security forces are engaged in a full-fledged battle with the terrorists. While the army and police are laying their lives for the sake of country and democracy, the politicians can't stop from messing around. "One would have thought that after 12 years

of democratic exercise our political leaders might have gained maturity. But no, they can't refrain from engaging in petty politics even at times of national crisis like this," rued the analyst.

Although Koirala justifies his call for broad democratic alliance and national government as being necessary to sustain the campaign against terrorists and protect democracy, it has acted in the opposite manner.

Prime Minister Deuba criticized Koirala's call as "unseasonal melody" hinting that it was having a destabilizing effect on his government. Inaugurating the 28th general convention of Nepal Jaycees last week, Deuba asked what the world would say if there was a political game (to change government) while the police and army are in the battlefield.

As different media reported that Koirala was calling for the national government to replace Deuba, the Congress party president, in an interview with the BBC Nepali service clarified that he only meant that the

current government include ministers from other parties.

Koirala's long time friend and Congress leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai has already castigated the call for national government. "I have never heard of any party that is in majority wanting to induct members of other parties," he retorted, adding that any move to destabilize the Deuba government at this particular time would send a very wrong message to the international community and could be counterproductive to the democracy itself.

After the initial warmth, even the main opposition UML

seems to have balked at the call for national government. After the all-party meeting held on December 24 called by Koirala, which endorsed the need for the broad democratic alliance, the Drishti weekly close to UML — stated that the party had turned down the offer of a national government.

Less than a month after the army went into the offensive against the Maoists, the politicians are back in their game. In the absence of matured leaders and judicious decisions, the politicking could put the country in a grave danger. ■

POLITICS

Consensus Convulsion

Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala's call for a broader national democratic alliance jolts Deuba

By KESHAB POUDEL

For the first time in five months, the Nepali Congress government led by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur felt the political equivalent of a moderate-intensity tremor. Although party president Girija Prasad Koirala insists that his call for a broader national democratic alliance is not directed against Deuba's government, the political currents it has triggered have exacerbated the national mood of uncertainty.

"My move is not directed against the government. Rather, it will help the government in tackling the Maoist terrorism problem," said Koirala. "We need a broader national democratic alliance to tackle the country's problems." (See box)

Koirala's formidable standing in Nepalese politics can help the country achieve the stability it so badly needs today. Unfortunately, Koirala has always been used by his coterie to create instability. The former prime minister's latest moves may help him regain power, but it would destroy his political legacy.

Efforts to rock every incoming government are nothing new in Nepalese politics. Deuba had challenged Koirala's government just few months after it was formed last year. However, two wrongs do not make a right.

Although former prime minister and Congress leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai has termed Koirala's new proposal as going against the spirit of multiparty democracy, the party president seems to be in no mood to give up.

"The proposal is just a bullying tactic of Girijababu. As the Nepali Congress

holds a majority with 113 seats in parliament, what is the rationale of forming a national government?" asked Bhattarai during an appearance on Nepal Television.

Members of Koirala's inner circle are busy defending his proposal, arguing that it has nothing to do with Prime Minister Deuba and his government. "Girijababu is just trying to develop a national consensus to bring all political forces together against terrorism," says Arjun Narsing K.C., spokesman of the ruling party.



PM Deuba (second from right) with Congress leaders: In trouble

But few seem willing to take Koirala's concern for the nation at face value. Prime Minister Deuba's supporters see it is a conspiracy against the government. "Koirala is showing double standards," says a Congress member close to Deuba. "When Koirala was prime minister, he tried to fend off demands for his resignation by showing his majority of 56 MPs in the parliamentary party. But now he says the Nepali Congress's 113 seats in parliament have zero value. Is this not enough to show how power-hungry Koirala is?"

Others question the viability of such an alliance. "What kind of broad national

democratic alliance does Koirala want to achieve by seeking support from undemocratic political forces like the CPN-UML and other communists?" asked Bimarsha editor Harihar Birahi in a recent column. "Koirala is the locus of Nepalese politics and he must maintain his own credibility."

Attaining power is obviously the fundamental objective in politics, but there are norms politicians are expected to follow. When the main opposition CPN-UML and other parties, including Rastriya Prajatantra Party, stalled the winter session of the House of Representatives for two months, Deuba, instead of defending his own government, had joined the opposition in demanding Koirala's resignation.

This does not necessarily mean Koirala, a seasoned politician who still enjoys mass following within the party, should adopt similar tactics. Koirala may

be ready to risk his stature by making compromises with the opposition to bring down the Deuba government. But how long does he think his own government could survive on an alliance with unpredictable and undemocratic parties?

"Koirala can't have forgotten his last days in power when main opposition party along with the RPP burnt hundreds of his effigies as if he were a dreaded criminal," says a political analyst. "What good does Koirala see in joining hand with such forces?"

The main opposition party, however, seems to be in a mood to listen. "We are not interested in making any opportunistic alliance with Koirala, but we are ready to discuss it in order to develop certain consensus on national issues," says UML leader Bharat Mohan Adhikary.

Surely Koirala must be aware of the wrong message such opportunism would send to the people, who are already frustrated by the dirty power games being played over the past decade. Moreover, Koirala, a victim of forces of destabilization barely five months ago, is now playing into the hands of those elements. ■

SAARC Summit Amid Tensions

Despite escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, officials are hoping for a fruitful summit

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

The terrorist attacks on the Indian parliament on December 13 once again exposed deep animosity between India and Pakistan. With India pointing its finger toward Pakistan for allegedly harboring terrorists on its territory, and the latter denying the accusation, it seemed that the 11th SAARC Summit would be postponed once again. The rivalry between the two countries had resulted in the postponement of the summit in 1999.

Busy with last-minute preparations for the summit, Nepali officials, however, said they had already received confirmation of participation from all six members. In an effort to reach the international audience, Royal Nepalese ambassador in New Delhi, Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, organized a press meet in the Indian capital Monday and said the summit will take place as scheduled. Dr. Thapa said all the members have reassured Nepal that they will participate in the three-day summit (January 4-6) in Kathmandu. "The issue of terrorism would be high on the agenda of the summit," said the Nepalese envoy.

During the third SAARC Summit held in Kathmandu in 1987, a regional convention on suppression of terrorism was signed. The convention calls upon contracting states to cooperate through appropriate measures to curb terrorist activities in the region. The convention is yet to be enforced effectively due to lack of enabling legislation in most member states. "The Kathmandu summit is expected to reaffirm its commitment forcefully to the convention and to the need for its effective and expeditious implementation by making national laws consistent with the provisions of the con-

vention," said Dr. Mohan P. Lohani, a former ambassador and foreign relations expert.

Though the charter of the 16-year-old body prohibits raising any bilateral and contentious issues during the summit, analysts say one-to-one meetings between heads of states or governments in the region have helped in easing tensions. But indications are that the summit this time would be held under circumstances that can be termed anything but friendly.

Last Thursday, India made it clear that there will be no one-to-one meeting between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf on the sidelines of the Kathmandu summit. "The question of talking to Pakistan given its attitude and unresponsiveness in taking action against terrorist groups operating from its soil against India really doesn't arise," an Indian Foreign Ministry official said in New Delhi.

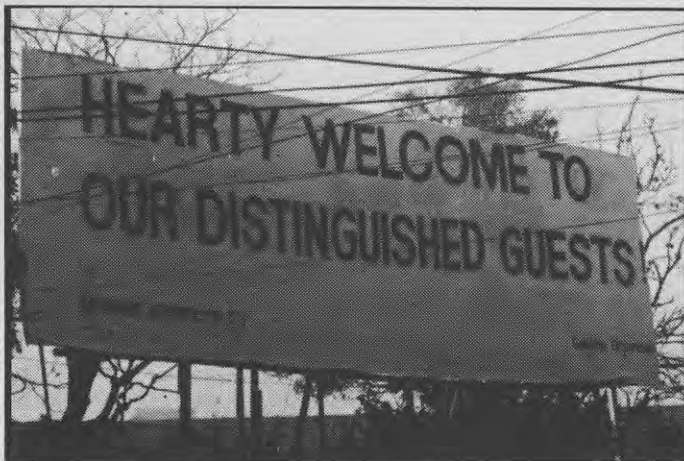
Nepali officials have, however, said bilateral tensions would not affect the summit as it has its own regional agenda. "We are happy that the SAARC process is being resumed after a gap of nearly three years," said Dr. Thapa. Dr. Lohani added: "The Kathmandu summit will prove to be a milestone in reactivating the SAARC process and further enhancing goodwill, mutual trust and understanding among member states to ensure continued peace, progress and stability

in the region."

According to officials, the summit is expected to endorse regional agreements on poverty alleviation, terrorism and trade. Preparations are also on to sign regional conventions on prevention of trafficking of women and children and on the welfare of children.

Meanwhile, Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh has said Myanmar and Afghanistan should also be invited to join the seven-member regional body. With the new interim government in place, war-torn Afghanistan might as well need a regional forum to air its views.

Though it will take a few more summits to welcome new members, SAARC could do well by accelerating economic cooperation within the region. The agree-



Banners to welcome guests : Warm hospitality

ment on South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangements (SAPTA) came into force in December 1995 so as to promote intra-regional trade substantially. But this arrangement still doesn't cover large part of the regional trade.

The proposal to declare South Asia as free trade areas by 2001 also needs to be reconsidered and revised so as to give more time to the member states for preparation. "SAFTA (South Asia Free Trading Agreement) is very much required to reduce the present tension between the two South Asian powers. Political relations will certainly change for the better after economic cooperation is strengthened," said Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, an economist. "Economic cooperation is the only way to defuse the Indo-Pak conflict." ■

POLITICIANS Losing Reason

Security forces are risking their lives in the fight against terrorism, but politicians are playing their old games

By A CORRESPONDENT

For a month, the security forces fighting terrorism are putting their lives on the line to make life easier for everybody else, including politicians. Instead of doing their part to help the soldiers and police on the battlefield, politicians are busy saying and doing irrelevant things in the comfort of Kathmandu valley. The cries of the people do not reach those who are in a constant quest to grab power.

King Gyanendra, the symbol of national unity, visited Birendra Army Hospital to console soldiers injured in the military operations. However, the same politicians responsible for creating the mess vied with one another to politicize the monarch's gesture of concern.

Senior advocate Basudev Dhungana, who was a minister and pradhan pancha of Kathmandu during the Panchayat years, spoke against the king's visit. He sounded like the mouthpiece of the main opposition CPN-UML. The Nepali Congress's Narahari Acharya, not known for a measured response to anything outside the ambit of his party, went a step further to question the monarch's visit.

Instead of doing something to boost the morale of the security forces, people like Dhungana and Acharya are vitiating the atmosphere. Worse, Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala, main opposition party leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, Rastriya Prajatantra Party leader Surya Bahadur Thapa and other senior politicians are engrossed in backroom political machinations.

No political leader, including Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, has found time to visit Birendra Army Hospital to inquire about the health of injured soldiers. "Nepalese political leaders have lost touch with the common people," says a political analyst. "They



Koirala addressing his partymen: Core issue under shadow

suffer from the Afno Manche (Our man) syndrome."

While security personnel are seeking logistical support to go into villages to drive out the Maoists, the leaders are exhibiting a callous disregard to the political side of the anti-insurgency campaign. "If politicians like Girija Prasad Koirala and Madhav Kumar Nepal are really sincere to the cause of democracy and country, this is the right time for them to visit the countryside and mobilize the people against terrorism," the political analyst says. "Calling for national consensus from the safety of Kathmandu doesn't mean a thing."

No senior politician has found time to visit the people in the remote parts of

the country who have been living under the constant threat of the terrorists. Moreover, those busy trying to build opportunistic alliances to gain political mileage during this national crisis utterly fail to realize that they have no moral standing to question the monarch's expression of concern for the well-being of the country and people. Had our leaders shown enough sincerity to the cause of freedom and democracy and acted in a timely fashion, the life of many would have been saved.

There is still time for politicians to play a constructive role in restoring normalcy in the country and prove their relevance. Central to such an effort is the acknowledgement that the state of emergency was declared in response to the grave threat the country is facing. If politicians fail to grasp this core reality and still try to advance the specious argument that democracy is under threat, they may find themselves in a corner when the going really gets tough. ■

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YOUTH Media Exposure

Television is the primary source of information for urban youths

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Among the urban youths of the country, television is the most popular mass medium. According to the recently conducted Nepal Adolescents and Young Adults (NAYA) Survey of unmarried and married youths in the 14-22 age bracket, about three quarters of urban youths watch television, slightly more than one-third listen to radio and about one-fourth read a newspaper or magazine daily.

The NAYA Survey on Mass Media Exposure among Urban Youth in Nepal was conducted by Dr. Shyam Thapa and Vinod Mishra. The survey indicated that four out of five youths in urban Nepal are exposed to at least one of these three media sources on a daily basis. The Internet is much less commonly used; only about one-fifth of urban youth have ever used this technology.

At a time when there is growing international concern over the rising tendency among youths of engaging in risk-taking behaviors like substance abuse (smoking, drinking, drug abuse) and pre-marital sex, the NAYA survey's findings could prove useful for the authorities. "Television can be used to educate urban youths against risk-taking behaviors," said Dr. Thapa, senior scientist at the Family Health International (FHI) and one of the co-authors of the study. According to him, NAYA survey provides the first ever base line information on youth population in the country.

The survey finds that young

married men and women have much less exposure to each form of mass media than their unmarried counterparts. A higher proportion of females is exposed to television than males on a daily basis, but females have much less exposure to radio and print media. The results from a multivariate analysis of factors affecting media exposure among youths indicate that the effects of gender and marital status are largely independent of other factors, including urban locale, ethnicity, household living standard, age, education and work

status. Among these factors, education has the strongest effect on youths' exposure to each specific media source.

The survey results highlight preference for radio and television programs among different groups of urban youths. It indicates that unmarried youths are more likely than their married counterparts to listen to FM radio stations. Televised news and sports programs are more popular among males, whereas televised serials (soap operas) and music programs are more popular among females.

Another significant indication of the survey is that it has found the mass media to be effective in informing urban youth about various social and health issues, such as drug addiction, HIV/AIDS, family planning, domestic violence, and girl-trafficking. Television, followed by radio, is the most common source of information about contraceptive methods and HIV/AIDS among urban youths. But the

mass media, the survey says, have been unable to disseminate information on puberty and related physical changes.

"The findings of the NAYA survey could be helpful for the Nepalese policy-makers in dealing with the challenges facing the youth and adolescents of the country," said Peter Xenos, a population and health expert at the East West Center in Honolulu, at a recently organized Asian Youth At Risk conference in Taipei.

Nepalese youths face problems of early marriage. The incidence of risk-taking behavior, too, is considerable among them. In fact, Nepal has one of the highest male-female ratios of smoking prevalence among 15-19 year olds. This ratio is 3:1 for Nepal compared to 38:1 for Indonesia, 17:1 for Thailand and 9:1 for Philippines.

As such, the mobilization of media to steer the young adolescents away from risk behaviors could be a vital way of tackling this problem. ■



City youths : Need Positive information

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

Continued Support

A leading donor says it will focus on poverty reduction programs

By A CORRESPONDENT

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has said it will focus its future assistance to Nepal on poverty reduction as per the Bank's policy to reduce poverty in Asia and will initiate measures to provide "more effective support" for rural development in Nepal. Addressing a press meet at his office last Thursday, Resident Representative of the ADB in Kathmandu, Dr. Richard Vokes said the year 2001 has been a "relatively good year" for ADB operations in Nepal despite different problems faced by the Nepalese economy including Royal Palace massacre, fall out of September 11 terrorist attacks on the US and insurgency, among others. He said there was strong potential of a strong recovery over the medium and long-term for the Nepalese economy though the immediate prospects did not look so good. "The recovery, however, will depend on how quickly the internal political and law and order situation is restored," said Dr. Vokes.

Responding to a question, Dr. Vokes said the Nepalese government had not specified any project or amount it needed in assistance to compensate its declining development expenditure in the wake of low revenue collection and rising security expenses. Dr. Vokes said the ADB had approved loans amounting to US Dollars 95.6 million to Nepal in the year 2001 in the areas including teacher education, governance reforms and road network development. The ADB provided US Dollars 4 million as technical assistance to Nepal during the period.

The loans sanctioned by the Manila-based Bank include a US\$ 30 million loan to implement the Governance Re-

form Program to improve service delivery in Nepal. The four-year-long program aims at establishing a civil service in Nepal that is more result- and people-oriented and gender-responsive and that will contribute toward higher economic growth and reducing poverty, the bank said. Similarly, the Bank has also approved a loan of US\$ 46 million for improving access to Nepal's rural areas. According to the Bank, out of US\$ 69.5 million project costs to upgrade and maintain East-West highway, feeder and district roads, the ADB will chip in 46 million dollars whereas the DFID/UK will provide seven million sterling pounds. The rest will be borne by the Nepalese government. The project aims to maintain 140 km of the East-West highway between Belbari and Chuharwa and to upgrade 165 kms of roads to an all-weather paved surface, among others.

This year, ADB also approved a \$800,000 grant to support poor and disadvantaged farmers through civil society organizations under the Bank's Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR). The JFPR grant to Nepal aims to provide better access to basic socio-economic services for some 30,000 poor and disadvantaged farmers in the five terai districts—Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur.

An interim report of the Agriculture Sector Performance Review conducted by the Bank said per capita income of Nepalese farmers' had increased at 2 percent (during FY 1995/96-2000) despite the decreased public investment in the agriculture sector. Production of milk, meat and egg grew more rapidly than the population growth, nearly meeting the target set by the Agriculture Perspective Plan (APP), the Bank said. ■

NGCCI

Exploring Potentials

A pioneer bilateral chamber eyes at immense potential offered by Germany

Though Germany is one of the biggest export markets for Nepali goods, Nepal has not been able to fully tap the opportunities available there. "Although we have achieved a lot in the last ten years, we have not utilized the full potential of our ties with Germany," said Ram Thapa, honorary Royal Nepalese Consul in Cologne, Germany. With the Europe moving toward a single currency regime since January 2002, there are tremendous opportunities for Nepal, said Thapa. Agreed B. K. Shrestha, President of

the Nepal-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NGCCI). "Despite big possibilities to attract direct foreign investment and technology from Germany, we have not been able to achieve the full potential." German investment could be brought in the areas of manufacturing, hydropower, telecommunication, information technology and infrastructure sector, said.

Germany is the single largest market for Nepalese hand-woven carpets. In 1999/2000, Nepal's total exports to Germany stood at R 7511 million whereas imports from Germany stood at Rs 1500 million. "Bilateral trade between Nepal and Germany traditionally has shown a vast surplus in favor of Nepal. This could also be seen as a kind of economic support, in addition to our official development assistance that places Germany among Nepal's three or four most important donors," said Rudiger Lemp, German ambassador to Nepal, addressing the tenth AGM of the NGCCI on Dec. 14. He also lauded the role played by the NGCCI in promoting bilateral trade and investment, with the support of GTZ and other organizations, between the two countries. ■

TOURISM

Struggle For Survival

The government opens new peaks as a first step to attract more tourists in the coming season

By A CORRESPONDENT

As Nepal's tourism sector continues to face hard times, the government has taken the first initiative to attract more tourists. Although the government has made a major start by opening more than 100 new snow-capped peaks to mountaineers, this would not be enough to raise the number of tourists.

If the government is really sincere about promoting tourism in Nepal, it must take a number of other steps, including modifying immigration regulations and reducing tourist visa fees. Opening up new peaks may attract a few hundred additional tourists, but what are really required are vigorous marketing and promotional activities around the world.

In the immediate term, the government has to work on facilitating the arrival of Chinese tourists as soon as possible. "The government is trying to formulate a comprehensive program, taking into confidence the private sector, to increase the tourists in Nepal," said Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation Bal Bahadur K.C. "Along with opening the new peaks, our next step will be to reduce the visa fees for tourists who want to visit Nepal for the second time."

As the international tourism market remains in the doldrums in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington DC, Nepal's tourism sector will have to brace for harder times in the days ahead. Despite improvements in the law-and-order situation in the country after the imposition of the state of emergency, the government has failed to project this image through its embassies abroad.

Nepal's tourism industry has suffered from series of blows over the last three years. Following the hijacking of Indian

Airline Flight 814 in December 1999, the tourism sector has been hit by several unfortunate events. Arrivals from India, a major component of tourism, have plummeted since then. The Maoist violence and deteriorating law-and-order situation further damaged Nepal's image abroad. Strikes called by hotel workers demanding the introduction of service charges

tourists in Nepal in the coming season. Chinese tourists make up 1.27 percent of the total arrivals today. The figure is expected to shoot up next year.

Nepal needs to start vigorous marketing for Indian tourists in order to recover short-term loss. "As the Indian media are still carrying hostile news against Nepal, one cannot see immediate change in the pattern of Indian tourist arrivals," says an entrepreneur.

If tourism fails to pick up in the coming months, many airlines and hotels will have to reduce their activities. Some star hotels are already talking about offering forced leave to half of their staff in accordance with the Industrial Act.

"The government has to come to rescue us during this crucial time, other-



Mighty mountains : Prime attraction

and pollution problems contributed to tarnishing the image of Nepal as a Shangri-La.

After the royal palace massacre in the June, the situation hit a new low. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the United States, tourist arrivals have dropped dramatically. "Although the hotels and airlines are receiving cancellations for January, the situation may be better in February, March and April," says a hotel entrepreneur.

As China has already signed a tourism agreement with Nepal, there are hopes of a drastic increase of number of Chinese

wise we will be compelled to close down our hotels. We cannot continue to pay such a large number of workers without getting work," said another hotel entrepreneur.

The government seems to be considering a number of ways to rescue the hotel industry. "The ministry is proposing to give some relief to tourism entrepreneurs by waiving interest rates for the time being and other such facilities," said Minister K.C. Additional relief measures officials announce in the days ahead will determine the future of Nepal's tourism industry. ■

STATE INSTITUTIONS

Scarcity Of Human Competence

In the absence of capable leadership and viable growth of state institutions, Nepal has had to pass through political instability, chaos and confusion in all spheres of governance throughout its five-decade history of democratization. Whether under the absolute Rana regime, limited democratic Panchayat system, or today's liberal democracy, the institutions of state have not been able to perform because of scarcity of people capable of leading them. The democratic system, which replaced the Panchayat system that was demonized as corrupt and inefficient, is facing similar charges. Sections of the intelligentsia are seeking to weaken the authority of democratic institutions by demanding greater powers for unaccountable institutions like the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority. As long as state institutions fail to find capable and efficient people to run them, every polity would be doomed to decay.

By KESHAB POUDEL

The Indian Supreme Court recently granted bail of about Indian Rs. 100,000 to Laloo Prasad Yadav, the former chief minister of Bihar state, in connection with his alleged involvement in a \$300 million fodder scandal. Nepal's Commission for Investi-

gation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) demanded a Rs. 30.4 million deposit from Sher Bahadur Thapa, who was accused in a Rs. 30 million corruption case in Nepal Bank Ltd. Citing the exorbitant security deposit, Thapa went to the Supreme Court seeking a reduction in the amount. The court upheld the amount set by the CIAA.

In both countries, the principle of bail

says that no institution can seek an amount that an individual cannot afford to pay. The judiciary in India made its decision according to that principle. Nepal's apex court thought otherwise. Judges speak with great conviction and eloquence in the media on the need to curb corruption and to ensure fairness and equity. However, when it comes to delivering judgements and orders



A group of youngsters : Role models wanted

that matter, they somehow fall short of applying those standards.

The parliament is full of similar stories of remissness. Its responsibility as an organ deriving its mandate directly from the people is to control the executive through legislation. But parliament has been working in the manner of a super executive. It is often found directing the executive to do this and not to do that. The Public Accounts Committee, State Affairs Committee and other parliamentary panels are often seen doing the job best left to the executive.

There are hundreds of cases of misuse of and lapses in the executive's functions. It changes its stand without explanation and often takes decisions in such a haphazard manner that no one can be certain what it intends to do next. In some cases, cabinet decisions have been reversed within 24 hours on flimsy grounds. In controlling the civil service and making decisions, the executive hardly follows any set of rules. The executive hires and fires secretaries not on the basis of academic qualifications, performance appraisals or experience, but personal influence. A civil servant who has spent his entire career in the Finance Ministry is suddenly posted as secretary at the Election Commission. It has become more than an adage among employees of the Ministry of Culture to be perpetually pre-

pared for a transfer to the Ministry of Agriculture and vice versa.

The media, which is supposed to serve as a pillar of democracy by disseminating objective and balanced information on vital issues of the day, has not been free from criticism even after emerging from the controls of the Panchayat regime. Politicians and intellectuals often accuse the media of misquoting and distorting their opinions. The latest victim was former prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala, who complained that the local media misquoted comments he made in a recent interview on BBC Nepali Service as a call for a national government. For two days, broadsheet dailies and weeklies ran stories on what Koirala insisted he had never said. Although the ownership, accessibility and size of Nepal's media have changed drastically over the last five decades, improvements have been slower when it comes to reliability and credibility.

Many politicians accuse journalists of deliberately misquoting their statements. More than half a dozen broadsheet daily newspapers are being published and a similar number of private radio stations are on the air. The demand for competent media professionals is growing. From the complaints you hear, it seems there is a serious dearth of qualified media professionals.

Nepal's thinking classes have bared their intellectual fickleness, too. The same speaker can be heard supporting the basic tenets of liberal democracy at one seminar and defending the empowerment of an unaccountable body like the CIAA at another. The importance of making critical evaluations is often far removed from the picture.

"A capable leadership can bring tremendous results in a very short period of time," says an analyst who has been studying political practices in Nepal over the past decade. "Politicians and officials are leading the democratic process but they themselves are not practicing democracy. No one is prepared to accept restrictions on the exercise of power. The leadership in almost every sphere of society remains democratic as long as it does not hurt its petty interests," he says.

Institutions Without Governance

Nepal's experience has elucidated that modern institutions alone are not enough to change the pattern of governance. The country also requires a large pool of trained people who are capable of providing leadership to these institutions.

Nepal's northern neighbor, China, has been training a large number of its citizen abroad on efficient methods of running modern institutions. As former colonies, South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have a vast reservoir of trained and capable work force. Nepalis, who have to deal with such competent people in the north and south, can expect to face difficult times ahead in terms of pursuing their point of view and presenting their interests. A country that should be working to build effective infrastructure for modern governance, however, finds itself engrossed in the shifting equations of politics.

From politics to the judiciary and from the bureaucracy to the media, all institutions seem to lack the quality of human resources needed for effective governance. Even political institutions run by elected representatives are struggling to prove their relevance to an increasingly disillusioned citizenry.

When you see politicians, intellectuals, professors and other influential people calling for the empowerment of unaccount-

able organizations to restore order and probity in life, you are forced to wonder where Nepal's experiment in democracy has gone wrong. Strangely enough, even some western donors under whose moral support Nepalis are learning the challenges of democracy, appear to be in favor of using such unaccountable organizations to control bodies that are responsible to the people.

Experts argue that Nepal's problem is not one of institutions and regulations, but of their performance. "The institutions are not abiding by their prescribed acts, like in the case of the CIAA, which intervened in Nepal Bank's internal financial irregularities," says a political analyst. "The CIAA

tutions have grown under various political systems. For 104 years, the Ranas had promoted and protected their own institutions, which left its distinct imprint on the country. After the political change of 1951, the country found itself without the trained work force and firm institutional structures that were vital to strengthening the new democratic order. As a result, the country embarked on path that would go through wildly varying political and economic models.

In his memoirs, "Atma Britanta", B.P. Koirala speaks of the pathetic situation the country was in when he was appointed home minister. He had to build the ministry

cultural dynamics of the country. A society with a long history of feudalism cannot transform itself overnight. Radical thoughts alone cannot change the behavior and value systems of the people.

During the Rana regime, a few high-class officials sent their children to Indian colleges and universities. However, the pool of educated work force was too small to meet the emerging challenges. Moreover, the feudalistic background of these qualified Nepalis stood in the way of social and economic change.

The value system accumulated over the past decades has prevented officials from becoming powerful agents of change. The tendency of becoming a cynical, rather than critical, citizens, persists. This feudalistic culture continues to influence the outlook of the power elite, who do not hesitate to swing from one extreme to the other.

The ignorance of the common citizens, most of whom are deprived of purposeful education and the luxury of contemplation, is understandable. What is surprising is that highly educated and westernized members of Nepal's intelligentsia are in favor of empowering unaccountable organs like the CIAA instead of working to encourage greater efficiency and responsibility in the parliament, executive and judiciary.

"It is rather shocking too see nobody talking about how to make the CIAA accountable," says a political analyst. "Where have the energy and enthusiasm that had gone into overthrowing the Panchayat system a little over a decade ago gone today?"

Public cynicism has grown to such a level that people are willing to count on measures that would limit individual freedoms and liberties to solve all their problems. Incapability and ignorance have prevented the political leadership, intellectuals and others from understanding the depths of the origins of the violent activities in the country today, which forced the state to impose a national state of emergency.

At a time when the Royal Nepalese Army, the country's oldest and most professional institution, is disarming the Maoists, political institutions are incapable



Opposition rally against corruption : Misuse of slogan?

statute does not permit it to investigate those institutions in which the government does not have an ownership of at least 50 percent," adds advocate Gandhi Pandit, who appeared in the Supreme Court in connection with the case.

Failure of Leadership

Nepal's acts and institutions are similar to their western counterparts, but they are giving the opposite results. This puts the blame squarely on the people who are leading our institutions. Unlike former colonies, which benefited from the strong institutions and capable work force the departing power left behind, Nepal has had to build institutions from scratch. These insti-

literally brick by brick, as there was no institution to command or competent officials to delegate authority to.

"The hopeful sign is that a large number of people are being trained and prepared to run modern institutions," says an analyst who has closely studied the evolution of the modern Nepalese state. "As a small country nestled between two big neighbors, Nepal does not have an easy way out. What is particularly frustrating is the incapable leadership that is on the top of the ladder."

Cultural factor

Any discussion of the growth of state institutions needs to take into account the

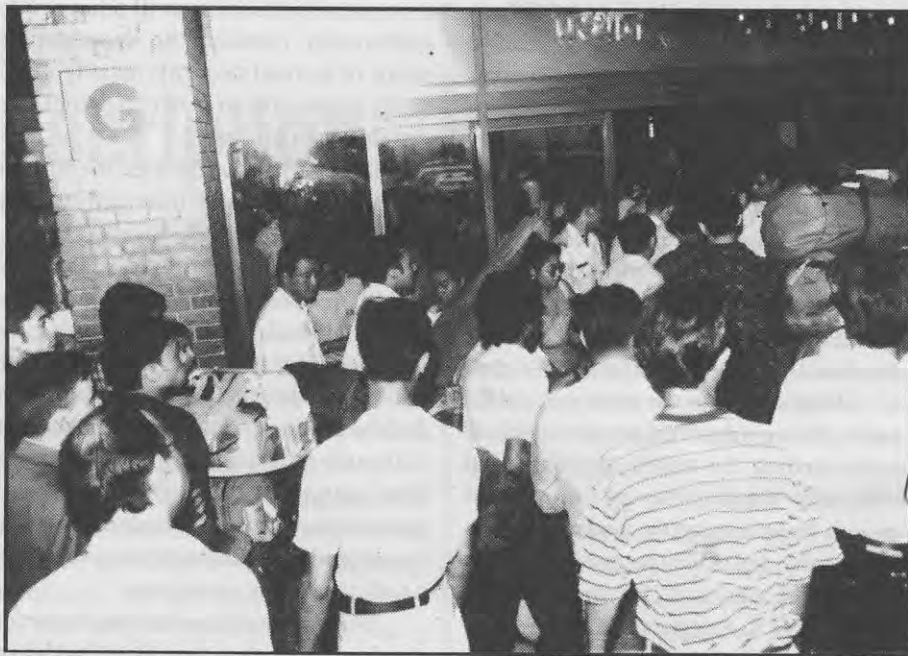
of hailing the soldiers' sacrifice. "In response to such a grave situation, the country has mobilized the army, but the political leadership, both from the left and the right, is raising questions of credibility," says a political analyst. If one gauges Nepal's position in 1950 through the eyes of Tony Hagen, the present changes and development, though slow and steady, have definitely been able to inject feeling of modernism in the mind of the people.

According to "Observation on Certain Aspects of Economic and Social Development Problems in Nepal, 1959" published by the renowned Swiss scholar, "There is a total lack of rural administration, of local organization and local government. Until 1950, Nepal was entirely a forbidden land and closed to the rest of the world. It is certainly tempting for the government officials to think in terms of big industries, modern research and techniques rather than in terms of the life, problems and needs of the common people."

Political Instability

Even with the growth of new institutions and establishment of nation-wide networks in the last five decades, Nepalis are yet to feel their existence and contribution. In the last five decades, no government has survived for more than three years. Political instability has ruined the country from 1950 to 2001. From 1951-1960, Nepal had six heads of government: Mohan Sumsher Rana, Matrika Prasad Koirala, Tanka Prasad Acharya, K.I. Singh, Subarna Sumsher Rana and B.P. Koirala.

Between 1961 and 1990, Nepal saw 11 prime ministers: Tulsi Giri, Surya Bahadur Thapa, Kirtinidhi Bista,



Youths going overseas : Brain-drain

Nagendra Prasad Rijal, Tulsi Giri, Kirtinidhi Bista, Surya Bahadur Thapa, Lokendra Bahadur Chand, Nagendra Prasad Rijal, Marich Man Singh Shrestha and Lokendra Bahadur Chand. After the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, Nepal has had 10 prime ministers: Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Girija Prasad Koirala, Man Mohan Adhikary, Sher Bahadur Deuba, Lokendra Bahadur Chand, Surya Bahadur Thapa, Girija Prasad Koirala, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Girija Prasad Koirala and Sher Bahadur Deuba.

With every change of government, there have been changes in the bureaucracy and project coordinators. Such changes hamper the overall development of the country. Along with political instability, Nepal has also faced frequent problems of violent insurgency after the change of 1950. According to Nepal 2000 Update published by the World Bank, persistent institutional weaknesses at virtually all levels are a major impediment to development effectiveness in Nepal. At the heart of the problem

is a weak, underpaid and unmotivated civil service. Increased political interference at key points in the project cycle, particularly in procurement matters and in appointments and transfers of key staff, has further undermined the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service. It is not that Nepal does not have capable leadership. There were efficient political leaders and bureaucrats.

Because of instability, the majority of mediocre people in the bureaucracy and politics have succeeded in sidelining the small number of exceptional individuals. The lack of competent people in different important fields hampers the development process. In the bureaucracy, the situation is particularly pathetic because of relentless political interference.

Instability in the bureaucratic structure has often led to the harassment of foreign investors. Kodak Company, which was permitted to open its processing factory, had to close shop after the government refused to issue the certificate of origin of its products.

Nepalese Students

Although a large number of Nepalis go to India, the United States, European countries and elsewhere for higher studies, only a handful return. Those who do soon become so fed up with the Nepalese environment that they leave the country at the first available opportunity.



Supreme Court : Heavy responsibility

According to the Ministry of Education, more than 10,000 individuals have returned from foreign countries after completing higher education. This number includes senior officials in the bureaucracy and judiciary. The number of graduates from the national university is also increasing. In the bureaucracy, students from the local university hold the lion's share of the positions. Because of the poor quality of education in Nepal, newly recruited graduates find it difficult to meet their challenges.

Whether it is in the private or public sector, there is a dearth of people capable of understanding the trends, problems and efficiency requirements of institutional growth. Nepal entered the modern age with few capable and skilled people. According to "Half-a-Century of Development: The History of U.S. Assistance to Nepal 1951-2000", published by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Kathmandu, there were very few skilled personnel capable of formulating and directing policies appropriate

for Nepal's identity, and a lack of administrative machinery capable of translating King Tribhuvan's political vision into economic and social reality.

Approximately 98 percent of Nepal's eight million people were illiterate with only 300 college graduates in the entire country. The highly centralized govern-

ment administration was ill equipped to realistically consider the demographic needs of its rural majority, making it virtually impossible to plan comprehensive development efforts.

Over the last five decades, the number of educated persons has increased by many folds and thousands of university graduates are competing in politics, judiciary and other sectors. But how capable are they of running modern institutions? "We have been spending very meager resources on university education," says a professor at Tribhuvan University. "A campus built for 100 students is admitting 3,000 students. How can you hope to produce quality students from existing infrastructure? Instead, we are producing mediocre manpower with a radical political orientation."

Nepal embarked on human resources development with support from the United States in the 1950s. According to "Half A Century of Development", between 1952 to 1959, USOM trained 164 Nepali participants in US universities. Nepal did not have its own university system at that time so USOM developed a participant training program to send Nepalis to US universities for specialized training.

The cynicism that has gripped civil society has helped instill a general sense of negativism. In the last 12 years, members of the highly educated class have been at



PM Deuba : Any vision to build institutions?

the forefront of political destabilization. Whether it was under the limited democratic Panchayat system or liberal multiparty system, Nepal has faced similar problems of political instability. In the process, politicians have lost their credibility. The ability of state institutions to deliver has eroded. However, the country's problems could go from bad to worse in the absence of urgent steps to stem the rot.

Building Competence

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 has envisaged strong institutions. Those that exist have been undermined by political instability. Except for a few years during the Panchayat system, Nepal has not experienced the political stability that is essential to achieving the country's goals.

In his book "Nepal: Growth of a Nation" Ludwig F. Stiller, S.J. writes, "The Nepalese nation was born against improbable odds." These odds still exist in different forms. The challenge this time is to encourage capable and competent people in state institutions. Without that, tinkering with the political system would only add to the nation's woes. ■



Queue to enter Singh Durbar : Over politicized

NEPAL RASTRA BANK

Economic Prescription

The business community says the central bank's new measures are inadequate

By A CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to revive the country's sagging economy, Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), the central bank, announced new measures Thursday. According to the bank, the compulsory cash reserve ratio (CRR, the amount commercial banks keep as deposits with the central bank) has been cut by one percentage point and bank rates (the rate of interest the central bank charges from the commercial banks) by one and two percentage points with immediate effect.

As per new regulations, the commercial banks must have 7 percent of the national current and savings deposits in the form of minimum compulsory cash reserve ratio. In April 1998, the central bank had slashed the CRR from 12 percent to 10 percent on an average. NRB Governor Dr. Tilak Rawal said the central bank had designed new measures to make a positive impact on the national economy without affecting economic stability. The cut in CRR is expected to pump in nearly Rs 2 billion into the national economy, which the commercial banks then could finance on industries, tourism and exports, he said.

Though the NRB's decision was being anticipated for quite long, bankers said the monetary measures could not help. "We welcome the NRB's decision," said Narendra Bhattarai, chair-

man of Nepal Bankers' Association. "The central bank should assess the impact of its decision and further slash the CRR," he added.

As expected, the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) welcomed the liberal monetary policy measures announced by the NRB. "We hope the liquidity flow of nearly Rs 2 billion expected to be pumped in the market will have some positive impact on the economy provided the capital is invested in Nepali

industries," said Binod Bahadur Shrestha, acting president of the FNCCI.

The apex private sector chamber also welcomed the cuts in the interest rates of export credits and refinancing rates as 'positive step' but stressed that not only the policy measures need to be effectively implemented but also the industries must have an easy access to such credits. "The government should introduce a complete package to inject life in the economy and rescue the export, tourism and manufacturing sector," said Shrestha.

According to the NRB announcement, the ratio of cash in vault is three percent, as earlier. Previously, the commercial banks had to keep a reserve of eight percent in cases of current and savings accounts and six percent in the fixed account. The central bank has cut the refinancing rate on the convertible currency export loans by two percent.

According to new rules, the central bank has fixed refinancing rate (for commercial banks) on industrial rehabilitation loans at three percent, down from 4.5 percent.

Similarly, the bank rate on the loans for rural development banks and Nepalese currency export has been brought down to 4.5 percent from the earlier 5.5 percent.

Responding to a question, Governor Dr. Rawal said the release of cash in market would not activate inflation. The central bank has estimated that inflation will remain at around 5 percent during the current fiscal year. The rate of inflation stood at 3.5 percent in the year 1999-2000, which declined to 2.4 percent in 2000-01. Officials said the new measures had been introduced after studying the poor performance of the country's economy in the first four months of the current fiscal year. "The objective of this initiative is to provide loans to industries and businesses at lower interest rates," said Dr. Rawal. ■



Governor Rawal : Tough decision to take

'SAARC Should Focus Its Attention On A Few Core Areas'

— KAMAL THAPA

KAMAL THAPA, spokesman of the *Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP)*, the third largest group in parliament, is a former foreign minister. He spoke to *SPOTLIGHT* on the upcoming 11th summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Excerpts:

How do you see the forthcoming SAARC summit in Kathmandu?

I am glad that the 11th SAARC Summit is finally taking place. Despite many commonalities among the seven nations of South Asia, it has not been able to project itself as a cohesive regional grouping. There is tremendous potential in South Asia. However, so far we have not been able to exploit it to the benefit of nearly one billion poverty-stricken people of our region. The seven nations' regional economic co-operation outfit, which was created about sixteen years ago, has not been able to stand up to expectations due to many seen and unseen factors. It has gone through many ups and downs. But, any way, the disrupted 11th SARC Summit seems now is set to take off. In the given political and security situation of South Asia, I would like to advise not to expect too much out of the forthcoming summit.

As a former foreign minister, do you see the possibility of any new agreement on regional cooperation?

I do not see the possibility of any extraordinary breakthrough. Of course, there will be no dearth of rhetoric from the participating dignitaries during the summit. Apart from some routine and general type of agreement, I think, nothing tangible will emerge. However, I do expect some sort of commitments on combating terrorism, which the leaders cannot afford to ignore in the present regional and international context.

How important is it for Nepal to host the 11th SAARC summit?

It is a matter of great pride for Nepal. Being a founding member of the SAARC Nepal has always played a significant role in strengthening the regional organization. Late King Birendra contributed a lot in laying the foundation as well as in the promotion of SAARC. We strongly believe that

only through effective regional cooperation can we solve the acute problems plaguing the region. Moreover, after the 11th summit, Nepal will get an opportunity to lead the organization until the next summit. This is a great prestige for Nepal. We can use this opportunity to further strengthen SAARC.

Will the ongoing dispute between India and Pakistan have any impact on the summit?

India and Pakistan both are members of the SAARC. Differences and disputes between them have tremendously affected the SAARC process in the past and definitely the present crisis will have some negative impact on the future of the organization.

As continuing hostility between the two big powers in South Asia often disturbs the SAARC, do you see any future for this regional association?

There is no doubt that the nature of bilateral relations will have some effect in regional or multilateral forums. After all, the foreign policy of any country is the reflection of its domestic policy. However, if we believe that regional cooperation is a necessity, then the concerned parties should try to ensure that bilateral dispute would not take hostage the regional process. Moreover, summits like these provide opportunities for consultation and dialogue. India and Pakistan should utilize the SAARC summit for narrowing their differences. The international community and the one-billion-plus people of this region are closely watching the Kathmandu summit. Whether the leaders of the region will rise to the occasion or remain complacent with rituals will be known shortly. Let us hope that under the blue sky of Kathmandu's winter, leaders will be able to explore new grounds for peace and cooperation. In whatever way the forthcoming summit ends, however, the process of regional co-operation will continue. The most significant contribution of the Kathmandu summit will be to let the ball get rolling. Even if we fail to get a breakthrough this time, I am confident that the future of SAARC is bright.

What benefits can smaller countries like Nepal get from the SAARC?

All the seven countries of SAARC will benefit

Apart from some routine and general type of agreement, I think, nothing tangible will emerge.



many factors the terrorist movements of the region over the years have developed some form of linkages and networking. Therefore, the nature of the threat demands collective action for the long-term resolution of the problem. During the third summit in Kathmandu in 1987, the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism was adopted. However, it lacked teeth. From the third to eleventh summit we have traversed a long journey. Enriched with experiences and concerned with the current reality, I am sure now we are in better position to take tough measures.

How do you find the preparations for the summit? Are you satisfied?

I am fully satisfied with the preparations made by His Majesty's Government and the SAARC Secretariat. They are being done according to international norms and agreed practices of SAARC.

What is the reaction of your party to the 11th SAARC summit?

The Rastriya Prajatantra Party is fully committed to make the 11th summit a great success. The RPP wants to see

from regional cooperation regardless of their size and strength.

What are the important areas for regional cooperation? As all South Asian countries are facing problems of terrorism, do you see the possibility of joint regional cooperation to tackle terrorism?

In the past, possibly because of over-enthusiasm we tried to cover as many areas as possible. That proved unrealistic. It is about time that we review our past performance and concentrate on a few core areas like trade, water resources, transport, and tourism. Combating terrorism should be another area of our focus. Similarly, emphasis should be given to promote people to people contact. In Male, during the ninth summit, we had formed a Group of Eminent Person (GEP) to recommend a perspective plan for SAARC. GEP has already presented its report in the tenth Colombo summit. However, due to time constraints, leaders could not take any decision then. I am sure the Kathmandu summit will consider that report. Regarding terrorism, I expect that forthcoming summit will come out with firm commitments and specific measures to counter this menace. Almost all countries of South Asia suffer from terrorism. The intensity of the problem may vary, but no country of the region is completely free from this threat. Because of

SAARC as a strong and vibrant regional organization, because we firmly believe it could be a vehicle in fostering peace and bringing prosperity in the region. We will accord total and unconditional support for the success of Kathmandu summit. ■

Enriched with experiences and concerned with the current reality, I am sure now we are in better position to take tough measures.

**SPOTLIGHT FAMILY
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HAPPY NEW YEAR
2002
TO ALL OF ITS
PATRONS**

FOLK MUSIC

People's Melodies

Folk-song albums are chart-toppers in the music market

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Last year, Khem Gurung's album made record sales. His song "Wari Jamuna Pari Jamuna" became the biggest hit of the year. This year, Prem Raja Mahat's "Hiunchuli Ma Hiun" is doing great business.

Although they were never out of the scene, folk songs are now having a field day. Such has been their commercial success that Nepali films and pop songs are now moulding themselves into folk melodies to gain popularity.

The sales of albums of folk songs occupy around 35 percent of the total music market, said Santosh Sharma, managing director of the Music Nepal, the leading music company in the country. The rest is shared by albums of Nepalese film songs, pop songs, Hindi songs and English songs.

Even among folk songs, Dohari or

Juhari — typical Nepali songs that run quite long and are based on question-answer format often between young couples — are getting more popular.

"Only those songs whose melodies are based on folklore have been able to catch the listeners' attention in the country. Whether they be film songs or pop songs, folk melodies have prevailed," said Sharma. He goes to the extent of saying that Nepalese pop songs began to get famous only after they moulded themselves in typical folk melodies.

At present, Sharma estimates that around 150 albums of folk songs are released. "And almost 80 percent of them become successful," he said. This phenomenal rate of success is rare among other disciplines. One reason why they are so successful could be the low cost of their production.

Most of the time, the singers/musicians of folk albums approach music

companies like Music Nepal, Ranjana Cassette Center and so on, only for the studio facilities. "They already have their songs and music planned. For around Rs 10,000 they can have their albums released," he said.

But there are people who demand heavy arrangements, which are costly, even for folk songs albums. Prem Raja Mahat's "Hiunchuli Ma Hiun" is an example.

The audiences of folk songs are primarily the rural population as well as Nepalese going overseas. "But now people from different walks of lives have started to listen to folk songs. Their sales are increasing," said Uttar Kumar Rana, a cassette shop owner in Jawalakhel.

The rising popularity of the folk songs can also be gauged from the fact that the number of restaurants that have entertaining programs based on Dohari songs are increasing in the capital.

Sharma, however, laments the apparent neglect toward folk songs from the authorities. "The folk songs preserve our traditions but there are no incentives to folk singers. They have to pay tax similar to others. Besides, the government does not have any policy regarding folk songs and how to promote them," he said.

Music is one of the very few industries in the country that is currently witnessing a phenomenal growth. From a market worth less than Rs 500,000 in 1984, the Nepalese music industry is today worth Rs 300 million a year.

Even though the Nepalese music market is growing in length and breadth, the equally thriving piracy threatens to eat up its successes. According to estimates by Music Nepal, as much as 40 to 50 percent of the Nepalese music market is captured by pirates.

The folk songs market, too, is haunted by piracy. A successful folk song album makes sales around 200,000 in Nepal. "And 60 percent of these sales are made by pirated cassettes," said Sharma.

Although folk songs have bright prospects, strong action against piracy is needed if the industry is to continue thriving. ■



Nepali film in theatre : Folk music is the key

IT EDUCATION

Career Choices

Is it hardware, software or something in the middle?

By AKSHAY SHARMA

When Pavan Shrestha, 24, went to a western embassy recently to apply for a visa for computer studies abroad, the visa officer told him there were better institutes in Kathmandu Valley. That was a tribute to the quality of computer studies here, but it did not help Pavan, a computer-engineering undergraduate, to decide whether to specialize in hardware or software.

Pavan, like most of his peers, wants to make sure he gets better openings and opportunities in the field well into the future. "Hardware wins out, but only slightly. Go for hardware," says Surdarshan Sharma, a guru at one of Kathmandu's technical institutes. "Any 14-year-old kid can write software."

Sharma doesn't believe learning software at a university is a viable option. "Whatever we teach you will be out of date by the time you graduate." As an alternative, Sharma recommends embedded systems, which combine both hardware and software.

Kavita Silwal doesn't think software is a bad field. "It is highly unlikely that any hardware will run or do anything worthwhile without software (and vice versa). Take some intro classes to both, as well as robotics and other areas in which you think you may be interested. Doing that, you will find something you enjoy."

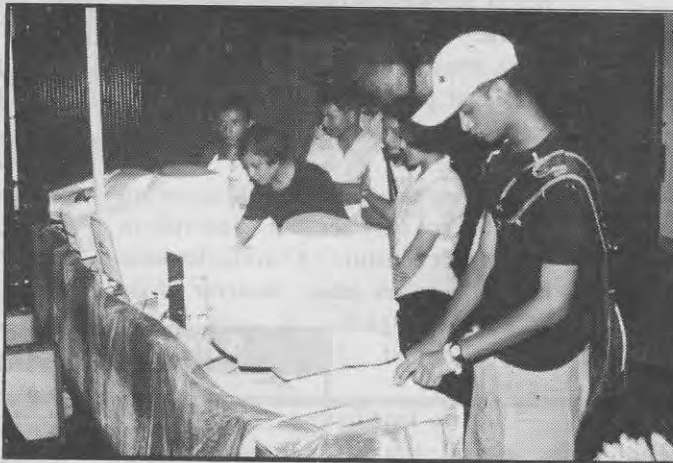
Regardless of whether you pitch your tent in the hardware or software camp, the general feeling is that you should do what you enjoy. "It will do you absolutely no good if you get into something because you think it would make a good career — if you're always miserable," says Sanjay

Shrestha of NIT Patan.

Whether you're in college and deciding on a career path or changing professions at 40, having helpful career resources is critical to making the right decision. In addition to the "to certify or not to certify" debate,

there is the "certification or college" argument that several students have been discussing.

A recent article about IT in The Kathmandu Post, "What's better: skills or certifications?," showed that members weighed in, for the most part, on the side



People using computers : Growing attraction

of undergrad degrees. This exchange prompted several e-mails about the merits of technical, academic, and on-the-job learning.

Mahesh Chhetri, 21, who is in computer systems support, points out that the debate left out a third career path. "That being on-the-job training and/or alternative training and experience. The trainings provided me with balanced training (leadership, teamwork, and management) combined with specialty skills in telecommunications, networking, computer systems, and application support. I have found this background to be just as much

a door opener as any cert or college degree could offer."

John Tamang said he went pretty far with an associate's degree and an MCSE certification. "I doubled my salary, leaving one job and going to another. However, I've gone about as far as I can without a B.S. degree, so I'm working on it part-time (information sciences)," he adds.

"I feel that having both is very important to maximize your potential. An A.A.S. degree and certification will get you going, but you really need a four-year degree or better to be considered for higher positions. With all of the online colleges and universities out there, there's no reason not to get your degree."

Asim Tuladhar, an instructor of IT and director of the Universal Computer Institute, says a new program can answer both issues of degree and certification.

"Our bachelor's of science in network engineering offers a four-year degree from an accredited institution with the entire fourth year of the program devoted to training students for their MCSE, Microsoft's Network Engineer certification. These MCSE classes are all 'for credit' classes that are used toward this degree."

Mahesh says: "When I worked as a broadcaster, there was a similar debate going on about getting a general arts degree or one in communications, along with tossing in an associate degree from a technology

institute. The interesting thing I discovered over my nine years was that the people who were truly the best at the craft were people who had none of the formal training."

He adds: "They started in the business because they loved it, worked for dirt, and spent 10 to 15 years working their way up the ladder to overnight success. In short, aspiring movers and shakers get their MBAs while in-the-trenches techies get their certifications. And let both sides be the best they can be at what they want to be and not try to force those hard drivers to be something they are not." ■

BOOK

Constitutional Concern

Senior advocate Mukunda Regmi expresses concern over the weakening of democratic practices

By KESHAB POUDEL

Senior advocate Mukunda Regmi is among those citizens who are very concerned with contemporary political, constitutional and other issues. As a constitutional expert, Regmi is a regular contributor of articles on contemporary political issues. Regmi's interest in constitutional issues and political debates is understandable, as he is one of the framers of present constitution and an active member of the Nepali Congress party.

Individuals have their own ways of

*Bigatka Abhibyakti Ra
Bartamanka Anubhuti
(Expressions of the Past
and Experiences of the
Present)*

By Mukunda Regmi

Published by Mukunda Regmi

Price: Rs.400

Pages: 648

expressing their views on the social, political and constitutional challenges of the day. Regmi is gifted with a special ability to convey the most serious subjects with great ease to the common people. Despite his busy professional schedule, the senior advocate has compiled previously published and unpublished articles in the form of a new book, "Bigatka Abhibyakti Ra Bartamanka Anubhuti" (Expressions of the Past and Experiences of the Present).

Whenever constitutional and political debates arise, Regmi has expressed his opinions through various newspapers. Whether it was the ratification of

the Mahakali Treaty on sharing water resources with India or the dissolution of the House of Representatives, the role of the main opposition party or the performance of the speaker, Regmi has not hesitated to speak his mind. Some of his comments have provoked enduring controversies while others have drawn endless criticism. In the process, he has encouraged informed debate, which is vital to the creation of an alert citizenry.

In this book, Regmi discusses such issues as constitutional monarchy, Royal Nepalese Army, legislature, democracy and nationalism, Nepali Congress, opposition in the parliament, law and legal professionals, human rights, elections and incidents from his personal experience.

Regmi's opinions on vital issues are valuable not only because of his role in drafting the constitution but also because he has been an astute observer of its implementation over the last 12 years.

In two lengthy articles, Regmi discusses the role of the Royal Nepalese Army and the constitutional provision on mobilizing it. Written months before the mobilization of the Royal Nepalese Army to quell terrorism, Regmi holds the view that the army can be deployed, like in other countries, to aid civil authority. Regmi hails the historical role of the

army and its institutional contributions in the process of national integration.

In another piece, he has critically evaluated the decision of the Supreme Court on the citizenship amendment bill the royal palace referred to the judiciary in response to extensive public debate. In particular, he has questioned the constitutionality of the apex court's recommendation to the King.

Apart from conveying cogent arguments in favor of or against particular issues, the book allows readers to go back to the context in which Regmi wrote his commentaries and opinions.

As a prominent activist of the Nepali Congress, Regmi's writing reflects his abiding commitment to the cause of upholding the underlying tenets of democracy and freedom. He provides incisive commentaries on internal dissension and other issues within the ruling party that have become a prominent feature of contemporary Nepalese politics.

Regmi also relates a personal incident in which some hooligans manhandled him. He has compiled news reports and commentaries published about the affair. Nobody has attempted to nab the culprit. A sorry situation indeed, but one that merits the attention of conscious citizens.

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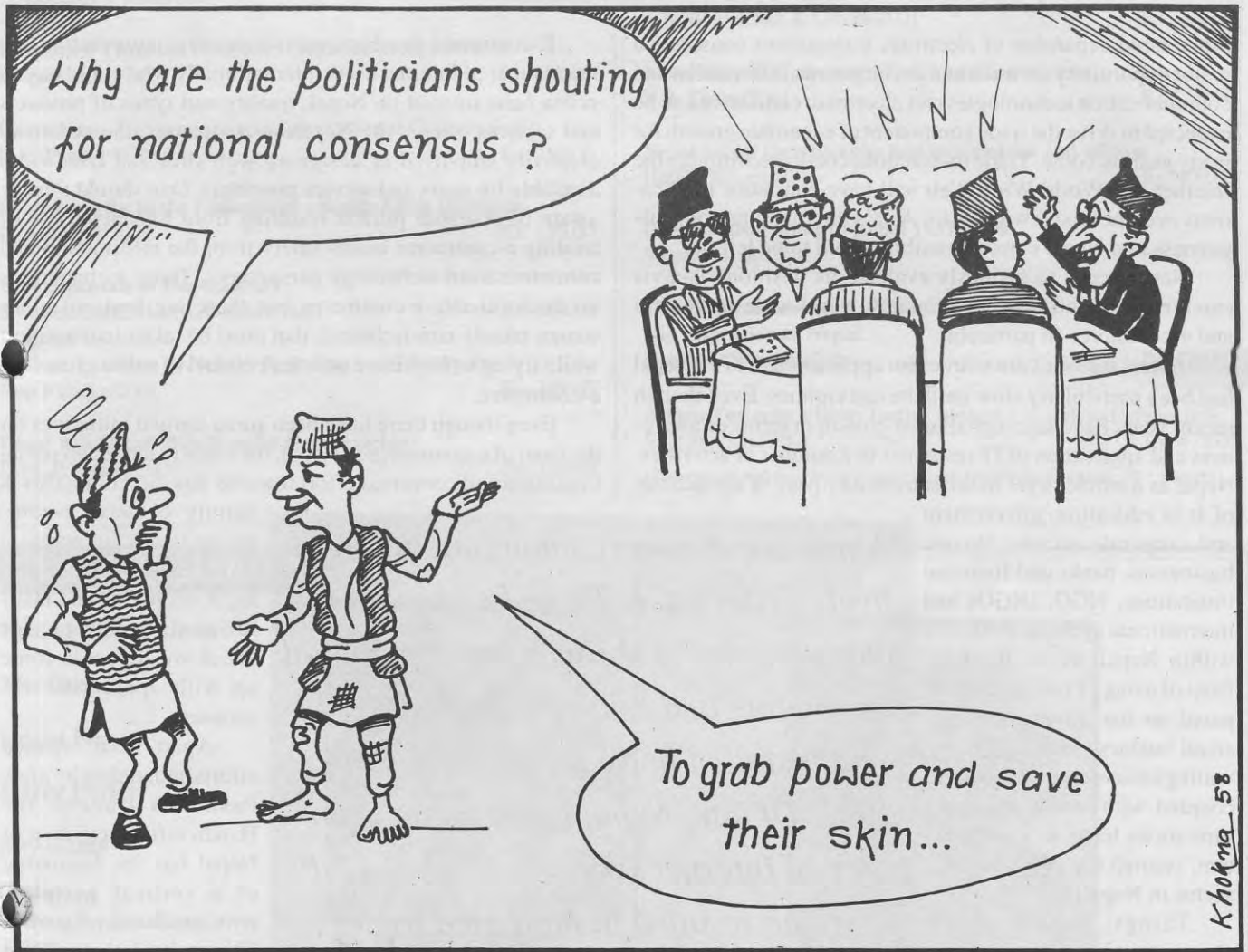
SPOTLIGHT

THE NATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

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By M.S.KHOKNA



TRANSITION

ANNOUNCED: Awards to individuals and organizations that have played key roles in establishing peace in the country, by the Birendra Peace Academy, on late King Birendra's birth anniversary on December 29.

TERMINATED: The three-

decade trolley bus service, after the government decided to dissolve its operator, the Nepal Transport Corporation.

ARRESTED: Two Nepalis, suspected Maoists, along with large quantity of explosives, by the New Delhi Police in old Delhi railway station.

KILLED: Three army men,

one on the spot, after an army truck fell to the ambush set up by terrorists in Lamjung.

LEFT: Sahana Pradhan, President of Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist), for Apollo Hospital, New Delhi, in connection with heart treatment.

RELEASED: Bandhu

Thapa, publisher of Deshantar weekly, and Gopal Budhathoki, editor of Saanghu weekly, after brief arrest by the authorities.

NOMINATED: Komal Shah, former minister, as the treasurer of the Bal Krishna Sama Foundation, by a meeting of the foundation. ■

IT And E-commerce In Nepal

By MANOHAR K. BHATTARAI

Since rapid expansion of electronic transactions constitute a major opportunity for trade and development, information and communication technologies and electronic commerce can be expected to drive the trade component of economic growth for many years to come. Trade transactions conducted through the Internet and World Wide Web will have enormous implications over the next few years for Asia's international competitiveness and Nepal cannot possibly afford to be left out.

Nepal needs to seriously evaluate its position vis-a-vis emergence of information economy world-wide in general and e-commerce in particular.

Actual statistics are scarce, but application of IT in Nepal had been particularly slow until the late eighties. Even though recent years have seen remarkable growth in terms of awareness and application of IT resources in a number of activities, Nepal as a whole is yet to see satisfactory pace of application of It in education, government and corporate sectors. Private businesses, banks and financial institutions, NGO, INGOs and international agencies operating within Nepal are on the forefront of using IT resources compared to the government and small business sector. The prevailing socio-economic realities coupled with human resources limitations have, to a great extent, stunted the growth of this sector in Nepal.

Things are, however, changing at a relatively faster pace. There has been a remarkable rise in the number of personal computers and related equipment sold and installed in Nepal especially after 1992. Of late, Nepal has seen an emergence of Internet service providers (ISPs) which resulted in increased use of Internet and World Wide Web. There are altogether seven licensed ISPs, including two V-SAT private operations in Nepal. Recently, National Telecommunications Corporation has also joined the ISP bandwagon and announced provision of Internet-related services.

Internet connectivity, though increasing at a faster pace, is far from being at a satisfactory level. The number of Internet accounts in Nepal is estimated to be around 10,000 and the majority of the users are within Kathmandu valley. Since the potential for electronic commerce within and outside Nepal will also depend on the number of users. But this alone will not be sufficient to guarantee the government of e-commerce in the country.

E-commerce development is dependent upon factors like the number of Internet users internationally who could have a prima facie interest on Nepal, quality and types of products and services offered by Nepalese companies, the skills and creativity employed in designing web sites and bandwidth available for users and service providers. One should thus be aware of potential pitfalls resulting from lopsided view of treating e-commerce issues solely from the information and communication technology perspective. These technologies no doubt enable e-commerce but there are hosts of other issues, mostly non-technical, that must be taken into account while trying to formulate policies conducive to the growth of e-commerce.

Even though there have been some limited initiatives on the front of e-commerce in Nepal, the country has yet to see an organized and concerted effort towards this direction. This is mainly because e-commerce issues cut across a broad range of technical, legal, economic and institutional questions for which we are yet to come up with appropriate responses.

Apart from isolated efforts undertaken by a few Pashmina traders, the Handicraft Association of Nepal has the beginning of a vertical portal www.nepalhandicraft.com.np. This site has links to twelve member home pages and an email ombudsman service to match suppliers with foreign distributors. But the site leaves a lot of room for improvement, as it is characterized by incomplete information and poor user interface. Issues like payment mechanism and export formalities also have not been addressed adequately in these sites.

With conventional economies signs of age especially in Asia, study of potential developmental aspect of e-commerce in the Nepalese context demands serious attention. Along these lines, it will be worthwhile first to examine as to what will be the potential benefits to Nepal obtainable through e-commerce and also how can Nepal create and enabling and conducive environment for e-commerce. ■

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(Excerpts from a paper presented at the round table on IT and e-commerce for development organized by Centre for Development and Governance. Bhattarai is an IT expert)

Now In Town

BOOK

- Challenges to Farmer Managed Irrigation Systems**
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S.K. Shrestha/2001 Rs. 475.00
- (Source : Himalayan Book Center, Bagh Bazar, Kathmandu, Ph : 242085)*

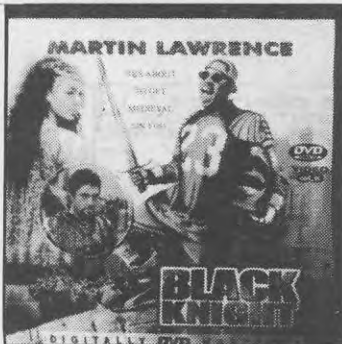
Video (English)

- Behind Enemy Lines
- The Order
- Ocean Eleven
- Harry Porter
- Spy Game
- Hot Cold
- 13 Ghost
- Life Is A House
- Black Kinght
- From Hell



Hindi

- Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham
- Ehsaas
- Tere Mera Saath Rahe
- Moksha
- Ashoka
- Abhay
- Deewanapan
- Meri Adalat
- Renha Hai Tere Dil Mai
- Yeh Zindagi Ka Safar
- (Source : Super Star Video, New Road)*



*“See God installed in everyone;
every body is a temple,
where the Omnipresent God is
to be adored and worshipped
by your service?”*

— SATYA SAI BABA

CATHY



GASOLINE ALLEY



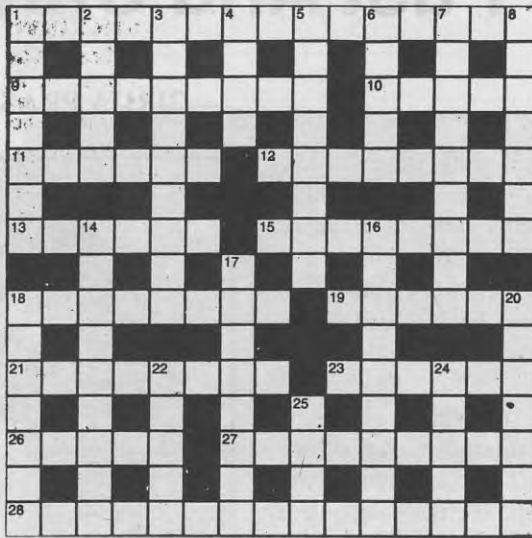
MR. BOFFO



JUDGE PARKER



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. Action hero, composite of droll don and dumb mug (7,8)
9. Two scholars introduced to change old school (4,5)
10. Blunder made by foreman ñ that's not right (5)
11. Think you can ring off? You only finish up fighting (4,2)
12. Utensil pa can use if properly trained (8)
13. Appear to make louder (4,2)
15. I had rejected ideal part (8)
18. Took part of strange instrument (4-4)
19. State showing promise (6)
21. About head and neck (8)
23. Capital doctor joining vessel (6)
27. The cheek of some players! (5)
28. Bird (American) with man in charge of American play (5,10)

DOWN

1. Group together and start to battle fraud (7)
2. Lover's race not fully run (5)
3. Non-speaking cast overcome with astortishment (9)
4. Number attending Georgia Tech cut by half (4)
5. Travelling via Arras, see something very unusual (4,4)
6. Wonderful raincoat worn by soldier (5)
7. Hybird griffons bearing quiet progeny (9)
8. Stamps no name on when business cannot be transacted (4,3)
14. Nothing left to have beneficial effect on worker laid off (9)
16. Is 2 outside of tax haven (4,2,3)
17. Former tax collector now innkeeper (8)
18. This was in the wind ñ only forestalled by dismissal (7)
20. Approaching town, having left north, on a road south (7)
22. Nothing in the present circumstances can afford a haven (5)
24. Bestowed in infancy ñ nickname for Greek philosopher (5)
25. Just for show (4)

ACROSS : 1. Bulldog drummond 9. Almatater 10. Garfe 11. Kung fu 12. Saucepan 13. Turn-up 15. Division 18. Side drum 19. Plight 21. Canoodle 23. Mascow 26. Brass 27. Coal miner 28. Titus andronicus

DOWN : 1. Dracker 2. Lemman 3. Dumbfound 4. Gate 5. Kara vats 6. Magtc 7. Offspring 8. Dies non 14. Redundant 16. Isle of man 17. Pubhican 18. Sackbut 20. Towards 22. Oasis 24. Cynic 25. Fair

NOITLON

BRIDGE

NORTH 3-26	
♠ 7 6 3	
♥ K 9 7	
♦ Q J 9 6 5	
♣ 8 2	
WEST	EAST
♠ J 9 5 4	♠ Q 8 2
♥ Q 6 3 2	♥ J 5 4
♦ 3	♦ A 10 4 2
♣ Q J 10 9	♣ 6 5 4
SOUTH	
♠ A K 10	
♥ A 10 8	
♦ K 8 7	
♣ A K 7 3	
Vulnerable: North-South	
Dealer: South	
The bidding:	
South	West
2 NT*	Pass
3 NT	All pass
*20-21 HCP	
Opening lead: Club queen	

“Danger breeds best on too much confidence.”

— CORNEILLE

Today's game looks like a "no-brainer." With dummy's five-card diamond suit easily established and with a sure heart entry to dummy, what does South have to fear? The answer, of course, is a poor diamond break. How should South play diamonds to guard against a bad break?

South wins his club king and counts six top winners excluding diamonds. Against any 3-2 diamond split, he can easily add four diamond winners to make an overtrick. How does he play safely if diamonds break poorly?

If South leads low to dummy's diamond queen, East wisely ducks. A diamond back to South's king brings a discard from West and trouble for South. East's A₁₀ remains behind dummy's J-9-6, and South cannot win more than two diamond tricks.

Had West held the diamond stack, routine play would always succeed. South would discover the bad break in time to finesse against West's 10.

To guard against a stack with either defender, South must begin by leading his diamond king. If East ducks, South leads his diamond eight, letting it ride when West discards. East wins his 10 to deny South four diamond winners, but South is in charge.

He ducks East's club return, wins the next, and knocks out East's diamond ace. The safety play in diamonds ensures three winners in the suit and gives South his game and rubber.

“Let’s Forget The Past And Unite For The Future”

— GIRIJA PRASAD KOIRALA

Former prime minister GIRIJA PRASAD KOIRALA has built a reputation of an iron-willed politician. When he made his latest call for national consensus, it was bound to send ripples across the political waters. Koirala, president of the ruling Nepali Congress, spoke to BBC Nepali service on Sunday on various issues, including his unity call. Excerpts:

It is said that you are proposing national unity simply to replace Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. How do you look at this allegation?

The talk of national unity is not new. I resigned as prime minister voluntarily. When I submitted the resignation, I proposed a 14-point program and had held talks with all political parties to implement it. The present situation of the country is very serious because of the violence unleashed by the Maoists. They have already been declared terrorists and a state of emergency has been imposed to quell the insurgency. In this situation, I realized the relevance of a broader national democratic alliance. If all democratic parties come under one umbrella, they could bring a major change in the country by increasing confidence among the people. It would also help to isolate the terrorists.

It is also reported that you have raised the possibility of a national government. What is this all about?

I have not said anything about the possibility of forming a national government. The confusion was the result of misquotes. What I said was that there is no provision in our constitution on forming a national government. Our government is a majority government. However, if the prime minister wishes to [broaden the base of his government], he can include people of other parties on an individual basis.

It is commonly said that Girija Prasad Koirala cannot remain outside the power. What do you say?

I have already told you that I quit the prime minister’s post voluntarily. Let’s not forget I resigned when I still had a majority

in the parliamentary party. However, I resigned after assessing the country’s situation. If people describe me as power hungry, it is a totally foolish charge.

You really believe MPs from different parties should be included in the government to tackle the existing problems?

I have not said the prime minister must include MPs of various parties on an individual basis. What I have said is that there is need for a national consensus on minimum common program. I believe the government should be run on the basis of such national consensus.

As you say, you have been stressing the urgency of national consensus for a long time. Why haven’t political parties been able to develop such consensus?

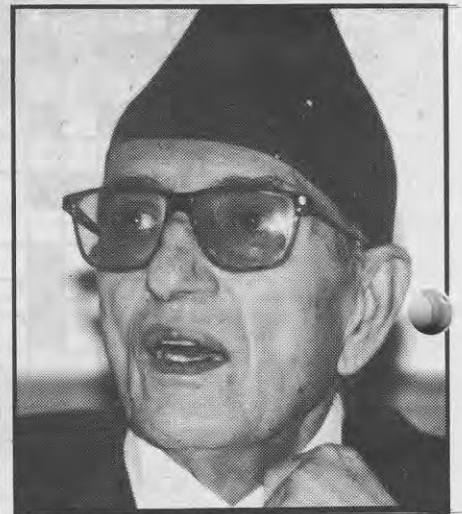
The Nepali Congress has given this mandate to me and I have just begun my initiative.

You could not bring political parties on a common platform earlier. What makes you think you would succeed in forging a greater democratic alliance?

Nothing is impossible. The Nepali Congress has given me the mandate to form a greater national democratic alliance and I have already initiated efforts. I have met senior political leaders. All political parties know how the economy has been destroyed and how non-functional the country has become. I believe all political parties that care about the nation’s problems will support me.

But opposition parties accuse the Nepali Congress, which has ruled the country for more than 10 out of the 12 years of democracy, for creating this mess. Some opposition leaders have even said no national consensus could be possible under the leadership of the Congress. Why are you insisting on the effort?

Much water has flow down the Bagmati River. I don’t want to repeat things of the past. I don’t want to comment on why parliament was not allowed to run for 57 days [during the winter session]. When I am talking about a broader national alliance, I



don’t want to talk about anything else. I am trying to develop a national consensus in order to safeguard the future of the country. I don’t want to get involved in the past.

But opposition leaders have been saying that the Nepali Congress is incapable of governing and that Girija Prasad Koirala is using this proposal as a ladder to regain power. How do you see these allegations?

I urge all political parties not to dwell on the past, but to look at the future of the country.

You say you are working to bring all parties under a single umbrella, but what do you say about the disunity in the Nepali Congress? Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba himself has termed your proposal as “untimely music”, hasn’t he?

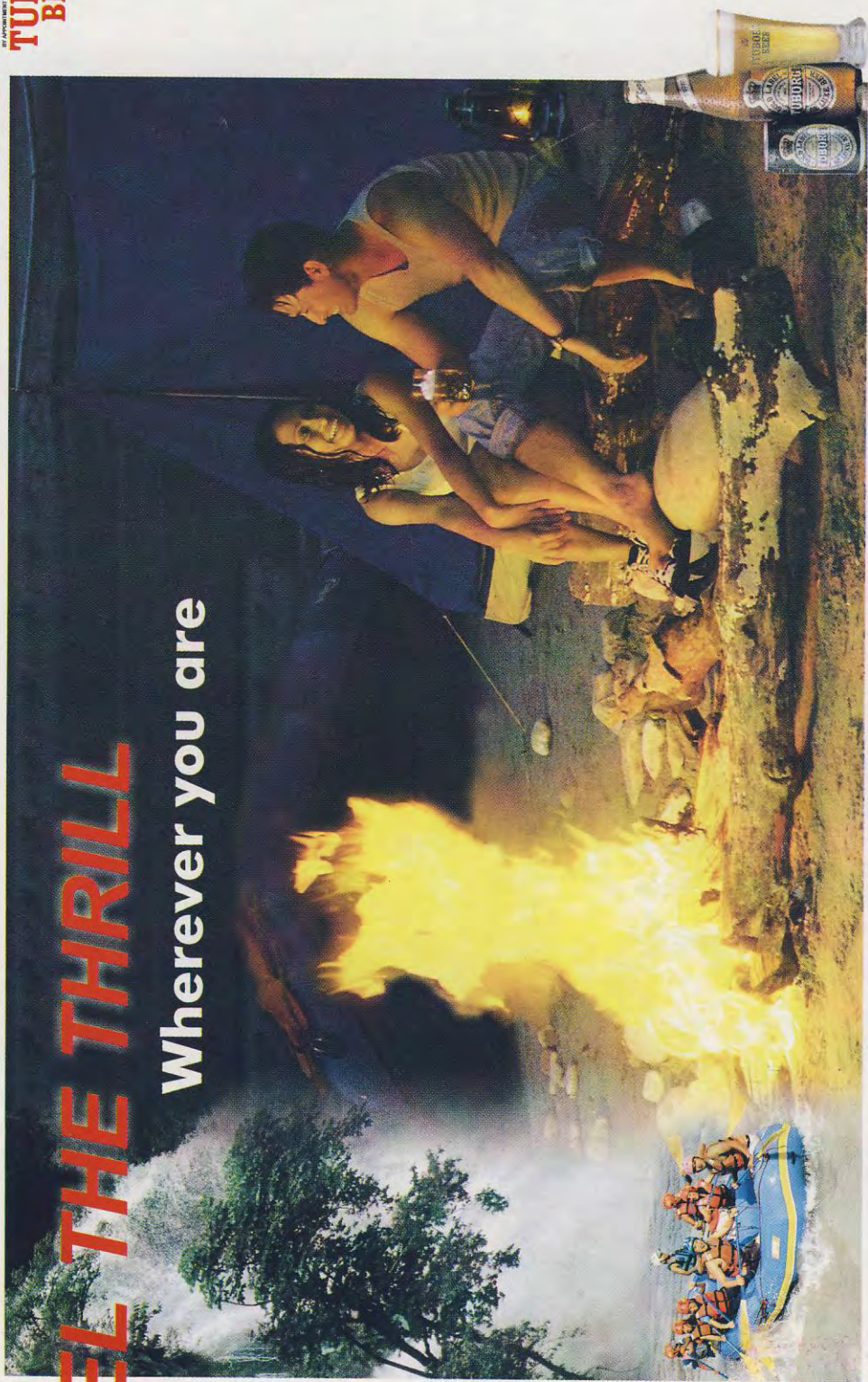
There is a big game going on to sow disunity in the Nepali Congress. Prime Minister Deuba’s made an emotional reaction to my proposal. The statement of Deuba — like mine — was twisted to create misunderstanding in the party. This misunderstanding has been cleared after I talked with Prime Minister Deuba.

So the Nepali Congress does not plan to replace the prime minister?

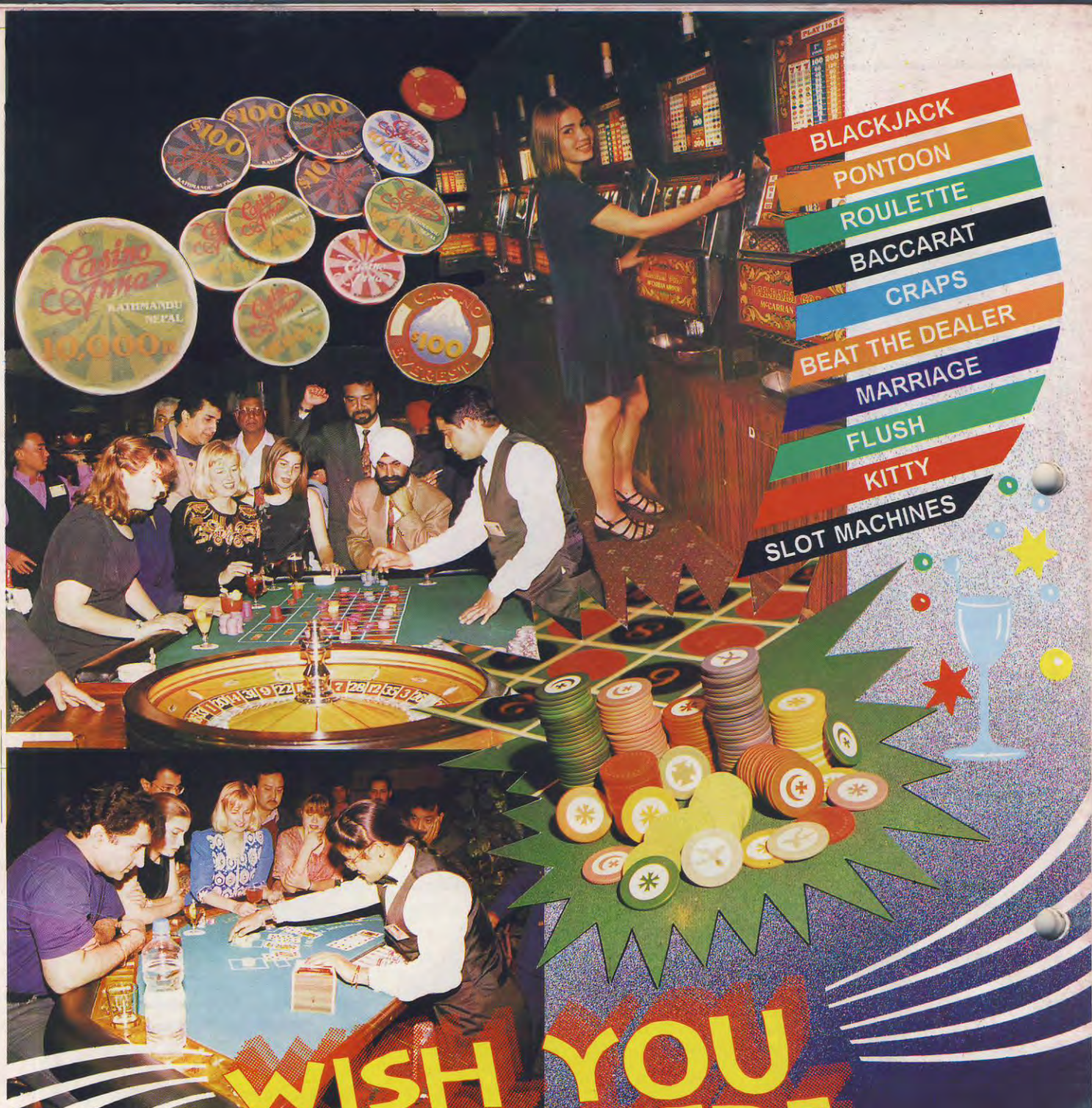
There is no plan to change the government leadership. On the contrary, my proposal for a greater democratic alliance is aimed at strengthening the government. ■

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BY APPOINTMENT TO THE ROYAL DANISH COURT



- BLACKJACK
- PONTOON
- ROULETTE
- BACCARAT
- CRAPS
- BEAT THE DEALER
- MARRIAGE
- FLUSH
- KITTY
- SLOT MACHINES

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 E-mail: rdt@mos.com.np



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