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Rasta revolution

Why are Nepalis obsessed with Bob Marley?

p10-11



Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 172

Q. What is the most-feasible political option at present?

Total votes: 720

Weekly Internet Poll # 173. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Which side in the conflict is a more serious violator of human rights?

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If you have to fight Fight by the rules

NARESH NEWAR

It is an indication of just how seriously the world now takes the brutality of Nepal's conflict that someone like Louise Arbour was here this week.

The former Canadian supreme court justice is a name associated with genocides in Rwanda and ex-Yugoslavia. She specialises in bringing war criminals to justice through international tribunals like she did the massacre perpetrators from Rwanda as well as Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic.

Her presence in Nepal should have sent a chill down the spine of every commander and political or rebel leader under whose watch human rights atrocities are being committed. More than 12,000 Nepalis have lost their lives in the last nine years: most of them are unarmed civilians, butchered, disappeared, killed after arbitrary arrests and torture.

This week in Kathmandu, Arbour was outspoken in her criticism of state security and the Maoists and warned them that they would be held to account. "In every part of the world, political and military leaders who thought themselves immune from persecution are now answering before the law for the gross human rights abuses they perpetrated," Arbour said.

Nepal has signed more than a dozen international treaties and instruments that would allow the UN to get Nepali human rights violators into international courts. "They are more than enough for the UN Security Council to set up tribunals for Nepali perpetrators," Sher Bahadur KC of the Nepal Bar Association and international lawyer told us, "and Arbour was here to assess the human rights situation under that UN



DEEPENDRA BAJRACHARYA

provision."

Arbour met King Gyanendra, Prime Minister Deuba, COAS Pyar Jung Thapa conveying her concern that there have been very few serious investigations and convictions of human rights abuses. The army was also given the message that human rights violations at home would affect the future of its UN peacekeeping operations abroad.

Arbour also met human rights activists and relatives of the disappeared. But her harshest

words were for the Maoists who she warned shouldn't think they exist in a legal vacuum. She told us: "I would like to warn the leaders of the insurgency not to misread developments in the wider world nor to believe that they can operate outside of the law." She said she was most concerned about the abductions of children, forced displacement of families, murders and extortion by the rebels. But even while Arbour was still in Nepal, Maoists went ahead with the abduction of 500

students and teachers in Dadelhdhura and 750 in Sankhuwasabha for their indoctrination programs.

A UN team on involuntary disappearances was in Nepal last month and is scheduled to present

its **Arbour's advice p2**
Watchlist report p5

report in the run-up to a hearing on Nepal scheduled for March. Arbour's office in Geneva will be looking at progress till then. ●

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REUNITED: Girija Prasad Koirala and Sher Bahadur Deuba bury the hatchet at the Australia Day reception on Wednesday at the Radisson Hotel.



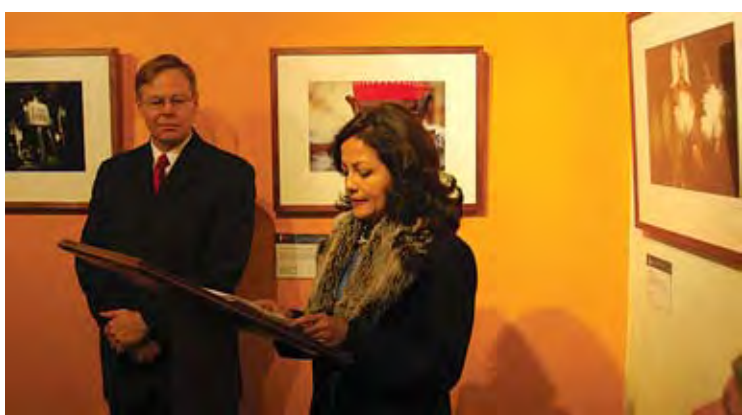
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DAJU BHAJ: Prime Minister Deuba and Indian Ambassador Shiva Shankar Mukherjee attend the Republic Day celebrations at the Indian Embassy.



RAM HUMAGAIN

SUNDAY BEST: Shivapuri emerged glorious in snow after Sunday's heavy snowfall which brought snow down to 2,500 m in the Valley.



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KICKIN' UP DUST: Australian ambassador Keith Gardner at the photography exhibition of Australian contemporary indigenous cultural festivals at the Siddhartha Art Gallery with Sangeeta Thapa.



SUDARSHAN RANJIT

AAHA: The finals of the Aha Gold Cup in Pokhara on 22 January in which, Manang Marsyangdi Club defeated Mahendra Police Club to win the Championship.

In the crossfire

Tula Ram Pandey has long stopped having any illusions that journalists should not get involved in their stories.

As a reporter in the remote district of Kalikot, he was nearly killed in a recent firefight between an army patrol and the Maoists. He has been threatened by both sides, found himself evacuating sick children to hospitals and has even mediated between the state and the Maoists to rescue abducted politicians.

"You have no choice," says 30-year-old Tula Ram, "You can't just say I'm a journalist, that's not my job." Last year, Pandey played the role of a go-between to obtain the release of the UML's Kalikot MP who had been abducted by the Maoists. Neither the Maoists nor the army would trust anyone else.

But that trust is sometimes mixed with suspicion. Every day is a high-wire act for Tula Ram as he tries to stick to professional journalism while keeping the army, the administration and the rebels at arm's length.

He is not always successful. Two months ago, while on a reporting assignment up the valley from Manma he found himself in the middle of a gun battle between the army and the Maoists. Four young Maoist

whole-timers were killed, but Tula Ram was lucky that a ricocheting bullet just grazed his leg.


Army officers have threatened to bury him on the spot if he didn't stop filing human rights stories, while a notorious Maoist militia chief warned he would be terminated if his articles weren't more positive. Tula Ram Pandey is the Kalikot correspondent for the Nepali national daily, *Kantipur*, and has grown used to the dangers. His more immediate worry is the technical difficulty of filing stories: there is only one phone line in the whole district and it is on the CDO's desk. Friendly helicopter pilots are Tula Ram's (and his district's) lifeline to the rest of the country.

Despite everything, he is still positive about the future. "I am an incurable optimist," he says, smiling, "If I wasn't I wouldn't have married last month. You have to believe that someday this madness will end." ●


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Gripping stuff

Hold the club right and let it rip

Take up golf the right way and one of the first things you are taught is how to hold the club correctly. This is known as 'The Grip' and at all levels of golf, right up to the top, it is a vital element of performing well.

Neglecting this basic key technique will lead golfers into all sorts of trouble, almost always resulting in an improper swing to compensate for weaknesses in the grip. Unfortunately most amateurs and almost all beginners don't pay enough attention to this and just indulge themselves in whacking more and more golf balls on the range with an incorrect grip. Instead of practice sessions being

constructive, they end up ingraining an incorrect swing that takes much harder work to undo.

To top it off, even after realising that it is detrimental to

one's improvement, once an incorrect grip has started to feel comfortable, it's something that's not easy to change. Golf textbooks identify three basic different ways of gripping the golf club.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



- The Vardon (or overlap) grip
- The interlocking grip
- The baseball grip

The Vardon or overlap grip: A vast majority of tournament professionals use the grip invented by Harry Vardon, known as the overlapping or 'Vardon Grip'. Here, the small finger of the right hand rests in the slot between the index and middle finger of left hand. Some find this awkward and prefer letting the little finger rest on the index finger itself. In both cases though, the ring finger of right hand should rest closely against the left index finger.

The interlocking grip: Many players prefer the interlocking grip as it offers a secure feeling of control over the club. This grip is formed by locking the left index finger and right small finger.

The baseball grip: Similar to gripping a baseball or cricket bat, here there is no linkage between the index and little fingers even though both hands should be very close to each other.



No matter which style you use, there are a few basics that need to be followed. First place your left hand on your club ensuring that without moving your head you can see two knuckles. This set up is for a normal grip as opposed to a strong or weak one. The V shape created by the left index finger and thumb should point to your chin.

Next, place your right hand on the grip ensuring the V created by the right index finger and thumb point to the right shoulder. To cross check, unfold your hands and see if they are parallel to each other. If they are, then you probably got the grip right.

Players usually adjust their grip in relation to their physical strength. Weaker people may opt for a stronger grip; one where you should see three or more knuckles of the left hand while holding the club. Conversely, for physically stronger people a weaker grip may be ideal, where only one knuckle is seen while holding the club.

The bottom line is that both hands should be parallel to each other when unfolded. The interlocking grip is recommended for players with small hands as it offers a secure feeling of control on the grip. The overlapping grip is best for stronger people and the baseball grip is sometimes for those who have long or uneven finger lengths.

At the end of it all, it's best to have your grip checked by your golf professional every two months or so. That is how easily and often a grip starts to go wrong and how important it is to stay 'in the groove'.

Deepak Acharya is a Golf Instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu. prodeepak@hotmail.com



Jamie Messenger, the winner, glides by the peaks. (Below) The paragliders race over Phewa lake.

Pokhara sky race

ADAM HILL in POKHARA

Pokhara, the town of lakes and aerial sports, played host last week to a sky-wide extravaganza. Forty-four pilots from 14 countries participated in the 6th Nepal Paragliding Championships, the colourful festival of gliders wheeling and soaring in the air currents above Phewa Lake.

Circling and climbing to 2,000 m in a thermal with 43 other pilots requires great skill and concentration. The idea is to ride rising currents of warm air called thermals until they stop and then glide out to the next rising current. These thermals are the secret to sustaining flight and paragliders need to be extremely adept at harnessing them.

Flying competition is often fast, furious and aggressive. Pilots race each other around a set course, the first to successfully complete it is the winner. According to topography and climate, Pokhara valley is ideal for such a competition. This year it played host to pilots of exceptional skill. The class of the field was world standard and this showed in the speed of the race each day.

Adam Hill is the Director of Sunrise Paragliding and a competitor in the event.

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The annual Nepal Paragliding Championship was a flying success



Day one: Clear blue sky, cumulus clouds popping off the high mountains and an uninterrupted view of the peaks. An ambitious task of 40 km was set. Starting from Sarangkot, the competitors raced 10 km down the ridge to Naundada and then another 10 km back to Sarangkot before heading due north towards Annapurna IV and back south to Lakeside. The promising conditions deteriorated as clouds enveloped the mountains and created strong valley winds. These winds blew the thermals out and put a lot of the competitors on the ground early. In the turbulent conditions one pilot from France suffered a collapsed wing and had to throw his reserve parachute, landing safely. Only four pilots made the final turn point, with only Jamie Messenger completing the task. Jean Michael from France came second and Ajay Kumar of India, third.

Day two: Another good day with early cumulus development. The race committee decided to set a shorter race that would allow more competitors to finish. So a 20 km ridge run with four turnpoints was set. A congested start saw all the gliders struggling for the best lift, with cloudbase 1,000 m above the takeoff, we were able to spread out and fly with little interference. Although you race against other pilots in paragliding competitions, in reality you compete against yourself. If you fly at someone else's pace and worry about where they are going and why, it becomes hard to find your own rhythm, you lose focus and land early. With good conditions the race pilot's main priority is to decide when he should leave the thermal he is climbing in and move on to the next. Today's task was won and lost on just such a decision with me taking the low route and sneaking in five seconds ahead of Jamie Messenger, Debu Chaudhary of India came third.

Day three: Though it had rained the night before, the day dawned clear. A short task was called as we had the closing ceremony that afternoon. Apparently, state ministers don't like to be kept waiting! A 23 km race was set around Phewa lake. Gliders have a wide speed range from 27-65 km/h. By flying fast you lose height, the skill is in balancing speed and height. Jamie Messenger dominated the field. Debu Chaudhary arrived second and Rajesh Bomjan from Nepal finished third.

In the afternoon the pilots headed up for a second flight, this time for an acrobatic display over the lake. A variety of thrilling manoeuvres later, they had the option of landing on a raft situated 100m offshore or a spot landing with an egg in the middle. By the end of the day there were three very scrambled eggs and many wet pilots. The crowd that thronged the shores of Phewa lake cheered wildly as more and more pilots missed the raft landing and splashed into the lake. Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Prakash Sharan Mahat, handed out the prizes to (pictured, from right) Jamie Messenger (UK), who came in first, Debu Chaudhary (India), second and Ajay Kumar (India). There were only eight pilots from Nepal competing in the event. Sunrise Paragliders hopes to train more Nepalis for future events but in the meantime if you want to ride with the wind, just head for Pokhara.




SURYA NEPAL
GOLF



MIN BAJRACHARYA

surprising sanctuary in Nepal. It is hard to explain the Bob Marley craze in Nepal but no one can deny that the raja of reggae with his rasta locks has found a certain resonance in here.

Legend has it that Bob Marley visited Nepal in the 1970s and went up to Mustang. Today, just below the temple of the eternal flame in Muktinath is his shrine, the Bob Marley Restaurant, where he is said to have rested. Late at night, the sound of 'No Woman No Cry' emanating from the restaurant and disco echoes in the craggy mountains below Thorung La. In the remotest corners of Nepal, trekking porters who don't even speak English hum Marley's tunes. Taxis, rickshaws and corner shops in Kathmandu and long-distance buses are resplendent in the Rastafarian colours of green, gold and red. Marley's Rasta stickers are readily available and ubiquitous defiantly showing off the cannabis leaves and waving the Ethiopian tricolour.

The Bob Marley stickers are printed in

Museum in the singer's former home in Kingston probed the records to find any reference to the singer ever having visited Nepal. There were none, but that doesn't mean he didn't come here, especially since Jimi Hendrix, Cat Stevens, Janis Joplin had all visited Nepal during that period and were inspired enough to write songs.

Marley didn't sing about Nepal but his infatuation with Nepal and vice-versa could have something to do with the similar outlooks (and looks) that the Rastafarians have with Hindu sadhus. Bob Marley is seen by some as a Bishnu incarnate and we wonder if this is the missing link that connects the famous Jamaican star with Nepal?

Marley died of cancer at the age of 36 in 1981. The people of Jamaica gave him an official funeral, and his body was laid to rest in a mausoleum. On his 60th birthday, his remains are to be exhumed and re-buried in Ethiopia, the spiritual home of Rastafarianism. ●

Marley in Muktinath



Bob Marley's contribution to the world of music is immense. He furthered a religion, promoted peace and sang for the people. He brought Jamaica to the world and the world to Jamaica and more importantly he brought reggae to Nepal. And one of the strangest sights while trekking in Nepal is to come across the Bob Marley restaurant and lodge at Mukitinath (pictured). Here, birds of a feather (reggae fans, Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims) flock together to pay homage to the eternal flame that comes out of the ground and the eternal music of Bob Marley.

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Arbour's advice

THE LEAST-COST OPTION

This country is running out of options. As the choices narrow, the discourse gets polarised and even the moderates are being pushed to be radically republican or royalist.

The four agitating parties on the streets ran out of options some time ago. The anti-'regression' protest has suffered from attrition. Desperate to sow unrest, one party stooped as low as trying to spread communal violence on 1 September after 12 Nepalis were killed in Iraq. Lately it has used the fuel price hike but the protests fail to ignite because the people see the protests as being led by crooks who just want their turn at the till.

King Gyanendra's October Fourth gameplan isn't going anywhere, either. He is now down to just two options: consolidate his takeover and scrap the constitution once and for all, or roll back October Fourth and restore a semblance of democracy. The international community has reportedly sent unambiguous signals that he desist from the temptation to go it alone. By now, it must be clear even to him that the musical chairs game of Article 127 can't go on. The king therefore needs a face-saving way out, and the only one we see is for him to join hands with a rejuvenated political process. For the parties it means recognising the crisis and coming together in a national government to address the deep-seated problems with the polity.

The Maoists used to have time on their hands: as the country's economic situation deteriorated because of the insurgency they just needed to bide their time as frustrations grew. Not any more. The revolution is in serious danger of devouring itself. There are signs of dangerous rifts. Desertions and resistance are spreading. To bring things back on track, assert themselves and even to provide a strong bargaining position in future negotiations, the dominant hardliners will want to mark the ninth anniversary of the start of the war next month with some big bangs.

Out of Nepal's 25 million people, there are probably only some 150 (arms merchants, hawks on both sides, toy boys) who benefit from this conflict. The rest don't want to have anything to do with this war. The trouble is that this overpowering peace constituency is not organised and represented to articulate its wish. The people have been let down by the people they elected, by a palace that is supposed to care, and by revolutionaries who have brought nothing but ruin.

Of the three, the only way to give the people back their voice is to allow them to speak through their representatives. The parliamentary parties may have squandered democracy, but it is they who have lost the most, physically and psychologically, in the past nine years. Whether it is to restore parliament, reform the constitution, have elections, engage the Maoists in negotiations, bringing the parties back in the picture is the least-cost option. Despite their sins only parties in a genuine democracy offer the self-correcting mechanism needed to get us out of this mess. Authoritarianism and totalitarianism are both dead ends.

By UN standards, the speech delivered on Monday in Kathmandu by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, was as blunt as they come. She warned both the rebels and the army that they would ultimately be held to account for human rights violations. She urged both sides to sign the Human Rights Accord, saying this would reduce the corrosive impact of the conflict.

Excerpts:

- I am aware that the (NHRC) Commissioners' current terms expire in May. I cannot stress enough how important it is that the Commission's work does not deteriorate after that date and neither its independence nor its effectiveness be adversely impacted. This is particularly so in light of the conflict, which overshadows this country and which is characterised by grave and systematic human rights violations occurring on both sides.
- While His Majesty's Government carries the responsibility of maintaining the integrity of state institutions and while it bears the heavy burden of ensuring the safety and security of its people, it must do so in full compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law. The Maoist insurgents, for their part, do not operate in a legal vacuum: they are equally bound under international law.
- The people of Nepal are now



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prey to disappearances, summary executions, abductions and torture. Its human rights defenders are subjected to harassment in the pursuit of their vital work. And the country's children are at the mercy of being press-ganged by the insurgents.

- There are few crueler means of ending a childhood than through military conscription. Children, incapable of complex moral and political choices, should not be induced to utilise dubious means to pursue dubious ends, and risk, in doing so, being tainted for life—should they survive—by their coerced association with a political agenda that they could not freely embrace or influence.
- It is always easier to point the finger at the transgressions of the other side than to take a

sober, hard look at the failings of one's own. Yet it is precisely these leaders who bear primary responsibility, under international humanitarian law, for the actions of those under their command. Increasingly they can expect to be held to account.

- Human Rights Accord proposed by the National Human Rights Commission recognises that the armed conflict in Nepal affects, above all, innocent civilians. It asserts further that this must end and that if war is inevitable then it must be carried out in accordance with certain basic rules, well articulated in international law.
- It should not be difficult to conclude this Accord: after all, it is nothing more, in effect, than a reiteration of those legal obligations under human rights and international humanitarian

LETTERS

UNETHICAL

Going undercover for research is one thing but 'integrity' in reporting is another. Pranav Budathoki ('Nepalis go underground in Britain', #230) needs to possess more ethics in his writing so as not to mention real names in a national newspaper unless he asked their permission which he would not if he was undercover. Working in restaurants or grocery stores is not lowly as he implicitly assumes. At the same time, these same people may not be illegal migrants as he implies and may be completing their higher level education by funding themselves, an effort which I salute.

Kavita Rai, Bristol, UK

- It was really distressing to read the report by Pranav Budathoki in a newspaper of the standard of *Nepali Times*. Illegal immigration is a big problem and Nepalis along with tens of thousands of eastern Europeans and South Asians in the United Kingdom are obviously subject to extreme exploitation in the illegitimate economy. However, to paint the picture of the grim scenario in such a pathetic way as Budathoki did adds salt to

the wounds of the sufferers. He and you in the editorial team should have realised the shortcomings of the Nepalis back home. The conditions there are worse than in the UK and only a portion of the Nepali immigrants are actually 'underground' in Britain. Many Nepalis have secured better jobs and are paid reasonably well. Although the students are working at hotels and restaurants or even cleaning hospitals, many have studied in universities having earned tuition fees with years of hard work. It will be the country, Nepal or Britain that will reap the reward of their hard-earned university degree. How can the students fund sky-high university fees without earning a few pounds on the side? Their work has helped strengthen the British economy itself. They pay taxes as British citizens do. Instead of appreciating their hard work, derogatory articles like this will add salt to the wounds of Nepali immigrants. The first or the second generation of Indian and Chinese immigrants suffered and worked hard, and look where their children are now. In future, *Nepali Times* should avoid such one-sided reports that tarnish the reputation of Nepalis as a whole.

R Kafle, London

RNA

Words such as 'democracy', 'freedom', and 'liberalism' that our forefathers spilled their blood to win are being cheapened by the likes of Sadip Bahadur Shah ('Not the people's war', #230) who use them with unbelievable ease for their own unjustifiable needs. Shah speaks as if the rest of us are incapable of spotting a far-fetched claim when one is so obvious. Given the outrageous human rights violations that the RNA has added onto the reckless killings by the Maoists (see the latest report by Amnesty International), what 'democratic norm' does Shah speak of? Perhaps he means the democratic norm that has allowed Nepalis to enjoy freedom and fundamental rights in the last 14 years. The democratic norm that has allowed our rural people to defend themselves against the violations of their constitutional rights: against caste discrimination, brutality, and constant bullying. The norm that has generously blessed our journalists with the freedom of speech. Nepal is yet to see a genuine democracy, let alone defend it. I suspect most Nepalis outside Kathmandu have neither the time nor the state of normalcy between getting raped and

murdered to fight fear. If it isn't already apparent to some, there is nothing served on their plates but fear. With no local authorities to effectively report to, Nepalis have no one to support or trust. So it's quite ironic that Shah brings up half-hearted support. I am certain Dailekh's 'defiant mothers' would beg to differ with him. If the army is to gain people's authentic support, reasonable measures must be taken to punish those who violate human rights, to show that they stand for democracy, and to prove that their concern is genuine. There is much work that



needs to be done if it is interested in winning hearts, being as crass as 'the enemy' is not it.

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- Increased fuel prices and now tax hikes, all for the security expenses? Whose security are you talking about Mr Premier? ('Adding fuel to the fire', #230) Security of the palace, power elite and political egoists? The general public's security has never been a priority. Dear king, this is an emergency, prepare to compromise. The people can no longer bear the cost of this war. Prachanda: How can you dream of spring when you are uprooting the tree in winter? To the palace: You nest in the same tree.

Rajesh Pokharel, New York

LAK

Good to know from Daniel Lak that 'the Indians would like nothing better than a Nepal that is prosperous, happy and at peace'. ('Looking at Nepal from New Delhi', #231) Such a statement, if issued by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would have provided great relief to us Nepalis. But this assurance has come from

law to which all parties to the conflict are already bound.

- A conflict that is waged without regard for fundamental human rights and international humanitarian law not only causes unimaginable misery to innocents but, in doing so, it has a corrosive, embittering effect for those members of the societies on which it impacts.

- This Human Rights Accord provides a genuine platform for peace: an opportunity that Nepal cannot afford to disregard. It simply affirms the legitimate statutory role of the National Human Rights Commission to monitor human rights violations, to undertake investigations and to report on its findings.

- If the Commission's monitors were to have unhindered access to all places of detention, I have no doubt that there would be a significant improvement in the human rights situation, particularly in regard to disappearances, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention, torture and other serious abuses.

- Violations of human rights, committed by either side, achieve the twin destructive goals of inflicting misery on those whose rights are denied and fuelling grievances which do nothing but push back the prospect for peace.

- I call upon the CPN-Maoists to end, immediately, the recruitment of child soldiers and to desist from using children in any way to further their military goals. I also call upon them to demonstrate their good faith by signing the Human Rights Accord and by allowing full access by monitors of the National Human Rights Commission to all areas under their control.

Stirring the poll pot

Just to show he is doing something, Deuba needs to keep churning out talk of elections

King Gyanendra's October Fourth decision and those after have been ascribed to a shadowy coterie of royal advisers. We don't know for certain who they are, but it's almost certain that neither premier Sher Bahadur Deuba nor his cabinet colleagues belong to that group.

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



Deuba knows where his orders come from. So he can't announce, defer or cancel parliamentary elections on his own. He has to wait for the appropriate light before pretending he has made up his mind. In the interim, he needs to show he is doing something. So, once in a while, he stirs the poll pot. Like everyone else in the kingdom, though, he too knows the absurdity of it all.

Despite his reputation, Deuba is neither naïve nor inept. He is a survivor and perfectly aware of the price of confrontation. He refrained from directly challenging the palace even while he was out in the boondocks in Budanilkantha last time he got the sack.

King Gyanendra had dismissed him by pinning the "incompetent" label on his lapel. There were many in Kathmandu's diplomatic circles then who gave

the king the benefit of doubt. They expected the king, with help from the military, would quickly clear up the Maobadi mess and hand power back to people's representatives. It's been two years and they are still waiting.

King Gyanendra has repeatedly said he is for constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy, but he hasn't given up his publicly declared intention that he also wants to be a 'constructive' (a politically correct synonym of 'active') monarch. Elections now will be an exercise in acquiring legitimacy for that active role rather than one that the constitution allows. Since the political parties agitating in the streets will be reluctant to commit hara-kiri by agreeing to polls, polls will end up alienating the parties from the monarchy even further. King Gyanendra is used to taking political risks, but this one is real big.

The Royal Nepali Army has been getting the goodies it wants but hasn't been able to meaningfully engage the Maoists. The military and the militants often play violent hide and seek—Tuesday night's attack in Mangalsen being another example of both sides claiming victory over the people's loss. Neither are in a position to subdue the other.

And nobody is sure of the kind of election the army wants. As anyone with some contact with our jarsaps knows, the officers don't hold politicians in very high esteem. It may sound harsh, but there is a vested interest in keeping the conflict going.

As for the Maoists, they never believed power flows from the ballot box anyway. Unless they reach a stage where they have to either participate in polls or perish, they will do everything they can to disrupt elections. Their capacity to paralyse normal life isn't in doubt. It would be futile to expect that the Maoists will lamely surrender and let King Gyanendra receive popular endorsement of his direct rule.

The palace's propaganda machinery is good at turning victims into villains, but the only people with any stake in meaningful elections are the leaders of political parties on the streets. If they don't want elections, there must be a serious reason for their reluctance. And that is the dissonance between the pronouncements and practices of the post-October Fourth Order. The Maoists are enemies of democracy, but

monarchists haven't shown they are friends of people power either.

And when Deuba boasts about holding elections, his own cabinet colleagues openly ridicule it. Bimalendra Nidhi has been urging reporters not to laugh, but to no avail. If Deuba really wants to hold free and fair elections, he should first hold free and frank discussions with the person who appointed him with the ambiguous mandate of "starting the process of elections" by year-end.

If updating the electoral roll is the beginning of the process, then preparations for polls have already begun. It's time Deuba took a lesson from Comrade Madhab's directives to his cadre and commit himself to a vow of silence and let the king say what exactly it is he wants. ●



someone who is not even an Indian national. (Or is Lak already a naturalised Indian citizen?) Frankly, does a western parachute journalist qualify to send a prescription to Nepalis, that too from a secure base called New Delhi? Why has the *Nepali Times* given Lak a permanent platform to frequently humiliate people living in Nepal?

**Mahendra Moktan,
Baneswor Heights**

- Being a respected journalist and ardent democrat, how can Daniel Lak in his Here and There column tell Nepalis to just follow the path of India? Although there are many well-educated pundits in and outside Nepal who do the

same thing, as a Canadian, Lak should be ashamed to suggest Nepal follow India's example. It's like saying Canada should follow the policy made in Washington DC. How would the Canadians feel about that? Just like the Americans dominate the world, what a great idea it would be to let India dominate South Asia! As someone who has spent a lot of time in Nepal in the past, Lak is free to have his opinions. And it has to be admitted, we are also to blame for kow-towing to the Big Brotherly Great Neighbour India. Historically, Nepal's kings, prime ministers and Maoists have all followed the Indian line, and look at where it

got us. So, Mr Lak, it is not the number of Indians who should or must know where Nepal is, not that the Indian media should have more reporting on Nepal, but that Indian leaders themselves must learn how to handle Nepal. The Maoists are a threat to Nepal and India, yet they are tolerated in Indian soil. Or is he suggesting that we hand defence and foreign policy over to people south of the border and only then will we be free of the 4Ms: military, monarchy, Maoists and multiparty?

C S Rana, email

- Every politician, bureaucrat, general, businessman and opinionist in Kathmandu should

read Daniel Lak's 'Looking at Nepal from New Delhi'. Our emotive pseudo-nationalism has undermined the national interest for too long. Successive rulers in Kathmandu used vitriolic anti-Indian rhetoric in public and sold us down the river in private. It is time to be transparent and pragmatic in our relations with India. Let's do our homework, figure out what it is we want and deal through a sense of realpolitik with New Delhi.

Jivan Khatri, email

MORE WEDDING PRESENTS

Kunda Dixit obviously doesn't do any shopping for wedding presents, otherwise he would know of a few more excellent

presents that can be given to newly-weds which would be essential for them in later life. Recently, I saw the following fabulous gift items at Bhatbhateni that I think every honeymooner would covet:

1. A 3-D stallion galloping through a wooden frame in which the artist has accurately portrayed speed and stamina.
2. Neon coloured deities from the Hindu pantheon with wooden pedestals under which they carry a 'Made in China' label.
3. Fountains that spew out water and smoke simultaneously with a sputtering sound when plugged in.

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Despite bandas and blockades, a white revolution raises the income of dairy farmers and improves nutrition

Land



KIRAN PANDAY

MILK RUN: A convoy of rickshaws carrying empty milk jars returns from a collection centre in Chitwan, and (overleaf) a farmer dumps milk that was spoilt after a blockade prevented transportation to the market.

MALLIKA ARYAL in DHADING

Rajendra Prasad Acharya of Kewalpur in Dhading wakes up at dawn every morning, milks his buffaloes and walks down the slippery trails to Dharkechhap carrying a jar of milk. This time of year there is thick fog as he approaches the Maheshmati Milk Production Cooperative off the Prithvi Highway.

The milk is tested for lactose and fat content and sent off to the Mahadeb Besi chilling plant five km down the road. From there Acharya's milk and milk from hundreds of other farmers in Dhading ends up at the Dairy Development Corporation's plant in Balaju for distribution in

Kathmandu.

Acharya is part of Nepal's white revolution, the dramatic spread of dairy farming across the midhills and the tarai that has raised the income of farmers and improved nutrition levels. Districts surrounding Kathmandu Valley (Dhading, Sindhupalchok and Kabhre) and even Chitwan and Nawalparasi have taken maximum advantage of the growing urban demand.

"When there is nothing else, milk is the best way to get a few hundred rupees," explains Hari Prasad Gajurel in Thakre. Most farmers who bring their milk to be sold here have given up

growing crops to become fulltime dairy farmers. There is no formal technical training required and most farmers already have cattle at home and just need to scale up. The return on investment is good during normal times.

Indeed, if it wasn't for the insurgency and political instability, farmers like Gajurel would have been quite prosperous by now. But frequent blockades and bandas have crippled Dhading's dairy and vegetable farmers. Here and in Chitwan, farmers recently got together and dumped thousands of litres of milk on the highways and rivers to protest the road closures. But the message hasn't

gone across to the Maoists or political parties who believe in creating maximum disruption by blocking highways. There has also been a glut in the dairy market because of oversupply and this has forced 'milk holidays'—days when Kathmandu based dairies do not buy milk from farmers. These are usually announced in advance and farmers have learnt to live with them. But local chilling units and production of value-added dairy products would have allowed farmers to be less affected by oversupply and highway disruptions.

"I lost Rs 5,000 during the last blockade," says Bishnu

Acharya. He and other farmers walked down to Dharkechhap carrying milk in dokos on their backs only to find out there was a banda and no one was at the collection centre. Bishnu carried the milk all the way back to his village but many of his friends just poured it into the Trisuli.

Heramba Rajbhandary, the owner of the private Nepal Dairy in Kathmandu predicts that at the rate milk production is increasing, Nepal is only five years away from a big milk boom. "But for that to happen, a stable political environment is a prerequisite," Rajbhandary told us. Nepal Dairy gets milk from Dhapakhel, Panauti, Dhulikhel and Panchkhal in the east and prides itself in never having to declare a milk holiday. "This is because we have diversified," explains Rajbhandary, "our products include ice cream, mozzarella, pizzas and bakery items, in addition to rasbaris and lalmohans."

The state run Dairy Development Corporation has also diversified its product base by investing in milk products like cheese and yoghurt. There are now 180 private dairy companies all over the country and 15 in Kathmandu alone, many are planning to invest in new equipment. In the past few years, private companies have set up units to turn surplus milk into canned condensed milk in Bhaktapur and Hetauda and are exploring export markets.

Almost as destructive as bandas is the import of cheap and dubious milk powder

Move Kathmandu away from Kathmandu

A bit radical but it may be the only way to effective decentralisation

Nepal should consider joining an exclusive club of nations. It may be the way to jump start the long stalled process of national development. How about this for company: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Tanzania, Nigeria, Pakistan and the United States?

What do they all have in common? Each has taken the decision to move the

capital city and the seat of

HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak



government away from the largest metropolis and into the hinterland, building a new town from scratch. The soaring arches of Canberra, the ultra modern precincts of Brasilia, Ottawa's gothic buildings against a forest backdrop, Dodoma in the shadow of Mt Kilimanjaro, Abuja in the central plains, Islamabad's broad boulevards and the ultimate imperial city, Washington DC.

None of these places existed, save perhaps Dodoma as a small village, before

the movers and shakers in each country decided to build them. There were many reasons for such a move—mostly a desire to get the seat of political power away from the money culture of the big city, from New York, Sydney, Dar-Es-Salaam, Lagos et al. But also a genuine feeling that the government could better serve the people if it existed among them. And yes, not a bit of land speculation and builder cartel profiteering.

The justifications in Nepal for such a move are many. No one who has studied this country can deny that alienation and distance from a faraway capital is rampant, and has been for centuries. The brave attempts at devolution in the 1990s were popular and effective. Now the only de facto decentralisation of power is practiced by the Maoists.

There's also a hugely compelling environmental argument. The gorgeous and valuable Kathmandu Valley is being smothered by urban sprawl. Declining water tables, poisonous air and disappearing arable land all portend a

cumulative catastrophe that will affect millions of people. So many attempts to stave off or mitigate this disaster have failed amid the political entropy in Kathmandu.

So where to build this new city, this Prithvipur or Janapur or Prajatantrapur or whatever? The East of Nepal is the most functional part so arguably it doesn't necessarily need the development that would come with a massive public works project. The Far West is too distant from the rest, however poor and underdeveloped. The hills are too rugged, the tarai too hot and too valuable as agricultural land. Pokhara or its surroundings would just end up as another Kathmandu, an aloof cut off and increasingly beleaguered urbanised valley.

My choice is Dang. The broad riverine lands around Tulsipur and Gorahi have an equable climate and an abundance of space and water. The troubled districts of Rolpa, Salayan and so on are just to the north, within easy proximity for development

work and security operations if necessary. Just across the low Mahabarat hills is the rich land of the tarai and the Indian border for trade and commerce. No more vulnerable convoys of smoke belching petrol tankers toiling up the Trisuli.

Of course, with a new capital, Nepal should be building roads and rail lines to access the city. A huge urban market economy would quickly spring up in the mid west of the country with benefits for the impoverished far west, the tarai, the central areas and even the industrialised east.

The Kathmandu Valley could be reorganised as a super municipality and restoration of the environment given top priority. The city's financial culture would eventually recover from the loss of government through a reinvigorated private sector and surging tourism. Nepal's new capital city, young, dynamic, democratic and dedicated to developing the country would be the envy of the region and the world. It's worth a debate at least. ●

of milk and money



from abroad. The production of milk is not uniform: there is a surplus during the winter months and a summer deficit. To plug the gap, the government allows the import of powder and condensed milk from Denmark, Australia, Singapore and New

Zealand.

Farmers and dairy owners say these imports are of questionable quality and dampen domestic dairy production. "It is completely absurd to import milk powder from New Zealand when milk is being poured down

the drains in Panauti because the roads are blocked," says Dirgha Raj Khanal, a dairy farmer in Kabhre.

The Dairy Development Corporation has a powder milk plant in Biratnagar that produces 700 tons of skimmed powdered milk every year and this is used to tide over the lean periods. But project manager Gopal Krishna Shrestha says the annual demand is for 4,000 tons and this shortfall is being filled by imports.

Dairy expert Tek Bahadur Thapa doesn't agree. "Nepal has become a dumping ground for cheap milk powder," he says, blaming the mess on the absence of product monitoring and lax law enforcement. Domestic powdered and canned condensed milk could be a way for Nepali dairies to diversify and add value to surplus milk but a powdered milk plant can cost anywhere up to Rs 60 million.

DDC supplies 130,000 litres of milk everyday to Kathmandu during flush time, buying it from farmers on the Valley's outskirts and surrounding districts. Even though it is state run, DDC, faces competition from private dairies by investing in dairy products. But it is also affected by bandas and blockades and loses up to Rs 3 million for every day of closure.

Tek Bahadur Thapa agrees that political stability is imperative for the survival of Nepal's dairy industry. "The milk boom has yet to come," Thapa says. "But due to instability, farmers have started leaving the dairy business because they can't depend on milk sales to meet daily needs."

What is surprising is that the dramatic growth and development of Nepal's dairy industry has happened despite political instability. It is clear that if the situation normalised, Nepal would be a major dairy producer meeting not just domestic demand but also a potential export-oriented industry. ●

Milk man

Nepal's first milk processing plant was built in Lainchaur 40 years ago with help from New Zealand and the UN. Until then, even in Kathmandu, people kept cows at home and had no reason to buy processed milk.

The Dairy Development Corporation (DDC) was formed in 1969 and as Kathmandu became urbanised, demand for processed milk soared. Another plant capable of processing 5,000 litres an hour was set up in 1978 in Balaju. Two more plants were built in Hetauda and Pokhara with Danish assistance.

Veterinarian Heramba Rajbhandary oversaw the DDC's expansion during those heady days. But he understood that the government would never be able to meet Kathmandu's growing demand for milk and dairy products. In fact, by the early 1980s, Nepal had a milk deficit.

Rajbhandary dreamt of starting his own dairy and remembers calling a pledging conference of his friends in 1981 to finance the launch of a private dairy. "Each person promised to loan me Rs 10,000," Rajbhandary recalls. This wasn't enough to cover the cost, so he built a small shed in his garden and started producing yogurt. That was where Nepal Dairy was born.

Today Nepal Dairy employs 200 people directly in its Khumaltar plant and has seven outlets in Kathmandu, Pokhara, Hetauda and Biratnagar. Nepal Dairy does not penalise farmers with milk holidays but buys all oversupply and has made product diversification and value addition its twin mantras. It has followed this up with professional marketing, investing in the attractive 'ND' logo and branding milk bars and dairy outlets. ND has also branched out into products that make extensive use of milk with bakery products, Nepali sweets and cheese.

"Marketing and processing benefits not just the company but also the farmer who sells milk to the dairy," Rajbhandary says. But Nepal's 'Milk Man' feels he still has a long way to go. "I must keep diversifying, if people are not eating ND's pizza because there is a scarcity of napkins in the market, I'm quite prepared to venture into napkin production as well," he says half-jokingly.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Children in conflict

An international network of non-governmental organisations highlighted the plight of Nepali children caught in the conflict. Watchlist, the New York-based network, said children were not just caught in the crossfire. "Worse, they are being deliberately used and exploited by those waging the war," said Watchlist's Julia Freedson. "The lives of children are not being spared, neither by the Maoists nor the armed forces."

In a report launched on 26 January titled *Caught in the Middle: Mounting Violations Against Children in Nepal's Armed Conflict* Watchlist details evidence of abuse committed against children by both parties. The evidence was gathered by children protection groups in Nepal, documenting alarming patterns of children being systematically denied their rights such as the right to education as a result of Maoist strikes, destruction of schools, school closures and overcrowding and the pervasive atmosphere of fear and violence. It also documents several cases of Maoists targeting schools for attacks and using schools as grounds for abduction and recruitment of tens of thousands of students and teachers.

"The government and the Maoists must take immediate steps to halt violations against children," said Kathleen Hunt, CARE International's UN representative and chairperson of the Watchlist. "They must uphold the international human rights and humanitarian laws, particularly the Convention of the Rights of the Child."

Japanese peace call

Peace Nepal Network held a forum on peace building in Nepal in Meguro Kumin Centre in Tokyo this week. MB Thapa, keynote speaker stressed the importance of a ceasefire under UN mediation and the need to find a solution through peace talks. Masayuki Tanigawa of Nagasaki University talked about the background of the conflict in Nepal and Takaki Yagjisawa, photojournalist, gave a report on the area controlled by Maoists. The need for pacifism advocated in the Japanese Constitution confirmed that all the people in the world have the right to live in peace without fear and scarcity. Nepalis living in Japan and Japanese who have maintained close relationships with Nepal, also participated.

Tek Nath meets Kofi

Exiled Bhutani human rights leader Tek Nath Rijal has appealed to the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to appoint a special envoy for repatriation of the more than 100,000 Bhutani refugees in Nepal.

"The United Nations must play its role to repatriate the refugees to their original homesteads with honour and dignity," Rijal has said in a letter he submitted to Annan on 24 January at the UN headquarters in New York. "I fervently believe that the appointment of your special envoy for Bhutan would provide an avenue for reviving the stalled Nepal-Bhutan dialogues and their eventual repatriation with honour and dignity as citizens of Bhutan."

Rijal said he was worried by the restlessness among refugee youths in the UNHCR-run camps in Jhapa and Morang. "In the face of uncertainty, these camps could become recruiting grounds for Maoist rebels of Nepal and for separatists groups of India's northeastern states," Rijal added, "The refugee problem, if left unaddressed could pose new security challenges in the region."

Nepal and Bhutan have been incommunicado after holding 15 rounds of ministerial talks between 1993-2003. All that happened in those years was the verification of a little over 12,000 refugees in one of the seven camps. But since that went nowhere, the international community has floated the idea of repatriating refugees to third countries and assimilating them in Nepal. Rijal has opposed this, telling us last year: "That would be a most unfortunate move, it would mean Bhutan got away with what they did to us."

ADB not happy

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has expressed its unhappiness to the government over the transfer of the chief of the Rural Infrastructure Development Project (RIDP) which the Manila-based agency funded.

The bank wrote a letter to the government stating that the transfer of Bhupendra Basnet would be a setback to the bank's newly approved Decentralised Rural Infrastructure and Livelihood Project (DRILP), a flagship project for conflict-affected areas such as the Karnali zone. Basnet has worked at RIDP, which began in 1996 as a prelude to the DRILP.

"We do not condemn the government's rights to transfer project staff," said ADB Country Director Sultan Hafiz Rahman. "But, they should allow the right person to be at the right place for adequate time and this is what we have stated in our response to the transfer."

The bank thinks Basnet had the requisite experience which would help get the DRILP project for peace and development in conflict-affected areas. Approved last September, the \$40 million project is aimed at promoting the participation of rural communities in planning, implementation, monitoring and maintenance of development projects aimed at poverty reduction and social cohesion. "The project will help reduce poverty by generating livelihood opportunities and developing rural infrastructure in poor and remote conflict-affected communities in western, midwestern and farwestern regions of Nepal," the bank says.

Transfers of officials from projects it funds has always been a contentious issue between the government and the ADB. "We are concerned at the frequency of such transfers," admitted a bank official. "It makes things difficult for both the donors and the government."



Liberty and society

If this was a democracy, we should be worried about the choice of governor, the fuel price hike and the VAT increase, but it isn't

As the country grapples with an intensifying insurgency, three issues in recent weeks have stolen the headlines away from the conflict: appointment of the Nepal Rastra Bank governor, the rise in the prices of petroleum products, and the increase in VAT to 13 percent.

Unscrupulous politicians and tail-wagging intellectuals of notoriously self-centered Kathmandu Valley are aflutter. This gives the impression that the situation in the rest of the country is normal, as politicians indulge in their usual shenanigans to ridicule democracy.

Debates in the Nepali media revolve around the politically-correct rhetoric of leftists in social democratic garb: 'the poor are ignorant and need planning by the government', 'the government has to think strategically', 'the state must intervene because of the free marketeers assumption that every individual knows what is in his own self-interest is false', and the punchline: 'every human being is equal'.

It is therefore no surprise that the core points of discussion in this left-led discussion have been knee-jerk free market bashing. The debate on the appointment of the governor became so spiteful that candidates were publicly undressed. Some of them even started strutting about as if they had already won the contest. If they were suitable candidates, being labelled political stooges and accused of being party bagmen would have been the kiss of death.

To institutionalise individual liberty, the government's authority must be limited. Issues directly affecting individuals should be left to them to decide. It may sound utopian, but that is what has historically worked. Everything else was an experiment in chaos and disorder and a diversion from human destiny.

Small, resource poor countries like Switzerland and Netherlands did not get waylaid by ideology. They carved a niche for themselves by believing in their own worth and having a clearly-defined national goal. Here, we go into national paroxysms over the appointment of a central bank governor. If a government is endowed with exclusive prerogative to literally mint money no matter what, every government would misuse that provision. And so, in Nepal, candidates tear at each other to become the governor which carries a salary of \$350 per month whereas an economist of the caliber demanded by the job has an international market value of more than \$3,500 a month.

The statist may dismiss privatisation of Nepal Oil Corporation on the grounds that petroleum products are a 'strategic commodity'. But actually it has more to do with keeping this strategic item in their control so it can be plundered for the party war chest. Partisan vested interest dictates the definition of what should be 'strategic', 'security' or 'essential' items.

If the private sector is able to handle health care efficiently, why can't it be allowed to deal in petroleum? The government should be restricted to activities the voters asked them to perform. They aren't supposed to indulge in indiscriminate taxation. The VAT increase was inexcusable, especially because it was not even an elected government that did it. The argument that the money is needed to buy more guns is even more indefensible.

Not surprisingly, apologetic capitalists and statist intellectuals like to confuse the issues. We need to demystify the selection of governor, hike in petro prices and VAT increase and link them to the institutionalisation of individual liberty. In a democracy, people are allowed to raise a hue and cry. A government is needed to control the tyranny of individualism, but the irony here is that it is the government that has run amok.

Dr Bhola Nath Chalise is a liberal economist.



KUMAR SHRESTHA

What Dhulikhel



NARESH NEWAR

NARESH NEWAR
in DHULIKHEL

At a time when parts of Kathmandu haven't had water flowing out of the pipes for years, the people of Dhulikhel have what the capital's citizens can only dream of: 24-hour water supply from the mains.

Sixty-year-old Nanu Maya Shrestha is relaxed, she no longer has to wake up at the crack of dawn to wait with her gagro at the public tap. "We are lucky," says Nanu Maya recalling the days when Dhulikhel had no water and dysentery and typhoid were common. The water shortage drove many out of Dhulikhel, and some settled in nearby Banepa.

When Dhulikhel was made the district headquarter of Kabhre in 1962, the population soared and the water situation got worse. As the Panchayat government was not taking any initiative to improve the water supply system, Dhulikhelis took the matter into their own hands. In 1983, a group of volunteer engineers decided that diverting water from Khar Khola was the best option, but it was 14 km away and there was no money.

Things became much easier after Dhulikhel was declared a municipality and Bed Prasad Shrestha was elected mayor in 1987. The German aid group, GTZ stepped in with part of the money, and local businessmen put up the rest. A water user's committee was

set up, and at the headworks villagers provided land for free.

After the project was completed in 1991 (*pic, above*), more than 230 households had private taps at their doorsteps. Within a year, the user's committee raised Rs 400,000 from each household paying Rs 35 per month for up to 10,000 litres of water. This was more expensive than Kathmandu, where people paid only Rs 15 per month in 1992, but in Dhulikhel the water was reliable and clean.

"This was our dream project, and because it was initiated and run by the townspeople there was no chance it would fail," ex-mayor Shrestha told us in an interview (*see box*).

Last year, the user's

"My wife and daughter were convinced I was gone"

Nepali family

ANOOP PANDEY

Many miraculous stories of survival and endurance have emerged from the catastrophic Indian Ocean tsunami one month ago.

The Shahi family has only now started coming out of the shock of having nearly perished, coming to terms with having survived when so many thousands died, and getting on with everyday life.

Susheel Shahi is a Nepali teacher working in Brunei who had gone to Penang in Malaysia with his family for Christmas break. The Shahis were just checking into the hotel in Penang when they felt the earthquake. There was panic in the lobby, but being from Nepal Susheel knew what to do to take cover. After the tremor subsided, the reception took time with the guests, so Susheel, his wife Milan and daughter Aishwarya headed out to the beach.

Milan was busy taking pictures with her new digital camera while Aishwarya and

Susheel were splashing around in the water.

Suddenly, the water was receding like a low tide on fast forward. "It was as if we could see the bottom of the Indian Ocean, and the lifeguard started blowing his whistle to get us to clear the beach," recalls Susheel, "but we were having too much fun to pay much attention." Milan started waving and pointing.

It was only then that Susheel noticed the approaching wall of water on the horizon. "At first I was oblivious to the danger as the waves came up," he recalls, "but it just kept coming higher up to my hips."

A wave pushed him into some rocks, he screamed for his daughter. Milan remembers, "I was pushed back by the wave and watched in horror as my husband and daughter were engulfed. Aishwarya was screaming and my husband caught hold of her and passed him on to a man higher up the rock."

For some reason, Susheel didn't think of climbing up

himself and started looking for his floating shoes. Just then a larger and stronger wave pushed him onto the rocks nearly smashing his head on them.

"I looked back and saw there was an even higher wave coming, and that is when I scrambled up," says Susheel. "I climbed in panic and finally got to the top just then a giant wave as high as the palm trees smashed onto the shore."

At the top, Susheel saw his wife and daughter hugging each other, they had given up on him being alive. The three of them held hands and ran for dear life. Later, they found out the next few waves were twice as high as the last one that nearly washed Susheel away.

Susheel was badly bruised and Aishwarya had deep cuts on her side. The three found a taxi to take them back to the hotel and along the way saw corpses and wounded people waiting for ambulances. The three went to the resort of Langkawi the next day but Milan and Aishwarya refused to go anywhere near the sea again.

can teach Kathmandu

Enough water for everyone all the time



committee generated revenue worth of Rs 3.6 million from 1,000 consumers, hospitals, schools, police stations and government offices. Dhulikhel's water supply project have become a model of community water supply. Experts from Nepal and abroad have come here to see how it is done.

The water project has become such an inspiration for the local community that they are thinking of investing in a larger network. "If the rest of the country was infected with this can-do attitude there would be a bright future for Nepal," says Din Dayal Soju Shrestha, member of the water users' committee.

"I had heard about Dhulikhel and was so amazed that I had to

come and see for myself, it's amazing," says Nancy English from Oregon who was visiting while we were there.

Once Dhulikhel had regular and clean water, Shrestha says, it was easier to go ahead with the plan to turn the town into an education and health care centre. The internationally acclaimed Dhulikhel Hospital and Kathmandu University located themselves in Dhulikhel, and one big reason was reliable water supply.

"Without the water, these two big institutions wouldn't have come here," says Rameswor Parajuli, engineer at the town's water users' committee. The project has made such an impact that the Maoists want

Dhulikhel to help locals in Bhumidara set up a similar project there.

"What we have shown is that the people don't always have to rely on the government to bring development into their home towns," says Shiva Bhattarai, administrator at the Dhulikhel Municipality, "Kathmandu can learn a lot from Dhulikhel."

But for now, visitors from Kathmandu can only marvel at the abundant water that Dhulikhelis have, and there is no need to pump it to roof tanks. Says local resident Nilkantha Makaju, with visible pride: "No matter how big your house, there is enough water for everyone all the time." ●

Perfect town

The people of Dhulikhel elected Bed Prasad Shrestha mayor three times and they have never regretted it. Though no longer in office, the Dhulikhelis still call him Mayor Sa'b in appreciation of his honesty and openness.

The mayor's popularity has nothing to do with his diplomatic charm or close affinity with the local community. He is modest and soft-spoken and least interested in party politics. But when he plans something, he gets it done—efficiently, honestly and quickly. That is why even though he is no longer mayor, he is still the de facto town chief.

"I dream of making Dhulikhel the perfect town," says Bed Prasad as he waves at the scenic panorama of town and the mountains beyond from the roof of his municipality. Most people go to Dhulikhel to look at the mountain vistas, few notice that a lush forest comes right to the town's edge, the vegetation not just giving the town a pleasing ambience but also protecting its water supply.

It is largely during Bed Prasad's tenure that the Dhulikhel municipality earned a reputation for being Nepal's most dynamic municipality. And it is proof of just what one accountable and dedicated person can achieve in Nepal. Dhulikhel has the best university, an international standard hospital and an efficient water supply system built and managed by the local community.

"When you have a clear vision and share it with your community, you don't have to depend on the government or foreign aid," says Bed Prasad (right) who played a major role in persuading the people to donate their land for the Dhulikhel hospital and Kathmandu University.

survives tsunami



The Shahi family arriving at Penang airport on 26 December. Milan's picture (right) of Susheel and Aishwarya on the beach minutes before the tsunami struck.



MILAN SHAHI

They spent a subdued new year's at their hotel watching the tsunami coverage on the news channels. Milan and Aishwarya are now back in Nepal, slowly

coming out of the shock. Susheel has gone back to his school in Brunei. He told us over the telephone this week: "Watching the news reminds me just how

lucky we were."

Although their camera was damaged by the tsunami, they retrieved the last pictures from the memory card. ●



NARESH NEWAR

With less than Rs 15 million as budget, the Dhulikhel Municipality Office relies on the local community for public service projects. Bed Prasad is confident that once the office comes up with good ideas, the people will support it. He is now involved in his 'dreamland' project: to promote Dhulikhel as a tourism, education and health care hub.

The plan includes building a lake, a scenic cable car, restoring old Newari houses and creating an amusement park with a golf club. A large football stadium was built with funds from the local community and seed money from the Japanese government. "Most projects were thought up by the citizens, that is why they succeeded," explains Bed Prasad. This combination of public participation with accountability of the leader is the winning formula in Dhulikhel.

Bed Prasad doesn't take credit for any of this, saying he is just the catalyst that allowed Dhulikhelis to realise what they were capable of. Modest as ever, he adds, "All we had to do was find the courage to do something practical, the rest is easy." ●
Naresh Newar

Cheaper power at night

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

Differential pricing for off-peak hours and seasons is the only way to go for now

The Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) is under pressure from experts and now the government, to sell millions of units of electricity it allows to go waste every year for a reduced price. Ironically, this is happening at a time when the NEA has been going for declared and undeclared load shedding because one of the turbines of Kali Gandaki A project has off and on remained out of order.

Although there has been a big increase in generation capacity in the past five years, 60 percent of the power comes from hydro power plants and most of them are 'run of the river' schemes and not reservoirs. This means their power capacity depends on the flow of the river, and there is excess power during the monsoon months when demand is lowest.

As a result upto one billion units of electricity are wasted as 'spill' every year. With an installed capacity of 610 MegaWatts, the NEA system generates more than 2,500 GigaWatts hour (GWh) of energy a year. One fourth of it is wasted as spill and NEA is under pressure to do something about it.

One option is to have differential tariffs for time of day and time of year: power is cheaper if consumed during off peak night-time hours or during the monsoon months. "We are working out the rates for the sale of the spill power," Minister of State of Water Resources Thakur Prasad Sharma told us on Tuesday. "The idea is to provide relief to the people at a time when they have been bearing the brunt of the fuel price hike."

The idea is not new. Successive governments have tried to use the wasted monsoon power by seasonal tariffs and other innovations. But differential pricing has so far been implemented only for the industrial sector. Nearly half the power in the country is used by



the domestic and commercial segments and seasonal pricing has not been offered even to the industrial sector.

"We are trying to introduce both seasonal and time of day tariffs," Minister Sharma said, "A consultant has been hired and these will be announced within next week."

Working out the tariffs is one thing but experts say implementing them is something else altogether. Reason: it needs a formal nod from the Tariff Fixation Commission. In the past, the NEA and the Commission have locked horns over turf and tariff. When the Lokendra Bahadur Chand government leaned on NEA to introduce seasonal pricing two years ago, the tariff commission rejected the idea.

"The tariff commission is so autonomous that it is unanswerable to man or beast," said Chand's Water Resources Minister, Dipak Gyawali who pushed it. "It should be responsible for making sure a new tariff is announced and

implemented each fiscal year."

But a commission official said the recommendation was rejected because differential pricing was proposed only for consumers using more than 150 units of power. "That would not have been fair to poorer consumers who use less energy," said the official, "Also, there is no infrastructure for the recommended pricing."

Gyawali argues that rebates were offered for lower slab consumers who would pay bills on time. "Innovations on pricing cannot be implemented at once, they can be done phasewise."

The commission says it is ready to talk to the NEA on new pricing to sell the spill energy. Minister Sharma doesn't think there will be a problem this time. "We have sounded them out, everything looks positive," he said. The Price Fixation Commission was set up 10 years ago as an independent body to regulate pricing mechanisms of the NEA. But in most cases the prices have been raised by the government or the NEA, under pressure from multilateral donors.

When the World Bank was in negotiation with the government over the aborted Arun III project in the early 1990s, the power tariff was raised by around 300 percent. When it provided a loan for the NEA's rural electrification project a few years ago, the Asian Development Bank got the NEA to jack up tariff by 60 percent. At the time, the banks blamed the government for not adjusting tariff with inflation for populist reasons.

Past electricity tariff hikes have, except for the time of day mechanism for industries, been flat increases. Energy experts are glad the government is finally considering differential tariffs so the monsoon spill is not wasted. But they say the government also needs to introduce power in such a way that there is less pressure during peak hours to reduce the need for load shedding. "For that the price of power during peak hours in the dry season has to be made expensive," suggests energy expert Ratna Sansar Shrestha, "demand can be controlled by pricing."

But since differential pricing for domestic and commercial consumers still doesn't exist, the NEA has been forced this week to restart load shedding because one of the 144 Mega Watt turbines at Kali Gandaki conked out. As the demand-supply gap grows, experts predict that power cuts will be chronic at least till 2008 because of delays in the Middle Marsyangdi. (See: 'Long dark winters ahead', #229) The situation is already fragile: peak load will touch 560 MegaWatts this year, while the installed capacity is just 610 MegaWatts.

NEA forecasts an eight percent increase in peak load this year, 7.8 percent next year and almost nine percent in 2007. But supply has been stagnant and no major capacity has been added since the 144 MegaWatt Kali Gandaki went into operation two years ago. The construction of the 70 MegaWatt Middle Marsyangdi was supposed to be finished this month but is already two years behind schedule. New plans like the West Seti and Upper Karnali are not even in the design stage. ●

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Business excellence awards

The selection process has begun for the second TOP 10 Business Excellence Awards organised by *the boss* magazine scheduled this year for March. The awards celebrate great performance in the workplace, recognise outstanding leadership, innovation, perseverance, creativity, teamwork and integrity through 10 core categories. The independent, all encompassing business awards honour companies of all types and sizes and the people behind them. A board of advisers and a panel of experts, which include some of the most eminent names in Nepal's business arena, leading executives and academicians, oversee the program. A new category, Social Entrepreneur has been introduced this year for people in the social sector, either individually or through their organisation.



Broader horizons

New Horizons Nepal is launching a Globally Certified IT Program (GCIT) to create professionals with a set of specific IT skills that are marketable anywhere in the world. GCIT consists of three streams: Databases, Networking and Programming. Participants completing the program will have at least two global certificates directly from companies like Microsoft, Oracle, Red Hat and CompTIA.



Aid Boeing 747

Martinair's first Boeing 747 freighter took off early in the morning on 12 January for Sri Lanka loaded with 110 tons of aid supplies. A second Boeing 747 cargo aircraft departed for Colombo carrying aid supplies that weekend. Supplies are channelled through WHO, the Red Cross and the Sri Lankan government to disaster-stricken areas in Asia via Amsterdam. Italy is sending 35 tons of chemical toilets and water tanks, the Netherlands, 65 tons of medicines and bandages, and Germany and Sweden, 10 tons of medicines and blankets.



NEW PRODUCTS



COLD CREAM: Dabur has unveiled Anmol Fairness Cold Cream in 25g and 80g packs, priced at Rs 24 and Rs 56 respectively. Fragrant, easy to apply and non-greasy, Dabur Anmol Fairness Cold Cream combines the qualities of a cold cream and a fairness cream. Its principal ingredients are almonds and saffron.

ONE ON ONE: Chaudhary Group has launched a new offer with Big Mimi Instant Noodles. Under this new scheme, the coupons collected can entitle the consumer anywhere from Rs 1 to Rs 111,111.



Six blind men

...and the elephant

The best way to keep one's profession going in Nepal in these times of economic decline, it seems, is to create panic and talk down on everything. Whether it is predicting that the conflict will rage on for another decade, or there will be an earthquake soon, the rupee is headed for devaluation, or the sky will fall.

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed



In Nepal, Chicken Little is alive and kicking ass. Economists have started predicting the fall of the Nepali Rupee vis-à-vis the Indian Rupee thereby bringing inflationary trends in the Nepali economy. Economists should behave as economists, not doomsday soothsayers. And the Nepali Times should stop quoting them (See: 'Coming soon', #231).

This Beed has actually been arguing the opposite. In a column three years ago in this space (*'Free the Nepali rupee'*, #59 www.arthabeed.com/articles/article_details.php?id=113) I had challenged why the exchange rate should just be 1.3 and not 1.6. Since no donor money was thrown in for this study, it did not get any responses.

Economic analysts in Nepal are either academics who have outgrown their utility or consultants who are tired of writing 'cut and paste' reports. Unfortunately, no corporate house or the plethora of business associations has economists who analyse issues as critical as the exchange rate. We have

associations of junket-savvy economists who are happier to play ceremonial roles at workshops and provide sound bites to television.

The exchange rate between India and Nepal is driven by pure politics and not economics. How else can one explain no revision of the exchange rate since 1 February 1993? In the past 11 years, the compositions of imports and exports have changed and this should definitely have affected the currency. Third country exports of carpets, garments and pashmina boomed and busted, the exchange rate did not budge.

Gold imports, a major currency ticket item, declined but it made no impact. Hard currency remittances have increased multifold thereby increasing the foreign exchange reserves of the country. This should have revalued the Nepali currency upwards not downwards. The argument that the Nepali rupee is over-valued against the dollar as this paper reported does not carry much weight. One has to interview real economists, not

gossip-mongers.

While it is good to have a fixed currency rate that does not change over a long period of time, a system of periodic review of exchange rate becomes important. With the Euro emerging as a stronger currency and the dollar losing ground, the Chinese yuan gaining importance with a stronger economy, the Indian rupee riding on strong ambitions, the fixed exchange regime with India and the modality on fixing the parity needs constant analysis.

The parity between India and Nepal exchange rate was established in 1960 to stem fluctuations of market prices in Nepal as the basket of the poor comprised mostly of items imported from India. We really need to revisit the rationale and establish timely justifications on the parity and surely give 1.6 a second look.

So, once again: 1.3, 1.4, 1.5. Rather than play Russian roulette we should engage in meaningful research. Definitely an upward revaluation means greater purchasing power, a stronger currency and surely higher GDP. ●

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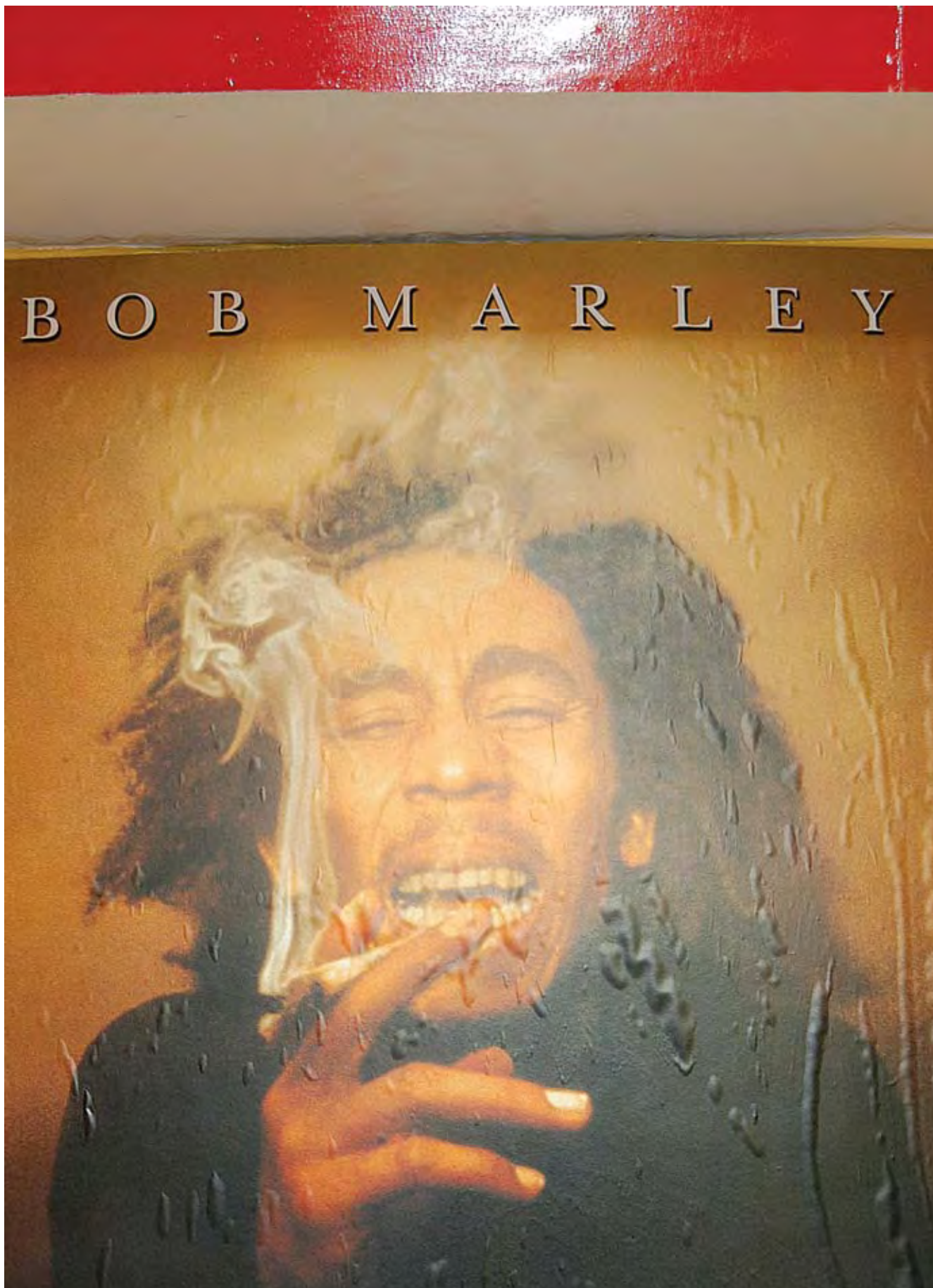
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The raja of rasta and reggae

Bob Marley is not dead, he's just not here with me or you

ANOOP PANDEY

"I love the development of our music, that's what I really dig about the whole thing. How we've tried to develop, y'know? It grows. That's why every day people come forward with new songs. Music goes on forever."

Bob Marley, August 1979

Bob Marley would have turned 60 on Thursday, 6 February. But a generation after his death, he has left a living legacy not just around the world but here in Nepal as well.

Marley's music from three decades ago remains as timeless and universal as it was when this obscure Jamaican singer first burst upon the world music scene. Robert Nesta Marley has been called 'The first Third World Superstar', the 'Rasta Prophet'. Everyone who was a teenager then remembers the brilliantly original and evocative revolutionary music Marley gave the world. He was and remains one of the most charismatic performers ever to have graced the music industry with his distinctive blend of Jamaican reggae and Rastafarian spirit.

In a musical career that took off in the 1960s Bob Marley was named ambassador for peace and awarded Jamaica's Order of Merit. His hit songs include, 'Exodus' 'One Love', 'Buffalo Soldier', 'I shot the Sheriff' and 'No Woman No Cry'. His music has spanned the globe and has found a

Bangkok and distributed by dealers in Marhu Tole, Ganesthan to local shops. A small sticker costs only Rs 5 and the bigger ones go for Rs 10. It seems no rickshaw or taxi driver in town can resist the bright colours with the black silhouette of Bob Marley—even if they don't know who he is.

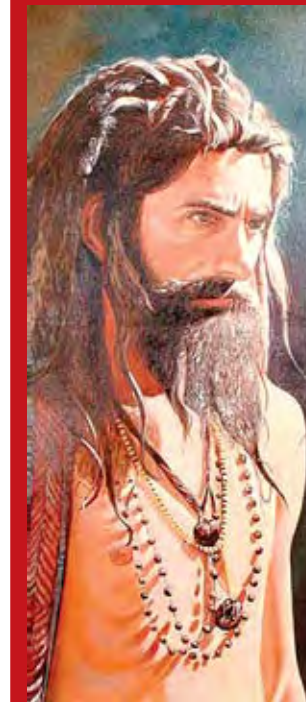
At nightfall these days, the streets of Thamel are alive with Marley songs and his beat blares out into the streets. Hippie relics and wannabes roam with dread-locked hair and Rasta Style cap-bobbing to the rhythm of Marley's music.

Bob Marley memorabilia is everywhere and one can just imagine what it will be like next week during his 60th birth anniversary. Shops specialise in Rasta hats, T-shirts carrying cannabis leaves against a backdrop of the Rastafarian tricolour are selling like rolled weeds.

During Marley's days, Thamel was the boondocks. The place to be was Freak Street of Basantapur. Jhonchhe was the kundalini of hippiedom, where the world's youth congregated in search of peace and eternal happiness. Many attained their private nirvanas with the assistance of mind-altering substances that was freely available on Freak Street.

It wouldn't be surprising if Marley was there too. Maybe he came to trace his Rastafarian roots? A recent Nepali visitor to the Bob Marley

Rasta sadhus



The influence dread-locked, ganja-smoking sadhus or wandering ascetics, well-known figures in Hindu society, had on the Rastafari is little known. But there is a link. The Hindu sadhu and the devout Rastafari both have long unkempt hair, ash-smearred bodies, very little clothing and the trademark chalice pipe, making it difficult to distinguish who's who. The sight of bands of sadhus living in Rasta-style camps and smoking marijuana from a formally-blessed communal chalice-pipe is common place. A good place to watch them in action is at Pashupati during Shivaratri on 8 March.

Ethiopian utopia



It's difficult to properly understand Bob Marley's music without considering Rastafari. This spiritual culture is at the very core of his music. Rastafari is a movement of black people who believe Africa is the birthplace of humankind. The movement grew out of the darkest depression that the descendants of African slaves in Jamaica have ever lived in and they took

Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie as their mentor. Out of the filth and slime that humanity was built upon arose a sentiment pure, without anger and full of love—the philosophy of the Rastafari faith. The green, gold and red flag of Ethiopia is the symbol of the Rastafari tricolour. Its motto is 'Freedom of Spirit, Freedom from Slavery and Freedom of Africa' and has 700,000 followers worldwide with its own 'Black Man's Bible'.

Let's have a referendum

Former royal-nominated MP Dipta Prakash Shah in *Deshantar*, 23 January

देशान्तर साप्ताहिक

Evaluating the circumstances of my resignation, it now appears that I was pushed out because the palace wished to establish a monopoly over state power. It seems the king was not happy with the division of power as provisioned in the 1990 Constitution. I was made to resign as a member of the Upper House because I stated all this in public and also because the palace was out to get power.

Those in the coterie of the royal palace and well-known opportunists instigated the king to take over. Normally, people make moves on the basis of advice from people around them and that is what the king seems to have done.

It is not that the king is unaware that democracy is necessary. In fact, he has been reiterating his commitment on constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy. The problem is his actions contradict his words. His moves point to a direction very different from his speeches. Abuse of the king's authority by the palace coterie is not new. Unfortunately, Nepal's history is riddled with such incidents. Patriots such as Bhim Malla were hanged and others were banished. Times have changed, but patriots and democrats in our country are still tarnished and dishonoured.

People need to know who the people around the king are and who influence him to take wrong decisions and that includes foreign power centres like India and the United States. They are working in their own national interest and could be encouraging the power centres. They also stage events to show their capabilities. The Delhi treaty was signed just when the 1950 revolution was about to be successful. India knew that if the revolutionaries came to power, the people would be all powerful and India's interests would not be fulfilled if the people's voice became decisive.

India realised that if the Nepali Congress revolution succeeded, the Nepali people would not agree to the 1950 friendship treaty it signed with

Mohan Shamsheer. The Indian government told Nepali forces to play along, made a Rana prime minister who led the government that the Nepali Congress was forced to be a part of. Historically, that is how Indian interests were safeguarded and how foreign powers move to safeguard their interests.

In the post-1990 era, Nepal had a different environment. Though ministers were involved in corruption and other irregularities, the people could voice their concern. The parliament and the press were vibrant. As a result, issues such as the Mahakali Treaty came up for national debate. But a conscious public is not conducive to certain power centres and so they egged the king to take over. One such power centre is India.

The other reason behind the king's move were the Maoists. When the Maoist insurgency began, the king was of the opinion that development would be a big setback for democratic practice in the country. That is why the palace was quiet about the movement at first. Later, when the Maoists grew to be a threat to the country, the palace thought it was the right time to take over. October Fourth was the result but this has now become a liability for the king.

What is done can't be undone. The king wants elections to be held because he believes that the polls will help him get his October Fourth move ratified by the people. This will not be an election of

people's representatives. Free and fair polls can't take place while war and violence rages. In short, only those approved by the security personnel will be elected and you can only imagine the kind of changes in the constitution that will then take place. Everyone who is for elections now are those who think they can win and bring those changes in the constitution.

The only way out is to let the people decide. Let the people decide which is the way out. Let there be referendum and let Nepalis decide whether the way out should be through an amendment in the constitution or a constituent assembly.



Keepers of peace

Rajdhani, 22 January

राजधानी

The government has requested the United Nations to continue recruiting Nepali security force personnel for peacekeeping missions. The Foreign Ministry recently wrote a letter to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stating, "The government is committed to improve the human rights situation in the country." It requested the commission not to suspend the peacekeeping quotas allocated for the Royal Nepali Army. The Commission has prepared a report to be presented at its annual general meeting in March stating that the Royal Nepali Army has been violating the human rights of its own citizens and therefore it can be concluded that it has not been able to respect human rights in the international peace keeping missions. If the report is passed Nepal could be debarred from UN peacekeeping forces.

The UN commission had sought the government's reaction to the report a month ago. "In its response the government said that in the name of violation of human rights, the RNA, which has earned fame for establishing peace in the international field, should not be pulled out of the peacekeeping force," a highly placed government source said. Before sending the reaction, the Foreign Ministry consulted with the defence and home ministries and the Human Rights Promotion Centre at the Prime Minister's Office. The Royal Nepali Army has been a part of the UN international peacekeeping force since 1975. Around 45,000 Nepali soldiers have served in UN missions and 3,000 RNA personnel go to different parts of the world as UN peacekeepers every year. Indian officials had hinted in media reports in December that the RNA's involvement in overseas peacekeeping missions was hampering its counter insurgency operations at home.

shape. Many of these doctors do not treat their patients well in government hospitals, forcing them to go to private clinics. The poor cannot afford these treatments. They are made to pay for medicines that are available for free in government hospitals and health centres. There is always a code of ethics for every profession and it is the state's responsibility to ensure that the code is not violated. Citizens cannot depend on the government alone to speak for them but must also bear their responsibility and raise their voices against unethical professionals. Perhaps the best way to have doctors applying in rural areas is by providing them with more attractive allowances and other benefits than those based in the cities.

Journos attacked

Krishna Shahi in Rajdhani, 23 January

राजधानी

DAILEKH—The security forces and the Maoists in Dailekh are competing to intimidate, threaten and pamper journalists so as to get favourable coverage. Four years ago, the Maoists established their people's government in Naumule after attacking the Area Police Office and killing 32 policemen. Since then, they had threatened to 'clean out' journalists who dared write against them. Their threats were not to be brushed aside, they proved this by killing radio journalist Dekendra Thapa last year. Several journalists fled after the Maoists threatened to cut off their hands and legs. But the security forces are also thrashing both journalists and human rights workers accusing them of being pro-Maoist. Many journalists were intimidated and forced by the Maoists to write positive stories about them. "If you write anything to defame our party, you will end up like Dekendra," the Maoists have warned us. Then state security warns action will be taken against those who write positive things about the rebels. "You must write the exact information we give you about them, if you go to villages without our permission, you will be victims of crossfire," the army tells us. Journalists in the district are tired of threats and as of now, have decided to boycott news of both the security forces and the Maoists.

Doctor who

Annapurna Post, 20 January

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट

A sad reality in Nepal is that some doctors are more inclined towards profit making. This is evident in Lumbini Hospital where all the doctors have reportedly spent their time working in nursing homes absent from their duties. It is the same case in Seti Hospital where many poor Nepalis wait for doctors to treat them. In Dhangadi's Seti Hospital, only seven out of 19 doctors are available while the rest are busy serving the elite. Our health system is growing poorer due to cases such as these where doctors are not available when they are most needed.

Doctors are unwilling to serve in remote areas. After all, more money can be made in the cities. There are many vacant posts for doctors in rural-based hospitals but few apply. The situation has grown so desperate that in some hospitals, peons fill in for doctors. Even in the cities, the state run hospitals are in bad

Bloody incident

Kantipur, 26 January

कान्तिपुर

Nothing is as it seems in Kathmandu anymore. There was blood flowing out onto the sidewalk from under the shutter of a coffee shop in Darbar Marg on Tuesday night. The police came promptly to check it out and cordoned off the area, concluding that a murder had been committed here. There was blood everywhere, shattered glass inside the café and eye-witnesses said four people had rushed off in a taxi taking a bleeding man with them. The police searched all night for the owner of the



Ball and the chain: Violence, instability, extortion
Hill: VAT Increase

समय Samay, 27 January

QUOTES OF THE WEEK



"If I ever meet my son, I will ask him to end the violence and start a peaceful campaign."

Maoist supremo Prachanda's father Muktiram Dahal in *Desantar*, 23 January. He has not seen his son since the people's war began.

restaurant, Sushil Shrestha of Ramechhap and his brother. In the morning, the police on duty saw the owner of the restaurant returning with the cook, Ganesh Karki, who was all bandaged up. It turns out that, the previous night, a mouse had somehow got into the trousers of the cook, who panicked and fell on the counter, shattering the glass panel. A shard gashed his feet and blood started gushing out. The restaurant

owners rushed him to Bir Hospital where they had spent the night.

Ninety days

Nepal Samacharpatra, 18 January

JUMLA—Chhetra Bahadur Mahat of Ranka village, Tatopani VDC said he was kept in a cave for 90 days by security forces who arrested him on suspicion of

being a Maoist in mid-November 2003. He was on his way to Khalanga when they stopped him. He was severely tortured during detention and has not yet recuperated. He was taken to Bheri Zonal Hospital in Nepalganj in serious condition. "Doctors discharged me saying they were not able to treat me. They say some watery substance has collected in my chest," he says. "The army men blindfolded me and took me away. They forced me inside a cave near the Keshabganj Barrack. I spent 90 days there before being finally released."

Forced recruits

Nispakshya, 26 January

The Maoists in Achham and Doti districts have been campaigning to force many youths to accept portfolios in the village people's government. Their campaign was most active last dasain and tihar. Since then a large number of the youth have left their villages to settle in India. "Many who want to live have left their homes. We

are still here because we are ready to face death," says a young man in Chaukhute on the borders of Doti and Accham. Only a handful of young men like him remain, the rest are only elderly citizens, women and children. "We could die any minute, whether in the

hands of the rebels or the security forces," says the youth. The situation grew worse when young men who had returned home to celebrate festivals with their families were forcefully nominated as candidates for the village people's government elections. Their worst fear was that they would be easy targets for the army who could arrest and torture them without realising they had been forced to join. One student of Patal VDC, Doti studying at Kailali Multiple Campus was forcefully appointed the Maoist village chief. He fled the village and vowed never to return. As soon as the security force finds new Maoist committees in the villages, the search for new members starts.

Displaced

Sama Thapa in Nepal Samacharpatra, 22 January

TIKUNIA, INDIA—Hundreds of Nepalis from various districts of the Karnali zone reach this Indian city everyday in search of safety and refuge. As the Maoists intensify their activities, they find no option but to leave their villages. "Everyday we see around two to three hundred new Nepali faces here," said Dinesh Baidya, a trader. "Most of them are from Karnali."

Unlike Nepalis migrating to India through Mahendranagar of Kanchanpur and Nepalganj of Banke, the records of those reaching Tikunia city in India via

Sati Bajar in Kailali are not recorded. More and more people use the Sati Bajar passage because there are no security hassles. "We hoped it would be peaceful again," said Dharme Lohar of Kalikot district. "But both the security forces and the rebels have grown more brutal by the day, we have no choice but to leave." Jad Darji, also from Kalikot said more than 150 villagers including himself had vacated his village at once and reached Tikunia. "I can imagine how many may have migrated from other villages and districts of Karnali," he said. Only male members of the family used to leave for India, now the number of women and children is equally high among migrants. Entire families are known to have migrated, some women carrying infants. Eleven-year-old Ram Lohar of Kalikot district arrived in Tikunia with his parents. "My parents and I were afraid that the Maoists would take away even children my age," he said. Many Nepalis are stranded at the Tinkunia railway station. "We spent all our money on transportation, so we decided to stay here for a few days," said Prem Bahadur Rawal from Jumla. "But there are so many Nepalis here already and it is hard finding a job." Even children are seen working as porters with their parents to earn their livelihood at the Tikunia railway station. "We are determined not to go back to be killed in crossfire," said Prem Bahadur Shahi of Kalikot.



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After effects

The extraordinary international response to the tsunamis that devastated south Asia is a remarkable political phenomenon. Though it is too soon to predict all the effects, some good consequences are already evident. One useful consequence is the wider attention low levels of assistance wealthy countries give to those less fortunate have gained. Plainly, the comment by Jan Egeland, the United Nations official in charge of humanitarian assistance, calling the West "stingy", hit home, especially in the United States. The Bush administration had committed a measly \$35 million in aid. In contrast, the countries that are most generous—Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and tiny Luxemburg—give proportionately far more than the American governmental and private assistance combined and the lion's share of their aid goes to the world's most impoverished countries. In the wake of the tsunamis, it seems possible that the US and other wealthy countries will rethink their assistance programs and possibly step up their aid to those most in need. But there is the risk that assistance for tsunami victims is diverting aid from disasters that are of a more chronic character. (Project Syndicate)

Central banks dump the dollar

WASHINGTON—Central banks around the world are getting rid of the US dollar in favour of the European currency, the euro, in a bid to stem losses from the declining greenback, an international survey says. More than two-thirds of central banks have increased their exposure to the euro in the past two years, mainly at the expense of the dollar. Reports find over half the central banks surveyed now regard euro-zone money and debt markets as being as attractive for investors as those of the United States.

The 12-nation currency was up on Monday to \$1.3086 from 1.3044 late on Friday in New York. Titled *Management Trends 2005*, the report is published by the London-based Central Banking Publications Ltd. It surveyed reserve managers of 65 central banks, who control reserve assets worth \$1.7 trillion, between September and December 2004. The survey was sponsored by The Royal Bank of Scotland. Since early November, the dollar has hit record lows against the euro almost every week, with a brief lull last month. A euro that cost only 84 cents in June 2002 and \$ 1.21 last September, now costs about \$1.30. The decline is powered by the current account deficit in the US or the gap in trade in goods and services, investment returns and one-way financial transfers between the US and the world. If China and Japan, two countries with the biggest dollar reserves, dump some of their dollar assets, the dollar is likely to go down far more than just the anticipated maximum of an extra 20 percent. (IPS)

Cutting hunger in half

BROOKLIN, CANADA—World hunger can be cut in half in a single decade for a mere 60 cents per month for every person living in a developed country, say two renowned scientists heading the United Nations task force on hunger. "It's peanuts compared to other big expenditures such as the war in Iraq," said Pedro Sanchez of the Earth Institute at Columbia University. More than 850 million people go to bed hungry every night, 300 million of them children. Worse still, more than 5.5 million children die of malnutrition-related causes each year. But these horrifying statistics can eventually be eliminated, Sanchez and MS Swaminathan, leader of India's Green Revolution movement, explained in the journal *Science*. The first step is to meet the UN Millennium Development Goal of halving hunger by 2015, they say. The financial costs are modest: \$8 billion for 2005, rising to \$11 billion a year by 2015 says their report *Halving Hunger: It Can Be Done*. It describes 40 specific, proven solutions for fighting hunger and a plan for implementing them at international, national and community levels. (IPS)



India shifts geopolitical cards

BANGKOK—Within a month of the tsunamis battering 12 countries across south and southeast Asia together with east Africa, India has gained a new political foothold in the Indian Ocean region. None captures this emerging climate better than the reception extended to India, itself a victim of the 26 December tsunami, from Sri Lanka. An Indian naval medical team was given a rousing farewell as it left the port town of Trincomalee in northeast Sri Lanka after completing its mission of mercy. Elsewhere across the South Asian island similar scenes of gratitude are being enacted to thank the large contingent of Indian military and naval personnel who began arriving in Sri Lanka hours after the tsunami struck—the day after Christmas—as part of New Delhi's 'Operation Rainbow'.

India's tsunami assistance rendered to its immediate neighbours can also be viewed as going beyond the humanitarian dimension. "India's willingness to help Sri Lanka and the Maldives clearly indicates that New Delhi takes an active interest in the region," said Betram Bastiampillai, former professor of history and political science at Colombo University. From the geopolitical front, New Delhi's helping hand virtually put a stop to possible challenges from other contenders for power and influence in the region, such as China and the US, at a time of crisis. New Delhi has also pledged \$23 million to help rebuild the south Asian island's coastal areas. (IPS)

Lessons from the tsunami

Though the world came together after the tsunami, it still ignores disasters waiting to happen

There are many lessons that emerge from the tsunami that brought such devastation and loss of life to Asia. It demonstrated the power of globalisation, as television brought vivid pictures of the destruction to homes around the world. Indeed, it is at times like this that the world truly does seem like a global village.

COMMENT

Joseph E Stiglitz



Of course, it seemed to take somewhat longer for news of the extent of the disaster to reach the Crawford, Texas, ranch of President Bush. But in the end, he decided to interrupt his vacation and offer amounts of aid that were successively revised upwards in a global competition which promised to benefit those who were desperate for help.

America's aid still appeared niggardly when compared with the amounts offered by countries with a fraction of America's economic wealth. Lightly populated Australia offered more than twice America's assistance, Japan promised almost 50 percent more and Europe pledged more than five times as much. This led many observers to reflect on the fact that the world's richest country was in general the most miserly in foreign assistance—all the more so in comparison to the amount it spends on war and defence.

The disaster was international, so it was appropriate that the United Nations take the lead in coordinating the relief effort. Unfortunately, in an effort that was widely seen as another attempt to undermine multilateralism, the US tried to lead a 'core group' driving the assistance program, ignoring ongoing efforts within the region and at the UN. Whatever America's motive, it later wisely decided to join the UN effort. The Bush administration's face-saving rhetoric that it had rushed to push together the core group in the absence of other efforts was quietly let to pass.

The response of some countries within the region was truly impressive, showing how far they had come in establishing efficient and effective governments. Myriad details were addressed: Thailand flew ambassadors to the affected part of the country to help attend to the needs of their citizens, helped those who lost their money and passports return home, provided health care for the injured, set up systems to identify bodies and dealt with



BANDA ACEH: Before and after in two satellite pictures.



the difficulties posed by shortages of body bags and the lack of cold storage facilities.

Countries, like Thailand, that felt they could handle the finances on their own asked that assistance be directed to others. They did ask one thing: a reduction of tariff barriers and greater access to markets abroad. They didn't want a handout, only a chance to earn income. The response, at least at the time of this column's writing, has mostly been deafening silence.

On the other hand, the G-7 made a truly important contribution in offering debt relief. This is especially important for Indonesia, which must service a debt of \$132 billion. Even without the tsunami, this debt burden would have been an enormous hindrance to the country's development as it finally recovers from the aftermath of the 1997 financial crisis.

Indeed, there is a compelling case to be made for Indonesian debt relief in any case, given that much of the debt was incurred in loans to the corrupt Suharto government. Lenders knew, or should have known, that not all of the money was going to help Indonesian development. Moreover, some of the debt was incurred as part of the 1997-1998 crisis, which was aggravated and deepened by IMF-imposed policies.

No one pretends we can prevent or alter the forces of nature. Rather, we have to learn to cope with them. There

are now calls for improved tsunami early warning systems. But in one area, global warming, we have already received an early warning. Most countries have recognised this, coming together in Rio and Kyoto to do something about it—not enough but the Kyoto protocol was intended only as a start. Sadly, global warming will likely destroy some of the same countries ravaged by the tsunami. Low lying islands like the Maldives will become submerged.

We are, however, still not a global village. After first disputing that there was scientific evidence of the problem, the largest polluter in the world, the US, is now simply refusing to do anything about it (other than preaching voluntary restraint—of which there is little evidence, at least in America). The international community has yet to figure out what to do with an aberrant member who fails to live up to its responsibilities as a global citizen.

Optimists say that technology will solve the problem. Realists observe that in the long race between the environment and technology, it appears that technology has so far been losing. Nature, as we have learned from the tsunami, has its own timetable. Unless we learn how to respect it, we will all miss the boat. ● Project Syndicate

Joseph E Stiglitz, a Nobel laureate in economics, is Professor of Economics at Columbia University and was Senior Vice President at the World Bank. His most recent book is *The Roaring Nineties: A New History of the World's Most Prosperous Decade*.

Starting the day with a sneer

Democracy matters and it deserves better than the media's jaded cynicism

There is a shocking tendency for the media to be more interested in the failure of elections in Iraq than in its success. The 'story', as the doomsayers apparently see it, is in the death threats and those intimidated out of voting and in the boycott by the Sunni minority which happily repressed the Shia majority for decades under Saddam Hussain.

IRAQ POLLS
Alice Miles

Regardless of one's view of the US-UK attack on Iraq—and I speak as one sceptical about it at best—surely one should wish the elections on Sunday to be a success. And I don't mean just want them to be but will them to be, and certainly not help those seeking to disrupt and undermine them.

People will risk their lives going to the polls in areas of Iraq this weekend and some parts of the media—in other countries as

well as in ours, I assume—have already written off these efforts as worthless, the elections as fatally flawed. What blinkered arrogance.

Who needs Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to shoot down a nascent democracy when they have some of Britain's best-loved and respected voices? Perhaps thousands will be killed voting. Perhaps turnout will shrink to levels which render the result illegitimate. At that point, then, discuss the validity of the result. But not before the poll has even occurred.

One hundred and eleven parties standing in the first election in half a century in a country of 25 million people of whom more than 80 percent of the electorate say they want to vote. This is a great and exciting exercise in democracy. Iraqis are not voting at the barrel of an American gun or under the heel of a British soldier.

The main Sunni political party, the Islamic Party, said yesterday that it will participate in drafting the country's



constitution and might even accept some appointments in government, even though it is boycotting the poll itself. Now surely that is grounds for optimism about the future of the country?

Shamed by the arrogance of the sneering at democratic efforts

in Iraq, I find myself taking efforts to define a purpose for a third Labour term here seriously. Concrete policies are emerging to engage the poorest members of society, the hopeless ones who grow relatively poorer year by year as the rich grow richer.

Iraq's election isn't just about

turnouts and tactical voting, no more than the Iraqi vote is just about the suicide bombers. Nor is it about Brown and Blair or who will replace Michael Howard if he loses big.

So what have we done to make democracy so dull? Written it off, for a start. ● (*The Times, London*)

SAARC's Southasia and ours

The summit in Dhaka is an opportunity to see southern Asia differently

When the Southasian Seven meet at the 13th SAARC summit in Dhaka on 6 February, they can take satisfaction in the small but significant achievements of their organisation. The very continuance of the South Asian Association for Regional

SOUTHASIA BEAT
Kanak Mani Dixit

Cooperation through the various India-Pakistan wars and war-of-words is a matter of some consequence. For creating a forum where ministers, prime ministers and presidents can meet with some regularity, we can thank the long-departed Ziaur Rahman, Rajiv Gandhi, JR Jayawardane, King Birendra and Zia Ul-Haq. And King Jigme and President Gayoom who are still with us.

The weaknesses of SAARC are of course many, for it started out as and remains, an external affairs project and secretariat. The directors are deputed from the foreign services of seven countries, their jobs are defined regardless of background and merit. The budget is infinitesimal. The plans tend to be grandiose, in inverse proportion to what is feasible. All seven foreign secretaries have to okay the Secretary General's every move and initiative. No wonder the SAARC Secretariat, fast by the Narayanhiti Royal Palace in Kathmandu, exudes such dreariness.

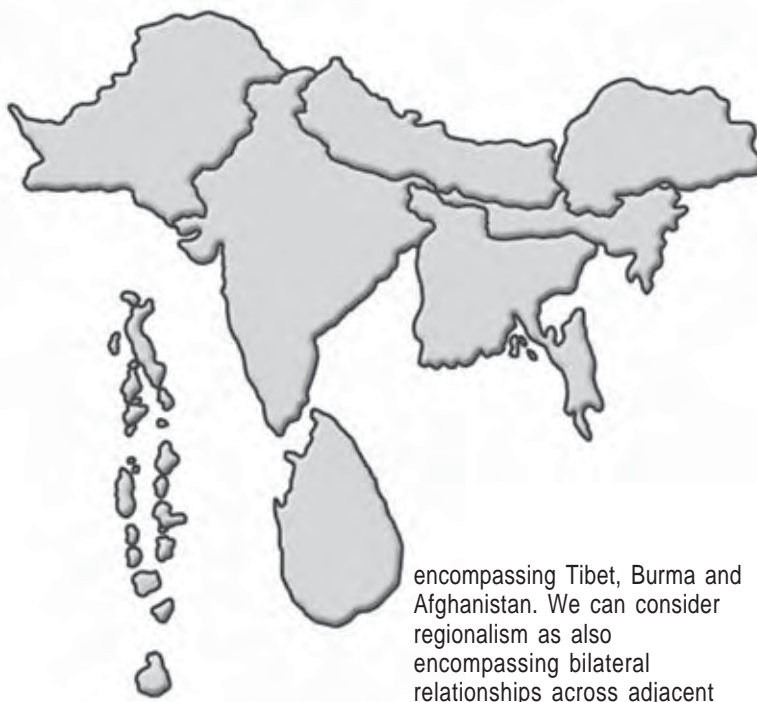
Beyond the institutional problems, however, there are conceptual issues that limit SAARC's utility other than serving as an annual talk shop and geopolitical safety valve. The state-centric construct of the organisation limits the interactions

to the seven capital cities (towns, in the case of Male and Thimphu). As a result, even civil society's attempts at regional cooperation have tended to reflect capital concerns. One must learn to distinguish between 'SAARC' the organisation and 'Southasia' the region. For the moment, the former refers to its membership of seven nation states, while the latter speaks of more than 1.4 billion people, a fifth of Earth's population.

The greatest incongruity of SAARC is the manifest disproportion among its members. Whereas ASEAN or the European Union have countries of roughly comparable size and weight, Southern Asia presents a different picture altogether. In considering the limits of what SAARC can do as constituted or the way it must evolve, one may simply look at the variation in population size, land area, economic power and global reach of its largest and smallest members. (India: 1.1 billion population, land area of 3.2 million sq km. Maldives: 3.3 lakh population and atoll area of 298 sq km.)

Besides its gigantic presence, India is centrally placed and bordering on all the other Southasian countries, whereas none of the others touch each other. While the very distinctiveness of peninsular India gives all of Southasia its 'shape' in maps and satellite imagery, present-day India has even usurped the historical legacy of 'India' pre-1947.

Further, India already makes up much of Southasia in ways beyond population size or economic strength. Within India's



expanse, you have everything from the Changthang high plateau to the Sundarban mangroves, Indian Ocean atolls to the Himalayan rimland, the Thar Desert to tropical rainforests. Given such an all encompassing presence of India in Southasia, there is no way for the state-centric SAARC not to be impacted at every turn by this behemoth.

India's overpowering situation is a reality confronting all its neighbours and this fact alone should help propel supplementary visions of Southasian regionalism other than SAARC's. While the regional organisation has us considering a Southasia of seven nation states and seven capitals, there are in fact other approaches with which to view this space. We can envision it as more than the seven countries, as a larger region with grey edges and

encompassing Tibet, Burma and Afghanistan. We can consider regionalism as also encompassing bilateral relationships across adjacent nation state frontiers or we can conceptualise Southasia as constituting many sub-regions within each country.

Whereas today Southasian interactions are rigidly controlled by the capitals, regionalism with a focus on the people will blossom when adjoining regions of individual nation states are able to trade and travel with ease. Lahore

must have access to Amritsar and Siliguri to Bogra. Southasian initiatives of the future will be the kind that promote links between Sindh and Gujarat/Rajasthan, Punjab state and Punjab province, Meghalaya and Sylhet. Those hung up on technicalities will term such initiatives 'bilateral' but it is the cumulative buildup of such linkages that will help complete the regional jigsaw that is Southasia. (Another time, I will try to defend my preference and proposal for the one-word spelling of 'Southasia'.)

Without doing violence to sacrosanct nation state sovereignty, it should also be possible to promote a version of regionalism that includes states, provinces and sub-regions as participant entities of a broadly-defined Southasia. In this sense, a truly federal India or Pakistan would be the best contributions to the goal of Southasian regionalism. Such would be the shape of Southasia of the future, which would require nothing less than rescuing our unitary past from the vivisection that has occurred. In the meantime, with hopes for the future, we will make do with an a-historical SAARC. ●

नयाँ भर्ना खुल्यो

नयाँ सत्र सुरु हुने
माघ १८ देखि चैत्र ३० गते २०६१ सम्म
सबै तहहरू प्राथमिक देखि वार्तालाप सम्म
मिति माघ ४-८ गते र माघ १०-१७ सम्ममा भर्ना हुनु होस् ।

फ्रान्सेली केन्द्र, त्रिपुरेश्वर
फोन: ४२४११६३, ४२४२८३२

नयाँ स्थान

फ्रान्सेली केन्द्र, त्रिपुरेश्वर
फोन: ४२४११६३, ४२४२८३२

The divine flute

Hari Prasad Chaurasia might never have played the flute but god intervened

Hari Prasad Chaurasia's father was a serious wrestler and wanted desperately for his young son to follow in his footsteps. Not wanting to spend the rest of his life throwing people over, the boy instead grew up to become one of the world's most acclaimed flautists.

"It was difficult but fascinating," says the maestro about his choice. The Indian Embassy in Kathmandu and the Indian Council on Cultural Relations are bringing Chaurasia to Nepal to celebrate India's 56th Republic Day and he will perform on his divine flutes at the BICC on 1 February.

Born in Allahabad in 1938 Hari Prasad Chaurasia learned classical vocals at 15 from the noted musician Pandit Rajaram. He might have continued with singing had he not chanced to hear Pandit Bholanath play the flute. So spellbound was young Hari that he immediately began learning to play the wind instrument under his tutelage for eight years. A prodigy of sorts, Hari Prasad quickly mastered the flute and joined the All India Radio while still a teenager.

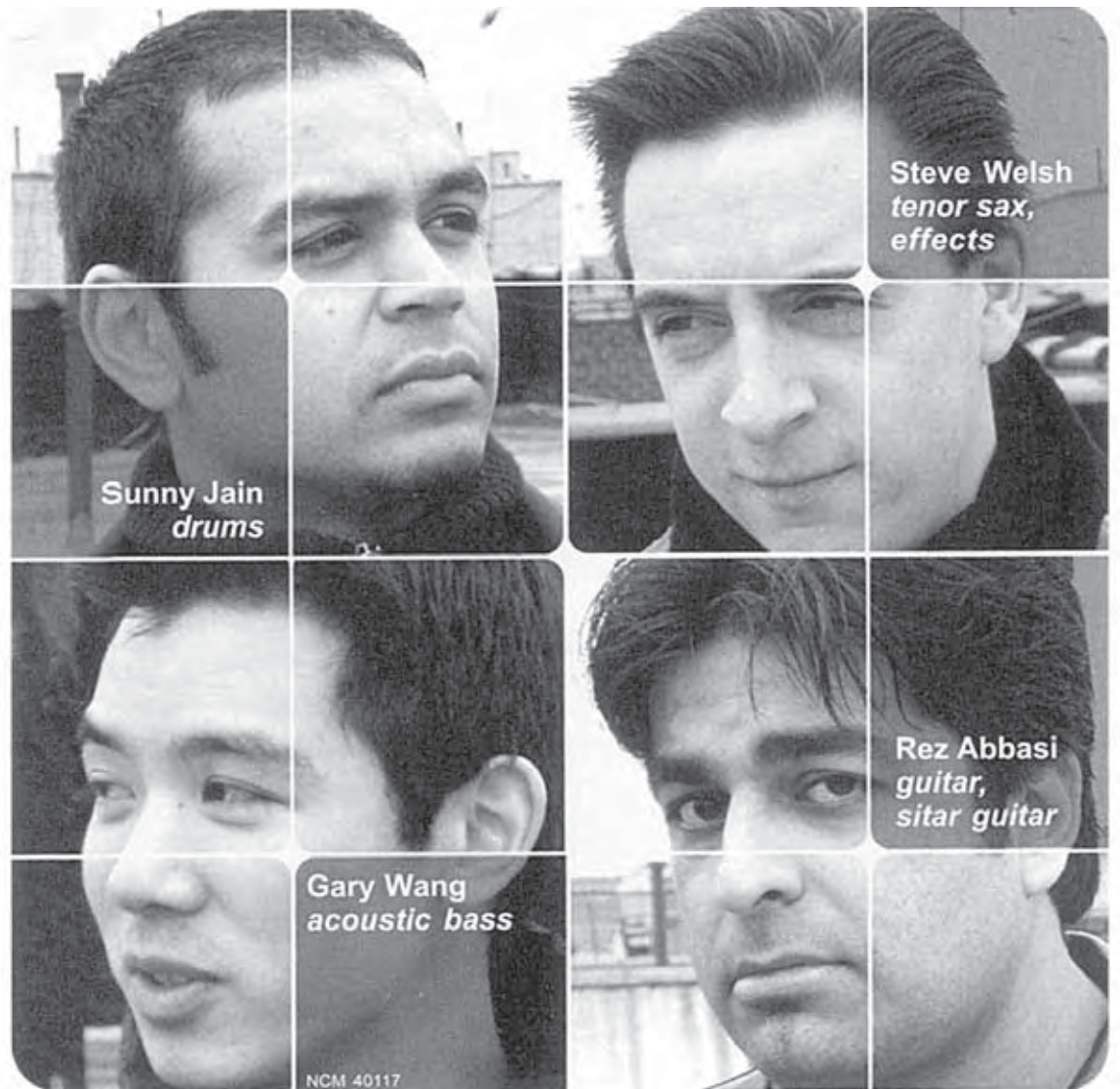
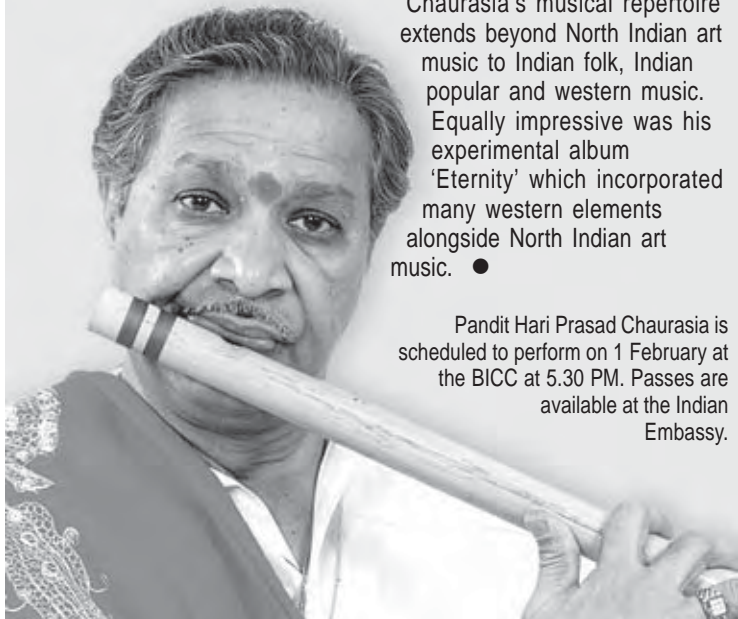
Chaurasia flourished as a musician as his recitals gained a new depth and expression. In Chaurasia's hand, the flute transformed into a magical instrument expressing the finer nuances of Indian classical music. The title of virtuoso soon followed and he was playing at concerts in India and abroad. He collaborated with many musicians, most famously with John McLaughlin, Jan Garbarek and a couple of fusion jazz albums.

Chaurasia's stint in Bollywood also received widespread acclaim for the music he wrote with Shiv Kumar Sharma in *Silsila*. He is one of the few growing classicists who has made an effort to reach out and expand the genre. He has played at music festivals all over the world and each concert is an experience for Chaurasia. "I treat each concert like the first and last so each becomes memorable to me," he says.

Hari Prasad Chaurasia is known for his innovation and expansion of expressive possibilities on the North Indian flute through masterful blowing techniques and unique adaptations of the *alap* and *jor*. Often when you walk into Thamel's book or music shops, the soothing flute sound you hear is Chaurasia's. His best-selling albums include 'Ragas-Morning' with Padma Talwalkar and Amjad Ali Khan, 'Ragas-Afternoon' with Pandit Jasraj and Shahid Parvez, 'Basant Bahar' with Pandit Jasraj, 'Megh Malhar' with Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, the famous 'Soundscapes', 'Maestro's Choice', 'Nothing but Wind' and 'The Elements'.

Chaurasia's musical repertoire extends beyond North Indian art music to Indian folk, Indian popular and western music. Equally impressive was his experimental album 'Eternity' which incorporated many western elements alongside North Indian art music. ●

Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia is scheduled to perform on 1 February at the BICC at 5.30 PM. Passes are available at the Indian Embassy.



Sunny Jain
drums

Steve Welsh
tenor sax,
effects

Gary Wang
acoustic bass

Rez Abbasi
guitar,
sitar guitar

Jain's jazz jamming

East is east and west is west but how the twain meet!

ABHA ELI PHOBOO

It was only natural that Sunny Jain should find in jazz the answer to his identity crisis. An American of Indian origin, music is a spiritual activity for him. Besides, being a Jain, he grew up listening to bhajans and then moved on to classic jazz and blues.

"My Indian heritage and Jain background is obvious in my music and aspirations, just as my upbringing in America," he says.

Sunny will be jamming with local jazz musicians at Shangri-la's Jazz bar on Friday, 28 January and it promises to be one of those not-to-be-missed events on Kathmandu's jazz calendar.

Sunny is a musician 24/7. In roaring traffic, sledgehammers going off, in a plane, on the beach or the sound of footsteps on the sidewalk, everything is music to his ears. "That's how I perceive the world," he says. And when he picked up the drums, it fast grew from passion to profession.

The Sunny Jain Collective is a group that fuses east with west. Its jazz improvisation revisits

Bollywood classics such as *Aawaara Hoon* and *Aap Jaisa Koi*, bhajans like *Raghupati* and *Meri Bhabana*. Their originals *Mango Festival* and *Pink City* are fresh and vibrant sounds. With a few electronic tweaks fed through a keyboard and then injected with Indian tunes, the Collective sound is different from mainstream jazz.

Sunny Jain has steadily been gaining popularity. He headlined the Atlanta Jazz Festival last year and has played at the New York City's famous Blue Note to sold-out tickets. He has also performed with Norah Jones, Kiran Aluwhalia, Seamus Blake, Kyle Eastwood, Dermot Driscoll, Lonnie Plaxico and Kenny Wollesen. The Sunny Jain Collective's debut album *Mango Festival* is truly a joyous celebration. "I was fascinated at a very young age by the sound of tablas but even more so by the rhythms of Indian music," says Sunny.

The Collective features Steve Welsh on tenor saxophone and effects, Gary Wang on bass, Rez Abbasi on guitar and Jain on drums. Avoiding clichés the

group reinvents music. In May 2002, Sunny Jain Collective released its debut CD *As Is*, which featured many of Jain's Indian flavoured compositions and arrangements. The group quickly gained recognition and support as it shared the bill with the renowned New Delhi band, Indian Ocean, at the Concert for Peace in South Asia in New York City.

A debut tour to India in November 2003, headlining at the *Jazz Yatra Festival* in Mumbai and New Delhi, brought the group instant recognition in their motherland. Now, the Sunny Jain Collective is joining the bandwagon to visit Kathmandu as it puts itself on the jazz map.

Navin from our very own group, Cadenza, is known to be as crazy about drums and jazz. He will be playing with the McTwisters, it is sure to be quite an event. The McTwisters, led by Czech Peter Kroutil features three members of the famous Nepali rock band 1974AD. ●

Jazz it Up with Sunny Jain Collective and the McTwisters on 28 January, 7 PM onwards at Shangri-la Hotel. Tickets Rs 999, 4412999



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"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, even a man with a bad goatee can be a hero.) - as translated by UNACO, the United Nation's Assn. of Cartoonists

KE GARNE? WHATEVER.
But be a Heroji - Travel light & pack a towel

"Man travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it."
-- George Moore
Irish Author and Fictional Biographer (1852-1933)

Next change: Herojig goes footballing with Ozzie Nepalis

HeroJig's Adventures can also be seen at www.extreme-nepal.com

#54 2061 by Jigme gaton - read. love. write.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Reflection of Nature II** Pressed dry floral Oshibana art by Pabitra Shrestha at Park Gallery, Lajimpat. Until 28 January. 4419353
- ❖ **Life through the Lens** Photographs by Kishor Kayastha at Indigo Gallery, till 31 January. 4413580, indigo@wlink.com.np
- ❖ **Kickin' Up Dust** Photographs of Australian contemporary indigenous cultural festivals at Siddhartha Art Gallery. Until 31 January. 4218048

EVENTS

- ❖ **Shahid Dibas**, 29 January
- ❖ **Tsunami Relief** Fundraising dinner on 29 January, 6PM onwards for Rs 1,200 at 1905, Kantipath. 4225272
- ❖ **Crazy Golf** For Corporates at Soaltee Crowne Plaza on 29 January, 10.30 AM to 3PM. 4273999
- ❖ **Sitcom** Cine Club at the Alliance Francaise on 30 January. 4241163
- ❖ **Sunny Side Up** Jazz picnic with the McTwisters on 30 January at La Soon Restaurant, Pulchok, 12AM to 6PM. Entrance Rs 300, 5537166
- ❖ **Kathmandu Chorale Rehearsals** from 31 January, 7.10 PM at The British School, Jhamsikhel. 5534737
- ❖ **Birdwatching** at Taudaha Laka on 2 February, 6km southwest of Kathmandu organised by Friends of the Bagmati. 4470-770
- ❖ **Adventure High** Documentary on cyclists from Mongolia to Nepal at Lajimpat Gallery Café on 3 February, 7PM onwards. 4428549
- ❖ **Sanibaar Mela** Every Saturday at the Dharahara Bakery Café, 12AM-5PM.
- ❖ **3rd Annual Wave Web Winner 2004** Website designing contest. Entry deadline 15 February. www.wavemag.com.np
- ❖ **The God Dance of Kathmandu Valley** Tuesdays at Hotel Vajra. 4271545



MUSIC

- ❖ **Motown Nite** with Soul-T on 28 January at Four Season restaurant, Thamel, 7PM-10PM, tickets Rs 100. 4701715
- ❖ **Full Circle Live** on 28 January at Moksh, Pulchok, 7.30 PM. 5528703
- ❖ **Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle every Friday, 25 percent off from 5PM to 7PM on 28 January. 4701208, 4701107, rum_doodle@gohimalaya.com
- ❖ **Margarita Night** at Fusion-The bar at Dwarika's Hotel on 28 January with Abhaya & the Steam Injuns, Rs 799. 4479488
- ❖ **Jazz it up** New York style with Sunny Jain Collective on 28 January at the Jazz Bar, Hotel Shangri-La, 7 PM onwards for Rs 999. 4412999
- ❖ **Dhicyag Subhchu Rinpoche's** debut album *Dharma Dhvani* release on 30 January at Maitreya Gumba, Swayambhu, 2.30PM.
- ❖ **Classical music**, 7PM onwards, every Friday at Hotel Vajra. 4271545
- ❖ **Jatra** Saturday nights with Looza, 6.30 PM onwards. 4256622
- ❖ **Happening live jazz in town** at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat. Every Wednesday and Saturday, 7.45 PM onwards.

FOOD

- ❖ **Grand Dosa Festival** at The Café, Hyatt, 6.30PM, till 30 January. 4491234
- ❖ **Barbecue Dinner** Every Friday at the Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Seasons Special Luncheon** at Hotel Shangri-La for Rs 450. 4412999
- ❖ **Delicacies** Pastas and snacks at Roadhouse Café, Jawalakhel. 5521755
- ❖ **Sizzling Weekend Treat** with live music, dance, barbeque and karaoke at Garden Terrace, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Genuine Thai** cuisine at Royal Lotus, Bakhundole. 5521231
- ❖ **Delicious barbecue dinner** Fridays at Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Café Bahal** Newari and continental cuisine under the giant Cinnamon tree at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4700632
- ❖ **Splash Spring BBQ** Wednesday and Friday evenings, 6PM onwards. Radisson Hotel, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **Dwarika's Thali** Lunch at the Heritage courtyard. 4479488
- ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** Pure relaxation, escape the chill. 4361500
- ❖ **Shivapuri Heights Cottage** Tranquil atmosphere at the edge of Shivapuri National Park. steve@escape2nepal.com
- ❖ **Chiso Chiso Hawama** Two-day package at Club Himalaya. 4411706
- ❖ **Jungle Base Camp Lodge**, Bardia, special package and prices. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Malaysia Dream Holidays** Packages starting from Rs 45,500 per person. 2012345, malaysiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np
- ❖ **Getaway package** Night's stay at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **AAA Organic Farm and Guesthouse** Rs 950 with three meals. 6631734
- ❖ **Temple Tiger** One night package \$250. 4263480
- ❖ **Machan Wildlife Jungle Resort** special packages available. 4225001
- ❖ **Weekend Special** at Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha. 4375280
- ❖ **Jomsom Mountain Resort** Two nights-three days at Rs 5,999 for Nepalis, \$199 for expats including airfare and food. 4496110, salesjom@mail.com.np

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JAI NEPAL CINEMA

The film is set in the India of the tumultuous 1930s when nationalists fighting for the country's independence rose up urging the British to quit. At this time, a young Indian, Kisna (Vivek Oberoi) befriends and then shields a British girl Katherine (Antonia Bernath) from an enraged mob of nationalists including Kisna's own uncle and brother. Katherine is the young daughter of a ruthless British collector. Kisna takes it upon himself to escort Katherine to the safety of the British High Commission in New Delhi. A tender attraction develops between Kisna and Katherine during the journey, a love story that is torn between Karma, the noble deed, and Dharma, the duty. Laxmi (Isha Shrivani), the Indian girl Kisna is engaged to, forms the third point in an emotional triangle involving the Indo-British romantic pair.

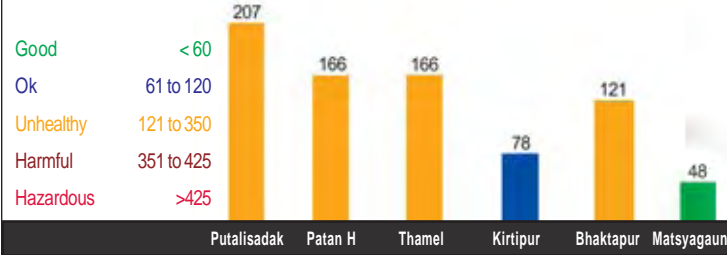


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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

Good news is in the air. Believe it or not, Kathmandu's air quality improved this week. After a couple of weeks of extremely high levels of pollution, the concentration of dangerous particles below 10 microns in Kathmandu was down by 22 percent last week. We must thank the rains for reducing the street level dust. Although PM10 in urban areas are still higher than national standards, in Bhaktapur and Kirtipur the levels were healthy on most days.

16 - 22 January 2005 in micrograms per cubic meter.
Source: www.mope.gov.np



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



When it rains, it pours as we found out this week. Behind one westerly was another westerly and then another. Enough already. When we said there had been a winter drought, we didn't mean for Lord Indra to dump three feet of snow in Jumla. This winter has been registered the wettest in a decade with Kathmandu receiving in one week 58 mm of rain—four times the January average and the month isn't even finished yet. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows the horizon to the west is clear except for a low pressure area over the Pamir which will bring patches of fast high clouds over the weekend. Valley residents can expect chilly and foggy mornings with increasingly balmy afternoons when the sun is shining.

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Everest forever

I don't know about you, but we've been getting sleepless nights about this Chinese expedition that is arriving here next month to determine if Mt Everest has indeed shrunk. On a matter as serious as this, the whole nation should be getting sleepless nights. Wake up, yes, you there in the driver's seat.

What if the Chinese discover that due to plate tectonics, the mountain has moved south and Tengboche is actually in Tibet? What if they find Mt Everest isn't the highest mountain in the world anymore? How can we hold our head high again among the community of nations? Imagine the ignominy and shame. What will all those proud owners of Mt Everest Restaurant and Bar (credo: 'Get High Here')

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit



, Everest Bank ('Our Interest Rates Are Highest'), Everest Hotel ('Nepal's top Hotel'), Everest Nursing Home ('Don't You Ever Rest?'), Everest

Insurance ('Life Insurance for Mountaineers, Too'), Mt Everest Momo Shop ('Dumplings Without Oxygen'), Everest Corrugated Zinc Sheets ('The Roof of the World'), Everest Rubber Flipflops ('Be the First To Summit in Chappals'), Mt Everest Yarsagumba Capsules ('Size Matters') do? Somehow, K2 Momo Shop just doesn't have the same zing.

Sir Edmund Hillary will be in the horns of a dilemma: to return his knighthood or not. And imagine the promo brochures NTB has printed, we'll have to scrap them all and print new ones with the slogan: 'The Land of Everest, We Were Great Once'.

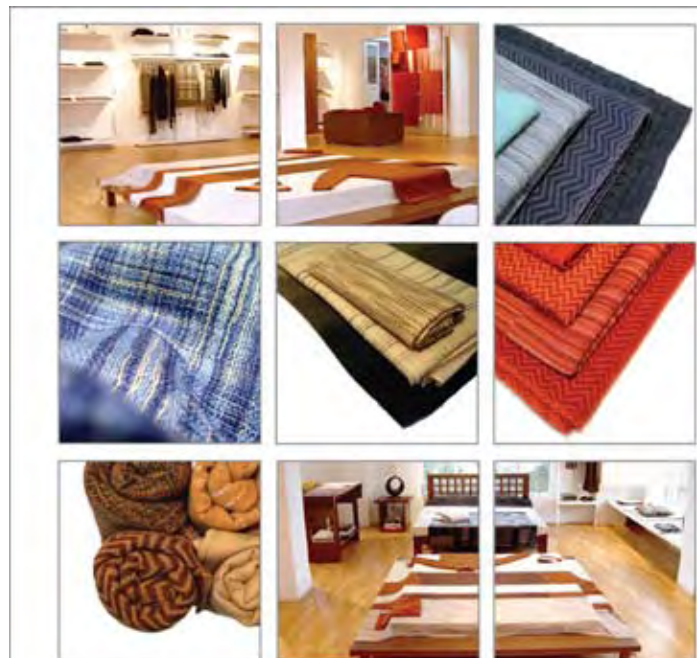
It is an unthinkable, nightmarish scenario. And what I want to know is why His Majesty's government had to be such a smart ass and grant the Chinese permission to make a discovery that would be potentially disastrous for our national morale. As if we didn't have enough problems already.

It is therefore in our national interest to safeguard our territorial integrity and vertical sovereignty to pre-empt this expedition and ensure that Qomalongma (which in Tibetan means 'Goddess Mother of the Earth') and Sagarmatha (which in

Nepali means 'The Pointy One Behind the White One with the Flat Top That Is Third from Right If You Are Looking Counter-clockwise') remains the tallest one in the world.

There are several steps that Nepal's Bureau of Standards and Metrology can start taking right away if we can get them to wake up:

1. Every expedition climbing Mt Everest from this season onwards must ensure that team members who reach the top all carry at least 10 kg of rocks to deposit at the summit. At this rate, we can restore three metres to Mt Everest in just a few years.
2. All Cleanup Expeditions that used to bring the trash back from the South Col and dump it on the banks of the Bagmati at Balkhu, will henceforth be required to take it on to the summit and deposit it there instead. If this happens, my calculation is that by 2008, Mt Everest's altitude will have crossed 9,000 metres above sea level.
3. Tectonic plates are like a see-saw, you press one side down and the other side goes up. So, if we can move all 25 million Nepalis to the vicinity of Jaleswor, we can make the entire country tilt, thus pushing Mt Everest up considerably.
4. Bribe the Chinese Height Fixing Committee.



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* PRERANA is a Kathmandu based non-profit organization that works towards supporting people living with HIV and AIDS, advocating the rights of those infected or affected with HIV/AIDS, and creating a better awareness of HIV and AIDS, particularly among young people.

