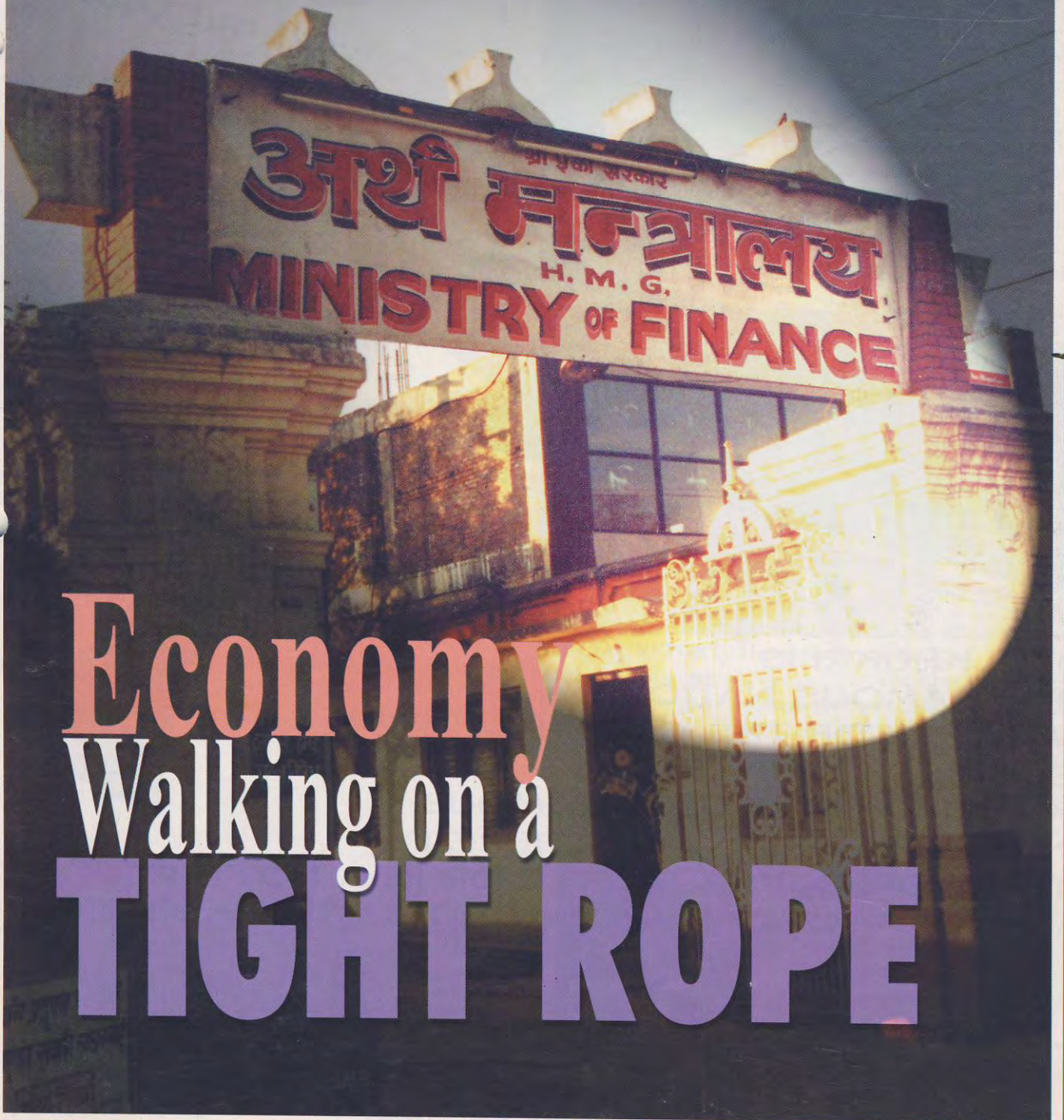


The National Newsmagazine

# SPOTLIGHT

March 2-8, 2001



## Economy Walking on a TIGHT ROPE

Special Report: CIAA Vs Attorney General

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**COVER STORY : ECONOMY : CHALLENGES AHEAD**  
As the Ministry of Finance is engaged in mid-term review of the implementation of this year's budget, newly appointed Finance Minister Dr. Mahat has a tough time to deliver the promises made by his predecessor.

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**SPECIAL REPORT : Hangover From The Past**

As the two constitutional bodies CIAA and Attorney General clash with each other, at stake is the constitutional process and credibility.

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**INTERVIEW :  
DR. MOHAN MAN SAINJU**

Former Vice Chairman of National Planning Commission Dr. Sainju talks about economic prospects of Nepal.

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# SPOTLIGHT

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

His Majesty King Birendra left last Monday on his latest State visit to the People's Republic of China, Nepal's friendly neighbor in the north. The number and frequency of such State, official, goodwill and friendly visits to any country is the true reflection of its state of relations with that country. China, indeed, is a good friend of Nepal. Whenever Nepal has faced any serious political or economic threat, China has always come to her rescue. Once again, Nepal is standing at the brink of the precipice. Her political instability and extreme political corruption are pushing her to economic bankruptcy. Moreover, the pernicious and baseless propaganda endlessly carried out by powerful Indian print and electronic media has hit Nepal's tourism industry very hard. Just an example. "Rebuffed by India, Nepal woos Chinese tourists" (Times of India 12 Feb. 2001). No day passes when either an Indian politician accuses Nepal in Indian Parliament or Indian media prints allegations against Nepal. This kind of Indian behavior has generated a sense of deep insecurity in the minds of an average Nepali while giving wrong ideas to the world. The Indian establishment has to understand that it is high time they brought a change in their mindset. The Nepalese people, despite their physical handicaps, can withstand all kinds of pressures. And it won't be either in Nepal's or India's interest to prolong this kind of relationship.

King Birendra will not fail to impress upon the Chinese the imperative on the part of Nepal of exploring Chinese tourist market. It may not fill the gap created by the absence of Indian tourists in the initial stages. But, if India refuses to relent and continues her punitive policy to destroy Nepalese tourism industry, Nepal has no alternative but to explore other avenues. King Birendra is sure to discuss with his Chinese friends India's obsession of her imaginary threat to her security through the unfounded increasing activities of I.S.I of Pakistan in Nepal. Indeed King Birendra will sound the Chinese about sealing Nepal-India border to forestall the long term threat to Nepal's integrity and to circumvent Indian charge of threat to her security from Pakistan. The Nepalese side should also avail of this opportunity of briefing their Chinese counterpart about the activities of RAW (The Indian CIA) in destabilising politics and economic activities in Nepal. It is reported the imbroglio between the Hoteliers and the unionists is the handmaid of Indian RAW.

Indeed this would be an ideal opportunity of exchanging ideas with the Chinese leaders about the nuclear proliferation in South Asia and Indian attitude towards SAARC. India's obduracy, to holding of SAARC Summit in Kathmandu in 1999 has not only come as a big setback to the healthy growth of SAARC but exposed India's disinterestedness in SAARC itself. On the whole King Birendra's State visit to China this time also has to be quite productive like before. China, as usual, is sure to assure Nepal of her whole hearted support to stave off any danger, to her integrity. Can we hope our traditional friend in the South will soften her hardened stand and let Nepal live a healthy and peaceful life?

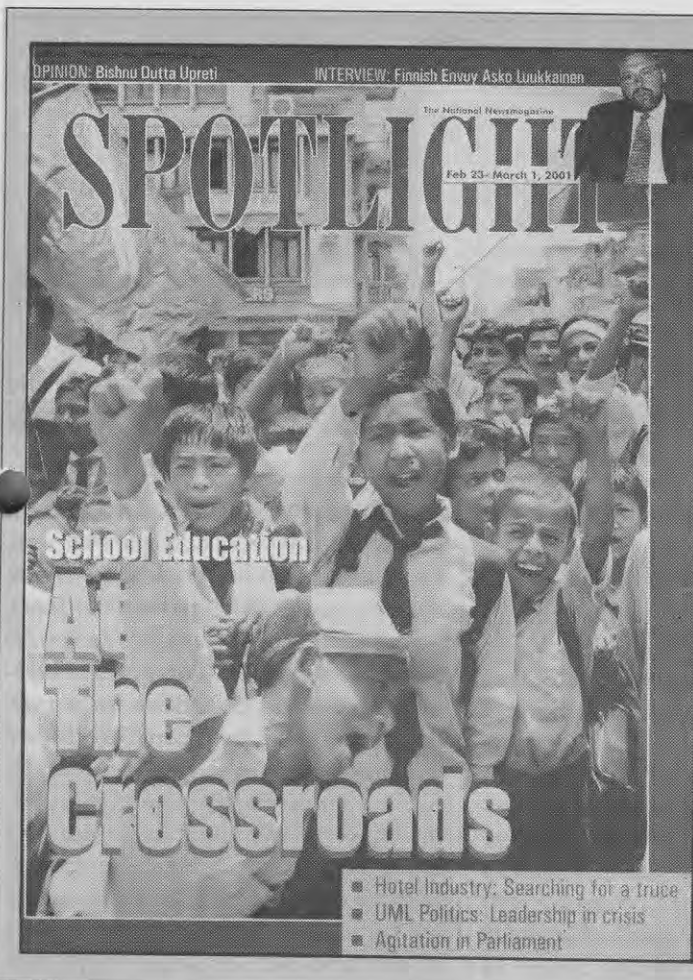
\* \* \*

Traditions develop to be broken in accordance with the change of time. The tradition of calling a holiday on the days of departure and return on State visits to friendly countries by the Head of State has to be broken. Nepal needs eight days in a week if she wants to catch up with other developed world. Of course, in the regimes of non-performing governments working days may have no importance. But assuming Nepal will have an honest and dedicated government some day, she has to cut down her holidays. And these kinds of holidays are better discontinued. With due respect to the monarchy, may we suggest that the monarch himself will realize the urgency of bringing in the necessary change and give urgent instruction to the government to break this redundant tradition. ■



**Madhav Kumar Rimal**  
Chief Editor & Publisher





## Investment Satisfactory

The government's investment in the education sector is increasing satisfactorily in the last one decade ("At The Crossroads", SPOTLIGHT February 23-29). Despite the resource constraints it confronts, it is laudable that the government is putting in so much effort to develop the education sector. However, problems are still there. Periodic policy lapses and centralized decision-making, among other things, are proving to be serious obstacles. Take, for instance, the government's dilly dallying on the issue of the academic session. Though it initially decided that the academic session would start from Shrawan this year, the government is yet to formally ask the schools to follow the calendar although time is running out. Such ridiculous policy lapses should be avoided.

**Jeevan Regmi**  
Bhaktapur

story provided glimpses into the achievements Nepal has made over the last five decades. It is high time that we stopped being cynical about the democratic polity. From these positive experiences, we can move on to build a better and brighter Nepal for posterity.

**Dinesh Baidya**  
Patan

## Blatant Terrorism

The attempt on the life of the chief justice of the Supreme Court ("Irrational Act", SPOTLIGHT, February 9-15) by the Maoists in no way helped their so-called 'people's war'. The attack was a blatant act of terrorism committed by a bunch of cowards. From political activism and armed rebellion, the Maoists seem to be headed towards pure terrorism.

**Hareram KC**  
Battisputali

## Education Is The Pillar

With reference to your cover story "At The Crossroads" (SPOTLIGHT, February 23-29), it is clear that, notwithstanding the atmosphere of gloom, there are reasons to celebrate the country's achievements in educating its people. From the dark history of education during the Rana regime, we have come a long way. However, the road ahead is still difficult. No nation can hope to develop itself without putting emphasis on education.

**Hira Shrestha**  
Balaju

## Literacy Riddle

Your cover story "At The Crossroads" (SPOTLIGHT

February 23-29) pointed out that the government and donor/private agencies are using different figures to describe the current national literacy rate. While the government puts the figure at 53 percent or even 57 percent, the donors prefer to stick with 42-percent level. What is the reason for this discrepancy? Is it because the definition of literacy differs from agency to agency? Perhaps the upcoming census would be able to end this confusion.

**Shri Hari Thapa**  
Bansbari

## Stress On Quality

The low level of retention of primary school students is turning out to be a serious problem ("At The Crossroads",

SPOTLIGHT February 23-29). The achievement and the pass rate of students, too, are on the down side. This has led to the deterioration in the quality of education. Sustained and concerted efforts by all government as well as non-government agencies are needed to improve the situation. The community and parents should be taken into confidence to achieve the goal.

**Sitaram Khanal**  
Kuleshwor

## On Positive Side

Your cover story "Trial And Error" (SPOTLIGHT, February 16-22) shed light on some positive aspects of our experience with democracy. In contrast with the prevailing atmosphere of negativism, the

## Lack Of Reconciliation

Present-day Nepal is a victim of lack of reconciliation ("Messed Up" SPOTLIGHT, February 2). Right from the political level to sports, the quarreling parties refuse to reconcile their differences in the broader interest of the country. While Maoists and the government are refusing to climb down from their respective positions to reach to peaceful negotiations, the bickering parties at the All Nepal Football Association have let away the Nepal's chance for hosting the World Cup qualifying tournament. The present need of the Nepalese society, therefore, is the character of reconciliation.

**Devendra Thapa**  
Tangal



## SAARC Secretaries To Meet In May

With a view to restarting the SAARC process, the foreign secretaries of the seven South Asian countries are slated to meet in May this year, The Associated Press reported Saturday from New Delhi. The agency quoted a spokesman for the Indian Foreign Ministry as saying that the decision was reached during a meeting between Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and visiting Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga in the Indian capital last week. The meeting of the SAARC foreign secretaries, the venue of which is yet to be announced, is expected to prepare for the summit of the heads of states of the seven-member grouping. The 11th SAARC summit, scheduled to take place in November 1999 in Kathmandu, was postponed indefinitely at the request of the Indian government in the aftermath of the military takeover in Pakistan. *Compiled from reports Feb. 25.*

## Govt. To Privatize Hetauda Textiles

After laying off more than 1,000 employees of the Hetauda Textiles Factory (HTF) early this month, the government has initiated the process to privatize the loss-making industry. The Finance Ministry has already selected auditors to undertake valuation of the industry's assets and the privatization process is expected to be initiated in the next four



Factory workers

months. Officials said the government is going to release Rs 250 million to pay for the employees' salaries and other benefits. The ministry is also going to expedite the privatization of Janakpur Cigarette Factory, Lumbini Sugar Industry, Hetauda Cement and Birgunj Sugar Factory, officials said. *Kantipur Feb. 25.*

## 200 Nepalese Workers Dead

At least 200 Nepalese workers are estimated to have died while working in Saudi Arabia last year, Kantipur daily reported. The daily quoted a senior official at the Ministry of Labor and Transport as saying that at least 14 Nepalese workers died in Saudi Arabia in January this year alone. A team of Nepalese officials that visited Gulf countries last month has said that adverse working conditions and lack of medical facilities for Nepali workers are mainly responsible for unusually high death rates of Nepalese workers. According to official statistics, nearly 100,000 Nepalis have left for Saudi Arabia in search of jobs. Manpower agencies put the figure as high as 350,000. Remittances sent by Nepalis working abroad,

estimated to be around Rs 69 billion a year, is said to be the largest source of foreign exchange for the country. *Compiled from reports Feb. 24.*

## Supreme Court Issues Notice

The Supreme Court has issued a show cause notice to Makwanpur Chamber of Commerce



Supreme Court

and Industry (MCCI) in response to a writ petition filed by Kodak Nepal Pvt. Ltd., saying that it was not give the certificate of origin to export its products to India, reports said. The company also named the cabinet secretariat and concerned government agencies as defendants in the petition. Set up under the Foreign Investment and Transfer of Technology Act, 2055 B. S., the company has a provision of exporting 80 percent of its products to India and the remaining 20 percent to third countries for foreign exchange earnings. The US multinational, Eastman Kodak, owns 80 percent of the company's shares, with Kodak Company of India owning the remainder. Reports say Nepalese business organizations have refused to grant the 'certificate of origin' to the Kodak products allegedly under pressure from influential Indian business organizations, including Confederation of Indian Industry. *Compiled from reports Feb. 25.*

## IPPF President Lobbies Lawmakers

Angela Gomez, the visiting president of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), the world's largest voluntary organization working in the area of sexual and reproductive health, has urged Nepalese parliamentarians to seriously think over abortion rights of women, saying it would save lives of thousands of Nepali women every year. Talking to reporters at the office of the Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN) here Thursday, Ms. Gomez said women undergo a great psychological trauma for not



being allowed to abort unwanted fetuses. Nepal has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, half of which is attributed to unsafe abortion. An amendment bill to Nepalese civil code that proposes to allow abortion under certain conditions is pending in parliament. *Compiled from reports Feb. 23.*

## Nepal Denied Entry Into BIMST-EC

Despite vigorous lobbying, Nepal failed to acquire membership of the regional grouping BIMST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand- Economic Cooperation). Upon his return home, Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola told reporters that Nepal could not join the organization due to "procedural problems". He said the moratorium on new membership imposed by the regional body was still in



Bastola

force. Bastola said Myanmar and Bangladesh had supported Nepal's application. Nepal participated in the two-day meeting of the BIMST-EC in Yangon early this week as an observer. *Compiled from reports Feb. 21.*

## Maoists Drive Away VDC Secretaries

As part of their strategy to weaken the government's position in their strongholds, Maoist rebels have started a campaign to banish secretaries of village development

committees in mid-western districts. According to the Ministry of Local Development, nearly 100 VDCs in these districts are running without secretaries. Nearly 300 other secretaries have approached the ministry with requests for transfers. As the government machinery to carry out development works to the grassroots level has become defunct, the funds earmarked for VDCs is stuck at the District Development Committees. The government has remained silent though the rebels have said they are setting up parallel district and village level committees. *Deshanter Feb. 25.*

## Jute Output Fails To Meet Local Demand

Though there is a demand for 60,000 tonnes of jute by various jute industries located in eastern Nepal, local production is limited to 24,000 tonnes per annum. Domestic production of jute is only meeting 40 percent of the total demand. Jute producers say they haven't been able to step up production because of instability in the market created by frequent breakdown of the major jute industries. Imports from India and Bangladesh make up for the shortfall. *Compiled from reports Feb. 20. ■*

## PM Handed Over Memo



The youths from Saptari district have handed over a memorandum to the Prime Minister requesting him to ensure compulsory and free primary education. The applicants have handed over the memorandum through the District Administration Office, Rajbiraj. The memo states that although the government has been harping about free primary education, it is not so at the local level. "Due to the financial-constraint poor and Dalit (underprivileged) communities have not been able to send their children to schools. As Saptari district has the highest concentration of Dalit communities in the country, we have urged the government to make the education free so that the children who are still outside the school system, will have the chance to read and write." The memo has also been addressed to Education Minister, District Education Officer and other officials. ■





**King Birendra being welcomed by Chinese officials at Boao**

**THE ROYAL NEPAL AIRLINES CORPORATION (RNAC)** has announced that it will provide 50 percent concession in its basic airfare to people aged 65 years and above in its domestic and Indian flights. The arrangement will be valid during this fiscal year only, the national flag carrier said. The airlines said it would continue its offer of free tickets to cancer patients and accompanying persons who want to go abroad for treatment. The private-sector Necon Air has already been providing a 50 percent discount to senior citizens in its domestic flights.

**NORWAY'S OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, NORAD,** approved a US\$ 24.7 million grant for the tunnel component of Melamchi Water Supply Project (MWSP) last week, reports said. Norwegian ambassador to Nepal, Ingrid Ofsted, said that NORAD would not start constructing the tunnel until the government signs a contract with a private operator for water supply. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) in December last year had agreed to provide a loan assistance of US\$ 120 million for the project. Close on the heels of the Norwegian support, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) is expected to approve its assistance of US\$ 25 million for the project, the report said. The \$400 million project aims to bring in 170 million liters of drinking water into the capital valley every day upon its completion by 2007.

**THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (PAC) OF THE** House of Representatives has started a probe into alleged irregularities during the Eighth South Asian Federation (SAF) Games held in Kathmandu in 1999. The PAC has instructed the Ministry of Education and Sports to present within 15 days all details on income and expenditure and related documents.

**TWO POLICEMEN, INCLUDING A SUB-INSPECTOR,** died on the spot and four others were injured in an electronic trap set up by suspected Maoist rebels at Chharahare Dada of Belghari VDC in Sindhuli district last week. RSS news agency quoted Chief District Officer Ganga Prasad Luitel as saying that the policemen fell into the trap while returning from an inspection of

the telephone tower at Chharahare Dada where the rebels had detonated bombs the previous night.

**THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE KILLED IN A STAMPEDE** in the aftermath of a Muslim religious fair at Nawalparasi, nearly 200 km west of Kathmandu, has reached 17, officials said. The bodies of two more children, both girls, were recovered Wednesday. The stampede occurred on Feb. 15 when fire gutted thatched huts atop the hill at Kodiya village development committee in the district. The people were killed when thousands of Muslim pilgrims started running away to protect themselves. Among those dead were Indian pilgrims. Thousands of people from India and Nepal had gathered at the annual Madar Baba Fair.

**SIRUBARI TOURISM PROJECT HAS BEEN AWARDED** the Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA) Gold Award in the Heritage category at the 2001 PATA Gold Awards, officials said. The PATA Gold Awards recognize exceptional achievement in a variety of endeavors, bringing acclaim to the best the region's travel industry has to offer. A small village in western Nepal, Sirubari allows visitors to experience a stay in a typical Nepali village. Nepal Tourism Board had nominated the project for the award.

**A PRIVATE COMPANY, VALLEY AUTOGAS SUPPLIERS** Pvt. Ltd. has constructed two Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) filling stations at Kalanki and Chabahil in the capital with a view to providing gas to the LPG-powered vehicles. According to the managing director of the company, Basanta Raj Nakarmi, the station, set up at an estimated cost of Rs 100 million, could fill 50 liters of gas per minute and would provide LPG at a reasonable price.

**THREE SUSPECTED MAOIST REBELS WERE KILLED** in an encounter with police at Mabuko hill in Raniban VDC in the mid-western district of Dailekh in early February. According to police, the rebels had opened fire at a police team patrolling the area. The rebels fled after a nearly an hour-long gun battle, reports said. The dead rebels are yet to be identified.

**THE ARMED POLICE FORCE (APF) REGULATIONS 2057** B. S. has come into effect with its publication in the Nepal Gazette. The Armed Police Force Ordinance, promulgated by King Birendra on January 22, has been tabled at the ongoing session of parliament for approval. The ordinance will have to be passed within two months of the convening of the parliament.

**CAPACITY UTILIZATION OF STATE-OWNED UDAYPUR** Cement Industry Limited (UCIL) has reached 70 percent, up from 50 percent. According to the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, the improvement in the performance of the industry could be seen after a new management team was appointed. The industry, which was recently capitalized at Rs 6 billion, will break even only at 75 percent. Set up eight years ago, the industry manufactures 80 tonnes of clinkers daily. The industry has been producing 277,000 tonnes of cement every year despite shortage of raw materials and other problems. ■

**“T**he prime minister’s resignation is our first condition for any agreement.”

*K.P. Oli, senior UML leader, in Drishti.*

\* \* \*

**“T**hat was unfortunate.”

*Sushil Koirala, former general secretary of Nepali Congress, on the decision of His Majesty the King to send the controversial bill to amend Citizenship Act to Supreme Court, in Kantipur.*

\* \* \*

**“T**o dislodge the corrupt prime minister is our mandatory compulsion.”

*Pradeep Nepal, former minister and spokesman of Unified Marxist Leninist, in Budhabar.*

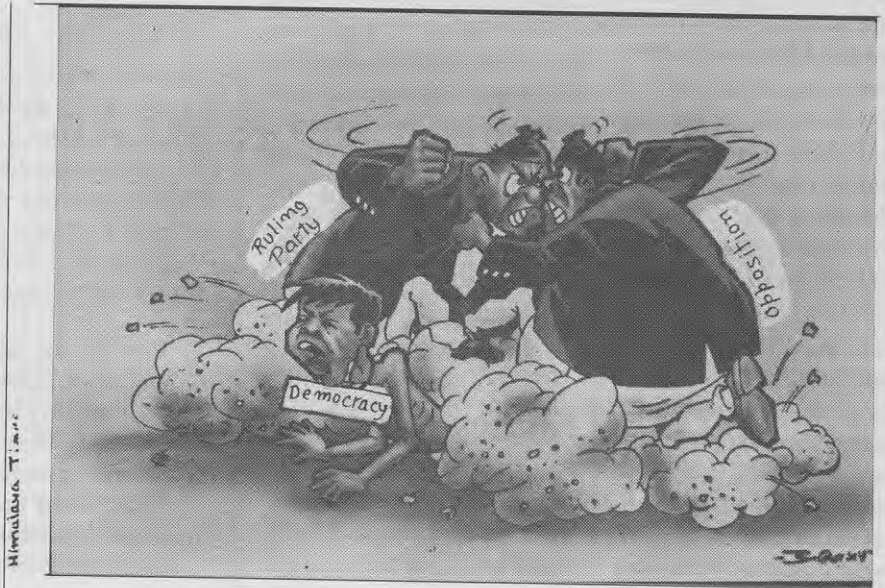
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**“T**he opposition’s demand for the PM’s resignation by blocking parliament is unconstitutional.”

*Gajendra Narayan Singh, president of Nepal Sadbhavana Party, addressing the public gathering.*

\* \* \*

**I** joined the cabinet to help the party



president in attaining unity.”

*Omkar Prasad Shrestha, minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, in Ghatana Ra Bichar.*

\* \* \*

**“R**astriya Prajatantra Party is not UML’s tail. It is only on the issue of corruption that our views are similar. Oth-

erwise, we have our own identity.”

*Jog Meher Shrestha, central leader of RPP, saying that being a prime minister of the majority government it is up to Girija Prasad Koirala’s judgement whether or not resign under pressure from opposition, in Bimarsha.*

\* \* \*

**“I**nstability is the root of all ills.”

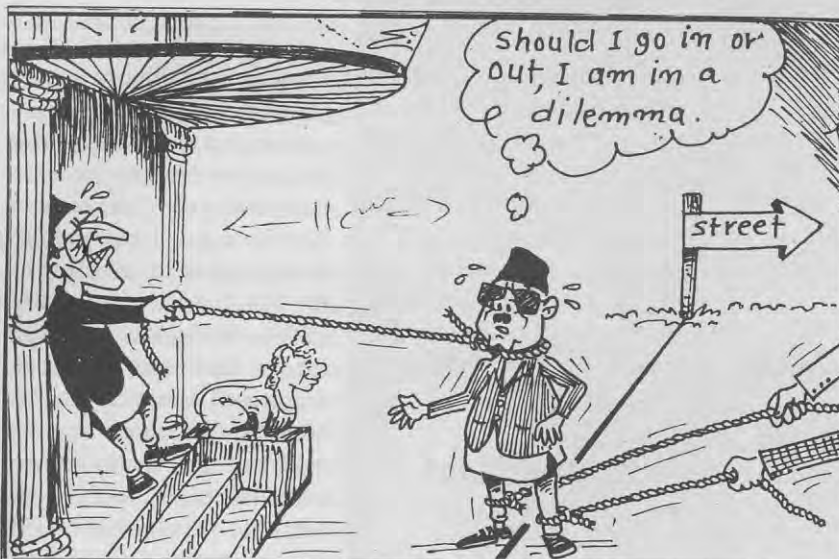
*Pradeep Kumar Shrestha, President of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), in Punarjagan.*

\* \* \*

**“I**n the present system of entrance exams and expensive colleges, there is no possibility for poor and deserving students to get the chance to become doctor.”

*Dr. Narayan Dharel, a prominent doctor, who could join the medical profession even though he was from poor background, saying there is no possibility for students from his kind of background to become doctors anymore, in Gorkhapatra.*

\* \* \*



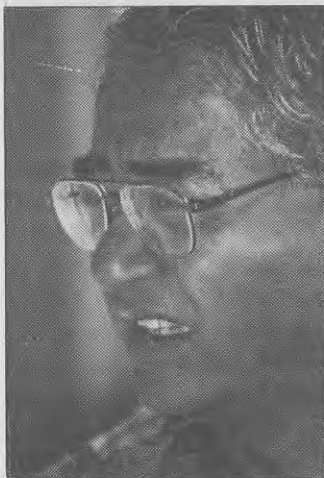


## Meeting Momentum

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's two hours of talks at the residence of the leader of the main opposition Madhav Kumar Nepal could not end the deadlock in parliament when MPs assembled the following day. Whatever may have transpired during the talks, Koirala's decision to go to Nepal's residence provided CPN-UML leaders the opportunity to project themselves as the ones who call the political shots. The day after that meeting, CPN-UML leader Krishna Gopal Shrestha was claiming that his party had established itself as the key player of Nepalese politics. Far from helping to end the parliamentary stalemate, Koirala's visit to Nepal's residence came as a morale-booster for our communist leaders who were on the defensive.

## Deuba's Theory

Nepal has an interesting assortment of political leaders with unconventional ideas. Former prime ministers Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress have propounded many theories on



Deuba : No polls, please

Nepalese democracy. Deuba's latest rationale is that Nepal's democratic system would be weakened if the prime minister chose to call mid-term elections to break out of the legislative logjam. Leaders in other parts of the world find going back to the people the best way to test their mandate. Our parliamentarians are supporting the idea of a fixed-term parliament. If having to go to the people represents such a big threat to democracy, why don't our MPs constitute a permanent legislature and declare themselves MPs for life?

## Money Machine

The controversy over the Lauda Air deal has opened up lucrative opportunities to different people. For the major political parties, the deal has come in handy in advance of the local elections. For spinmeisters on either side of the debate, Lauda has provided a fresh opportunity to make money. When the main opposition CPN-UML decided to publish a red paper on the jet deal, the writers and researchers hit a jackpot. Those who responded with a white paper on the deal, too, found the exercise financially profitable. It seems the deal is providing money and masala to politicians and intellectuals of all hues. Is this why the scam just refuses to go away?

## Hooligans In College

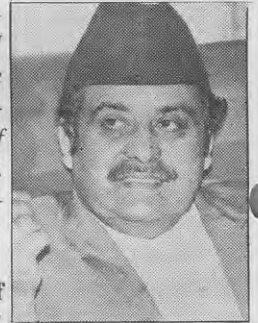
When the country was celebrating National Education Day last week, calling for quality education, groups of students backed by rival political parties were smashing windows in one of the leading campuses in Kathmandu.

## REVELATION

# 'Opposition Should Follow The Democratic Process'

— DAMANNATH DHUNGANA

Former speaker of the House of Representatives **DAMAN NATH DHUNGANA** holds the view that the opposition parties should follow constitutional procedures — not use force — if they want to remove the prime minister. Dhungana made the remarks at a meeting organized by parliament. Excerpts:



**How do you see the activities of the opposition parties in parliament?**

They are very irrational and undemocratic. The activities of the CPN-UML shows that they do not believe in the democratic process. The opposition should follow the democratic process.

**What could the opposition have done when the prime minister is adamantly opposed to resigning?**

Since there are many institutions to investigate and prove corruption-related crimes, no one is forced to agree with what the communist party says. In a communist form of government, the decision of the communist party will be final. In a democratic form of government, other institutions have to prove charges.

**Then what prompted the CPN-UML to take such attitude?**

The CPN-UML also took an active role during the struggle against the Panchayat system, but this time they are on the wrong side. If they are really sincere to the cause of democracy, the CPN-UML must follow the democratic process and settle the dispute through the parliamentary norms. ■

Campaigning for the student union elections showed that politicians are turning education institutions into a political battlefield. Instead of encouraging a healthy academic environment, our leaders just cannot break from their habit of fanning hooliganism in these temples of learning.

## Wheeling And Dealing

At a time when all the major political parties are busy trying to pull down the gov-

ernment, the fourth largest party in parliament is busy organizing a nation-wide chariot procession. No one seems to have the faintest idea on how beneficial the chariot procession would be for the cause of the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP). In Biratnagar, party leader Gajendra Narayan Singh used the example of the Mahabharat to stress that the NSP had the mantra for the unity the country badly needs today. In the process, he left few in doubt as to who he believed Krishna was in this chariot procession. ■

# CHI'S VISIT Security Concerns?

Amid growing rivalry in South Asia, China's defense minister makes his first visit to Nepal

By KESHAB POUDEL

Two years ago, a senior Chinese leader reminded a visiting Nepalese leader in Beijing that China's ties with Nepal were very important not just because the Himalayan kingdom is the communist giant's neighbour.

Former prime minister Li Peng told former Nepal's prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba point blank that China did attach importance to relations with Nepal for "security reasons" as well. Still one of the most powerful persons — No. 2 in the leadership rung after President Jiang Zemin — Li's remarks on relations with Nepal was the first by any senior Chinese leader since the Sino-Indian war nearly 40 years ago.

Those remarks were followed by yet another "first" in Sino-Nepalese relations last week. Gen. Chi Haotian became the first Chinese defense minister to visit Nepal.

Having initially embarked on a three-nation South East Asian nation tour, which took him to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, Defense Minister Chi hastily put Nepal on his itinerary. The purpose and the details of his visit of the only South Asian nation, at such short notice are not yet clear, tight-lipped as the Chinese authorities are.

But there are some important indicators worth pondering. The visit of the Chinese defense minister to Nepal took place at a time when India started changing its policy on its eastern neighbour, Myanmar, to make compromises with the Myanmar military regime in an obvious attempt to tame the growing Chinese influence there.

Instead of making a halt at **Acharya welcomes Haotian : Symbolic gesture**

Myanmar, at the end of the region's tour, Chi decided to take a long flight to another region, South Asia. And it was clearly not just a simple stop-over on his way back to Beijing. Chi spent a full four days in Nepal.

He met with the king and the senior government officials. Chi spent hours with the leaders of the "pro-Indian" Nepali Congress government, including the prime minister, the foreign minister and, of course, his Nepalese counterpart, Mahesh Acharya.

But he apparently made it a point to avoid the "anti-Indian" Nepalese communist leaders, including those from the main opposition party, United Marxist-Leninist.

Chi's visit did also coincide with the crisis the "pro-Indian" Prime Minister Koirala is currently facing from the "anti-Indian" communist opposition. Interestingly, Koirala's crisis deepened soon after the government reached an agreement with China to build an alternative road linking Nepal with Tibet Autonomous Region of China. Equally interestingly, there are no reports yet about any Communist Party of Nepal welcoming that economically and strategically crucial agreement between Nepal and China.

No less important is the fact that Chi's hastily planned visit to Nepal took place barely days after a Chinese national was injured in a Maoist attack near the Chinese border in Sindhupalchok. The Chinese national is the first foreigner to have been wounded by the "anti-Indian" Nepalese Maoist rebels since they took up arms five years ago to set up a communist regime in Nepal.

The timing of the visit was important for other reasons as well. The first ever visit of Nepal by the defense minister of one of the world's Big-5 nuclear powers took place immediately after Chinese strongman Li Peng was greeted by regional rival, India, with the test of the long-range Agni missile that has the power to penetrate deep inside the communist republic.

Having changed into his military uniform upon arrival at the Tribhuvan International Airport — coincidentally on Nepal's Army Day — Chi made it a point to be seen in all official programs in uniform.

The only occasion he shed the military uniform was when he visited Lumbini. And it was no less meaningful, either. Even as the Nepalese disciples of the Mao Zedong continue their five-year-old campaign to capture power from the barrels of gun and establish a people's republic in Nepal, the powerful defense minister of the people's republic that the late Chinese leader established 50 years ago was busy offering prayers at the birthplace of the lord of peace and non-violence, Buddha. ■



**Acharya welcomes Haotian : Symbolic gesture**





Apex judiciary : Ball is in the court

## CIAA Hangover From Past

The CIAA's action against the Attorney General's final prosecutorial decision shows its obsession with its Panchayat-era aura

By KESHAB POUDEL

An organization specifically created to ensure that no institution exceeds and encroaches upon the authority and powers of others is itself stepping upon the powers expressly assigned to another authority. Doesn't this amount to abuse of authority? Who will guard the guard? This is what the current controversy between the Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) and the Attorney General of the country, which is pending at the Supreme Court, is all about.

Infuriated by what it considered the CIAA's encroachment on its constitutional authority, the Office of the Attorney General filed a case in the apex court demanding a stay order. The Supreme Court is hearing the crucial case to define the con-

stitutional limitations of the CIAA in the issue.

Even before approaching the Attorney General directly on the matter, the CIAA filed a case against a district attorney for his decision not to forward to the district court a corruption-related case. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal has defined the Attorney General as the final authority on deciding whether to file a case.

The functions, duties and powers of the Attorney General under Article 110 (2) of the constitution says: The Attorney General or officers subordinate to him shall represent His Majesty's Government in suits wherein the rights, interests or concerns of His Majesty's Government are involved. The Attorney General shall have the right to make the final decision as to whether or not to initiate proceedings in any case on behalf of His Majesty's Gov-

ernment in any court or judicial authority.

Justifying the need to arm the Attorney General with such major powers, those who drafted the constitution argue that the government lawyers are specialists in the law. Endowing the Attorney General with the final authority on whether to file a case on particular dispute would help to analyze the legal aspects of a dispute. One cannot question the advice and opinion given by the Attorney General on different legal issues, as he is the sole prosecutor of the state.

Others reject this argument. They say Article 98 (1) of the constitution clearly authorizes the CIAA to take action against the Attorney General. According to the article, the CIAA may, in accordance with law, conduct or cause to be conducted inquiries into and investigations into improper conduct or corruption by a person holding any public office; provided that the CIAA shall not have jurisdiction over the any official in relation to whom this constitution itself separately provides for such action and any official to be prosecuted under the Army Act.

"The CIAA has the right to investigate corruption and misuse of authority by the Attorney General. The Attorney General is not immune from the jurisdiction of the CIAA," said Anup Raj Sharma, who is one of five private advocates hired by the CIAA in the case. "The institution is following constitutional procedures."

Advocate Harihar Dahal, speaking on behalf of the Attorney General, said: "The Attorney General can be prosecuted on corruption issues but he cannot be prosecuted for his legal opinion and decision."

If the CIAA were allowed to review the conscience of legal officers, it would create more complications in the future. Today the controversy arises from the decision of the Attorney General. Next time, the CIAA can proceed to question the decisions and conscience of judges of lower courts.

The Supreme Court's decision on the dissolution of the House of Representatives has acquired the force of an amendment of the constitution today, but no institution can question the conscience of the decision expressed in the case. The CIAA is setting a very dangerous precedent by

this case. According to the constitution, the Attorney General has been conferred with high powers and heavy responsibility as the chief prosecutor and chief legal adviser and the chief counsel of the kingdom.

That is why he is officially addressed as the attorney general for the Kingdom of Nepal. The authority conferred to the CIAA, on the other hand, is subject to the law enacted by parliament.

Constitutional conventions and practices defend the power and authority granted to an institution from encroachment from other institutions. What prompted an institution like the CIAA to go against another institution?

In other democratic countries, such disputes have been settled long ago. Former US chief justice John Marshall conventionally traced the judicial authority to enforce the constitution against unconstitutional acts. In his opinion in *Marbury vs. Madison*, his decision claimed that the written constitution is included within that law for which it is "the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is." Its implication is that when a particular department or authority is specifically or expressly granted certain powers, then all the rest of the departments are excluded from exercising the same power.

Institutions in Nepal have their own traditions. The Supreme Court and other organizations of justice have a glorious past. After the emergence of democracy in 1950, whenever the moment to take a decision arrived, the history of the institution concerned has had a major influence.

The independence of the Attorney General was established more than 200 years ago in Britain. In a 1792 case, Attorney General John Scott defended his independence saying, "My conscience must direct me, your judgment shall not direct me."

The CIAA was founded during the darkest period of the Panchayat system and invested with the power to investigate, to prosecute and to convict. All these powers were combined into an office without accountability, which was used to manipulate Panchayat politics.

The CIAA was used against the most competent politicians and bureaucrats of the Panchayat era. Dr. Tulsi Giri, Dr. Bhekh

Bahadur Thapa, Dr. Harka Gurung, Kulshekhar Sharma, Devendra Raj Upadhyaya, Lok Bahadur Shrestha, Ganesh Bahadur Thapa and a large number of other top politicians and renowned bureaucrats were put in the trap of prosecution.

After the CIAA action, honest and competent personalities were removed from positions of power. However, that did not discourage corruption in high places. The corrupt received political protection. Those people who were accused of corruption did not have such protection at the time.

After the political upheaval of 1979, CIAA prosecutions and trials turned into a farce. Although the present constitution took away most of its powers, today's CIAA has not been able to escape from its past.

Senior advocate and former attorney general Motikaji Sthapit cited a quote delivered in the 1792 while defending the independent role and power of the Attor-



**Upadhyaya : Who will judge the judge?**

ney General. "The Attorney General is free to decide and to take case. He is independent in his authority. Once the Attorney General takes a decision no one questions his conscience of justice," said Sthapit.

This scribe has written many stories in this magazine demanding a strong act to strengthen the CIAA. Now there is a growing realization of how dangerous it would be to concentrate enormous authority in the hands of a few popularly unaccountable individuals.

This current dispute between these two constitutional bodies also demonstrates that individual freedom is under threat not just in an autocratic system but also within the parameters of a democratic constitution.

"If we do not check the authority of the

Attorney General, he will become autocratic. That is why there is a constitutional provision to review the decision of the Attorney General though the CIAA," said advocate Bal Ram K.C, who retired from the Attorney General's Office after two decades of service.

Legal observers disagree that the Attorney General can be autocratic in the present constitutional framework, as he is accountable to parliament through the prime minister. Unlike the CIAA chief, who can be removed only through an impeachment motion passed by a two-thirds majority in parliament, the Attorney General does not need to undergo such a lengthy procedure.

If such excessive power is left in the hands of a few unaccountable commissioners of the CIAA, one cannot imagine the situation of common citizens whose fate is in their hands. When the Attorney General of the country and highest law officer of the country has been forced to move the court to restrain the CIAA from encroaching on his authority, one cannot imagine the liberty and freedom people suspected and arrested under the CIAA's order could expect.

In the Panchayat days, institutions such as the CIAA were used to terrorize honest and competent bureaucrats who did not have high-level political backing. The present constitution curtailed the powers and functions of the Panchayat-era body by confining it to investigation.

Even in the investigation process, the CIAA Act of 1992 places certain restrictions on the institution. According to Clause 10, the agency that investigates the abuse of authority should not publicize and disclose any institutions or officials accused of abuse of authority as long as adequate evidence against them is found. Till then, everything should be kept secret. In past cases, however, the CIAA publicized various aspects of the investigation process even before collecting adequate evidence against the accused.

In fact, the present CIAA has the role of conducting investigation for the prosecution. The Attorney General has the final say even in the matter of investigation by the CIAA, but the commissioners of the CIAA have not been able to reconcile with the curtailment of their powers. They still



suffer from the hangover of a past in which they enjoyed the power of prosecution as well as conviction.

The present criminal justice system in Nepal distinguishes the powers of agencies entrusted with the investigation of a crime and its prosecution. The CIAA commissioners have proposed draft legislation also claiming the power to prosecute. The bill is still under the consideration of parliament.

If we want to avoid granting unchecked power to any authority, including the CIAA, we must think of ensuring a clear mechanism of checks and balances. Activism of the kind the CIAA has embarked on has created a kind of lawlessness, the victim of which happens to be the Attorney General of the country.

Under the constitution, the supreme law of the country, the Attorney General is an officer of the court as a lawyer, who enjoys the privileges of parliament to attend and address its session as a chief adviser of the government as well as the chief prosecutor.

He is an important authority of the executive as it is rare for him to have access to all organs, i.e., executive, legislature and judiciary. The Supreme Court has issued a show cause notice to the CIAA going through very restrained and extremely cautious deliberations. The final solution should be granting only the power of investigation to the CIAA and giving final prosecutorial power to the Attorney General.

Independence of the lawyer is a vital

ingredient of the independence of the judiciary. The Attorney General being a lawyer has been made to render legal questions, opinions without any kind of intimidation or dictation final. He has the final say on the matter of public prosecution.

Lawyers and judicial authority around the world still quote Scott's statement on the authority and duties of the Attorney General. However, in Nepal, the Attorney General's final decision is questioned by a non-legal institution manned by officers with only police power. This is something unheard of and not in conformity with the parliamentary system of government.

The law is what the courts say it is. It is presumed that the Attorney General's decision may be right or wrong but one's conscience can be reviewed. No other institution has the right to ask under what circumstances and what conditions the decision was taken. A decision may be right or wrong, but no one can raise questions as to the merit of the case. The CIAA has done just that.

As Nepal is in the process in making and shaping democratic institutions, the present dispute between the Attorney General and CIAA will have a long-lasting impact on the solution of disputes.

As their decision will have a lasting effect on the functioning of the democratic institutions well into the future, the five members the Supreme Court bench hearing the case have the challenging task of preventing the encroachment on the power



**Karki : Fighting back**

and authority of one institution by another.

Powers, Functions and Duties of the Attorney General Article 110(1) The attorney general shall be the chief legal adviser to His Majesty's Government. It shall be the duty of the attorney general to give opinions and advice on constitutional and legal matters to His Majesty's Government and such other authorities as His Majesty's Government may specify.

110 (2) The attorney general or officers subordinate to him shall represent His Majesty's Government in suits wherein the rights, interests or concerns of His Majesty's Government are involved. The Attorney General shall have the right to make the final decisions as to whether or not to initiate proceedings in any case on behalf of His Majesty's Government in any court or Judicial authority.

110 (3) In addition to the functions, duties and powers referred to in Clause (1) and (2), other functions, duties and powers of the attorney general shall be as be specified in this constitution or other laws.

110 (4) In the course of discharging his official duties, the attorney general shall have the right to appear in any court, office or authority of the Kingdom of Nepal Article 111. Right to Appear in the Parliament: The attorney general shall have the right to appear and express his opinion on any legal question in either House, any of their committees or the joint session of parliament provided that he shall not have the right to vote. ■

### **Functions, duties and powers of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority**

Article 98 (1) The Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority may, in accordance with law, conduct or cause to be conducted inquiries into, and investigation or, improper conduct or corruption by a person holding any Public office:

Provided that the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority shall not have jurisdiction over the following officials:

- a) any official in relation to whom this constitution itself separately provides for such action; and
- b) any official to be prosecuted under the Army Act

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

98 (3) If the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority finds, upon inquiry or investigation carried out pursuant to Clause (1) that a person holding any public office has committed an act which is defined by law as corrupt, it may bring or cause to be brought an action against such person or any other person involved therein in a court with jurisdiction in accordance with law.

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

# STUDENT ELECTIONS

## Politicization Of Education

Political parties still consider education institutions as fertile recruitment centers for their cadres

By AKSHAY SHARMA

The latest elections of the students unions showed that Nepal's education institutions could soon turn into a political battlefield or centers of hooliganism if responsible political parties do not take necessary steps to depoliticize the institutions.

For the election campaign alone, the students unions of the major political parties spent millions of rupees. They



**Student activists :** Politics takes front seat

have spent more money on the victory celebrations.

"As long as the student unions remain under the control of political parties, they may still be able to do constructive things. If they go under the grip of the mafia, students can be used to destabilize society," said a university teacher on condition of anonymity. "Gradually, student unions are turning into disruptive forces."

Student unions have remained a major platform for the country's major political parties. They played a very important role in the struggle against the Pan-

chayat system. Even after the overthrow of the Panchayat system, the political parties did not dismantle their student wings.

The records of parliament show that more than 90 percent of members of the House of Representatives came from student politics. A student leader has a greater opportunity to get the nomination for a major political race. Everyone sees student politics as a platform to jump in the national politics.

Almost all leaders, including CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal, joined the Communist Party through the All Nepal Free Students Union. In most of the communist parties, the former student leaders maintain a strong influence.

Nepalese political parties are trying to use education institutions as a political battlefield rather than a place of learning. This is the reason why political leaders have been racing to woo student leaders into their fold.

After the student elections concluded, the student wings of all major political parties have started to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Nepal Students Union, affiliated to the Nepali Congress party, has emerged as a major force, winning more than 60 percent of the places. The All Nepal Free Students Union, affiliated with the CPN-UML, secured the second position.

Following the restoration of democracy, student politics remain a major area of political interest. All political parties see the education institutions as the best place to recruit cadres for the future. ■

## King Birendra Addresses Boao Forum

His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, on February 27, addressed the inaugural ceremony of the Forum for Asia in Boao, China. "The countries of Asia are diverse in their cultures and traditions and are proud inheritors of some of the world's ancient and enduring civilizations. It is also true our continent has vast human and natural resources. Yet, there still exists disparity in the level and pace of development between the regions. As we enter this millennium mindful of the rapidly changing world in the context of IT revolution, globalization and privatization, it has now become incumbent upon us to chart a definite course to reduce this disparity and achieve equitable and sustainable development so that the future generations can live with dignity and honor," reads His Majesty's address speech. "A common forum, founded for and by the peoples of Asia, articulating different issues from the Asian perspective is essential in helping us to utilize and maximize the positive aspects of the prevailing world order in the collective interest of our nations and region. We are happy to note that such an organization is finally being set up here in Boao. We would like to congratulate all those who had the vision and took the initiative to establish this forum. We wish to see it develop into a center of excellence and succeed in realizing its mission by developing itself as a platform for voicing the concerns and aspirations of the Asian countries and in enhancing cooperation among ourselves, both regionally and globally, in a true spirit of mutual understanding." The Boao forum is being participated by renowned leaders of Asia. A delegation of Nepalese businessmen, too, is participating in the forum. His Majesty the King is attending the forum as the Guest of Honor. ■



# AGRICULTURE

## Seeds Of Growth

The use of research-certified seeds boosts the production of principal food-grains in the country

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

In the last three decades, research in agriculture has produced 44 varieties of rice, 15 varieties of maize and 27 varieties of wheat in the country.

Among the total of 3 million hectares of farmland, the use of research-certified varieties has been growing tremendously during this period, reaching 66 percent for rice, 65 percent for maize and 88 percent for wheat. This shows the growing tendency of Nepalese farmers to make use of certified breeds that have higher productivity.

During fiscal year 2028/29 BS (1972/



A paddy field : Yielding higher

73) the annual total food-grain production in the country was around 3.4 million metric tons, which reached nearly 7 million metric tons in 2056/57 BS (1999/2000). According to statistics for 1998, the area of farmland and the production of food-grains increased by 66 and 100 percent respectively in the last three decades. The population had increased by 94 percent in the same period.

Nepal Agriculture Research Council (NARC) has the mandate to conduct research for improving agricultural output in the country. "NARC, with the help of international research organizations like CIMMYT and IRRI, has been involved in the research of better and improved varieties," said Bhola Man Singh Basnet, senior

agronomist and chief of documentation section at NARC.

In fact, NARC recently celebrated Nepal's three-decade-long partnership with the CIMMYT, the Mexico-based International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center. In the 1960s the Lerma-52, a wheat variety introduced from CIMMYT, greatly helped increase production. Lerma Rojo-64, the first semi-dwarf introduced from the center, became a popular variety in mid-hills, especially in Kathmandu Valley. NARC also has a fruitful partnership with the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

"At NARC, we stress on research that is done in the actual farmland with the participation of farmers themselves. Recently, we did a demonstration farming of a new breed of rice in Katunje, Bhaktapur to replace the RR 21 variety," said Basnet. It takes about 8 to 10 years of research to release a single variety.

"And after another 10 years or so, this new breed will have become susceptible to newer forms of pests or disease and, therefore, has to be replaced. In that case, at any given time, we have to have alternative breeds or varieties ready or in pipeline to come to the rescue of farmers," said Basnet.

The Agricultural Perspective Plan (APP) prioritizes rice, maize and wheat as principal food-grains in that order. In the last three decades the area of cultivation of rice, its production and productivity has increased by 32, 83 and 39 percent respectively. For maize, the area and production has increased by 85 and 78 percent respectively. But its productivity has declined by 4 percent in the same period. "This decline is because of the gradual erosion of top soil in hilly regions. In terai, maize productivity has been on the

rise," Basnet said.

Wheat has been experiencing a healthy growth in the country. In the last four decades, the area and production of wheat has increased by 6 and 10 folds respectively. Productivity, too, has increased by more than 100 percent.

At present, Nepal has an average annual deficit (of food-grain) to the tune of 150,000 metric tons. "We can say we are almost self-sufficient," said agronomist Basnet.

But even as the production of the food-grain increase, the failure to move past the self-sufficient mark nags the Nepalese agriculture sector. The reasons for this failure could be various. One being that although the farmers have started using research-certified seeds, they have not followed the whole package of recommendations that comes with it.

For any certified seeds, there is a whole package of recommendations, including the quantity of pesticides, chemical and organic fertilizers to be used, climate conditions, time of sowing, reaping and so on. Take, for instance, the following data, — it is found that Nepalese farmers use, on average, only 30 kg of chemical fertilizers/nutrients (Nitrogen, Phosphorous, Potash) per hectare of land against the recommended 200 kg.

With around 81 percent of the population involved in agriculture sector the government giving maximum priority to the sector, the research push together with market pull could bring about a sea change in the country's agronomy.

### Agriculture Highlights

Forty-five years ago, worldwide production of foodgrains was around 631 million metric tons. Now it is more than 1,900 million metric tons per year. India alone increased its production from 50 million metric tons to 200 million metric tons in the period, with states like Punjab and Haryana leading the production success.

According to statistics for 2056/57 (1999/2000), the average national productivity of rice is 2.6 ton per hectare, maize is 1.765 ton per hectare and wheat is 1.8 ton per hectare. Bhaktapur district leads in rice productivity with 5 tons per hectare. The rice productivity of Kathmandu valley, in general, is 4.5 ton per hectare while that of Jhapa district is 3 tons per hectare. In Jhapa alone, 22,000 hectare of land is used for foodgrain production — more than the total farmland area of 22 hilly districts.

## NEPAL AND INDIA

# Call For Closer Ties

Prominent Indian expert on Nepal S.D. Muni stresses the importance of closer bilateral relations

By KESHAB POUDEL

Nepal and India share an open border that is more than 1,500 km long. The leaders of both countries repeatedly emphasize that they have unique relations. In reality, however, relations between Nepal and India have always suffered from misunderstanding. S.D. Muni, a professor of international relations at Delhi University who also served as ambassador to Laos, addressed a program in the capital organized by the Center for Contemporary Studies. Following are some of the points Prof. Muni, considered a leading Indian scholar on Nepal, emphasized.

**On India's attitudes toward Nepal:** The Nepalese people do not need to worry about India, as they know how India helped Nepal liberate itself from Rana rule and gave moral support during the struggle against the Panchayat system in 1990. Minor misunderstandings and irritants can be sorted out through mutual consultations.

**On Nepal-India friendship:** Although scholars and politicians from both countries have exchanged visits from time to time and called to strengthen the traditional ties between two countries, one cannot see the reflections of their remarks in the actual relationship. Nepal and India remain historically friendly nations and have always maintained their friendship.

Nepal has many good friends in India, who always favor good friendship with a small neighbor. Even during 1988 when then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi imposed certain restrictions, the then army chief and Shankaracharya opposed the move. Relations between Nepal and India are rooted in the people of both countries. Both countries are bound together by history and culture. I don't think small irritants may damage the cordial relations.

**On democracy in Nepal:** India always supports efforts to stabilize the democratic process in Nepal, as a democratic Nepal will be good friend of democratic India. As a close neighbor, India and Nepal may face some problems in the course of time. Close friends may sometimes have small prob-



Koirala (left) with Vajpayee : For better ties

lems. India sees the future of Nepal in a democratic set-up. Nepal and India have to develop their relationship further to meet the new challenges in the future. India always wants to see an economically prosperous Nepal.

**On security concerns:** As a good friend, India must not allow any forces to conduct anti-Nepal activities. As a close friend, Nepal, too, has certain obligations towards India. Following the restoration of democracy in Nepal, relations between the two countries have become much warmer. At the same time, we are also reading news in the Indian media that Nepal's soil is being used for activities against India. As a good

neighbor, Nepal must take care of this concern.

**On the 1950 treaty:** Nepal should develop a national consensus on the kind of changes its wants in the treaty. Following such consensus, Nepal and India could begin to review the treaty.

**On trade ties:** Nepal must use the opportunity given by India to share its market, but it should be very careful not to disturb the healthy trade relationship between two countries.

**On the future:** Many intellectuals and politicians in India believe that both countries need to further enhance their relations in the changing context. India has been adopting a policy of integration with the

world. Nepal, too, should work to expand its ties with an eye on the process of globalization.

From the chair, former Nepalese ambassador to India and president of the Center for Contemporary Studies Dr. Lok Raj Baral said that Nepal and India have a long history of good and friendly relations which both countries must work to further enhance.

"As the world is moving toward a new direction, the relations between the two countries need to be consolidated further to meet the challenges of coming years," said Dr. Baral, a professor of political science at Tribhuvan University. ■



## ECONOMY

# Challenges

# To

# Meet

As the Finance Ministry is engaged in the mid-term review of the implementation of this year's budget, the trends are not very encouraging. Instead, the challenges for the old-new finance minister are quite daunting

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

**W**hen Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala appointed Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat as the country's new finance minister, even the minister himself was reportedly surprised. He refused to take the oath of office on "health grounds" but reports said he was more worried about the deteriorating economic health of the country.

A day after resuming office last month, Dr. Mahat said the country could fall into a financial crisis if the present

trend of widening budget deficits continued. Addressing a seminar on "Improvement in Management of Public Expenditures," the finance minister said, as revenues had not increased in proportion to increasing public expenditures, there was a possibility of such a crisis. "A poor country like Nepal is spending a huge amount on internal security as a result of the deteriorating law and order situation," said Dr. Mahat.

He is right. Back in Bagh Durbar after a brief stint nearly a year ago, Dr. Mahat knows his job is not romantic at all. Declining business confidence, a

deteriorating law-and-order situation, slackness in economic activities and acute political instability do not bode well for any finance minister.

Although macroeconomic indicators in the country are still promising, the government has yet to keep the promises it made while presenting the budget estimates for the year 2000-01. While presenting the budget on May 30, 2000 then Finance Minister Mahesh Acharya had declared that the budget was aimed at alleviating poverty, increasing employment opportunities, checking corruption and ensuring a sustained economic growth. Minister



Ministry of Finance : Under trial

Acharya substantially raised salaries of civil servants and expressed commitment to check illegal trade, among other things. Nine months down the line, nothing substantial has been achieved in that direction.

Instead, opposition leaders charge that economy is heading toward a crisis. "The growth rate of revenue collection is not satisfactory and there is massive leakage in the process, corruption is at an all-time high and there is lack of commitment in the government to implement its own plans and programs," said Bharat Mohan Adhikari, a former finance minister and a senior leader of the main opposition CPN (UML). "There is a total breakdown of law and order and the situation is as if we do not have a government in the country. All this is having its reflection upon the economy."

Private sector leaders, too, feel that

the government has failed to fulfill its promises. "We have been drawing the government's attention toward creating a conducive environment for promoting investing, both domestic and foreign, controlling massive corruption in revenue collections and promoting formal trade by discouraging illegal trade," said Jagadish Agrawal, chairman of revenue committee of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI). "But over the last 6-7 months, we couldn't see any positive changes in that direction."

While presenting budget estimates of Rs 91.62 billion, Minister Acharya had proposed to raise nearly Rs 53 billion from government revenue and mobilize foreign aid equivalent to Rs 30 billion. But, former minister Adhikari estimates that the government may not be able to collect more than Rs 45 billion worth revenue if the present trend continues. "The general expenditure is rising exponentially whereas the government hasn't been able to spend the development budget which is not a good trend," said Adhikari.

In April 2000, the government approved a comprehensive package of reform and a poverty-reduction agenda aimed at addressing the problems and weaknesses existing in various sectors of the economy. Major areas identified for priority reform actions were i) macroeconomic and fiscal structure, ii) private sector development, iii) finan-

cial sector reform, iv) decentralization, v) governance, vi) aid effectiveness, vii) civil service reform and viii) role of civil society. This reform agenda was also presented to the Nepal Development Forum (NDF) meeting in Paris in April last year.

Officials say the government is committed to fulfilling the promises made at the NDF meeting and in this year's budget speech. The government formed a Public Expenditure Review Commission (PERC) last year and also announced a foreign aid policy. It is also implementing some key components of its financial-sector reform program including handing over the management of state-owned Rastriya Banijya Bank and Nepal Bank Limited to international management consulting companies for a period of two years. The government has also taken steps toward civil service reforms by reducing the number of ministries to 21 from 26, among others.

A draft legislation has been presented at the parliament to strengthen the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) and a number of laws related to banking and taxation are also being formulated. The government is also formulating a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and has entered into a Poverty Reduction Growth Framework (PRGF) arrangement with the International Monetary Fund.

Officials say the government is committed to implement second generation of economic reforms in the country. But ensuing political instability, in fighting within the ruling party and between the government and opposition in the parliament have not helped.

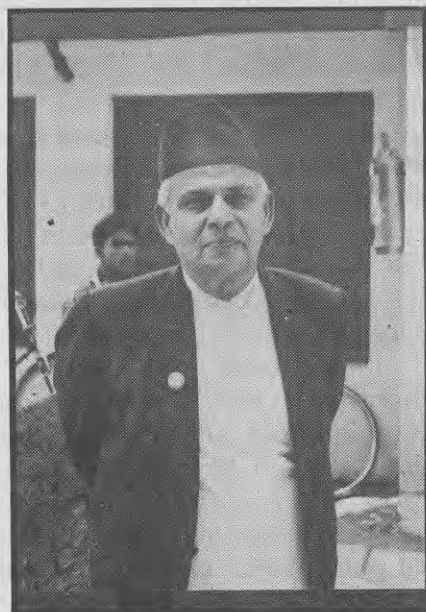
The so-called "basket funding" mechanism to carry out development works in Maoist-affected districts has failed to take off. Promises made in the budget such as providing training to unemployed labor force, promotion of self-employment, setting up of National Women's Commission, setting up of the National Food Security Reserve, Credit Rating Agency and Asset Re-



constructing Agency are yet to be fulfilled. Similarly, reforms in revenue administration are yet to move ahead.

As the political instability prolongs, the bureaucracy too has failed to implement the government's policies and programs, say experts. They say steps like raising salaries of the civil servants alone can't meet the objectives of raising the efficiency of bureaucracy. "Raising salaries alone is not sufficient to boost the morale of civil servants. The situation is such that the administrative leadership hasn't been allowed to function in a strong way. The present political chaos is mainly responsible for non-performance of bureaucracy," said Dr. Dwarika Nath Dhungel, former Water Resources Secretary.

Even multilateral donor agencies are pointing out that deteriorating law and order situation in the country is having its toll on economic activities. Recent attacks on industrial establishments in different parts of the country and targeting of business communities right in the capital are some such examples. Said a recent report by the World Bank, "The growing law and order problem is an important issue which needs to be addressed as a high priority. This has important political and economic im-



**Adhikari** : 'Economy in the doldrum'

plications. While the reasons and motivations for the current unrest are indeed complex, there is little doubt that widespread poverty; significant disparities in incomes, employment opportunities, and access to resources and basic social and economic services and infrastructure between urban and rural areas and between regions; frustrated public expectations from successive governments



**Shrestha** : 'Where is economic agenda ?'

for better development results; and perceptions of increasing corruption/weak governance have contributed to these developments. And solutions to the problem cannot focus only on security measures but will need to address the acute development needs of affected areas."

Of course there are some positive indications too. Nepal's macroeconomic situation is stronger now than at any time during the past few years. There are clear indications that economic growth has picked up and the implementation of economic reforms has begun to move forward. This could provide the basis for a revival of business confidence and momentum for sustainable development effort, says the World Bank report.

Economic growth accelerated to an

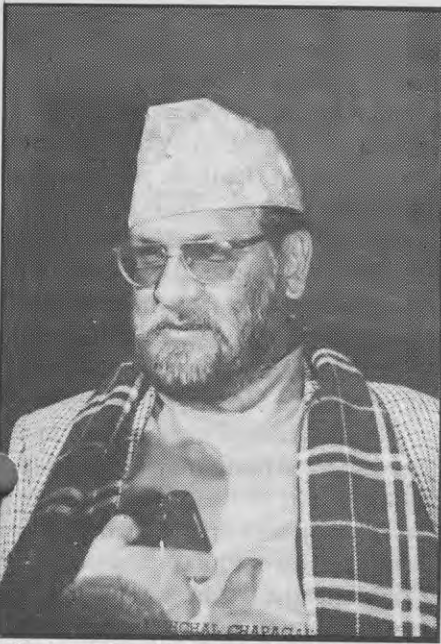
estimated 6 percent in the year 1999/2000 up from 3.9 percent in 1998/99. Agriculture rebounded by 5 percent while the non-agriculture sector grew by 6.7 percent. According to Nepal Rastra Bank, exports grew by nearly 30 percent to Rs 24616.8 million during the first five months of this fiscal year whereas imports grew by only 11 percent to Rs 46542.9 million. The balance of payments remained favorable by Rs 1605.0 million and foreign exchange holdings of the banking system increased by 30 percent to Rs 105509.4 million as at mid-December 2000.

Despite high liquidity with the banks, the flow of bank credit to the private sector decelerated by 6.3 percent to Rs 6944.8 million during this period compared to a growth of 8.8 percent over the same period last year as a result of the sluggish demand for credit for imports, said the central bank.

"In order to direct excess liquidity in the market toward productive areas, the government should come up with viable and concrete programs," said Jagdish Agrawal of FNCCI. "When countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are trying to get duty free access into the vast Indian market, questions are being raised about such access being enjoyed by Nepal. The government should seriously address such issues."

It seems officials have laid their priorities elsewhere. The problem related to duty drawback by major export-oriented industries is yet to be resolved. "The situation is such that you can't have any job done without paying bribes. There is a situation of disappointment every where," said former finance minister Adhikari. "At a time when our immediate neighbors, India and China, are moving forward to attain high rates of economic growth our economy is likely to slide farther."

With transport operators resorting to general strike time and again and hotel workers threatening to go on nationwide strike if their demand for compulsory introduction of 10 percent service charge is not met by March 14 an



**Minister Dr. Mahat** : Time to deliver

environment of uncertainty looms large. "A sensitive industry like tourism can't flourish in such an environment of uncertainty," said Basanta Raj Mishra, a senior tourism entrepreneur.

Business leaders blame the lack of commitment among political parties to economic development as the underlying problem. "The industry and businesses in the country are almost in a state of stand-still due to economic sickness and social insecurity," said Ravi Bhakta Shrestha, addressing a trade fair at the Far-Western Development Region in Mahendranagar early this week. "None of the political parties have given priority to economic issues over the last ten years. They were preoccupied with the political issues only."

Shrestha claimed that nearly 70 percent of the country's small and cottage industries were sick. "We can't remain silent at a time when our recommendations, presented to the government dozens of time, seldom get implemented," he said.

In such a scenario, experts say annual budget speeches are turning into formalities. "The budget preparation has remained a mechanical exercise and too much influenced by political pressures,"

said Dr. Biswombher Pyakurel, professor of economics at the Tribhuvan University. "There is no link between Acts and Policies most of the time creating confusion at the implementation level."

With a view to improve the formulation and implementation of the annual budget, the Finance Ministry recently brought out a new Budget Preparation Manual replacing the one issued in 1997. "The country's budget needs to be prepared on a scientific basis and making it more result and performance oriented," said Finance Secretary Dr. Bimal Koirala, addressing a seminar organized by the MoF and NPC last month. "The new budget manual lays special emphasis on the performance of the projects," he said.

As per the new manual, the Finance Ministry has asked ministries and concerned authorities to submit the details of the required regular expenditure for the coming fiscal year, officials said.

The concerned government institutions will now have to answer three major questions to MoF while demanding the budget. That is: What the major objectives of the program are, how much revenue it can generate and what the cost of the program is.

Besides such initiatives, there should be a clear-cut terms of reference for each ministry and inter-ministerial coordination should be made effective, recommends Dr. Bishwombher Pyakurel. Adds Dr. Dwarika Dhungel, "It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance to see if the budget is being implemented in as envisaged in the budget speech. Unfortunately, it has failed to give a strong leadership to address to aberrations seen in national development and economy."

Whether the new finance minister, Dr. Mahat, succeeds in giving such a leadership to Bagh Durbar remains to be seen. ■

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## EXODUS OF YOUTH

## Paradise Lost Or Gained?

Tribhuvan International Airport is packed with Nepalis going abroad to earn and learn, leaving the country wondering who gains and who loses

BY AKSHAY SHARMA

**V**ikram Maskey, 21, wants to go abroad to earn more — for himself and his country. “I don’t want to stay in this sati-cursed country,” he says. “Maybe I can even send money back home that would help the economy.”

There are dozens of young Nepalis like Vikram leaving the country in droves each week. Frustrated by the country’s overall situation, many more are waiting for an opportunity to go to the West, Middle East or Southeast Asia to eke out a better future they believe awaits them there.

It is becoming increasingly common today to find families that have at least one member working or studying abroad. Members of the lower classes usually wind up in the traditional role as Gurkha soldiers or as manual workers in Gulf countries. For the Nepalese middle-class, the West remains the destination of first choice.

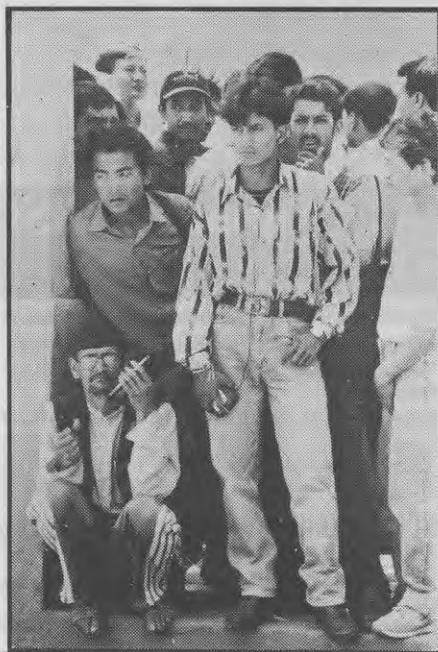
Going outside in search of better job opportunities is not a new phenomenon in Nepalese society. The widespread use of the term ‘lahure’ says it all. In an earlier era, Nepalis went to Lahore (now the capital of Pakistan’s Punjab province) to seek work as mercenaries in a foreign army.

Nepal is ranked among countries undergoing the fastest process of brain drain. Experts worry that such a rapid exodus of skilled Nepalis can pose a serious threat to the country’s development.

Political distortions, the Maoist insurgency, general decline in law and order are among the many factors that push Nepalese youth to leave the country. The sense of anarchy prevailing in the education system has forced many students to go abroad.

Tribhuvan International Airport is packed with young Nepalis going abroad for studies. “I don’t find any fault with the syllabus here,” says Bipin Jangam, who left Tri-Chandra College last month to study computer engineering in the United States. “The fault lies in the style of teaching. A student reared in such an environment will definitely have his own faults.”

Experts agree. They say the educa-



**Youths :** Young and jobless

tion system today provides no motivate to inquire and excel. “In developed countries, there are several ways in which a person is motivated to study. They try to learn more and more from the mistakes they’ve made,” an education planner says.

“The first thing we should do is teach teachers the psychology of students. We should teach them how to stimulate their students’ thought processes,” Bipin says.

“This would definitely help Nepalese

students, who have a habit of turning the pages just before the exam. Then we should work towards providing better facilities at a lower cost, publishing results faster, promoting extra curricular activities. Above of all, we should de-politicise education,” he asserts.

Sunil Niraula, 26, who studies computer science in Australia, says the older generation that went abroad to study didn’t reconfigure the education infrastructure when they returned. “In fact, we are dancing to the same old song,” Niraula says.

There is reverse trend as well. Many Nepalis abroad have returned after realizing the depths of their bonds with their country. Rajendra Sharma, who lives in Bishalnagar, went to the United States with his family. But he decided to come back: “Money is not everything. I came back because I wanted to be able to eat dal-bhat at home.”

Others do not leave in the first place because of their sense of duty to the country. “Everybody is a production unit first for himself or herself, then for the family, and then the whole nation. When will we realize our responsibilities?” asks Lisa Baidya, an environmental science student who also holds a job.

Rupak Sharma, 23, who works as a DJ, is finishing his bachelors degree. Asked why people are jumping to go abroad, he says: “Maybe because there is no stability in the country. Government posts are reserved for a few. Companies have not been able to flourish and provide enough job.”

Then he turns philosophical: “Poor people want to be rich and they return home after spending their prime years working for other countries. They should have spent their time here trying to make a better place for future Nepalis.”

Lisa believes it is up to Nepalis themselves to pave their road with gold. “One should not depend on others. If an individual works to improve himself, he is helping shape the nation in an indirect way,” she says.

“In the larger scheme of things, money should not be the overriding concern. The famous painter Vincent Van Gogh died penniless, but look at how much his paintings cost today?”

## PARLIAMENT

# Deadlock Without Reason

As the opposition parties remain determined to oust Prime Minister Koirala, the country is bracing for another round of instability

By KESHAB POUDEL

If the present alliance of different political forces is any indication, it shows the coming political instability in the country. This is going to be a most difficult phase for Nepal's 10-year-old democratic process, which has been under continual pressure.

The unnatural alliance between different political forces shows that the country is heading for another round of unpredictable political turmoil. Nepal's political process has always suffered whenever there has been an unnatural alliance among different political forces.

The actions of political parties have already shown that they will not hesitate to take steps that would dismantle the political process which is based on institutional practices. It is natural to see the communist parties going against the basic spirit of parliamentary democracy, as they do not believe in the continuity of the political process and its institutions.

Strangely, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party — which claims to be an alternative democratic party — is also following a similar path by taking an active part in a program against the essence of democracy.

As the deadlock in parliament continues, intellectuals and politicians have undertaken efforts to bring opposition factions together in the parliament. Even the main opposition party CPN-UML discussed with intellectuals and other politicians to find a way to end the political stalemate.

"It is only in the communist form of government where the decision of communist parties is final. But in the democratic process, there are certain procedures and institutions to prove guilt," said former speaker of the House of Representatives Daman Nath Dhungana. "The opposition parties are choosing the wrong way by stalling the proceedings of the House of

Representatives," said Dhungana, addressing a talk program organized by the Parliamentary Study Center.

Opposition parties disagree. "We will not allow parliament to run as long as Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala continues in his post. It is Prime Minister Koirala who is responsible for the present stalemate," said K.P. Sharma Oli, deputy leader of the CPN-UML. "If parliament does not work, we will take the issue in the street."

The RPP justified its alliance with communist in parliament on the ground that Congress even formed a government with the communist in 1998 to hold the general elections. "What is wrong for us to

go with the communists to ask for the resignation of a tainted prime minister," said Rabindra Nath Sharma, one of the powerful members of the RPP.

As opposition parties, including all communist factions and the RPP, have decided to go to the open theater to demand the resignation of the prime minister, the 10-year-long practice of parliamentary democracy has come under threat.

Despite the hard stand shown by the main opposition CPN-UML and RPP, efforts are going on to bring all factions to a common ground. The nature of political alliances shows that the stalemate will not end without setting an undemocratic process.

As the institution supposed to investigate corruption and misuse of authority is doing its job, the opposition parties are pursuing the one-point demand of the resignation of Girija Prasad Koirala for his alleged involvement in the Lauda Air deal. The stalemate created by CPN-UML and other opposition parties will further shake Nepal's fragile political institutions, which are in the process of gaining maturity. ■

## OPPOSITION AGITATION

### West's Concern

Western diplomats express concern over the opposition parties' undemocratic politics

As opposition parties, including the CPN-UML, appear to be in no mood to follow established parliamentary procedures, western diplomats in Kathmandu are worried by the way democratic norms are being undermined.

"We are very troubled by the decision of the main opposition party CPN-UML and alternative democratic party, the RPP, to force the prime minister to resign," said a diplomat from Scandinavian country on condition of anonymity. "We are not in a position to support moves to remove the head of a democratically elected government through undemocratic means."

Diplomats agree that the opposition has the right to demand the prime minister's resignation, but not by disrupting parliament or going to the streets. They must first prove their allegations against the prime minister through a democratic and legal process, the diplomats say.

"We have seen the CPN-UML transforming from a communist party to a democratic one, but their present actions show that they have still a hangover from the communist era," said another western diplomat on condition of anonymity. "They must pave the way to resume the parliamentary process. How can they reach a verdict on corruption when the investigation process is still going on?" ■



# 'We Should Learn To Build On Our Strengths'

— DR. MOHAN MAN SAINJU

*MOHAN MAN SAINJU, former vice-chairman of the National Planning Commission, is one of the well-known economists of Nepal. Sainju is now president of Institute of Integrated Development Studies, a think tank. He spoke to KESHAB POUDEL on various issues related to contemporary politics.*

## **How do you evaluate the present political scenario? Is it conducive to economic development?**

The present situation is very unfortunate. The democratic experiment of the last ten years has been not positive, though the people have voted a political party twice to the power with a majority. Instead of uniting the nation for economic development, political leaders spend time in politicking. I cannot imagine a worse situation. Because of the inefficiency of political leaders, the common people are frustrated with the democratic process. Political leaders must learn from this experience. The present stalemate should be resolved and the leaders must have a plan to place the country on the development track. In India, a government with 22 political parties is taking major economic decisions and pushing the country on the right track. In Nepal, we have not been able to do so.

## **As frustration and anger grips society, how do you see the future of Nepal?**

Everything is not well and perfect, but it does not mean that the future of Nepal is bleak. Nepal has many characters and potentials to develop itself as an economically prosperous nation. We are frustrated because we are ignorant about our strength. We have more than 150 years long system of community-based irrigation. We have our own model of development but we knew about it only after two students of Cornell University did their Ph.D. on the issue. People have run the irrigation system for 150 years without a penny in contribution from the state.

## **Then why are we not satisfied with our five-decade-long effort of modernization?**

It is not bad that the country is not able to gain in the modernization process. This trend is itself not bad. As we know that the wants and needs are the mother of invention. Man cannot be creative without doing anything. When people start to think that they cannot do anything, then the road of peace will be blocked. Nepal's position is different. In the last five decades, I myself has seen big strides in different areas. Just three decades ago, one had to go through India to move from one part of Nepal to another. When I came to Kathmandu for first time from Palpa, I entered though the territory of India. There was no other option at that time. But today, the situation is different, as there are different modes of transport available to go to Palpa. There are several flights from morning to till late afternoon and buses are available every hour. This is not a small change. I still remember when I went to Jhapa 35 years ago, I had to fly to Calcutta from Kathmandu, then fly to Bagdogra. I then had to go to Ghum of Darjeeling district to finally enter Jhapa. This is not a story of 100-150 years ago, a reality of 32 years ago. Now one can travel to

Darjeeling overnight thorough Nepal. When I was in United States as late as 1969, it took me two consecutive days to make contact in Nepal by phone. The operator came to say that she could not get the line. The situation now unimaginable as one can talk around the world from any part of the country. Isn't this a long stride? It shows that we could move ahead even overcoming the existing problems. We have not been able to reduce the level of poverty and nutrition distribution. Our income distribution is still unbalanced but we have not seen our own potential to overcome them. We feel inferior and incompetent to do something more. This part is most important.

## **How do you see the economic growth of the last five decades?**

If you see the growth rate positively, the contribution of agriculture in the Gross Domestic Product is declining. Just five decades ago the contribution of agriculture sector in the GDP was 80-90 percent. It meant we didn't have any other sector than traditional agriculture to contribute our economic sector. Now the contribution of the agriculture sector is just 40 percent. Today other sectors are contributing to the economy. This is not insignificant. We reduced our dependency on agriculture from 80-90 to 40 percent. But one can see the negative part also. As the contribution of agriculture to GDP has declined, the percentage of the population depending on agriculture remains similar. Even today over 80 percent of Nepalis are dependent in the agriculture sector. Here is a dichotomy. It shows that there are fundamental defects in our growth strategy. The existing situation is not a diagnosis but a lesson. It also shows the way out. We have to give priority to the agriculture and employment generation sector. Our strategy should motivate agro-based industry. We have to stress on small and medium scale industries that could use our own capital, raw material and become export oriented. There are potentials. Agriculture does not have a major contribution in the economic sector but other areas like trade service and commerce are contributing more. It is not a sound economic base. Fundamentally, we need industries based on our raw materials. In water resources, we have potentials. A country with 83,000 MW capacity is now just supplying electricity to 15 percent of the population. We have also had water to revolutionize the agriculture sector. We claim ourselves to be a country rich in water but we are not able to provide drinking water to the people in the capital. We can resolve many problems by tapping water resources. We always talk of lack of capital and technology for the failure of our development.

We have indigenous technology and capital though, which we can bring a lot of change. As our community is always eager to work with us, there is no need to worry. We have to take care of the model of development. We have huge savings in the community through which we can take some model initiative. Poverty does not mean that it will finish all kinds of potentials. There are many community-based organizations, which have accumulated more than 3 billion rupees in savings. We can collect savings from

*"Nepal has many characters and potentials to develop itself as an economically prosperous nation."*

our own and exploit human resources for development. But when free money is coming without any problems, why do we bother to ask our people to spend?

We need foreign aid but not in all the sectors. Our people are capable to generate some resources on their own. In this situation, we have to develop an approach and should have certain priority sectors. We have to convince our donors in areas where we need their support. The country must be selective. In the home front, we have also worked to stop the misuse. For that purpose, we need transparency and accountability in spending. If we follow the advise of Auditor General, we may be able to reduce the irregularities and corruption in project implementation. Nepal's national saving is more than 10-11 percent for last 20 years. It is difficult to mobilize the internal resources. Our capacity to absorb the aid is low. In many aid programs, there is a disruption. We have failed to utilize foreign aid.

**Who is responsible for the failure of the present system?**

It is the role of political leadership to think about the prospect of the country. Our political leadership does not have any kind of vision. Our leaders must give the message that we want economic development. Our political leaders fought 30 years to overthrow the autocratic and undemocratic system but they never thought about programs for the future. No one even thought of democratization of the party. The leaders never thought about the need to strengthen the political parties. After the restoration of democracy, the leaders should have proposed a long-term vision and should have put their house in order. Democracy and democratic behavior should have begun from the political parties in terms of elections and recruitment of workers. Our parties do not have a democratic culture and values they are always run by a group of leaders. Because the political parties do not have their own way of recruit the leaders, political parties continue to politicize education institutions. That is the only way they can get recruits. Parties should have their own bases to recruit workers from the grass-roots level.

**How do you see the experience of the last 10 years economic development?**

Many express frustration over the development activities of the last 10 years. We have made some important achievements in the last 10 years. In the private sector, they have shown the best performance. Today, they are operating airlines and tourism. Private sector gives timing, alternatives and other things. In the media sector and information dissemination sector, we can see a sea change. The private sector is playing an important role in education sector. After just de-licensing and opening the market, private sector has come up. In the banking sector, they have made important contributions. There are billions of rupees in deposits. The pathetic part is that the banking sector has large number of non-performing deposits. We have been unable to use the environment created in the last one decade. In the last 10 years, Nepal's has made tremendous improvements as our level of exports to India and other countries have gone up. It may be due to the Indian companies like Dabur, Hindustan Lever but their export to India is to our advantage. In the health sector, we can see huge investments. Of course, these facilities are still out of the reach of the poor people but they are catering to those who can afford. We don't have to go foreign countries for treatment. Despite continued political instability and insurgency and lack of development vision in the political sector, our private sector proves that they can change the

fate of the nation. Now time has come to use this successful experiment in the industrial sector and small and medium enterprises and agriculture sector. If we provided this opportunity to the agricultural sector, it would have definitely gained something. Even in such a dismal situation of the last one decade, we have seen some strengths in the economic sector.



**Was there no democratization in the undemocratic Panchayat system?**

Of course, the undemocratic Panchayat system also taught us how to vote in local bodies. But we forgot the positive aspects of that system and started to condemn the entire process. In infrastructure and grass-roots democracy, the previous system made certain contributions. No party should have to feel inferior by accepting the reality. Nepal is one of the oldest countries in the region introduced decentralization. India has recently introduced Panchayat Raj, which we introduced four decades ago. The concept of zones and regions is very positive. We simply dismantled it because it was introduced by the previous regime. Now we are once again trying to implement it. This local administration unit helped to established link between center and zone. We do not seem to be learning from our own history. This is a strategy. If you don't have anything, it is difficult to learn. Once you have your own experiences, you can draw something from them.

**Why is there so much negativism and cynicism in Nepal?**

I am very optimistic about our problems because there is a way out. My argument is not based on imaginary basis as Nepal has its own history and existing capacity and real identification of such potentials. If we utilize and exploit our potentials, there is nothing to worry about. We are not in economic stagnation. It does not mean that what is happening is all right. I have so many objections on many issues. We have seen rampant corruption and misuse of public money. They are eroding us everyday and we have to stop it.

**If the situation in the other countries of the region is equally bad, why are our intellectuals publicizing the level of corruption in Nepal?**

Corruption is related to morals and values. If we develop a feeling among the people that there is no room for morals and values, the country will be ruined. Simply because there is territory and people leaving within a territory does not qualify that area as a nation. One of the essences of the nation is a value, which includes the ideals. Corruption always ruins society. Society also recognizes corruption. Some people have six houses and four cars but no one asks how he or she made such money. There is need to be worried, but we do not need to be so pessimistic because Nepal's problems are manageable and Nepal has strengths in different ways and different areas. Nepal has gained enormous goodwill abroad. Nepal is a country of 22 million people and such huge potentials. Nepal is a country with a fantastic biodiversity. Eight out of nine highest peaks of the world are situated in Nepal. Nepal is the only country in the world that provides a foreigner various kinds of bio-diversity within a radius of 100 km. We need a leader with vision to exploit such potentials. ■

*We need foreign aid but not in all the sectors. Our people are capable to generate some resources on their own.*



## FILM REVIEW

# Incisive Humor

Ace comedian Hari Bansha Acharya shines in a new film that hits at current social and political anomalies

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The latest comedy "Tan Ta Sarhai Bigris Ni Badri", which roughly translates as "Badri, You've Really Spoiled Yourself" has hit Kathmandu theaters with a bang. Cashing on the popularity of comedian Hari Bansha Acharya, who plays the leading role, and chartbuster songs, the film is doing great in the box offices.

Close on the heels of the unprecedented success of "Darpan Chhaya", "Tan Ta..." is also expected to set the box office ringing with its marvelous comedies that probes the contemporary social ills.

Badri is a typical lad from Kathmandu's suburbs, also known as Kaanth region, who is spellbound by the glitter and glamor of city life. Living on the fringes of Kathmandu, Badri dreams of high-rise buildings and beautiful ladies around him.

With no one to guide him, Badri goes ahead and sells off his ancestral land despite his mother's caution. Taking advantage of his naivete, a broker tricks him into buying a building, whose owner is abroad.

Along with his village wife Sabitri

(played by Sushmita KC) and a son, Badri moves to the new home.

The first thing Badri does after moving to the city is buy a glistening Pajero and start flirting with a skirt-wearing girl Whisky Nani (played

scenes, the film takes a new turn with the entry of Politics Uncle (played by Sunil Thapa). The ugly character of Nepalese politicians are well depicted in the film. Bhuwan KC also plays a key part in the film. He helps in bringing Badri back from ruining himself.

In the second half, the comic scenes take a rest to make way for violent ones. This is one of the weakness of this film. Instead of making it a wholesome comedy, the director has decided to follow the time-tested formula of mixing sex

and violence as well. Unfortunately, the violence does not augur well with the audience who attend theaters hoping for three hours of comedy. Definitely, the first half of the film is far better.

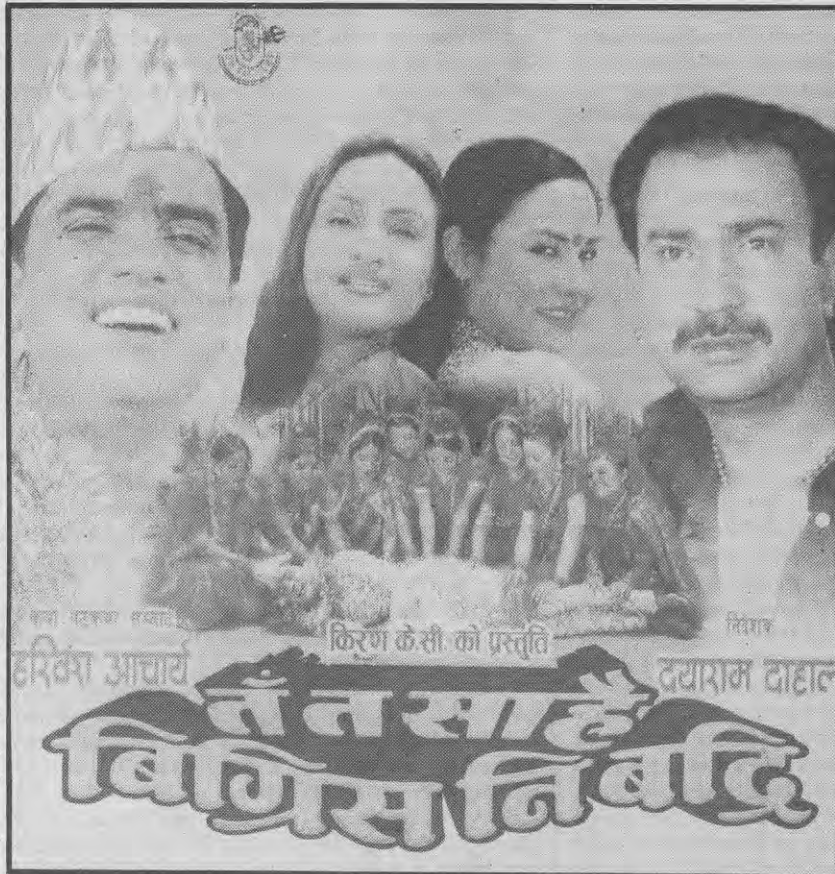
Badri epitomizes the Kaanth culture of the society. The practice of selling ancestral land and buying motorbikes and vehicles is very much happening in the suburbs. At the end of the film, Badri realizes his mistake of moving away from his native place and returns back to his mother.

The film is laden with some serious messages as well. It is successful in making people realize that poly-

gamy is not funny at all.

Likewise, it cautions people from plunging head-on into the city life without knowing about its darker side.

Directed by Daya Ram Dahal and produced by Kiran KC, the plus point of the film is its music. Most of its songs have already become superhit. ■



by Bipana Thapa). He succeeds to marry whisky as well.

Then starts the scenes of situational comedy that is natural in a house with two wives. Amidst the tug-o-war between the two wives, Badri gives audience a plenty of chance to laugh their hearts out.

After a series of laughter-ridden

NMA

# Golden Jubilee

The Nepal Medical Association's 20th congress is being held with the theme 'Doctors for the Community in the Third Millennium'

By AKSHAY SHARMA

**"E**ven as a child, I have recollection of many founder Nepal Medical Council members coming to my house in Dillibazar for what we call medical get-together, in the Seto Durbar Complex. This should have been at that time the house usage was given to us

by the late General Sur Shamsher. All this could have been during the time my father was the first president of NMA," Excerpts from Hemang Dixit's book "50 Years of NMA."

Nepal Medical Association has crossed the half-century mark. "The association has come a long way since it was registered on March 4, 1951 immediately after the establishment of democracy in the country," said Dr Anand Prasad Shrestha, the present president of the association, speaking at a press conference on February 26.

The NMA is holding its 20th congress from February 28 to March 3 with the theme "Doctors for the Community in the Third Millennium."

"Scholars, scientists, professors and people having experience in the field of community health from 10 countries will participate in the event," said Dr Vijay Kumar Sharma, the president of the organizing committee and the former president of the NMA. "The theme of the congress, 'Doctors for the Community in the Third Millennium' sounds quite appropriate, considering the present condition of the country. Medical professionals are facing immense challenges in providing proper health care for the poor in the developing countries. It is high time the care providers of all specialties sat together to discuss about providing quality medical service to the underprivileged."

The association that was started by 20 members in 1951 has blossomed to include 2,225 members under its umbrella. It has been publishing a medical journal regularly and has been organizing scientific sessions to "make the medical professionals fully up-to-date with the advances in medical sciences. It has been striving for the common interest of the medical profession and has contributed to the overall improvement of the situation of health in the country," Shrestha said.

Specialists from the United States,



Village people : Health for rural area

Canada, Britain, Australia, Japan, and the SAARC region will take part in the four-day conference that will be held at the Birendra International Convention Center, Baneswor. According to the NMA, 1,200 doctors and 300 scientists are expected to present their views on ways of providing better health care in the country.

Dr Manindra Ranjan Baral, a former president of the NMA, said at the press conference, "Only 15 percent of the country's population receive proper health care facilities. The objective of the four-day conference is to find ways of providing the rest of the population with proper health care facilities. The establishment can play a greater role by focusing on

preventive measures by providing proper drinking water to combat diseases like typhoid and cholera. Fifty percent of the diseases spreading in the country are preventable, which proves that doctors alone will not be enough.

"Health education and awareness play a vital role in combating diseases. Kathmandu is the only place where people from rural areas come for treatment. And the hospitals work beyond their capacity and capabilities to do their best.

"I remember a time when there was an outbreak of meningitis in the country a couple of years ago. The hospitals were packed with people, which showed how the people were aware of their health. The country is providing Hepatitis B injections through donor agencies. We should not relate to the topic of health in the ad hoc basis as we have been doing in the past. The tendency to go to Kathmandu or Delhi for treatment is still prevalent," Baral said.

He added, "We have no plans for 14- to 18-year-olds which is the age when most of the population resort to troubles and bad habits. There is no facility in Nepal to provide adolescent medicine. Are they provided the kind of education they need?"

"The theme correctly highlights the 200 papers to be presented by the national and international participants on various aspects of health which will be beneficial to all," said Dr Sudha Sharma, the chairperson of the souvenir sub-committee. "The paper covers a variety of topics ranging from the advancement of medical science to medical education and medical ethics."

"For the international delegates, Nepal has a diverse culture, world heritage sites, unique trekking experiences and the breath taking view of the Himalayas," said Vijay Kumar Sharma, speaking at the conference.

The conference provides an opportunity to share experiences, develop new friendships and renew old ones in helping people in the rural areas to get proper health care.

View the registration procedures at the web-site [www.healthnet.org.np/conferences/ANEMECON-20.html](http://www.healthnet.org.np/conferences/ANEMECON-20.html) ■



# BOOK Water Wisdom

Professionals highlight the importance of indigenous irrigation systems in Nepal

By KESHAB POUDEL

**B**efore modern irrigation management projects were introduced, Nepalese farmers already had in place a well-functioning system of irrigating their land. Based on a framework of community management, the system is still deemed more productive in comparison with projects funded by the government.

In Nepal, the community-run systems cover more than 70 percent of the irrigation sector. There are few government-run projects, which are more difficult and expensive to manage. Some large projects had to be dismantled a few years after they were completed.

In the last five decades of planned development, Nepal has introduced many new concepts and models in the area of irrigation.

Although it is one of the richest countries in water resources, Nepal is yet to exploit its vast potential to increase agriculture production. Some big projects have been constructed in the border areas to share water, but farmers on our side have hardly found enough supplies for their land.

In the Narayani irrigation, Koshi and Mahakali projects, Nepal has spent billions of rupees to expand the irrigation infrastructure, but the farmers still do not find water when they need it.

In contrast to the big projects, farmers who run small irrigation projects on their own seem to be pleased with the way their water-sharing arrangement works. The supply of water may not be sufficient, but the farmers have developed a prudent way of sharing whatever they have.

At a time when the country is spending millions of rupees to expand the existing irrigation systems, the basic reality remains government-funded projects have failed to yield the desired results. Projects based on indigenous practices are more reliable and, therefore, successful.

An international seminar titled "Challenges to Farmer Managed Irrigation Systems", organized by the Farmer Managed Irrigation Systems Promotion Trust, recently discussed various aspects of the traditional water management and supply scheme of Nepal.

This book, a compilation of the proceedings of the seminar, highlights critical issues related to irrigation and technology, irrigation and socio-economic environment, self-governance and public intervention, promotion of participatory irrigation development, irrigation management, and gender roles.

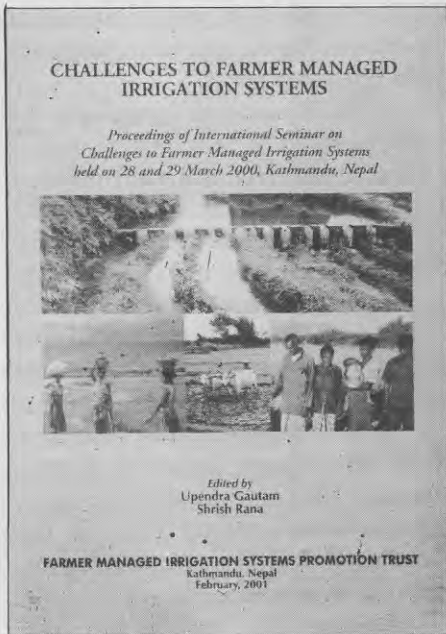
This volume is a compendium of the thoughts and findings of senior professors, mid-career professional and young university graduates.

"Apart from the keynote and leading address, also included in this book are pertinent case studies of specific farmer-managed irrigation systems and agency-managed ones and the irrigation systems where the government has made interventions," says Upendra Gautam, the editor of the book, himself an expert on community-managed irrigation systems.

When Nepal is gradually trying to interfere in community-based irrigation systems, other countries of the region, including the People Republic of China and Vietnam, are learning from the practices Nepalese farmers have adopted for the last many centuries.

Nepal's experience has clearly shown that the community's participation is one of the important aspects in managing and maintaining irrigation systems. In big projects in Nepal, the role of the farmer is minimal. After some bitter experiences in government-controlled projects, officials are seeking the community's support even in the large projects. A process of handing over irrigation systems to the users is under way.

The Nepalese experiment suggests that democratic and participatory socio-cultural organizations exist at the grassroots. They have managed the bulk of indigenous irrigation systems in the country and proved that any official intervention should take full cognizance of the intricacies, expertise and plurality inherent in these organizations in order to be of any meaningful help in their role as development agents at the grass-roots level. ■



*Challenges to Farmer Managed Irrigation Systems*  
Edited by Upendra Gautam and Shrish Rana  
Published by Farmer Managed Irrigation Systems Promotion Trust  
Price: US\$ 10 (NRS.500.00)  
Pages: 243

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**TRANSITION**

**LEFT:** Madhav Kumar Rimal, Chief Editor and Publisher of Spotlight newsmagazine, for the United States, on a personal visit.

**Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya**, Chief Justice, for Bangalore, India, to take part in the meeting of judicial officials.

**AWARDED:** Sirubari, Nepal's first model tourism

village, with the PATA Award 2001 on Heritage and Culture.

**Anil Poudel**, a poet, with Yuddha Prasad Mishra Literary Award.

**ELECTED:** Parshuram

**Koirala**, as the president of central working committee of Tribhuvan University Employee's Association.

**WOUNDED :** UML MP Harkaman Tamang, in a road accident. ■



# Status Of Regional Newspapers In Nepal

By BISHNU PRASAD SHARMA

Until 1996, Barta weekly published in Mahendranagar under the editorship of Ram Bahadur Chand, was also known as Gorkhapatra. Chand was sometime called Gorkhapatra Baje by the people.

The situation, now, has changed. There are now many dailies and weeklies printed in modern offset printing press. After the establishment of the Media Development Fund (MDF) under the patronage of Press Council Nepal, technological and professional changes have taken place in print media outside the capital.

Mahendranagar, unknown even to the capital just five years ago, is now enjoying modern facilities in printing as well as information technology. Chure Times, a recently registered daily published by Chure Pargati Prakashan (P) Ltd., has Internet access. According to Prem Chand, director of the firm, they are trying to distribute their papers to major districts like Dhangadi, Bardia, Dang, Baitadi and Dadeldhura by appointing distributors.

The editor of Chure Times, Ram Bahadur Chand, has a wide vision despite his poor health and age. At the end of 1996, after completing all introductory regional seminars of the fund, we found him to be the only person full of determination who expressed deep interest in subsidized loan to purchase offset press in the region. Experience, determination and potential market situation made it possible to establish an offset press in this region, which really was beyond expectation.

In 1997, at the recommendation of the fund, some offset presses were established in Mahendranagar, Surkhet, Pokhara, Chitwan, Birgunj, Itahari and Jhapa. The fund had covered from west to east a large region of the country. Because of new technology, unskilled manpower, poor management and closed attitude, the fund as well as the small publishers had to cross many obstacles at the beginning.

Gradually, many editors of small weeklies and dailies became interested in — or the developing environment encouraged them to enter — the modern printing era. It brought a new media culture at the regional and local level. Priority to local news and job opportunities for local correspondents was given. Circulation and advertisement collection was gradually picking up. One remarkable change was that part-time editors of the region became full-time professional journalists.

The story of the newspapers in the regions is different from those of the capital. Access to bank loans and modern printing technology was limited to the capital until 1996. Because of poor-quality printing and desk-based reporting, newspapers from the capital were the main source of news to local readers. And local newspapers were published only to post to the Department of Information and Press Council Nepal for the purpose of newsprint subsidy and classification.

Drastic changes have taken place in print media at the regional level. Till 1995, there were no newspapers published in offset press. Today newspapers in Kanchanpur, Surkhet,

Janakpur, Dharan and Jhapa have entered new printing technology. There is also competition in the registration and distribution of regional standard dailies. Chure Times (Mahendranagar),

Jansangra (Butwal), Pratik (Birgunj), Blast Times (Dharan), Janakpur Today (Janakpur), Purbanchal (Jhapa), all dailies, are but a few examples.

Maximum coverage of local news and events, recruitment of local trained correspondents and full-time editors have made the papers readable. The daily papers have encouraged in the people a habit to read. Readers are ready to subscribe local and buy national papers. Many local daily newspapers have established a regional status.

Like in Kathmandu, weekly papers in the regions find themselves under pressure to compete.

According to a source of Press Council Nepal, 110 dailies, nine bi-weeklies, 534 weeklies, 95 fortnightlies are registered in different districts. Out of total of 748 newspapers, 37 dailies three bi-weeklies, 136 weeklies and 13 fortnightly are in publication. The total number of published newspapers is only 189. Similarly, only 78 newspapers are regular, according to the definition of the Press and Publication By-laws 2049 B.S.

Out of the total 189 published newspapers, 24 dailies, one bi-weekly, 91 weeklies, and eight fortnightlies are published in offset press. This represents 65 percent of the total published newspapers. In 1999 the number of newspapers printed in offset press was only 33. On the basis of these figures, we can say that local newspapers are rapidly entering the era of modern technology.

Within this year, most of regional dailies will have access to Internet. Similarly, small papers in the hilly regions will also enter new printing technology, as the fund is providing easy access to interest subsidy to journalists. Local journalists also have access to journalism and management training from different organizations.

Despite all these possibilities and facilities, regional newspapers and publishers are still very weak in management. They are still not getting small loans from local banks easily although the MDF has decided them to provide interest subsidy. The fund's new policy allows them to receive interest subsidy if they take loan from any branch of any bank at their own initiative. According to this policy, they do not need to go to Kathmandu to get recommendation for the loan. President of the Nepal Federation of Journalists had called for easier procedures to get small loans from local branches. If arranged easily, the number of application for interest subsidy will increase. The regional papers still face daily problems like lack of newsprint, untrained manpower, shortage of raw material and advertisement facilities.

Their internal management is also very weak. If the responsible government and non-government organizations and institutions cooperate, then the major obstacles of the regional papers will also be eliminated. Last but not least, the journalists themselves have to change their depressed behavioral attitude. There are tremendous potentials for the development of regional papers which need continuous effort from small publishers and editors. ■

*Sharma writes on media issues.*

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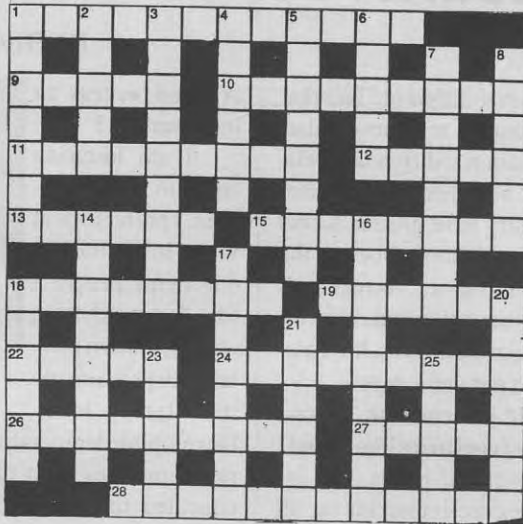
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**ACROSS**

1. Fellow arranged other function for college meeting place (12)
9. Finish off tea with cereal and fruit (5)
10. For cricketer joining one cricket side, a trial period (9)
11. Town flat secured in period of development (9)
12. Bore through, but not using right bit (5)
13. Nasty type mainly cheated (6)
14. What's the point of field being left unploughed? (8)
18. Reflective quality possibly characteristic of crosswords (8)
- Very fast pasta sauce taking only second in preparation (6)
22. Party beside river performing repetitive music (5)
24. During a game scoffed — it's certainly not quick (9)
26. Tree covered in snow before summer, say (9)
27. Starting in neutral and picking thirds not appropriate (5)
28. With nothing better to do have a term of French (5,2,5)

**DOWN**

1. Body finding fruit cordial hard to digest (7)
2. Make amends, being in total agreement (5)
3. Offer is made finally to prepare food (9)
4. Pressure to enter race and compete again (6)
5. What shows latest in distance motored around? (8)
6. Mark left minimal amount of money in the bank (5)
7. Unconventional routes off the beaten track? (8)
8. Flat like this let down? Certainly! (6)
14. Artist with vision set out in art.com (8)
16. It implies selection, naturally, for those extremely fit (9)
17. Mineral produced by old Rand miners? (8)
18. Cunning shown by wife getting in scrap (6)
20. Make extortionate demands for money with unconcealed weapon in US (7)
21. Source of religious law adult males broken (6)
23. Taking part in home game, the last of a series (5)
25. Conscious of what's missing in abbreviated state (5)

Down : 1. Chassis 2. Atone 3. Tenderise 4. Replay 5. Odometer 6. Scarp 7. Sideways 8. Indeed 14. Romantic 16. Darwinism 17. Orpiment 18. Shrewd 20. Overtax 21. Talmud 23. Omega 25. Aware  
 Across : 1. Chapterhouse 9. Acorn 10. Probation 11. Stevenage 12. Piece 13. Sordid 15. Headland 18. Symmetry 19. Presto 22. Rondo 24. Inanimate 26. Whitebeam 27. Inapt 28. Faute de mieux

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**SATHYA SAI BABA**



# 'Other Countries Can Learn From US Mistakes'

— REBECCA McDUFF

*REBECCA McDUFF, Information Resources Officer at the US Embassy in New Delhi, believes public libraries can play an important role in the process of disseminating information. McDuff spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues. Excerpts:*

## **How do you see the changing role of the US information resource center?**

We have really focused on delivering information on important issues of interest to both countries such as the environment, economic development and regional stability. These are important issues around the world. Our information centers have large collections of materials on these and other issues. We have moved away from the public type of library to be a special library. As a result, we can offer more in-depth response to the reference questions we get. We often try to make sure that we can provide the materials required by visitors. It is much more on the line of a focus library. The issues are important in the United States and in Nepal.

## **What is the response in Nepal to the changing role of the library?**

It was such a pleasure to meet quite a variety of people in different places. All of them are pleased to be able to get more in-depth and sophisticated information in the center. The situation was different when we were running a public library. Everyone has found the center useful. We cover a large territory as there is a vast body of opinion in America on each of the topics. The information does not follow a specific line and we provide all information related to America. People are also interested in learning new ideas. Everyone likes to use the public library and many public and private institutions are offering such service.

## **As the regional director of the information resource center, how do you find the situation in the other countries of the region?**

I cover Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. For instance, in India there are four information resource centers. The number of resource centers depends on the size of the population. Frankly speaking, the cen-

ters are not really that different. The real focus in all the countries remains similar. We provide information at different levels. As Sri Lanka has a higher literacy rate, people in that country have greater access to information than others. One of the important developments in the region is the existence of cyber-cafes and other information-disseminating centers. Information is very easy to get these days.

## **What specific information do you provide to people of countries like Nepal?**

We work for global issues. For instance, water issues are important for all the countries, including the American West. Water comes up everywhere. Individual countries have different perspectives but the issue is the same. Trafficking of women and children, globalization, economic development and the World Trade Organization are issues of worldwide concern. As all South Asian countries are concerned with them, we can provide a lot of information on these issues. Countries may have different approaches but they have similar problems.

## **Nepal is one of the emerging democracies of the world. How can the center help the process of institutionalizing democracy?**

We have different materials available on the development of institutions in the United States. We have a lot of articles, precedents and applications of the law. Our information is also available on the Internet as the information resource center is a worldwide program. We usually get a lot of requests on environmental law, copyrights and information and communication. Different countries have different parliamentary systems and procedures. When I first arrived in India, people wanted to know about the freedom of information law of the United States. We can provide such information and encourage discussions on how the process works. People of other countries can see what mistakes we have made in implementing different laws. We are happy to provide the information to different agencies.

## **In this information age, how can countries like Nepal benefit from in-**

## **creased access to information?**

I am librarian and am very specific. I prefer to deal with information that helps people's life. But the sharing of information is totally dependent on the literacy level.

Developing democratic traditions and values comprises a lot of issues. The more educated the population, the better the decisions they can take. I do believe that a literate population has greater options. As a librarian, I am very concerned about the literacy and education. In general, basic education — reading and writing — are more important. If we have access to the basic things, it makes our life better, responsible. We are better able to take care of the family. When you are enjoying a lot of freedom, you also need to understand the responsibility that comes with it. I am interested in that kind of information.

## **You have visited some of Nepal's libraries and institutions. What are your impressions?**

All libraries need professional and trained staff as the profession is constantly changing. There also a need for greater monetary support to improve libraries. The library is the doorhouse of the community and a place to share knowledge. So each individual needs to have access to information. I would like to see leaders around the world to acknowledge the importance of public libraries. These institutions provide information essential for the development of the country.

## **What are your impressions about Nepal?**

I love Nepal and I have been very pleased with this opportunity to meet people. Everyone I met had interesting things to discuss. One of the important things I found in Nepal is that everyone is interested to see the strengthening of democracy. People are very positive about democracy. ■





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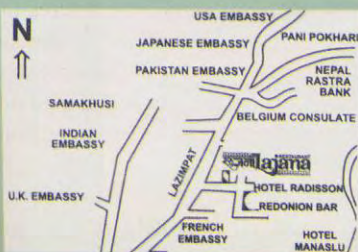
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