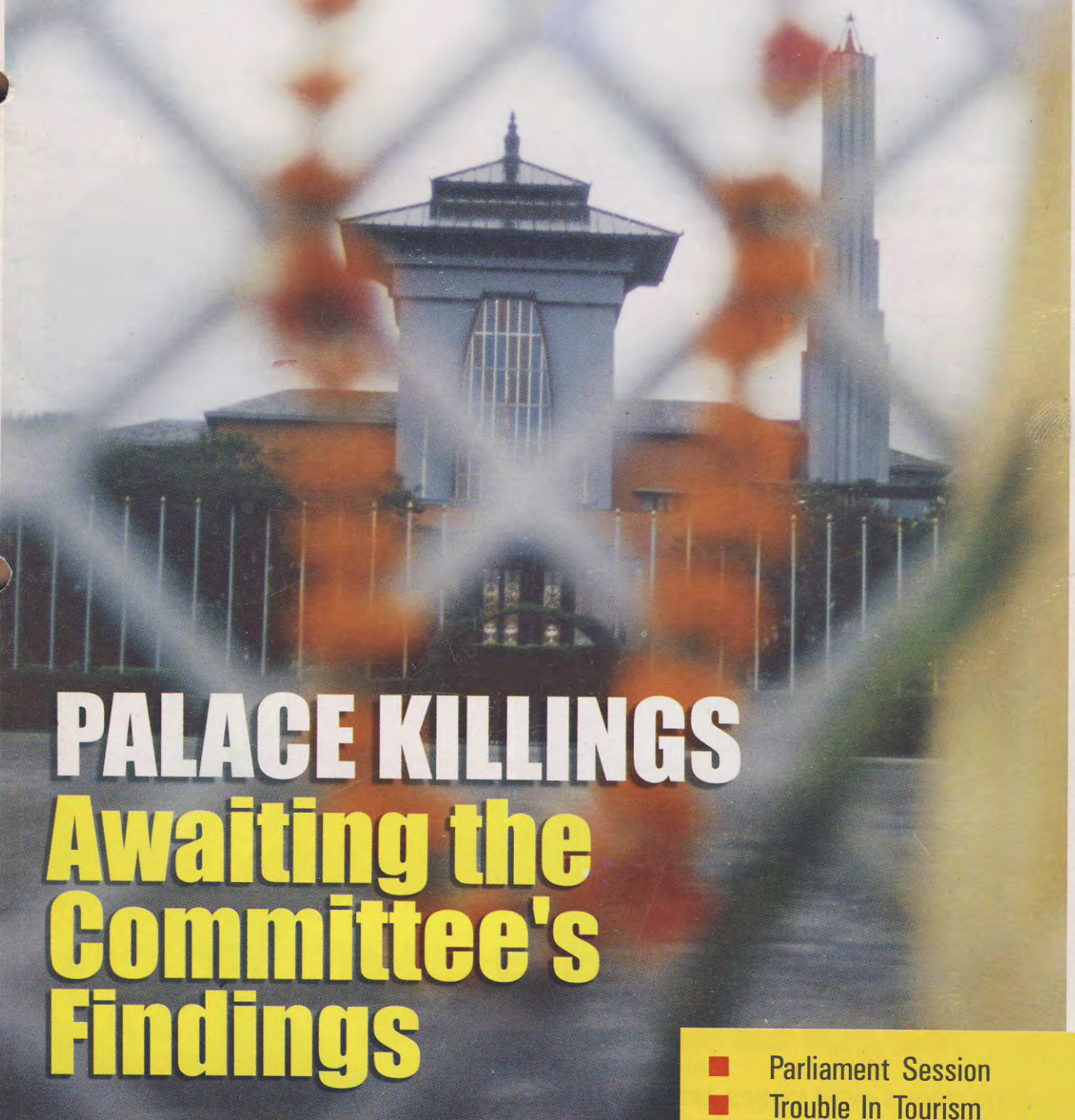


The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

15-21 June, 2001



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- Parliament Session
- Trouble In Tourism
- Sports Sector In Mourning
- Failure Of Government Media

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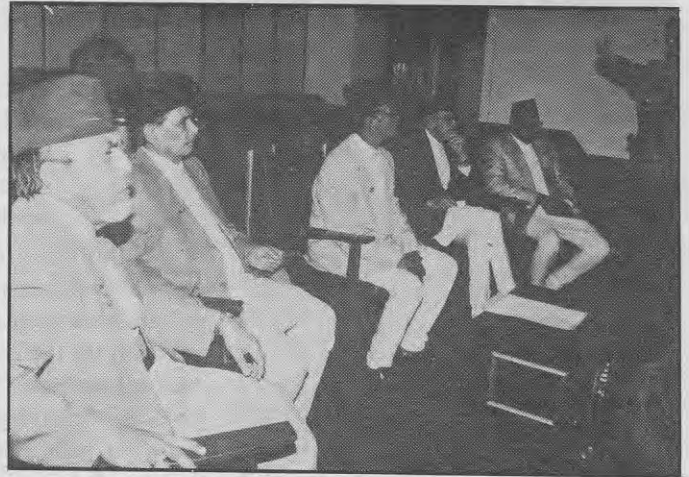


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COVER STORY : WAITING FOR THE REPORT

Two weeks after the palace tragedy, people are eagerly waiting for the report of the inquiry commission.

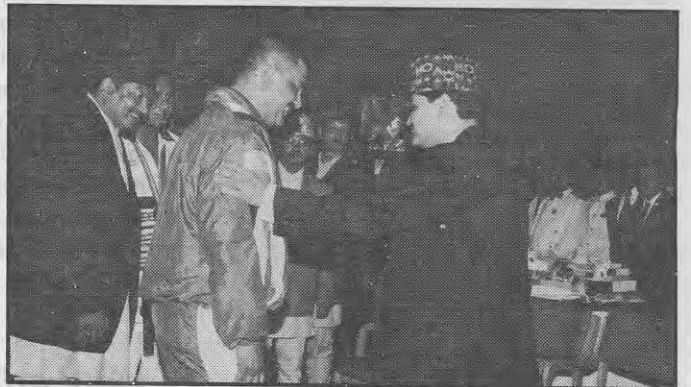
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PARLIAMENT : Uncertain Session

The budget session of the parliament is set to begin amid uncertainty.

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DEATH OF KING DIPENDRA : Sports Scarred

In the death of King Dipendra, the sports sector has lost a patron and a guiding force.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The recent tragic events in Nepal have exposed the total uselessness of the print and electronic media managed in Nepal under governmental supervision. Indeed, the nation was overwhelmed with excessive grief and sorrow and no Nepali in the world, not only in Nepal, must have been yearning for any kind of entertainment whatsoever from NTV or Nepal Radio. But, that all Nepalis were most impatiently waiting to be informed in detail about the sad happenings needs no emphasis. Since their own media failed to meet their right to information guaranteed by the constitution, they had to turn to foreign media, specially the Indian electronic media. Since the media in India have developed a certain bias against Nepal and the Nepalese people, they seldom follow the accepted norm of objective reporting. Their unqualified prejudice has often perpetrated immeasurable harm on poor Nepal's development and economy, resulting in souring relations between the two friendly countries. Even during the recent heartrending happenings in the Nepalese capital when the whole nation was reeling under the unbearable catastrophe, some Indian T.V. channels, who were granted permission by the government to cover the unhappy episode were feeding disinformation to the world while inciting the wounded sentiments of the aggrieved Nepalese people. Even the magnitude of the tragedy could not generate any feelings of sorrow and sympathy in their hearts. By talking to a couple of spectators on the streets of Kathmandu, they had the temerity to report that it was the public opinion in Nepal. Some even think those who spoke to the Indian TV could have been planted. Every Nepali, without any exception, was most deeply hurt by the callous behavior of the Indian T.V. journalists. Why the government in Nepal persisted in allowing these alien T.V. channels to project the baseless jaundiced views is beyond our comprehension. Not using our own media to report the truth and relying on antagonistic channels whose loaded reportings did more damage has forced many patriotic Nepalis to think whether the ministry of information has become redundant. There are some who even believe that the Nepalese media has played into the hands of the Indian media. Why do we need a TV network which cannot counter malicious publicity by any unfriendly TV media? Will concerned people look into this affair and take NTV to task?

* * *

The freedom of press in Nepal got a severe jolt at the arrest and detention of the Kantipur daily's editor and publication officials. Even though sub clause 1 of article 13 of the constitution has empowered the government to take action against violations of the clause, prosecution of the Kantipur officials smacks of prejudice and retribution. This becomes more glaring when the government has not taken any action whatsoever against the author of the article in question for which they have been booked. For a government that boasts of having a long democratic character, attempts to gag the press does not only reflect its hypocritical behavior but also presages some kind of danger even to democratic process. We do trust the government will refrain from attributing any subjective angle to the case and release the journalists without undue delay. ■



Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Uncontrollable Tears

Today the country is crying — it is crying so bitterly. The tears of the Nepalese people are flowing down the Himalayan glaciers. The news is unbelievable. It will be impossible for the Nepalese people to fully come to terms with the passing away of their beloved king and queen, princes and princess and so many members of the royal family. ("End Of An Era", SPOTLIGHT, June 8). Tremendous grief and fear grip the simple and poor Nepalese people. They have been orphaned at a time when problems are hounding them from all sides.

Ramesh Thapa
Chabahil

ence in the field of conservation will come in handy in dealing with the day-to-day affairs of the country. He has shown his willingness to work in a democratic environment. King Gyanendra will now have to make concrete contributions. Going by his experience, there is no reason to despair.

Gopal Basnet
New Baneshwor

The New King

King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev has been crowned at a time the country is passing through the worst phase in its history ("The New Monarch", SPOTLIGHT, June 8). All eyes are now upon him. The new king will have to help his people get out of these troubled times. He has the responsibility to steer the nation toward economic prosperity. The commitment to multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy he expressed in his first address to the nation as monarch has been appreciated by all. He will now have to work in close cooperation with the elected leaders to safeguard the national interest.

Prakash Sharma
Maitighar

Devastation Day

June 1, 2001 will always be remembered as the darkest day in the history of Nepal ("End Of An Era", SPOTLIGHT, June 8). A sense of disbelief still prevails among the people. They are still to grasp the full implications of the tragedy. A shooting inside the heart of heavily guarded palace was something no Nepali ever imagined could happen. But it has happened and nothing can undo the events. The cruel blow of fate cannot be avoided.

Bhola Bista
Samakhushi

A Nation Bereaved

The morning of Saturday, June 2 greeted Nepalis with horrendous news of the wholesale killing of their beloved monarch and his family ("End Of An Era", SPOTLIGHT, June 8). Never in recent history of the world has such a tragic massacre taken place. For Nepal, already knee-deep in problems of all types, the news of the death of the king and queen has come as a big shock. It will indeed be hard for the Nepalese people to get over this incident. May the departed souls rest in peace.

Harihar KC
Kuleshwor

Grief Taller Than Everest

The Everest seems like a dwarf compared to the height

of the grief the country is enduring after the heart-rending royal massacre ("End Of An Era", SPOTLIGHT, June 8). The peace-loving Nepalis had never had to bear such kind of tragedy in their history. The whole country is trembling. The situation is very delicate. It will be an uphill task for the Nepalese people to return to normality. The leaders of all political parties must come together and give a new direction to the country.

Pukar Shrestha
Sanepa

Follow The Path

King Birendra will always be remembered as a good monarch who knew how to deal with the people ("End Of An Era", SPOTLIGHT, June 8).

His demise has left a void in Nepal's politics. The damage caused to the nation is difficult to heal. Even then, the leaders and people should concentrate on the path shown by His late Majesty and work towards pulling the nation out from the present difficult situation.

Binita Sharma
Baneshwor

Big Challenges

The challenges before the new King Gyanendra are difficult, to say the least ("The New Monarch", SPOTLIGHT, June 8). He will have to do everything possible to restore faith in the Nepalese people. The political, economic and social challenges are tremendous. His first royal address did send a positive signal. His vast experi-

First Eyewitness Account

In the first eyewitness account of the palace killings of June 1, 2001, the son-in-law of former prince Dharendra Shah, younger brother of His late Majesty King Birendra, told reporters on Thursday that it was then-Crown Prince Dipendra who opened fire on the royal gathering. Giving graphic details of Friday's incident, Dr. Rajiv Shahi said Crown Prince Dipendra, who was in a "very, very intoxicated" state, first opened fire on his father, King Birendra, hitting his neck and stomach. The shootings took place at a family get-together where many members of the royal family, including Queen Aishwarya, Prince Nirajan and Princess Sruti were present. Dr. Shahi said Crown Prince Dipendra "started to go wild shooting at whoever came in front of him. All this time Crown Prince Dipendra was in combat fatigues. He was wielding an assault rifle at different times. An M-16 at times and MP-5, I think, but I am not too sure about what the weapons were... I did not count how many," he said. "It was too far and too terrifying to see what was going on..." After shooting down members of the royal family, the crown prince then turned his gun on himself. *Compiled from reports.*

Differences Over Adhikary's Report

A report by the leader of the Unified Marxist-Leninist party Bharat Mohan Adhikary giving a clean chit to UML



Rawal

leader Bhim Rawal in the China South West Airlines (CSWA) scandal has reportedly led to differences among the leaders of the main opposition party. During the party's central committee meeting on Sunday, Adhikary presented the report that exonerated Rawal and instead rapped the House of Representatives Public Accounts Committee (PAC) for arriving at such a decision. A few weeks ago, the PAC had implicated Rawal in the scandal. Rawal was charged with committing irregularities while leasing a CSWA aircraft during his tenure as civil aviation minister. The PAC's report sparked a heated war of words among the top-notch comrades of the party. The central committee of the party formed a separate committee headed by Adhikary to probe the deal after expressing "surprise" over PAC's decision. Interestingly, the PAC is headed by UML leader Subash Nemwang and includes top party leaders like K.P. Oli and Iswor Pokhrel as members. A few months ago, the UML had termed the PAC as a mini-parliament and brandished the panel's report, which charged Nepali Congress minister Tarini Dutta Chataut with irregularities in the Lauda Air deal, to ask for the resignation of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. The UML even obstructed the winter session of parliament and organized a three-day general strike over this issue. Many political parties have termed the UML's behavior as reflecting the party's "double standard". Meanwhile, the UML central committee meeting on Sunday denounced the government for trying to undermining press freedom and demanded the immediate release of the editor and publishers of Kantipur. *Compiled from reports.*

Census 2001 Begins

The second phase of the tenth national census started in Sunday in over 30 districts, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics. Officials at the bureau say the census has been under way in 40 percent of the districts without any hindrance. Because of the tragedy that occurred at the royal palace last week, the bureau could not establish communication with many districts, the officials said. Over 20,000 enumerators have been se-

lected for the purpose. Training for the enumerators was postponed after the palace deaths. The officials claim that the second phase of the census will start from June 14 in the remaining districts. There have been reports that the Maoists are obstructing the head-count in some districts. In their strongholds, the Maoists are collecting data on their own. The first phase of the census focused on family listings. Over 5,000 supervisors were used for the first phase. In the second phase, the actual head-count will be done. *Leading dailies report.*

Rumors Still Flying

Panic spread in Mata Tirtha village, some 15 km south of Kathmandu, on Thursday when around 1,000 villagers were told that their water supply had been poisoned. The panic started after local women at the water reservoir reported some noxious smell. Technicians of the Nepal Drinking Water Corporation rushed to the site for investigation. They said some kind of powder or liquid was mixed in the water but ruled out it was fatal. However, the authorities told the local people to use the water only after cleaning the reserve tank. The details of the contamination will be known only after a thorough investigation by Royal Nepal Academy for Science and Technology. *Leading dailies report.*

Probe Committee Term Extended

His Majesty King Gyanendra has extended the term of the high-level committee probing the palace killings of June 1, 2001 by four days. The committee is investigating the events that left King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, Crown Prince Dipendra and other members of the royal family dead. The committee headed by Chief Justice Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya asked for the extension to the government. The king granted the extension after the government's recommendation. The new deadline of the committee ends on Thursday, June 14. Upadhyaya, in his submission, stated that the committee had almost finished with the inquiry but awaited forensic reports

and needed some more time to prepare the final report. In his royal address on June 4, King Gyanendra had formed the three-member committee and directed it to submit a detailed report within three days. The committee faced initial hiccups after one of its member, leader of the opposition Madhav Kumar Nepal, backed out, citing procedural reasons. The other member of the committee is Speaker Taranath Ranabhat. Various objects and weapons from the site of killings have been sent to the laboratory in Khumaltar for forensic tests. The two committee members reportedly sought eyewitness accounts from Her Majesty Queen Komal Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah from the Birendra Army Hospital in Chhauni. *Leading dailies report.*

Price Rise Due To Uncertainty

Amid the growing uncertainties in the aftermath of the terrifying killings at the Narayanhity Royal Palace on June 1,

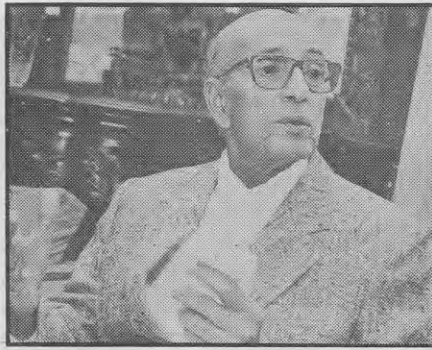


vegetable vender

the people have had to bear hikes in the prices of essential commodities. As many shops remained closed, those that were open were charging exorbitant prices citing "scarcity". The prices of rice, pulse and vegetables have increased. Although the shop owners cited scarcity as the reason for price hike, officials at the retail trade association denied facing problems in supplies. *Compiled from reports.*

NC For All-Party Consensus

In the aftermath of gruesome palace killings and emerging delicate political scenario, the ruling Nepali Congress party has decided to strengthen internal coop-



PM Koirala

eration and attempt for consensus with other parties, including the main opposition, on major national issues. During the party's informal meeting held in Baluwatar on Saturday, Prime Minister and president of ruling party Girija Prasad Koirala reviewed the present situation of the country and urged everyone not to lose patience. Party spokesman Narahari Acharya said that after the incident at Narayanhity palace, PM Koirala and his deputy Ram Chandra Poudel have talked with leaders of the main opposition several times. Now there is a need to give continuity to this dialogue so that the parliamentary session

will take place smoothly, said Acharya. For the last few months, the leaders of the ruling and opposition parties were not even on speaking terms, leading to uncertainty over the upcoming budget session of the legislature. *Compiled from reports.*

Smuggling Leads To Scarcity

The unbridled smuggling of kerosene to India through the porous borders in Kakarbhitta has led to scarcity of the fuel in Jhapa district. The price of kerosene in Nepal is Rs 17. In India, the unsubsidised price of kerosene is around Rs 21. Unscrupulous traders find it lucrative to smuggle the fuel from Kakarbhitta to nearby Siliguri town in India. Just recently, Nepalese workers confiscated 150 liters of kerosene from an Indian trader near the border. According to an official at the Nepal Oil Corporation, the organization had to lower the quota of the fuel it had assigned for the place as in recent months it started to rise astronomically from 4 to 5 tankers per month to 30-33 tankers. *Compiled from reports.* ■

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A Brahmin priest having a sumptuous meal as a part of "katto" ceremony

THE 25TH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL Assembly, which began in New York on June 6, observed a minute's silence for the peace of the departed souls of His late Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev and His late Majesty King Dipendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

THE ELECTION FOR THE 20 VACANT SEATS OF the National Assembly will be held in June 27, according to the Election Commission. Every two years, one-third of the Upper House seats become vacant. This year, 11 of the 20 vacant seats will be filled by the election through the House of Representatives based on proportional representation system. Five members will be chosen by the local bodies and four will be nominated by His Majesty the King.

CONCERNED BY THE LATEST TRAGIC DEVELOP-ments in the country, leaders of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) is meeting with political leaders. The FNCCI representatives, led by president Pradeep Kumar Shrestha, met with the leaders of Marxist-Leninists at its party office on June 10 to discuss the present national situation. The leading businessmen of the country told the M-L leaders that following the unfortunate palace incident, an environment of chaos and confusion was prevalent in the country, and asked political leaders to sit together and give a new direction to the country. General Secretary of the CPN-ML Bamdev Gautam assured the businessmen that his party would behave very responsibly and urged them to take the initiative in bringing ruling and opposition parties towards a national consensus.

DESPITE THE WIDE CONDEMNATION against the arrest of editor and publishers of Kantipur daily, the government is standing firm. In a statement published on Saturday, the Ministry of Information and Communication has supported the home administration's move of arresting the journalists, saying the first duty of the state is to penalize those who break the law. The ministry has also said that the move, in no way, was an attack on press freedom. When exercising the right of expression and opinion, the laws according to the constitution do not provide immunity to any citizen to commit crimes against the nation's sovereignty, integrity and the state. If anybody violates this law, it is the primary duty of the state to take legal action against the person, reads the statement. Meanwhile, condemnations are pouring in from several human rights and media organizations against the government for arresting editor

Yubaraj Ghimire and publishers Binod Raj Gyawali and Kailash Sirohiya. ■

Green Nepal Party Congratulates New King

The Green Nepal Party has extended best wishes to King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev on his accession to the throne of the kingdom of Nepal. An emergency meeting of the central committee of the party held in June 7 passed a note congratulating the new monarch. The party expressed confidence that His Majesty would be able to perform the duties well. The party welcomed His Majesty's commitment to constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy and vowed to support in all his endeavours towards strengthening and promoting this system. The party also urged the king to organize an all-party meeting to discuss the major issues facing the country including corruption and Maoist problem. In the same meeting, the party expressed deep sorrow at the unexpected incident at the palace that took the lives of king, queen, crown prince and other royalties. The party extended condolence to His late Majesty King Birendra, Her late Majesty Queen Aishwarya, His late Majesty King Dipendra, late Prince Nirajan, late Princess Sruti and other members of royal family and prayed for the departed souls. Meanwhile, the party has denounced the government for arresting Kantipur journalists on charges of sedition for publishing an article by Maoist leader. It has asked the government to immediately release the journalists and respect the press freedom. ■

“Girijababu should step down at the proper time.”

Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, former prime minister, at a Nepali Congress meeting.

* * *

“I never imagined that a reputable paper like Kantipur would publish such things.”

Shiva Raj Joshi, Minister of State for Information and Communication, supporting the home administration’s decision to arrest the editor and publishers of Kantipur daily on charges of sedition for publishing an opinion article by an underground Maoist leader.

* * *

“All political parties have welcomed the present King’s accession to the throne, saying it is in accordance with the constitution. So, politically I see no trouble now.”

Padma Ratna Tuladhar, former minister and left-leaning human rights activist, in Bimarsha.

* * *

“For a revolution to succeed, favorable circumstances are more important.”

Narayan Man Bijukchhe, president



of Nepal Workers and Peasants Party, saying that raising arms alone would not make a revolution, in Chhalfal.

* * *

“The death of Their Majesties has come like the death of one’s own parents. I am really feeling bad that I couldn’t do some-

thing at this hour.”

Ramesh Upreti, an actor, regretting that he couldn’t shave his head because his producers didn’t want their shooting schedules disrupted, in Nepal Samacharpatra.

* * *

“The future of the monarchy in Nepal will be bright if King Gyanendra works according to the people’s wishes and eliminates the mafia in the palace.”

Dr. Sanubhai Dangol, the only Nepali to have received a doctorate from the Tribhuvan University on the place of palace in Nepalese politics, in Budhabar.

* * *

“Since the King and the Queen were the parents of the country, we have banned the selling and consumption of meat for 13 days.”

Chhorten Gharti, an inhabitant of Manang district, in Nepal Samacharpatra.

* * *





**SPOTLIGHT Family extends
heartfelt felicitations to
H.M. King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev
and prays to Lord Pashupatinath
for his long and prosperous reign**

The Challenges The New Monarch Faces

By MADHAV KUMAR RIMAL

The macabre killings in the Royal Palace in Kathmandu on that fateful evening on June 1, 2001 have decreed that the successor to the Shah throne, HM King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev must take up the gauntlet and save the country from going into disintegration. In the gravest of situation in which King Gyanendra has assumed the responsibility of guiding the nation he has to use his utmost discretion in choosing his advisers. There will be no dearth of mushrooming loyalists who will stoop to all kinds of tricks and vows to win the confidence of the new monarch. It need not be emphasized that the royal advisers have left the king in the lurch on many occasions in the past, and they have already made a dubious beginning with the new king. Since King Gyanendra has assumed the throne in a most unusual and extraordinary situation, it has become imperative for him to weigh and judge every advice meticulously before executing it. At the present juncture he cannot afford to take even one wrong step. Those who follow him closely are fully reassured that he is well qualified to meet all the challenges he may have to face, and the future of Nepalese monarchy is absolutely safe in his secure hands.

King Gyanendra has not inherited a bed of roses. With the most inept and corrupt government whose whole concern is focused on amassing illegal wealth; with the bigger political parties divided into factions aggravating the already unstable political situation; with the general mass groaning under sky-rocketing prices of daily necessities, unavailability of drinking water and stinking garbage making life hell in the capital city; with total insecurity of life and property; with unbearable burden of foreign debt; with unfriendly foreign media badly hurting tourism, one of the mainstay of the nation's economy by baseless damaging publicity and disinforming the world about the recent tragic happenings in Nepal; and above all with the Maoists spreading their tentacles around the

country, he faces problems that could overwhelm ordinary people. Since all these problems need immediate attention it may not be easy to set priorities. It thus becomes the bounden duty of all patriotic Nepalis to rally round the new king and offer him unflinching cooperation. It is, indeed, very unfortunate that the leader of the opposition Madhav Kumar Nepal decided not to cooperate with the new king at this time of

national calamity. This sort of behavior has not only reflected his real character but also exposed his attitude towards the solidarity of the nation as a whole. What can the people of Nepal expect from such politicians? That the new king has to be very wary of such people need not be emphasized.

That King Gyanendra has expressed his commitment to multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy and to continue walking on the path laid down by his illustrious brother has set at rest any misgiving lurking in some minds. The spontaneous expression of intense grief at the unthinkable tragedy and the unsullied demonstration of love and respect for their beloved king by the people irrespective of their caste or creed is the unquestionable testimony of faith they harbor in the institution of monarchy. The impulsive manifestation of their inherent feelings for their monarch by



the people must sound a clear warning to the politicians never to try to belittle the exalted institution. With such an effective and invincible charm at his disposal, King Gyanendra must start redressing the miseries of his people without losing any time. The callous behavior of the corrupt politicians, the nonperformance of all the political parties that have wielded the reins of government and the high expectations of the people are sure to demand extreme caution, dedication and hard work from the new king. The people are clamoring to curb corruption and take the corrupt politicians to task. The magnitude of political corruption has started disillusioning the people in the

very democratic system. Unless this process is arrested, the hard won democracy might not survive at all. Politicization of bureaucracy has turned the administration party-oriented and non-functioning. Since the politicians in charge have institutionalized corruption, it has become free for all and all kinds of bureaucrats, high and low or big and small do not even bat their eyelids to accept any bribe in public. King Gyanendra has to root out this evil. Even partial success to bring the corrupt to book is sure to win national applause. Another pressing problem before the new king is the resolution of the Maoists issue. Since the use of force may only exacerbate the dispute, the

Maoists must be brought to the negotiating table. Even late King Birendra was averse to using the Royal Nepal Army against the Maoists. There are many who can talk to Maoist leaders and convince them to enter into dialogue. Prime Minister Koirala has failed. So, King Gyanendra has to find some other means, and that too, as early as possible.

In a few days the parliament is meeting for the budget session. The chagrined Prime Minister Koirala had to face at his failure to pass the anti-national citizenship amendment bill must be smarting him incessantly. It is being rumored that he is sure to bring the bill with minor amendments and try to hoodwink the new king. Since King Gyanendra is also alive to the dangers, Koirala will not be successful in his nefarious tricks. Because of such anti-national activities of the Koirala government and the appalling miseries, the poor people of Nepal had to endure during the last more than a decade of multi-party regime which has started threatening the very democratic process, so dearly nurtured by late King Birendra, the overwhelming majority of Nepalese were demanding that Girija Koirala be replaced. Any leader with a reasonable sense of political morality and faith in democratic traditions would have voluntarily resigned on a couple of issues that Prime minister Koirala had faced. But, Koirala being totally unaware of such virtues, did not oblige the nation. In due course, after the pangs of sorrow and grief subside, King Gyanendra must give due consideration over this issue. In the meantime, if the Prime minister realizes his mistakes and makes significant improvements in his behavior,

the necessity of second thoughts might be felt.

The unprecedented tragedy that struck Nepal has staggered the whole world. When the whole nation was reeling with the shock, unfriendly elements did not flinch even for a moment to exploit the sad events to further their vile ends. King Gyanendra wants the truth to come out and for that purpose constituted a commission with wide powers to probe into the affairs. The commission is to submit its findings in a few days. But, elements inimical to the nation's solidarity have floated all kinds of totally baseless rumors. King Gyanendra must make a note of such elements and deal with them accordingly.

King Gyanendra has not inherited a bed of roses. With the most inept and corrupt government whose whole concern is focused on amassing illegal wealth; with the bigger political parties divided into factions aggravating the already unstable political situation; with the general mass groaning under skyrocketing prices of daily necessities, unavailability of drinking water and stinking garbage making life hell in the capital city; with total insecurity of life and property; with unbearable burden of foreign debt; with unfriendly foreign media badly hurting tourism, one of the mainstay of the nation's economy by baseless damaging publicity and disinforming the world about the recent tragic happenings in Nepal; and above all with the Maoists spreading their tentacles around the country, he faces problems that could overwhelm ordinary people

The new king himself must set right certain misdirections that have crept in Nepal's relations with her bigger neighbor in the South — India. And this is going to be a tough job. Since the mandarins in the South Block seem to be unable to shake off the hangover of the Raj era, and the Indian political leadership under their thumb, poor Nepal has to face very difficult situation periodically.

Nepalese can even imagine of having confrontation with India. It is not the religious or cultural affinity, neither the traditional relationship, as the Indians wont to claim, that impels Nepal to maintain a cordial and friendly relationship with India. It is Nepal's utter necessity. Her geography, her size and her economic backwardness are such constraints which leave her very little room to maneuver in her relationship with her bigger neighbor in the south. In a little more than five decades that Nepal has established political relationship with independent India, the bilateral relationship has seen many ups and downs. Nepal being at the receiving end cannot take lion's share of the blame. Unfortunately, the Indian media miss no opportunity to rub on Nepal's smallness. At times, the Nepalese are forced to think whether the Indian media are guided by officialdom. And our elected government can never stand up to their height dealing with the Indians. In such a situation, the king has to shoulder the added responsibility. King Gyanendra, with his wisdom and maturity, will succeed to bring the relations back to the normal keel.

PARLIAMENT

Uncertain Session

The budget session of parliament seems to be running far behind schedule

By KESHAB POUDEL

As the country is mourning King Birendra and his family, the government is yet to make an official announcement on convening the 20th session of parliament.

Although the government of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala was considering convening the session in the middle of June, it has yet to find time to consult with the new monarch.

For the ruling Nepali Congress, the National Assembly is going to be the most vexing challenge. The number of Nepali Congress members is set to go down in the upper house. The ruling party would need the support of nominated MPs to pass crucial pieces of legislation.

At a time when a number of important bills have been pending in parliament for a long time, the government must ensure a way of clearing them in both chambers. "One of the important tasks of the forthcoming session of parliament is to pass a number of bills pending from the previous session," said Bishnu Dutta Upreti, spokesman of the parliament secretariat. "The parliament secretariat is ready to hold the session as soon as we receive a formal notification."

"The session will begin from the middle of the month as the government has already started consultations within the

Nepali Congress and with other parties, including the main opposition CPN-UML," said Foreign Minister Chakra Parsed Bastola.

Because of opposition from the CPN-UML and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), the winter session of the house could not take up business for even a single day. The opposition parties blocked the entire session demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Koirala over his alleged involvement in corruption in the Lauda Air deal. As the

opposition parties are still in no mood to give up their demand for the resignation of Koirala, the budget session is unlikely to be trouble-free.

"As long as Prime Minister Koirala holds on to his position, there is no question of our participating in the session of the parliament," said MP and leader of United People's Front Lila Mani Pokharel. Our party will abide by the decision of the five-party left front."

The government has many items of business for the upcoming session, including the tabling of the controversial ordinances on setting up an Armed Police Force and regional administrators. A number of other bills, including those relating to education and women's right to property, also have to be tabled.

Although the RPP, the third largest party in parliament, has indicated that it would not boycott the 20th session of parliament, it is yet to formally announce its decision.

The summer session is also known as the budget session. The government has to pass money bills from the parliament. As the Nepali Congress holds an absolute majority in parliament, passing the budget and annual policies and programs of the government would not be too difficult for the government.

The only difficulty for the government is to pass other bills and ordinances on its own. "From this session, we will lose our majority in the upper house and we will have to rely on royal nominees and other members to pass the bills," said Congress whip in the parliament.

The tragic deaths of King Birendra and his family members have cast a shadow over the session of the parliament. Despite the importance of the government's annual programs and policies and the budget, public attention has not shifted to the legislature yet. ■



House of Representatives : Will the next session be smooth ?

ECONOMY

Courting Disaster

Regular disruptions in daily life will seriously erode the national economy

By A CORRESPONDENT

Like all other transit points with India, the Birgunj-Raxaul border post was closed following the killings at the royal palace. The nearly weeklong closure of these vital border points will affect the annual revenue collections.

The country's major industrial areas were also shut down. Even small and cottage industries were virtually at a standstill. If all the cumulative losses



Vegetable market : Economy hit by uncertainty

calculated, the economic catastrophe the country has undergone would come into sharper focus.

Although Nepal's financial institutions are yet to come up with a detailed accounting of the damage seen in the economic sector, economists hold the view that it will take months for Nepal to recover. Despite chronic political uncertainty, Nepal has achieved an average economic growth rate of 6 percent.

"The country's industrial sector is passing through a very critical phase. Everyone has to work to create a conducive climate to boost the industrial sector," said the Federation of Nepalese

Chambers of Commerce and Industry in a press release.

Political uncertainty and frequent strikes called by major political parties have hampered direct foreign investment and slowed industrial output. "If the situation is not handled properly, Nepal will face a severe economic crisis in the coming days," said an economic analyst.

With the onset of the monsoon on time, this year, too, seems to be favorable for the agricultural sector, which plays a very prominent part in overall economic development.

In the last few years, Nepal has been able to achieve economic progress in large part because the agriculture sector performed well.

"In the last four years, timely monsoon has helped to retain the level of economic progress," said former finance minister and UML leader Bharat Mohan Adhikary. "Had the Nepali Congress government handled the country's economy prop-

erly, the situation would have become different."

After the country emerges out of its mourning period, it will have to confront a key question: how to bring the economy and industrial sector on an even keel?

At a time when traditional export items like carpet and garment are facing a slump and tourism is virtually on the ruin, the Finance Ministry seems to be facing some difficulty in putting the economy back on track. The government will have to bring out a long-term recovery package drawing commitment from all political quarters. ■

MEDIA

Struggle For Freedom

The government's decision to arrest the editor and publishers of a leading daily newspaper has sparked a new round of controversy on freedom of the press

As soon as the government arrested Kantipur editor Yuba Raj Ghimire, and publishers Kailash Sirohiya and Binod Gyawali, it drew widespread criticism from national and international quarters. Although the court is yet to agree on the charges levelled by the government, Ghimire, Sirohiya and Gyawali have spent several days in police custody.

"This is an attack against the freedom of the press guaranteed by the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal," said Suresh Acharya, president of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists. "There is nothing that can justify the government's charges against the three men."

Ghimire, Sirohiya and Gyawali were arrested on charges of treason for publishing an article written by Maoist ideologue Dr. Baburam Bhattarai. The government saw Dr. Bhattarai's article as a public call to defy existing laws and the constitution.

"Is there any government which can tolerate calls for the disintegration of the country and fomenting rebellion against the existing regime?" asked Minister of Information and Communication Shiva Raj Joshi. "We have no intention to curtail the freedom enjoyed by the press, but they have to be responsible in their actions."

This is not first time a newspaper editor or publisher has been detained since the restoration of multiparty democracy 12 years ago. The editor of a weekly newspaper believed to reflect the Maoists' views was released two months ago under orders from the Supreme Court after he spent 22 months in prison.

Three months ago, following violent protests triggered by unsubstantiated remarks attributed to Indian film star Hrithik Roshan, the government called in the publisher of the Space-Time daily for interrogation.

Whatever the arguments the government has advanced to justify its action this time, the arrests of Ghimire, Gyawali and Sirohiya have conveyed a very damaging message both inside the country and outside about the state of Nepal's democracy at such a volatile period. ■

LANDSLIDES Slithering Menace

The monsoon makes an ominous entry this year, as landslides kill more than a dozen people in a remote north-eastern district

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

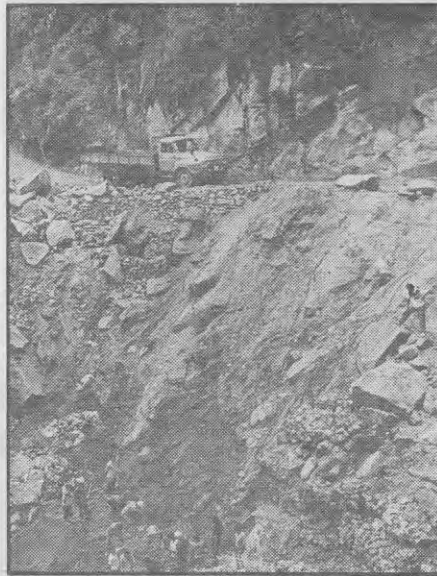
Even as the country was mourning the deaths of their king and queen, landslides unleashed by the early monsoon rainfall swept houses in the remote Pathibhara and Pawakhola village development committees in the north-western Sankhuwasabha district killed 13 people.

The heavy downpour on the night of June 6 triggered massive mudslides in different parts of the villages, claiming more than a dozen lives - including four people of the same family. The villagers have said that the mudslides swept away dozens of other people, whose whereabouts are still unknown.

Located in a far-flung area, the villages are cut off from communication. The news of the natural calamity could reach the capital only two days later. Even rescue workers could reach the area quite late. The district administration office has distributed relief money to the families of victims and those who have been rendered homeless.

The hilly regions of the country are prone to landslides during the monsoon season every year. The houses built on the steep slopes of denuded hills are susceptible to such calamities. As about 68 percent of the country's area is covered by hills, the landslides are fatal. "The floods and landslides occur as a part of natural phenomenon. But what is important is to find out how to prevent them from taking lives and destroying property," said an environmentalist.

Every year hundreds of people die as flash floods and landslides hit in different parts of the country during the monsoon season from June to September. This year, too, the early signals show that more floods and landslides could be in the off-



A scene of a landslide: Recurring problem

ing. As the monsoon will affect the country for another three to four months, the disaster in Sankhuwasabha could be repeated in other parts.

However, is the government prepared?

The answer is "no". Much of the government's effort is focused on rescue and relief operations. Things like prevention, disaster management, mitigation and rehabilitation are not in the picture.

The landslides last week could not have come at worse moment. The whole country was mourning the tragedy at the royal palace and the authorities were too disturbed to take any

quick action to help the victims.

Although the district administration made some rescue and relief attempts, they were too little and too late. But as the country limps back to normalcy after the June 1 palace killings, the government now has to face the long hard monsoon and its calamitous affect on lives and property across the country. The first thing the authorities could do is put rescue workers on red alert and take steps to prevent the loss of lives and property this season.

The months of July and August, generally, mark a peak season for rainfall. Therefore, the government has to be extra-cautious to prevent the heavy loss of lives like that witnessed in 1993 when nearly 500 people died in floods.

In most parts of Nepal, rainfall occurs from mid-June until late September. The average annual rainfall varies depending on altitude and local topography. It ranges from under 250 mm at places in western Nepal north of main Himalayan range to over 5000 mm on the southern slopes of the Himalayas.

During the monsoon season hundreds of watershed swell resulting in the landslides in hills and flash floods in plains. As dark clouds bring ominous signs, the government will have to brace for tough days ahead. ■

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TOURISM

Downward Spiral

Recurring street violence and chronic political instability batter Nepal's vital tourism industry

By KESHAB POUDEL

When the first flight of Qatar Airways arrived on Wednesday May 30, the plane, which was supposed to have more than 70 percent occupancy, had only 40 passengers. Of them, there were only four foreign tourists.

As soon as the four tourists moved towards the arrival lane after immigration and customs formalities, they found themselves swarmed by two dozens taxi drivers and almost an equal number of hotel representatives. "We have to wait the whole day to get a trip of Rs.200. If the situation remains unstable, the families of more than five hundred workers at the airport will have to starve," said Sita Ram Giri, a taxi driver. "It is the primary duty of political parties to teach their cadres how to maintain order in society."

Tens of thousands of people whose livelihoods rest on the tourism industry share Giri's worries. In the aftermath of the frequent street battles and riots of the last few years, tourist bookings from India and other countries have plummeted. From five-star hotels to the small lodges in Thamel, room occupancy has plunged from 40\50 percent to virtually zero.

Activities in tourism-related sectors have almost come to a standstill. There is a sense of emptiness in many places that once buzzed with people from around the world. Worse, nobody knows whether Nepal's tourism industry would be able to revive itself.

"One of the biggest achievement of Nepal was [its reputation as a] tranquil

and peaceful destination with humble people in the mountain. Nepal is fast losing all its unique characters in the last few years," said Yajna Raj Satyal in a recent book. "Nepal has a to go a long and difficult way to prove that it is really safe for tourists."

Others are less gloomy, seeing the possibility of the tourism industry recovering lost ground fairly soon. Amid the infrastructure and facilities available in the country, they say, Nepal may not have to wait very long for the recovery to take place.

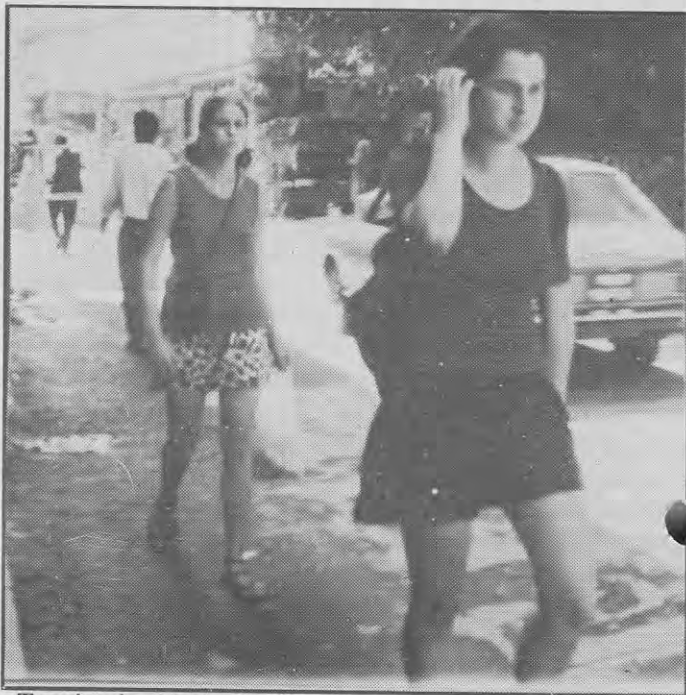
If the trends of the last two years are any indication, however, Nepal is losing its reputation as a peaceful and tranquil destination for tourists. The negative publicity the country is getting in the international media is partly responsible for the slump.

One of the major challenges for Nepal's tourism authorities and entrepreneurs is finding ways of raising the inflow of tourists. All concerned parties need to work in unison to revive the industry before it sinks deeper into the mire of apathy.

According to reports, more than 37.8 percent of the tourists visiting Nepal come through organized tours. Among

them, about 16 percent seemed to come with friends. About 32 percent come on self-guided tours and about 15 percent visit through semi-organized tours.

According to a study conducted by Hari Prasad Shrestha, the highest number of visitors to Nepal — 43.7 percent — made their travel plans about three to six months in advance. About 30 percent of the visitors planned their trip between one and two months before their arrival. Similarly, 23.9 percent made their plan between six months and one year in advance. "This shows that most of the visitors coming to Nepal made plans at least six months in advance," said Shrestha in his book, "Tourism in Nepal: Marketing Challenges".



Tourists in street : Confused?

This makes it clear that even the slightest disturbance in Nepal would have negative effects on tourist inflow over the long term.

Although Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) has initiated market promotional activities in different parts of the world, including in India and Japan, its activities have been set back by the growing perception of Nepal as a violent and unstable destination.

"The frequent bandhs and other vio-

lent activities have already damaged Nepal's reputation in the international tourism market. We have time and again requested major political parties, which are supposed work for the betterment of the country, not to launch any program that would damage the image of tourism industry," said Narendra Bajracharya, president of Hotel Association Nepal. "Unfortunately, everyone has turned a deaf ear to us."

Department of Immigration records show a drastic fall in tourist arrivals from India and other countries. This decline has had a knock-on effect on several other areas of the economy.

If the situation fails to improve, hoteliers say they are not in a position to pay back interest on loans they received from commercial banks. "How can we pay back the interest when we don't have anything to pay," said a hotelier on condition of anonymity. "No one can rescue us as long as we Nepalis do not bother about our problems."

It is said that some hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara are planning to close down indefinitely. While this step is expected to save millions of rupees for beleaguered hotel owners, the message it sends is clear: Nepal's tourism industry is in a very critical period and nobody knows how long it will take for things to improve.

Nepal's tourism crisis began after the hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight to New Delhi from Tribhuvan International Airport in December 1999. Following the hijacking, Indian Airlines suspended its entire operations in Nepal. That move led to a drastic fall in tourist arrivals, particularly Indian visitors.

Although Indian Airlines resumed its flights six months later, the situation has not become normal. New regulations requiring Indian nationals to carry their passport or other official identification document and the ban on travelers from carrying Indian Rs 500



In a restaurant : Feeling safe

banknotes have discouraged Indian tourists from visiting Nepal.

Weeks after Indian Airlines resumed its flights, stories of bird hitting aircraft at the airport grabbed the headlines. Although birds actually hit no more than two aircraft, national newspapers were full of stories about how dangerous Nepal's only international airport had become. Some major international newspapers picked up the story with disastrous effect.

After the bird-hits seemed to recede from the papers, hotel workers launched a strike demanding the imposition of 10 percent service charges on guests. In response, owners of Kathmandu's hotels locked up their premises for a day. Because of the hotel workers' strike, many tour groups sent in last-minute cancellations.

As the hotel row appeared to be softening, protests triggered by unsubstantiated remarks attributed Indian film star Hrithik Roshan rocked Kathmandu, leaving a trail of death and destruction. The so-called "Hrithik episode" helped to portray Nepal as a hostile destination for Indian tourists. Despite the widespread acknowledgement in India that the Nepalese people were

friendly towards Indians because of, among other things, their shared religious and cultural heritage, the fury and intensity of the anti-Hrithik protests were enough to convey a negative message.

Amid this crippling of the tourism industry, five left parties, including the main opposition CPN-UML, last month called a three-day Nepal bandh to press for Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's resignation over his alleged involvement in a tainted aircraft deal. Despite repeated request from industrialists not to adopt such an economically suicidal course, the opposition alliance went ahead with their 72-hour shut-down.

If Nepal's tourism industry were to collapse, the country would lose a source of direct employment for tens of thousands of people. Hundreds of thousands of others would face indirect consequences.

If Nepal's political parties join hands to achieve national stability, there still might be some hope for the tourism sector. For this to happen, political leaders have to acknowledge the fact that they can no longer ignore the consequences their negative actions bring. ■

PALACE KILLINGS PROBE

Waiting For The Report

Dazed and shocked, Nepalis are yet to come to terms with the unbelievable tragedy that struck the royal palace. Although the people's anger over the gruesome killings of so many royal family members is cooling, their quest to know the truth persists. Will the report of high-level committee formed to investigate the palace killings bring the answers?

By KESHAB POUDEL

Tens of thousands of people continue to pay homage to their late king, queen and other members of the royal family who were killed when tragedy struck a family gathering at the Narayanhity Royal Palace on June 1, 2001. At the same time, they are awaiting substantial evidence on the actual circumstances surrounding the tragedy.

From the failed love affair of Crown

Prince Dipendra to conspiracy theories of various colors, Nepalis are having to rely on rumors and unsubstantiated information. A credible story on the palace bloodbath is yet to come out in public.

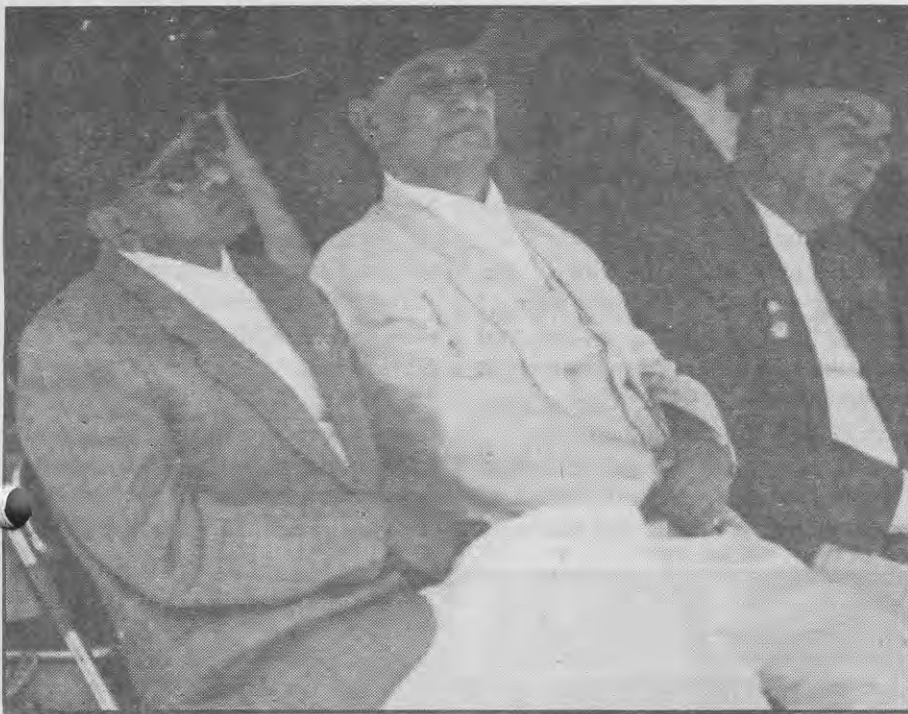
As Nepalis are still mourning their beloved king, an adrift nation is struggling to regain peace and tranquillity. But a profound sense of anger and frustration is etched on the minds of the people.

Though angered and frustrated, the Nepalese people do not have an alternative to waiting for the report, which is

expected to be presented to King Gyanendra by the committee by Thursday evening.

Upon the request of the committee, the king extend its tenure by four days. After the extension, the committee is said to have interviewed the some girls who have been linked with the late King Dipendra Shah.

This is the first high-level committee that has been given full authority to investigate events and interview all the surviving eyewitnesses, mostly royal relatives.



Upadhyaya (middle) and Ranabhat (left) : Historic responsibility

In the killings, 10 royal family members, including five members of King Birendra's family, his two sisters, Shanti Singh and Sarada Shaha, brother-in-law Kumar Khadga Bikram Shaha, cousin Princess Jayanti Shaha and brother, former prince Dhirendra, died.

In order to investigate all angles of the case, the committee seems to be making every effort to interview people even remotely related to the incident.

"This is first time an outside committee has been allowed to investigate a matter related to the royal palace," said an analyst. "The high-level committee has to investigate all kinds of details regarding security and other matters of the palace."

Many contradictory rumors about the massacre at the Narayanhity Royal Palace on the Black Friday on June 1 have floated even before the high-level committee began its work.

Although all media reports and revelations of the royal relatives indicated that it was Crown Prince Dipendra who killed his family members before committing suicide, for the majority of the Nepalese is finding it hard to believe.

It seems that the committee's report alone will not solve the confusion and

chaos on the killings in the royal palace as a large number of people are skeptical about the accounts of the so-called eye-witnesses.

Political Parties on Committee

Although all major political parties have stressed for the need to restore peace and tranquillity in the country, no one believes the parties will abide by their commitment.

"Although our party decided to pull out from the high-level committee, we will support and cooperate with the report," said leader of main opposition party Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Other political parties including CPN-ML and other leftist communist parties, including radical NCP(Masal) and other small communist outfits, also have exhorted the people to remain calm.

"To believe the palace killing was the result of a family feud would be utterly childish. This is a conspiracy hatched by international reactionary forces against the country's sovereignty and to limit the rights of the people," said a press statement released by NCP-Masal.

Other political parties, including the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, also issued calls for calm. As the CPN-Maoist still seems to be in a mood to fuel public

anger after the publication of the report, one cannot rule out an outbreak of unrest.

"Some forces like the Maoists and other bad elements may try to exploit the fragile situation," said Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola.

Along with a large number of mainstream political parties, intellectuals and political analysts also hold the view that the people will gradually realize the facts.

"People are now talking on the basis of their emotions so their reaction is spontaneous. As soon as they see the fact, the people will realize it," said Professor Lok Raj Baral. "I don't expect any violent outbreaks as the eyewitness accounts are already coming out about who committed the act."

"We are taking every necessary step to prevent possible violence as one cannot rule out the possibility of some sorts of disturbance," said Minister Bastola.

Although the government has been taking measures to prevent possible disturbances after the probe panel presents its report, political experts think that the level of violence witnessed in the first week of June would be repeated.

"Spontaneous violence erupted in the immediate aftermath of the killings because of contradictory remarks and confusion emanating from the government," said Professor Shridhar Khatri. "Had the government named the real culprit of the incident earlier, such violent incident would have been prevented."

Headed by Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya, the high-level committee will have a very challenging task in convincing the people that their probe has been examining impartial and based on truth.

The committee has been given broad powers to probe into wide areas, including Royal Palace security officials, interviewing survivors, and interrogating all other persons including the doctors involved in the treatment.

In accordance with the terms of reference given by King Gyanendra, the high-level committee has said to have interviewed eyewitness survivors, security personnel and medical officers. The two-member committee has also visited the Narayanhity Royal Palace to probe

into the incident.

After the sudden eruption of three-day violent street demonstrations, the government seems to be fully prepared to take necessary steps to prevent such further happenings.

Desperate, frustrated and confused, the people of the country are eagerly waiting to know how the high-level committee will present their report about the unfortunate incident that took place in Narayanhity Royal Palace on June 1. If things go smoothly, the committee will hand over its report on Thursday. The question: will the people accept it?

"The majority of the people will accept the verdict of the committee as they do not have any other alternative," said Professor Khatri. "There is always a possibility of a small number of group opposing the idea."

Others do not rule out the possibility of series of violence in the coming days. "The recent tendencies of the youth show that there is going to be a series of violence in the coming days," said Professor Dhruba Kumar.

Although some eyewitnesses to the royal palace killings have supported the theory that Crown Prince Dipendra is responsible for the bloodshed, the committee still requires concrete evidences to justify it.

"As everyone knows who killed the royal family members, people will not have difficulty to support the findings of the high-level committee," said Professor Baral.

Challenge to New Monarch

New monarch Gyanendra has already made efforts to provide the right information appointing a high-level committee to probe the killing. Never in the history of Nepal was Nepal's monarchy so depleted of its family members.

Although King Gyanendra is regarded as a competent and efficient monarch, he does not have many relatives

and family members to turn to. King Gyanendra has difficult task to lead the nation and overcome the challenges.

Despite smooth succession to the throne, the misgivings generated by the aftermath of the killings might take some time to subside.

The love and affection of the Nepalese people for the institution of monarchy is unquestionable and unchallengeable, as every community in the country requires the unifying presence of the institution of monarchy.

As life moves toward normality, there is a sense of anxiety in the face of the common man. "The royal palace in-

Nepal as the geographical forehead of India. Right now, the country is giving New Delhi a terrible migraine. India's largest-circulated daily's comments on Nepal underscore how much Indians are concerned by the turn of events in Nepal.

As China regards Nepal as a soft belly to Tibet, the northern neighbour is obviously much concerned by the possibility of prolonged political instability in the kingdom.

"India and China have already expressed deep sorrow over the unfortunate events in Nepal. This definitely shows their concern about development in Nepal. Indians are much worried about

alleged terrorism activities in Nepal," said Professor Khatri.

"As the traditional concept of diplomacy has been transformed by economic concerns, Nepal may not have wide room to exercise its foreign policy options," he continued. "Nepal has to accept its historical, cultural and geographical compulsions. As Nepal has already expressed the commitment not to allow its soil to be used against any of the neighbours, there is nothing to worry about," said Foreign Minister Bastola.



King Gyanendra : Challenges ahead

incident has rocked the entire country, but the situation is going to normalize. As the adage goes : The king is dead. Long live the King," said Minister of Finance Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat.

People may not take part in violent demonstrations, but the instability and uncertainty generated in the mind of people will not fade away soon.

Political Instability

If Nepal plunges into prolonged political instability, it will be uneasy for Nepal's two giant neighbours. India has already expressed concern over the fall-out of political instability in Nepal. China, as usual, has been subdued in expressing its concerns.

The Hindustan Times has described

"Political instability and violence will not help either Nepal or any of its neighbours. The sooner the country recovers from the trauma of violence, the better for the region as a whole," said Professor Dhruba Kumar. "If violence is allowed to prevail in this mountainous country, it will be difficult to control in future."

Although tensions are subsiding and the country is gradually limping toward normality, Nepal may have to go long way to recover from the shock of the killings. At a time when Nepal has already lost its image as a peaceful destination, it is the people who have to prove that they are inhabitants of a peace-loving country. ■

YOUTH

Residents Of Rumorland

Can Nepal's young hope to break free of the rumor-reaction-regret cycle?

By AKSHAY SHARMA

“We were paid Rs 1,000 for each tire we burned on the streets,” a youth protester gleefully told SPOTLIGHT in the aftermath of the killings at the Narayanhity Royal Palace. A tear gas fumes, rubber bullets and burning tires gripped the streets of Kathmandu, the nation again tried to find out what lay behind the violent tendencies among the youth.

“Why is it that the youth are vandalizing their own property?” asks Krishna Sharma. “Even if they have political grievances, what is it that they hope to gain by destroying public property?” The scale and circumstances of the violence defied reasoning. “When somebody suggests that an elephant has entered my house, I’ll look at the size of the door through which it might have entered before I act,” says Padma Tuladhar. However, such caution is thrown to the wind once rumors start spreading like wildfire.

The roots of youth alienation can be found in many areas. “Drugs might be the guiding force behind it all,” says Hira Kazi Maharjan. “Moreover, there is no value for academic qualifications in our country. Exams are not held in time.” Then the big picture enters. “There is a huge generation gap between the youth and the leaders. If this is understood, many problems could be solved. Sadly enough, the tendency of the elders is to misunderstand our problems,” Maharjan adds.

“Jealousy is another factor contributing to the anarchy that so often spills onto the streets,” says Jayan Nyachu. “Many youth see their friends becoming better off socially and economically. They choose to do things that they feel would make them worthy of notice.”

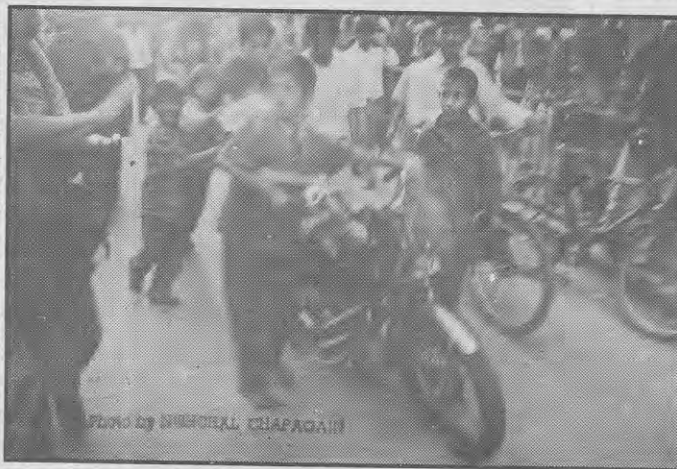
The youth have always played a crucial role in national politics, argue political leaders. However, students do not want to remain pawns at the hands of bickering politicians. “Is Tribhuvan University the preserve of the government?” asks Sunil Pant of Kathmandu University. “If you indulge in politics in Kathmandu University, you’d be kicked out pretty soon. Our universities need to produce creative thinkers instead of corrupting the minds of the young.”

With some campuses having become hot-

beds of radicalism, the law-enforcement community has begun paying special attention. “Since the Maoist insurgency, we have been looking into public colleges where we suspect some Maoist members are active,” says Arjun Basnyet, who is part of the security apparatus. “Political instability provides a perfect opportunity for people to steal or vandalize property.”

Earlier, police were not allowed into college premises without the permission of the campus chief or the leader of the student union. But that is changing. “In temples, colleges and almost everywhere else you run into blue-uniformed police officers,” says Asim Pradhan of Amrit Science College.

The Nepalese propensity to be carried



Nepalese people : Rumor-struck

away by notions and hearsay was chronicled by Brian Hodgson, British representative at the court of Nepal in June 1813. “It was a time when he found himself shut up in the narrow round of Residency routine, and forbidden to stray further than a morning’s ride from its walls,” writes William Williamson Hunter.

Hodgson seems to have returned to Nepal in 1824 and written to his sister, “If these barbarians did but know their own good, instead of which they are insolent and hostile, and play on us, as far as they can dare, the Chinese etiquette and foreign policy. The celestial Emperor is their idol, and by the way, whilst I write the (Nepalese) sovereign himself is passing by the Residency in all royal pomp to go three miles in order to receive a letter which had just arrived from Peking. Here they go! 50 chiefs on horsebacks, royalty and the royalty’s advisors

on 8 elephants and 3,000 troops behind the cavalcade!” Moreover, he points out that the crown prince descended from his elephant to take the epistle as the royal salute is fired. He clearly observes that the Nepalese had an age-old attitude that the Chinese were the strongest people on earth.

This situation, where a handful of powerful and influential people determines the outlook of the majority, has scarcely changed over the centuries. With high premium placed on the principles of accountability and transparency, the traditions of an isolationist and relatively ignorant era should have lost their relevance. However, today’s police department, which bears the brunt of the creativity of rumormongers, understands how hard old habits die. “Every university or college has a student elected body, be it a union or a student council. They represent the voices and views of the students,” says Binod Bhattarai of Tribhuvan University. “They should not be involved in national politics or be used by political leaders as pawns. If a student leader wants to make it big in national politics, he should first prepare himself and then go to the right place to show his talents.”

“We represent the students and we are elected to voice their demands,” counters Subodh Sharma of Trichandra College. “If a student takes a justifiable demand to the campus chief surely he will listen.”

Nevertheless, rumor-based politics seems to thrive on college campuses. “Why do clashes between colleges that are controlled by political parties occur so regularly,” asks Kumar Basnyet of Trichandra College.

“Why do teachers in public colleges get manhandled?” asks Dinesh Shrestha of Kathmandu University of Science and Technology. If colleges controlled by national political parties are part of the problem, what is the way out? “I studied in a public college and in three years I have not attended a single class,” says Chandra Gung of Minbhawan Campus. “Why don’t public colleges require 75 percent attendance, that is the basic requirement

in any educational institution?”

What responsibility should student leaders be prepared to bear for this state of affairs? “One needs practice to represent the people’s demands. A student union leader can brush up his leadership skills in college,” says Asish Sherchan of Amrit Science College. “However, he or she should refrain from getting involved in national politics while serving as a representative of fellow students,” he adds.

“I always deeply relish the sweet noble air and the sweet scenery of this fine region,” Hodgson wrote. “Upon the whole of my life, though monotonous, flags not, nor is liable to tedium, and with good health I should not envy the Monarch of Great Britain.” Perhaps the late poet Bhupi Sherchan was merely giving a Nepalese perspective to Hodgson’s views when he said, “This is a land of rumors.”

MEDIA

State Silence

State-owned Nepal Television and Radio Nepal face sharp criticism for their (non)reporting of the palace deaths

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

On that fateful morning of June 2, hundreds of thousands of Nepalis were glued to Nepal Television and Radio Nepal in the hope of getting some news.

Already disturbed by the barrage of reporting by the foreign media about the killings in the Narayanhity royal palace and the constant ringing of the telephone from family and friends, the people groped for information from the government media.

Never had the telephones in the country been busier. Even in the early morning, the network was so overloaded that



People in the street : Information-hungry

it became difficult to get a connection. The news of shooting in the palace the previous night spread like wildfire as friends and family kept on telephoning one another.

The reported deaths of their king and queen and other members of royal family troubled the Nepalese people already plagued by political uncertainty, corruption and growing insurgency. Adding to their woes, there was no official news, aggravating the confusion and frustration.

Strangely, the state media kept mum. Even the daily news bulletin at 7 am was skipped, leading the people to fear the worst. The constant reporting from foreign media like BBC and CNN became the only source for those people who had access to these channels. Others had to let their anxiety grow.

In the absence of credible information, rumors were cooked up and flew fast, sending people into confusion. Rumors and hearsay filled the vacuum of information.

It was only after the privy council's chairman Dr. Keshar Jung Rayamajhi made an announcement around noon that the state media informed the people that their beloved king and queen were dead.

The nearly sixteen hours of non-information from the state has been rapped by all. "While the foreign media were freely reporting the incident, what stopped the government from letting people know about the incident concerning their king and queen," asked Anup Bhattarai, a youth from Pulchowk.

Not only during the reporting of the incident, the role of state media has been criticized also in the aftermath.

Many people are asking why the state media did not present the national perspective of the news even as the foreign media were reporting them in their own manner.

"The Nepalese media should have presented their version. That could have stopped many rumors from flying," said Bhattarai. "While the Indian media were broadcasting live interviews and talk-shows on Nepal, our

Media Mela

Last week saw Nepal grab the international media spotlight - but for all the wrong and sad reasons. The wholesale killing of the revered royal family brought newsmongers from across the world to the capital of this Himalayan kingdom.

Newspaper reporters and television crews were seen camping at the major star hotels in Kathmandu to cover the "sensational killings".

From newspapers like The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times and The New York Times to international news weeklies like Time and Newsweek, every major publication had sent in their representatives.

Even the lesser-known papers like Sydney Herald and others reported the incident with great emphasis.

The television crews from BBC and CNN offered round-the-clock coverage of the incident. In fact, these media broke the news not only to international audience but also the Nepalis, as the official media in Nepal were silent at first.

The Indian media, too, gave the unprecedented coverage of Nepal. The television channels like Star News and Zee News were in the forefront of the coverage. The leading newspapers like The Times of India, Indian Express, and Asian Age all gave extensive coverage of the incident. The news channels even had talk shows and debates on the incident.

The news portals on the Internet were filled with Nepal stories. They even ran special sections on Nepal - yahoo.com, bbc.com, cnn.com, were all filled with news from Nepal.

"I was in fact in Nepal to cover the successful expedition of blind mountaineer to the Everest. And now this incident took place," said Karl Taro Greenfeld of Time Asia. ■

own media remained silent."

Even when baseless rumors like poisoning of drinking water and milk spread and sent people to panic, the state-media did not do adequate reporting to assuage the tension. ■

STREET CHILDREN

Struggle For Dignity

Dispossessed and disgraced, the vicious circle of poverty multiplies their pain

By AKSHAY SHARMA

With the onset of the monsoon, among those bracing for the worst are the capital's street children. Wet pavements, slippery surfaces and incessant deluges all conspire to dislodge them from their dwelling.

The world is not deprived of poverty. Experts say that of the 6 billion people on this planet, 2.8 billion live on less than \$2 a day, and 1.2 billion live on less \$1 a day. About 44 percent of these people live in Asia.

Street children are familiar features of many urban centers in the developing world. "These kids consider the kerb as their pillow and the street as their mattress," a philosophically inclined observer describes their plight. "The people of Kathmandu know these children as 'khates', who suffer the brunt of what usually happens in the capital," says a sociologist.

Bimal Pun, who arrived in the capital from Nuwakot, west of Kathmandu, offers a rags-to-rags story. "I've collected garbage, begged and done all sorts of work. Now I work for the owner/driver of a Safa tempo."

For many like Pun, their struggle to make ends meet often manages to draw the attention of the state, but in a disappearing way.

According to social activists, during last year's unrest in Kathmandu, police detained many of these street children. However, law-enforcement officials maintain that there is a reason why 'khates' are the usual suspects. "They are easily led astray because they have no source of income and have been observed to play a vital role in the unrest that usually happens in town," Inspector Rajendra Gurung, told SPOTLIGHT.

There are other threats to the wellbeing of these children. One newspaper recently reported that many street children had been observed sniffing toxic wastes in garbage dumps around the capital. "Paints and gasoline can be especially toxic and damaging to the brain," says Dr. Prashanta Barakoti of Patan Hospital.

Seminars and workshops on the



Street child : Needs to be rehabilitated

plight of street children are generally caught up in the wider debate on poverty. These children live without fundamental freedoms of action and choice that better-off sections of society take for granted.

They lack basic necessities like food, clothes, shelter, health and education. These deprivations hold them back from living the life that everyone values. "Street children also face extreme vulnerability to economic dislocation and natural disasters," says sociologist Anjan Lama. "As they are exposed to the ill-treatment of the institutions of the state

and society, they also find themselves powerless to influence the key discussions affecting their lives." Lama says. All this in turn creates a sense of alienation at such an impressionable age.

The magnitude of the deprivation street children suffer is obviously intense and painful. A poor person's description of what living in poverty means bears eloquent testimony of his or her pain. When escaping poverty becomes impossible, the suffering only multiplies.

"Poverty is a result of economic, political and social processes that interact with each other and frequently in ways that exacerbate the deprivation in which the poor people live," says Suhesh Sharma, who teaches sociology at Tri-Chandra College.

The debate then returns to how limited assets, inaccessible markets, and scarce job opportunities lock people in perpetual poverty. At macro-economic level, experts stress the need to promote opportunities by stimulating economic growth, making the markets work better for the poor people and building up their assets.

However, that does not tell the full story. Sharma says, "In a world where political power is unequally distributed and often mimics economic power, the way in which the mechanism of the state operates may be unfavorable to these young people." One law-enforcement official agrees: "These children are often victims of corrupt and arbitrariness on the part of the state."

Pun says: "I have slept with blanket of newspapers covering my head. I have managed to find a job and I am proud." That sense of pride became apparent when SPOTLIGHT asked him how much he earned in a day. He brushed aside the question with the contempt of a grown-up, reminding us how impolite it is to ask a man his salary.

In the end, Pun's brusque response may have provided planners, policy makers and everyone concerned for their wellbeing a gem of advice: Start helping street children by giving them the respect all human beings deserve. ■

HISTORY

Unsung Hero

Intrigues entered the court not long after King Prithvi Narayan Shah declared Kathmandu the capital of modern Nepal

BY AKSHAY SHARMA

The most authentic records on the country's history are of modern Nepal. Information on the earlier eras is available in bits and pieces in the form of folklore and tales. Historians say medieval Nepal has many stories and anecdotes of enduring value. However, the difficulty in getting written material stands

in the way of putting together a coherent and conclusive series of events.

"It was in the 17th century AD that the emergence of the powerful Kingdom in Tibet with its capital at Lhasa transformed the Kathmandu valley, an isolated sub-Himalayan backwater, into the commercial entrepot between India and central Asia," writes Leo Rose in "Nepal: Strategy for Survival".

An important figure in the annals of modern Nepalese history is Bahadur Shah, the second son of the founder of Nepal King Prithvi Narayan Shah the Great, who was born on Thursday, June 16, 1757 AD. The news of his birth was a relief to Prithvi Narayan Shah, who was in a state of frustration after the defeats in his battles against the Malla kings of the principalities in Kathmandu Valley, say historians.

Prithvi Narayan Shah's dream of national unification had been battered by the loss of his faithful lieutenant Kaji Kalu Pandey. The uni-

fication campaign had been postponed for two years. Prithvi Narayan Shah had hopes that one day this baby prince would become brave, courageous and stout. Moreover, he hoped that he would assist him in his future expansion campaigns. The baby prince was born of Prithvi Narayan Shah's queen Narendra Laxmi.

Gorkhavamsa Brikshya mentions three sons of Prithvi Narayan Shah — Pratap Singh Shah, Bahadur Shah and Narayan Shah. Brian Hogson's report to the India Office Library mentions the sons of Prithvi Narayan Shah's sons as Pratap Singh Shah, Bishnu Shah and Bahadur Shah. Historians remain unclear whether Narayan Shah and Bishnu Shah was the same person. However, it is clear that Prithvi Narayan Shah had more than two sons of his queen Narendra Laxmi. Those who were dead were not counted according to the traditions of the time.

In Prithvi Narayan Shah's Divya Upadesh, the general term denoting Bahadur Shah was Mahila Baba (the second son). According to B.R. Bajracharya, "Shashidhar Upadhaya (an officer of Pratap Singh Shah deputed at Bētiya, India, to report on the person living there in exile) in his letter to Pratap Singh Shah (1777) referred to the Mahila Saheb (the second Sahib) and so did Rana Bahadur Shah in a letter to him."

According to the tradition then, Bahadur Shah was supposed to have received his early education through Brahmins whose task then was to educate the princes and princesses.

Baburam Acharya and Surya Bikram Gyawali, citing Bahadur Shah's poor handwriting, argue that he was not well educated. However, poor handwriting cannot gauge a person's knowledge. Bahadur Shah was supposed to have been trained in such areas of warfare as archery, horse-riding and swimming. Moreover, according to Bajracharya, "He probably took interest in the court discussions and got influenced by the courtiers themselves.

History books suggest that Bahadur Shah was much closer to the Gorkha courtiers because he lived with his father wherever he went. He was supposed to be soft spoken which probably provided him the



King Prithvi N. Shah : Warning against courtiers

opportunity to acquire statesmanship. A historian tells us that by the age of 13, Bahadur Shah's familiarity and attachment with the courtiers had increased. It was then that Prithvi Narayan Shah took over Kathmandu.

Prithvi Narayan Shah appointed his elder son Pratap Singh Shah to look after Kathmandu and the surrounding areas. He went to Nuwakot, where he preferred to live the rest of the 25 glorious years of his life. Bahadur Shah accompanied him.

Historians claim that Pratap Singh Shah soon began to live the life of ease and Pundit Brajanath influenced him into trism. Later, he was known to have married a Newar girl named Maiju and gave birth to Bidur Shah. Swaroop Singh Karki and others who were opposed to the principles of Prithvi Narayan Shah later surrounded him.

Prithvi Narayan Shah could not detach Pratap Singh Shah, who was obsessed by the group's activities, from tantrism. In his Divya Upadesh, Prithvi Narayan Shah writes, "This three-cited Nepal is a cold stone. It is only in intrigue with one who drinks water from cisterns, there is no wisdom, nor is there courage. There is only intrigue. My wish is to build my capital at Dehachok. And I will build

and me houses of leaders and the priests of my people, my family, my courts."

B.R. Bajracharya says Prithvi Narayan Shah was right. No sooner had he declared Kathmandu as the capital of modern Nepal, than court intrigues came into scene. However, it was not the Newars, but the khasas and the Brahmins from the east and west who played the dirty games. They set aside the Gorkha court tradition and misused the power."

An old Nepali adage says, "If you want justice you better go to Gorkha." This was the tradition the forefathers of Prithvi Narayan Shah had set.

Moreover, in his Divya Upadesh, Prithvi Narayan Shah tries to warn his people against the intrigues of the courtiers: "The Chhetris and the Brahmins of the east and the west should not be permitted into the affairs of the court. Why? I

will tell you the outsiders do not obey the court traditions. Keep the command of the king firmly."

Prithvi Narayan Shah's advice firmly indicated the king's power to check misuse and the weak character of Pratap Singh Shah as an enthusiastic politician. It was a natural phenomenon for the old courtiers of Nuwakot to get interested in Bahadur Shah, a promising prince.

The courtiers once made an approach to Prithvi Narayan Shah through his youngest brother Dalit Shah to make Bahadur Shah his heir apparent, suggests one historian.

When Prithvi Narayan Shah died in January 1775 Bahadur Shah was 17 and the court was divided into two factions, one supporting Pratap Singh Shah and the

History books suggest that Bahadur Shah was much closer to the Gorkha courtiers because he lived with his father wherever he went. He was supposed to be soft spoken which probably provided him the opportunity to acquire statesmanship.

other Bahadur Shah. The courtiers surrounding Pratap Singh Shah saw a threat that Bahadur Shah would become the Chautaria (the equivalent of prime minister) and began the first intrigues in Kathmandu by isolating Bahadur Shah.

Pratap Singh Shah's ears were filled with rumors of a possibility of a coup from Bahadur Shah who had a strong hold over the old courtiers and the army stationed at Nuwakot.

Moreover, as Fr Stiller writes on the imprisonment of Bahadur Shah, "Why was a lad of 17 in tears almost before his father's ashes were cold No one knows. There is no documentary evidence to show that he was guilty of any crime. In the absence of such evidence, historians have regularly fallen back on speculations, and this unfortunately has not been unbiased."

Hence, the first episode of the drama

staged by the courtiers in the Kathmandu Durbar was to convict Bahadur Shah and Dalmardan Shah of a coup attempt. Bahadur Shah went on to live his life in exile in Tanahun and went on to Betiya.

After Pratap Singh Shah's death on November 17, 1777, two-and-half-year-old Rana Bahadur Shah was crowned king. On November 22, 1777 Bahadur Shah was recalled to Kathmandu and arrived in the capital around December.

Although checked by the conspiratorial court politics on his return to Kathmandu at the age of 20, Bahadur Shah saw the advent of his political career.

"The Indo-Tibetan war with in 1788-89 brought a challenge to Bahadur Shah's previously unrivalled influence at the Nepali Durbar," Rose writes. "The party opposed to the regent's (Bahadur Shah) rule was not enough to bring his downfall immediately, for he still received support from the various factions in Nepal whose interest was closely tied to his own. In the regent's family there were certain elements of the royal family including Bam Shah and the half brothers of Rana Bahadur, who had regal ambitions of their own; the kala (black) Pandey faction led by Damodar Pandey, and a Brahmin faction led by Gujraj Mishra; the Palpa royal family which had

matrimonial ties with Bahadur Shah — whose position as a semiautonomous vassal of the Gorkha Dynasty held an important figure in Nepal."

"Cipher as the Raja has been and still seems to be," Brian Hogson writes of the blind support of the courtiers to the crown, "omnipotent as the prime minister has been and still seems to be, no one here doubts that if the former willed the death of the latter, the minister's head would be as speedily off as that of Damodar (the Bhimsen Thapa of his day) in 1802."

However, Rana Bahadur Shah forgot the valuable services of Bahadur Shah without which he would not have come to power. Bahadur Shah was charged with innumerable false crimes. Thus, the courtiers simply entertained themselves by the fall of Bahadur Shah, who faded into history unsung.

DEATH OF KING DIPENDRA

Sports Scarred

The sports sector mourns the death of King Dipendra, whose love and patronage it will now miss forever

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Just two days after that fateful Friday night of June 1, late King Birendra was to inaugurate the 5th national games in the Dasarath Stadium.

But, unfortunately, one week later, the stadium had to organize a condolence meeting to mourn the death of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, King Dipendra and other members of the royal family.

Hundreds of athletes, sports authorities and sports lovers thronged the special condolence meeting organized at the Dasarath Stadium in Tripureshwore on June 11. Ministers, officials of the sports council, head of different sports associations, athletes and general public came out in big numbers to pay their tribute to the royalty.

The stadium, which would otherwise have been colorfully hosting the national games, now sports a mournful and deserted look.

The kind patronage given by the royal family, especially by then-Crown Prince Dipendra Bir Bikram Shah, toward the Nepalese sports sector has gone long way in developing the field.

King Dipendra's love for sports was known to all. The interest and enthusiasm with which he visited the sports venues during last year's 8th South Asian Federation Games in Kathmandu was crucial in instilling winning zeal

among Nepalese athletes. As a result, Nepal could win record 31 gold medals to stand in second place behind India during the games.

Many observers say that the credit to the successful organizing of 8th SAF games goes largely to late King Dipendra. "The way he was actively present during the games made sure that the organizers worked hard," said a sports official.

Late King Dipendra's active presence during the games made his popularity to grow by leaps and bounds not only among the players but also among the Nepalese youths. The manner in which he

used to raise confidence among Nepalese players went down very very well among the youths in the country.

"In King Dipendra's death, Nepalese sports sector has received an irreparable damage. While their majesties' death is a big loss to the country, the sports sector is further ravaged by this unthinkable tragedy," said Ganesh Thapa, President of All Nepal Football Association and former skipper of national football team.

Thapa remembers late King Dipendra's interest in sports especially the football. "When Nepal lost to India in preliminary match during the 8th SAF games, he called me and told not to demoralized."

Such was his regard to football that even though he was watching other games in Shahanshah hotel that day, late King Dipendra rushed to Dasarath stadium when he heard that Nepal was leading 2-nil in the semi-final match against Maldives. "I still remember how visibly pleased he was to see Nepal win. He ran to the

crowd-filled stadium and congratulated coach and players himself," Thapa recollects. "He used to say that he could see Nepal lose in other games but not in football."

Being a former national player and the head of football association, Thapa got many opportunities to know late King Dipendra. "All of us in the sports sector received tremendous support and patronage from him."

Late King Dipendra was the patron of the National Sports Council and his last public appearance, too, was associated with sports. In the afternoon of that fateful day, then Crown Prince Dipendra had visited the swimming and shooting complex in Satdobato to take stock of the preparations for the 5th national games. He often came to stadium to watch football matches.

Thapa remembers the day one year ago when former



Late King Dipendra (left) with Thapa : Will be missed forever



Athletes paying tribute : Loss of a guardian

national players played a friendly match against late Prince Nirajan's team in ANFA Academy ground in Satdobato. "We took turns at playing and at one point when I was back in the player's box after muddying myself, late King Dipendra, who was present to watch the games called me. He then told me that he loves playing football in muddy fields while it is raining. When another official asked if he should bring uniform, late King Dipendra almost agreed but later he said he would have played if he didn't have to go to another important event that day." Late Prince Nirajan scored a goal in that game.

Other members of the royal family, too, were keen on sports. Late Prince Nirajan was an avid swimmer. He used to visit to stadiums to watch football matches with his brother. Late Prince Nirajan's first formal program was when he presented third Rupak Memorial Award to former national player Mani Shah.

Likewise, late Princess Sruti was a black-belt in judo. Her last official program was when she felicitated karate player Sushmita Kandel.

Last year, then Crown Prince Dipendra had gone to Sydney to watch Nepalese players play in the millennium Olympics. "He was always present to

buck up the players," said Ganesh Thapa. Just a month ago, he had visited the Asian cross country championship held in Gokarna where he personally approached Nepalese runner Gyan Bahadur Bohara who fainted due to exertion and asked about his condition.

Thapa also says he was impressed with late King Dipendra's simple behavior. "Once in an unofficial program in Godavari school I met him and we were talking about football. Just then an old lady passed us by and she pointed her finger (at him) saying wasn't it the Crown Prince upon which he just smiled and acknowledged. There was no sign of any royal arrogance around him."

In the aftermath of June 1 killings in the palace, the sports sector has lost its patron and guide. "The damage to the sector is simply impossible to be repaired anytime soon," said Thapa. "We feel like orphans."

As the whole country lies in tatters, the time demands all related to the sports field to come together and move ahead by taking cue from late King Dipendra. "We must continue to seek inspiration from his patronage and help fulfill his dream of placing Nepal on international sports map," Thapa said. ■

11TH DAY CEREMONY Unique Tradition

A Brahmin is given away items of luxury, money and an elephant to help the king's soul travel safely to heavenly abode

After devouring the sumptuous meal of 84-delicacies, the 75-year-old Brahmin Durga Prasad Sapkota was donned in regal robe. He sported the glasses and gold-colored shoes, formerly used by late King Birendra. He even wore a replica of the crown. Then he mounted the especially brought elephant and was chased across the Bagmati river to the "katte pati" in Jawalakhel where he would remain for three days after which he will leave the valley.

This is all a part of the 11th day ceremony known as "katto ceremony". The ceremony was organized on June 11 in sacred Kal Mochan ghat alongside Bagamati river in Tripureshwore.



Katto ceremony : Tradition bound

The tradition of "katto" is very old. Historians say this tradition was prevalent even during the Malla period. Malla kings ruled the Kathmandu valley before they were defeated by King Prithvi Narayan Shah around 1768 AD. Ever since, the tradition was followed by Shah kings.

In the Nepalese tradition, it is considered impure to eat anything offered by the house/family of the dead on the 11th day. So, eating "katto" (the meal) is something that is regarded as impure and anybody who eats is called "katte".

It is Brahmins who are offered ikattoi. The person is also offered items of luxuries and personal usages. Sapkota was given gold, jewelries, briefcases, bed, almirah and other items of personal use of His late Majesty King Birendra. ■

ART

Distressing Departure

Munindra Rimal's death is a grievous loss to Nepali film and theater

BY AKSHAY SHARMA

“He was better than most of the film heroes around today,” said Dhiraj Kharel of Dhobhidhara, an actor himself. The reference is to Munindra Rimal, who died last month at the age of 41. After running a fever that refused to recede, Rimal was rushed to Om Nursing Home in Kamal Pokhari. He was later taken to the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Maharajgunj, where he breathed his last.

One vernacular quoted family members as saying the cause of death could not be determined even by the time he had left to meet “his maker”. However, Sameer Chhetri of Balaju told SPOTLIGHT that the cause of Rimal's suffering and death might have been his liver.

Known as a soft-spoken, kind-hearted and dedicated personality, Rimal's career as an actor began in 1985. His premiere presentation was Manahari Bhandari's “Kala Ko Hatya” (The Murder of Art). Rimal was involved in dozens of theatrical performances, a limited number of films and television serials. He also performed many dramas on the radio and wrote some scripts.

“I heard that he wasn't supposed to drink, since he was suffering from complications of the liver,” said an actor on condition of anonymity. “Maybe he had had a drink that day, and maybe that proved to be fatal.”

In a press release issued on behalf of fellow artistes, Rabindra Khadka expressed condolence to the late actor's family. “Rimal's death is a definite setback to the film industry,” the press release said.

Rimal's death raised all kinds of ques-

tions. “Why do artistes die of problems that always seem related to cigarettes, drugs and alcohol?” asked Pramita Pandey, a medical student at the Teaching Hospital, a curiosity that has dogged show-business enthusiasts around the world for decades.

The actor, who was cremated at Pashupati Aryaghat, was working at the Shangri-La Channel's Day TV as the chief of administration. Born in 1959, Rimal is survived by a son and a daughter.

The excellence of Rimal's performances has endeared him to many. “There is an excellent drama that Rimal presented in the Panchayat era—when censorship was at its harshest—called ‘Yug Dekhi Yug Samma’ (From One Era to Another). I remember one verse where he says: ‘The clock at the Ghantaghar says twelve’,” said Dhiraj.

Rimal's performances in “Jemata” and “Andhyaro-Ujyalo” (Darkness and Light) were equally acclaimed and his TV series such as “Pratidwandi” (The Competitor) were highly appreciated. Rimal's career in

Kollywood, which the film industry in Nepal is popularly known as, began with “Anartha” (Meaningless). Saroj Shrestha met Rimal once and was instantly impressed. “He seemed to be such a nice fellow. He looked like a cool guy and someone with brains,” Shrestha recalled.

Rimal won the top prize in a single conversational theatrical drama that thrust him into the limelight. Rimal's performance earned him the second position in a competition last year. He performed the role of Bhakti Thapa (a historical figure in the war between the East India Company and Nepal) in a play entitled “Amar Singh Thapa”.

“His performances were breath-taking,” said Dhiraj, before pausing for what turned out to be a commonly heard lament. “He was just 41 when he died. Maybe it is a fact that only the good die young.”

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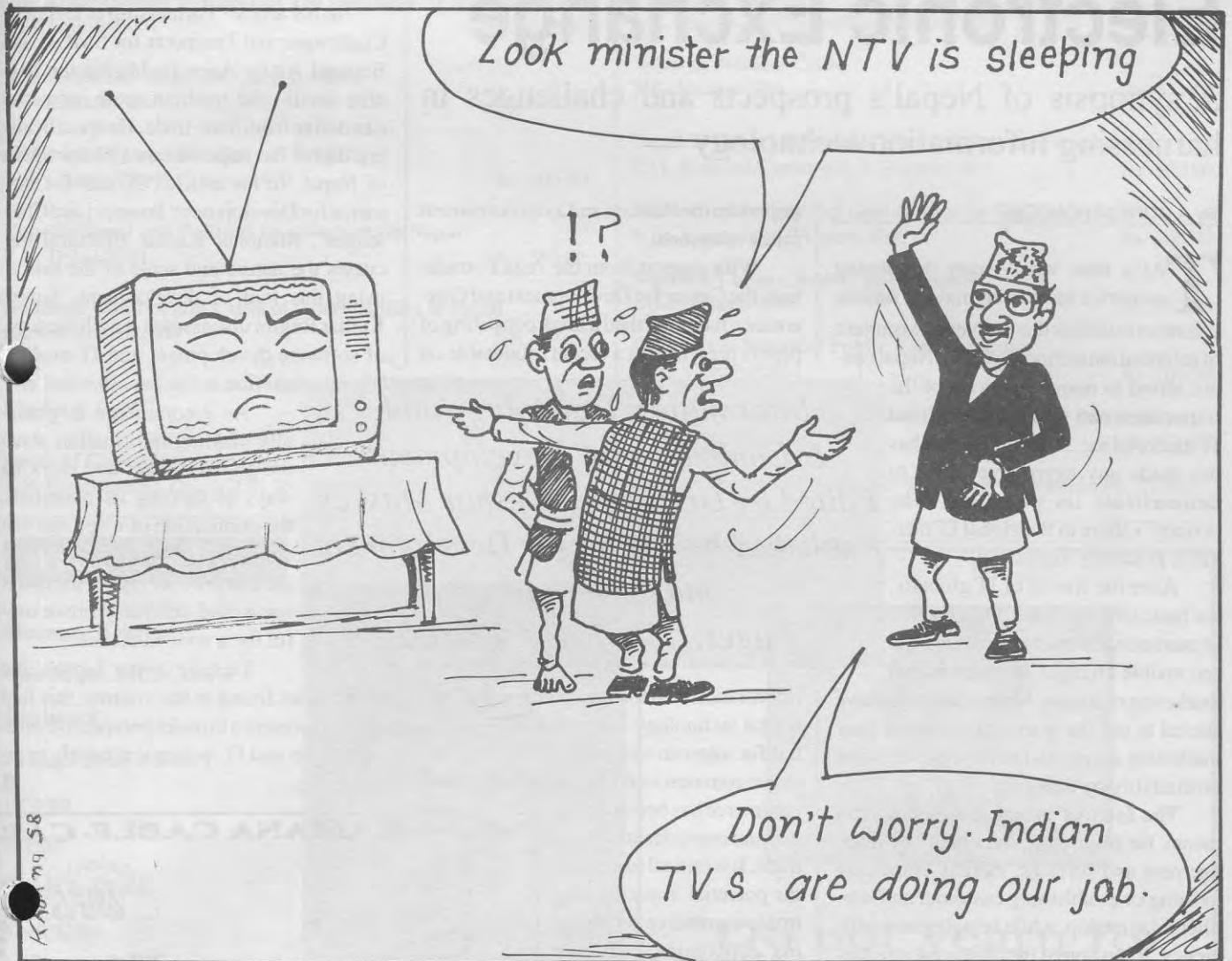
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TRANSITION

EXTENDED: The term of the high-level committee formed to probe the palace killings, by four days, by His Majesty the King on the recommendation of the prime minister.

OBSERVED: The 11th day ceremony of the death of **King Birendra** on June 11 and the 11th day ceremony of the death of **King Dipendra** on June 14, with traditional rituals.

The 13th day ceremony of the death of **King**

Birendra and **King Dipendra** on June 16, with traditional rituals.

DECLARED: Nationwide holiday, on June 11 and June 14, to observe the 11th day ceremony of the death of **King Birendra** and **King Dipendra**, by

the government.

NOTIFIED : All foreign and local journalists, to seek proper accreditation, for publishing/collecting news, by the Department of Information, in order to control baseless news and rumors. ■

BOOK

Electronic Exchange

A synopsis of Nepal's prospects and challenges in harnessing information technology

By A CORRESPONDENT

TAt a time when many developing countries have been making serious efforts to establish themselves as exporters of information technology (IT), Nepal cannot afford to remain ignorant of the importance and trends of the global IT marketplace. Although Nepal has not made any aggressive effort to demonstrate its potentials, the country's share in the global IT market is gradually increasing.

After the spread of IT globally, the basic structures and phenomenon of marketing have changed. One can see visible changes in international marketing strategies. Many companies have started to use the Internet to increase their marketing access and have improved their profitability by doing so.

The Internet is acting as a powerful means for improving the quality of management and services, thereby enhancing existing or establishing customer and supplier relationship, while bringing new efficiency. It is a potent mechanism for reducing costs across the board, including those associated with production, inventories, sales execution, distribution and procurement.

Although electronic commerce is in the early stages of evolution, it is rapidly establishing itself as one of the most powerful tools of development. E-commerce has already achieved widespread recognition, having become a highly visible symbol in the contemporary language of IT.

In Nepal, e-commerce remains in a very early stage. The government has realized its importance to developing market potentials for Nepalese products. The government recently announced a national IT policy and has expressed its commitment to developing the IT sector both as an

important mechanism and as an instrument for development.

With support from the Asia Foundation, the Center for Development and Governance has published a book consisting of papers presented at a recent roundtable on

Information Technology and E-Commerce for Development
 Edited by Dr. Bishwa Keshar Maskey
 Published by Center for Development and Governance
 Pages: 158, Price: Rs.300

information technology. "The Internet and digital technology offer enormous potential for international participation in electronic commerce and, as a result, electronic commerce has become a significant component of world trade. It is critical to examine the potential impact of electronic commerce on emerging economics," says Dr. Bishwa Keshar Maskey, who edited the volume, in his preface.

IT has spread across the globe as marketing, sales and communication phenomenon, even changing the face of certain business sectors. The articles and papers included in this book provide an overview of emerging trends and throw new light on the importance of IT in business-promotion activities.

For a country in the preliminary stages of development, it becomes very essen-


tial to understand the basics of IT and identify areas in which it can be applied most efficiently.

In his article "Partnership of E-Trade: Challenges and Prospects for SMEs", Dr. Bernard Andre Ance highlights the benefits small- and medium-scale industries can derive from the e-trade. He specifically highlights the importance of IT for SMEs of Nepal. In his article "IT and E-Commerce for Development: Prospect and Challenges", Manohar Kumar Bhattarai discusses the nature and scale of the task of using this tool of development. Suresh Kumar Regmi discusses at length the topic of software development and IT-enabled

service. As e-commerce is gradually yielding information about the global market and showing ways of tapping its potentials, the publication of a volume that comprises papers on core IT areas and proceedings of the meeting would definitely prove useful for a wide audience.

Despite some lapses and weaknesses found in the volume, this first effort to present a broader perspective on e-commerce and IT in Nepal is highly commendable. ■

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Now In Town

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- Bridget Jone's Diary
- Driven
- Secret
- It Isn't So
- Tom Cats
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- Freddy Got Fingered



Hindi

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

(Source : Super Star Video, New Road)



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

- SATHYA SAI BABA



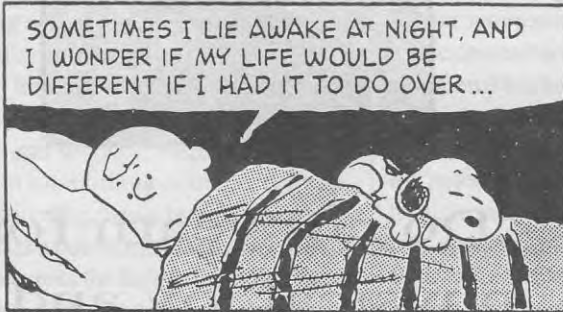
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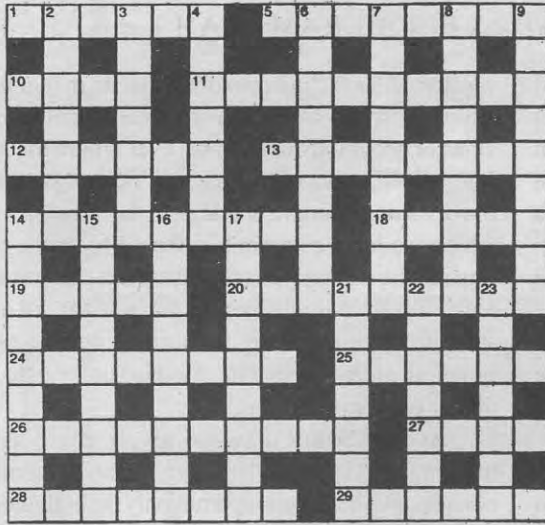
PEANUTS



BLONDIE



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. Jellyfish in sea to west of America (6)
5. Run-down theatre company launches appeal after a month (8)
10. Gibe made by Figaro, say, with out hesitation (4)
11. Yesman offered to kick alcohol, it's said (10)
12. Setter possibly rejected humorist's clue for wading bird (6)
13. Dips initially I not medieval manuscript containing Irish Gaelic (8)
14. He may have a craft and master at sea (9)
18. Italian who made violins in the morning, very early (5)
19. Books about a certain music group (5)
24. Way one is taken in and so on, arousing pity (8)
25. Opinion about island is unacceptable (6)
26. Fairly good daily leaves room in this state? (3,2,5)
27. Bring down fastening device (4)
28. One who recovers and judges again? (8)
29. In Athens, almost ready for a little liquid (6)

DOWN

2. Girl endlessly keen to captivate (7)
3. Not curved, like violin parts needing attention? (7)
4. A conspirator right up a tree! (7)
6. Small craft owned by yours truly in terrible state (9)
7. Constantly repeat ceremony, taking ecstasy and speed (9)
8. Asian captain is shaken, about to be replaced by king (9)
9. Hiding article about evidence of disease (9)
14. Can work upset Frenchman? It makes eating possible (3-6)
15. Added commentary to books held by girl and boy (9)
16. Boned steak from croft, oddly served in dish (9)
17. Size of attractive bar, say, due to be developed (9)
21. Flattering husband closely observed on entering (7)
22. Rubbish a French attorney noticed round building (7)
23. Old stone implement misplaced in hotel (7)

Down: 2. Enamour 3. Unbowed 4. Arbutus 6. Estaminer 7. Reterate 8. Pakistant 9. Thrashing 14. Tin-opener 15. Annotated 16. Entrecote 17. Magnitude 21. Honeyed 22. Rotunda 23. Neolith

Across: 1. Medusa 5. Decrepid 10. Barb 11. Bootlicker 12. Godwit 13. Immerses 14. Tradesman 18. Amati 19. None 20. Gathering 24. Pathetic 25. Notion 26. Not so dusty 27. Nail 28. Redeemer 29. Drachm

SOLUTION

BRIDGE

NORTH 3-23
 ♠ K Q 6 3
 ♥ K J 10 8 3
 ♦ 5
 ♣ A 10 7

WEST ♠ 10 8 7 4 2
 ♥ A 9 7 5
 ♦ A 3 2
 ♣ 3

EAST ♠ A 9 5
 ♥ Q 6 4 2
 ♦ 9 4
 ♣ 9 6 4 2

SOUTH
 ♠ J
 ♥ —
 ♦ K Q J 10 8 7 6
 ♣ K Q J 8 5

Vulnerable: East-West
 Dealer: East

The bidding:
 East South West North
 Pass 5♦ All pass

Opening lead: Club trey

"I wonder men dare trust themselves with men."

— Shakespeare

"Sorry, partner. I should have given you a ruff," apologized East. "However, whether to lead a heart or a club was a pure guess."

"Had you trusted me, there would have been no guess," replied West. "Had you analyzed the problem more deeply, you would have found the setting trick."

With 12 cards in the minor suits, South blasted to five diamonds at this first turn. Against vulnerable opponents, his huge preempt could lose little and might create a substantial swing for his side.

West led his singleton club to dummy's ace, and South led a trump to his 10 and West's ace. West shifted to his spade four, East's ace winning as South dropped his jack.

With no future in spades, East was at the crossroads. He elected to lead a heart, playing partner for the heart ace because of South's preempt. Unfortunately for the defense, South ruffed and then claimed the rest.

Should East have led a club instead of a heart? West argued that he should have, and we side with West. There are two good reasons for leading a club.

After West won his trump ace, if he didn't want a club ruff, he should have tried to cash the heart ace before leading a spade. More convincing, with a singleton spade in South's hand, South's side suit rated to be clubs, marking West's opening lead as a certain singleton.

SAARC: A Vision For Collective Self Reliance

By LATE KING BIRENDRA BIR BIKRAM SHAH

Situated in the Himalayas, Nepal as a sentinel of independence has for many centuries watched over the drama of our sub-continent that stretch from the snowy peaks to the rolling waves of the Indian ocean. Bounded between the high mountains, the seas and the ocean, this landmass from the picturesque atolls to the high mountains constitutes a total ecosystem that governs our life. Each summer the monsoon sets into motion a pattern of life that are all so common to us. Year after year from the planting of rice to the harvesting of wheat, our people through the ages have followed a cycle of events that marks the change of seasons with the seas plays a cooperative role that can only be described as provisionally meaningful.

For centuries Nepal has watched over the moving pageants of peoples and communities who came from different directions in different epochs to make this vast, sunlit region of South Asia their home since the beginning of history. This fact also makes us among the most ancient nations on earth. In the march of times in the region, we have heard exuberant cries of victory as well as the anguish of defeat. We have seen external aggressions and brutal scenes committed through greed and inspired by lust. We have also observed the defeat resulting into humiliation through internal dissensions. In the midst of it all, we have seen dynasties rise and fall, empires come and go, civilizations blossom and wither away. Yet the people of our region have contributed to the world the finest philosophic thoughts, a rich heritage of culture based on the quest of peace, freedom and brotherhood among men.

We all know that the people of South Asia constituting nearly one billion are crammed into a region with relatively limited land and resource base. With the legacies of internal divisions, exploitation and domination by powers beyond us, I think there are many challenges we face in common. The problems of basic needs remain real for the large segments of our people in this region. The world never has had in its recorded history such technological resources as it has today to cope with poverty and hunger on a global scale. But the gradual erosion of the collective spirit has aggravated our problems and frustrated our efforts which is why we have agreed over the years to strengthen cooperation among ourselves in international fora on matters of common interest. The weakening of the global economic interdependence and the disillusionment with the continuing deadlock in restructuring the international economic order have thrust upon us greater responsibilities for collective self-reliance and South-South cooperation on a much larger scale.

Indeed, it is our firm conviction that regional cooperation can strengthen the building of a lasting edifice of peaceful co-existence through initiatives and interactions in the fields like the cultural, scientific, technological and economic spheres. We realize that there exist among us many differences in size, situation, population, resources and the levels of development. In a way, this diversity has been our drawback in the past. But destiny has put us

together in such close proximity that no matter how hard we try to delink ourselves from each other we cannot override the compulsions of geography nor can we ever ignore the lessons of history. It is, indeed, a fact of life that historically, powers have played on our divisions to an extent that even the principles of non-alignment which we have commonly adhered to could come to a danger threatening the very peace and stability of this region. The challenge therefore is whether we are able to turn our weakness into strength by resolving to reach into a principle of agreeable harmony, an order that says not for one but for all to the betterment of all our people of this region.

As the century draws to its close and as each country thinking of a vision for the future, let this gathering be able to chart out a course of action based not only on high ideals alone but also on common sense and hard realism. Let us not forget that the very objectives we have been seeking in so many forums have now become more urgently than ever, a common challenge to us. From the side of Nepal with the high Himalayas as one of our assets and a vast reservoir of yet untapped water resource that can give to the millions of our people a means to fulfill their basic needs, I wish to draw the attention to the fact that there exists this priceless resource waiting to be harnessed for the benefit of our people.

May I add that for the first time in the history of our region, we are gathered here to set a seal on a Charter establishing an institutional framework for deliberations and decisions on what we can do among ourselves to promote the welfare of the peoples of this region by upholding at the same time, the ideals and purposes of the United Nations Charter, the five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence together with those of the Non-Aligned Movement of which we all are sovereign members. While it is our common concern to preserve the independence and security of each country in the region, we have also a common commitment to promote the cause of peace and development for our people. The escalating arms race is draining world's precious resources. The world and, above all, our region urgently needs a new wisdom capable of striking a balance between the claims of security and those of basic needs.

The choice for us in the region is clear. After a long winter of mistrust, coldness and suspicion this region of South Asia looks forward to a new spring giving birth as it were to a new era of enlightened self-interest based on a common desire to replace conflict with cooperation, to substitute discord with harmony, and finally, move from an attitude of selfcenteredness to a widening horizon of contacts in the region in a spirit of reciprocity, give and take, live and let live. May God grant us all such a vision and statesmanship to meet this challenge of making the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation a vibrant reality with our people for their wellbeing, peace and joy. ■

(Excerpts from the address by late King Birendra at the first SAARC Summit held in Dhaka, in December 1985.)

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