

People

After his near-brush with death, Kanak Dixit, publisher of Nepal's most popular

fortnightly newsmagazine Himal, is making good progress is fully alert and in high spirits at a hospital in Kathmandu. "It is a miracle he survived," said noted neurosurgeon Dr Upendra Devkota. Dixit is not receiving visitors, but is expected to be discharged for further recuperation at home soon. Dixit dislocated two thoracic vertebrae and had scalp injuries in a fall while trekking from Jomsom to Pokhara along a trail above the Marsyangdi River in Lamjung district last week. Three rescuers including Kunda Dixit, Kanak's elder brother, plucked the missing trekker from a perpendicular ledge overlooking the swift flowing river on August 23. Unable to crawl back, Kanak anchored himself to a ledge to prevent a further fall into the river and survived for three days and three nights on rain water; he lost his rucksack in a 50 feet tumble.

Dharmasiri Senanayake, minister of Sri Lanka's Aviation and Tourism ministry, died at the age of 67; he was a bachelor. **Dr. V. K. Bahuguna**, Indian Forest Service Officer, received the Queen's award by the Commonwealth Forestry Association, for his role as administrator, teacher and researcher in the field.

Dilip Kumar, Indian film star to receive the Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana award. The award is being given for promoting the cause of communal harmony and national integration.

Khawaja Shong, well-known Pakistani poet has been selected for the Makhdoom award, for his outstanding contribution to Urdu poetry.

The Buzz...

Bangaru Laxman, New BJP chief: "... this distance has not helped either our Muslim brethren or our party. Above all, it has not helped India and her democracy... Muslims are the flesh of our flesh and the blood of our blood."

Amitabh Bachchan, on his participation in the TV programme, Kaun Banega Karorpati, "This is unique. I am not acting, I am playing myself."

Gen. (Rtd) Hameed Gul, former head of the Inter Services Intelligence Pakistan: "Nawaz Sharif did not behave like an honourable Prime Minister of Pakistan during the Kargil conflict."

Javed Jabbar, Pak Federal Information Minister: "Chief Executive Gen. Pervez Musharraf was sincere to resolve masses' problems. The government would eliminate corruption from politics and corrupt politicians would never be allowed to come in power at any cost."

Syed Salahuddin, Hizbul supremo: "Until Indians come forward for meaningful talks that include Pakistan, the Mujahideen will continue its activities in Kashmir."

Khaledia Zia, BNP Chairperson: "We believe in rule of law... We have total respect for law and confidence on court. Law should be allowed to take its own course if any one commits any crime or does any corruption."

Pakistan

Weak Pillars of Democracy

By Navine Murshid



MANSOOR MAMOON, in his last week's write-up *Doctrine of Controlled Democracy in South Asia* section of the *Daily Star*,

has aptly said that "Pakistan is seemingly in a vicious trap and conundrum of authoritarian rule and under the tentacles of army with democracy remaining as elusive as it had been in the past." Democracy is important for the country. But all indications say that General Pervez Musharraf will follow the footsteps of his predecessors -- Ayub Khan and Ziaul Haq -- and is likely to stay in power longer than is expected, even after Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon's push for restoration of democracy in that country. Musharraf has already mapped out his strategy when he said that he would introduce new brand of politics -- genuine democracy -- where the fabled politicians, who were in power in the past, would have no place. When the time will be opportune he may also assume, like his predecessors probably, a quasi-civilian coating for legalising his regime, form his own band of political party and handpick persons loyal to him.

This gives a depressing political culture as far as democracy is concerned. Political culture and conventions are products of a social milieu, which strengthen with the democratic commitment and time. A broad-based and well-organised political party usually serves as a mediator between the social thought and the political action. When it comes to power, it works as a bridge between the society and the state. It is commonly said military coups in Pakistan are because of the failure of democracy and democracy fails be-

cause of weak and corrupt party system. When Pakistan became independent, say historians, Muslim League started losing its influence and prestige and was involved in bureaucratic and military policymaking. In 1954, the Muslim League suffered a crushing defeat in erstwhile East Pakistan provincial election and was reduced in former West Pakistan. Muslim League did not sustain itself as a major political party, due to the several greedy politicians and bureaucrats. On the other hand, the then East Pakistan formed its own party Awami League under the leadership of H.S. Suhrawardy. In 1967, Pakistan People's Party was formed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, which emerged as the party with new vision.

However, it remained as "West Pakistan's party" and Bhutto as "West Pakistan's leader". When erstwhile East Pakistan emerged as an independent country, People's party emerged as the single largest party in Pakistan. Then again due to internal rivalries and the domination of the vested interests, the People's Party lost the popular faith.

Although Pakistan was founded as a democracy after the partition of the subcontinent, the army has remained one of the most powerful institutions of the country. This is in spite of the fact that in recent years the army has stressed that it has no desire to become involved in politics.

Successful governments have always made sure that the military was consulted before they took key decisions, especially when those decisions related to the Kashmir conflict. Political leaders know that the army has stepped into the limelight in the past, and could do so again. After Pakistan formally became a republic in 1956 under President Mirza, it faced an array of serious threats to its stability. Its conflict with India

The Region This Week

No "child soldier"

MAOIST rebels in Nepal have denied allegations from the government and human rights groups that they recruit child soldiers. The leader of the underground Maoist Communist Party, known as Prachanda, said the group had a policy of dissuading children from joining their ranks. The government has accused the rebels of abducting children and forcing them into their armed movement.

Calls for aid

THE chief minister of the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh is calling on central government to help meet the cost of dealing with the devastating floods. The deluge, described by Chandrababu Naidu as an unprecedented calamity for his state, has so far claimed more than 120 lives.

Mori ends Nepal visit

JAPAN'S Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori assured Nepal of continued economic cooperation and lobbied for his country's agenda for reforming the United Nations, especially expanding the membership of the Security Council. Though no major aid commitment was made, Japan has agreed to look into Nepal's proposals for projects on river management, community bridges and an additional highway linking Kathmandu with the Tarai. Mori and Japanese officials said Mori sought support for reforming the UN, particularly articulation of the need in the official speech Nepal would make when the world body meets for its Millennium Summit on September 6-8 in New York.

Dynasty Expands



A baby boy for Robert Vadra and Priyanka Gandhi. The daughter of Indian opposition leader Sonia Gandhi, has given birth to a son, adding another generation to the country's most famous political dynasty. The boy was born at the Sri Ganga Ram hospital in Delhi. "Priyanka Gandhi Vadra gave birth to a healthy boy weighing 2.76 kilograms (6.07 pounds) ...," a doctor at the Sri Ganga Ram hospital in Delhi said, adding that the baby was delivered by caesarean section.

Confidence-building

The Line under Control?

By Mansoor Mamoon



ALL and sundry now equate to the detriment of peace and stability in the entire region thereby presenting the biggest paradox and the starkest irony in the contemporary history. This huge spending on stock piling of armaments is occurring at a time when three hundred million people of the region have no access to fresh drinking water and about five hundred million are mired in absolute poverty. After their brief encounter in Kargil in 1999 and the subsequent hijacking to Kandahar of an Indian airliner there is little doubt that relations between India and Pakistan have never been as bad as they are today and the two countries are moving endlessly towards the direction of sinking their relations further to the depths that have never fathomed before. The mood in Delhi and Islamabad centring their bone of contention Kashmir is the harshest so far and yet another conventional warfare between the two in the near future has not been ruled out by analysts. International pressure, mainly from the US which for strategic reasons is rather keen to play the role of a mediator, failed to melt the glacier and bring about a thaw between the two traditional rivals. India under the administration of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee is pursuing what it calls the Doctrine of Limited War (enunciated by Defence Minister George Fernandes) vis-à-vis Pakistani incursions and fuelling of insurgency in Kashmir.

Nagpur convention of the ruling BJP strong demands were voiced for more drastic action on the part of the Indian government to strike the Mujahideen bases across the Line of Control (LoC) in the valley of Kashmir to eliminate the sanctuaries in Pakistan administered area. General Musharraf, the military ruler in Pakistan, has given the equally stern warning that in the event of such an action India would be taught a good lesson. Such a situation will lead to armageddon in which the entire fabric of South Asia will not only be destroyed but will also cost untold human lives. What is more disheartening is that at the Nagpur convention the Indian government's stand of no dialogue with Pakistani till what it claims as military junta steps aiding and abetting the Kashmiri militants has received overwhelming support. This portends danger. Former diplomat and a member of the opposition Congress (Sonia) Working Committee K Natwar Singh views the current deterioration of India's relations with Pakistan as an alarming development and advises a degree of caution in what he terms as the headlong rush towards orchestrating the international ostracism of the neighbouring state. He has rightly observed: "Who are we to choose the government of Pakistan?"

Viewing dialogue with the military rulers in Pakistan is tantamount to interfering in its internal affairs contrary to recognised international norms and practices. This is nothing but end bilateralism in

the neighbourhood and the emergence of superpower (US) tutelage. He called for unfreezing the situation by talking directly to Pakistan.

Inside India there is a growing demand among the expatriates of civil society to pursue the Gauri doctrine which emphasised good neighbourly relations all its neighbours including Pakistan for creating a congenial environment of bilateralism.

The South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (Saarc) which was formed in the early eighties for creating an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation instead of hostility and hatred, among the seven member-countries has been pushed into backwaters due mainly to Indian obduracy and intransigence. This big brotherly attitude on the part of Delhi has put an abrupt brake to the progress of the structured cooperative spirit in South Asia with the result that the region has now no regionalism. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent overtures to Pakistan is in the right direction. In response to General Pervez Musharraf's desire, Sheikh Hasina has given her consent for a summit level meeting with him in New York during the millennium moot of the United Nations in early September this year.

She is also scheduled to meet Vajpayee separately. Bangladesh had pioneered the formation of Saarc. With Sheikh Hasina as the Prime Minister Bangladesh can once again take the lead in resurrecting Saarc from its hiberna-

tion and reactivate it. An atmosphere of peace and stability in the region is of utmost importance at this crucial juncture when things are gradually turning worse. The holding of the postponed (at the desire of India) summit of Saarc has, thus, become imperative. Except India, the other six members are in full tandem on the need for immediate holding of the summit. They can exert pressure on India to give up its belligerence and once again revert to bilateralism as regards its approach towards Pakistan. The paucity lies not in the Doctrine of Limited War of George Fernandes but in the Gauri Doctrine of good neighbourliness. Only through this attempt at confidence-building in the subcontinent can once again be initiated. The initiative should have come from India, as it is the largest among the south Asian nations. But since the VJP-led NDA government is palpably lacking in this endeavour the other six countries should through their respective as well as collective diplomatic channels convince India of the need for a summit level meeting by way of fresh confidence building in the region for ensuring peace and stability. They can count on the increasing support of the civil society in India which is strongly for such a move.

In the eighties when Jammu and Kashmir issue started flaring up in its present form Indian Prime Minister V P Singh had openly declared in the lower house of Indian parliament that the solution of the

Pakistan expels Indian diplomat

PAKISTAN has ordered the expulsion of an Indian diplomat in Islamabad just two days after a Pakistani official at the high commission in Delhi was expelled. Pakistan said the Indian official P.C. Dey, had engaged in what it called activities incompatible with his official status - a term normally used to mean spying. He has been given a week to leave the country. India gave the same reason when it ordered the expulsion of the Pakistani high commission official Malik Mohammad Rafique, from Delhi.

Furious over Olympic 'snub'

THE Taliban's unrecognised Olympic committee has reacted furiously to the withdrawal of accreditation for two Afghan observers to go to the Sydney Olympics. Afghanistan will be the only nation with no athletes at Sydney, because the International Community does not recognise the Taliban Government. A week ago the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said two officials could go as observers.

Blamed for killing trekkers

A Spanish woman and her teenage son have been killed by a group of bandits while trekking in the Himalayan mountain foothills in northern India. Maria Angeles Girones, 34, and her son Cristobal, 14 both from Valencia, were apparently murdered while camping in the remote Parvati valley. Martin Young, 32, a British man believed to be Girones' boyfriend, was also seriously wounded in the attack.

Kidnap talks

THE mediator negotiating the release of an abducted Indian film star will hold a third round of talks with the kidnapper - notorious bandit, Veerappan. Veerappan abducted Rajkumar from his farmhouse in the southern state of Tamil Nadu on 30 July, and has presented a long list of demands for the film star's release.

Senior rebel surrenders

INSURGENT Maoists' Chief Political Commissar of Bajura district and two associates surrendered before the district administration in Martadi Friday. Ram Bahadur Shahi, 24, surrendered with his associate, Devi Lal Sunar, 24 and a teenager Pandu Sen. Several deserters from the guerrilla group have told authorities that the rebels are slaughtering cows in areas under their control and forcing people to eat the meat. Cow slaughter is banned in the world's only Hindu kingdom. The insurgents have been waging what they call a people's war to establish a communist state in the kingdom.

Flood toll rises

THE death toll from the devastating floods in southern India has risen to more than 130. At one point, thousands of workers were rushed to a breach in a dam on the outskirts of Hyderabad following the heaviest monsoon rains in 40 years. Nearly 40,000 people were evacuated from the area on Saturday as the floodwaters inundated their homes.

Fire chief angry

THE fire service in Bangladesh has criticised safety standards in industry after twelve workers died in a blaze at a garment factory in Dhaka. The fire broke out in the early hours of the morning when the main gates of the factory were locked and there were no emergency exits. The head of the fire service, Obaidul Hoque, said a majority of factory owners lacked proper training and did not care much about the safety of their staff. In the past ten years, more than 200 workers have died in fire-related accidents in the Bangladesh garment industry which employs about a million and a half people.

Militants bomb newspaper office

TWO armed militants set off a powerful bomb in a newspaper office in north-east India, after having ushered employees outside at gunpoint. No-one was hurt in the daily *Lamanyaba's* office in Imphal, the capital of Manipur state. The two men entered the Pan Manipur Youth League building, where the newspaper is located, under the pretence of intending to enrol on a course being held there.

Artificial rain

THE Pakistani authorities have conducted an experiment to induce rainfall in Quetta, the drought-stricken capital of the south-western province of Balochistan. They said the experiment led to a twenty minute downpour. Meteorological Department officials said the rain was the result of cloud seeding.

-- Compiled by Navine Murshid

Nuclearisation

Who Wins, Anyway?

By Ekram Kabir



JAPANESE Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori has ended his tour in South Asia. His main purpose, among others, to visit India and Pakistan was to build pressure on them to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Given Japan's commitment to the objective of nuclear non-proliferation, it is quite expected, Japan is the only country in the world to have experienced the horrors and devastation of nuclear weapons. "It is extremely important that both India and Pakistan sign the CTBT towards preventing nuclear proliferation," Mori was quoted to have said.

His position should be welcomed. Because, for the other big nuclear powers, says Dr. Maqbool Ahmad Bhatti, the non-proliferation agenda is regarded as a political ploy to retain their privileged position under the NPT. But, when Japan advocates abstinence from the acquisition and development of nuclear weapons, one cannot but respect their sincerity. Hundreds of thousands of Japanese who survived

the holocaust in 1945 continue to suffer from the after-effects of atomic bombs, in this respect, feels strongly to warn the world about the risks of n-weapons. In 1945 when atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, the world had less than 10 such bombs, all with the US. In the '80s the total number of nuclear weapons was about 70,000, mostly with the US and the erstwhile USSR. In some 35 years, there was a 7,000-fold increase in the global nuclear destructive capability! No other human activity has seen such a massive build-up in so short a time.

The nuclear tests conducted by India on May 11 and 13, 1998, drew condemnation from Japan. It also imposed economic sanctions against India. Japan tried to stop Pakistan from following suit, offering economic incentives and warning of serious consequences in case Pakistan went ahead. Clearly, Pakistan didn't listen. When it tested on May 28 and 30, 1998, Japan condemned the action and imposed sanctions. The sanctions have caused more damage to Pakistan's economy than it did to India. Over the past two years, while the nuclear dialogues with India and Pakistan has

been conducted by the US, Japan has assigned a special role to itself, on account of the fact that it is the largest source of economic aid for these two countries. As the economies of the two countries have been affected by the withholding of Japanese assistance, with Pakistan facing greater difficulties, Japan has been urging them to sign the CTBT.

There has been extensive debate on the CTBT and NPT, but both India and Pakistan have their own versions on arms control. Pakistanis think that there is no fundamental contradiction or conflict between Pakistan's nuclear capability and the objectives of non-proliferation. Islamabad's nuclear policies, argue pro-nuclear lobby in Islamabad, have been consistent with the key provisions of the treaty. Without being a signatory to the NPT, Islamabad has been fulfilling its obligations, they say. On non-proliferation matters, Islamabad has also been willing to sign legally binding agreements if New Delhi also does so.

So, there is an 'India factor' working here. But these countries must remember that it was 'rivalry' that led to the huge stockpile of weapons among the big five. Says Prful Bidwai, the noted Indian columnist: "Pakistan is the most reluctant nuclear power to have disclosed its cards. It is a reactive power to whatever India does. Because it knows that in the long run, it can't compete with India. They have said they will not deploy if India does not. And if India agrees to sign the CTBT, it will follow suit." Now, has India gained anything from nuclear tests? Says Amartya Sen, "It could not be claimed that India benefited from the 1998 blasts of Pokhran-II, not to mention the well-being of the people, even the strategic goals of the government of India could not have been well served. This was true in the context of India's standing vis-à-vis both Pakistan and China." India and Pakistan consider that signing the CTBT is not a priority issue. Especially because a national consensus in both countries on the issue has yet to be evolved. They are always talking on two points. Firstly, the CTBT will take effect only after all 44 countries on the essential list have signed and ratified it. With the US Senate having refused to ratify it, there is no chance of the treaty being enforced for several years. Consequently, India and Pakistan could have the benefits of signing the treaty, without assuming any of its obligations. Secondly, only 26 countries out of 41 signatories have ratified it. So, these two countries too are delaying ratification.

According to Bharat Srinivasan of Columbia University, the total cost of the Indian nuclear programme in 1998 currency terms to be between \$48 billion to \$72 billion. That's a lot of money, which could certainly be used in the country's anti-poverty programmes. Defence spending on conventional arms also has risen in both countries since last May, and is still rising.