HEARD, SEEN & SPOKEN.

This time the Heard, Seen and Spoken column is a Hotch Potch. I pride myself in thinking that I have purposely done it in this manner. My intention is to arouse the passions and flame the fires burning in the hearts of some of my readers. If what I have written prompts a couple of my readers to take up their pen and write rude letters either to me or to my Chief Editor, then my labours would not have been wasted.

One of my colleagues from Bir Hospital recently remarked 'We are all thieves gathered for the kill.' This started a chain reaction in my mind and I thought of a story told by one of my Chiefs in England. The story went like this:

"When I was a schoolboy I looked up to the medical profession. I wanted to become a doctor to relieve the suffering humanity. When I became a medical student, I still had that idea. As I qualified and became a Houseman, I felt that the medical profession was generally good, but I had my suspicions. As I became a Registrar, I felt that there were good doctors and bad doctors as in any professional group. When I became a Consultant Surgeon I was convinced that all doctors are a gang of crooks. They will cut your throat for six pence and charge you a shilling to stitch it up again."

I came across an old issue of RAMJHAM — Vol. 5, No. 2 of June 1969, to be exact — the other day. I read it with some interest. The article in question was one about increasing proteins in the Nepalese diet and was written by Dr. Amar Giri. He mentions in the article that most of the people in Nepal hardly get 40G. of protein in their food. One of the
measures he suggests is for the development of food processing industries with a view to improve the production and distribution of food. In his conclusion, besides the above, he has enumerated six other avenues of approach.

I. Baidyaraj, would go about it another way—Ours is a land of different food habits, which is eaten in one part of the country is refused by others. I would therefore advocate that with the formation of Margas or Highways in our country, we should arrange for transportation of animal protein which is not eaten in that part to another part where it is eaten. In the terai belt buffalo's meat is not in that great demand and so one sees the permanent movement of 'RANGOS' (buffalos) to say Kathmandu. (In fact food walks down the Highways of Rangos from India and Chyangras and Bhedas from the Tibetan Region of China). On a National basis we could arrange to send the Capital's rats and jackals to the Tharus in Western Nepal, for the meat of these animals are delicacies there. (Tharu children I believe would much rather have crows but to catch a crow is a problem for us non-crow-eaters). In return they could send us Chickens for this is a bird that they don't eat. Of course the chickens would have to use the Flag Carrier of the Everest Country for the other alternative to be made to the tune of 'It's a long, long way to...'. — and who knows if any of the chicks would in fact reach Kathmandu at all.

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Writing about local customs I came across various beliefs of our Nepalese people... I wonder how many medical practitioners have heard that jackal's meat is good for gout, monkey's meat for muscular dystrophy. (Another authority however maintains that eating monkey's meat drives you round the bend). Of course the soup and meat of few days old chicks is supposed to be very potent and strength giving to those who are convalescent and those suffering from tuberculosis. Soup from the shins and hooves of goats (Khuti) has probably been given to many of us at times of stress.

Those who are vegetarians might be interested to learn that a tigress's milk is supposed to be good for pneumonia. This however was not a popular remedy for firstly you had to catch a tigress and secondly the applecart has been upset by a man named Sir Alexander Fleming who discovered penicillin.

Those who would prefer to go in for topical applications can utilise rhinoceros urine, as ear drops, or cow's urine with 'bear' (turmeric) to combat scabies.

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The Medical Association is at loggerheads with the Post & Telecommunications Dept. of H.M.G. Understandably the Medical Association is chagrined for whereas Govt. Employed in administration and journalists pay just a quarter of the charges, the Medical Association request for similar facilities for doctors has it seems been shelved for the moment. Two or three meetings with ministers seemed to be of no avail. I hear it rumoured that the Dept. feels that doctors in fact have more incoming calls than outgoing ones and a reduction is going to be given to doctors, then why not for lawyers, architects etc. If everyone pay at the reduced rates, they used to say. More recently the pendulum has swung the other way and now it is everyone at the full rates.
But the Post and Telecommunications Dept. should be on good terms with doctors. The doctors we at least have learnt to cope with the vagaries of the Kathmandu monsoon season—or even the outbursts of rain in Kathmandu. Rain in Kathmandu is followed by diarrhoea in its wake. At least the doctors have learnt to cope with their patient’s seasonal upsets. This cannot be said for the Post & Telecommunications Dept., for each time there is rainfall at Kathmandu, the internal system, we are told, goes haywire as a result of its being water-logged. (It is a good job the satellites are taking over as a telecommunication system for quite frankly the Trans Atlantic and Trans Pacific cables might pack up any day). If the Russians gave us a few Sputniks as foreign aid, would the Telecommunication Dept. look into the possibility of them being stationed hovering over the Tundikhel, and projecting our telephone messages on to it for further transmission.

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How time flies, for here we are in the midst of summer again. A year ago at this time we had been troubled with reports that the Secretary of the Nepal Medical Association might not return to Nepal after having spent a couple of weeks in the Land of the Rising Sun or the enclave of geishas. He was there at the kind invitation of the Japan Medical Association and I am sure he carried the flag very high during all the deliberations. The story that he might not return was cooked up simply on the presumption that he would have ample opportunity to get lost in Calcutta, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Hong Kong and finally Bangkok once again. Discrete enquiries, painstaking foot-work, Sherlock Holmes deduction by Detective Baidyaraj all pointed to one simple incident at Tribhuvan Airport. For what it is worth it is simply this:-

On the originally scheduled day of departure our Secretary arrived at Tribhuvan Airport to board the Thai Airways for Bangkok. As he arrived there the Thai Caravelle was streaking past on the runway to take to the air. At this particular juncture our secretary was seen to wave his arms in the air, point to his wrist watch from time to time and heard to say, “It is not time to take off yet, it is only 3.45 by my watch”. Though the Thai pilot probably understood English, the noise produced by the vocal cords of our Secretary surely did not reach him, nor for that matter were they any match for the noise made by the Caravelle.

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Earlier in this column I wrote about animal protein, let me now switch to a vegetable one. TOFU is in town. Who you might ask is Tofu? Put simply it is ‘SOYABEAN FINGERS’. My readers might give a cynical smile but, if one can have ‘FISH FINGERS’ in England why can’t you have ‘SOYABEAN FINGERS’, for a product which is exactly similar in outward appearance. In using such a term I am doing nothing more than applying the Rules of the Queen’s English out here.

The advantage of Tofu is that it a cheap protein and can be eaten in a variety of ways. Before I write next sentence however I want to assure readers that I am not
turning 'Heard, Seen and Spoken' into a 'Womens Corner Column'. I simply want to say Tofu is a poor man's 'CHENA' and can be cooked as such. Why not use it at the next party when one has to invite a lot of people.

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The Medical profession in Nepal is bewildered by the forms of treatment practised in this country. The reason why I am prompted to make such a profound remark is because of the news item some time back in the Gorkhapatra that H. E. the Indian Ambassador opened a free clinic, run on Homeopathic lines at Dillibazar. I may perhaps be wrong but my feelings in the matter is that in this 20th Century there is no place for treatment which is not scientific, and the only scientific treatment which I see is the Modern Scientific (so called Allopathic) system of Medicine. What are the other forms of treatment practised out here? Well, to name just a few we have Ayurvedic, Unani and 'Jhar-Phuk'. (This last is practised by practitioners known as Jhankris and Gobhajous.) To add to this the Chinese doctors at Meen Bhawan (and the Nepalese doctors trained at Peking) practise Acupuncture. The Homeopathic system of medicine which India is trying to popularise out here brings the forms of medical practice to a grand total of six. My feeling about all this can be summarised in one word -- ludicrous. One might well ask the medical service of the country -- 'Quo Vadis?' 'Can someone provide me an answer?'

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I have heard it rumoured that Japanese cars currently priced in the Kathmandu market at Rs. 32,000 can be brought to Kathmandu for as little as Rs. 12,000. The only snag of course are getting an import permit, foreign exchange and of course tax-exemption. This is not asking for the impossible for a number of Judges have been given just these facilities. Furthermore one or two doctors availed of this facility, in not too distant past. Consequently cannot the Medical Association form sort of a lobby and request for some if not all of these facilities for the doctors. Make no mistake, if the Medical Association does not do it — No one else will

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