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nation

WEEKLY

**DASHAIN
SPECIAL**
EXTRA 20 PAGES




diaspora

DASHAIN

RS. 30 ISSN 1811-721X

From Brussels to Beijing Nepalis celebrate Dashain



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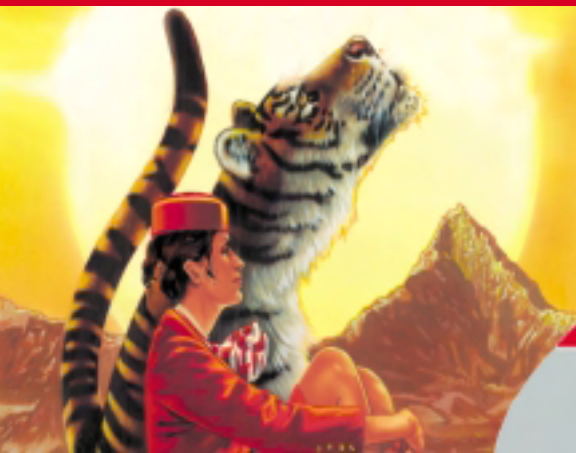
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Letters



“ The decision to allow Gurkhas the choice of British citizenship is too little, too late ”

PURNARAI

No American NGO

WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL Nepal would like to thank you for profiling one of our staff members and highlighting our works in Jumla and Kalikot through Midwest Relief and Rehabilitation Program (“Jumla Vision,” by Pragyan Subedi, October 17). We appreciate the article as a whole but would like to clarify the following points:

World Vision is not an American-based NGO but it is an internationally governed partnership organization with international board members, drawn from different parts of the globe, that have equal voting rights. Our international offices are located in Geneva and California and our Asia Pacific Regional Office is in Bangkok.

We appreciate Yuban Malla’s leadership and contribution to the organization and our work in Jumla and Kalikot. At the same time we would like to recognize the hard work and dedication of all the staff members, the local community, our partners and donors for whatever we have been able to achieve through the program.

PRADEEPSILWAL
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL NEPAL

as the ultimate savior. That points to a deep-seated inferiority ingrained in the Gurkha psyche—that the “white masters” can do no wrong. While I am personally no fan of organizations like the Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen Organization (GAESO) especially their rhetorical war against everything British, I have come to respect what they stand for. They are at least speaking for a large section of the Gurkha community who feel betrayed by the British. It is only in recent years, especially after the restoration of democracy in 1990, that the Gurkhas could speak up more openly about their grievances, and the Nepali media took up their cause with a new gusto. I would like to thank Nation and especially Satish Jung Shahi for covering the issues related to the voiceless community.

PURNARAI
LAGANKHEL

Too Little, Too Late

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT’S decision to allow Gurkhas the choice of British citizenship is a case of too little, too late (“Halfhearted Welcome,” by Satish Jung Shahi, October 17). There’s a tendency among the Gurkha communities in Nepal to treat everything Britain offers them as a huge achievement and to regard Her Majesty’s Government



Election at gunpoint?

NO MATTER WHAT PRIME MINISTER Deuba says, holding free and fair election now is impossible ("Polls at Any Price," October 17, by John Narayan Parajuli). Unless he wants the minimal voter turnout and proxy votes to hit the headlines. Anyone closely following the events in Kashmir will tell you that the elections there are just not a good example to follow.

The peace process isn't easy, either. Bringing the Maoists to the table for any meaningful dialogue seems a remote possibility without the government agreeing on constitutional assembly, no strings attached. The Maoists are unlikely to budge for anything less.

The appointment of Deuba clearly showed the escapist attitude of the King and his unwillingness to remain within the bounds of constitutional monarchy. When Deuba was restored as prime minister, he was bestowed with the onus of holding elections. He is at least supposed to "initiate the process" of elections by next April. In the event of his failure to hold elections, Deuba is likely to take full advantage of the leverage offered to him by the King (the prime minister need not hold elections but only "initiate the process" for one by next April). There is every possibility that he will manipulate the royal caveat to his liking. In any case, elections are just not possible.

NAVIN PARAJULI
GAUSHALA

WHY DO WE NEED THE POLLS IF THE next government will come out of the same mix of political parties? How different will the new government be, than those of past 12 years? Not very much, I am afraid. Without the Maoists being brought to the mainstream politics, the elections will be fruitless. The new government will again claim to be the representatives of the people even if the majorities shirk away from voting.

What have we got to vote for after all? Unless the old generation is ready to make way and a fresh line of visionary leaders emerges, what is the use of going to the polls to vote for the very

people who have led us into the current mess? And, what will we be trying to prove by voting at gunpoint? That, this is how a representative democracy works!

The only way out of the quagmire, for now, is constituent assembly. I cannot understand why so many people are vehemently against doing away with our current Constitution, which is seriously flawed and defunct, as has aptly been shown by the events of, and after, the royal takeover on October 4. We can draft up a more inclusive constitution, which adheres strictly to egalitarian principles, the bedrock of a democratic society. Constituent assembly could be a good beginning. And while so doing, we have to make sure that the true power rests with the people and constitutional bodies this time, and not with a handful of interest groups, who claim to be the people's representatives while they are busy playing their own power politics. And, no one should be sidelined in the peace process, for all-round participation will hold the key to legitimacy. The neglect of any of the quartet—the Maoists, the monarchy, the political parties and the civil society—may only serve to fester the problem in the long run. Lastly, the future of Nepal will largely depend on how the King intends to define his role within a constitutional framework. Deep-rooted suspicions will remain about his intent so long as he remains an active ruler.

NIRMAL TULADHAR
KATHMANDU

Correction

Prakash Sharan Mahat is the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, not assistant minister as it appeared in the report "Halfhearted Welcome" (Vol.1, No.26).

S B Subba as the ex-chairman of Bhutanese Refugee Repatriation Representative Committee, not the chairman, as it appeared in the report "Forgotten Souls" (Vol.1, No.26). Bhampa Rai is the new chairman.

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Nation Weekly, The Media House, Tripureshor,
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Tel: 2111102, 4229825, 4261831, 4263098

EDITOR: Akhilesh Upadhyay
editorial@nation.com.np

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR: Suman Pradhan

COPY EDITOR: John Child

SENIOR STAFF WRITERS: Sushma Joshi, Satish Jung Shahi,
Tiku Gauchan

STAFF WRITER: John Narayan Parajuli

PHOTOJOURNALISTS: Sagar Shrestha, Das Bahadur Maharjan

DESIGNER: Raj Shrestha

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS: Indra Adhikari, Yashas Vaidya

AD & CIRCULATION DIRECTOR: Krishna Shrestha

OPERATING MANAGER: Ashish Bhattarai

ASST. MARKETING MANAGER: Rameshwar Ghimire
ad@nation.com.np

SUBSCRIPTION OFFICER: Akshaya Shrestha

subscription@nation.com.np

ASST. SUBSCRIPTION OFFICER: Jeshna Karmacharya

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER: Angiras Manandhar

MARKETING CONSULTANT: Kreepa Shrestha

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E-mail: editorial@nation.com.np

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The Media House, GPO 8975, EPC 5620

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	Lukla	YA103	Daily	0710	0745	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Lukla	YA 105	Daily	0715	0750	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Lukla	YA107	Daily	0840	0915	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Lukla	YA113	Daily	0845	0920	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Lukla	YA109	Daily	0850	0925	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Lukla	YA 115	Daily	0855	0930	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Lukla	YA117	Daily	1020	1055	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Lukla	YA119	1,2,4,5,6,7	1025	1100	1665	91	DHC-6/300
	Taplejung	YA 901	3	1025	1135	2695	164	DHC-6/300
	Phaplu	YA181	1,3,5	1030	1105	1480	85	DHC-6/300
	Rumjatar	YA 221	2,4,7	1030	1105	1245	61	DHC-6/300
	Manang	YA 601	6	1030	1130	2995	122	DHC-6/300
	Meghauly	YA171	Daily	1130	1200	1340	79	DHC-6/300
	Bharatpur	YA 173	Daily	1200	1225	1160	61	DHC-6/300
	Bharatpur	YA 175	Daily	1400	1425	1160	61	DHC-6/300
	Simara	YA 141	Daily	1330	1355	970	55	DHC-6/300
	Simara	YA 143	Daily	1500	1525	970	55	DHC-6/300
Kathmandu	Kathmandu	YA 301	Daily	0700	0800	4800	109	SAAB 340B
Kathmandu	Kathmandu	YA 302	Daily	0705	0805	4800	109	SAAB 340B
Kathmandu	Kathmandu	YA 303	Daily	0820	0920	4800	109	SAAB 340B
Biratnagar	YA 151	Daily	0945	1025	2585	85	SAAB 340B	
Biratnagar	YA 153	Daily	1430	1510	2585	85	SAAB 340B	
Biratnagar	YA 155	Daily	1640	1720	2585	85	SAAB 340B	
Pokhara	YA 131	Daily	0815	0840	1710	67	SAAB 340B	
Pokhara	YA 137	Daily	0955	1020	1710	67	SAAB 340B	
Pokhara	YA 135	Daily	1415	1440	1710	67	SAAB 340B	
Bhairahawa	YA 163	Daily	1555	1630	2220	79	SAAB 340B	
Bhadrapur	YA 121	Daily	1135	1225	2950	109	SAAB 340B	
Nepalgunj	YA 177	Daily	1155	1250	3500	109	SAAB 340B	
Biratnagar	Kathmandu	YA 152	Daily	1050	1130	2585	85	SAAB 340B
Biratnagar	Kathmandu	YA 154	Daily	1535	1615	2585	85	SAAB 340B
Biratnagar	Kathmandu	YA 156	Daily	1745	1825	2585	85	SAAB 340B
Pokhara	Kathmandu	YA 132	Daily	0905	0930	1710	67	SAAB 340B
Pokhara	Kathmandu	YA 138	Daily	1045	1110	1710	67	SAAB 340B
Pokhara	Kathmandu	YA 136	Daily	1505	1530	1710	67	SAAB 340B
Bhairahawa	Kathmandu	YA 164	Daily	1655	1730	2220	79	SAAB 340B
Bhadrapur	Kathmandu	YA 122	Daily	1250	1340	2950	109	SAAB 340B
Nepalgunj	Kathmandu	YA 178	Daily	1315	1405	3500	109	SAAB 340B
Lukla	Kathmandu	YA 112	Daily	0750	0825	1665	91	DHC-6/300
Kathmandu	YA 102	Daily	0755	0830	1665	91	DHC-6/300	
Kathmandu	YA 104	Daily	0800	0835	1665	91	DHC-6/300	
Kathmandu	YA 106	Daily	0805	0840	1665	91	DHC-6/300	
Kathmandu	YA 108	Daily	0930	1005	1665	91	DHC-6/300	
Kathmandu	YA 114	Daily	0935	1010	1665	91	DHC-6/300	
Kathmandu	YA 110	Daily	0940	1020	1665	91	DHC-6/300	
Kathmandu	YA 116	Daily	0945	1025	1665	91	DHC-6/300	
Kathmandu	YA 118	Daily	1110	1145	1665	91	DHC-6/300	
Kathmandu	YA 120	1,2,4,5,6,7	1115	1150	1665	91	DHC-6/300	
Phaplu	Kathmandu	YA182	1,3,5	1120	1155	1480	85	DHC-6/300
Meghauly	Kathmandu	YA172	Daily	1120	1155	1340	79	DHC-6/300
Rumjatar	Kathmandu	YA 222	2,4,7	1250	1325	1245	79	DHC-6/300
Manang	Kathmandu	YA 602	6	1145	1245	2995	122	DHC-6/300
Taplejung	Kathmandu	YA 902	3	1150	1300	2695	164	DHC-6/300
Bharatpur	Kathmandu	YA 174	Daily	1240	1305	1160	61	DHC-6/300
Kathmandu	YA 176	Daily	1440	1505	1160	61	DHC-6/300	
Simara	Kathmandu	YA142	Daily	1410	1435	970	55	DHC-6/300
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1. WE SALUTE YOU: Nepathya pay tribute to journalists at Harmony for Humanity, a concert organized by nepa-laya, the band's promotion company
 2. DASHAIN AAYO: A traditional ping, a swing, being set up at Pashupati
 3. THE RIGHT TO KNOW: Human rights activists attend a fast-unto-death organized by relatives of the "disappeared." They were demanding that the whereabouts of those missing be made public.
 4. AWARENESS: A street play on child rights organized by CWIN at Patan Sdurbar Square
 5. COME OUT TO PLAY: Children affected by the conflict at a picnic organized in the Balaju gardens
- photos: nw/SS and B Rai



4



3

Picture of the Week



MAIDEN VOYAGE: Perhaps for the first time, cameras and cameramen jostled inside the Supreme Court where Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala appeared in response to a court summons for contempt of court



Unfettered Right

All public officials—even the most reviled ones—have right to due process law. The CIAA will do well to understand that.

BY JOGENDRA GHIMIRE

My last column, “Watching the Watchdog” (Vol.1, No. 25) seems to have caused some ripples among the officials at the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority, the CIAA. I am happy to note that one of them, Phanindra Gautam, a former colleague of mine at the National Human Rights Commission and currently a senior law officer at the CIAA, responded with a full-page article on these pages last week. He questioned my understanding of the CIAA vis-à-vis the right against self-incrimination. The constitutional right against self-incrimination that former Prime Minister Koirala, or for that matter any other public official, enjoys against the CIAA summons, of course, was the cornerstone of my argument in defense of Koirala.

This article elaborates further some of the issues I raised in “Watching the Watchdog” and my position on issues Gautam raised last week.

There should be no confusion in anybody’s mind that the CIAA, as a constitutional authority entrusted with the powers to investigate abuse of authority by public officials, has all the right to ask them to appear before it. My concern regarding the current role of the CIAA is not to argue against its exercise of this right. It is to argue that because of the way the CIAA has gone about its business, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, for an individual to assert his constitutional right to due process. That should be reason enough for concern, and hence my call for the need to watch the watchdog, the CIAA.

It should, however, not be mistaken that I was trying to advocate for Koirala’s case. That has been taken care of by some of the best constitutional lawyers in town. My argument is that even if Koirala decides not to cooperate with the CIAA investigation on his property holdings, he should still go to the CIAA, assert his right against self-incrimination and force the constitutional body to take a decision regarding an un-cooperating individual. Such a stance from Koirala, I hope, would force the CIAA to think twice before taking shortcuts to investigations and detaining individuals during investigations. With a lesser public figure, the commission could well be tempted to do otherwise. The concern, therefore, is not for Koirala’s right per se but for the rights of the lesser public figures who should be able to use the right to self-incrimination without fearing reprisals from the CIAA.

My fear, based on anecdotal evidence, is that if a potential accused does not cooperate with the investigators, he is likely to be arrested during the investigation. Investigators could cite a host of clauses provided in the CIAA Act while doing so. Take the case of former minister Govind Raj Joshi. He was detained because, as Gautam states, “if he were not detained, he may have caused adverse effect on the course of investigation.”

That does not explain Joshi’s side of the story. I have very little sympathy for Joshi but a former minister, who was being hounded by the media, pursued by the state machinery and ostracized by a substantial segment of the political class, is unlikely to stand in the way of the CIAA investigators.

Gautam argues that the CIAA summons to individuals is in line with the principle of natural justice, which requires an authority to listen to the accused before condemning him. While I do agree with the principle, it should also be noted that not so long ago, the CIAA caused the ouster of the then Minister Sharbendra Nath Shukla from the Cabinet. His crime: As a witness for RPP leader Rabintra Nath Sharma, he appeared before the Special Court, where he spoke against the CIAA. The case was illustrative of the fact that there are limits to the CIAA’s “patience” when it comes to hearing the “other side” of the story.

The concern about the CIAA’s use of the principle of natural justice is that while it is presented as an option, it is enforced like a compulsion. The implied message to a lesser-known public official: If you don’t cooperate, you will pay a price. It would be interesting to know if there is a practice at the CIAA, for example, of informing those who appear before it that they may decline to answer any questions and that such a decision would be respected? My understanding is no. Does the CIAA allow legal counsel to be present before and while taking statements from any potential accused? Any lawyer will testify in the negative. What percentage of suspects have asserted their right against self-incrimination before the CIAA? Next to nothing.

Considering the powers that the CIAA enjoys under the Constitution and the CIAA Act, public officials know that the CIAA could do a lot of damage to an individual just by following the legal procedures leading to prosecution, even if the ultimate verdict of the court does not go in the CIAA’s favor. It has the power to arrest the person during investigation; the filing of a case by the CIAA results in suspension of the official in question; and the very public nature of the CIAA investigations makes it impossible for anybody to come out of the ordeal squeaky clean.

The law does not provide that the CIAA can arrest a person who declines to cooperate with the investigation. But the CIAA Act does provide the constitutional body with discretionary power to determine the need for such an action. It is in light of such elements of discretion that high-profile figures—like Koirala—could be test cases to force the constitutional body to use its authority wisely, thus setting a useful precedent.

Gautam is right that the fundamental right against self-incrimination does not give anybody immunity from corruption charges. I neither argue for one. In fact, the CIAA should be commended for its vigorous pursuit of corrupt public officials. Still, it’s not an unfettered luxury. While pursuing the guilty, it is of paramount importance that the investigators pay maximum heed to the minutest of due process and constitutional protection that every individual—no matter how hated and reviled—is entitled to. That is the crux of my argument. **N**



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'Thinker'
by Auguste Rodin



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ROYAL RIDE: Crown Prince Paras out for a ride on his motorbike with a security contingent at Tinkune

New birth

Princess Prerana gave birth to a son on Sunday, October 10, at Birendra Military Hospital in Chhauni. The baby weighed 2.5 kilograms. The health of both the mother and the baby is reported to be sound. King Gyanendra, Queen Komal and other members of the royal family visited the hospital.

Bhutanese call

A Bhutanese refugee delegation to Geneva led by Tek Nath Rizal, chairman of the Human Rights Council of Bhutan has asked the international community to exert pressure on Nepal, Bhutan, India and the United Nations Human Rights Commission to find a durable solution to the refugee problem. The repatriation process that was to begin on February 15 this year has been stalled after refugees pelted stones at Bhutanese officials in the Khudunabari camp

last December following provocative statements from the Bhutanese officials. The Joint Verification Team assigned to verify the refugees' status had concluded that 75 percent of refugees in the camps are Bhutanese.

Estate closure

Half a dozen tea estates and tea processing plants were closed in Panchthar in the last few months due to Maoist threats and lack of transportation facilities. The Maoists forced the Pathibhara Tea Garden in Oyam, Panchthar to close down, alleging that Padma Sunder Lawoti, the RPP leader, owned a share of the business. Kantipur daily quoted the manager of Kanchenjunga Tea Estate, Nirananda Acharya, as saying that the Maoist act had upset their efforts to declare the northern region of the district as an organic tea zone. More than Rs.

80 million has been invested in the tea estates.

Diesel seizure

The Rupandehi District Market Follow-up Committee confiscated petroleum products worth Rs. 100,000 while they were being transported illegally to India. The committee confiscated more than 14 drums of diesel fuel at the Belhiya transit point. To control the illegal export of petroleum products to India, the government has limited fuel sales to 50 liters of diesel for long-route vehicles and 20 liters for short-route vehicles plying to India from Nepal. In one month the committee has confiscated more than 3,010 liters of diesel that was being taken to India. A large number of trucks and buses enter Nepal from India with empty tanks to have them filled in Nepal, as the price of diesel in Nepal is lower by Rs. 7 per liter due to government subsidies.

Media policy

In a new 11-point media policy made public, the government has banned all types of commercial wall paintings and posters in the Kathmandu Valley. The Minis-

try of Information and Communications stated that the decision was made to discourage outdoor advertisements and to divert the money used for these forms of advertising to the media sector. All media houses will have to file an audit report every year, and publications will not be allowed to use more than 40 percent of their total space for advertisements. The government also decided to provide Rs. 1.5 million immediately to the Federation of Nepalese Journalists to set up a fund for the welfare of conflict-hit journalists. Another Rs. 100,000 will be provided to construct FNJ district offices.

FDI in telecom

The government has invited foreign investment in the telecommunications sector. It says that Nepal's telecom policies and laws are liberal and investor-friendly. Telecom policies permit foreigners to have up to an 80-percent share in investments in the telecommunications. The statement was issued during an Israeli telecommunications conference held in Kathmandu.

Temporary truce

After weeks of drama and a war of statements between the government and the Maoists, the Maoist supremo Prachanda on Friday, October 15, announced a unilateral truce for nine days, starting October 20 through the festival of Dashain. In a statement issued to media houses, the Maoists said they would postpone all their military action for now, keeping in mind the wishes of human rights organizations and the civil society. However, in the same statement, Prachanda warned his cadres to remain vigil against "conspiracies and maneuvers" of the present government. The Maoists have also accused the Deuba government of failing to answer "clearly and concretely" the six-point question they put to the government regarding its legitimacy and its stand on constituent assembly.





DAY OUT: Non-resident Nepalis surveying the site for a new *kriyaputri* building with FNCCI members at Pashupatinath on NRN Day, October 11.

NRN Day

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba assured Non-Resident Nepalis, or NRNs as they are better known, that the government is preparing a law that will give them legal status in the country. The assurance came at a meeting between the prime minister and representatives of the NRN International Coordination Council. Non-Resident Nepalis have been saying that without clear legal provision, it would be nearly impossible for them to invest in Nepal. The NRN council also donated Rs. 400,000 to Nepal Tuhura Kalyaan Sangh in Kirtipur.

SC deadline

The Supreme Court ordered the government to submit information about individuals who have gone missing after being arrested by security forces. Deciding on a writ filed a month ago by Babu Ram Giri, secretary of the Human Rights Organization of Nepal, the apex court ordered the government to present the details of findings by a committee formed to investigate the missing cases. The petitioner in his writ had urged the court to issue an order to the government to disclose the whereabouts of all the missing individuals. The government has already made public the whereabouts of 204

persons said to have been missing. The investigation committee published a list of 126 additional missing individuals.

Drug peddlers

A team of the narcotics police unit arrested Kapil Dev Mahato, an Indian drug peddler, with 500g of brown sugar in Kathmandu. Police arrested him at Kalanki with the drugs at around 6 in the morning. Mahato is from Champaran in the Indian state of Bihar. He was on the police blacklist of drug peddlers in the Valley. He was nabbed after police launched a special operation to locate him by calling his pager. Seven others involved in drug smuggling have been arrested in the Valley during the first week October.

Mountaineering accident

Two Japanese climbers, Michio Sato and Hideji Nazuka, were killed in an avalanche as they were climbing Annapurna I. The Japanese climbers had been reported missing by the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation. They were caught in an avalanche at Camp I on Mt. Annapurna. Sato was leading a four-member team up the 8,091-meter peak. The climbers' bodies have been recovered. The other two members of the team, Toshio Yamamoto and Hideki

Nishimura, are reported to be safe. The extent of their injuries is unclear.

Security posts

The government has decided to remove security posts from schools and has asked the security agencies to comply. Security forces have set up camps at various schools, mostly in conflict-affected areas, following growing Maoist activities in schools. The Maoist-aligned All Nepal National Independent Students Union-Revolutionary has been demanding the removal of Army and police posts from schools before sitting for negotiations with the government. The government, for its part, has proposed that rebel students stop strikes and other violent activities in educational institutions.

Women in uniform

About 500 women from a pool of 800 applicants passed the physical fitness qualifications for officer-level positions in the Royal Nepal Army. They now have to compete with 1,100 male qualifiers in tests of mental abil-

ity to qualify for the Army positions. This is the first time that the RNA has recruited women for non-technical officer-level positions.

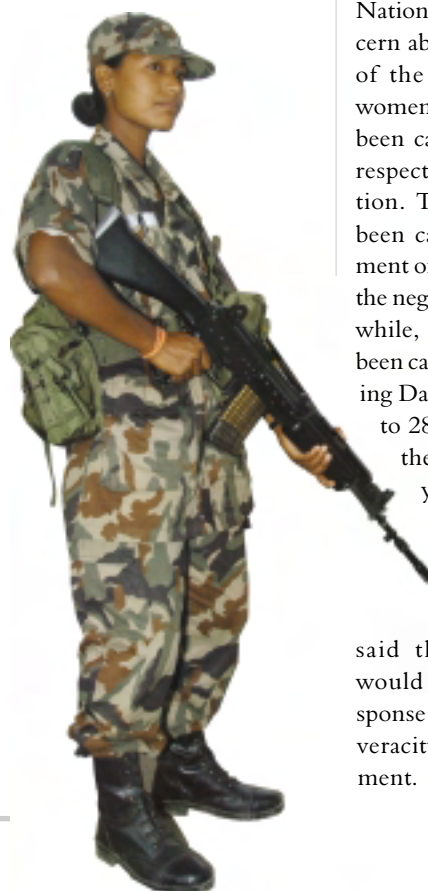
Landslide toll

Two members of a family were killed and two others injured in a landslide at Samkot VDC in Dhading. Those buried in the landslide were 56-year old Somlal Tamang and his 9-year old son. The landslide buried them while they were sleeping in a water mill at Sukekhola. The injured were brought to Kathmandu for treatment.

U.N. interest

The United Nations has shown repeated interest in monitoring a ceasefire if both the government and the Maoists agree and ask it to do so. U.N. resident coordinator for Nepal, Mathew Kahane, told the Kathmandu Post that agreements made at the time of a ceasefire declaration should be respected by both the sides and should involve some monitoring mechanism. The United Nations has expressed its concern about the adverse effects of the ongoing conflict on women and children and has been calling on both sides to respect the Geneva Convention. The Maoists have also been calling for the involvement of the United Nations in the negotiation process. Meanwhile, a temporary truce has been called by the Maoists during Dashain from October 20 to 28. As we went to press, the government had not yet responded to the Maoist move.

Mohammed Mohsin, the government spokesman, said that the government would issue a collective response only after verifying the veracity of the Maoist statement.





World Record

Twelve-year-old Sagun Khatri set a new world record for randomly memorizing 100 objects. He demonstrated this ability to memorize and recall random objects before an audience that included the minister for science and technology, Baram Ghartimagar, academicians, child specialists and journalists. Sagun, an eighth-grade student at Little Angels' High School in Hattiban, broke the record of Justin Hartely of the United Kingdom. Hartely had memorized 75 objects in 2002. Sagun's bid for a world record will be submitted to "The Guinness Book of World Records," the global authority on record-breaking achievements. The school will send the videotape of the authentication test conducted on him along with all relevant documents to the Guinness Book to formally register Sagun's claim. If the authorities approve, Sagun will also set a record for being the world's youngest person to memorize so many objects. "Sagun has demonstrated the ability to memorizing 100 objects and recall them in sequence, reverse sequence and at random," school principal Umesh Lal Shrestha said. "His memory is sharp, and he can memorize the names of all 45 students of his class without any effort." Sagun, who likes playing lawn tennis and football, wants to become a neurosurgeon or a scientist when he grows up.

BANK OF KATHMANDU IN BIRATNAGAR

The Bank of Kathmandu has started banking transactions in the industrial city of Biratnagar. The bank has branch offices in Kathmandu, Hetauda, Dhangadi, Nepalgunj and Pokhara. With the start of services in Biratnagar, the bank now has branches in all the five development regions of the country.

YETI ACQUIRES SAAB 340B

The newest addition to Yeti Airlines' fleet, a SAAB 340B aircraft, arrived at the Tribhuvan International Airport. The 36-seat aircraft is the third acquired by Yeti Airlines since it started operations in September 1998 with DHC-6-300 Twin Otter aircraft. Yeti Airlines now has the largest seat capacity in the domestic sector and offers a wide network of domestic flights. The company employs more than 300 people.

DISCOVER DTS-I UNVEILED

Hansraj Hulaschand, the authorized distributor for Bajaj Auto, has launched the Bajaj Discover DTS-I motorcycle in the market. The Discover DTS-I has a 125cc engine producing 11.5 horsepower. The bike is available in four colors and is equipped with an advanced feature called the ExhaustTEC (torque expansion chamber) technology for the exhaust system that improves engine torque at low rpm and optimizes engine performance. The Discover is priced at Rs. 105,900. Hansraj Hulaschand is offering a "scratch and win" scheme, with prizes of Rs. 4,000 to 10,000, on the purchase of any Bajaj bike.

COSMIC YINGANG CY 100-7

Cosmic Yingang Motorcycle Manufacturing Company has launched the new CY 100-7 bike. The bike is targeted at city dwellers. Produced in Nepal, the bike has features like self-start, gear display, fuel indicator, time clock and lighted rearview mirror. It is available in three different colors-black, red and blue. The CY 100-7 is priced at Rs. 67,500 with a two-year warranty, free replacement of spare parts for a year, six free service visits and a buy-back guarantee. Cosmic Yingang has service centers throughout Nepal. A special Dashain offer of a zero percent down payment and a free helmet is available for a limited time.

PHILIPS MIRROR TV LAUNCHED

Syakar Company, the authorized distributor for Philips Electronics in Nepal, has launched MiraVision Mirror TV, a versatile LCD display integrated into a mirror. The MiraVision Mirror TV uses a unique polarized mirror technology, which transfers nearly 100 percent of light through the reflective surface. The TV can be installed on a wall or be used with a desktop workstation. It can be connected to a laptop or a PC with a special connector, enabling the mirror to become an LCD monitor providing a large display for presentations or for surfing the web. It comes in sizes of 17, 23 and 30 inches.



PM NOMINATES KHETAN

The chancellor of Pokhara University, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, nominated Rajendra Khetan, executive director of the Khetan Group, as a senator of Pokhara University. Khetan is the president of Nepal-Britain Chamber of Commerce and Nepal Insurance Association and will represent the private sector. He is also the honorary consul of Portugal to Nepal.

NEPAL TO PARTICIPATE IN TELECOM FAIR

Nepal will be participating in the telecom fair Telecom Israel 2004 to be held from November 8 to 11 in Tel Aviv. The telecom fair will serve as a platform to learn about advanced technologies and outsourcing opportunities, to enhance business ties and to explore third-country markets.

Nepal has a 100-percent digital transmission and switching system, and the government has endorsed a new telecom policy for 2004, which welcomes private investment in the telecommunications sector. The number of subscribers will only be limited to regulate the radio spectrum, and an open license regime has been implemented, said Suresh Kumar Pudasaini, chairman of the Nepal Telecommunications Authority. Information and Communication Technology is one of Israel's leading economic sectors. The accelerated development and mobilization of information and communication technology in Nepal could play a vital role in poverty reduction and speedy economic growth, said Israeli Ambassador Dan Ben-Elizer. The GSM mobile phone technology being used by Nepal Telecom was bought from Telerad, an Israeli company.

GOLD MEDAL FOR K-TOO

K-Too Beer and Steak House located in Thamel has won a gold medal recognizing the high quality of service at the restaurant. The French Society of International Jury of the Quality of Life, the general manager of Europe's Air Excel, Abu Dhabi investment authorities and the deputy managing director of Gulf Aircraft Maintenance Company were among the judges. Export Manager Johnny Pier Ambrosini of Thompson-SCF and Deputy Chairman Marie Christine Ambrosini of The French Society of International Jury of the Quality of Life awarded the medal to the restaurant. To celebrate the award, K-Too is offering a discount of 20 percent on lunch and breakfast. On the festive occasion of Bijaya Dashami, a 20 percent discount on dinner is offered to all Nepali guests.

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INADEQUACIES IN DIPLOMACY

A new leadership has taken nuanced approaches to entice the Maoists to negotiate. Despite the appearance of grandeur, inadequacies at the base level remain unaddressed.

BY DIPTA SHAH IN NEW YORK

During his recent visit to New York, Minister Prakash Sharan Mahat met the usual entourage of dignitaries and diplomats. He also upheld what some hope will become tradition for future generations of qualified dignitaries from Nepal—to speak to a gathering of students, professors and future world leaders at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA).

Last year, Foreign Minister and Ambassador-at-Large Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, kindly obliged requests from Nepali students at SIPA and delivered an exceptionally articulate and well-rounded talk. The discussion section that followed represented the full range of issues pertaining to Nepal—from alleged human rights abuses to the Bhutanese refugee crisis and a very non-traditional explanation of the origins of the Maoist insurgency (one that resonated extremely well with the SIPA audience).

This year, at requests from the larger Nepali community members, Nepali students at SIPA coordinated with the South Asia Institute, which kindly accommodated Mahat into a one-hour question-and-answer session at Columbia University. Mahat, following closely in his predecessor’s foot-steps, delivered an exceptionally passionate speech on Nepal’s current plight through the prism of the Maoist insurgency.

Mahat’s exposition started off with the definition of the Maoists as “terrorists”—

a term that Thapa craftily avoided a year earlier—and he spent the larger part of his time, describing in strategic terms, the deceptive tactics the Maoists have continued to employ. Mahat delved into much greater detail on Prime Minister Deuba’s past experience with the Maoists and using this experience as a baseline, justified the current government’s caution and skepticism regarding immediate peace talks with the Maoists.

For the most part, Mahat delivered an expected, although very impassioned, speech about the suffering the Maoists have brought upon Nepali citizens and did an excellent job of outlining the Deuba government’s position on the insurgency. However, there were a few inconsistencies in his delivery, clarification to which, could not be sought owing to time constraints.

The first area of concern was Mahat’s insistence that future peace negotiations be held in “secret,” which contrasted sharply with his resolve that there is no alternative for Nepal other than a democratic establishment. Granted, such delicate negotiations do require some degree of secrecy, but there was no clarification on the degree to which democratic freedoms would be suppressed in the name of negotiations. The lack of clarity in this regard raised questions on the issue of accountability should talks fail and to whom the ultimate credit would go if they succeed.

Audience members also wondered what Mahat was exactly alluding to when he claimed that measures were being

taken to bring the Maoists in for talks. He offered scant details about what exactly was being done. There was also confusion over Mahat’s contrasting claim at first that the Maoist leadership was nowhere to be found, and later—in response to a question—that no external mediation was required as the government is in direct contact with the Maoists because “they are everywhere.”





This was the easy part of the question and answer session and consisted of queries delivered by those with genuine interest in, but not completely attuned to, internal affairs in Nepal. Successive questions that focused on Nepal's internal political situation and the consequences on overall diplomatic efforts were not as soundly addressed.

After an impassioned speech on the diplomatic efforts that the government is extending to resolve the Maoist conflict, Mahat expressed a certain level of unease and discomfort when questioned on the measures his ministry was taking to address a persisting conflict of interest in the Royal Nepalese Mission to the United Nations. Mahat deferred answering a targeted question regarding the legitimacy of the current Nepali Ambassador to the United Nations (who allegedly is also employed by a U.N. agency and reaping the benefits of both his ambassadorship and the perks of his U.N. employ-

ment). Although the individual in question was also present, he seemed incapable of defending his position. Non-Nepali members of the audience were naturally shocked.

Further questioning regarding Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala's reluctance to join the current coalition also drew sharp criticism from Mahat. He attributed Koirala's inability to put past differences aside to an overblown ego.

All in all, it was apparent that a lot had changed in Nepal since last year when Bhekh Bahadur Thapa spoke at SIPA. A new leadership is holding the reigns of power in Katmandu, nuanced approaches are being employed to entice the Maoists to negotiate and this government's position on the Maoists as a terrorist outfit seems firm.

Less heartening was the realization that despite the appearance of grandeur, inadequacies in Nepali diplomacy at the base level, remain unaddressed. **N**



TRENDSETTER(above): Last year, the then Foreign Minister Thapa went to Columbia University in New York to speak on his government's position. The discussion that followed covered a wide range of issues.

SUCCESSOR: Early this month, Minister Mahat, following in Thapa's footsteps, delivered an impassioned speech outlining the Deuba government's position on the insurgency at the same venue. His speech impressed the audience, though some were still left with questions unanswered.





DIASPORA DASHAIN

As our far-flung community grows—in India, Europe, the United States and elsewhere—people devise new ways of celebrating Dashain in their part of the world

BY PRAGYAN SUBEDI

DASHAIN MAY NOT seem like an easily transplantable festival. The rituals that are held over the 10 days—from the planting of *jamara* to the sacrifices of animals—cannot easily be held in other lands. The festival itself is so intrinsically connected to a particular time of year and, to some extent, to the place, that Nepalis who have lived a good part of their lives in Nepal before moving to distant shores say that the fall

festival makes them deeply nostalgic. It's the time of the year when you talk endlessly about the festivities and gaiety back in Nepal. Take for example, one of the major events celebrated during Dashain, the harvest of the rice crop. That can hardly be celebrated in Europe or the United States.

Yet, the primary ethos of Dashain—to spend time with one's family and to reestablish bonds of kinship—has lost none of its meaning. All over the world, Nepali communities celebrate Dashain with zest and in style. It is remembered as that special time of the year when the rains dry up and there is a nip in the air.



Schools and colleges close, with an aura of anticipation and excitement.

As our far-flung community grows—in India, Europe, the United States and elsewhere— people devise new ways of celebrating Dashain in their part of the world. For most Nepalis abroad for the first time, trying to adapt to a new culture and searching for a new community to be part of, the period around Dashain brings on a special nostalgia. Phone calls home make one

aware of the hectic preparations and excitement of the festival and leads to the feeling of being left out. To combat the alienation, most Nepalis in cities all over the world try to connect with other Nepalis.

Nepali organizations help do this by organizing parties and events where people can come together and mingle. In capitals, which usually have the presence of a Nepali embassy or consulate, the diplomatic missions take the lead.

But however enjoyable such gatherings may be, the characteristics of the festivities are fundamentally different from celebrations back home.

Even in communities where Nepali practices such as the planting of *jamara* and the receiving of *tika* take place, the values behind these practices have changed over the years. Community gatherings in other lands can't be purely family affairs; what replaces family are friends and their families. The ceremony



of pasting *tika* onto each other's foreheads takes on a different meaning. In Nepal, *tika* is placed by older members of a family onto the foreheads of the younger ones as a blessing. There is a strict hierarchy and protocol in the ceremony. The oldest member begins by blessing each younger member. This is followed by blessings from other members of the family. Each takes turn according to seniority. That elaborate protocol is hard to maintain in a foreign land where dis-

tinctions based on seniority are much less important.

Nepalis abroad, especially in the west, have already imbibed cultural values that are egalitarian in nature. It makes no sense for Nepalis without families to have a hierarchy among friends who paste *tika* on each other's foreheads. A lack of protocol means that *tika* ceremonies are held with less solemnity than in Nepal, and with more lightheartedness and cheer.

Dashain for the diaspora is an opportunity to meet other Nepalis and celebrate their Nepali-pan. Writing about Dashain in Kathmandu, Arun Gupto recently complained in a column in The Kathmandu Post how all his friends seemed to disappear once the Dashain

season set in. For them it was a time to spend with family, not with friends. For people like Gupto, whose extended families live outside the Valley but still choose to remain here during the festivities, Dashain can be lonely.

Not so for Nepalis abroad who are willing to reach out. The lack of immediate family means that Nepalis of all communities and age groups are welcome to Dashain festivities. It is an opportunity to celebrate and remember, an opportunity to connect with newcomers and old friends alike. It is an opportunity to rediscover through each other the characteristics they have each been given by the homeland and share the traditions of home in a new world in new ways. **N**



NECESSARY NOSTALGIA

“Did you get an invitation for the Dashain party from the embassy?” a friend of mine asks me. “No,” I reply.

BY AKSHAY ADHIKARI IN BRUSSELS

IT'S OCTOBER AND IT'S DASHAIN. Back home it's different; you can feel it in the air, and the whole atmosphere is painted with festival colors. Nothing of that sort here. Apart from a few calls from back home and occasional emails from friends, nothing makes you remember. Now that he had asked me about the invitation, I was thinking of Dashain. There's one good thing about all these diplomatic missions we have abroad: They keep reminding you of important events like Baiskash 1, the King's birthday and now Dashain. I'm sure there are lots of other good things

they do, but none affect my life as directly.

I didn't receive an official invitation from the embassy for Dashain the previous year either, but then it was different. I had just arrived, and I had no connections whatsoever—not an invitation by somebody with any kind of influence. Fortunately a friend invited my girlfriend and me to the party. And it worked out well. You see, it's different when you live away from home. You miss all those small pleasures of life that we are so used to at home, like talking in Nepali, seeing Nepali faces, enjoying *khasi ko maasu*. All things that we take for granted at home become something of a privilege, and

their memory overwhelms you with nostalgia. The Dashain party brings people together in a memory-sharing circle.

“Does the embassy have your postal address?” my friend asks me. “Of course they have it!” I had gone there myself to provide them with one last year, I remember. “Do they know that you're not a refugee applicant here?” he then asks me, which I am not.

Then he explains to me that political refugee applicants from Nepal are not invited by the embassy, as they would have something against the government. It's just not possible to have those people on the guest list at the Embassy of His Majesty's Government. Well, I don't have much to say on that, so I just acknowledge it. “They must have their own parties going on somewhere then. Maybe I should try to figure that out,” I decide.

Dashain for all of us Nepalis living outside of Nepal means the same thing. It's time to celebrate with the ones we love and to have a break from our busy schedules. It's a time to see the girls and marvel at the way they look dressed up in ethnic costumes. It's time to party



'til the wee hours of the morning and dance to Nepali music and folk songs. And for those without any sense of rhythm, blame their awkward steps on the *jaar* that DHL refused to mail from Nepal. It's also the time when you ask your friends to call in sick for you at work because the foreign companies have an NIH (Not Invented Here) policy towards Dashain. It's time to forget—at least for a moment—about your work, about family that you miss back home; to forget all the mess in your country, to forget the differences between you and others and after forgetting all these things, it's time to party. It's time to get invited to put on *tika*, show your cards skills in “marriage” and believe that the weekend is going to be a good one in a genuinely Made-in-Nepal way.

“Ok I'll remind them that they have to send you an invitation too,” he tells me. “But why don't you try to call them yourself as well?”

He's suggesting to me that I should say one of those, “Kahi? Haami lai ta maya marnu bhayo jasto cha ni?” Now I am wondering if that would be a good idea and ask them to invite me. Now I'm considering whether I should have a backup plan if the embassy invitation never happens to me. Pratibha is making *aalu ko achar*. Sush is going out for a few drinks after work. Ajaya has some friends coming over to his place. Everyone I know has a plan for Dashain. And each has prepared for Dashain in his own way and according to his convenience. Maybe I should come up with a plan too.

Home was a place where you didn't have to plan anything; everything just happened. There were just too many invitations, and you had to come up with excuses to refuse all but a few of them so that you could have your own fun time amidst family obligations. But here it's a different story. Now that I'm thinking of home and Nepal, I hope this year will bring some peace to my country, and that we will not have to wait for arrival of Dashain for a ceasefire.

As for my plan, I have decided to place a call to the embassy to ask them if they still have a few invitations left so they can put my name on the invitees' list and post the invitation before Dashami. Just can't let another Dashain slip away. **N**

THE VAGARIES OF DASHAIN

The only icon for Dashain worship in my Washington home is a small, exquisite statue of Tara, the Tibetan goddess of compassion

BY KARUNA CHETTRI
IN WASHINGTON D.C.

GET UP YOU LAZY BUM, IT'S Dashain weather outside!” says my friend, as he calls me from his cellphone while jogging in a nearby park. “Of course it's Dashain weather, silly, it's October!” I retort. In Washington D.C., Dashain stirrings start with the advent of the fall season. As the sweat-bath heat and humidity of summer give way to bright sunshine and cool breezes, I am unceremoniously prodded into a month-long relentless nostalgia of memories.

Unlike Christmas and its audio-visual onslaught of jingle bells—red, white and green colors—reindeer and Santa Claus, Dashain seeps into the very air I breathe until it becomes one with my moods. No *jhilimili* hustle and bustle of Dashain shopping rush, nor the pet mut-

ton in the backyard nor frantic visits to the *Devi* temples, and yet the Dashain feeling grows on me like wild weed growing out its yearly cycle. The warm sun on my back, the lazy evenings, the changing fall foliage and the honking of Canadian geese as they fly south across the orange sky all symbolize my Dashain.

Every Dashain has been a series of growing pains for me. The first year after my arrival in Washington, I tracked each passing day, every new moon, every full moon, and every celebration that I remembered. My dog-eared *bhutte patro* showed all signs of my compulsion—a compulsion driven by the need to track my family's life in Kathmandu. They were futile attempts at controlling and regulating my emotions through the waxing and waning of the lunar cycle. On the first *Tika* away, my parents called to bless me in my inconsolable mood.



The blessings did nothing to empower me; rather, I was drained, exhausted and melancholic. I remember skipping classes that day.

Eventually, my obsession with the calendar waned with the challenges of each college semester. Dashain was no longer a major part of my calendar. It was that particular time of year that prompted memories of Dashain experiences in Nepal. With clarity, I recall my mother's aromatic cooking; my sister and I dressed in our "new Dashain clothes" sitting cross-legged waiting for my parent's blessings; big, red, rice-vermillion-mixed *tika* slowly sliding down our forehead to our nose; my father's flawless chanting of the mantra; and the pungent and yet aromatic fragrance of the incense mixed with marigold flowers that cradled the steady glow of the oil lamp. Every strand of childhood memory meticulously nailed into the furthest recess of my mind, filed but vulnerable to the whims of my shifting moods. Like Pandora's box, the Dashain of my childhood remains closed. Trapped within is a potpourri of emotions simmering in passive ripples. And, with a sudden pang, I realize that the only icon for Dashain worship in my Washington home is a small, exquisite statue of Tara, the Tibetan goddess of compassion. She is radiant, illuminated by an oil lamp and fragrant with sandalwood incense. The rituals are minimal.

Dashain abroad is fascinating. The Washington D.C. metropolitan area has a significant number of Nepali people working or studying here. Every year, a few Nepali organizations throw Dashain parties at the local

hotels or community centers. Such events promise modern and folk dances and a dinner consisting of *masu*, *bhat*, *alooko achar*...and a good time. The young congregate to "party" and mingle; the old to connect and reminisce. On one particular occasion, I decided to go to such a party hosted in Virginia. Sari and "rato-tika" clad, I ventured, anticipating an evening of festivities. The food was flavorful; the dances were entertaining and the dancers beautiful. The mood was jovial, strangers made friends, friends met old long-lost friends and people danced to the Macarena. Despite the companionability, I felt cheerless with every dance I danced. To make matters worse, the friendly curiosity expressed by total strangers with questions of: "Where do you live in Kathmandu?" "Whose daughter are you?" "What does your father do?" "Are you married?" and the mother of all questions—"What visa do you hold?"—rankled on my nerves. Exasperation marked the end of my public celebration of Dashain spirit. Since then I have stuck to private parties at friends' homes, where I helped to cook up a storm, sang old forgotten songs, lip-

synced new Nepali and Hindi songs, played cards and *antarakshari*, and danced to folk songs I had never danced to before.

In recent years, Dashain has symbolized a period of mental cleansing for me. In Nepal, I wasn't much of a temple-goer during the Navaratri festivities; the bloody scene of headless goats, chickens, ducks and buffalo calves had successfully removed the sacredness of the temples for me. In Washington D.C., the only temple I have visited on an impulse is the Hare Ram Hare Krishna temple in Potomac. However, in D.C., Ghatasthapana ritual worship starts at home at my little Tara's shrine. Mindfully, I attempt to keep the flickering flame of the oil lamp burning until *Tika*. While the wispy smoke of sandalwood incense suffuses my home with my mother's presence, peace sets in. Western stress triggers take a backseat, and I feel more connected with my surroundings. On the auspicious Dashami, a few close friends and I put *tika* on one another while making earnest and hilarious attempts to remember the Sanskrit mantras of *Ayudrona Sute* and *Jayanti Mangalakali*. My parents' phone calls no longer cause me anguish. Finally, I have acknowledged that the vagaries of Dashain are merely a state of my mind and not of time, place, rituals or people. **N**

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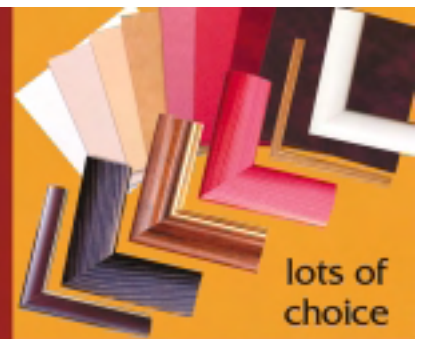
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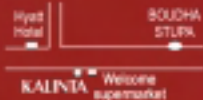
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DASHAIN LAI LE! DASHAIN KUAILE

Dashain is a family holiday, but when you are far from home, the company of other Nepalis is a good substitute

BY TRAILOKYA ARYAL IN BEIJING

IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR again when I really wish I were back in Nepal. Partly it's because of the upcoming midterms, papers and presentations, but mainly because of Dashain.

Beijing is a happening city, and there is always something to do for entertainment all-year round. But when it's Dashain time, all the Nepalis here think of home, because we all grew up singing "Dashain Aayo, Khaula Piula"—Dashain has come, its time to eat good food. It's probably the only time of the year when Nepalis living outside Nepal think exactly alike, regardless of who they are or what they have become. It's a time to celebrate and think about home.

That's what makes the Dashain celebrations outside Nepal special. Everyone is sad that they are not in Nepal to celebrate it, and, at the same time, everyone is happy to meet other Nepalis, eat Nepali food and sing a song or two. The only requirement to come and enjoy the celebrations is to be a Nepali or a friend of Nepal. No race, caste or class restrictions: truly an egalitarian celebration.

When my Chinese friends ask about Dashain, my standard answer is: "It's something like your Spring Festival and Chinese New Year, when everyone is expected to be home. It's not just a festival, it's a time to renew the family bonds. It's not only enjoying good food, it's enjoying good food with your family." They more or less understand because, like our own culture, the Chinese culture puts a heavy emphasis on family relations. And when they ask me whether it is a Hindu or Buddhist festival, I always tell them that although it originated as a Hindu festival, it has

now evolved as a national festival. It is not a Hindu festival anymore. It's a Nepali festival.

This feeling that Dashain is a national festival makes Nepal especially colorful and festive during Dashain, and it makes Nepalis outside Nepal want to celebrate it with other fellow Nepalis. Mary Subba, a Christian from Dharan who attends the

Guangxi Medical University in Nanning, which borders Vietnam, has the same view. "It's a national festival, so I am going to celebrate it." She will be celebrating this with some 80-plus future Nepali doctors, eating Nepali food and singing Nepali songs. A few rounds of card games like marriage and call-break will, of course, be included. Suman Tiwari and



his Nepali friends at Shanghai's East China University of Science and Technology too are excited about the Dashain celebrations. "We will be cooking Nepali food, then going to various Nepali parties at other colleges. Then there is a Nepali party at a Nepali restaurant, followed by a big party which almost every Nepali in Shanghai is likely to attend." But the students at Zhengzhou Medical University in Henan Province have more celebrations lined up than anyone else in China. The sheer size of Nepali student body—about 200—means they can have not only parties but also sports events and Nepali music concerts!

Nepalis in Beijing have fewer options. Unlike other cities in China, there are only a handful of Nepali students in Beijing, and they are scattered

all over the big city. Only the Peking University Medical School has more than 10 Nepali students. Hitasha Shah, a student at the school, plans to cook Nepali food and play card games with other Nepalis there. Other Nepali students at various colleges where there are only one or two Nepali students will have to wait for the annual Dashain Party at the Nepali Embassy in Sanlitun Lu to celebrate Dashain. The embassy's annual party is one of the few times that some of the students get to meet each other. Hitasha and her friends are eagerly looking forward to it. According to her, "It's not the food, it's the chance to meet other Nepalis that makes us go there."

Nepalis in China, from teenage students and post-graduate fellows to se-

nior embassy staff, all have something planned to celebrate Dashain. Although everyone admits missing home and relatives, they are also excited to meet new friends and renew old ties. Of course there is no substitute for Dashain celebrations with one's family in Nepal, but these celebrations outside keep Nepalis connected to their Nepali heritage. As for me, I have a small celebration planned myself. I will be taking my friends from China and elsewhere out for a Dashain celebration the Chinese way, with countless sticks of *yang rou chuan'r* (barbequed goat or lamb meat on a skewer) and Beijing's own Yanjing beer, the perfect cure for the Dashain blues. Then I'll head to the embassy's party, to celebrate the Nepali way. **N**

DASHAIN AT A DISTANCE

Students at the tiny Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania invite Nepalis from all over America to their Dashain party

BY YUBRAJ ACHARYA AND SHALAJ TATER IN PHILADELPHIA

IT'S A WEEKEND IN EARLY October, almost two weeks before the actual date of Dashain. More than 30 students in their late teens and early 20s meet, cook food, chat, sing and dance. There is neither *jamara* on their ears nor the fragrance of *makhamali* in the room. And there is no *Durga Puja* going on.

While the gloomy possibility that the Maoists and the Army may not call a ceasefire during the festival season clouds the mood in Kathmandu, Dashain is being celebrated in a far-away land, at Swarthmore, a small liberal arts college in northern Pennsylvania. For the past four years, students, mostly undergraduates, have been gathering at here to celebrate Dashain.

This tradition started four years ago, when a group of students attending Swarthmore College decided to organize a small gathering for students from nearby colleges. Of course many students who attend college and universities in the United States are from well-off families and could have relatives, close or distant, in America. But for many, this gathering has been a relief from homesickness.

As they gather to meet new people and celebrate Dashain with *daal*, *bhat*, *masu* and, perhaps, beer with Nepali melodies in the background, many relate the celebration to what Dashain symbolizes. "Dashain is a festival to celebrate the victory of justice over cruelty, valor over cowardice and truthfulness over deceit," says Pranab Lohani, a senior at Wharton Business School at the University of Pennsylva-

nia. Lohani has been to Swarthmore to celebrate Dashain for the last three years. He is not alone. Pukar Malla, also a graduate of Swarthmore College, has attended all the Dashain gatherings at Swarthmore. He and other Nepalis at Swarthmore organized the first Dashain gathering three years ago. Ever since, he has traveled long distances to celebrate an occasion. Last year, for example, he traveled all the way from California, a six-hour flight. The reason: "What better a place to celebrate an important occasion than [Swarthmore,] where I know and will meet people important to me?"

Similarly, Bibhav Acharya, a junior at Haverford College, considers Dashain a time to forget sorrows and misunderstandings and to enjoy the company of others also far from home. Referring to the broader practice of Dashain, Acharya says, "Any distance, be it physical or emotional, between family members is forgotten, and everyone gets to enjoy everyone else's company over some good food." Even if the physical distance can't be completely forgotten, coming together to enjoy good company and good food is a great reason to celebrate Dashain. This year, there were nine freshmen in colleges near Swarthmore. For many of them, this was their first Dashain away from home.

The fact that the cost of food and accommodation is borne by the organizers themselves separates this event from other Nepali gatherings in the United States. "This is the most generous event and the best social plan I ever heard," wrote Mandeep Shrestha, a freshman at Moravian College, who plans to attend this year's gathering. Despite the financial burden on the organizers, the desire to be a part of the organizing team seems to grow with every gathering. For the last two years, the event has been organized not only by the students at Swarthmore but also by students at Bryn Mawr and Haverford, two nearby colleges.

Guest participation also marks this gathering as different. It's not a traditional gathering where the hosts cook and serve the food while the guests sit and eat. The gathering starts with a brief informal introduction, after which everybody starts chopping vegetables, preparing rice or wrapping up the momos. Perhaps this collective work around a table helps the participants get to know each other and make themselves at home. "Dashain [here] helps us relate [our life here] to life back home," says Servesh Tiwari, a graduate student of computer science at Drexel University. Tiwari arrived a day before the gathering this year to help out with the preparations.

One problem the organizers and the participants face is the timeliness of the gathering. The college's fall break falls almost two weeks—sometimes even three—before the festival. "It would have been more fun if we had been able to celebrate it on the actual day," says Lohani. But there are logistical issues with having the celebration on the real Dashain day. Organizing the event is often a strenuous task, which entails taking approval of the deans, reserving the space and making sure that there are enough rooms for the guests to spend the night. All these arrangements become easier when many students leave during the break and the organizers have less academic work.

Despite the event coming weeks early, students enjoy it a lot. "We always look forward to this [gathering]; it is the biggest event of the year," says Lohani. ■

MAKE-SHIFT TIKA

Dashain means extra phone calls home and a sense of appreciation of my culture. But I have found it harder and harder to hold ad-hoc Dashain celebrations.

BY ANIL J SHAHI IN NEW YORK

I REMEMBER WHEN I BEGAN MY student life in the United States 15 years ago; I was always very keen on explaining to the "foreigners" the different aspects of Nepali life. Many did not even know where Nepal was; and whenever I got the opportunity, I was always eager to educate them about our country, our language, our culture and our way of life in general. I am not sure if any of my "students" were as eager to learn as I was to teach, but I chatted along anyway, always assuming they were interested. Some might have been genuinely intrigued by what I had to say, but I am not so sure about others. Unaccustomed to the new way of life in the United States, my naivety at the time about the idea that people here actually sincerely cared about others' lives was genuine, and perhaps misguided.

Dashain, at the time, therefore, meant trying hard to improvise and hold make-shift *Tika* celebrations and explaining to the "foreigners" what the red rice grains on our foreheads meant. It was a moment eagerly awaited by checking on a "bhitte pattro," sent from home to let every other Nepali you knew know when exactly was Dashain. Oh, yes! We were a very small Nepali community then—perhaps just over 200 even in New York City, which is now a home to over 8,000 Nepalis—and almost everyone knew everyone else. It was easier to hold

small but meaningful Dashain parties with home-cooked authentic Nepali food. Dashain also meant higher phone bills—you not only called home more during Dashain, but you would call almost everyone you knew to wish them "Happy Dashain."

As the years passed, I have become overwhelmingly overloaded with the American way of life. I have come to accept the fact that life in the United States is very mechanical—one almost feels like a robot in terms of being entirely consumed with daily chores of work and other superficial aspects of living. Like an American, sadly, may I add, I sometimes feel compelled not to worry about aesthetics of life, but rather be hopelessly consumed with worries about making money and paying my bills. The weekdays to me mean nothing but work, and maybe a glimpse at the TV while taking dinner; the weekends are reserved for household errands to prepare for the following week, such as doing grocery and laundry. I may catch a movie or make a short trip to friends if I am lucky on some weekends. This does not mean I like or advocate this kind of life, but hey, this is the only way of survival in the global hub of capitalism.

So, what is Dashain for me now? The extra phone calls to home remain the same; and the feeling of nostalgia and a sense of appreciation of my culture too remain deep. However, I have found it harder and harder to hold ad-hoc

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Dashain celebrations, particularly with friends and family. Not everyone is off on Dashain days (one would be lucky if it falls on a weekend), and not everyone could care as much as they wish about Dashain due to other obligations. Even the Dashain parties are not fun anymore—the large number of people, ironically, has meant that the parties have become more and more commercialized. The food is not authentic home-cooked Nepali anymore—it's usually Indian buffet catered from a restaurant, with perhaps a couple of Nepali items.

The DJ dance that follows most of the parties include modern hip hop songs and Indian *bhangras*, with only an occasional burst of Nepali *jhyaure* or pop. And occasionally one has to encounter unprovoked aggressiveness from young

zealots who have had a little too much to drink.

Not all parties are unworthy, though. I have been to some Dashain parties that, along with the fulfillment of all the necessary commercial attributes, made attempts to add Nepali-pan by having Nepali cultural shows. At one party, there was someone's old grandmother putting *Tika* on every guest at the door. Now, that was pretty impressive! Most importantly, though, whether the Dashain parties are overly commercial or not, or whether they reflect true Dashain spirits or not, they sure are very good excuses to catch up with friends, or even just to relax one's mind from the daily hustle and bustle of American life.

As I have grown older and have developed a deeper sense of appreciation

of my roots, I personally have started to grow some *jamara* and do the necessary *poojas* privately at home. I also try to gather close friends and family for an improvised yet a close imitation of *Tika* celebrations every year. Dashain has also come to be an excuse to play few extra rounds of “marriage” with higher-than-normal wagers and to indulge in merry-making with a few extra drinks. Other than that, I have begun to refrain from overly commercialized large parties; and there remains absolutely no yearning to explain what all this means to those who are new to it, save someone's *bides* spouse or a close friend.

“Happy Dashain!” also sounds too commercial and western to me, so “Vijaya Dashami ko haardik mangalmaya shuva-kaamanaa!” ■



BRINGING NEPALIS TOGETHER

Pulling together the *khasi*, the *kotha* and the kindred for a *bideshi* Dashain isn't easy, but it's worth the work

BY ALOK TUMBAHUGPHE IN PUNE

DASHAIN IS THE TIME OF THE year when one misses home more than anytime else. There is a difference between getting to celebrate the biggest Nepali festival at home and having to limit the celebrations in a foreign *desh*. Granted that India may not be so far away from home and our cultural and social relations give us the *bhai-bhai* kinship, but when it comes to celebrating one's festival, there's no better way to do it than the way it's done at home.

A Dashain without the customary *khasi ko masu*, drinking, gambling and of course the *tika talo* doesn't really feel like Dashain. Let's face it, no matter where you are in the world, come Dashain one is bound to return to memories of post-monsoon freshness, of clear fall skies filled with kites (vying for supremacy); shopping to appease the Goddesses; the immortals immortalized in blood-soaked statues; and the mortals who run the household and dish out the goodies, *sel rotis*, *aloo ko acchar*, *khasi ko masu*, and, yes, chilled beer.

Those at home might ask, what's the big deal with location? A lot. As a Nepali it's perhaps a genetically acquired demand to want to celebrate Dashain with the customary amenities. Not that it's an easy task trying to maintain the customs in a foreign land. Even with the current confusion and chaos that has divided Nepalis, the very thought of the festival of the triumph of good over evil brings one and all together. It doesn't matter whether you're a Sunar or a Shah, a Rana or a Rijal, a Thapa or a Tiwari. Here you are just a Nepali with the same nostalgia for home. Everyone wants to go home for Dashain. Those who can make it a point to go, even if it's just for the day of *tika*. But it's not as easy as observing the customary *tika* rounds from elders and relatives.

Here one has to carefully plan for the festival months before it actually arrives. You can't be a stranger in a strange land and expect to get a train ticket home a day in advance. No wonder, the closer the festival gets the greater the anticipation. Students prepare weeks, if not months, in advance.

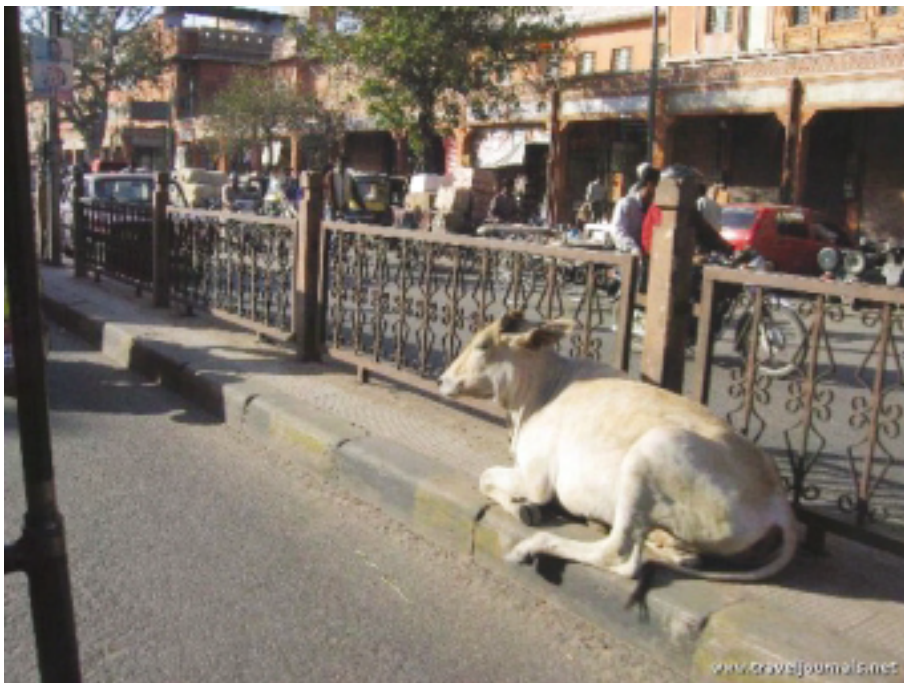
The very thought of spending a few carefree days with family and friends is enough to take away the brunt of all the frustration that piles up during the course of the term. The frustration of those who don't do their booking on time is clear. Add to it the desperation of fast dwindling funds, and it's clear why it's worth the trouble for *tika*.

Not being able to make in time for *tika* may dampen the spirits a little, but the Gods are gracious. We may not be home, but at least the spirit to celebrate still remains. As the festival approaches there is a talk of having the compulsory Dashain party. The local student body, the Nepalese Students Association-Pune, is now busy looking for a venue to hold the grand event.

The challenge is that the members demand to go whole hog. That means cutting a *khasi*, and mind you, that's not any billy goat, *boka* or *bakhri* for you. Those are unworthy of the noble taste of *khasi* our highland palates have acquired. So here begins the problem even before the celebrations. It's not too difficult getting a *boka* or a *bakhri*, but where on earth do we find a proper *khasi*, the castrated goat that forms an essential Dashain ingredient?

Thankfully, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of migrant Nepali workers earning their livelihood here as security guards and, these days, as chefs of street eateries called "Chinese." It's not too difficult to come across a Nepali here, and as for the *khasi*, the word has been spread and the *dajus* who operate the food stalls have promised to look for a suitable one.

Now as for how many might attend the gala event, no one really knows. We have always been known for our indecisiveness, but this much we know: The *khasi* will not go to waste. After months of surviving on chicken masala, to waste even a minute morsel of the mutton would be a sin. **N**





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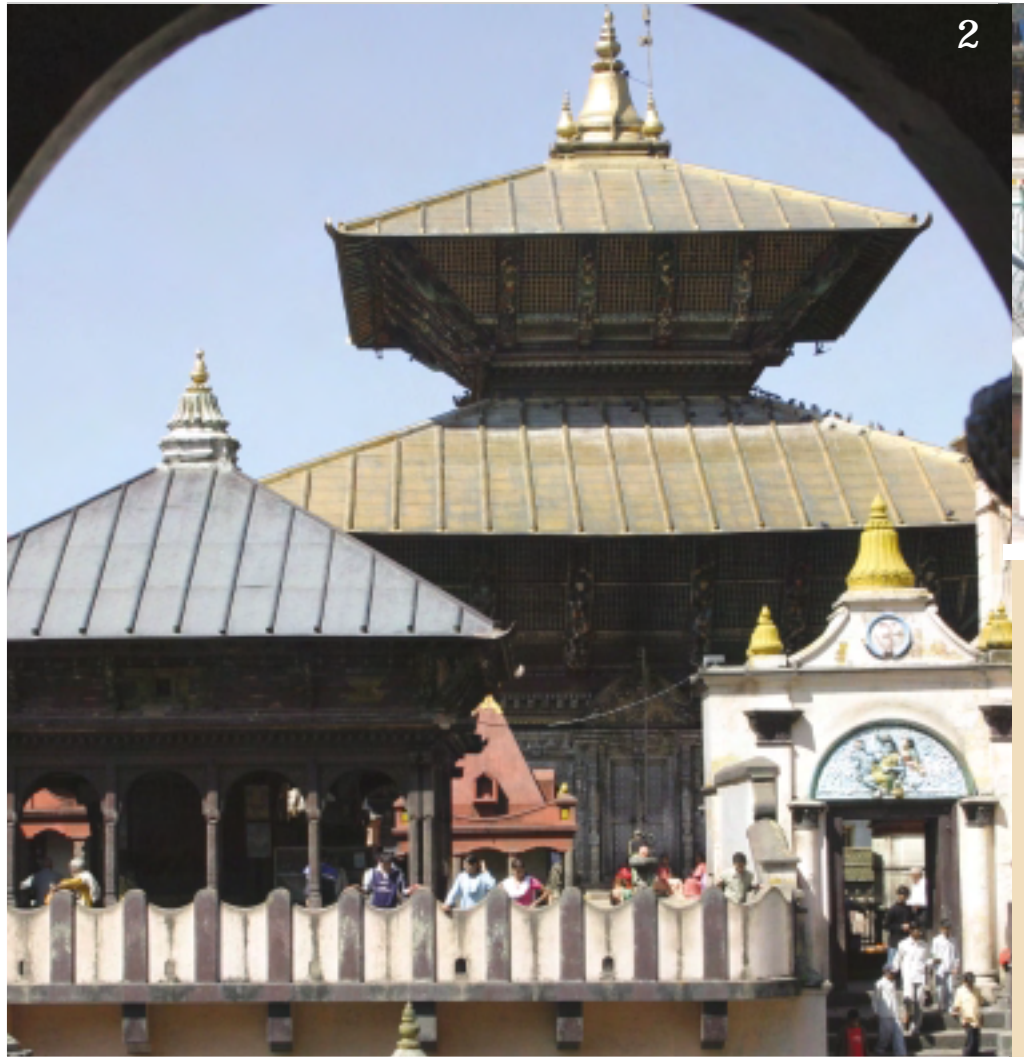


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 - 9. Maitidevi
 - 10. Shova Bhagwati
 - 11. & 12. Dakshinkali
 - 13. Mahankal
- All photos by Sagar Shrestha and B. Rai





1



2

1. A DANGEROUS AFFAIR: A snake charmer during Nag Panchami
 2 & 7. A TIME TO PLAY: Young and old, alike, celebrate Dashain and Tihar with various card and board games
 3 & 8. A TIME TO LAUGH: Maha performing at BICC during Gai Jatra. Children in a procession of Gai Jatra that marks the yearly festival to mourn for the dead
 4. PREPARATIONS UNDERWAY: A potter sells clay pots for the Dashain. The pots are used to grow *jamara* used on the day of the *Tika*.
 5. LADIES IN RED: Women at the Risheswor Mahadev at Teku during Teej
 6. LOOKING SHARP: The Army prepares for the Phulpati *badai*



3



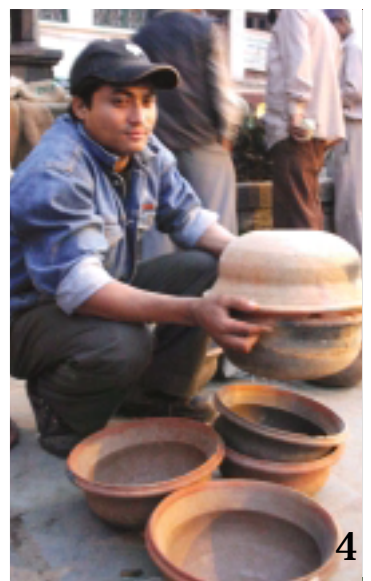
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BLACKOUT

Fear hangs like a low-grade fever over the villages. Soon darkness will follow.

BY SUSHMA JOSHI IN HETAUDA

KATHMANDU, I AM TOLD, IS the most dangerous place in Nepal at the moment. Anywhere else is much better, as long as you don't get caught in crossfire. And indeed as we drive from Bharatpur to Hetauda, past sunny fields of rice and cows ambling lazily past rivulets of water, the conflict seems far from this idyllic land. Except for a few stray Army units, the road is free of any signs of militarization. A red flag stuck on a bicycle on the side of the road did not belong to any revolutionary, but to a worker from the Road Department whose gear, on closer inspection, also included a yellow helmet.

"Where is the conflict?" my friend said. We had come expecting to find war but found only bucolic peace. "Just wait till you get off the highway," somebody said. Well-seasoned fellow travelers entertained us with stories of almost-abductions they had faced in their travels and warned us that the greatest danger was the patchy nature of the command network of both the Army and the Maoists. Raw troops of both varieties are the biggest dangers—well-trained ideologues of either strain are not.

Travel in Rolpa and Rukum is hassle-free because both parties control certain defined areas; as long as you inform the relevant authorities you are coming, there is little chance for unforeseen encounters. Places like Kavre, on the other hand, have raw Maoist cadres with little education wandering around, and even the United Nations has stopped its programs in that area due to the risk.

The first sign of conflict is the curfew, which in Hetauda starts at 9 p.m. Uneasily aware of the big trucks filled with unified command who had come to guard the agricultural minister, we hurry through dinner. An old friend of mine tells me she likes the town and finds it easy to live in, despite the bombings.

Stories of Army troops caught in ambushes and ministers who barely escaped with their lives from big sieges soon surface. "This is where the Lever factory was bombed, that's the police station that was bombed," a local journalist tells us matter-of-factly as he gives us a tour. In one village, graffiti prominently felicitates the "Prachanda Path." The graffiti demands punishment for the Bhiman incident, in which 17 individuals were shot in cold blood by security forces while they were asleep. Fifteen of the 17

were Maoists; two were civilians. In the villages, dozens of stories of extrajudicial arrests by the Army and of arbitrary justice and policies of the Maoists soon surface.

Most striking is the sense of fear that hangs like a low-grade fever over the villages. Voices are lowered as people talk about their fears of both parties. The sense of being caught in a stateless void is palpable. All state agencies have stopped functioning outside district headquarters. The police no longer go into villages to investigate common crimes: The community where a woman had recently hung herself was told to photograph the body and bring it to the district headquarters. Domestic and civil disputes are resolved at the local level because people are afraid of the arbitrary nature of state justice.

In remote areas the Maoists have demanded food, imposed a draft that asks for an individual between age eight and 80 from each house and abducted people to carry food and explosives. In one village, more than 50 men have been abducted for labor purposes. All eventually returned. The Maoists have started to influence local community groups



of all sorts, from *Ama Samuhas* to forestry management and youth groups. A person felling a tree now has to pay a Rs. 300 tax. Every bag of marijuana is taxed Rs. 200. We meet the wife of a man who was hacked with axes by the

Maoists, and we met people raped and tortured by the security forces. The citizens' bitterness and disillusionment with the Maoists is equaled only by their loathing for state agencies and the security forces.

Predictably, NGO culture flourishes even under these drastic conditions. English words like "facilitator," "focus groups," "motivators" and "programs" are common currency, and so is the thorough demand for civic and economic accountability, which people ask for from the field workers they perceive to be dollar-guzzlers.

The Maoists have recently started to tell people in Makwanpur not to pay their electric bills. Anybody who goes to the city to pay their bills will have their arms and legs broken, the Maoists promise. The man from the electricity office is too afraid to go to the villages, so there is no longer any system to negotiate this basic service. People who approached the NEA and asked them if they could leave their payment cards in the district headquarters have been told that this is not possible. In one community I visited, 800 households will soon be cut off from their electrical supply if they do not go and pay the Rs. 40,000 that is pending. If the NEA cuts off their electrical supply, their mill will stop working, and they will not be able to grind their flour.

The Maoists have no system to provide alternative electrical service, and the NEA is unwilling to consider different methods of payment. People in this situation will have to live in darkness due to the arbitrary policies of both parties. How do people cope in such situations? In one village a couple of women took me aside and told me the Maoists had not threatened them. "Really?" I asked. They came closer and whispered: "We go and pay it in the city, and they don't know about it." Will the Maoists not notice that certain villages are still fully lit, and, if so, what will they do in retaliation? Will the whole country have to go dark before the "people's war" is successful, or is this just a localized decision from an area commander who has a particular grudge against that reactionary service known as electricity?

History teaches us that civil wars can often spiral into atrocities that border on the unbelievable. Let's hope plunging Nepal into darkness will not be the Maoists' contribution to their country. **N**

mw/ss

RUSTIC ILLUSION: Villagers in rural countryside bear the brunt of the arbitrary decisions made by both sides to the conflict



RED ALERT: Outside the Valley, Maoist ambushes and attacks, like the bombing of Nepal Lever (shown here), have cast a shadow of fear on the local populace



NO ALTERNATIVE TO PEACE

The effect of the conflict will continue well after it has ended with the economic cost directly proportional to the length of the conflict

BY BIPUL NARAYAN

AS THE GOVERNMENT AND THE Maoists weigh the pros and cons of entering into a ceasefire, they would be served well to take into account the economic consequences of continued conflict. Another few years of conflict will be extremely debilitating for the economy and could potentially wipe out the achievements of decades of economic and social development.

In economic theory, a country's economic growth is dependent on its in-

vestment in human and physical capital. The more a country invests in roads, power plants, industrial equipment, irrigation, education and health, the more prosperous it can hope to be. When a country's investment in these productive resources declines, the capital stock of the country falls—reducing the growth potential of the country.

Unfortunately, the story of Nepal during the last several years has been one of an utter neglect of the productive resources of the country. Since the con-

flict intensified the government has been unable to invest even in the development and maintenance of new roads, hydro-power plants and other infrastructure needed to maintain the growth of the country. On the contrary, vital infrastructure in different parts of the country has been destroyed or has remained underutilized due to the conflict.

The government has reduced expenditures on education, health and training, depleting the stock of human capital in the country. The quality of the government's meager investments in education and health has also

declined due to repeated disruptions and extortion of government staff by the Maoists. The government has run historically low budget deficits but at the cost of higher development expenditure, which has declined from about 9 percent of the national income in 1997 to 6 percent of the GDP in 2004. Consequently, public investment in Nepal has been well below the level needed to put the country on a higher growth path necessary to reduce poverty.

The cost of doing business in Nepal has increased significantly due to the conflict; Maoist extortion, lack of security, numerous bandas, blockades and shut-downs have made Nepal one of the most difficult places to do business in the region. It is not surprising that new private investments—both domestic and foreign—have come to a standstill in the country. The investment rate as percentage of the national income declined from 21.7 percent in 1997 to 18.7 percent in

ECONOMIC FOCUS



IM/SS

2004. In India, the current investment rate is over 25 percent and in China over 40 percent.

These effects of the conflict have combined to give the country an average economic growth of 2.6 percent during the conflict compared with 5 percent growth in the 10 years preceding the conflict. The loss is similar to that of other conflict-affected countries, which, on average, have been shown to lose 2.2 percent growth for each year of civil war. Nepal's per capita income, which is \$270 in 2004, could have been \$300 if economic progress had not been intercepted by the conflict. The economic loss is likely to become greater as the conflict lengthens. If the conflict lasts another five years, Nepal's per capita income will be 20 percent less than what it would have been without the conflict. If the conflict lasts another 10 years, Nepal's per capita income will be 30 percent less than what it would have been without the conflict.

The effect of the conflict will continue well after the conflict has ended with the economic cost directly proportional to the length of the conflict. Although peace will reduce the costs of economic activity in various ways, it will not reduce them to the pre-war level. With peace the destruction of physical and human capital will cease, reducing the depreciation rate on capital back to its pre-war level. In simple terms, what this means is, for example, if a business owns a car, the car will have a shorter life during the conflict due to attendant dangers than at normal times. The disruptions in the economy through bandas and blockades might also cease so that there is a one-off increase in productivity. However, other areas of crucial importance to the economy are unlikely to immediately revert to the pre-conflict level. For one, there is only likely to be a partial restoration of productive public expenditures in areas such as education, infrastructure, health and agriculture. Military expenditure will be slow to decline: Demobilization will likely be delayed through fears of its consequences



COST OF CONFLICT: Many years will be required before the country can recover from the damage done to its infrastructure by the conflict, even after the conflict ends

and the Army might have to be expanded to include the Maoist rebels.

The conflict will also leave behind a "culture of violence." A generation, which has grown up amidst armed warfare, is likely to be significantly more inclined to a life of crime and violence. With little education or training, they will be unable to contribute significantly to the development of the country. Nepal will end up as country with a huge amount of unskilled and uneducated labor and a ramshackle infrastructure—

compromising the ability of the country to development of internationally competitive industries. Democratic and social institutions weakened by the conflict are also unlikely to gain full strength at once—resulting in huge economic and social costs for the country.

What is at stake in the conflict is not just the political throne in Singha Durbar but the future of 24 million Nepali people. The government and the Maoist leadership must act to find an outlet—and they must act now. **N**

FERTILIZER AT HOME

An increasing number of Valley residents are becoming environmentally conscious and turning their home garbage into valuable compost

BY SATISH JUNG SHAHI

TRASH COLLECTION SOARS AT Dashain; crews work extra hard collecting waste that is mostly organic, leftovers of the parties and family gatherings of the almost 780,000 residents who receive city trash services. The volume goes down after the holidays, but the problems remain. There's a lot of trash, and it's expensive to col-

lect and dispose all of it. A major portion could be recycled instead.

Sixty-nine percent of the 896 cubic meters of waste collected each day is organic, and less than 10 percent of it gets recycled into compost. Environmental experts say that more and more people are now becoming environmentally conscious and are voluntarily turning their household waste into valuable fertilizer.

"People are willingly paying to have their garbage collected from their homes by private parties, which shows they are becoming more aware of environmental issues," says Rajesh Manandhar, chief of the Solid Waste Management Section at the city's Environment Department. "The street bins have not been stolen, unlike the problems we had years ago." Manandhar's department has been selling home composting bins for the last three years in an effort to encourage individuals to recycle. They have sold over 800 of them, 200 in the last three months alone, and the city has a hard time meeting growing demand.

"The response is tremendous," says Ratnakaji Maharjan, who conducts the

SOURCES OF WASTE IN KATHMANDU

Household Waste: 750 cubic meters per day
Commercial Waste: 75 cubic meters per day
Institutional Waste: 75 cubic meters per day
Street Waste: 75 cubic meters per day
Total: 975 cubic meters per day
Collection rate: 896 cubic meters per day
Percent of waste collected: 92%

[Source: KMC]

WASTE MIX IN KATHMANDU (2001)

Organic 69%
Paper 9%
Plastic 9%
Clothes 3%
Glass 3%
Construction material 2%
Metal 1%
Rubber 1%
Others 3%

[Source: KMC]





HANDY BIN: Kathmandu's residents are slowly warming up to the idea of turning their garbage into compost. The demand for plastic compost bins is increasing

trainings on the use of the compost bins. The training is required for those who purchase the bins. The city last year decided to order these plastic compost bins in bulk, using an open tender to minimize costs. Buyers also get a set of gardening tools, a cloth bag, a bottle of microorganisms that speeds up the composting process and a packet of free compost. The city plans to sell 1,000 bins by July 2005.

“Even foreigners and well-established Nepalis working in various projects have been our clients,” adds Maharjan, as he explains how the bins should be handled to produce good-quality compost. “All your kitchen garbage is turned into valuable compost that won’t smell bad, if you handle it well. Nurseries have been selling compost for up to Rs. 25 per kilogram.” People are getting the message; there are several inquiries each day.

In order to systemize the process, now that demand is high, Maharjan notes down the addresses of everyone interested in buying one of the compost bins, and he calls them for training once their

orders arrive. The authorities say the training is mandatory. The city also does a follow-up visit to make sure the bins are being used correctly.

According to Indra M. S. Suwal, chief of the city’s Environment Department, the cost of the bin—known as a *sa:ga*, meaning fertilizer pit in Newari—is Rs. 1,072, but they are being sold for Rs. 750, after a donor-sponsored 30 percent subsidy. NGOs such as World Vision and CIUD are also distributing compost bins in the Valley. A few other private players have started to conduct training on composting at a nominal fee to meet the growing demand. Participation in all the projects is voluntary.

“The household compost bin project has a success rate of around 90 percent,” says Manandhar, who has overseen similar solid waste management projects for the city. “Previously it didn’t work out well when we tried in a few wards of Kathmandu. Our experience shows that making the program voluntary increases the rate of success.”

Though household composting is helpful, it will not be a total solution to minimizing waste in the Valley. The environmental department’s solid waste management strategy through 2015 pre-

pared with assistance from Japanese aid agency JICA focuses on mass composting and large, centralized composting plants. There are many steps, mostly not yet addressed, before the city gets to that stage.

“We lack in marketing, and we still haven’t looked into the economic side, such as collecting compost from households and selling it,” says Manandhar. He offers the example of Amul Dairies in India that collects milk from many farmers to make its dairy products. But before that can happen, the city has to encourage households to start. “You should turn composting into a daily habit, like brushing your teeth,” says Manandhar. **N**



MAKE IT A HABIT: Manandhar urges people to turn composting into a habit

Roadside Collection: 452 cubic meters per day
 Door-to-door Collection: 259 cubic meters per day
 Container Collection: 185 cubic meters per day
 Total: 896 cubic meters per day

FIRST TO GO?

An important U.N. regional center that has only been operating for a few months may be pulled out of Kathmandu. Can Nepal stop it?

BY JOHN NARAYAN PARAJULI

WHILE NEPALI AND U.N. OFFICIALS were celebrating U.N. Day last Thursday in the Rose Garden in the U.N. premises in Pulchowk, few invitees present at the annual function were aware of the war going on sub rosa between the officials. The battle is to hold on to the regional U.N. center in Kathmandu. Once complete, the regional center will be the largest U.N. regional hub Nepal has ever hosted.

The day before, it seems, the U.N. Resident Representative Matthew Kahane had been summoned to the Prime Minister's Office and the Foreign Ministry to explain why the government had not been informed about the alleged move to relocate the newly established center to Colombo. Worse, some government officials even expressed shock that the U.N. officials should make such an important decision without informing the host country. U.N. officials have cited Nepal's poor security situation as the reason for the proposed relocation.

Kahane's office told Nation Weekly that "due to the conflict in Nepal, the discussion on relocation has started, but no decision has yet been taken." One government source says Kahane is as keen to keep the center in Nepal as the Nepali government.

Though the news of the relocation was first reported in the media early this month, it was only last week that government seems to realize the gravity of the situation. There is now a growing realization that the relocation will be damaging to both Nepal and the United Nations. With the withdrawal of an important U.N. center, Nepal will be seen as a country with serious security problems by other international aid agencies



Peace for Development

Thursday 14 October 2004



too. The United Nations will perhaps look even worse—it will be seen as making a hasty retreat from a country in conflict while the bilaterals are staying in bravely to aid Nepal's development.

Although the Prime Minister's Office couldn't be reached for confirmation about the Kahane summons, it is clear that the U.N. resident chief has been notified of the government's displeasure. "All those who have a say in this matter have been consulted," says Minendra Rijal, the prime minister's aide and NC-D spokesman. "The government is mobilizing all resources to keep this office here." The center, when fully staffed, would employ as many as 60 officials, half of them Nepalis.

The Kathmandu Regional Center, which will oversee various UNDP programs in 25 Asia-Pacific countries, came into partial operation in July this year. It was the result of an agreement signed between the Thapa government and visiting U.N. Assistant Secretary General Hafiz Ahmed Pasha in February 2004. "The decision to develop Nepal as the headquarters has already been finalized and will be implemented from July 1, 2004," Pasha had said during his visit.

The regional center will oversee programs in such areas as poverty alleviation, crisis prevention and recovery, and HIV/AIDS. As a host nation, Nepal will substantially benefit from the center that will cost the United Nations a minimum of \$6 million annually. The UNDP has

acquired a building (that belongs to the Sanchaya Kosh) opposite the U.N. headquarters at Pulchowk for the center and one-third of its staff have either already been hired or have arrived from other U.N. offices outside Kathmandu.

There is already a smaller version of the center, a Sub-Regional Resource Facility or SURF, which looks after nine countries in South and West Asia. When inaugurating the SURF in August 2001, U.N. official Pasha had lauded Nepal for being "an outstanding partner and supporter of the United Nations for the last four and half decades and a formidable host of U.N. agencies." The SURF also serves as a backup to UNDP programs in democratic governance, poverty eradication, environment and sustainable energy, HIV/AIDS crisis prevention and recovery, and IT for development. Important as that is, a full-scale center would be much more so.

Bangkok is only other Asian capital to host a UNDP regional center. Kathmandu was chosen partly because SAARC, OXFAM and other organizations already have their regional headquarters here. Kathmandu also has an appeal among the international staff as an exotic and quiet destination, a feature it is losing fast.

"The Regional Centre is a matter of huge prestige for Nepal," says Ram Sharan Mahat, former foreign minister and leader of the Nepali Congress, who had jointly inaugurated the UNDP SURF with the U.N.'s Pasha in 2001.

Besides being the largest regional hub of its kind, it will also provide high-paying U.N. jobs to Nepalis.

Although U.N. officials say that no decision has been taken yet, they admit that the escalating conflict in Nepal has triggered discussions about relocation. Concern about having the full regional center in Kathmandu was perhaps sparked by recent news about blockades, riots and bandas in the international media. It is not clear why Sri Lanka is preferred over Nepal, where peace is fragile, at best. The selection suggests that high-stakes decisions are being taken by people who have little knowledge of ground reality and are swayed mostly by the news about Nepal's conflict. The talk of relocation, if carried out, is likely to plant the first seed of poison in otherwise cordial ties between the United Nations and the Nepali state.

Analysts are surprised that the United Nations, which is supposed to be the very bastion of development in Third World countries, should be the first one to throw in the towel, citing poor security. If anyone has to be concerned about their safety in Nepal, say the analysts, it is the bilateral agencies whose governments support the Nepal in its war against the Maoists and not the United Nations that is seen as a neutral party. For now, the immediate concern is whether the Nepali government's belated lobbying will stop the regional center from leaving. **N**

BY SATISH JUNG SHAHI IN LELE

DRIVE UP 14 KILOMETERS along Kanti Rajpath from Satdobato in Ring Road, head further south toward Bajrabarahi and Chapagaon, follow a bumpy dirt track, and you will arrive at the tiny village of Devichaur in Tika Bhairab. The biggest settlement in vicinity is Lele. Another five minutes further up after crossing the Nallu Khola and passing the Tika Bhairab temple brings you to Champi and the two-story mud brick and straw-thatched house where the Khadkas live.

Ask any villager where the parents of one of the 12 Nepalis killed in Iraq live, and they will lead you to the house without much fuss. Everyone knows the parents of Ramesh Khadka, ever since the killings in Iraq on August 31. It has been a difficult six weeks since. First the shocking news of the death of their child and then the streams of visitors for days on end, many of them to express their condolence but many others curious onlookers.

The Khadkas' lives are slowly returning to normal, but Dashain this year is filled with a deep void. They still remember how they had made fervent pleas for the life of their son to the Iraqi captors and how all that went in vain.

"It is sad that this old father is having to do the work his son was supposed to be doing," says Jit Bahadur, father of Ramesh, as he sits down on the *pidi* of his house, just back from overseeing the rice harvest at Bungajuli, a little further up the hill. His white cap, worn during the mourning period, is wet with the cool afternoon rain.

"I will be returning this cap tomorrow when it will be 45 days since my son died," says Jit Bahadur. "The pundit says I will not have to undergo the customary yearlong mourning as Ramesh was younger than me." His eyes welled up with tears as he spoke to us of his son when we visited him on Thursday, October 14. Wiping off his tears, Jit Bahadur says the end of the mourning ritual would allow the family to celebrate Dashain and perform other *pujas*. "But Dashain is not going to be the same as in the previous years," he says.

At a neighbor's house nextdoor, a goat lay tied to a pole; the mood was festive. The wooden shutters of a shop were be-



DEATH IN THE FAMILY

After their son's in Iraq in August, the Khadkas' lives are slowly returning to normal. But Dashain this year is filled with a deep void

ing painted brown and school children returned home from the last day of school before the holidays.

At the Khadkas', all was silent except for the occasional rumble of trucks passing in the nearby Kanti Rajmarg. Loaded with gravel from lo-

cal quarries they were on their way to Kathmandu.

The Khadkas have received Rs. 1,000,000 in compensation the government promised them. Ramesh's older brother Sudarshan, one of the three remaining sons of Jit Bahadur, has been



promised a job by the Khetan Group as have been 11 others, one from each of the 12 bereaved families.

“Almost Rs. 200,000 was repaid to the people Ramesh had taken loans from to get to Iraq,” says Jit Bahadur. “It would have been better if Ramesh had died of a disease or had stayed back and made a living crushing stones. Such an end is just very difficult for a father to go through.”

Radha, mother of Ramesh, joined us once she had finished sweeping the *aangan* with a broom and packing the rice that had been drying out in the sun. She had just finished washing her granddaughter’s dirty feet and sat down with the young child still on her lap.

“I haven’t been out anywhere since the incident and I just stay at home playing with this granddaughter,” says Radha. Her eyes presently turn watery, and she

wipes the tears with the *sapko* of her red dhoti. “Only a few weeks back I saw four boys in garlands, all my son’s age, passing by as they left for work overseas. I couldn’t hold myself from crying.”

There was another trauma since Ramesh’s tragic death in Iraq. Sudarshan was threatened with arrest after the rioters vandalized the manpower company that had sent Ramesh to Iraq on September 1. “It was Pralhad Giri who sold my son. Giri’s brother even charged Sudarshan with inciting the riots, but at the time of the riots, Sudarshan was making me drink water. I had fallen unconscious after hearing of Ramesh’s death,” says Radha, still angry with the manpower company that sent Ramesh to Iraq and bewildered at charges leveled at her son.

All three remaining sons, the eldest who is married, share the house that Jit

Bahadur and Radha live in. Two of the Khadka daughters are already married; Ramesh hadn’t yet married.

“It feels good to share our sadness with people,” says Radha. She tells us how it had felt good to talk to another family from Dhankuta whose son too had been killed with Ramesh. The family had visited the Khadkas three weeks ago. The Khadkas still get occasional visits and letters, from those known and unknown, expressing condolences. The village chairman recently handed over a condolence letter that had been sent by Nepalis in Australia through the Ministry of Labor.

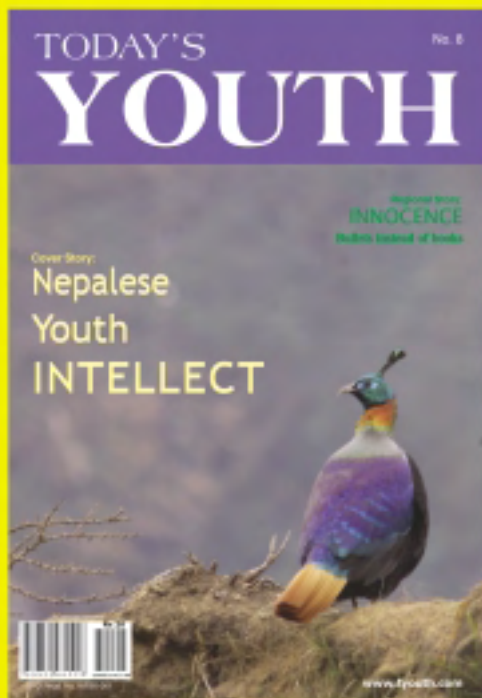
“We will probably make a statue of Ramesh beside the Tika Bhairav temple with whatever remains of the money we received as compensation,” says Radha. “The villagers say the labor minister has promised he would be there to inaugurate the statue.”

The Iraq incident will haunt the villagers forever. “It was terrible,” says Bhim Bahadur, who runs a small eatery near the Tika Bhairav temple. His wife adds, “It just seems like yesterday when he [Ramesh] ate *tarkari* at my place. He left for Iraq the next day.”

An Indian Muslim who makes quilts and lives in a rented room above Bhim Bahadur’s eatery nods in approval as he holds a steel glass that has just filled with *rakshi*. Bhim Bahadur looks at him: “This chap did not come out of his room for three days after the riots.” It was Bhim Bahadur who assured the quilt-maker that he was safe in the village.

“It has been 13 years since I have worked here. I didn’t know I already had so many friends,” replies the quilt maker. Everyone in the eatery burst out laughing. **N**

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Thinking Out Of The Box

BY YASHAS VAIDYA

When you are young,” says Shrijana Singh Yonjan, “you have a kind of blind courage.” That courage carried Yonjan, then a college student in her late teens, to Seoul, South Korea to participate in the Miss University Contest. For the student from Padma Kanya campus, it was a whole new world in more ways than one. Besides taking her to new places, the trip was her first foray into the world of glamour and the ramp, which were to become a large part of her career. She remembers how she walked into breakfast one morning in the course of the competition in “pink tracks” and, to her surprise, came across the other girls dressed in miniskirts wearing full makeup. For someone not familiar with fashion—the only makeup she knew until then being the *gajal*—Yonjan fared quite well, winning the talent award with a *Durga Bandana*, a semi-classical dance. With that prize she became the first Nepali to win an award at an international pageant.

The experience influenced her life and probably shaped her career. But when she took the plunge and boarded the plane to Korea, she had little idea about what she was getting into. Yonjan recently undertook another new responsibility as editor of the Metro Citypaper, formerly Metro. It was, she says, “a plunge into the deep end of the pool.” Yonjan, now in her early thirties, did not jump into the venture with the blind courage of her college days. She gave the move a lot of thought. She has experience in radio and television,

working for Kantipur FM and Channel Nepal, but this was her first opportunity to be in charge of a newspaper. It was a big decision for Yonjan to give the paper the long-term commitment required of an editor.

As the editor she’s brought in a new look for the Metro Citypaper. Aesthetics have always been important to Yonjan. She worked for years designing events and doing

choreography for the ramp or on the stage. She has also worked on television programs, songs and an animated music video. From those experiences she understands the need to make things “look good.” She explains how the focus today is on the visual: in music, advertising and everywhere. She is willing to turn things around, change them and delve in the small details to get the aesthetic sense she wants. An example is the new name, Metro Citypaper, and a new logo, a simple white design against a red background. She has given the magazine more eye-candy—catchy colors, a new logo and new sections like the “pic picks,” a photo page.



Yonjan has also started to change the content. She wants Metro to be more than just a paper for “metrobaasis,” She talks about “revolutionizing the thoughts of thinking people” and “giving people the outlet to express themselves in ways they were reluctant to before.” Time will tell whether she succeeds. But what is certain is that she’ll be taking the road less traveled.

Doing things differently has always come naturally to Yonjan. She was the director of the Entertainment Programming Department at Channel Nepal, Nepal’s first satellite television station, for a year and a half during its formative months. She was involved in designing concepts; training presenters, producers; and overall administrative management, and she worked with anchors and producers who were, she says, “raw.” The people on the team were new to television, but so were the

ideas Yonjan pressed for— issue-based talk shows, musicals and programs on beauty, fashion and cinema. Television programming was homogenous then—the same look and the same presentation. Yonjan set about doing things differently. “Channel Nepal brought glamour to television,” says Yonjan. NTV struggled to catch up with Yonjan’s unique programming.

She does things differently because she thinks unconventionally and keeps an open mind about new things. For example, she sees culture as a dynamic thing: Each generation creates its own culture. She isn’t against tradition, as long as it remains relevant to modern society. If not, she would just as soon they go: “For example, Rishi Panchami should be banned,” she says. “That women need to wash off their sins 365 times: The reasoning behind that is just absurd.”

Her independence has much to do with her parents, late singer, composer and musician Gopal Yonjan and Rinzin Yonjan. She says they never discouraged her from anything nor led to believe that being a girl restricted her in any way. From her father, who she calls a genius, she learned about hard work and the drive to succeed. She recalls how he used to work all day around, without even food. “Food had to be heated and re-heated again and again,” she says. “He didn’t need to eat.” At the same time she learned about independence and self-confidence from her mother, a working mom at a time when most women stayed at home. The role of the docile housewife held no interest for mother or daughter.

Even with such celebrity parents, Yonjan never felt as if she lacked any attention from them. They were always accessible, especially her father. She recalls how when she was a child, her father used to tell her stories he had made up. Yonjan, now a mother of two, finds herself telling those stories to her own daughters. The kind of accessibility and the attention she got is something she and her husband, Navin Singh, try to emulate with her own children—Navashree and Navita, aged seven and five. Despite her editorial responsibilities and often hectic days at work, she comes home to help with her daughters’ homework. Yonjan knows there are more important things in life than work. **N**



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Gorkhapatra's Children

Fourteen years after the Jana Andolan, the Nepali media industry, despite its bravado and numbers, is institutionally weak in many ways. It is still managed by people whose business model is all about squeezing their employees.

BY ASHUTOSH TIWARI

Earlier last week, through a Cabinet decision, the government unveiled an 11-point media policy. It said that the policy was formulated as per the recommendations of a high-level team headed by Mohammed Mohsin, the minister of information and communication. But to observers of the Nepali media industry, the policy appears to boil down to throwing millions of rupees of public money at private sector media houses and their organizations, and making the movers and shakers of the so-called fourth estate dependent on government's largesse, with an unstated hope that they will not bite the hand that feeds them.

Sadly, without understanding the significance of what it means to be on the government's indirect payroll, especially in these times when the Nepali public needs a free press that remains skeptical of government of any strip. Tara Nath Dahal, the chairman of the Federation of Nepali Journalists, the FNJ, put out a statement welcoming the policy, adding that "more needs to be done for journalists' welfare by the government." Similarly, Kantipur Publications, another beneficiary, had an editorial published in Kantipur in which it expressed profound gratitude to the government.

When media houses and their supposed leaders celebrate regulations that aim to reduce competition in their industry, much less think about being entitled to pocket public money, you know that the boast of the Nepali newspaper publishers that they are hallowed members of the "fourth estate" amounts to no more than a flash of hypocritical rhetoric. And any Nepali citizen can now ask whether the members of the fourth estate are any different from most of our disliked ex-members of parliament who too had the government pick up the tabs for all sorts of benefits that were above and beyond what was proper.

But let's flesh out these two specifics of the new media policy. First, the government wants to ban all forms of outdoor advertisements. Why? So that advertisers have no choice but to use the products of the big media houses as outlets to get their messages across. That this regulation is unfair to ad agencies and their clients, who are now deprived of choices to reach customers, does not seem to have crossed Mohsin's mind. Yes, if the government were genuinely concerned about the billboards being eyesores, then, it could raise the fees so that there would be fewer of them. Alternatively, it could also work out other arrangements that municipal governments around the world have done. But by banning them altogether, it only aimed to serve the interest of big media houses, who, like any self-serving business, are eager to grab a favorable regulation for all its worth. And they did so by giving Mohsin's gift a page-one treatment last week.

Second, the government wants to double the advertisement subsidies to weeklies which, according to Pratyoush Onta at Martin Chautari, number in hundreds if you count registrations but 200-plus in terms of regular publication.

Moreover, the media policy calls for donating millions of rupees to help construct FNJ district offices and set up a welfare fund for violence-hit journalists.

Still, the question here is not what public services have been cut in this poor country to pay for these subsidies. Nor is it whether it is the role of a government to distort a competitive media market by doling out taxpayers' money to prop up private enterprises instead of instituting rules that help make the industry more developed and professional. Nor too is it whether media professionals deserve such a special treatment from the government. It is whether any self-respecting media professional saw the carrot for what it is: money in exchange for agreeing to toe the government's line. Indeed, as Mohsin made it clear, any weekly that runs afoul of a government-interpreted code of conduct will not get its share.

Journalists never tire of saying that journalism is a profession (or, for that matter, that the media is an industry) worthy of respect. But how much respect does Nepali media industry can command from the public—or from other professionals—when the higher-ups in that profession pull strings to ward off market-based competition for ads and when talented employees, clamor for more government handouts for things they themselves should be able to raise funds for, and are so insecure that they think their daily bread needs to be protected by the government?

The truth, I suspect, is that 14 years after the Jana Andolan, the Nepali media industry, despite its bravado and numbers, is institutionally weak in many ways. It is still managed by people whose business model is all about squeezing their employees (i.e. low pay, no insurance, no investment in hiring competent people to gather and interpret news, etc.) and being closer to the communication minister than about responding to the demands of the news marketplace. That is why it is no surprise to see the media leaders dancing right into the trap that Mohsin, an old Panchayati hand, laid out to buy their independence in the name of the "11-point media policy." **N**



If I Should Be So Lucky

There's nothing funny about not going

BY KUNAL LAMA

UTI. It's not another wireless-loop telephone company, thank you, but is certainly wireless, loopy and the only call you will be getting will be the call of nature—or not, as is its wont. Hello, lost in translation? Urinary Tract Infection (UTI, get it?) is what I'm going on about.

I was asked to give a “clean catch” sample by collecting “midstream” urine in a sterile container. The urinalysis test showed the presence of white and red blood cells and bacteria. Bingo! I had UTI.

UTI is a serious health problem affecting millions of people each year throughout the world, women being especially prone to it. One woman in five develops a UTI during her lifetime, and there is one man out of 12 million in Nepal who has got it now. No, not you! Me. Yours truly. :-)

The average adult—like you and I—needs to pee a lot each day and night. (Now that winter is just round the corner, the nocturnal urge to purge gets positively annoying, when the real urge is to curl up under a quilt, preferably with a loved one. Not good. Get out of that bed, pronto, and tippy-toe to the loo!) It was the frequent need to drip, drip, drip one fine, recent morning that gave me the first inkling that a call was getting lost in the labyrinthine world of kidneys, ureters, bladders and urethra. Every time I picked up the phone, it was getting engaged, disconnected, forcing me to hang up. I felt bad all over: tired, shaky, washed out. Instead of the river I dearly wanted to unleash, only a shrunken stream was released. I also had a slight fever, which meant that the infection might have reached the kidneys. That certainly explained the nagging pain in the back and below the ribs. I knew I had to do something quick. After all, I could not keep going to the loo every other minute, only to return full of bladder, all day long. I have a life, you know. Besides, my YKK zippers were getting seriously fouled up. Makers of Levi's, get a posse of cowboys WITH UTI next time to test your jeans. What's the use of that tough image you project if the zippers aren't?

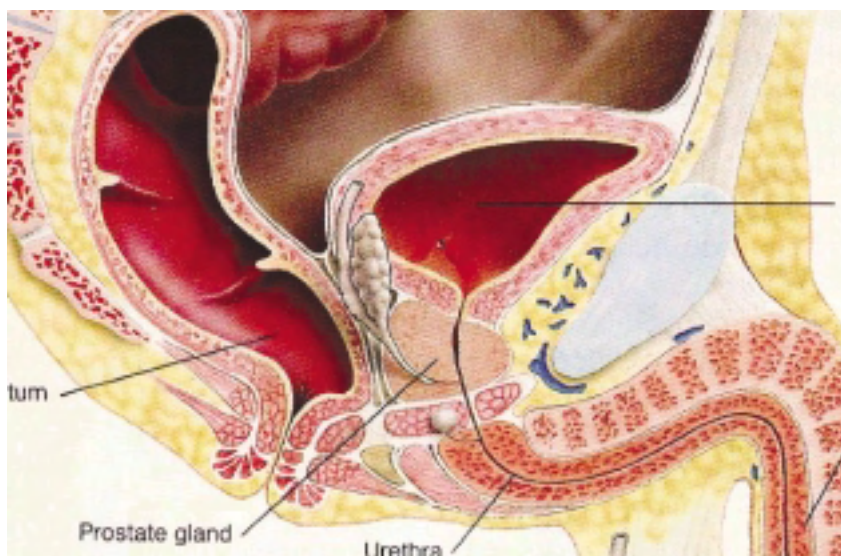
So off I went to the NIC to meet the doctor. After listening to my “urinary” woes (the poor, patient, gentle Doctor-saheb), I was asked to give a “clean catch” sample by collecting “midstream” urine in a sterile container. The urinalysis test showed the presence of white and red blood cells and bacteria. Bingo! I had UTI.

Normal urine, surprisingly, is squeaky clean, but those highly motile micro-organisms, especially bac-

teria, which, along with viruses and fungi, form a nasty axis of evil, swim out of the digestive tract and cling to the opening of the urethra and begin to multiply, as they only know how. If you have diabetes, then watch it, because any change or disorder that suppresses the immune system raises the risk of a urinary infection. More women get UTI than men, possibly because their urethra is shorter, allowing bacteria quick access to the bladder from the nearby anus and vagina. For many women, sexual intercourse seems to trigger an infection. Tough luck, fair ladies. In men, obstructions—such as a urinary stone or enlarged prostate—or medical procedures involving a catheter (ouch) seem to cause infections.

UTI meant that I had to dose up on 500mg of Ciprofloxacin twice a day for a week. Bad, bad news. With me, as far as antibiotics are concerned, the cure is far worse than the disease. The only silver lining I can see, since the commonest advice given to prevent—or to help get rid of—UTI being to drink plenty of water, as it helps to cleanse the urinary tract of bacteria, is that my leg muscles are getting strengthened from the frequent trips to you-know-where.

In the future, scientists may develop a vaccine that can prevent UTIs from recurring. A method being considered for women is to apply the vaccine directly as a suppository in the vagina. Uggh! To avoid similar indignities, I have taken a solemn pledge to drink plenty of water every day; urinate when I feel the need rather than resisting it; take showers instead of tub baths (Duh, where is the water for such luxuries?); avoid using feminine hygiene sprays and scented douches, which may irritate the urethra. Men, the last one is obviously not for you, unless you happen to be a BDS member. If that is so, some of you might also consider wiping from front to back to prevent bacteria around the anus from entering the (imaginary) vagina or urethra. Ooh, I'm in real trouble here, but, guys, ladies, I'm trying to be funny. Comprene? Don't take it personally, okay? Anyway, I gotta split. That urge is now getting rather urgent. UTI, I'm gonna shoot you out. Oh, only if I should be so lucky! ■



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FADING BEAUTY

Illegal mining in “protected” forests in the south of the Valley is destroying the environment and people’s lives

BY SUNIL POKHREL

LELE, 14 KILOMETERS SOUTHWEST of Kathmandu, is rich with natural resources and once was rich in natural beauty. No more. The hills surrounding Lele and the neighboring villages, Tika Bhairab, Devi Chowr and Champpi, are barren due to the rampant mining of stone for construction in the Kathmandu Valley. The locals are angry about how resources so close to them are being picked by outsiders. The simmering dispute between the politically backed, wealthy mine operators and the

locals will boil over soon unless the authorities act.

Prakash K.C., president of Bagashowri Yuva Club, a local club established to protect natural resources of the area, has started speaking out against indiscriminate mining in the hills. He says that the area has almost been turned into a desert. “We cannot afford to waste time to stop what is going on in our area,” says K.C. “We will not let the mines run if they don’t comply with the environmental rules set by existing law.” The hills used to be full of *kaliz*, *titra* and *dhukur*, recalls Ram Chandra, an elderly

local resident. “I don’t see them these days,” he says. “Overpopulation and pollution have destroyed everything.”

District officials admit that the mines are not complying with the laws. They say that they have taken note of unlicensed stone crushing plants and mines and will act against them shortly. The stone mines and crushers extend from Chapagaon to beyond Tika Bhirab. Prakash K.C. estimates that out of the 15 plants in Chapagaon, nine are unlicensed. For years, he says, the plants have ignored public requests to control their dust emissions.

The beauty of Lele and its hills are being destroyed by the dust, deforestation, traffic and pollution. “The stone mines may be a lucrative business for



their operators,” says Sunita Lama, a student and resident of Tika Bhairab, “but the rising construction in Kathmandu is causing increasing ecological degradation in Lele.” The locals’ anger is not limited to the mine operators alone. They say that government agencies know about the destruction of the environment and the encroachment of the government forest, but have done nothing. The locals are upset with their VDC representatives too. Some residents accuse them of serving the interests of the miners to fill their pockets.

While officials watch, tens of thousands of laborers work. The Nallu Khola, which emerges from a gorge near Tika Bhairab, was once a center of attraction for visitors but is in a terrible state now. The hillsides above the river have been stripped for four kilometers. Loose mud and rocks left behind have become a danger to the villagers who live along the gorge. Two families have deserted their homes for safety; others are con-

sidering doing the same. Monsoon landslides in the area have increased considerably.

The miners and the destruction are spreading. Lele, Devi Chowr and Champpi have seen an unprecedented increase in mining operations. The miners first offer good money to a landlord whose land lies near the government forest. The miners start to extract stone from the land they have bought but soon move into the government forest. Forestry officials know of this, but they lack the will or the clout to move against the miners.

The problem started with a forestry department decision some 30 ago that granted permission to Purna Marvel and Stone Factory to operate mines in the national forest. After the locals’ com-

plaints about the proliferation of mining, a commission headed by Shanti Ram

Joshi, joint secretary at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, concluded that the mines weren’t complying with the rules. More than a year has passed since the report was prepared, but no action has yet been taken.

More than 700 trucks transport stones, gravel and mud each day into the Kathmandu Valley. The government is collecting taxes, and the mine opera-

tors are earning handsome profits. But the cost of the damage to the environment is being borne by the local people, whose livelihood depends on the natural resources. If government officials don’t act to enforce the laws, the confrontation between the miners and the increasingly irate locals could turn ugly. **N**

The miners and the destruction are spreading. Lele, Devi Chowr and Champpi have seen an unprecedented increase in mining operations.



CITY ThisWeek

EVENTS



MALASHREE— The Music of Dashain

Dashain is here and Sukarma, the grouping of Drubesh Chandra Regmi on sitar, Atul Prasad Gautam on the tabala and Shyam Sharan Nepali on sarangi, is all set to spread the word with their enchanting music. The trio will be performing at “Ritushrawan,” a bi-monthly event organized by Mantra Entertainment, this time at the Patan Museum Court-

yard, Mangalbazaar 5 p.m. onwards on October 30. The show will consist ragas and raginis of the season as well as folklore from across the country. Dance performances will be an added bonus. The entry fee is Rs. 500 with 20 percent of the proceeds going to Rotary Club of Swayambhu. For information: 9841205297 (Sunanda) or 9851051789 (Samir).

THE EXPRESSIONS ART EXHIBITIONS



On the occasion of Dashain, Umesh Shrestha, Hari Jung Bomjon and Sudan Kumar Singh have come together to put on show their newest collection of art works. The exhibition, titled “The Expressions,” intends to disclose and explain social complexities. The artists have also tried to explore the magnificence of nature through their paintings. At: Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal. For in-

formation: 4220735.

Hamro Prayas

Art Exhibition by students of grades 6-10 of the Adarsha Vidya Mandir. At the NAFA Gallery, Naxal. For information: 4421206.

The Faces of Time and Colors of Sensibility

Paintings by renowned artist and cartoonist Durga Baral. At the Siddhartha Art Gallery. For information: 4411122.

Humongous Sagarmatha

Taste Pizza from sizes of 12”, 15”, 18”, 22” to the world’s largest pizza, the humongous



SAGARMATHA 25” which has just become larger. Special Dashain offer—10% off on any pizza (for pickups only). For information: 5520294, 5539345.

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off on food and domestic liquors at the Fun Café. Date: October 15 to November 15. For information: 4411818.

Festival Offer at Tian Rui

Celebrate Dashain with 25% off on food and items. Fixed lunch @ Rs. 150 from 12 a.m. to 3 p.m. For information: 4243078.

Cine Club

Movie: Kundun(1997). Director: Martin Scorsese. Starring: Tenzin Thuthob. At the Alliance Francaise, Tripureshwor. Date: October

31. Time: 2 p.m. For information: 4241163.

Hamro Pani Dashain

Rotary Club of Himalaya Patan, which celebrated it's centennial year this year, comes together with SathSath to celebrate this Dashain with the street children. Drama by street children, tika offerings and kite flying will be the main attractions. At Khullamanch. Date: October 23. Time 10:00 a.m.



Sizzling Chimney Flambed!

The Chimney at the Hotel Yak and Yeti, offers Sizzlers and Flambes this autumn. Also your choice of the finest duck, lamb or cottage cheese; and caramelized onions, roasted garlic and sauces to give your taste buds a treat. Date: 8-24 October. Time: 6:30 p.m. onwards. Price: Rs.499- Rs. 1,199.



Oktober fest



Dwarika's celebrates the Oktoberfest on the last week of October to make you rejoice in a festive mood. You will be satiated with a brilliant blend of food and culture, where Nepali raksi and sekuwa will be served along with international drinks and grilled bratwurst. Venue: The Fusion bar, poolside at the Dwarika's. Date: October 29. Price: Rs. 750 per person. Includes "Oktober fest-ival" dinner with special cocktail of the evening or a glass of beer. Also live music by Abhaya and The Steam Injus from 7 p.m. onwards. Happy hour 4-7p.m. Special 10% discount for Heritage Plus members. Reservations recommended. For information: 4479488.

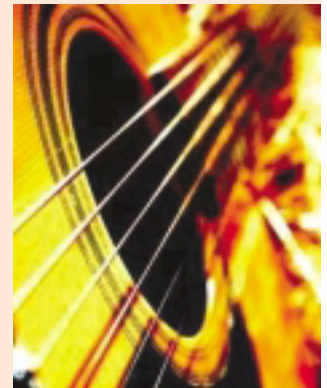
ONGOING

All That Jazz

Presenting "Abhaya and the Steam Injuns" and the best of jazz In Nepal at the Fusion Bar, Dwarika's Hotel 7 p.m. onwards, every Friday. Entry fee: Rs. 555, including BBQ dinner, and a can of beer/soft drinks. For information: 4479488.

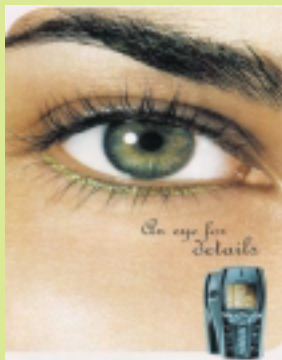
Fusion Night

The Rox Bar welcomes everyone to be a part of the Fusion Night. The rhythmic and harmonic beats of the eastern and the western instruments will be a treat for your senses. Enjoy the Sarangi played by Bharat Nepali with a well-blended mix of western tunes played by The Cloud Walkers. Every Wednesday. Time: 6 p.m. onwards. For information: 4491234.



Marwari Specialities

Every Saturday evening@ Shambala Garden Café, Shangrila Hotel with a wide selection of vegetarian delicacies. "Rusty Nails" playing Blues and Rock N' Roll. Every Saturday live @ The Jazz Bar. Time: 7p.m. onwards. For information: 4412999.



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Enjoy varieties of Nepali household delicacies like *samaya bajee*, *celroti*, *bara*, *sekuwa*, *khasi ko kabab* and *haas ko masu* with an array of vegetables. Interesting mouthwatering dishes prepared on the spot by our master chefs. A wide range of Nepalese spicy pickles with sweet temptations including *julebi*, *panchamrit*, *juju dhau* and the



renowned Dwarika's *pharsi ko halwa*. Date: November 3. Price: Rs. 1200 net per person includes snacks & dinner with live music. 10% discount to Heritage Plus members. Time: 7-10 p.m. For information: 4479488.

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UFO Clothing Store, Putalisadak

5% off on all items in display. For information: 4242195.



Central Departmental Store, Khichapokhari

Up to 40% off on Ladies Shoes. For information: 4222028.

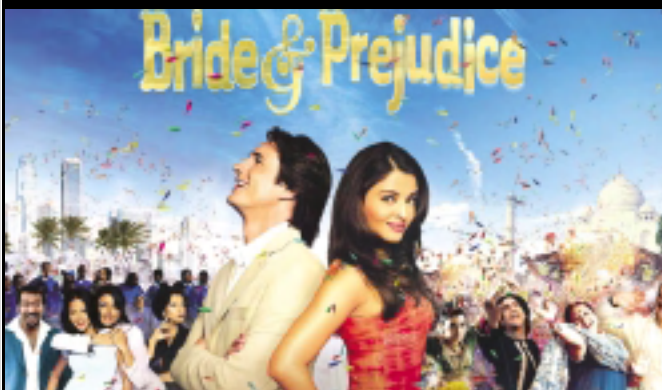
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Bluebird Departmental Store

Purchase goods worth Rs.1000 and collect 10 points. Exchange the points with a gift hamper of your choice. For information: 4228833.

Top Class, New road

Discount upto 50% in shoes and clothes. For information: 4246093.



Photography competition

Wildlife Conservation Nepal organizes the WCN Amateur Nature and Wildlife Photography Competition for amateurs. Photographs should be submitted at WCN with a standard 8X12 inches. No



entry fee. The final exhibition will be organized in December 2004. A panel of prominent photographers will judge the best 12 photographs and they will be featured in WCN Annual Calendar 2005. The first three contestants will be awarded. The fund raised from the sales of the calendars will be logged back into the into the conservation awareness program, mainly for the research grants for 3 biological science postgraduate students for the year 2005. Deadline November 30. For information: 5524202 or www.wcn.org.np

Women in Concert

The liveliest show in town, Women in Concert-2 will leave all you music lovers breathless. Groove to the songs played by Abhaya, Preeti, Pooja, Rachana, Sheri and Vidhya accompanied by the Rusty nails, Rajan and Peter. The pro-



ceeds from the show will go to the Circus Children Project. Venue: Dechenling Garden. Date: October 31. Time: 7 p.m. onwards. Tickets: Rs.750 includes buffet dinner. For information: 4412158, 4416387.

Just Devine Dashain

After a hectic day in office, relax yourself at "Jack Lives Here"- 1905 Kantipath. Enjoy happy hours from 4-8 p.m. with free snacks and 20% off on drinks. Also buy one JD Cocktail and get one free. Till October 31. For information: 4225272.

Cine Club

Movie: Verite si je mens! 2 st/ang(2002). Director: Thomas Gilou. Starring: Richard Anconina. At the Alliance

Francaise, Tripureshwor. Date: November 7. Time: 2 p.m. For information: 4241163.

Drin...king Utsav '04

Drinks of all types at the Birendra International Convention Center. Date: October 15-19. For information:



SOALTEE SUPER SIXES 2004

For the Sixth consecutive year, Soaltee Crowne Plaza organizes the Soaltee Crowne Plaza Super Sixes 2004. This year will witness a battle between 16 different teams-- Nabil Bank, Indian Embassy, British Gurkhas, Standard Chartered Bank, Kumari bank, Himalayan Bank, ILFC, Gorkha Brewery, Kantipur Publications, APCA publications, Space Time, Surya Nepal, Bhote Koshi, Nepal Investment bank, Nepal Merchant Bank and Soaltee Crowne Plaza.

The tournament will be held for three and a half days. This Six-a-Side tournament has been designed by the Cricket Association of Nepal and the technical aspect of the tournament will be supervised by professionals nominated by Cricket Association of Nepal. Backed by much fun and rejuvenation, you would not want to miss this most sought after event. Date: October 29 to November 1. Venue: Tribhuwan University Grounds.





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PUSHED TO THE BACK FOOT

With its talent pool, Nepal should finish among Asia's top non-Test playing countries. It should start with holding three-day matches at home.

BY SUDESH SHRESTHA

Ahead of the three-day match between the U.A.E. and Nepal in the ACC tournament last Sunday, there was not much to choose between the two. Early this year, Nepal had forced a draw against the desert emirates in the three-day away match and had beaten Malaysia, another Asian team aspiring for cricket's big league, comfortably at home.

Then it all happened in a hurry. By late Monday afternoon, that margin between the two was more than the length of the Tribhuvan University Cricket Ground, where the match was being played. "Why did so many of us get excited about the prospects of a contest?" a disappointed journalist remarked after the lop-sided encounter.

The match had been billed as The Showdown between Asia's top two non-Test-playing nations. Given Nepal's poor performance, particularly their rash approach to the game in the first innings,

more a appropriate slogan would have been The Letdown.

Perhaps the most accurate promotional jargon would have been the Massive Gap between the Best and the Rest, for it is now an indisputable fact that the U.A.E. are the standout team among cricket's emerging nations in Asia.

The U.A.E. won the match when their bowlers, led by speedster Asad Ali, demoralized the home team by wrapping up the Nepal first innings for just 64 runs. Ali, who had snared 9 wickets in an innings against Nepal when the two teams met in an ICC Intercontinental Cup match early this year, picked up seven wickets in the innings again this time.

"We thought it would be a tough match against Nepal on its home turf with a partisan crowd cheering it on. Thanks to our bowlers who once again performed splendidly our batsmen's task was made a lot easier," said Mohammad Tauquir, the U.A.E. captain,

who was standing in for injured Khurram Khan.

The U.A.E., who made 209 in its first essay, required just 39 runs in its second innings after Nepal followed the poor first innings total with 180 in the second. And it scored the winning runs without losing a wicket to end the game a day early. The result has now confirmed the U.A.E. a final berth in the "Fast Track Countries" tournament organized by the Asian Cricket Council with the objective to enable the "second tier" cricketing nations in Asia to adapt to the longer version of the game. Besides Nepal and the U.A.E., Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore are other teams in the fray. Nepal and the U.A.E. will each play Hong Kong in the final round-robin contest.

In the wake of the debacle last week, all sorts stories are doing the rounds. Was it the newly laid pitch at the TU ground? Or perhaps, was it captain Raju Khadka's call to bat first, ignoring the pitfalls of batting on a moist pitch and in morning conditions?

As far as the officials are concerned, all the noise about the pitch is baseless. Komal Pandey, a member of the Cricket Association of Nepal, who was responsible for the pitch preparations, says that the pitch was built as prescribed by the ACC consultants. NZ Sport Turf Institute, a New Zealand company that specializes in cricket ground development, monitors the ground development in these emerging nations.

Nepal's coach Roy Dias is disappointed as any local cricket fan would

be, but he says the pitch there wasn't anything in the pitch to complain about.

"It's just too easy to pass the blame on someone else," says Dias. "At this time of year, the pitch retains some moisture early in the day. It was Nepal's lack of exposure to these type of games more than anything else."

Others are filled with more apprehension. They feel that the home team lacked the heart to risk playing on a lively surface. Despite being skilful, they are woefully inadequate to adjust themselves to the situation.

"Players wore an unsettled look even before the match," says a cricket critic, recalling Nepal's poor batting in the first innings. "They batted as if they were in a big fat hurry."

Nepal was always going to find it tough after being bowled out cheaply in the first innings. But it had a chance to remain in the game, and possibly force a draw, after a good opening stand between openers Sarad Vesawkar and Shakti Gauchan in the second innings. That never happened.

There is hardly any doubt that Nepal has enough talent. As Nepal competes in the race on the "Fast Track," sports administrators have to heed to what renowned cricketers so often say, "There's nowhere to hide in a longer version of the game."

At the top level, all players are technically skilled, but it is your big-match temperament and ability to pace your innings that will give you the edge in the longer version of the game. Having a quick go at the opposition may prove decisive, but a good side can always bounce back in the game at some stage. When both sides bat for two innings, there is more than one crunch situation; any weakening of resolve at any moment spells doom. Which is why confidence is a prime ingredient for success.

Still, if Nepal ever is to graduate to big league cricket, experience will hold the key. "The only way to become a stronger cricket nation is to play on a regular basis against stronger opposition," says Dias, "without relying on

ICC and ACC schedules." He also suggests that Nepal should now be able to set realistic targets for its own national development programs and measure the results on the field against other countries at a similar stage of development.

Doesn't that require a new thinking on the part of our cricket officials?

"Yes, indeed," says the president of the Cricket Association of Nepal, Jay Kumar Nath Shah. "We are meeting shortly for a serious discussion over how to arrest national team's inconsistency." He believes one of the major drawbacks facing the cricket team's preparation is the lack of indoor facilities, which he attributes as one of the factors behind Nepal's poor showing.

For now, the officials have identified two major handicaps. First, the cricketers lack facilities to train themselves, especially during the long monsoon layoff. The country's cricket association is currently holding talks with the Sports Council to let the cricketers make use of its Satdobato facilities. Second, plans are afoot to hold three-day matches among the country's six cricket regions. But lack of good pitches outside Kathmandu has been a major hamstring to the plans, says Shah. First two pitches outside Kathmandu will soon be completed in Birgunj and Kalaiya. Kathmandu currently has four pitches—one each in St. Xavier's School and Tribhuvan University and two inside the Institute of Engineering at Pulchowk. Three more will be completed—in Bhairahawa, Biratnagar and Dharan—in another three or four years.

"We will have to make a three-day league among the country's six cricket regions a regular fixture in domestic cricket," says Shah. Until that happens, Nepal's fortunes in the longer version of the game are bound to swing wildly, like they did last week against the U.A.E. **N**



UNSTEADY HANDS: The lack of big-match temperament in Nepali cricketers, say critics, is one of the reasons behind Nepal's recent poor showing in the match against the U.A.E.

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Snapshots

BY DHRITI BHATTA

Working Holiday

It's the festive season, but Miss Nepal Payal Shakya hasn't made any plans for Dashain yet. It's been a hectic time for the beauty queen. She returned last week from a 12-day trek to Lukla, Namche and the Lake Inja in her role as conservation ambassador for the World Wildlife Federation. Shakya was raising awareness about global warming and shooting for a documentary that is to be released in the first week of November. In doing her bit for the environment, Shakya missed out on important dance training classes, preparations for the Miss World 2004. "I'll have to start my training sessions right after Ghatasthapana if I am to fly to China with confidence on November 6," says Shakya. "As I am not involved in any sort of preparation for Dashain this year, I feel no excitement about the festival. At this point it's work and only work for me."



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B Rai

SILVER FOR SIAM

October 9 was a day of triumph for Kamala Shrestha. She became the first Nepali beautician to celebrate the silver jubilee of her salon. The owner of the Siam Beauty Parlor was official beautician at Miss Nepal 2004 and is well known from her television ads and beauty tips. "I always wanted to do something unique," says Shrestha. "Though the job of a beautician was not a respectful profession at the time, I still persisted." That persistence has paid off. On her silver jubilee she was at the Blue Star Hotel displaying her hair-cutting and hairstyling skills. "If I impart my knowledge to the younger generation," she says, "then many other quality salons will sprout in the near future and will go as far as Siam did."

ILL HEALTH

Seventy-two-year-old musician Shivashanker Manandhar has over 3,000 songs to his credit, and he acted in Nepal's first home production, "Aama." Last week the legendary musician was in the news again when he flew off to Mumbai for treatment; he had been diagnosed with liver cancer. Only five months ago, he would travel on his bike to record his songs. Actors and singers are collecting funds for Manandhar's treatment.



mw

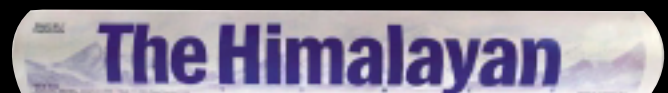
There are two sides to every story.



There are always two sides to every story. Who's right and who's wrong does not depend on which side you're on. To a third person, there may not even be a right or wrong, just a difference of opinion.

The important thing is to move on, change and adapt while keeping your goals intact.

The Himalayan Times is not about taking sides. It is about positively expressing the view of both sides.



A GREAT NEWSPAPER

Brand Man



NM/SS

Popstar **Nima Rumba** has been in the newspapers a lot in recent weeks, but his music isn't the reason. Rumba is the brand ambassador for Shaka Laka Boom noodles, Enticer motorcycles and SUBISU Cablenet. Brand sponsorship has recently taken him to places as far as Jhapa, Birtamod and Janakpur on endorsement assignments. Rumba, whose father was a

lama, chose a singing career over his family's thangka business. With six albums to his credit and regular overseas tours, it is understandable why Rumba is such a hot property in Nepal's advertising market. Satish Jung Shahi talked to Rumba about the music scene, the plague of music piracy and his lifestyle as a popular singer.

Your schedule sounds busy.

I just got back from Janakpur from an assignment with one of the companies I am brand ambassador for. My wife, Seily, has been a great source of encouragement and has been very supportive in handling the household chores, leaving me plenty of time for music. The past few years have been really good to me. I am currently writing songs for my seventh album due for release next year.

How do you see the present music scene?

There's been some sort of a revolution in Nepali music in the last few years. It wasn't like this when I used to perform with my band, The Bass, at *toles* around Swayambhunath back in 1990. At least music has developed into a respectable profession. Music companies are better organized, and the publicity is huge. During my performances, I see people from different age groups, from the very young, just 5- and 6-year olds to families and even the elderly. The music has reached everyone. It probably also has to do with the boom in the media.

What other reasons could be fuelling the boom?

Things were very raw when I came into the scene. It was mostly youth music, and we hit the right market. We delivered exactly what the younger generation was looking for. It was all by chance, but we hit the right chords. It was a big struggle back then. A singer like me had to battle for coverage in the press in the earlier days. Maybe it was due to the monopoly back then: Only those singers who had better contacts were getting covered. But as I said we got a lot of support from FM stations, television and newspapers later on. So that turned out well, though piracy is another problem we still need to overcome.

If listeners buy pirated cassettes, the companies will go bankrupt along with singers like us

Is piracy getting that bad?

Yes. It is a serious issue that listeners need to be aware of. The music companies, even the ones I'm involved with, say so. If listeners buy pirated cassettes, the companies will go bankrupt along with singers like us. Things will get better if listeners stop buying pirated cassettes. The music scene is finally big now after years of struggle. Singers like me are highly dependant on this profession. I request we fight piracy together.

You came back from Hong Kong where you were working...

Things have been good so far. My profession is now fulltime singing. Even when I performed in Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, the United Kingdom and Malaysia, most of the audience were Nepalis. I came back as I thought I would do better as a singer back home.

You are known for your wonderful stage performances. How do you see the audience from up there?

A supportive crowd is always a positive sign. But one thing I keep in mind as a performer is that the audiences are my clients, and my duty is to entertain them. I work very hard to make them enjoy the moment and to give them their money's worth. The crowd these days don't come there to only listen to music but also sing and dance together and have a good time. I can't just stand there and sing; they would rather listen to my CD at home.

How important are music videos?

They have become a really good medium to express our feelings and reach our listeners. Music videos have become a sort of a fashion, a trend. Listeners expect to see singers on visuals and not just hear them on audio. Plus, it plays a huge role in promoting our music in this competitive market. Also the Internet has helped us reach out globally. I get emails from as far as Dubai and Sikkim. The music scene has grown big indeed. **N**

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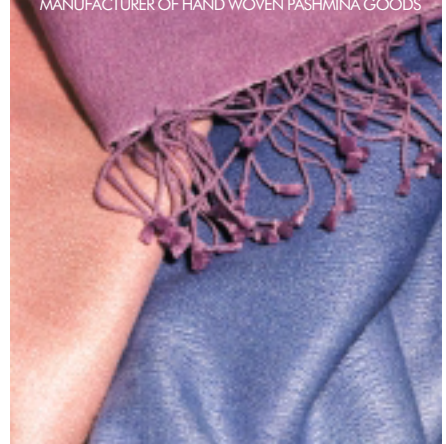


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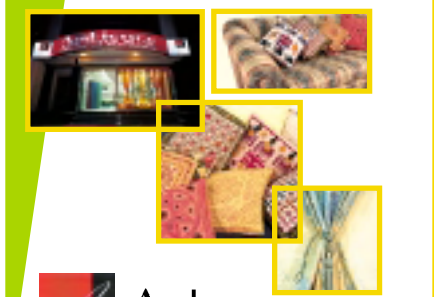


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Unraveling The Insurrection

The how and why of the Maoist movement from the best and brightest

BY ADITYA ADHIKARI

If you can figure out the full causes, career and consequences of the Maoist movement in Nepal, you have mastered knowledge about contemporary Nepali history and society," states Pratyoush Onta flatly in his chapter in "Himalayan 'People's War.'" It is obvious that at the current time, in the midst of the movement, the perspective required to do that is hard to attain. Little hard information of the movement is available. Most details about the Maoist organizational structure and goals are shrouded in secrecy. "Himalayan 'People's War'" is an attempt by various social scientists to explore different facets of the movement by studying their effects on the society around them. The 12 essays in this volume explore such themes as how a hospitable climate was created for the growth of the Maoist movement and why so many people were attracted towards the Maoist cause. The hope of the volume is to gain a comprehensive picture of the movement and the directions in which it is headed.

Internal squabbling between the mainstream political parties during the past decade has been held in full view of the public, as has the antagonism between the parties and the Palace. It does not take a great leap of imagination to arrive at the thought that the struggles for power in Kathmandu created the opportunity for the Maoists to strengthen themselves. What is unclear, however, is how exactly the Maoists took advantage of the situation. A few contributors to "Himalayan 'People's War'" analyze the situation. Hari Roka's intriguing assessment in the penultimate chapter of the volume is the best.

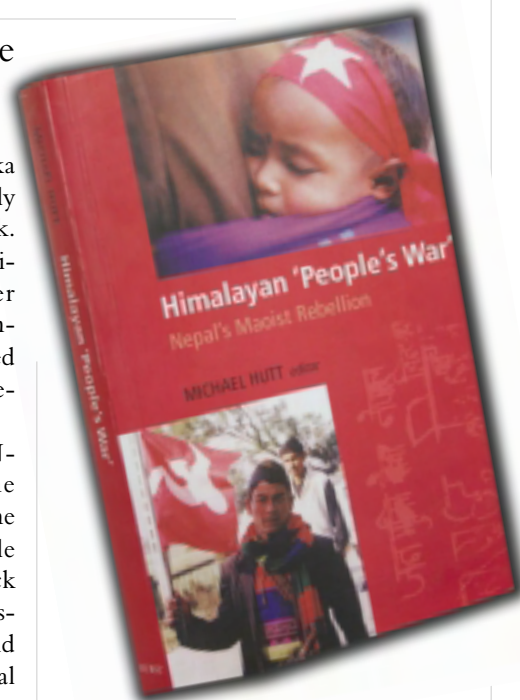
The strategy of the earliest days of the "people's war" was to attack only the police and their posts but not the Army; only the Nepali Congress, the ruling party, but not the other left parties. The

reasoning behind this strategy, Roka says, was to make it seem as though only the Congress party was under attack. That the strategy was successful is evident from the fact that the power struggles between the different mainstream factions were greatly exacerbated after the growth of the Maoist movement.

Roka claims that both the CPN-UML and the Palace provided the Maoists with economic assistance in the early phases of the movement. While there is no concrete evidence to back this argument, the Army's deliberate distance from the elected government and multi-party democracy and their refusal to confront the Maoists even when ordered to in July 2001 by the then prime minister are compelling demonstrations of the Palace's attempts to use the Maoists against the government.

It is also evident that the Maoists have been able to mobilize the populace in ways the mainstream political parties never could. "The ability of the [Maoist] leaders to traverse geographical and social distances while mobilizing local people must be seen as a lesson for many persons in elevated formal political and administrative positions," writes Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka in another chapter. Sara Shneiderman and Mark Turin were able to gain a firsthand look at such mobilization. Between 1998 and 2001 they were living in Dolakha district, undertaking research on the Thangmi people. While other foreigners working in the area were asked to leave when the Maoists moved into Dolakha, Shneiderman and Turin were encouraged to stay, as their interests were in research and they had no connections to I/NGOs.

In their essay "The Path to Jan Sarkar in Dolakha District," Shneiderman and Turin provide a chronological account of the local perspective of the Maoists: From initial fear in 1997 when the Thangmis first heard of the Maoists through radio and newspapers, to cau-



Himalayan 'People's War': Nepal's Maoist Rebellion
Michael Hutt (editor)
Hurst and Company, London, 2004
Pages: 322

tious anticipation of their arrival at the village, to acceptance of the rebels. On July 23, 2001 the Maoists proclaimed the formation of their *Jan Sarkar*, the "people's government," in Dolakha district. The general sensitivity the Maoists showed towards the population, the disillusionment with the state and its political system and the power that the Maoist movement promised to the relatively depressed Thangmis are the reasons why many joined and others implicitly accepted the movement, say Shneiderman and Turin.

Mandira Sharma and Dinesh Prasain describe the attraction towards the movement for rural women. The protection given to women against domestic violence, alcohol abuse and state abuse are reasons why so many women have joined the Maoist rank and file, they say, as are the aspirations towards cultural change held by women traditionally voiceless against the state. Marie Lecomte-Tilouine describes in another essay how the Maoists were able to gain the support of the Magarant National Liberation Front. Since the early 1990s,

Magar intellectuals have been vocal about their desire for an autonomous Magar state. From their perspective, the Maoists only offered them an avenue to fight for autonomy. For their support of the Maoist cause, various ethnic organizations—Newa Khala, the Tamuwan National Liberation Front and the Tharuwan National Liberation Front, for example—have been offered regional autonomy by Maoist leaders once the movement proves successful.

These overtures towards ethnic organizations reveal a contradiction within the principles of the Maoist party. Saubhagya Shah points out in his powerfully argued essay “A Himalayan Red Herring?” that theoretically the Maoists present ethno-national liberation as contingent on the resolution of the class conflict. In practice, however, in the mobilization of ethnic communities, the class conflict takes a back seat, as the Maoists have to promise autonomy to minorities.

The promise of self-determination for minority groups is not unique to

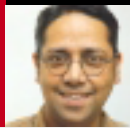
Nepal. Mao himself proclaimed the right to self-determination for minorities. Once the communists had taken over China, however, they could afford to disregard the claims that minority groups made. But minority groups in China amount to less than 10 percent of the population. In Nepal there is no majority group equivalent to the Han Chinese. Nepal is a country made up of minorities. If and when the Maoists come to power, it will be difficult for them to assuage or control the outburst of demands for promised autonomy of various groups.

Saubhagya Shah further claims that there is another gap between Maoist theory and practice. While they claim intense nationalism for themselves, and their rhetoric is anti-India and anti-American, he says, they depend upon India for their sustenance. Further, all the anti-Indian rhetoric has led to no harm to Indian business interests in Nepal. While it is clear to all

that the Maoists have been using India as an important base for a number of years, Shah’s claim that this shows that they have links to and are supported by the “Delhi Durbar” seem tenuous. The India-Nepal border is notoriously hard to regulate, and the mere presence of Nepali Maoists in India does not seem sufficient evidence to prove their connections to the Indian establishment.

There is much speculation in this volume, but that is understandable in the present context. The Maoists do not even have a manifesto of action that lays bare their plans. The most comprehensive Maoist-generated document is still the 40-point demand of 1996, and that, as Krishna Hachhethu writes, is merely “an auxiliary item: it is an agenda provided for public consumption.” In the absence of hard information, any research on the conflict is welcome; this book is especially so, with its diverse selection of essays by specialists in different fields. This review is just a general outline of some prominent themes in the book. There is a great deal more worth reading. **N**





Farewell to Arms

Dashain is here. And with it the ceasefire. Tens of thousands of people will now get to travel home without fears of getting caught up in the crossfire, though we are not so naïve as to assume that the temporary truce is a blank check for safety, or even that it will make everybody head home. Neither is likely, if past experiences are anything to go by. The festival season in previous years saw the Maoists extort unsuspecting folks who had traveled home for Dashain, and the security forces show total disregard for the spirit of a mutually agreed truce. Yes, ceasefire or no ceasefire, many more Nepalis will never return home.

Anyone who has been a witness to eight years of continued violence will be extremely wary of temporary peace. For our part, we are wary that many will dismiss the nine-day truce, starting on October 20, as a mere annual ritual that hardly holds any political significance. The conventional wisdom is that it's going to be over once the country is done with Dashain. We take a different view. The fact that the Maoists announced a ceasefire at all is noteworthy. It shows that they still don't consider themselves as out-and-out brutal guerrillas, but a political force that listens to the civil society and is ever anxious to expand its popular base. That opening—that tiny light at the end of an otherwise dark tunnel—means a lot more than what it may appear at the first sight. That tiny opening offers a golden opportunity for the government to reciprocate the gesture and see if the ceasefire can be extended from Dashain to Tihar and then a little beyond. Every single life saved in this needless cycle of violence will add impetus to peace.

To quote Malcolm Gladwell's enterprising work "The Tipping Point"—"Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do."

The enormously successful book documents how a number of brilliant ideas started out with a small section of the people willing to act differently from the rest and how that behavior spread to others. The crux of the argument is that a little change from a small group of people ends up having a huge difference. We are well aware that it's unfashionable to talk about the prospects of peace at a time when both the government and the

B Rai



Maoists are deeply polarized and seem to be drifting further apart.

Still, we hope the Maoist call for a nine-day ceasefire, even assuming that it's mere propaganda, will force the government to think outside the box. Something has to give and what better time to start than Dashain.

Akhilesh Upadhyay, Editor

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