GOOD HOUSE KEEPING

MPs couldn't finish their homework, but for the first time the Nepali parliament showed multi-partisan maturity in passing laws that matter.

There are, of course, questions about all of the above. The Kamayas are few, but they have been excited by landloards and money are coming in to the task outside Bhaktapur. The budget was passed in time, but the bureaucracy machinery is doing the traditional thing of waiting for the rains to stop before diluting any of it. The Human Rights Commission hasn't got much to show for itself and now it has less money to do what it can to prevent it out of it.

Even the Citizenship Bill didn't go smoothly. The Virabhadra Bhattarai who's been a leader in the past, was rejected by the House, and also other bills that were tabled for discussion.

The Judicial Administration Bill which will allow a different Bench to hear appeals on rulings by the Supreme Court.

The Education Bill which would streamline rules about private schools and also a tax on it for support government schools.

The Kamaya Freedom Bill which would make provisions for the rehabilitation of free Kamayas.

What next? was perhaps the most important bills that would have addressed reforms in the banking sector and also given the central bank more supervisory powers.

One of the most positive moves for the future is that the Parliament's committees are functioning as they should. The Public Accounts Committee, under MP Subas Numaung, N.P. Sawal, Hridoyak Tripathi and others, have been busy working on the budget and the administration. It was this committee that also approved the citizenship bill through a smooth vote. Som Prasad Pandey, Ram Gurung and Lara Mani Pokhrel of the Foreign Relations and Human Right Commission were among the first to pass the bill. The First House of the State also passed the bill.

For the first time in the House, the Prime Minister's speech was cut short. A lot of people were concerned about the Nepali Times' role in the development of the country. But for the first time in the House, the Prime Minister's address was cut short. A lot of people were concerned about the Nepali Times' role in the development of the country. But for the first time in the House, the Prime Minister's address was cut short. A lot of people were concerned about the Nepali Times' role in the development of the country. But for the first time in the House, the Prime Minister's address was cut short. A lot of people were concerned about the Nepali Times' role in the development of the country. But for the first time in the House, the Prime Minister's address was cut short.

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The party is over

The Nepali Congress has all along exhibited its well-known knack for extracting defeat from the jaws of victory.

Many of you will remember the Punyateera text-book that had the chapter "Reason for the failure of the party system in Nepal." The mess in the political parties these days makes one wonder if there was some truth in the "reasons" manufactured by Punyateera ideologues.

The Nepali Congress was at the forefront of the struggle against the "Punyateera Democracy." Voices gave it an abysmal majority in the parliament elected after the new Constitution came into force. But the party literally threw it away when, in 1993, the prime minister was forced by his fellow MPs into giving for a mid-term poll when they defied the party whip and abstained from the crucial vote in the House. The Nepali Congress exhibited its well-known knack for extracting defeat from the jaws of victory.

And it never did learn any lessons. All ruling coalitions were morticated again. The party's whip in the new parliament was even given to the very person who had led them into defining it as the outlier one. The issue within the Nepali Congress has never been one of institutionalization, but of managing the ego of ruling stalwart. The fault line in the parliament is so deep that it actually is like two parties. K.P. Sharma and G.P. Koirala have to hold regular summits to bring the party back from the brink of a full split.

The Communist Party of Nepal (UML), the main opposition in the parliament, is in no better shape. Showing more discipline, their factional leaders do not squabble in public, but they can't help taking a dig at each other in public through their respective mouthpieces.

The reason for this is the relatively mild wrangling within the UML. It is the party that has been split since 1990, with the ML breaking away last year. Even though the ML has not been made welcome in the party, it has failed to get a single seat in the parliament, it continues powerful local government units, including the Kathmandu Metropolitan Council. The question is whether the MNLA should go.

It's still not too late to institutionalize political parties. Even the unorganizable Asha "Political Parties Bill" passed by the Lower House of the parliament before it adjourned last week offers some scope for change. However, the first step must be to free parties from the stranglehold of ambitious leaders who consider controlling organizational elections as insult to their long years of sacrifice. Past involvements are not enough; now need to be given a behaviour to understand what the New Year's" revolution" means. Mahatma Gandhi suggested that the Indian National Congress be disbanded. Perhaps he did not want in the proud legacy of the independent struggle to be wasted. Maybe it's time for Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) to think in radically different terms.

After all, politicians from the two parties used to get along better with each other than with their own parties. And both parties now work together during the functioning government when the memory of struggle was fresh. But public memory is notoriously short, and if anything can stop a King Mahendra from emerging again, it can only be institutionally resilient and ideologically unambiguously political parties. If the present mess goes on, those who fought for democracy to come to power may be forced to use the "Reasons for the failure of the party system in Nepal" 

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All the prime minister’s men
Nepali Times brings you the behind-the-scenes people who run Girija Prasad Koirala’s office.

It was while he was at CIP that Chalita Pushpa Basnet, now foreign minister, and Jaya Prakash Pratap Singh, now chief minister, suggested that he come home to advise Koirala who had just begun his first stint as prime minister. Hari was only 26 years old when he joined the Prithvi Pradesh Office (PPO) in 1991.

“Jaya Prakash Pratap Singh set up his first real office, providing him all secretarial assistance needed,” said Hari. When Koirala was made chief of cabinet secretariat in 1993, Hari moved to the department and became a part of the cabinet office.

Hari’s official role now includes just about everything from organizing the PMO and briefing the PM on any issue that comes his way. He also works out the cabinet agenda, together with the chief secretary, and serves as a channel through which government secretaries can communicate with the prime minister’s chief secretary.

Needless to say, Hari is also the Prime Minister’s eye and ears on foreign affairs, which happen to be a subject of a very special interest to Koirala.

Gokarna landed his job with Koirala when he was just finishing college, courtesy cousin Hari and Gokarna. He was in the mid-20s when he joined the PMO nine years ago and has been with Koirala ever since.

As Koirala is a Kham Bahadur Khadka protege but such bonds don’t bother him. “Others can say whatever they want,” he says, adding that his one and only guru is Koirala.

The prime minister is at work early at his official Baluwatar residence, out of bed by 5.30 a.m. After a couple of glasses of tea, he begins his morning round of discussions from his office to the secretariat and, in recent months, has been stepping out for some outdoor exercise in the morning.

Paranjan serves as the Prime Minister’s Office, and advises him on development policy and economic affairs. His task also involves scanning government papers raised in parliament and submitting proposals after consulting concerned officials and ministers. All party, performance and development related issues pass through his desk.

Paranjan spends many evenings discussing policies and plans with key ministers and academics at Baluwatar. His favourite rendezvous includes the Center of Whirls by J.B. Lam, G.W. Jones and Jeehs Bhanumath, a terrace-reading the Prime Minister and the cabinet.

“Many people come to this office with issues that the same mechanism should have redressed a long time ago,” he said.

“The lesson learning is that unless the delivery of services takes place, it is not possible for the people to have immediate democracy,” he said.

Being close to the source of power has its benefits, especially in a society that worships anyone with authority. Hari has a rank controller in the Ministry of Finance and the other two are at the same level as government secretaries. But the two have close almost similar to what the royal palace secretaries used to have during the Rana era. All three, therefore, also have their own state of followers and hangers-on—people seeking favours for jobs, promotions, ministerials, etc.

Many political leaders still believe the PMO is a place where you can get everything done. Here we get (pointing) on every ding from buffalo to job applications and all sorts of development projects,” said Hari. “We are merciless and can only give what we consider useful.”

Hari Sharma

Gokarna Paoudel

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LETTERS

On the political front in the Nepali Times

This is the whole article. It seems to have a topic related to politics or government. The style is informative and detailed, with a focus on events and discussions.

Jagdi Kamal Karmacharya

As a citizen of Nepal, I believe that the government should be transparent and accountable. It is essential for the well-being and progress of the country.

Barun Khanal

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ONLINE TIMES

When you try to read real news on your online edition. To keep in some small way in touch with Nepal and the Nepali people who use modern times for their work and hobbies, you might find this online edition useful

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As the landslide blockage showed, the capital is dangerously dependent on just one road in and out.

The Nepali army and police benefit from UN peacekeeping roles around the world, but things can turn nasty when there is no peace to keep.

On the hot and humid morning of 19 August, a group of Nepalese soldiers with the United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor (UNTAET) were ordered to move into the Boco area. This had been a trouble spot where some 30 anti-independence militiamen were reported to be hiding, and the Nepalis had been trying to flush them out with the help of the Fijians. The search lasted the whole day, but no militiamen were found. But suddenly, another team of Nepalis traveling in a convoy to relieve their counterparts was ambushed at 6:30 in the morning. The 14 Nepali UN peacekeepers in the convoy returned fire. Hilirama Dwi Ram, Jauli and Dilliram Kashi were hit. Dwi Ram was shot on the chest and died at a UN helicopter being evacuated, and Dilliram is recovering from his wounds at a Dili hospital.

Dwi Ram's body was brought home to Kathmandu last week and handed over to his family who were flown in by helicopter to Kathmandu from their home in Diktel district. Among those who came to Kathmandu were Dwi Ram's 26-year-old wife, Koshma Dwi, who is still recovering from the birth of their son only two weeks earlier. The family have received a compensation payment of $50,000 (Rs 3.5 million), while the Royal Nepal Army is going to provide a further Rs 400,000 to the bereaved family. Dwi Ram's wife who will also get a lifelong pension and the two boys' education will be taken care of all the same.

The fatally wounded Kashi Dilliram, a contingent of the Royal Nepal Army was also a major concern that although Nepal has benefited immensely from sending its troops to take part in UN peacekeeping forces around the world, things can turn nasty when the role of the UN is not properly defined or there is no peace to keep.

At present, the Army has more than 810 soldiers serving in Lebanon, East Timor, Sierra Leone, Congo, Eritrea, Kosovo and Cyprus. The biggest contingent, consisting of 500 men, is in Lebanon, and East Timor has the second biggest Nepali deployment with 154 soldiers. "Nepali peacekeepers have earned a reputation for being extremely disciplined," said an army official, "and they are tough under fire in Lebanon," says a retired army general.

Besides soldiers, Nepali policemen are also under the UN flag in various conflict situations. There are 137 Nepal Police personnel in Bosnia, Iraq, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, while East Timor also
Toothless party bill

Barely hours before the parliament’s budget session was to end on 18 August, the ruling Nepal Congress Party rammed a watered-down version of a bill that originally sought to make political parties more transparent and accountable.

The opposition was against the bill not because it had been made toothless but because it allowed a party president to nominate up to 50 percent of the party’s executive body. According to the original draft a party declaring itself as national would have to nominate only 25 percent of the executive members, but that did not go well with the ruling Nepal Congress. The opposition had gone against the 50 percent clause arguing that it was against the spirit of the constitution. The government’s position was that the nomination issue was an internal affair of the parties and there was no harm in keeping that flexibility because it did not prohibit parties from electing every member to the executive.

The bill had already been weakened considerably by the ruling party and the opposition working together to delete two important provisions from the original draft. One related to the funding of political parties from the central coffers—the rate of one rupee per voter to parties securing at least three percent of the total vote—was deleted outright. Another important clause that was thrown out, is one that would have required political parties and positions to abide by codes issued by the Election Commission from time to time. The original draft gave the Commission authority to even cancel the registration of parties that regularly violated the codes.

One of the few provisions of the bill that remains and can contribute toward making parties more transparent is the requirement to make public their audit reports, including names of contributors that give more than Rs 25,000 to the party.

RNAAC’s ATR deal questioned

It has become routine that any decision by the Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RNAAC) ends up by gracing the Parliament’s Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

The latest to come up before the PAC involves the purchase of two French-made ATR72-600 aircraft. Last week, the Committee ordered RNAAC to furnish all relevant studies and papers on the aircraft purchase for assessment.

The airline was importing the $400,000 "compliant" type for the PAC stepped in and ordered it to stop the purchase until the inquiry was over. The second ATR 72-600 has been received in Kathmandu on 18 August, according to RNAAC’s plate number plates.

A record number of two new aircraft landed with more than 5,000 vehicles on the streets of Kathmandu every day. Half of these are motorcycles. The narrow roads in the Valley and the large number of vehicles account for the slow speed of the traffic leading to delays and higher vehicle operation costs. A study by the Department of Roads says that the average speed of vehicles on major Kathmandu streets is about 20 kilometers per hour.

Kathmandu Valley has 10,020 km of roads of which only 40% is black-topped. Experts say this is the reason behind the dust and haze that envelope the city during the dry months.

Manhunt in Nepal

The number of motor vehicles in Nepal has increased by almost four times in the past 10 years, according to the Department of Transport Management.

In mid-August the number of motor vehicles has reached 633,000 nationwide. Of these, two-wheeler alone registered 148,500, of which 72 percent were private vehicles. Likewise, the number of motorcycles registered in the country has grown by more than 300 percent over the past 10 years, and most of the increase has taken place in the Kathmandu Valley. Of the 147,100 in the country, 94,000 have been registered with the Department of Transport Management.

According to the Department, over 160,000 vehicles ply the streets of Kathmandu every day. Half of these are motorcycles. The narrow roads in the Valley and the large number of vehicles account for the slow speed of the traffic leading to delays and higher vehicle operation costs. A study by the Department of Roads says that the average speed of vehicles on major Kathmandu streets is about 20 kilometers per hour.

Kathmandu Valley has 10,020 km of roads of which only 40% is black-topped. Experts say this is the reason behind the dust and haze that envelope the city during the dry months.

Has a contingent of nearly 60 Nepali Police.

Policing the UK affords both soldiers and policemen wonderful opportunities to earn substantial incomes in a short time. There is therefore stiff competition to be included as peacekeepers and although both institutions claim that their selection process is fair, complaints about being overlooked are common.

At present, the daily allowance for Police peacekeepers range from Rs 570-576 depending on the nature of assignments, area deployed in and sick. Police personnel have to take care of their accommodation from the allowance, whereas soldiers live in their own berths.

Police peacekeepers contribute up to 10 percent of their allowance for a welfare fund which is used for emergency relief back home in Nepal. The Nepalese police says it has constructed six schools with money from the welfare fund.

The Royal Nepalese Army is very secretive about its remuneration, and officials say they are unable to give the details. However, according to an army officer who formally served in Lebanon, commissioned officers get something to the tune of $1,000. Out of that about 20 percent is deducted for the army welfare fund, which provides for the army hospital and the army school.

More than 50,000 Nepali troops served in various UN peacekeeping operations in the past 43 years, but a party of six that have died in the line of duty and 48 have been injured. Army sources say the benefits for Nepal is expensive to pay for the sacrifices they have made. Several soldiers say the benefits for Nepal is expensive to pay for the sacrifices they have made. Several soldiers say the benefits for Nepal is expensive to pay for the sacrifices they have made. Several soldiers say the benefits for Nepal is expensive to pay for the sacrifices they have made. Several soldiers say the benefits for Nepal is expensive to pay for the sacrifices they have made. Several soldiers say the benefits for Nepal is expensive to pay for the sacrifices they have made.

NEPALIS IN U.K. PEACEKEEPING FORCES WORLDWIDE

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The Rs 20 million FM licence

The FM licence given to Kantipur FM to operate a 1000 WFM radio station by Information and Communication Minister Jaya Prakash Guppa has been cancelled after a price tag of Rs 20 million. The deal was clinched by Minister Guppa in New Delhi, where he was on a visit as part of a personal trip. Kantipur FM will now be operating an FM radio together with Times of India’s Times FM in east Nepal. The transmitter will be installed at Bhedanath district, Times FM is the same radio station that Saraswati Swastik, the former [Nepali] Information and Communication Minister, blamed for causing cultural distortion and banned from operating in India. But Nepal’s Information and Communication Minister Guppa, greedy for Rs 20 million, has given the Times FM a licence to assault Nepal culture. Several Nepal FM companies, including Saraswati FM, have been waiting for the past 4-5 years for a licence to increase their broadcast capacity. But what is surprising is that the company like Times FM, which has been banned in both India and Bangladesh, has been given a licence to operate in Nepal.

Information minister’s love for Kantipur

December 15

A single-handed decision by the Information and Communication Minister Guppa has allowed Kantipur to establish a 1000 WFM radio station in Bhedanath, Lalitpur. According to sources, the minister granted the licence on the basis of a week-old application, and it took him just five minutes to decide it on 16 August.

There are 21 other applicants seeking FM licences. The applications submitted by different NGOs, social clubs and other private operators have been pending for more than a year. In all, 12 FM radios have been licensed since the government came up with a Communication Policy. Of these, the license of First FM has been cancelled while the other 11 are operational. In Kathmandu Valley, other than Radio Nepal, the only FM broadcasting at 1000 watts is Kantipur FM. Other stations say they have not been given permission to increase their transmission capacity. According to Radio Saraswati, its application to upgrade its transmission from 100 WFM to 500 WFM has been pending for over a year and a half. Likewise, the minister has not renewed the licence that was registered last year.

The sudden decision by the Communication Minister has led to the rejection of an earlier proposal of the Times of India group to seek a licence and which had been rejected by Minister Radha Krishna Mahat. After BIP Minister Saraswati Shrestha cancelled the ToI’s permission saying that it was spreading western culture, the company moved on to Bangladesh. It has come to Nepal after it was unable to get permission there either. It was planning to set up a station in Biratnagar.

TOI to run FM

Ghahival, 13 August

Against the interests of the Nepali, Information Minister Jaya Prakash Guppa has allowed the Times of India to get into FM broadcasting through Kantipur FM. According to highly placed sources, on 16 August the minister decided to licence Kantipur to run a powerful station. Reliable sources say that the Times of India group will broadcast its programmes using this infrastructure.

When Radha Krishna Mahat was communication minister, the TOI group had wanted to broadcast its programmes through Radio Nepal. However, the request was rejected because the government deemed that it would be against the interests of Nepali. The present minister who is from both Kantipur and TOI has fulfilled the wishes of the two organisations at one go. Before the permission was granted, Minister Guppa, who was on a private visit to India, had said to have visited the TOI offices, according to sources.

The important thing is that Minister Guppa has not licences any of the 21 radios that NGOs, social clubs and other private operators have proposed. The promoters have made arrangements for all the infrastructure needed for the stations but have never again been heard, thus returning from the ministry without a licence.

It took minister Guppa just five minutes to decide on Kantipur’s application submitted only a week ago.

Why do MPs always break the law?

Raj Nichha, 14 August

How can the nation progress if those who make the laws, break the laws and govern the nation are themselves involved in the quickest of illegalities? Such questions come to the mind of anyone who reads the recent report by the Auditor General. According to the report, MPs have been pocketing an amount equal to Rs 14,000,000 over the last four years. Past reports too have been pointing this out. The law on salaries and allowances of MPs does not mention Dalai Lama allowance. Every year, MPs are paid Rs 14,000,000 as an allowance. This amount is not even half of what a poor civil servant receives. It is paid to them directly from the Public Accounts Committee.

The report also states that the Speaker and Chairman of the Upper House have large sums of money in their exchange accounts and have not declared them to the Income Tax Department. The Speaker and Chairman together declared Rs 141,000 to the Committee. However, the private secretary of the Speaker received Rs 100,000. Even though it is not much money, it is an open and unexplained amount.

Nepal’s government is the only one left in the sky from where Everest could be seen. Nepal’s ATC had found that spot and was到位 at about 25,000 feet, while an aircraft belonging to British Airways was about 20,000 feet away from where it was flying. There were five other aircraft flying to get to the opening in the cloud from where Everest was visible. Even though there was a chance that there was the possibility of a mid-air collision they were competing. They had climbed down by about 500 feet and tried to stay safe. As soon as it had inched Air Traffic Control, another aircraft appeared at about 24,500 feet. Nepal’s then ATC director finally decided to take another 500 feet. Then the Buddha Air aircraft which was commanded by an Indian pilot followed suit at high speed, even without informing other aircraft of the danger zone. On one side there was the mountain, on the other side thick clouds. Nepal’s Air’s director N.P. Rana redesigned the Indian pilot and made him use the other side of the danger zone.

Oil Corporation scandal

Sanjib, 14 August

The Public Accounts Committee is investigating the Nepal Oil Corporation’s "Oil Storage Project" that started in 1994 with the aim of building storage facilities for petroleum products nationwide but which has not been completed even till now. The project was planned after India's economic sanctions. A sum of Rs 20 million had been granted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1989 for the project, and the contract was provided to an Indian construction company by the name of Bridge and Roof.

One of the contract terms was that the project would be completed by June 1994 and be complete by December 1996. But the company couldn't complete the work and the deadline was extended with permission from the ADB for the final phase in March 1997. When Bridge and Roof couldn't complete the work under extended terms, the ADB formed an investigation committee to find out why the work wasn't completed. After a site visit, the committee discovered that some of the construction work was satisfactory and recommended termination of the contract.

Although the ADB has tried to opt out of the agreement it hasn't been successful so far. Bridge and Roof's father has his hand's under the soil now. The project, once completed, was expected to cost Rs 25 million. Even now it has reached Rs 50 million. The Bridge and Roof company has demanded compensation of Rs 20 million.

Week that was supposed to have been the best in a year and half has already extended for six years, causing economic crisis. The Nepal for Bridge and Roof is said to be NEPCOM. Among the ADB fund's beneficiaries, this is the only one that has taken such a long time to finish.

Please explain, IGP?

Sanjib, 14 August

An official source has confirmed that Inspector General of Police Arjun Krishna Koiral has been dismissed from his post for a year. According to the source, the IG's counterparts are involved in every scandal from cheating the government to taking money. It has been observed good words were more than Rs 10 million have been earned by the Inspector General in one year for calling for tenders. Even though there was enough time, Rs 10 million was spent on builder-proof jeevan without calling for tenders while Rs 3.7 million was spent on body shields and Rs 1.29 million on other equipment. These figures are stated in the Public Account's Committee's report.

It is also confirmed that there has been embezzlement of funds while hiring helicopters for anti-drug efforts.
"To know all international languages is the best yet English is enough."

Our Social Studies, pg 8, Grade X, text book

Too many young minds are being brainwashed with rubbish. Too many hands are being penning utter nonsense. Even discerning students are forced to parrot nonsense if they want to succeed. I believe in the paperback edition has been under construction at the compilation of which is hoped that there won't be shortage of water in it but it is the Huffington valley (p. 60).

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The last thing to note about expanding your vocabulary, but I do believe in the paperback edition has been under construction at the compilation of which is hoped that there won't be shortage of water in it but it is the Huffington valley (p. 60).
Indian trade fair

An Indian trade exhibition is being held in Kathmandu to showcase Indian manufactures on 19-24 September. The India Trade Exhibition 2000 will exhibit a wide range of products like agro-products and implements, automobiles and accessories, high-end electronics, engineering tools and machinery, home improvised gadgets and equipment, garments, food and pharmaceutical products.

The Exhibition is supported by the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu, the Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Himalayan Bank ATMs

Himalayan Bank Ltd.—the first Nepal bank to introduce automatic cash dispensing machines—has introduced an upgraded version of its Cashlink, the Automatic Teller Machines now operational at all of its four Kathmandu Valley branches. The service is available at the bank’s branches in Patan, Thamel, New Road and Maharajgunj. The ATM will allow consumers to withdraw and deposit cash, balance inquiry, obtain statements and make cheques requisitions.

The withdrawal limit per account per day is Rs 20,000. The machines also allow deposit of both cheques and cash—50 notes per withdrawal, up to Rs 4,000 per account.

Customers holding Premium Savings Accounts at the bank are not charged anything extra for the ATM cards. Others can acquire ATM cards upon paying a one-time fee of Rs 100.

Everest Bank reports Rs 41.2 m profit

Everest Bank has netted a profit of Rs 42.4 million after tax in the past fiscal year. The bank, which has held no shares for the past two years, has also decided to offer other shareholders holding 10 shares five shares each for Rs 1 each under a scheme to issue new stocks to existing equity participants.

Grindlays opens 10th branch

Grindlays Bank in Nepal has opened its 10th branch in Hetauda last week saying that it had decided to come to the insurance industry not just to make money but also to provide class banking services outside Kathmandu. Grindlays began banking operations in Nepal in 1995.

Nepal Bank sacks top executive

The board of directors of Nepal Bank Limited has sacked Deputy General Manager Sharad Thakur. Thakur had been造假ing from any job with the bank for the past year.

On 11 August the directors decided to sack Thakur who has been charged of having approved more loans than which he had authority.

Plant quarantine tax

After the informal Special Additional Duty (SAD) was lifted Nepal businessmen have been confronted with yet another hassle at the Nepal-India border. The Mesh Chambre of Commerce and Industry says Indian customs officials have begun charging Nepal agro-products on the Special Additional Duty tax for the first time.

Customs officers have reportedly charged Rs 700 per truck on cardamom, ginger, broom and other agro-products exported to India. The Chamber has asked the Prime Minister’s office to take up the issue with India.

HAN team in China

A team of Nepal hotel owners and managers are in China on a 12-day promotional tour to coincide with the Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Basaula’s official visit. A cultural programme and a food festival are planned for Shanghai. HAN and China Hotel Association are also signing an agreement for cooperation for promoting tourism. Nepal was listed as one of the limited tourist destinations for its nationals by China last month.

Singapore Airlines, Gulf Air add flights

Singapore Airlines and Gulf Air are to announce flights to Nepal in time for the autumn tourism season. Under the new schedule, effective 11 September. Gulf Air will fly the Abu Dhabi-Kathmandu—Abu Dhabi-Katmandu via Bahrain, and Abu Dhabi-Katmandu-Bahrain and Bahrain-Katmandu.

Gulf Airways also announced that three extra flights to its thrice-weekly Katmandu flights from 2 October. The Singapore-Katmandu-Singapore flights will operate on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

ECONOMIC SENSE

Striking while the iron is hot

The Nepali economy is now laboring through a phase buffeted by a lowering foreign exchange. Efforts to improve the country’s earnings position are now becoming serious and the government is doing its best to improve the economy. If there is one entity that has become really powerful after the restoration of democracy in Nepal, it is the government—"the government organization"—the generic term for public enterprises which are usually financed by foreign aid.

The government is strapped, and it has only itself to blame. Government officials shouldn’t be in business, and it is its job to ensure that. The government corporate company has five times more employees than private or public enterprises of a similar size, but its revenue is less than half.

So where is the government going to get the revenue? The government is left with only two options. You can either hire fewer employees or a higher salary. Can’t have both. Look at the national budget—every single sector is suffering. At best, there was 7000 percentage increase in the education sector in the same period last year.

The solution is clear. The government needs to get out of the business of running public enterprises and public service providers by providing a legal labour framework and leave it to the private sector to handle workers’ demands.

But that is going to be tough. Nepal’s labour laws provide the perfect incentive for workers to strike. Management cannot sack them and it is forced to negotiate. The laws exist to protect the welfare of the workers. But this welfare must be earned.

In case labour goes on strike, it loses clients. This is a kind of political labour that frightens away foreign investors, and these are the very investors that Nepal needs to have their hands up and ready for the country’s economic transformation because they cannot control their workers’ demands.

In this debate over the economic perspective does it make sense to talk to union leaders who are actually acting as obstacles to the country’s economic development? What are they doing? A lot of government leaders are using their economic power to maintain power and control for a few more years.

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Katmandu’s health-savvy young urban professionals work out a sweat, and the fitness business responds to new demand.

ALACK TUMBAHANEPHY

Not long ago, Kathmandu’s young people led sedentary, stressful and unhealthy lifestyles. Thanks to the internet and the rise of social media, the awareness of health and fitness has increased among the urban Nepali elite. With the advent of gyms and fitness centres, people are now more conscious of their health and fitness levels.

The fitness fad of the Kathmandu yuppies represents a growing health consciousness. Quite a change for the Kathmandu business class who for many years have been sedentary and overweight. With the rise of the fitness industry, people have started to take fitness seriously.

The fitness industry has grown exponentially in recent years, with an increasing number of gyms and fitness centres opening up in the city. This trend is not only limited to the Kathmandu Valley but has also spread to other parts of Nepal. The rise of fitness culture has not only improved the physical health of the people but has also contributed to the mental well-being.

The fitness industry in Kathmandu is still a relatively new phenomenon, but it is rapidly gaining popularity. The fitness industry has become a part of the everyday life of people, with gyms and fitness centres being a common sight in the city. The fitness industry is not only for the rich and the elite, but it is accessible to people from all walks of life.

The rise of fitness culture has also led to the emergence of fitness and wellness coaches who help people achieve their fitness goals. These coaches provide personalized training plans and motivation to help people stick to their fitness routine.

The fitness industry has also led to the development of new fitness technologies, such as fitness trackers and smartwatches, which help people monitor their fitness progress.

The rise of fitness culture has not only improved the physical health of the population but has also had a positive impact on the mental well-being. The fitness industry has become a popular way to relax and unwind after a long day.

In conclusion, the rise of fitness culture in Kathmandu is a positive development that has improved the physical and mental well-being of the people. The fitness industry is still in its early stages, but it has the potential to become a major industry in the future.

Phora Dharu, the International Club in Annapurna, that is.

Dr Amaya says, "Nepalis don’t become health conscious until they get bedridden. He may be right, but things are certainly changing with all this fitness craze. One could even say that it is a trend. However, with these 3000 members each, the total number of club goers and fitness club regulars in Kathmandu is still a very small proportion of the city’s population. For it to grow, perhaps, the membership need to be more affordable and the quality of the facilities upgraded.

Annual membership fees in some of the clubs and fitness centres in Kathmandu (in Rs)

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UNDERFED NATION

Nearly half of all Nepalis need to put on more weight, and perhaps 0.5 percent need to lose some of it.

Going by the proliferation of fitness parlours in Kathmandu, it would be hard to tell that Nepal has a serious problem with underweight people, not overweight ones. But then, we don’t need to remind ourselves that Kathmandu is not Nepal. The most direct indicator of a nation’s poverty is the proportion of its population that is underweight. For Nepali adults, it is nearly half. And for children, only one-fifth of the population, it is an astounding 63 percent. What these figures mean is that more than six in every ten children in Nepal don’t get enough to eat. According to UNICEF’s State of the World’s Children Report 2000, 47 percent of all Nepali children under five are moderately or severely undernourished and 16 percent are "severely" undernourished. It gets easier to see how serious this situation is by comparing Nepal’s nutrition figures to those of other countries. For example, the proportion of children who are undernourished in Thailand is less than 20 percent, whereas countries like Singapore, Japan or New Zealand don’t even keep statistics on the number of undernourished children. (They have data for overweight people because that has a different set of health implications.)

The only conclusion is that it can be called that, that Nepal’s undernourishment figures are not as bad as some neighbouring South Asian countries (India has 74 per 1,000 undertreated moderately or severely undernourished). But the percentage of Nepal infants with low birthweight is one of the highest in the world—a figure that points to widespread and serious undernourishment of mothers. Malnutrition is easy to measure. And you do it with a tape and weighing machine to find out how much deviation from a reference healthy population there is for height (height) and weight (height). In Nepal’s case, 15 percent of all children are moderately or severely stunted, 25 percent are undernourished, and 5 percent are severely undernourished. But an astonishingly high 48 percent of children under five are seriously stunted. Stunting and wasting have severe impact on the physical and mental development of children and increases the risk of death.
Mountains and water

The new Indian ambassador to Nepal is an avid photographer and loves mountains. Good move, Draupadi Basu.

Above: Bhalu Danda in cloud forest below Kangchenjunga in Sikkim.
Clockwise from left: Stream in Sangla Valley, Himachal Pradesh; Shrikhand Peak (also called the Gangani Massacre) in the Garhwal Himalayas; Waterfall in Harki Pomri, Garhwal; Villages at a meadow in Chakik above the Mahabali river with Nepal's Api Himal in the background; Tibetan pony rides; Sera Monastery near Menchukha in Tibet.
Fifteen years after joining the foreign service, India's new ambassador to Nepal has finally been posted to the country where he has wanted to serve all along. In fact, recalls Deb Mukharji, he even wanted to start taking Nepali lessons back then, but he got sent to Bonn instead. Switzerland is where Mukharji could really begin to enjoy his own passions of photography and mountains. In fact, throughout his career Mukharji has seamlessly blended his diplomatic chores with hiking in the mountains and taking pictures. And his portfolio shows the range of his travels: towering elephants in the Chind, a soulful seminar eased at the edge of a forest in Alaska, stark desert images from Nevada, dark monsoon clouds hanging over the Arakan Hills in Bangladesh, the wide and wildly expressive of the Tibetan plateau under a big sky.

His pictures, however, keep coming back to two dominant themes, mountains and flowing water. In every case, the two are intertwined. The young Mukharji first got bitten by the mountain bug when he went to India's Garhwal mountains bordering western Nepal with his college mates: "I just fell in love with mountains. It is hard to explain exactly how or why," says Mukharji, looking out of the window at the nearby town of Enfield grounds. "It is the beauty, the serenity and the smell of mountains...yes, you smell. You feel it after you cross a certain altitude, a single in the air."

Mukharji has always liked the physical effort needed to get close to the mountain. He says: "What you realise while hiking is how little you really need to be truly happy...a boiled potato when you are hungry, cool spring water when you are thirsty."

The main difference between the Himalayas and the Alps, Mukharji found, was that the Himalayas are not just higher, but it also has more "depth"—more than 200 km wide in places. This means you need to walk for weeks to get to the base of the highest mountains. These distances are now shrinking as roads are built to pilgrimage sites, and in the span of a few decades many parts of the Himalayas have lost their depth. "It's just not the same thing when you cross over there. Everybody is running up," he says. But not keen to be seen as anti-progressive, he adds quickly that roads also transmute village like remote areas of Himachal Pradesh in India which have prospered become a new highway provided access to markets for its delicious apples and pears.

Mukharji got a box camera when he was nine and had his first Voiglander as a teenager which he named taking black and white pictures. He then graduated to Canon and stuck with the brand ever since his Canon FT fell into the sea in Ireland, was retrieved by a couple of good Samaritans, and was good as new when it was found in a shop in Canada for Rs 200. He is now using a 15-year-old Canon A1. He doesn't think much of digital photography which he says can be manipulated: "There isn't much left for a photographer to do, you become a technician." In Nepal, he would like to get back to shooting black and white photography, which he thinks is much more hard work, but also creative.

Mukharji says he finds Kumbhanda and Nepal a photographer's dream come true. "The quality of the light in Kathmandu is just fabulous, it is emerald in the monsoon, liquid gold in the autumn, the people, architecture and the mountains. Hopefully I can get a lot of photography done, but the job doesn't really give you enough time," he says.

If there is one thing that Mukharji likes to photograph more than mountains, it is flowing water. "By changing the shutter speeds, you can create beautiful images. What you see in the photograph of a fast-flowing stream is not what you see in real life—there is a lot of room here for imagination and creativity."

If his lunch warms much, we ask if he is looking forward to discussing current water issues with Nepali government officials. Deb Mukharji throws back his head and laughs: "I didn't mean that kind of water."
2.5 million people will visit Nepal* this year

All advertising is about interrupting people, but in the Internet age it is about infecting people with the idea virus.

How do you get to ask for people’s permission? The basic theory in that great area is: buy a list, be a virus, and ask people if they want to opt in. The next step is to be a “sniffer.”

Google is a classic example of this. It came to the market and did not spend a fortune on marketing, immediately breaking two of the common capitalist golden rules of internet success. However, word came out of Silicon Valley that it was really pretty special, early adopters took to it, and it is now not only the coolest search engine to use, but has also been taken up by Yahoo!, thereby making it the most popular.

Google knows how business is run:

UN to bridge digital divide

New York - The United Nations, in an attempt to bridge the digital divide between rich and poor nations, has decided to set up an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Task Force.

“It is crucial that the Task Force be set up as soon as possible. There are so many fingers in the ICT Information Technology) pie, if the UN wants to regain its leadership, it must act now,” says Payre Mangosang, chairman of the Admission Opened Working Group on Informatics.

Mangosang believes this may be possible as the task force would work independently of the UN above the layers that sometimes are ripe within the UN bodies. Although no final date has been set for the formation of the Task Force, its debut is expected to be in place early next year.

“arrested development” The UN produced its first-ever Ministerial Declaration on advancing development by handing “digital opportunity” last month. The document sets out ICT policy and strategy, concluding “partnerships, involving national governments, bilateral and multilateral development agencies, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders should play a key role.”

Kafi Amer, UN Secretary-General, is optimistic. He said last week: “If we succeed in this task, we will ensure that poor countries can join the knowledge-based global economy by giving them a powerful tool with which to make their voices heard and to combat ignorance and disease.

At present, an estimated 24.6 million people have access to the Internet and e-commerce is expected to reach $3.7 trillion by 2004. However, only half of the global population have access to a telephone line and only five percent are connected to the Internet.
Mori mends South Asia ties

Japan needs trade, South Asia needs aid. But anti-nuclear sanctions get in the way.

SUDHIR KUMAR. 

TOYOKO - Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's stop in South Asia this week is a diplomatic overture aimed at mending ties that have been strained between India and Pakistan's nuclear tests in 1998. Mori is on a three-day visit to the region starting on Tuesday.

The first official trip to South Asia by a Japanese leader in a decade, Mori's visit seeks to

Japan's lunar plan

India's space agency has already committed significant dollars and is now ready to send a mission to the moon within five years of getting the green signal.

A space group at the Department of Space (DOS), under the Prime Minister's Office, told parliamentarians last week that the Finance Ministry should allocate Rs 5 billion to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) so that it has both the human expertise and technological capability to send a probe to the moon by 2007.

New Delhi, Dec 22: A six-member ISRO delegation has arrived here in the Indian capital to discuss the proposed Indian lunar mission with the local space agencies.

Government clearance remains key - the project is expected to cost Rs 3.5 billion, and there are many areas competing for such funds.

Ecosystem in Asia

BANGKOK - While regional anti-narcotics agencies are still trying to promote intelligence sharing between each other, narcotics societies, ecosystem growing popularity, particularly among the young and affluent, has raised growing concerns.

A key step in this fight that ecosystem seems to be mostly consumed by Western brands, but more recently, it has gained prominence among Thai youngsters, especially those who do not go to school.

"We first had to take steps against heroin users, but then marijuana users and now ecstasy has come into the picture," said Somdet Sangsuriya, Secretary-General of Thailand's Office of the Narcotics Control Board.

"The same syndicates which smuggle heroin from Thailand to European countries are importing ecstasy on the way back for the Thai market," said Chatchai, who runs a growing cross-border trade in drugs through her home in Bangkok.

"The drug is becoming more accessible, and there are concerns that if the drug's popularity increases there may be attempts to manufacture it locally to reduce expenses," he said.

As a result, the growing drug market has also become a concern among the young and affluent, and there are concerns that if the drug's popularity increases there may be attempts to manufacture it locally to reduce expenses.

Japanese middle class falters

The mid-20th century of the middle class has resulted in a continental divide among Japan's haves and have-nots. As the lucky few continue to live in the majority, the people who have fallen on hard times, are among the at-risk group where they are in the majority.

The rich are getting richer through stock investments, entrepreneurial success or higher compensation packages, and they are spending their wealth on goods and services that are out of reach for their class.

Meanwhile, the middle class is experiencing a lifestyle squeeze because of rising costs, yet they are unable to escape from their current situation, even if they work very hard or get some help from family or friends.

But what may be more worrisome is a pervading pessimism among many Japanese. According to the survey, only one in 10 Japanese expect their financial circumstances to improve in the future.
The new Iranian Revolution via satellite

GENEVA (AP) — Every night, Ahmed sits in front of his TV and watches the news. In 1978, he listened to the songs of Goongosh, Iran’s hard-line movement, and the music of Ahmad Nourizad, a well-known revolutionary poet. He listens to satellite TV and remembers a time when opposition leaders were a public affair. For about six months, he saw, out of the corner of his eye, the Islamic Revolution.

He goes to bed already looking forward to his return from work the next day, when he can escape to the past again. “I am not sure if this life ever means, I am much happier now,” says Ahmed, who is too afraid to give his real name.

Thousands of Iranians are now sitting in the past by watching TV in National Iranian Televisions, a state-controlled broadcast service, and satellite equipment by satellite from the Middle East. Californians, not far from the area known as “Amerikah,” are sitting on the same couch, watching Iranian TV and commentators, because of its high-quality content of providing Iranian information. The Iranian authorities have always banned an American invasion, but say that the program’s main function is to entertain the American public.

“Revolutionary Iran has been vigilant about an American invasion, but it cannot defend itself against this one from the sky that brings television programming.”

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LONDON - A new satellite service is being launched to the people of Iran, the United States and the Soviet Union. The satellite will broadcast news and entertainment programs in English, Persian and Russian.

It is believed that the satellite will also provide a platform for Iranians and Americans to discuss their views on various issues.

LONDON (AP) - The satellite service is expected to be operational within the next few weeks.

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Whose airwaves?

The government has licensed Nepal's biggest FM radio transmitter to a private group, but critics say this goes against its own policy to use radio for development communication.

Nepal must be more radio active

BY BHARAT KOIRALA

Radio communication holds the promise for decentralised information necessary for grassroots development in Nepal. By Bharat Koirala

Black in 1990, when democracy was young, several Nepal organisations got together to apply for a licence to operate a private radio station. Although there was nothing in the constitution banning privatisation, we were sure the application would be shot down.

The Communication Policy Task Force headed by Namaste Ayaha had just come out with its recommendations, and one of the key elements in the document was the provision to allow private broadcasting on the FM Band. But it was not reassuring that the main thrust of this report was that private radio stations were not viable.

So our appeal went on the government and leaders to adopt the recommendations of the Task Force. It was drafted before the National Government had a plan and called for private broadcasters to be licensed.

The government licensed the first FM radio station in 1990. However, in the presence of the United Nations (UN) and the Government of Nepal, the two governments signed an agreement on the UN's assistance to the country. The agreement was to support the establishment of a national radio service.

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Sports Council is run like in Panchayat days

Vajra (literally-flash of lightning), an artist’s condominium, is a transit house for creativity, providing a base during months of information and creative interaction. Its isolation, graphic splendid and peaceful ambiance make it an ideal retreat from the clock of pressure.

I stayed a week at the Vajra, by which time I had become so fond of it that I stayed another.

John Collee
The London Observer

Vajra, a serene assembly of brick buildings, grassy courtyard and recovered walls and Hindu statuary is a calm oasis over looking, chaotic Kathmandu.

Mountain bike championship

In two weeks, an 11 km track inside the Nipponese reserve will be the site of Nepal’s first Mountain Bike Championship series. The championship is being organised by Peter Stewart, the man who brought the country’s first ever激wave race in 1998.

The mountain bike events will be divided into three races each in five categories and will showcase the best mountainbiking from Nepal and abroad. “Kathmandu is at a critical point, young people are not doing much. Sport is what really help mould them and keep them occupied with something good,” says Stewart, the race director.

The Himalayan Mountain Bike Race Series-2000 will involve high school students, junior (under 100, 120, 140 kg) and open category (over 40 kg) women and open to compete. There are six races, two in each of the age groups.

The one-day race will be held on October 8th, 11th, and 14th. During the period, the participants will be adding points according to timing and position in each event. The one who gets the highest points will bag the grand award a two-wayer Qatar Airways return and an entry into the European MTB Championship this year. The inter-school competition winners will get a running trophy, which points to the national MTB championship in future.

The first stage will kick off with the junior and senior group (10.4 km) followed by the women’s group (13.7 km) at 3.30 in the afternoon. The seniors will start about an hour later and will be followed by the “real riders” of the open event to complete the 33.6 km course in three laps of the 11-km loop that runs through the Nepalese reserve. Stewart: “The loop will remain the same in all three races till November as it would help athletes cover their training, improve their skills and gain confidence,” says Stewart. “It generates positive feelings towards this action packed sport.”

The course is based on standards set by the Union of Cycling International (UCI) and follows the suggested format. Says Stewart. “The race will provide good spectator viewing. There will be enough time to move around the course to watch events like the Open Category which will pass spectators on 10 occasions.

The event will be aired by IMG and TSN, the leading international TV sports coverage companies, for distribution to various TV networks worldwide.

An added attraction will be staring Charlie and Caroline Alexander, World Cup and UCI National MTB Champions, who will compete in the open race on the last day of the championship. They will later conduct a four-day training camp for Nepali riders at Canberra, a recent event in the Nepalese UCI Road World Cup. The final awards ceremony will be held at Hotel Radisson in Kathmandu.

To register, contact the Himalayan Mountain Bike office in Thamel or through their website www.biketrip.com

in Kathmandu, the Vajra

Swayambhu, Dalta Bilaswari, PO Box 1084, Kathmandu Phone: 977 1 271545, 272719 Fax: 977 1 271695 E-mail: vajra@mos.com.np
The gorge of the flaming sword

Geologists may have various reasons to believe Kathmandu Valley was once a lake, but they would not be able to match the story of Manjushri.

In the high wall of the Kathmandu Valley, at a place called Chobar, is the gorge of legend. Here, where white geese walked on the earth and mountains were commonplace, the Mongol king Manjushri cut the mountainside with his Harrangan to drain a lake that filled the valley. His two wives, who sit atop nearby summits, watch the avatars that marched only perhaps by the dripping of the waters of the Red Sea. Monks, Manjushri’s novice was to reach and worship a lion of incomparable beauty that floated upon the lake. Perhaps, he also realized the rich potential of the valley that would result, for legend has it he built the temple behind to found the city called Kathmandu.

That would be the end of the tale except that, like all tales it varies in every telling and is still in the process of being spun. So it was Manjushri who saw the goddess Manjushri at the chobar mountain with a thunderbolt. The thunderbolt assumed the shape of the goddess, and it was there below the gorge today, as in golden-covered temple,存在 holy in a gilded dome, two strangely shaped pillars, and far distinctly a Gokarna without a mask. The walls were hewn to reach a holy of holies. The beautiful rocks have been chiselled to reach. Many of the lovely trees have gone and often a pile of stone or dust or both among the stones. One does not picnic anywhere, but there is still the benevolent gorge to explore, nestled in a grotto cut into the rock in the shape of a throne. A grotto where the carvings of images of natural sculptures, are numerous great caves which have leading to a temple on top of the hill, in the city of Katikoff, to the great Buddhist statues of. Swayambhunath, which gives a little hint to the ancient and its art, with its tree and shrubs and gazed and shaped by the wind that buffers the gorge, could have been designed by a Japanese master gardener. Our spread out on a picnic among the rocks and having fun, back to watch the changing light transform the valley and the lowering snow creates with flexing designs and colors a temple roof soaring brightly with a snow pyramid, the river. Degan has run through a purple landscape while the snow turned to gold.

Now a current factory below the gorge is greatly embalming the hill of failure. The factory has been chiselled to reach. Many of the lovely trees have gone and often a pile of stone or dust or both among the stones. One does not picnic anywhere, but there is still the benevolent gorge to explore, nestled in a grotto cut into the rock in the shape of a throne. A grotto where the carvings of images of natural sculptures, are numerous great caves which have leading to a temple on top of the hill, in the city of Katikoff, to the great Buddhist statues of. Swayambhunath, which gives a little hint to the ancient and its art, with its tree and shrubs and gazed and shaped by the wind that buffers the gorge, could have been designed by a Japanese master gardener. Our spread out on a picnic among the rocks and having fun, back to watch the changing light transform the valley and the lowering snow creates with flexing designs and colors a temple roof soaring brightly with a snow pyramid, the river. Degan has run through a purple landscape while the snow turned to gold.

There was a stern not long ago when it was easier to fantasize about the gorge. It was Kathmandu’s fantastic picnic spot. Stood under tall old trees above the river that thundered through the narrow gorges, there was the whole Kathmandu valley spread out below one, a bowl of emerald or gold or tawny green according to the season, and beyond the little city with its gilded spires and pagoda roofs, the high steps of mountain ridges reaching to the sky. A weekday was a rare event of a picnic. On the Kathmandu side of the hill were the lovely rocks that may have been fashioned by a Japanese master gardener. Indeed the entire area, with its tree and shrubs and gazed and shaped by the winds that buff the gorge could have been designed by a Japanese master gardener. Our spread out on a picnic among the rocks and having fun, back to watch the changing light transform the valley and the lowering snow creates with flexing designs and colors a temple roof soaring brightly with a snow pyramid, the river. Degan has run through a purple landscape while the snow turned to gold.

The paintings symbolize questions about why what and where we live and climb. Rohan is a perfectionist. Often, he comes with negative conclusions about our progress, our climb. Maybe it’s just me, maybe I have not had adequate experience, but my consciousness tells me that we are all bounding down the wrong path. The sky, the all the divine and human souls of the mountains have found their way into Rohan’s haunting works—nature, dogs, and its various forms to come together. We were intended to be nature’s creation. We’re gifted with a special capacity to create and discover. But we have closed off from the natural world that has in us a sense of self.

Rohan knows where it hurts when he climbs. He knows how the muscle is stretched to the limit, he knows the diehard of climbing lleging. Why do I climb? To express the question why do we climb? What are we reaching for? I look at climbing as a metaphor for life and for our entire existence,” he says.

Rohan hopes to keep one foot in Nepal while he goes to the United States soon as a student. His students have developed any concept of any single, pure culture. It is evident Rohan is searching for meaning. We hope to find it.

Rohan’s drawings were exhibited at the Siddhartha Art Gallery last week.

Garbage in, compost out

Saul Burden

Even as the time of Katmandu's compost project, the government is still facing challenges in getting people to participate in the composting process. However, with the help of local organizations such as WEPCO, composting is becoming more popular. One of the major challenges is finding ways to promote the benefits of composting to the community. Some of the challenges include lack of awareness among the public, lack of proper infrastructure, and lack of proper education and training programs.

Says Sudha Paudel, Vice-President of WEPCO:

"But the government is making efforts to overcome these challenges by providing training and support to local organizations. The government is also working on developing a comprehensive composting policy to ensure the sustainability of composting in the long term."
Beyond Langtang

You face the descending darkness. The presence of the mountains doesn’t leave you, it leaves a mark on your soul forever.

The path less trodden scenarios means coming to the point where the fog was amidst mountains, and venturing beyond. Langtang’s ki-shaped valley is just 40 km due north of Kathmandu, but it is so wild that it may as well be 4,000 km away.

More so when you get to Langtang Village or Kyanjin Gompa and, strike by the views all around, stop. Not that it is not a beautiful place to take a break; the views are out of this world; the singles-capped snowed mountains are almost Alpine in looks. But after a day or two, you itch to move on to see what’s around the bend in the valley beyond the alpine. You also want to get away from the blue waters of the Langtang Glacier that beam menacingly above Langtang village. Not a very safe spot to locate, you think, but the locals probably know better.

As you swing past Kyanjin and Langtsho Kharka, you start getting an indication of what a high altitude Himalayan lake is like. All above 500 degrees of mountainous views so spectacular that they seem to have been chiselled in heavens by Gods. The Band summit ridge of Gorka Chhripu is one such exquisite piece of the auditorium.

It changes in various moods throughout the day—from the moment it is silhouetted against the dark sky, past noon as the sun glows off the ice melting on its flanks, in the afternoon when the clouds will slide the ridge on a backdrop of pale blue and finally the golden hour: the crimson giving way to pastel pink as the sun sets and the shadows of Naya Kanya steal up its sides. Up here in Langtsho village, the speculations do not end with the close of day. There are other heavenly bodies, the moon and stars, that rise soon after. By late night, the peaks guarding Langtang Glacier come out like ghosts of our impede ancestors and they stand like silent sentinels in a sky of stars. The silence is total, especially if it is one of those wintry pre-monsoon nights. The only interruption comes from the Langtang Glacier grinding so softly as it slips, or an avalanche thundering down from the snowfields of Pemphang Kangri. The booming sound reverberates and, when it dies down it only accentuates the silence. A matter pieces noiselessly across the sky, binding itself towards Tiber.

In the early morning at Munchole Peak Base Camp, you realize how far up you have come by how disfigured Gokyo Chhripu looks from this angle. We are now in the windshadow and the half-heated clouds that do venture up here just leave a few drizzles. But this is enough to make the merences bloom with flowers. Chukar pheasants are the only birds around, a flock of them pecking on the wild berries and chattering Contentedly.

Above this point, the glacier gets more dangerous and is used by mountaineering schools for training in creating crevasses, rock climbing and ice work. Climbing up one of the eastern spur of Merimotsung Peak, the broadening presence of the vast South Face of Xina Pangma rear up in Tibet from behind Hagen’s Col. This awesome wall of rock is a magnetic presence, is seems to look down on all the smaller summits around as they show them who’s boss. As you hurry down towards camp, racing the descending light, the presence of the mountains doesn’t leave you. It leaves a mark on your soul forever.
Bhairab dai

At 73, actor-producer Bhairab Rimal has the energy that belies today’s young reporters. After being involved in theatre and directing, he now dedicates his time to radio dramas. His recent radio drama, "Bhairab Dai," has been a hit and has won numerous awards. Through his work, he has emphasized the importance of family and community values.

Grindlays DAL BHAT INDEX

All prices are in US dollars, collected from various sources, and are only indicative.

Dine with us: Sasho Correia Plass presents the Olympic Lucky Draw. At Fizz, Four Points by Sheraton; Garden Terna at Red Bar, and The Buddha. Dine at any of our fine restaurants and you could win a round-trip air ticket to Sydney!