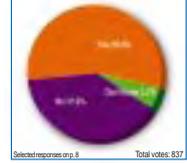


The staff of Nepali Times and Himalmedia wish all readers and partners a happy and prosperous Dasain.

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DASAIN WISHLIST

- For whatever it's worth, here is our Dasain wishlist:
1. That the government and Maoists stop waffling their thumbs and take secret high-level talks to their logical conclusion.
2. Do we actually have a government at the moment?
3. That there is a serious and massive push to create new jobs by spurring domestic and foreign investment.
4. Rescue the tourism industry by a) lifting absurd passport and ID requirement for Indian tourists...

TRUTH IS THE FIRST CASUALTY

None of us should have any illusions about it. The US-led bombing of Afghanistan is to assuage domestic public opinion in the wake of the devastating 11 September attacks in New York and Washington. The air raids are not supposed to achieve military success—after all, there isn't much left to bomb in the rubble that is Afghanistan. More than 90 percent of Americans until last week favoured military retaliation. What George W Bush has to decide is when the anti-US backlash in soft Islamic states like Pakistan, Uzbekistan or Indonesia gets to be a liability to his country's own geo-strategic interests.

But what is it about superpowers like America or regional powers like India that when the nation goes to war, its supposedly free and independent media suddenly goes ballistic with patriotic jingoism? Combined with global satellite and cable, this has the effect of turning wars into programme highlights. Learning the lesson from the Vietnam debacle, Washington is playing the propaganda war through a plant media, which has made pacifism a dirty word and any talk of finding the root causes of terrorism heresy.

The western media has always reflected the interests and concerns of the western world. That is to be expected. But the trouble is that the western media is the source of news for not just the west, but also the rest of the world. When defeating the Soviets in Afghanistan was in the western interest, the war was interesting for the western media. The Islamic jihad was glorified as a war against the Evil Empire.



LETTERS

ASYLUM I was alarmed and disappointed by the misconceptions in 'Asylum' (#63). Asylum seeking in the UK is made to sound like a holiday but this is far from the truth. The article claims that, after arriving, surviving is easy. Even those without acquaintances to help don't have to worry much: the British government gives you 36 pounds per week as survival allowance, 10 pound in cash and 26 pounds as food vouchers. In reality, asylum seekers find that the weekly allowance is not enough for a dignified existence and the voucher system is intensely humiliating. Entering the UK in container trucks is also made out to be easy but surely the fate earlier this year of the Chinese people who died while they were hiding in a refrigerator container, is enough warning about the dangers of illegal entry.

It seems you are trying to butter the governments of developed countries, forgetting the plight of Nepalis abroad. We sold our property to go abroad since we were too honest to get jobs. We may not have fear of persecution in Nepal, but we were desperate to support our parents and children. We would like to return to Nepal, but we need to use source-force with ministers just to get a job. We are not here for any criminal activities, we are not terrorists, and we are not here to exploit Nepal. We are coming some pounds and sending it to our families at home. Media here never writes against the national interest, why should you write against those of us who desperately need to stay here for survival? Sudhir SHARMA Kathmandu

TU AND KU The way Tribhuvan University (TU) and Kathmandu University (KU) have been compared in 'College comes to Dhulikhel' (#64) is not fair. KU has more technical programs than humanities and commerce. We agree that the quality of the education in TU may not be as good as that in KU only in humanities and commerce programs but you cannot generalize. Of course, there is political interference in TU and it is easier to manage just one college in Dhulikhel than several campuses at TU does. 'Shreeram' Thaland

Jitendra Raut's 'Asylum' and Alok Tumbahangphe's 'College comes to Dhulikhel' (both #64) have forced me not only to question the credibility and objectivity of your paper but also turn pessimistic about the Nepal press. Because if Nepal Times publishes reports that transform a few exceptions to a general rule or blatantly advertise a product or an institution in the guise of an article or a report, no other paper currently published from Kathmandu is likely to do any better. Both reports lack the basic criteria for publication in a well-esteemed paper like yours. Tumbahangphe's write-up on KU gives a false image of a private university of the few for the few as a solution to the terrible state of Nepal education today. Raut's is a label against all Nepalis and he takes a few isolated cases of Nepal asylum seekers to define the entire populace. His tone is not only condescending, but also disparaging to the Nepali diaspora.

KU's management, class size and observation of a schedule are definitely better than those of TU. More importantly, it has held back some of the nation's money that would go to foreign institutions. And yes, the grand old TU is mismanaged at best. But still it doesn't mean that you can make an analogy between TU with more than 190,000 students all over the country and KU with less than 2,500 students. The article overlooks the qualifications

of TU and its role in nation building? After all, who produced the like of Suresh Raj Chalise? Aruna Kandel Kathmandu

TIKAPUR Why does CK Lal keep slandering great Nepalis? After great Gandhian Dr Dilli Ramjan Regmi, this time he has insulted the memory of Shadhy Babadar Singh, a great leader and a visionary. He established Tikapur as that there can be a modern planned town in far west Nepal, and the town is now an educational centre. Why does CK Lal have a problem with that? It is very easy to criticise does. I know you will not publish this letter, but I am writing it anyway. Rajalaxmi Bajral Kathmandu

CK Lal is right about most of the things about Tikapur (#64). But he is wrong in saying that Maoist scourge is on the wane. Tikapur is the Rolpa-Rukum of the trail. The terror of Maoists is still very much there, and that is why farmers have not been able to harvest the paddy even though it is ripe. Lal's views about Tikapur's isolation is wrong. Fifteen km is not a long distance, and Tikapur can easily be connected with Mahabadi Rajmarg if the existing road is black-topped. Connection with India is bad but that is not important because there is no major Indian town nearby. Prakash A Raj (Letters, #62) misses Samrat 'Mad Dog' Huntington's hate for all races other than his own in 'Clash of Civilisations'. Either Mr Raj has not read the book or he is hopelessly dim-witted. In any case, as long as Colin Powell calls the shots in Washington, CK Lal need not worry an all-out war in his neck of the woods. Good paper, keep up the spirit. Satyendra Berkshire, England

Bin Laden John Paul Lederbach in 'Let's do the unexpected' (#63) blames the tragedies of 11 September in the United States on the Arab-Israeli conflict. While there is no doubt that this conflict has called to arms some disaffected Arabs to Bin Laden's cause, it has not been their revered leader's cause until this week. His cause was first to free Afghanistan from Soviet domination. When that goal had been reached thanks largely to aid from the United States, he needed another one. The next purpose-for-living was to rid Saudi Arabia of invited American troops. While the Soviet-Afghan issue was blatantly imperialist, the arrival of American troops in Saudi Arabia was



to protect Mr Bin Laden's country from Iraqi imperialism. It has been quite clear that neither the Saudis nor the Americans are going to change their mutual interests to suit Mr Bin Laden. Now that the United States and several dozen countries are co-operating to ferret out this megalomaniac and the repressive regime he supports, he has desperately sounded a new clarion: the Arab-Israeli conflict. Of all the

venom he has speared and the manipulation in the name of Islam, this issue will certainly embolden poor young people who willingly give up their lives for the cause. What a supreme irony: it appears that Secretary Colin Powell was about to announce support for the nation-state of Palestine. This is a man who has gone over to the dark side and is tragically taking thousands of otherwise decent people with him. Suzanne Silvers Houston, Texas

SUBLIMINAL I am an early supporter of the Nepal Times, and appreciate your news coverage and reporting. However, after many weeks now, I am compelled to write you about the advertisement for a wrist watch. You know, the one with the woman's leg and the armature going up her ass. I find it distasteful and repugnant. Thank you for paying attention and being more careful about the subliminal messages you are presenting to the Nepali audience, as well as the global audience. Please show more taste and responsibility in the ads you accept. Wendy King Kathmandu

CORRECTION The email address in Action Aid's vacancy announcement (#64) should read: jobs@actionaid.org.uk. The photograph of the sweater in 'Labour Pain' (#64) should have been credited to CK Bhusal.



Advertisement for China Garden restaurant. Features a large image of a hot pot dish and text: 'Now Open!', 'After raging through the shopping malls of Manila, arrived on the Steam Boat to Hong Kong.', 'It's a Chinese experience with a twist. Let your senses wander through the flavours of Boil, Potage and Plucker to the farthest edge of the East. China Garden. The Chinese restaurant whose recipes also come from beyond the shores of China. China Garden'.

"Cynicism is the obstacle to Nepal's development.."

Kul Chandra Gautam, a soft-spoken and modest 53-year-old from Gulmi, is a self-made man. He rose up the ranks with hard work and integrity to become a deputy executive director at UNICEF. Gautam spoke to Nepali Times about his career, Nepali children and global challenges.

How did you end up at UNICEF?
In the early 1970s I was a student in the US. It was the height of the Vietnam War, and the anti-war movement. University campuses were bubbling with protests against the war. I had been quite involved. I was fascinated by how a small country like Vietnam could take on the world's superpower and bog it down. I did some special courses on Indo-China, its history and politics, particularly the life of Ho Chi Minh. I studied French and Asian politics. I was a student at Princeton when the Paris Agreement was signed and UN Thant was the UN Secretary General. UNICEF launched a major operation for post-war relief and reconstruction. I contacted UNICEF, and they called me for an interview. I was hired on the spot.

Long way from Gulmi to New York...
I come from a small village called Anampur, about a half-day walk from Tamghas. In the old days we had to walk four days from Tansen. Now with a four-wheeled drive you can go up to the district headquarters. When I grew up there was no school, obviously no roads. I went to high school in Tansen and finished school from JP High School in Kathmandu. I applied to some US colleges, and was offered full scholarship.

and admission at Dartmouth. It took me one-and-a-half-years to get a passport: at that time the people in government were very suspicious. They said who is this boy who comes from Gulmi, is not related to anybody important, how did he get a scholarship? The fact that one got it on the basis of merit was not an issue. My father is still in Anampur, and I make it a point to go to Gulmi every time I come. I just enjoy being home, with my people and unwinding from the rest of the world. Being out of touch, no telephone, no electricity, no TV, no Internet, no email, no cars. It is just wonderful.

What is your job at UNICEF? My principal responsibilities are mobilising resources for UNICEF, fund raising, communications, advocacy, external relations, our relations with the rest of the UN system and civil society groups. But because I am an old timer with UNICEF—I've been with it for 28 years, and have worked at different levels—I take a lot of interest in program and planning. I also advise Carol Bellamy, our executive director, on other matters beyond my main areas of responsibilities.

Has the destruction of the UNICEF office in Quetta affected your holiday?
It happened when I was here. Every morning New York time, or evening Nepal time I have a conference call involving our executive director, who was in Russia last week, myself in Nepal and our regional director here Nigel Fisher who has also been appointed to be the overall

coordinator of our efforts in Afghanistan and surrounding areas. We are monitoring the situation and have evacuated our staff from Quetta. Fortunately, no staff member was in the building at the time of the incident. It is a very serious situation.

How does the situation of Nepali children look?
Because we are Nepalis, we tend to think that Nepal is somehow exceptional. That we are exceptionally poor or exceptionally backward or not much progress is being made. But from my vantage point in New York, Nepal is actually quite typical of most of our Least Developed Countries. If we look at the progress for children it is not a great success story, but it is not a disaster either. Compared to other LDCs, Nepal is actually doing quite well. In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa there is an actual regression, mortality rates are increasing because of HIV/AIDS, because of conflict, drought, pestilence.

In Nepal, different UN agencies have begun working together to address issues affecting poverty, and not just do things under their "mandate". Is this a strategic move, or did it just happen?
It was a deliberate plan of colleagues here. This is the way because poverty is the ultimate cause of many of the ills. But poverty is not just lack of income, poverty has at least three dimensions: income, which is related to productive employment, second the lack of basic social services, then lack of education and health are both consequences of poverty as well as the cause of poverty. We realized that if we worked in some of the same districts, in some of the villages with an integrated plan, with good poverty alleviation activities including micro-credit

programs of vitamin A distribution and coverage is high. There has been good progress in salt iodination. You no longer see goitre in young people, only among the elderly. Immunisation is going well. We had only one case of polio in the country last year, and we are sure we are on the way to eradicating polio, which would be a fantastic achievement.

And implementing is going to be harder because of the insurgency. Have you assessed how this could affect the development of children?
Our colleagues here in the UN are quite aware of the impact on development of the insurgency. Certainly in terms of young people we are aware that children and women are often used as human shields, and that is unacceptable. There is disruption of schools. This is unacceptable. Children should be left out of the conflict. Let the adults do the quarrelling, fighting and the negotiating. Leave the children alone. I suggested to the prime minister that we hope as part of the negotiations that are going on, one point may be to declare children a "zone of peace". Don't recruit child soldiers, and don't disrupt schools or health centres.

For God's sake make children one of those issues on which both parties can agree.

What is the role of NGOs and government in delivering development? NGOs are new important partners, but in Nepal many NGOs are urban-based. There are a very few active in remote areas, so the government is and will continue to be a principal partner. In terms of government performance, viewed from New York, it is average, not a stellar one. Forty years ago Nepal and South Korea were exactly at the same development level, per capita income was about the same, less than \$100. Compared to some East Asian countries, Thailand, Malaysia, we are far behind. But compared with the sub-Saharan countries we are doing fairly better.

by DANIEL LAK



Collateral damage

QUETTA: An old man, Najib, stands weeping in the hall of the main government hospital here. He uses the trailing end of a tightly wound turban to wipe tears from his cheeks. His son sits beside him, one eye and an arm bandaged tightly. There should be a grandson here as well, but the five-year-old, also called Najib, is dead. He is collateral damage, a civilian casualty, a victim of an American bomb on Kandahar.

"We don't like Taliban, we don't like any of them," the elder and suffering Najib is saying, his voice rising with emotion. "Why did the boy have to die? What did he ever do? What did any of us ever do?" Questions that can't be answered, not to anyone's satisfaction. Anyone who tells me that five-year-old children are unavoidable casualties of war, that the deaths of children in the World Trade Centre attacks merit other young lives snuffed out, is beneath contempt. There is no way to rationalise or explain what happened to Najib. But, bereaved, righteous and increasingly fearful, the Americans continue to bomb Afghanistan. At least as I write this a second wave of death and destruction rans the sky on a day that I once lived.

A Pakistani friend who knew one of the countless victims of the 11 September atrocity telephoned to ask some unanswerable questions. "What the hell are they doing," he wonders, "Do they think they can catch terrorists by bombing piles of rubble into smaller bits? It is not, of course, that simple, nor is my friend entirely accurate in his assessment of the air strikes. Military installations and equipment have indeed been destroyed with surrounding damage kept more or less to a minimum in many places. The Taliban infrastructure of war—medical, or perhaps per World War I—has been crippled; something that might have been accomplished with far less expenditure and triumphalist rhetoric, not to mention the death of little Najib and others.

What about the four United Nations mine clearers killed earlier in the campaign? Was I alone in feeling a twinge of nausea when British ministers on the BBC referred to the UN's measured announcement of the deaths as "unconfirmed reports". The daily claims from the Taliban

It's time to start waving a white flag. Let's see what hits me first.



diplomats here of civilian deaths are dismissed as "unverifiable" by journalists and others. Perhaps, but does anyone dare to challenge the grip of Najib and his son? I don't. I believe them.

Reluctantly, near the end of the first week of raids, it was acknowledged that several ordinary folk may have died in Kabul during one late night blitzkrieg. Note please that this was after US claims of "air supremacy" were widely made across the international media, but they kept on bombing at night. The four admitted deaths in Kabul came, we're told, as a 2000 pound bomb was being dropped on—wait for it—a helicopter. And they missed. Instead a house 500 m away is hit and at

least four breadwinners of an already beleaguered Afghan family are obliterated. That helicopter, already crippled, collapsing, without spare parts, may still be there. What will they target next? Taxes?

Here's: Don't get me wrong. I still hold out hope that the vicious Taliban can be toppled. I thought, I prayed that perhaps our American friends were going to encourage evolutionary change in Kabul and Kandahar while concentrating their understandable anger on finding and catching Osama Bin Laden. But no. They chose the easy way out. They bombed and fired missiles from high above a land that can't really fight back, and they smashed and blew up and flattened mud huts and tutted airstrips and badly maintained ancient Soviet military technology. I thought the aim was to get Al Qaeda, but first we're blating away at everything around the venomous network, ripping down barely living trees to get at the spider and his web.

The momentum of these things is beyond our ordinary folk. We have no say, we are either for America or a potential target of its wrath. Just isn't that what George W. Bush said during one of his many halting speeches over the past weeks? We do suppose it's time again for us to start waving a flag, a white flag. Then we'll see what his first will be. Will it be the hijacked planes with terrorist pilots of American not-so-smart weapons? Can we take a small step back please?

President Bush, please take note. So far, the terrorists are winning. D

development.."

-Kul Chandra Gautam

and combine that with health, nutrition and education, that would give a multiplier effect.

Have you seen a major shift in the status of Nepali women over the past 20-30 years?

I think the situation of women in Nepal continues to be deplorable. Yes some progress has been made but it is nothing to be proud of, or brag about. A country that still has 65 percent of women illiterate, where there are one of the highest maternal mortality rates, where girls are trafficked in huge numbers. We are now having this debate about property rights for women, it should have happened 20 years ago. And the most progressive legislation being proposed is not progressive enough. We still have a long way to go. The progress is excruciatingly slow.

So we're a lot better than the really bad ones?
Yes, I see Nepal on the average and we should not be happy with being an average. We should be doing much better than that and that is the challenge. Nepal in many ways is in a fortunate position. Here is a country that UNICEF action in the coming years in Nepal—girls' education. It is important not only on its own right, but girls' education is perhaps the best investment that a nation can make.

And implementing is going to be harder because of the insurgency. Have you assessed how this could affect the development of children?

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DC there was a big global health meeting in which the vitamin A project in Nepal was honoured as being the best in the world. If you read the Nepali newspapers you would not know that, journalists here should highlight the positive and help fight cynicism. Particularly in this time we need some encouragement and positive feedback. Nothing succeeds like success, we need to breed success, we need to create a more optimistic atmosphere. Yes, things are bad and difficult but there is hope and let's focus on the hope. Children are our hope.

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Fake bankers...

It is now the turn of bank employees to be put through the paces. After looking into the academic certificates submitted by its officials, the Rastriya Banijya Bank says nearly 600 employees working in the bank's branches around the country have fake academic qualifications. But it hasn't taken action yet; the bank hopes to complete inquiries it has started with some of the universities concerned, largely in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in India, before Dasain. After that they will look into the academic certificates of junior staff. Some 5,800 people work in Rastra Banijya Bank branches around the country.

...also teachers?

About 8,000 public school teachers have submitted their resignations after the government began checking the education certificates of government school teachers nearly two months ago. Of approximately 150,000 teachers working in 25,000 public schools around the country, the government suspects about 45,000 teachers are holding fake certificates. The Education Ministry is expected to accept the resignations soon. Despite the lack of official data, the Nepal National Teachers Association, based on reports from their district branches, estimate the figure to be around 8,000 and most of them got the jobs after political pressures. Those who feel they can pass off their certificates as authentic, better watch it: the Education Ministry says it will seek diplomatic help to verify certificates from foreign education institutions.

Khadka Down Under

The Maoist problem appears to be uppermost in the minds of Nepalis everywhere. Even in Australia where Nepalis based in Melbourne expressed their concerns about dialogue to visiting Home Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka. Khadka, who was down under attending an international AIDS conference, was quick to reassure them at a reception hosted by the Nepali Association of Victoria. "The Maoist problem has to be and will be solved through dialogue. This is the belief of the present government," he told members gathered at the Gurkhas Brasserie, a Nepali restaurant. However, Khadka, self-assured and confident, added on a sterner note: "If the problem isn't solved through dialogue the government will have to adopt harsh measures." Nepalis in Australia also sponsored Dasain programmes in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra with Nepali performers, Santosh Pant, Nabin Bhattarai, Kunti Moktan and Kumar Basnet.

Bad blood

Just when Dalits had thought their days of social exclusion were over, the "upper" caste have proved that old habits die hard. "Taka Jatra" a pit-Dasain four day fair in Beldaha, Malladheli in west Nepal has been cancelled for five years after some Dalits entered the Dilashanti temple complex to offer puja. The idol was being prepared to be taken to Haridwar in India for ritual cleansing. VDC chairman Dipak Bahadur Ram confirmed that the traditional heritage Jaya Singh Bohora had ordered the cancellation of the fair for five years. In a related incident, a "Ramleela" programme was cancelled for this year after a dispute between Dalits and non-Dalits. Member Dalit Mukti Samaj Puran Singh Dayal was beaten up by upper caste people three weeks after he unsuccessfully tried to enter the Jagannath temple. The police reportedly just looked on as non-Dalits organised a rally protesting the entry.

Food for school programme

On the eve of World Food Day 2001 on 15th October, WFP Executive Director Catherine Bertini said research and decades of experience show that school feeding can immediately alleviate hunger, dramatically increase attendance, improve performance and ultimately help educate many more girls and boys. The World Food Program provides meals to more than 12 million school children in 54 countries, including Nepal. The largest provider of school meals in the developing world, the WFP has been feeding 250,000 children in public primary schools in 16 food deficit districts in Nepal. Recently, it extended the program to five more districts making a total of 21 districts. School children receive a midday hot meal made of fortified blended food (maize, wheat and soya), vegetable ghee, and sugar.

Bahuns and the Nepali State

KANAK MANI DIXIT
 or long ago, Tashi Jangbu Sherpa and I were discussing some matter in a courtyard near Pashu Doka. A Manari jeep bearing government license plates came to a halt about 50 feet away. An officious-looking bureaucrat—he could not have been anything else—struck his head out of the window and waved towards Tashi, gesturing him to walk over. Tashi, an accommodating Nepali if ever there was one, started moving towards the jeep. I held him by the hand and stopped him short. Again the official waved at him, this time irritably. I held on to Tashi and called out, "What is it that you want?"

A course correction is needed when so much of the people's present and future is in the hands of one community.

"I'm looking for the doctor's clinic."
 "It's just there, you may proceed."
 Now this may be considered an ordinary, everyday incident. But to me it was in many, including understandings and expectations in a society that is modernising but remains feudally minded. The parbatyaha (Bahun or Chhetri) official did not know either of us, yet he chose to call Tashi with his flat "Mongoloid" features rather than me with my aquiline "Caucasian" ones. When the splenic said-halt to decide who to trouble to take those 50 steps and answer his query, he chose to call the one with the flat features.

bank counters, at the airport departure/arrival points, or even while waiting in line to pay the electricity bill. Across class lines, people with sharp features are put to the test less than others.

Some may demand why bringing up such a divisive issue when the country is undergoing an grave crisis after another. "What with the Maoabadi and all..." But the discrimination against one or another kind of Nepali—whether male, female, Dalit or in this instance hill ethnic—is a matter of critical importance. If we ignore the injustice that is the unrestrained undercurrent of our society, then more problems are bound to surface in future.

There are of course some areas where the people of ethnic origin are ahead of other communities, but by and large it is the parbatyaha and Newar who have traditionally paraded the national spoils in the arena of economy, academia, administration, politics—and now NGOdom. And the two areas where the injustice of under- or non-representation is carried out on a grand scale are those of politics and administration. If we believe Nepal is a true mosaic of different communities and castes, then of course all groups must be properly and proportionally represented.

More than anything else, the destiny of the nation lies in the hands of the political parties and the government machinery. There can be no doubt in the minds of Nepalis that Chhetris, Newars and especially Bahuns have got a bigger slice of the representational pie in these spheres. In the last decade of democracy, the peoples' representation was supposed to grow increasingly to reflect the given proportions in the population. This has not happened, and it is only the

proportion of Bahun that has grown in the civil service.

Statistics from the Public Service Commission (picked up by this writer at a recent seminar organised by the Janajati Mahasabha) indicates that in the past decade there has been a substantial growth in the number in the "Bahun/Chhetri" category who get pass the examinations for the civil service. Simultaneously, there has been a drastic, even heart-stopping, drop in the number of Newar, janajati (ethnic), Dalit and people of Tarai origin who make it into government service.

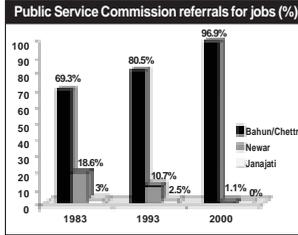
This information should set alarm bells ringing, but so busy are we in charting the course of the Maoist 'revolution', the inter-party wranglings and hatching of one or more conspiracy theory on this or that, that this relentless downturn over the years has gone practically unremarked. It is said that the officials of the Public Service Commission themselves are cognisant of this negative trend and are properly concerned, but one does not find representatives of the educated classes fanning their brows and—where necessary—railing against what the statistics point to.

And this is what they show: among those who passed their civil service examinations and were assigned to ministries, 69 percent were Bahun/Chhetri in 1983-1985, this was up to 81 percent in 1992-1993, and now the number has peaked at 98 percent. The proportion of Newar who made it into the civil service during the same period is down from 19 percent to 2.5 percent, and rested at 1 percent in 2000. The figure for the janajati category has dipped from 3 percent to 0.5 percent, and for Dalit, it is only 0.1 percent.

encountering circumstances which could help us digest this data, some would say. For example, the capable individuals from non-Bahun communities are far less interested in the civil service, or other fields have opened up in recent years are more attractive and lucrative than a civil service position can ever hope to be (discouraging corruption). For example, there is foreign employment of all kinds now available, NGOdom has become a magnet for the capable, and opportunities in the business world has obviously attracted away Newars who earlier would have joined government. It is mostly the Bahun from the hills that have the required education and orientation for bureaucracy, and this explains their preponderance among the inductees into the civil service. (It should also be noted that even though the Chhetri tend to be clubbed together with the Bahun as "parbatyaha", it is in fact Bahun who are mostly represented in the civil service statistics being cited.)

Turning from the civil service to the political parties, which play the overwhelming role today in giving (mis)direction to the state, here again we find an over-representation of Bahuns in comparison to their proportion in the population as a whole. The top leadership of the major political parties are almost exclusively Bahun, with a few Chhetris included and nothing but a sprinkling of the hill ethnics and its derivative, mental discipline. Sure, the others are finding greener pastures elsewhere. Even accepting these arguments, one should ask whether it is correct to maintain the status quo where one community that makes up less than 15 percent of the population should have such clout over the direction of the entire country and its people. And it is also necessary to ask whether a corrective mechanism must not be sought so that both Nepal's political terrain and bureaucracy are more representative of the communities that inhabit this differentiated land.

We remain an incomplete democracy for many reasons, including the fact that our politically powerful classes and bureaucracy are not representative of the population—and in fact are becoming less so as far as the civil service is concerned. To bring about the change that is required, you do not need a benevolent dictatorship/monarchy, nor do you need Comrade Prachanda's path or the living off of independent "homelands" of the 'indigenous'. The change in representation can be brought about from within the existing constitutional dispensation. This will begin to happen the moment those who have the responsibility of forming public opinion—the educated classes, including foremost the Bahuns among them—decide that there is an imbalance about which needs redress. This is a serious, even volatile issue that must not be pushed aside on any pretext. Whatever the reason or cause for this phenomenon of under- or non-representation, a correction is necessary which will show up in the statistics of the political party leadership and in the data put out by the Public Service Commission in the years to come. □



who makes such cynical use of the ethnic card in their rush to build a people's republic? Half the leaders of the Maoist organisation (those whose names are known) are Bahun in the business world has obviously attracted away Newars who earlier would have joined government. It is mostly the Bahun from the hills that have the required education and orientation for bureaucracy, and this explains their preponderance among the inductees into the civil service. (It should also be noted that even though the Chhetri tend to be clubbed together with the Bahun as "parbatyaha", it is in fact Bahun who are mostly represented in the civil service statistics being cited.)

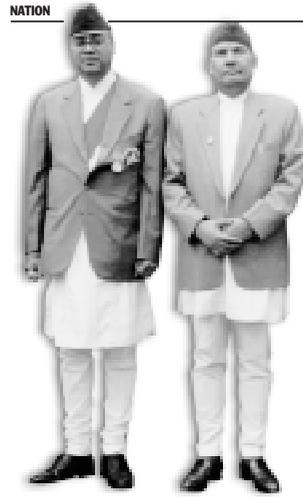
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SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL

Impatient kangresis

Deuba's flock is already itching for a break and government ministries are in dire need of reorganisation.



Although I didn't look so ominous at the time, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's troubles started even before he took the oath. For three days, the planetary position was 'propitious for the wearing-in ceremony. For another two days, Deuba tried hard getting the political alignments right while drawing up his cabinet list. In between, aids to the prime minister-elect tried rearranging the furniture at his Singha Darbar office along directions they hoped would prolong his tenure. In the end, Deuba decided to underpin the endurance of his government on a three-pronged formula: promise of phase-wise cabinet expansion to accommodate and pacify supporters, peace talks with the Maoists, and a "revolutionary" land-reform agenda.

An interesting thing happened last fortnight, which served to underscore the depth of Deuba's woes. The home and health ministers flew separately to Melbourne to participate in an AIDS and drugs conference. That tells you two things: Deuba's flock is already itching for a break and government ministries are in dire need of reorganisation. Deuba can handle his health minister. The difficult one is that the characteristically assertive home minister commands a chunk of 20+ plus MPs, most of whom are still waiting to get into the Cabinet. The home minister, who has the fawning reputation for determining the fate of all recent Congress governments, left a memo listing the MPs he wanted aboard just as Deuba planned to expand the cabinet in his absence.

The cases were out for the prime minister—creating more vacancies by splitting ministries and setting up new ones—is not feasible for a country that apportioned half of its annual budget on regular expenditure. Moreover, that course would be in clear violation of the pledges given to the donor nations, agencies and consortiums by two sitting members of the cabinet. So Deuba may have bought time by appointing a government panel to suggest ways of reorganising the ministries, but he cannot avoid the day of reckoning. By giving him a free hand to expand his government, Deuba's rivals in the party have indemnified themselves against any responsibility for his failures. (Few need his chances of success very high on the day he was elected, anyway.) I leaders of the main opposition party, already infuriated by the government's take-it-and-return-it women's property rights initiative, are humiliated by the belated realisation that Deuba's land reform proposal was an even remotely grounded in their Badal Commission report. It must have been painful for the UML to vote against something it had taken out a procession across the capital's main thoroughfares to celebrate. The prime minister probably can't count too much on the judiciary, either, which sees him as indifferent to, if not actually acquiescing in, the impending erosion of its independence by the Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority's anti-vote squads.

The Maoists struck Deuba enough to order a mace even before he had legally become prime minister. They, too, have now realised that the fed-good exchange of pleasantries at post rooms is doing little but strengthen the restive battle-hardened flank of the party. As long as the negotiations stall on the non-negotiable hard-lines on both sides can expect to further their positions for future offensives. One way Deuba could probably get out of this morass is by closely coordinating policy with the party. The Nepal Congress central committee should work out a clear power-sharing formula with the leader of its parliamentary party. Every block and patron in the ruling party must try to apportion ministerial positions in a way that would remain within the tolerance level of the donor community and meet the internal equilibrium test. Within months after assuming power in 1990, Kangresis dispelled the myth that they are a homogeneous entity working for a common objective, barring, of course, the preservation of political power. In terms of organisational behaviour, they are more like the Taliban, an association of disparate alliances held together by a desire to hang on to positions of privilege and pull as long as they can. Even with a comfortable majority, the Nepal Congress has produced three prime ministers halfway into the term of its parliament. This makes the five premiers of the high court unwieldy hung parliament look like representative of a benign phase of Nepal's politics.

It's time for factional bosses to acknowledge what the rest of the country has long realised and begin circulating internal party memos on who becomes prime minister and for how long. Ministerial appointments could then be worked out in accordance with the existing balance of power in the party and periodised distributed accordingly. That way, the people can expect the House of Representatives to last its full five-year term and live under a government that is not in perpetual risk of implosion. You don't have to amend the constitution to work out a participatory process that democracies like Italy, Japan and Israel have lived with. The practical benefit of such an arrangement is that Deuba could one day serve as Chakra Prasad Bastola's foreign minister or Ram Chandra Poudel's home minister without Kangresis having to carry inflated or punctured eggs. □

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Kathmandu on NHK

Japan's NHK television is setting out to do something very nice for tourism in Nepal. The capital is to be featured in a six-episode series on Asia's "mysterious cities" alongside Beijing, Banaras, Jogiakarta, Isfahan and Kyoto. The crew is in town shooting footage on High Definition Digital Television (HD-TV)—the latest technology—and will show the growth of the city and its culture from the Kirati era up to the present, using computer generated graphics to showcase what it is not possible to film.

Dasain shopping

The House of Rajkumar, the pioneer in business expos in Nepal, is back to help you lighten your wallet. They're here with the Dasain Mahostav 2001 from 12-20 October. The Dasain show will have over 150 companies selling their wares in Bhrikuti Mandap exhibition halls. The exhibitors include some of Nepal's largest business houses that sell everything from instant noodles to state of the art electronics—the Khetan Group, the Golchha Organisation, the Chaudhary Group—and well known foreign companies such as Emami, Revlon, Shahnaz Hussain, Parsani, and Phillips. The expo also has things to do for those not interested in shopping—cultural programs, and a food festival with offerings from popular eating and watering holes in Kathmandu.

New motorbikes

The motorcycle market in Nepal is growing fast, with more companies joining the race and promising to outdo each other in product and after-sales service. Loncin is the latest Chinese company to join the race with its Terminator (Rs 137,700), Custo (Rs 105,000) and Slimmer (Rs 93,700) models. Pioneer Marketing, an undertaking of the Sharda Group, is the sole dealer for the bikes in Nepal, which come with a two-year warranty and the assurance of easily available and cheap spares.

NTC discounts

Nepal Telecommunications Corporation (NTC) is in a festive mood—it is offering 50 percent off on domestic calls and 25 percent off on international calls made during Dasain and Thihar. The Dasain cuts will apply from 23-29 October and the Thihar discounts from 14-16 November. NTC says its mobile users will get a 33 percent discount on the bill covering the same period.

NTV Unplugged

The House of Entertainment (P) Ltd. has taken up the challenge of bringing fresh air into NTV's otherwise staid or plain bad programming. The half-hour NTV Unplugged entertainment programme—modelled after MTV's feature by the same name, premiered last week. It features well-known Nepalis and also promising young singers, musicians and local bands. The company plans to sell good entertainment and also CDs with their recordings. The program is on air every Friday at 9.45PM.



What does India want?

India and Nepal should renew the treaty and get on with it.

Our Secretary for Industry, Commerce and Supplies Bhanu Acharya is in New Delhi this week to discuss ways to get the Nepal-India trade treaty renewed before it expires on 5 December. Given the experience of the past two rounds, there is a possibility that the talks may be deadlocked yet again and Acharya may return with an agreement to meet again. Back home he would be charged with not having done enough homework, or not being able to understand India's "concerns." There is a strong possibility that the talks won't go anywhere because we just don't know what India wants incorporated in the revisions.

Officials from the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), which had lobbied to get the 1996 treaty signed by India, has been trying to tell Nepal what India wants. They tell us that the treaty that India agreed to India's changes in rules of origin and value addition, the treaty could be renewed. But they aren't sure if that alone will do the trick.

The FNCCI handed in a report to the prime minister about a month ago, and only a month later did it become public. Commerce Ministry officials had not even seen it before that. Officials there said to have tried to get a copy and were unable to locate one at the Prime Minister's Office earlier.

India is said to want Nepal to agree on adding 30 percent value as the basis for origin certification—against free trade, without any quantitative restrictions. If that is done

India would agree to a renewal without seeking additional changes. It is said the outgoing commerce secretary and our ambassador in New Delhi had agreed to this new provision.

But this is easier said than done because nobody in government seems to know what the value addition means in practice. By one measure it could mean: *output minus input divided by output*. This means the added value in hydrogenated vegetable oil—Nepal's main export to India—would be around 14 percent. But the FNCCI says Nepal's vegetable oils would still be eligible for duty-free exports without quantitative restrictions. That leads to the next question: How is the added value India is talking about calculated? There is FNCCI is mum on this though its officials claim the 30 percent was something they had proposed.

Nepali officials said to have asked their Indian counterparts to prepare a version of the treaty for discussion when the two sides met in Kathmandu in August. Nepal was assured this would be tabled when the joint secretaries would meet in New Delhi—that meeting is over, and there was no draft.

It is not fair to blame Nepal for failing to reach an agreement as they have nothing concrete to work with. This week our ambassador in New Delhi said the reason behind the stalemate was our inability to do our homework in time to address India's "concerns." I would like to ask the ambassador if he had communicated those concerns to the government, and

if he can explain them to the Nepali public? The best that can happen for Nepal is automatic renewal. If that is not possible, the minimum we expect Mr Acharya to come back with is a clear understanding of what India wants. India can help by telling us clearly whether it wants trade under the Most Favoured Nation regime or continue the preferential treatment granted by the treaty to Nepal exports. Nepali officials who see the treaty working well to boost exports cannot go about guessing what India wants—they have simply never been told.

Could India gain by forcing Nepal to plead for agreement on 30 percent value addition? There is a possibility: it would be difficult for India to negotiate for concessions with its larger trading partners after imposing restrictions on a poor, small neighbor when the November WTO round begins in Doha.

A win-win scenario for Nepal and India is to agree on renewing the treaty as it is, automatically, before it expires.

Nepal would also need to do it take immediate actions to address the sensitive issues of "surge" and "dumping" of certain Nepali and assure India such acts will not be allowed to happen again, because we must accept that there are certain things just not right with how we are trading. □

(Dr Chalise is the former Secretary of Industry)

Bleak Dasain

Will the Nepali economy take the high road or the low road? A lot depends on political stability and the pace of reforms.



BINOD BHATTARAI

As if things were not bad enough in 2001 with the insurgency, royal massacre, Nepal bandhs and strikes, the post-September international crisis has made prospects for Nepal's economic recovery suddenly much worse.

Domestic and foreign investment is below zero, as even those already in Nepal pull out. The purchasing power has been hit, the public is not shopping this Dasain. Alcohol, which was one of the most profitable industries has been a victim of scare tactics by Maoist women. Shares of the Himalayan Distillery were floated a month ago, but only Rs 30 million of the expected Rs 173 million had been raised till last week. Banks and finance companies that underwrote the issue will take the remaining shares. This used to be untended-of—shares of even suspect ventures had always been oversubscribed.

The writing on the wall is clear: the economy is going into deep freeze and may already be in recession.

Some early signs are the slowdown in exports, the slump in tourist arrivals and lower government revenues reflecting falling receipts from the sales of beer and alcohol. Then there is capital flight due to political uncertainty and the panic that followed the prime minister's "revolutionary" land reform plan. Even investments that were in the pipeline are now held up by the confusion. A weak monsoon in the eastern tarai grainbasket is bound to affect overall agriculture production and the overall economy.

The lack of business confidence, and early signs of a slowdown are already apparent in this year's Dasain bazaars. "The crowds are there, but they are buying very little," says Rajesh Kaji Shrestha, of the Nepal Chamber of Commerce. "Shoppers are trying to clear stocks and few are replenishing or ordering new supplies, which is a sure sign of recession."

The Himalayan Distillery public issue could have done better had it not been for the Maoist

prohibition scare. The government managed to get the pro-Maoist women to agree to four dry days a month and stricter enforcement of drinking age and control of sales. But that did not stop Maoist supporters from raising the Shah Distillery in Nuwakot in August after the government and the rebels had agreed on a "ceasefire."

Despite the rocky scenario, Nepal's macroeconomic indicators look surprisingly healthy—apparently buoyed by years of good monsoons, exports and remittances from Nepalis abroad. It is also a result of appropriate exchange rate, monetary and fiscal policies. But economists warn that in the face of continued political instability, even this achievement may begin to fray.

At the "Arctic IV" consultations held in August, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) gave Nepal a not-too-bad rating mainly because of our macroeconomic health over the last few years. But as long as there is uncertainty in the peace process and lack of confidence in the government, fiscal discipline will almost certainly begin to creep in. That happens when weak governments are forced to buy political support with handouts.

"The market looks upbeat now but this may not last past Dasain," says Rajendra Khetan of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry. "It is a problem of lack of confidence and we just don't know what is ahead."

The IMF Staff Report foresees two medium-term scenarios: high growth and low growth trajectories. Political and economic stability are crucial for Nepal to take the high growth road. If the Maoist insurgency and political instability persists, then the IMF foresees a low growth scenario.

If Nepal wants to aim for high-growth it needs to fully implement reforms to achieve 6-7 percent GDP growth. This would entail keeping inflation under five percent, increasing domestic savings and maintaining comfortable foreign exchange reserves. All this can happen with political and economic stability, which could then lead to increase in agricultural production, as more irrigation systems get built,

and there is investment in new hydro and road construction projects.

GDP in the low-growth mode would hover at around three percent—a direct fallout of political uncertainty and a slowdown in the pace of reforms. Continued political unrest would trigger downfalls in private investment and tourism receipts. A slowdown in agriculture growth would lead to lower demand for non-agricultural goods. Slow reforms would mean a net decrease

in donor assistance—because we won't be able to spend it. All of which would have domino effect on fiscal discipline and inflation.

The political stability business need now is not only restricted to resolving the Maoist problem. It is equally important to have a strong government that can focus on public policy. Whether and when this will happen is hard to tell, given the ruling party's well-known propensity for infighting. A best-case

political scenario is a united Left forming a government, the possibility of which has been pushed further away after the Marxist-Leninists have decided that it will hold no more talks with the main opposition UML. A Left government would bring stability in government and isolate the Maoists, but it will disrupt much-needed economic reforms with which the comrades have ideological problems. □

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Would it be the better to have a reunited non-Maoist Communist Party of Nepal?

Not only other communist parties, but also the Maoists should unite by changing their policies. Then, maybe our country can have a stable government. But Nepal communists will never unite because all they are interested in is power for themselves, not in the welfare of the country.

It would be better if we had a united communist party only if they are thoughtful about the upliftment of the underprivileged and downtrodden Nepalis. It is better if the Left fragmented and perished if the present communist leaders are what we get. If there is a common goal and objective than unification is a must. So why exclude the Maoists?

Answering "yes" or "no" on any national matter is not enough. If we want to build our country into a beautiful place for us and our future then let us join together and start now.

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TAJ

THROUGH THE NEPALI CHECKS IS RULING THE NATION, the majority of votes in the latest election were communist. Actually the Nepali Congress would have been a minority if all the communists were united. In order to give a challenge to the ruling party, they must unite.

Thak Lamsal

Yes, if all the communist party of Nepal reunited, they can come with a better solution for Nepal.

Buddhi Pant, Coventry, UK

विजया दशमी २०५८ को उपलक्ष्यमा हादिक मंगलमया शुभकामना

शुभुरा प्रसादा वासुदे (मनास)

मी सि पि सि एरीयर्स

Culinary Kathmandu

Of the many splendid restaurants in Kathmandu Valley there are some that stand out for their ambience and aroma.

Soba restaurant, Hotel Sunset View

Tucked away on two acres of wooded greenery in New Baneswor, Hotel Sunset View, offering a delightful blend of Nepali and Japanese food, overlooks Patan and Kathmandu and serves some of most authentic Japanese cuisine in Kathmandu—soba (Japanese buckwheat noodles) made from scratch. The buckwheat, especially flown in from Taksche in Mustang is ground in a jato (stone grinder) to a fine flour, kneaded and then cut into noodle strips by hand. The soba piece de resistance involves lightly boiling the noodles and serving the dish cold (in summer) with soba thuyu (a soup from soy sauce, seaweed, sake and fish) and lightly fried tempura. Sweet tasting soba dango, (buckwheat balls in soya sauce) and buckwheat tea are served alongside. And of course soba yu (the water in which the soba is boiled). The meal is rounded up with Japanese sweets.



"The flour is the key. 80 percent buckwheat and two percent maida," says Hitoko Tulachan, who runs Sunset View with her husband Arjan. Since the couple started the soba restaurant four years ago, there's been a steady stream of clients. Japanese tourists, American and European expats and a few Nepalis. And unlike most of our favourite foods, soba is the ultimate health food—it is said to be good for hypertension and the digestion, and is naturally fat-free. If the food weren't reason enough to go here, diners can also watch soba chef Shankhalal Thakali, who was trained in Japan, working in the kitchen, making the noodle that millions of Japanese cannot live without. Of course, you don't have to eat soba—the restaurant also serves outdo, refined wheat flour noodles. (482172)

The Summit Hotel Garden & Patan Museum Cafes

These two restaurants, both run by the Summit Hotel, are among the nicest alfresco dining options in the city. The Patan Museum Cafe only does lunch and high tea, which is a shame. The ambience is unbeatable, hypnotic, almost. The courtyard and the garden with its trellises and little nooks and crannies is alluring, and the sight of the museum's splendidly renovated facade is a delight to look at and blocks out the sound of chattering tour groups in Darbar Square. No surprise, then, that even city residents—not just tourists—go out of their way to spend an afternoon or Saturday brunch here. The Summit Hotel Garden, located in a rather high Sanepa cul-de-sac, is lush, well-kept and welcoming. In the evenings, it is cleverly lit with warm lights in little niches in the wall near floor level. In the day, the garden feels secluded and away from the din of the city and it is sheer luxury to spend an afternoon in the stillness with a beer or cup of strong filter coffee, looking at the views over the city and even the mountains on a clear day.

The menu in both places is similar: sandwiches on French bread, the popular Museum burger, pure comfort food like the liver and onions platter, the tempting—and calorie—bread basket, a filling Nepali thali, excellent fish and chips with a lavish helping of chips, excellent potatoes, and a crunchy chef's salad. The Summit Garden also does a barbecue with live music on Friday nights. Desserts are a strong point in both cafes—the orange bomb, the lemon soufflé, the chocolate mousse and the apple are always delicious and well-presented. (521810)

The Splash Bar and Grill

The new outlet at the Radisson is the best place in the city to catch the sunset. On the fifth floor of the hotel overlooking the attractive and very blue pool, the restaurant offers views of the ugly, unplanned city, but also of Nagarjun and the forest near the British and Indian embassies, from where flocks of egrets fly south, just past the terrace, in the evenings. On a clear day, there are views of Gaun Shukrar. But the most spectacular feature is the sun setting behind Swoyambhu. The Splash has regular tables and chairs, but more fun is in the bar-sty



seating around the edge of the terrace. For nights with a nip in the air, there is also limited covered seating which looks very comfortable and cosy. The menu is a surprise—not just your usual grill fare. There are interesting vegetarian options such as the Cajun cottage cheese with balsamico peppers and the bean steak with peri peri chilli, veggies and the honey-mustard sauce one generally assumes goes with pork. There's plenty for carnivores, a range of burgers, inventive sandwiches like the chicken tikka sandwich with mint yogurt and a substantial king fish with lemon-caper butter. The Splash also has an amusing take on the classic Surf and Turf combination—here it is called Pasture and Pond. You get the tenderloin, but with elaborately prepared prawns instead of lobster.

If you are a vodka drinker, there's something to rejoice about: The Splash offers a range of cocktails made with flavoured vodkas (think herbs, clove, fruit flavours) and liqueurs like blue curacao or an ouzo/raki-type aniseed liquor. Now if only there were seating at the attractive beaten-copper sided bar. (411818)

La'soon Restaurant and Vinohique

The archly-named La'soon is in a surprisingly light basement in Pulchowk. Run by Manu, a Ghanian



who has lived in Nepal for close to a decade, and Dolly, who was formerly a model and now also runs a school. La'soon is a happy refuge for hordes of lunch-droovers who find few other options in the area that probably has the most NGO-workers per square inch in the city. La'soon serves up a cosmopolitan mix of Italian and American-influenced food. The pastas are filling and flavourful, ranging from spaghetti with feta, olives, capers and chilli, to the simple delights of noodles with pesto. The garlicky mixed bean stew and the chicken in wine sauce are a delightful meal for the starving, while the African peanut soup (when it is on the specials board), the quiche or the tomato and mozzarella salad are perfect for a lighter meal. Other winners include the sandwiches, the Nepali set meal and the jacket fish with lemon and pepper.

The temptation to sit back with a beer or, indeed, a glass of wine from the restaurant's more than adequate selection is strong, but perhaps best resisted if one is going back to a long workday. In this case, have a go at the espresso-based coffee, which are excellent, especially the extensive selection of Swiss coffee brewed in La'soon's brand-new Krups Nespresso machine. The excellent food and drink and pleasant lemon-yellow and grey interiors with changing artwork on the walls make this one of the most congenial places on the quieter side of the Bagmati. La'soon runs the same menu for dinner, and on weekends, there is often live acoustic music by members of 1974 AD and friends. (535290)

The Rox Restaurant and Bar

There's nothing quite like The Rox in the city for over-the-top styliness. An almost overwhelming concoction of granite, marble, slate and blonde wood, this is the place to go for a Very Posh Night Out. The Rox is on three levels, the main dining floor with its show kitchen and un-stuffy seating arrangements including counter seating, the mezzanine, which serves as a pre- or post-dinner lounge for the cigar set, and the trendy Rox Bar on the lowest level, which has a number of seating options and opens out to a terrace and then the garden.

The drinks menu is exemplary and includes a huge variety of cocktails, including The Rox's delicious signature drink, the Capriochka, a drool-worthy selection of single malts, an extensive



wine list and cocktails by the pitcher. The food at The Rox keeps pace with the décor. There are simple, rich dishes for the meat-lover—cordon-roule, sirloin, lamb chops and whole trout, and appetizers like liver terrine with green peppercorns and a berry compote, baked scampi with garlic and coriander and stuffed bell peppers with pork, rice and oregano. Vegetarians have nothing to fear—there is a wide selection, and some dishes are particularly good, such as the quiche with leeks, potatoes and blue cheese or the marinated grilled cottage cheese with veggies, bell peppers and lavache. (491234)

Jjang

If you like Korean kimchi, go to Jjang. Actually, go even if you have never eaten it before. Mostly patronised by Korean clientele (always a sign the food is good), this Korean restaurant in the heart of Thamel, serves a selection of Korean cuisine that tastes great, is easy on the stomach, and won't dent your pocket. Try the set menu or be more adventurous and go for the Kim Chi Gi Ge, a kimchi stew with tuna, pork or vegetables. Also excellent are the Je Yuk Bok Gem, pork seasoned with punch (a paste of Cakes, sugar, ginger and garlic), and the Dark Do Ri Tang, chicken seasoned with punch and served with soup, punch balls or steamed rice and miso soup.

For the carnivore, the Korean-style sushi is a special treat with ham, vegetables, kimchi, cheese, tuna or beef. There's plenty for vegetarians too—one of the most delicious options is the Den Jang Gi Ge, a soya bean paste stew with vegetables served with a side dish of rice.

But the Nepali Times favourite is the traditional Bi Bin Bab—mixed vegetables (and beef, if you like) cooked Korean-style with rice,

fried egg, seasoned with a special hot sauce and served in a hot stone bowl. With its accompaniments of kimchi and miso soup, this is a perfect autumn evening meal. (412715)

China Garden

Finally, a Chinese/Oriental restaurant without a single red lacquer item in sight, and no trumpety fans and wind chimes. The 'new Oriant' has arrived at the Soaltex's new outlet (a branch of the legendary China Garden in Mumbai), possibly the best designed restaurant in town. The warm-toned, lightly veined marble floor, the two slim waterfalls contained between glass that is lit to appear ruses, the shattered-glass and wrought iron screen that sections off a large table, and the carefully neutral grey-brown furniture with hunter green upholstery all come together to make a wonderfully tranquil and cosy space. This is a perfect place for families as well as couples, friends and even to dine out alone. The row of tables for two (or one) are far enough from each other for privacy, but close enough to strike up a conversation if you



want—a good move in a city where it is difficult to do things solo.

The food is equally pleasing. Not strictly

extensive nine-page menu features Mongolian, Thai, Vietnamese, Malaysian, Indonesian and some Japanese food, too. There are even a couple of specialties from Calcutta's Chinatown here. The effect is pan-Asian and utterly delicious. The soy and wine chilli chicken, the peking duck (they use chicken), and the Japanese-style teppanyaki are perfect—light, yet satisfying, intensely flavourful but never overcooked, and all fresh and wholesome-tasting. The vegetarian dishes are sublime—very unusual fried cream corn, crunchy, garlicky beef oyster, baby corn with juicy oyster mushrooms, and an emperor fried rice that

beats the pants off any fried rice we've ever eaten. For a meal in a bowl, the soba noodles or the prawn and chicken soup in a thick garlic and chilli broth are perfect. (273999)



Dechenling Beer Garden

Right behind the Keshar Mahal garden in the lane opposite the Tivedi temple in Thamel is a quiet little garden restaurant that the management describes as "a place of joy". Dechenling Beer Garden Restaurant and Bar is the perfect place to relieve stress—in the heart of the city. The garden is extremely pleasant and the dining rooms are tasteful, but not overwhelmingly done up.

The menu is an interesting mix of Nepali, Tibetan, Indian, and Bhutanese dishes. There are few better places to go with your family or a large group of friends and indulge in the Tibetan hot pot Gyachok with its mix of seasonal vegetables, mushroom, semicelli, pork fillet and chicken with side dishes of steamed dumplings, chicken capicum. Tibetan bread, or butter rice and fruit desert. The Bhutanese specialties, Ama Dharti—chilli, cheese, and mushroom curry served with rice, or the Pak which is chicken or pork with cabbage and rice are perfect for the lone luncher. For a quiet beer in the evening, the hot garlic potatoes are the perfect accompaniment. (416387)

See p. 12

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EXHIBITION
Images from Bhaktapur Solo photo exhibition by Kishore Kayastha. Until 21 October, 10am-6pm. Park Gallery, Pulchowk, 522307

EVENTS
The Culture and Future of the Internet Lecture by Prof Kim H Veltman, Scientific Director, Maastricht McLuhan Institute University Maastricht, The Netherlands. 10.30AM, 19 October, Russian Culture Centre, Kamalpokhari
Contemporary Jazz dance classes by Meghna Thapa. At Alliance Francaise Sundays and Tuesdays 4.30pm-6.30pm, 241163. At Banu's, Kamal Pokhari, Wednesdays 6.30pm-8pm, Saturdays 1.30pm, 434204, 434830

MUSIC
Weekends at The Jazz Bar The Jazz Commission on Thursdays, Chris Masand's Latin band on Fridays and on Saturdays An Faimne, 7pm onwards, Shangri-La Hotel, 412999
Live music Tuesday and Friday nights at the 40,000 1/2 ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, 414336
Live acoustic music Dinesh Rai and Dependra every Friday at the Himaltate Cafe, 7.30pm-10pm 262526



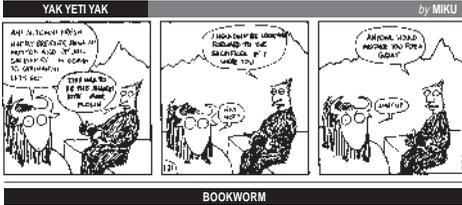
EATING OUT
Barbecue lunch with complementary wine or beer for adults, soft drink for children. Saturdays and Sundays at the Godavari Village Resort, 50675
All-new at Dwarika's Krishnarpan Nepali ceremonial four-course lunch, \$13, daily. Three-course course set lunches daily at the Toran Garden Restaurant, \$11. Friday Night Sekuwa with fusion music by Himalayan Feelings. Special price throughout October. Rs 555 per person, Rs 1010 per couple. All prices net. 479488
Rox Restaurant Traditional home style European cuisine straight from a wood-fired oven. Steaks, trout, garden vegetables and desserts. 491234.
Peking Duck and Mandarin Music Chinese chefs' mild and spicy delicacies from the far east at the Tien Shan. Every Sunday, Hotel Shangri-La, 412999
Saturday lunch at Restaurant Kantipur, Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. BBQ buffet Rs 500 per head, 410432.
Spa Brunch Aerobics, yoga classes and salad buffet. Includes complimentary use of swimming pool and the health club. Rs 750 per person plus tax. Every Sunday, 11.30am-5pm. Hotel Yak & Yeti 248999
Juicy steaks, chilled beer, Mexican cuisine, great beverages, sports bar. All week long. Live band Wednesday, Sunday evenings 6.30-10.00. K-tool Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel, 433043
Barbecue dinner with music by Las Sonidos Latinos. Every Friday night through October. Rs 500 per adult, Rs 250 per child, plus tax. Summit Hotel, 521810
Two for one International buffet lunch with main courses, on-site cooking, seven kinds of dessert, eight kinds of salad and dressings. Rs 700 plus tax, this month two lunches for the price of one. Garden Terrace, Soaltee Crown Plaza, 273999
Saturdays at the Malla Swimming and French chef's barbecue lunch. 11am-5pm. The Malla Hotel, 418385, 410966
Splash Bar and Grill New fifth-floor outlet with view of city and surrounding hills. Radisson Hotel, 411818
Kolkata to Kathmandu With recipes from the famous Sonargon restaurant in Kolkata, exotic preparations like kalkori kebab, dal sonal gaon, murg malai kebabs and more. Hotel De L'Annappura, 221711

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GETAWAYS
Dasain special package Rs 2058 nett per person per night includes breakfast, free use of spa, gym, pools and tennis courts, 25% discount on food and beverage and supervised children's activities. Hyatt Regency 23-29 October 491234.
Dwarika's Breathtaking Escape Until end-December. Two nights accommodation, afternoon tea, cocktail, dinner, breakfast, massage. \$155 per couple nett, 479488
Chiso Chiso Hawama Summer B&B package for Nepalis and expatriates. Rs 1,250 per head. Club Himalaya Nagarkot Resort, 410432, 414432
Nagarkot Escape Weekends in cottages, views of the Himalayas, valleys and forests. Special rates for Nepalis and resident expatriates. Hotel Keyman Chautauri, keyman@wlink.com.np, 436850

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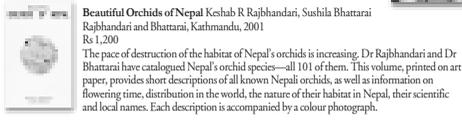
NEPALI WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL
Unlike some previous years, this is not going to be a hile (muddy) Dasain. A glorious high pressure system circulation over southern India are being blown off by the newly-assertive westerlies. The storms from central India are being blown off to the east to merge with a cyclone over the South China Sea. Some of these clouds will graze the eastern Himalaya, bringing the first showers of the season. The weakening sun and cloud-free skies will bring down the minimum temperature in Kathmandu to as low as 12 C.
KATHMANDU VALLEY
Table with weather forecast for Kathmandu Valley from Oct 26 to Oct 25.



BOOKWORM
Staying Alive: Memories of Women in Prison Durga Ghimire Jagdish Ghimire, Kathmandu, 2000
Durga Ghimire recounts the period between 1970-1972 when she was twice in Kathmandu's women's jail and once in Biratnagar. In all, she was behind bars for a little over a year for protesting the Panchayat system and organising a conference to discuss democratic alternatives. Ghimire wrote a diary in her time in prison. This is the English version of the diaries that were published in Nepali in 1994.

Nepal in the Nineties: Versions of the Past, Visions of the Future Michael Hutt, ed. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001
This collection of eight essays discusses in detail the social, cultural and literary life of Nepal in the 1990s. The authors reflect on the changes that occurred in the kingdom and the circumstances that produced these changes. Their wide-ranging focus is on the social processes that produced these changes.

Beautiful Orchids of Nepal Keshab R Rajbhandari, Sushila Bhatnagar Rajbhandari and Bhatarani, Kathmandu, 2001
The pace of destruction of the habitat of Nepal's orchids is increasing. Dr Rajbhandari and Dr Bhatnagar have catalogued Nepal's orchid species—all 101 of them. This volume, printed on art paper, provides short descriptions of all known Nepali orchids, as well as information on flowering time, distribution in the world, the nature of their habitat in Nepal, their scientific and local names. Each description is accompanied by a colour photograph.



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Excerpts from The Tutor of History

Khairati Tar was a roadside town along the snaking Kathmandu-Pokhara highway, set apart from the others by its tropical vegetation, anomalous in the hill regions. Ringed by rich green rice fields and spotted with jarananda, gulmohar and bougainvillea plants, its bazaar was slightly less drab than most highway bazaars. Its narrow alleys were littered with dirt, bits of torn schoolbags and plastic wrappers, shanks of light bulbs, stacks of chicken wire, fallen leaves and stubbed-out cigarettes. Most of the buildings were huddled together in an unattractive clump and there was no view of the hills from here. Still, it was a good place to live in. It wasn't remote like the villages off the highway. It was a sleepy hick settlement. The bazaar had a police post, a high school, an agriculture office and an intermediate-level college campus; it even boasted a prone English-medium boarding school for those who craved handouts of cash. A few of the shops sold pish-tiki items like handbags, sunglasses, nail polish, and leather belts. Khairati Tar was a middling kind of town where it was common, while walking through alleys, to enter a twilight of cultures: to hear the scree of Nirvana on a transistor radio while passing a group of women carrying loads of freshly scooped dung. Young men from the town's finest families no longer just joined the British, Indian or Nepali armed forces but went to work as migrant labourers in Seoul, Osaka, Australia and Dubai. From abroad they sent their families a hundred, two hundred, three hundred green dollars a month. Young girls no longer consented to ill-fated but clannish go to school. Occupational caste taboos, cobblers, metal smiths and singers refused liberation slogans under their breath. In the bazaar people could be heard speaking Nepali, Gurgur, Magar, Hindi, Kumbale—and bursts of English: 'Ta-ta, bye-bye, hello Sir.'

The town's physical structure mirrored its changing ethos. A new church stood at the edge of the bazaar, near a new area where a Hindu caste lived off dies. The new buildings of the bazaar had firm store walls, and tin roofs were in demand among the well-to-do. But most of the older houses were made of clay and thatch, and their uneven walls and mismatched windows bore prints of the hands that had built them. Some of the town's houses were covered in red clay, others in lime-plaster, while others weren't decorated at all. Some had metal rods on the windows, others didn't even have glass. Some had electric wires, others were bleached at night by the bright white light of kerosene lamps. Each house contained, in this way, an archaeology of its own, its artifacts bearing testament to Khairati Tar's growth and development.

In the centre of the town was a sacred wind-together-ha-pee-pal tree which concealed, with its dense banyan and bodhi foliage, the farms of the trucks and buses that rolled into the bus stop all hours of the day. Every morning vendors gathered on the stepped platform beneath the ha-pee-pal tree to sell seasonal fruits and vegetables, ready-made sweets, candies and biscuits, hair oil and hair threads, and aluminium and plastic items. On days when it wasn't raining the Muslim man bangle-seller set up a display of glass bangles of the latest designs. When people got off the buses, all the vendors vied for attention: 'Bananas so cheap they're almost free!' 'Chesseballs-chips-a-lodger-for-you-daughter!' 'Peanuts! Peanuts!' The bangle-seller alone waited in peace for her customers to inspect and buy. 'Fixed price, babe!'—even as people around her heaped, made counteroffers, cried foul and defended their honour.

After the announcement of elections, a few changes took place around the wind-together-ha-pee-pal tree. A few more passengers than usual disembarked from the Kathmandu buses. After looking around uncertainly, the newcomers asked for directions to their party offices. The bazaar thickened each day with unknown faces.
One morning the communist UML party office, which stood next to the ha-pee-pal tree, hoisted a tattered red hammer-and-sickle flag above its door. The next day the party assigned its workers to repaint its sign board so that it could be read from afar: NEW CONGRESS PARTY (UNITED MARXIST LEAGUES). From then on, a number of UML workers began assembling in front of the office each morning, some sporting Lenin goggles, Marxist beards, Castro fatigues and Che Guevara's shirts and others more ordinary in village homespun or in ragtag student uniforms. A few more and more workers arrived at the UML office, they spilled into the adjoining grocery store, talking politics in hushed tones among the store's displays of aluminium plates, iron pots, stainless steel utensils and plastic buckets.

Next door to the grocery store was a cloth shop which carried fine Indian cottons and Chinese rayons. The Nepal Congress Party office was beyond this shop, and the current Member of Parliament was often seen in front of this office—till the day the party abruptly announced that it was fielding another candidate. The new Congress party candidate, a Bahya Bahuan man whom no one had ever heard of—but who was said to be a member of the dynasty that ruled the Congress party—then showed up at the office, constantly surrounded by a host of young followers led in profusion from Kathmandu.
The small conservative Rastriya Prajantana Party had no following in this election, but it had fielded this year to field a woman from here—because the five per cent quota for women candidates had to be filled somehow. The RPP office was located a few houses from the Congress party office, between some fruit stalls and the Himel Lodge Restaurant Bar. But the RPP's lady candidate was too shy to come to the party office, and the lone

SYNOPSIS

The Tutor of History is an ambitious social saga, a compelling tale of idealism, love and alienation, set in contemporary Nepal caught between tradition and modernity. The events of the novel unfold against the backdrop of a campaign for parliamentary elections in the bustling roadside town of Khairati Tar. At its heart the book is about four main characters: Girdhar Adhikari, the chairman of the People's Party's district committee, who suffers from a serious alcohol addiction and strange, violent manias; Rishi Parajuli, a lonely, under-employed bachelor and disillusioned communist who gives private tuition in history to disinterested middle-class boys; On Ganung, a former British Gurkha determined to bring love into every life in his hometown; and Binita Dahal, a reclusive young widow who runs a small tea shop and is careful not to demand of life more than the meagre pleasures it brings her. As the election campaign reaches its peak, the crisis in each character's life mounts, and the eventual rigging of the elections becomes a metaphor for the flawed, ineffect choices that ordinary people must make to get by in a world beyond their control. (Penguin)

office guard, nodding off at the door, gave the building an abandoned, deserted look.
The blind shopkeeper Shankar's grain store was next to the RPP office, its spacious airy interior displaying stacks of rice, dals, grain, spices and oils, as well as odds and ends like cigarettes, chocolates, biscuits, cheap dolls, plastic carvings and Chinese umbrellas. Next to Shankar's grain store was the radio and watch repair shop, a canvas stall dwarfed by a two-storey yellow house decorated with stucco pineapples. (The oxidation of the yellow house always prompted newcomers to guess: 'A former British Gurkha's house?') For its first two meetings the People's Party had gathered here, relying on the hospitality of homeworker On Ganung. No such meeting had taken place in the past few years, and the People's Party didn't even have an office in town.
Beyond On Ganung's yellow house was a wood mill, and past that, the arid unattractive plains which dried like dung as soon as the monsoon rains ended, giving Khairati Tar its name: ashen flatlands.

Inconveniently for all the political parties, Khairati Tar's telecommunications office was located on the north side of the highway, away from the bus stop. All day, political workers were seen scrying along the highway in this one-room office to place STD trunk calls and telese. Everyone knew that the operator was efficient at her job; they also knew that her supervisor listened in on conversations from his rental room above the office, where he spent half the day talking in his bed with unnamed yellow sheets. People talked cautiously over the phone:
'I'm calling about that matter.'
'That one or the one before that?'
'That one, that's the one I mean.'
'Not the other one?'
'No.'

A little distance away from the Telecommunications Office was Binita's tea shop. Binita was a retiring woman who—everyone knew—had never received from the shock of her husband's death in a bus accident. When his mangled

corpse had been brought home, the whole town had watched her charge, almost before their eyes, from a bushy young tree to a reclus. The more conservative Chetri-Bahun families of the town shunned her for her unseemly conduct to continue living alone, with only her little daughter for company till the arrival of her young cousin about six months back. But the more liberally inclined townpeople, and those who appreciated Binita's fragrant milk tea, tended to frequent her shop.

Binita's ready eye never overlooked, and it didn't attract men in search of raucous exchanges to pass the evening with. Such men went to other places at the southern end of town, shabby bamboo-and-thatch stalls erected overnight by landless settlers from other districts. These settlers' backyards were sometimes hard to determine—some had dark southern faces and their Gurgur-Magar surnames, while others had rounded features but Chetri-Bahun caste names. They seemed to bring with them no past, and sometimes no qualms or strictures. Their radios were always on, their food was cheap and their alcohol strong. Their clients included government employees addicted to card games, bus and truck drivers staying the night, unemployed men, local hoodlums, youths who had made it into the army, and boys just out of school. In these days talk soon veered to the elections:
'Let's see who wins this time.'
'It's UML's turn.'
'Congress won't give up.'
'Doesn't have a choice.'

'Did you hear about the People's Party? That party—remember—of intellectuals.'
'Oh them. Are they fielding a candidate?'
'Girdhar Adhikari—the son of Baburam Adhikari.'
'Thah, heh! Never again.'

In his house in the hills north of town, the chairman of the People's Party district committee, Girdhar Adhikari, knew that the bazaar was whispering about him, laughing, saying, have you heard, did you know—insinuating, spreading rumours, implying that he'd been fired from the bank due to incompetence, and he deserved it, he wasn't capable... There was no place for him in the world. Girdhar's Khairati Tar was an intimate one where everyone knew him and talked about him in demeaning ways, declaring him to be a hollow man. The town crowded him out of its space.
Years ago Girdhar had been dismissed from his position as bank manager. It was his fault: there had been a civil service reform, and everyone who'd worked for more than twenty years had lost their jobs regardless of capability, regardless of qualification. It was a matter of regulation. It didn't reflect on his ability. For he'd been an excellent bank manager, hadn't he?
These past few years, Girdhar had begun to spend long days lost in the unsteady ground of his mind, in cracks and crevices that led back past a day's memory, past a week's a month's, a year's, to areas soon thick with catastrophe. Today he sat dependently on his front porch, looking out at the terraced rice fields below his house. The silver rains of the monsoon had drained the town these last few months. The fields had turned a sickly green. Girdhar owned a plot of land at the bottom of the hill; its harvest was his only income now. Beyond that plot was the path into Khairati Tar. He could make the bazaar from here, a scraggly row of houses along the highway. His friend On had invited him for dinner tonight. But he didn't feel like facing it all. He wanted to be in the bazaar now, amid its noise and cement and cracked plaster, its spot-on walls and dark rooms, its shifting people, its new faces arriving on buses, telephone messages, the push of bodies, talk of the latest, men whispering—have you heard...
But they never made room for him there.

Once, Girdhar used to wear hundreds of thousands of rupees' worth of transactions. He used to know what happened in the power centres of the district: who was spending money for what, and how. He used to know. But now here he was. His days embarrassed him with their idleness. He spent all afternoon staring into the past and scrambling back to the present. He did not feel he had the courage to venture into the foreground—ambitions, achievements—all too precarious to support him. D

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CUTTING EDGE BAGS

Manjushree's Rishi

Democracy, liberty and equality boil down to the private dignity of the individuals.

The *Tutor of History*, the second novel by a Nepali in English, is out this week. The author, Manjushree Thapa, is known for her English translations of literature in Nepali and English journals. Her work has all along been focussed on studying in depth Nepal, the people of Nepal, their history and culture, their language and literature.

These diverse efforts are critically linked to the compulsion she feels to understand herself and her companions who are presently passing through a transitional period of tremendous importance. The schism between Nepal traditional and emergent and its anguished resolution is the essence of her novel. The convergence of changes, social and personal, orderly or erratic, promises the resolution.

While old feudal Nepal brought

forth peasants, artisans, priests, soldiers, administrative staff and the ruling class, the newly emergent Nepal has thrown up new classes and categories of people. Of these categories, the more active and influential ones, both of the old and the new order, have been given selective representation in the novel.

Jinmawal Bajaj, for instance, combines in himself with ease his renunciate religion and his worldly desires. Then there is Rishi, the protagonist after whom the novel is named, an educated but unemployed youth, and Binita, a widow. There is Nayan Raj, a film star standing for elections from Khaireni Tar, the locale of the novel. Thapa's characterisation is excellent—her main characters are typical yet very convincingly individualised. They change and develop, they do not disintegrate or head for a

nihilistic deconstruction of themselves. There is a kernel of indelible humanity in them, which relentlessly urges them to reach for fulfillment.

For us Nepali-speaking readers the novel is in some senses a given. We proceed to read the novel with prior knowledge. This, however, should not make us complacent that we know all there is to learn about ourselves and our society.

The novel having been written in English, a language alien to the community described, assumes the aspect of clinical detachment and so the picture that emerges is, in large measure, an evaluation of us. A mirror is held to us and the picture that

results is not as we might be used to or as we might like it to be.

Incidents, remarks and conversations, however seemingly stray or redundant, are organically organised and form parts of a connected whole. Thapa has, while writing the novel in English, refused to follow the easier way of catering to the taste of westerners or pandering to their pre-conceived notions. For her, writing is a mission, a sacred covenant between the writer and the Nepali people.

This trait is discernible in the many translations that we come across in the work of Nepali folk songs, proverbs and idiomatic expressions. In her English rendering of these, she has struck a neat verbal equivalence between what translation theorists call the Source Text (in this case, Nepali), and the Target Text (in this case, English). The translations are: Source Text Oriented, even Source Language Oriented, yet they are literary texts in the target

literary system, English, too.

Towards the close of the narrative, we begin to view Rishi, the protagonist, as a harbinger of a new realisation, a re-affirmation of valuable principles we have lost sight of—that all theorisation and practice of democracy, liberty and equality boil down to the actualisation of the private dignity of individuals'. Once Rishi dreamed of 'collective liberation'. Now he is a rebel against totalitarian revolution. He is a rebel against various manifestations of social, political and religious mores.

Manjushree Thapa's accomplished first novel will not be a one-time hit. She will be a recurrent success story. **I**

Indra Bahadur Rai is the foremost writer and theoretician in the Nepali language in India. He is the author of the classic work, Kathapustako Man (The puppet's heart). The above review is excerpted from a speech he delivered at the launch of The Tutor of History on 15 October in Kathmandu.

by INDRA BAHADUR RAI

The ten days of Dasain

ALOK TUMBHAHANGPHEY

After the monsoon ends and autumn begins, the biggest thing is the biggest festival of the year. Just saying "Dasain" conjures images of windy days and blue kite-dotted skies, new clothes, plenty to eat and family gatherings that bring the entire clan together. Celebrated by a majority of Nepalis, the festivities mark the mythic battles between good and evil between goddess Durga and the demon Mahisasur.

If he was living today, Mahisasur would be called a terrorist. The only difference is that he had taken on the form of a water buffalo. Dasain probably has pre-Vedic origins in harvest festivals and in a sense it has come a full circle to a cultural festival rather than a purely religious one. The longer holiday of the year provides the perfect opportunity for family reunions, and a time to relax.

Those who criticise us for having such a long holiday at Dasain must remember that

Nepalis don't usually take vacations, so this is our holiday season. Dasain comes from the word for ten; ten days during the bright lunar fortnight ending on the day of the full moon—1 November this year.

17 October, Ghatsthapana, literally "pot establishing" (and we are not talking here about hallucinatory agents) marks the beginning of the festival. The *kalash*, water vessel is placed in the prayer room. A leaf plate filled with sand and covered with cow dung is shielded from the sun and placed in front of the image of the Durga. Barley seeds are sown into the sand block and water from the *kalash* is sprinkled on it to nurture the seeds everyday during the morning and evening puja. The ritual performed at a certain auspicious moment determined by the astrologers will provide the yellowish green seedling known as *jamara* considered a blessing of Durga and bestowed

by elders atop the heads of those younger to them during *tika*. The same ritual is also conducted at the royal palace in Gorkha. 169km north west of the valley where the ancestors of the present royal family started their conquest of Nepal in 1801.

From the days following Ghatsthapana to the seventh day pujas are offered everyday and regular rituals performed. On the fifth day the *jamara* to be used by the royal household planted in Gorkha palace is brought out and the procession for Kathmandu begins. The procession comes to Kathmandu on the seventh day bearing the Phulpati (23 October). Brahman priests carry the *jamara* and sugar cane plants tied with red cloth in a decorated palanquin under a gold tipped and embroidered umbrella. The procession also carries the royal *kalash*, banana stalks, and sugar cane tied with red cloth and includes Royal Nepal Army men wearing the same attire that Prithvi Narayan Shah's

men wore. When the *phulpati* arrives in Kathmandu the procession starts from Rani Pokhari and ends in Bishanpur Hanuman Dhoka Royal Palace where the *jamara* is placed in the Dasain Ghar.

24 October, Maha Ashtami or the eighth day of the festival is the day when the goddesses Durga and Kali have to be appeased. Animal sacrifices of buffalo, goat, sheep, chicken and duck are made all over the country. The night of the eighth day is called *Kali Ratri*, the dark night. Hundreds of animals are sacrificed in Durga and Kali temples, palaces, and military barracks. Let the feasts begin.

25 October is Nawami. The Toleju temple at Hanuman Dhoka is opened for the public. This is the only day in which the temple is open and thousands throng the temple. Sacrifices are again held at Hanuman Dhoka Royal Palace to honour the Durga. This is also the day when Biswakarma, the god of creativity



No partridges on pear trees, but lots of goats and chicken.

is worshiped. Factories, vehicles, machines household weapons, and these days even computers and jet airliners are worshipped.

After ten long days the battle is over and victory has been achieved, good prevails. 26 October is Dashami the tenth day. The day elders put *jamara* and *tika* upon the foreheads of those younger and bless them. The importance of Dasain also lies in the fact that this day brings family members and

relatives from far and wide to receive *tika* from the head of the family. The king and queen too give *tika* to the hundreds waiting outside the palace thus strengthening the relationship. This continues for four days and in the last day people stay at home and rest. The full moon day is also called *Kojagratra*, meaning 'who is awake'. The goddess of wealth *Laxmi* is worshipped and people gamble the night away. **I**

SNOOKER WINNERS: Victors in the Surya Snooker Championships pose with their certificates and trophies on 14 October.

