

Manjushree talks to Samrat



Novelist Manjushree Thapa, author of the much-acclaimed The Tutor of History has a cyber-chat with fellow-author and compatriot, Samrat Upadhyay who has just published his second book, The Guru of Love in the United States. Sample of the exchange: Manjushree "You seem to be a

squeaky-clean Nepali boy next door, correct me if I am wrong here. Isn't this unusual for a writer?"

Samrat "I'm hardly squeaky-clean, but yes my family and teaching are as important to me as writing."

Read the full interview on page 8-9.

Bagchal

The First International Bagchal Tournament concluded last week in Bern. The Bronze Tiger trophy went to Ruth Kaeser. Back in Nepal, bagchal is losing its once-dominant place in the entertainment scene, but you can revive this game. To find out the rules, see page 15.



Tel: 24609

HEMLATA RAI, with JANAK NEPAL in **NEPALGANJ**

hoever killed their parents, the children end up in the same place. Sangita Yadav's father was a farmer in Banke district. The Maoists came while he was eating, dragged him out of his house, beat and tortured him in front of his family, and killed him. Sarala Dahal's father was a teacher in the same district. He was killed after surrendering to the security forces.

Sarala and Sangita are both being raised in a child shelter which has just opened in Nepalganj by the charity group, Sahara. "We don't really care who killed their parents or relatives, we want to protect the future of these children, and they all get equal care here," says Sahara's Balkrishna Joshi.

With a capacity of taking care of 50 children, shelters like Sahara are just addressing the tip of the mountain of misery affecting Nepali children. Even so, there is such negligible rehabilitation going on, Joshi says, that every little effort counts.

Nine-year-old Hira Bahadur Pariyar and his 13-year-old brother Nar Bahadur from Rolpa have become symbols of this lack of care for the children who have been affected by the violence of the past seven years. Their father was killed by police, probably one of the first dozen casualties after the Maoists launched their

"peoples' war" on 13 Feburary, 1996. Unable o take care of the boys by herself, Hira and Nar Bahadur's mother abandoned them. Last week, the boys walked up bravely to the district administrator in Libang and demanded that the state raise them.

No one is even keeping count of thousands of children like Sangita, Sarala, Hira and Nar



Bahadur. Besides the orphans and destitutes, there has been a sudden spurt in the past month in children being abducted from schools across Nepal, forced to take part in military training, attend Maoist mass meetings or do portering for the rebels. Many have since been released unharmed, but the spreading panic has made many parents send their children to the safety of the district towns.

By targetting schools across the country, the Maoists have indirectly affected the lives of millions of Nepali children. "They are the unseen victims, they are de-sensitised by reports of violence, they are psychologically affected by the forced closure of schools, and they are haunted by uncertainty," says Surendra campaign, "Secondly, we must start addressing

rucksacks rest at a tea house in Kalikot district in June.

Mandal, a parent and teacher who has recently

moved to Kathmandu from Rautahat. "Because

Moved by the enormity of the crisis facing

these are children, you are talking about the

Nepali children, activist groups got together

this week to launch a "Children as a Zone of

address the specific and immediate education,

health, shelter and food needs of children in

"Firstly, the children should be kept out of

140 VDCs in 22 of the worst-hit districts.

this conflict," says Gauri Pradhan of Child

Workers in Nepal (CWIN), which is part of

the group implementing the children peace

Peace Campaign" under which they will

nation's future."

Maoists to carry their

the needs of those who are already affecte One of the undocumented aspects of the conflict is the growing number of internally displaced families. This has increased the number of children in the district headquarters townships and in Kathmandu Valley who have lost their traditional village support mechanisms. School closures and threats of forced recruitment of one child per family by Maoists have added to the influx of children. A recent survey in the insurgency hotbed of

Rukum alone found that out of 1,000 people displaced, nearly 300 were children. A high school headmaster from Sindhupalchok who is also living in Kathmandu told us nearly half the students in his school had dropped out this year, most have fled to Kathmandu and beyond. "Even

those who have stayed behind have been very

irregular in class," he said. Tarak Dhital of CWIN feels children displaced or orphaned by the Maoists get more media attention than those affected by the action of security forces. "Most of the young victims of arbitrary action by the security forces have gone undocumented," Dhital says. These children are at far greater risk: they might not have access to institutional assistance, and they may be too scared to seek help.

Since the government either cannot help, or isn't doing much, activists say, it is now up to neutral relief groups to protect Nepali children from further harm. 🔶

See also <mark>→ p4-5</mark>

"Recovery hinges on peace"

he Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB) is one of Nepal's largest development partners with around \$2 billion invested since its assistance to Nepal began in 1969. Country Director for Nepal, Richard Vokes spoke to Nepali Times about

ongoing assistance to Nepal, including delays in the Melamchi scheme, the development of hydropower infrastructure and the controversy over the lifting of subsidies for shallow tubewells.

Vokes admits that Nepal is going through a critical period, and thinks the key is to restore peace. "If it is possible to resolve the conflict in the near future...there is a meaningful and effective program of rehabilitation, and development that really addresses the underlying causes of the conflict, then the prospects for economic recovery and addressing Nepal's persistent poverty are good, "he says.

> The fiscal crisis is more serious, Vokes adds, and says the donor community is willing to help address it. But what donors also want to see is an improved effectiveness of public expenditure. Full interview



EDITORIAL

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Chief Editor: **Kunda Dixit** Design: **Kiran Maharjan**

100 DAYS

coner or later, when this conflict burns itself out as one day it must we must be ready with a state apparatus that has learnt lessons and is ready to rebuild. We can't go back to 1990 and try to re-invent the wheel, wasting another 12 years waiting for the leaders of political parties to get their acts together and figure out what it is they got elected for.

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We can't afford another lost decade of governance paralysis. No more scandals that are named after foreign companies and have become household words synonymous with the stench of corruption: Dhamija, Pajero, Lauda Air, China Southwest. Nor can the country take another 12 years of political horse-trading at the Shankar Hotel, MPs being whisked away to Bangkok to be wined, dined and entertained at tax-payers' expense just so that they wouldn't vote for a rival coalition. We will not stomach the sight of the demolition of our democratic institutions because of petty politics, ministers who regarded public sector companies as ripe for plunder, and others who saw the civil service as a mass employment agency for their flunkies. Not after so much suffering and pain.

This is why it is so nauseating to hear the same kleptomaniacs demanding from the pulpits that the king correct his mistakes. "Democracy" "pluralism" and the "constitution" have become mere words for these amoral and sanctimonious chieftains. Words that they hope will propel them and us back to the days when they ravaged the nation.

For its part, the "interim government" has just completed its 100 day honeymoon period. And aside from attempts to streamline government (and a health minister who performed a successful brain surgery on the sick leader of a political party) we haven't seen the flashes of brilliance we'd hoped to witness from the royal appointees.

In fact, going by the lavish coverage on state media of various interaction programmes, conferences and foreign trips and events that they mandatorily attend, it seems to be all a ho-hum busines-as-usual style. Let's hope we are wrong, and there is a lot more happening behind the scenes than we are privy to.

However, at the public level, optimism that the Fourth of October decision would give us a clean slate, efficient government and restore peace is beginning to wear thin. That public trust is critical for the legitimacy of this royal interregnum.

We do not under-estimate the challenges at hand. The 3,000 VDC buildings, health posts, hydro power plants, bridges and the district headquarters that the Maoists have destroyed have to be rebuilt brick-bybrick. We will have to catch up with lost time in the delivery of basic health care, primary education, nutrition, agricultural extension and all the other aspects of development that have come to a standstill. Lack of money should not be the excuse: we just need to show the donors we are willing to make a new beginning

The absence of peace is also no reason to delay problems like kamaiya rehabilitation so that their children don't die of exposure. The war is no excuse not to send medical personnel and equipment to at least district hospitals, and vigorously start pushing education reform.

For lack of a better way to put it, development needs to go on a "war footing". We don't need to wait till complete peace is restored before we begin to attempt this, and the job of the Chand adminsitration is to get the ball rolling. The honeymoon is over.



In half-made societies, the elite periodically yearns for a knight in shining armour.

he deep-seated animosity between Nepali politicians and Kathmandu's social elite is rooted in history. Ever since the Rana days, politics has always been synonymous with court conspiracies, and the well-off have considered it beneath their

King Mahendra found politicians not to his liking and punished them in 1960 by putting them behind bars, dissolving parliament, suspending the constitution and banning political parties.

By the time King Birendra ascended the throne in 1972, political alignment of any kind had come to be regarded as disloyal to the ruler and the country, in that order. At the height of the "non-party" Panchayat system in the seventies, the palace establishment labelled all political leaders "anti-national elements" and prosecuted them for high treason. So the true-blue elite and the career-minded steered clear of politics. Even when King Birendra called for a National Referendum to decide the fate of Panchayat in 1979, the ban on political parties wasn't lifted.

The Popular Movement ten years later forced King Birendra to accept the existence of political parties. The new constitution

placed multiparty democracy in its preamble, and beyond the purview of any amendment. The upper crust was finally forced to accept that the political parties existed. But even then, there hasn't been much love lost between them.

Post 10-04, these old animosities have resurfaced. Cursing political parties has once again become fashionable, and few see the need to examine their own roles in the decomposition of democracy. All they need to do in order to be a part of the "with-it set" is blame politicos for all ills besetting society. There is a chilly sense of déjà vu in the Kathmandu air this winter for those who remember 1961.

In his Biratnagar address, King Gyanendra recognised that a monarchy of the 21st century has to be for democracy, and not against it. The very existence of unity in a heterogeneous society is dependent upon the practice of democracy, and no ruler can inhibit pluralism without undermining his own legitimacy in the process.

In heterogeneous societies like ours the role of political parties is even more crucialthey have to offset latent tensions by acting as miniature states themselves. The absence of



vibrant political parties leads to democratic decay and even the collapse of fragile states. For Marxist thinker Antonia Gramsci, Machiavelli's prince in the contemporary world is a political party with all its strength and vulnerabilities.

Why, then, does the Nepali elite still loath political parties? The revulsion is not based on principles, but on practical considerations. For one, political parties have their own loyalty and patronage network and have no place for those who don't want to get their ands dirty. Second, party leaders do not respect dress codes, know zilch about social niceties, and end up antagonising the social elite steeped in the tradition of court manners. Third, and perhaps the most important, all political parties are perennially engaged in managing their own internal contradictions, a preoccupation that puts off disciplinarian

And then, it is in the nature of half-made societies that the elite periodically yearns for a knight in shining armour. This is a common dream of the oppressor and oppressed alike in all collectives with a wounded psyche. When political parties fail to raise hopes, even sensible people start looking for a saviour.

Neo-populist strongmen who have no patience for democratic institutions bank on his when they try to sideline political parties. In the public realm, civil society is effective enough in "protest-making" to check nisuse of the law by those in power. But when it comes to "claim-making" demanding that laws be made based on certain universal values—there is yet no alternative to political parties. An independent politician is therefore an oxymoron, for there can be no politics without adherence to certain shared values.

Party building is therefore the equivalent of nation-building. It is a complex task that requires unwavering commitment, patience, persistence, courage, compassion and a willingness to make compromises without sacrificing any of the fundamental values of he collective. Organised society can't escape from the compulsion of putting up with politicians. So, go join a party today. Better still, start your own. 🔶

PRIVATE WATER

Kalyan Pande's letter (#126) on privatisation is a welcome contribution to an important topic that has not yet been fully discussed in public-the proposed use of a foreign private sector company to manage Nepal Water Supply Corporation's (NWSC) operations in urban Kathmandu valley. This is one component of a set of major reforms for Kathmandu that will in total cost \$470 million during the next decade.

One important distinction between the privatisation of state owned enterprises and the proposal for NWSC, is that the Private Operator (PO) will only manage the staff and assets of NWSC, and the people of Nepalthrough government—will continue to own the assets. The use of a PO has been made a condition by those lenders and donors supporting the Melamchi tunnel in the hope that this will ensure these new water supplies are well managed. The impetus for using the private sector appears to have started

after NWSC's failure to utilise previous loans for system improvements during the 1990's.

Many of us working on water services believe that the root cause of Kathmandu's water woes is a lack of institutional autonomy to operate the system in to the local private sector. an efficient, equitable and environmentally sound manner. As of political interference that is a result water tariffs are far too low to encourage responsible use, perverse subsidies help to reduce the cost for the affluent, a substantial number of families are unconnected to the distribution network, the network leaks and one third of all water is wasted, and NWSC has too many. underpaid staff.

There should be no mystery to convenient times of the day, running a good urban water supply system and there are a number of straightforward solutions to Kathmandu's many problems, some of which would include: cost recovery tariffs, universal metering, network repair and enhancement, paying market salaries for staff, retrenching surplus staff and offering service contracts to some, recruitment on merit, more investment in

LETTERS

equipment maintenance and repairs, computerised billing, service monitoring, a customer complaints system, an independent regulator, reducing connection charges; and contracting out selected activities

But above all it is the removal required, allowing the staff of NWSC (and one or two external managers if necessary) to put into practice what they know and holding NWSC management, staff and board accountable for meeting targets of more water, to more people (especially the unconnected poor), of a higher quality, at a reasonable price, at throughout all seasons. When the PO takes over, it will be ensured of autonomy and protected from political interference by a contract and then it will begin to undertake the activities listed above. Why does Nepal need to take out loans to pay its costs, when, with political will and institutional commitment, a made-in-Nepal solution could be possible? There are also many other related

issues worthy of debate

Experience with the use of the private sector to manage urban water supply in South Asia is minimal. Government has been trying to recruit a PO for over 6 years without success. The World Bank, the lender with most international experience in the use of the private sector, has now dropped out of this project. Kathmandu's water supply is a truly important issue, one that affects every family in the five municipalities every day. WE need public scrutiny and discussion of these proposals that are simply too important to be left only to government, development banks, donors and experts.

Alan Etherington, WaterAid, Nepal

UNIVERSAL VALUES

The assertions by Subarna Bhattachan ("Letters", #126) in response to CK Lal's "Musharrafship" (#124) cannot go unchallenged. A belief in the universality of democracy, human rights and global capitalism does not imply the superiority of a racial, national, philosophical or

civilisational block. A cursory glance at world history reveals democracy, human rights, individualism, capitalism, materialism, etc, to be indeed universal. The late Professor of Journalism at Tribhuvan University, Lal Deusa Rai, wrote a book describing the prevalence of what is now called "human rights" in the Malla period of Nepal. To regard these values as typically Western is to fall victim to what Bhattachan himself calls the

Western conservatives are in fact very fond of the fictious notion of the "Western rule of law vs Oriental despotism". They go on to claim that values such as charity, mercy and compassion are typically Western derived from the teachings of Christianity. Another example of Bhattachan's thought process being already in the vicelike grip of Western colonisation is his disingenuous assertion that our society is rooted in "inner



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NATION

Seven years, 7,000 dead and counting



Sudip Pathak, President, Human Rights Organisation of Nepal, and Convenor of the Committee for Facilitation of Peace Dialogue.

On the impact of the **conflict**: An increasing number of people are trapped by the conflict. This kind of violence is not natural and unacceptable. We have been campaigning to restore peace,

and have been getting the parties involved to give up violence. We don't even have the exact data on the number of people killed, rendered disabled or displaced due to the conflict. Over the last few months, thousands of people have been fleeing their homes in the mid-western hills in search of safety and employment. We don't know where they are living and under which conditions, or where they have gone. It is the responsibility of the government to provide them security and create an environment where its citizens can lead a life with dignity.

On the prospects of peace: We strongly advocate a peaceful solution to the present conflict which has exacted enormous socio-economic costs on the nation. The late Hrishikesh Shaha had called for peaceful solution to the conflict when the Maoists launched their "people's war" in 1996. We appeal to both the government and rebels to find a negotiated settlement to the problem through dialogue. Both of them must be sensitive towards the situation in the country.

On mediation efforts: We have been in direct touch with both sides involved in the conflict. We have urged them to start a dialogue process, to begin with. In the second phase, we could identify the agenda for talks and in the third phase, formal peace talks or negotiations could start. But before that, both the sides will have to agree to some sort of code of conduct. We believe that the peace talks are possible through joint efforts of the government, Maoists, political parties and the civil society.

On creating an environment for talks: We have yet to create an environment for peace talks. We are still far away from bringing both the sides over to the table for negotiations. Of course, both the sides have expressed their commitment towards dialogue, which in itself is a positive sign. The Maoists

The Maoist insurgency enters its eighth year next month. We asked three human rights activists about the impact of the conflict, ways to minimise the suffering of the innocents, and steps to find a peaceful resolution.

have said that they will not target infrastructure, and will not kill cadres of different political parties. The human rights community, including ourselves, want to monitor whether their commitment is being implemented. Similarly, the government needs to make public whereabouts of Maoist cadres under detention and start releasing them to create an environment of trust. The government should adopt a flexible approach toward the rebels and withdraw allegations against them. Only an environment for peaceful talks can bring both the sides together.



Krishna Pahadi, Chairman, Human Rights and Peace Society.

On the fallout of the **conflict**: Unarmed people and civilians are increasingly being caught in the crossfire between the security forces and the Maoist rebels. We recently visited two western districts, Dang and Baglung

and found that innocent people had been killed by the security forces alleging them to be terrorists. Similarly, Maoist rebels ambushed passenger buses in Sindhuli and Dolakha, which is a gross violation of human rights.

Appeal to the parties in conflict: Our appeal to both the parties in conflict is: Don't lose patience and try to find a peaceful solution to the problem. We urge you to stand in favour of humanity and abandon this spiral of violence and hatred.

On broader democratic agenda: People's fundamental human rights can't be protected in the absence of democracy. We have been launching peace campaigns in different parts of the country calling for the protection of people's democratic rights. We have also organised sit-ins and "upava" (fasting) to press for this cause. We denounce the government's intervention even in the peaceful demonstrations in the capital and elsewhere.



Kundan Aryal, journalist affiliated to the human rights group, Informal Sector Service Center.

On the impact of conflict: People feel scared and have to a great extent lost the tradition of generosity towards strangers. The greatest victim of this conflict has been the freedom of

expression. People don't speak their mind fearing reprisals People have been forced to live under curfew for more than 14 months in districts like Dang. And, the irony is that they don't feel secure even under the curfew. What is the justification of imposing such a prolonged curfew at a particular place? Aren't there alternatives to maintain peace and order?

On the Geneva Convention: The Geneva Convention stipulates that civilians should not be targeted during the conflict and that humanitarian assistance should be made available to the injured and sick. But there have been numerous instances of violation of the provisions of this convention by both the parties in Nepal over the last seven years. We have the widespread culture of impunity which needs to be changed. Moreover, the human rights community must warn the parties in conflict that they will one day have to face the International Criminal Court for their gross human rights violations and abuses.

better than that. The million dollar question is: If Bhattachan does not believe in democracy, human rights, etc, what is he doing in the US? Plotting Uncle Sam's downfall?

Ram Limbu, Sydney

MORE GUNS

With its human rights record ("Army vs Amnesty", #126) one can only hope that the military's abuses will not worsen after the arrival of more sophisticated weapons. This climate of crisis and uncertainty has been further aggravated by the rise of the ultra-right, short-sighted military strategists who have added fuel to the fire by their unmitigated loud clamour for more weapons. Instead of helping the government to address the root causes of the uprising (poverty and economic disparity) by implementing programs such as the ISDP, the military is keen to reap handsome dividends from arms deals, and is leading the nation to the brink. Money that could have been better utilised for improving health, that only medical doctors per transportation, communication and capita are eight times more than

worldly" quests. Surely, we know education facilities is instead being wasted on buying weapons

> The fake "revolution" of the Maoist terrorists cannot be put down at gun point. The optimism and bravado of those who think so are misplaced. It has been over a year since the deployment of the Royal Nepalese Army, and we haven't seen any decrease in Maoist activity or extrajudicial killings, and there has been no independent verification of skirmishes in Maoist-controlled districts. The army is not a personal force of any individual or institution. It is funded by taxpayers and it must be more accountable to the people and an elected parliament.

> > Saurav Jung Thapa, Budhanilkantha School

SIKKIM

Kunda Dixit says in "Why Sikkim works" (#126) that Sikkim is governed ten times better than Nepal. How could he measure that? Comparing the development data for Nepal and Sikkim shows

ours. He is trying to compare apples and oranges. Nepal may be ten times bigger than Sikkim but our population is almost fifty times greater. Nepal's population density is five times higher than Sikkim's.

Sikkim is simply a state of India, like one of our zones. We should not ignore the fact that the government of India pumps resources into Sikkim. Rulers always advocate their good governance, as chief minister Pawan Chamling does. Just look at the history of Sikkim before it became one of the states of India in 1974, and you will get a

different picture of governance. Suraj P Shrestha, Lakehead University

HOLIDAYS

It is great that Prince Paras has a son, and last weekwas the baby's annaprasana. However, I fail to see the reason for the government to declare the day a national holiday. What is this, another *bandh*? If there is a celebration, there should be a party so the whole of the country gets a decent meal in honour of

the whole country help us celebrate the young prince's rice feeding ceremony? Haven't the Maoists done enough to ruin the country's economy that the government now has to close offices down at the slightest

How many days is the country going to close down at the upcoming royal wedding? The way to mark these happy occasions is to work harder and keep the

CK Lal's column this week ("Another world", #127) was woolly. It is astonishing why hidebound lefties like Lal refuse to wake up. No amount of wailing can hide the reality that globalisation is going to triumph in has rightly recognised that Nepal must accept globalisation. Then only industrialisation can take place, employment opportunities can be created and poverty can be eradicated. Democracy is

the baby. How does closing down secondary. First of all we must short transit at TIA customs join WTO like China and work more to export products to the world market. When the country becomes rich people will drive out Maoists and peace will return. All these so-called leaders are creating hurdles. CK Lal should grow up and write more about economic and management issues. There is no "another world", Mr Lal. This is the only world. You better accept it. Shivananda Adhikary, email

DROP SHOPPING

Your shopping special ("Drop in to shop...shop till you drop", #127) about supermarkets should be taken with a pinch of salt. Most of them are selling fake footpath stuff from the streets of Bangkok as "genuine". I bought a pair of "Nike" sports shoes for my son the end. Evevn in our own country for Rs 2,500 and the sole came Nepal, His Majesty King Gyanendra off in three days. My wife bought me an "Adidas" track suit bottom for Rs 800. This is just not possible because the genuine article will cost at least \$10. Sorry to say, folks, most of the items are straight from Banglangpoo (with a

a little more aware and cautious. Amrit KC, Bishalnagar

office). There may be a percent-

age of shoppers who want to

spend a little more money and

buy genuine articles. So this is a

warning to Nepali shoppers: Be



CORRECTION The pictures in #127 accompanying "All for the people" and in "From the Nepali Press" were by Dambar Krishna Shrestha.

pretext? country open for business. S Acharya, Sanepa

WOOLLY

Canada



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4 NATION

A day in the life of Patan's street children



KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

hey are there, but most of us don't care to notice them. Ragtag bands of street children sleeping outside bakeries, rummaging through garbage, loud and sometimes raucous children begging from tourists, or inhaling glue out of old milk packets.

The problem seems so overwhelming that most of us look the other way, troubled by our own conscience. "But," we try to justify to ourselves, "what

HERE AND THERE

can we possibly do. Where do we even start to make a difference?"

Others have started making an effort either by buying the children clothes or food or by counseling them on work and earning. Street children are a popular cause with many charity groups in Kathmandu, but the relief hardly compares to the enormity of the problem. And what little is being done is exacerbated by the new influx of families, or school-age children fleeing the conflict

areas, or forced recruitment by Maoists.

So we went to find out how they live, what they eat, how they pass their time, how they landed up in the streets. They are nearly all boys. The recent Maoist-related influx ha swelled the numbers of street children ("khateys") who were already here. All family members must work to survive, but jobs are hard to find and the younger ones end up in the streets to fend for themselves.

The families can't afford

school fees, even though back in the village most of the children went to school. Some have either left their families or their families have deserted them. Their parents simply can't afford to feed them any longer. Caught in a dead end with no education and no work, the children end up

where we see them: blackened with soot and warming themselves at a trash heap. A few maintain ties with their families, but they seldom

rather sacrifice regular meals return to the fold. Many have and a roof over their heads than got used to the freedom of the relinquish whatever control they and sell anything usable. The



Families fleeing the conflict have flocked to Kathmandu, swelling the ranks of street children.

streets and can't adjust to the

structure and discipline of

complain of ruthless bullying

camps, and run away again.

group of boys in Pulchowk.

He had once stayed at the

(CWIN) shelter. "The kids

us trouble so I decided to

leave," he said. They would

didn't want us there and gave

Child Workers in Nepal

from older children in the rehab

Kuntey runs around with a

childrens' homes. Many

have over their lives.

Today, Kuntey and his friends are a close-knit group of children between 8-16 years. Their activities concern survival—survival from hour to hour, day to day. "I'll work and live. That's it," says Kuntey's friend who looks 10, but claims to be 16.

The boys work hard to make a little money. Begging works sometimes, but mostly they have learnt to forage through piles of garbage, clean up and eat anything edible,

Take it easy on the "T" word

t is surely long past time to end the silly debate—here and around the world—about the "T" word. Should we journalists use the words "terrorist or terrorism" when we report on insurgency, militant activity, violent attacks in civilian areas, the American campaign against Al Qaeada, or should we simply tell our readers, listeners and viewers what has happened and leave them to make the decision about terror?

My own policy, garnered from my employers of many years, the BBC World Service, hasn't changed. It is the latter—I say what has happened and leave the colourful and subjective judgements to others. To my mind, good journalism demands no less.

We in the world arm of the BBC were considered extremely suspect in the United Kingdom in the 1980s whenever we covered the quagmire known as Northern Ireland. The violent campaign to end British rule by the Irish Republican Army and others, was a clear-cut case of terrorism to many of my colleagues in other media, including the BBC's home news services. A bombing that killed civilians was "an outrage", an IRA appeal for peace talks or a denial of responsibility was "a bloodstained lie". The IRA were "terrorists"—no questions asked.

We begged to differ, not with the intense feelings of the people affected by violence in Northern Ireland, or the understandable loathing that victims and potential victims had for those who used bombs and bullets against democracy and civilians. It was the use of the words themselves, and the occasionally self-indulgent tones of newscasters and writers who let a bit of that hatred or anger creep into coverage that was supposed to be enlightening, comprehensive, neutral. I, for one, could think of nothing worse to contemplate than a bomb in a crowded area that killed civilians.

To call it an outrage was to miss the point. It was ignoring the tragedy of individual victims and their families. It covered up the



reality that only negotiation and compromise could end such "outrages" once and for all.

In tragic, beleaguered Israel, an angry nation is lashing out at the western media for showing-it's widely believed-too much sympathy for Palestinians who tie explosives to their waists and detonate them in markets and buses, killing dozens and calling down the wrath of the security forces. So much pressure is put on reporters from other lands that one American TV network has taken to using the term "homicide bombers" instead of the more widely favoured "suicide bombers".

Yes, Israel is a victim of horrid violence, and suicide bombing is awful, unspeakable really, but by attacking terminology of media coverage, aren't we missing the point? Surely the priority is to end the practice once and for all, and in the end, that can only be through

Today's terrorists may be tomorrow's political leaders

dialogue, compromise and efficient defence. Even President Bush's war against terror" is ill served by sloppy terminology and rampant demonisation of the enemy. Again, an enemy that can be understood can be pre-empted and eventually beaten, especially in a case like this where compromise is out of the question.

And so we come to Nepal, where the Maoists—we read in 2001 were "officially declared terrorists" by the late, unlamented government of Sher Bahadeur Deuba. In those dark days of the state of emergency, a docile media followed suit. News stories spoke of "terrorists" being killed, with no attempt being made to probe into circumstances or even the identity of the so called "terrorist". Now, the media is much bolder and rarely uses the "T" word. In fact, reporters frequently ask ministers if the Maoists—who are being asked to restart peace talks are indeed terrorists. Some say yes, some say no, in the way of this government

Visiting dignitaries and diplomats also mix their terms, especially those from countries that provide military aid and sell arms to Nepal. Hard to justify a big arms deal or an aid package if the enemy isn't as evil as possible

Using the "T" word eclipses the obvious, that peace talks and compromise are the only way out of the current, tragic reality of Nepal. Today's terrorist is tomorrow's political leader, as the scions of the Nepali congress, the UML and others no only too well. Let's take it easy on the "T"-word. ♦

fog is still thick, and the street lights are still on when they set off early in the morning from their cardboard shelters in Pulchok. The best pickings are in Patan, Satdobato and Jawalakhel and they fan across the town trying to be the early birds. When their sacks are full, they return to base.

Plastic waste is separated into simple plastic sheeting and hard plastic. The two are often mixed during recycling, but the junkyards insist on

together to separate their collection. The going rate is Rs 5 per kg of plastic waste. Metal fetches a higher price. Pieces of metal are hard to find, and the boys consider themselves lucky if they chance upon copper cable. They melt the plastic insulation off the wires and then hammer the wires into heavy little balls. "It increases the weight," Kuntey says as he shows me his hoard.

whatever they find in the garbage, but there are times when they get a handout from a nearby restaurant, or leftovers from a party. This morning, Kuntey has found a sausage, and we overhear him telling his friend: "Eat this. It's a buffalo's penis, and it's really tasty." Beaten rice or chiura with sugar is a real treat. One of them found a bag of sugar and everyone had "really, really sweet tea"



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DOMESTIC BRIEFS

Death toll update

have been killed since the Maoist insurgency began in Nepal in 1996. A report by the human rights group, INSEC this week says 5,431 people have been killed by the state while 1,952 people have been killed by the Maoists These include police,

army, security personnel, farmers, teachers, civilians, political worker civil servants, businessmen, social workers, lawyers, health workers and journalists. Among those listed killed between 13 February 1996 and 13 January 2003, 118 were children. The report, compiled from government and human rights organisations' statistics says 2,514 people have been displaced during the insurgency—the majority from Lalitpur district. However, displaced populations have not been registered in Rolpa and Rukum, two of the worst-hit districts by the Maoist movement. Human rights organisations say the actual number is much higher.

Food shortage not acute: ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross has concluded after a survey of districts in western Nepal worst affected by conflict that there was "for the time being no acute food shortage" in the areas. ICRC staff visited areas under the sway of the Maoists as well as those under government control.

"Famine by February", #120) that there was a looming food crisis in the districts of Bajura, Achham and Mugu. ICRC said there had been "alarming newspaper articles" in the Nepali media and there was little first-hand information from the area to confirm this.

"Agriculture was being pursued fairly normally and families" overall economic security remained comparable to that of normal times," ICRC said in a report released earlier this week. But it added that restrictions imposed by both parties, a chronically poor transport system, and insecurity arising from the fighting were all inhibiting commerce and transport.

It said that these factors could still precipitate an "acute crisis" in the area by preventing migrants from returning home with planting and harvesting. ICRC said it would refrain from large-scale food distribution in the areas of conflict so as not to undermine "existing coping mechanisms".

On trial

A case has been filed against top Maoist leaders, including Dr Baburam Bhattarai and Chairman Prachanda for crimes against the state. Other defendants named in the case are Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Barman Buda of Rolpa, Pampha Bhusal of Arghakhanchi, Kali Bahadur Malla Bharat Bom, Khadga Nepali, Bishwanath Yogi, Durga Rawal of Jajarkot. They have been accused of attacking and destroying the Khatwada police post in Kalikot on 25 November and killing 11 policemen, destroying bridges and government buildings and disrupting public life. The Kalikot district prosecutor's office filed the case last month and has demanded that the rebels be imprisoned in accordance with the State Offence Act 1990, Article3 (3). This is the first case to be filed since a special court against corruption and anti-state crimes was established or 16 August last year.

Climbing up

Despite a steady drop in tourist arrivals to Nepal, there's good news on the mountaineering front. Tourism ministry officials say 134 climbing expeditions, including 23 American, 13 French and 12 Japanese expeditions received permits to climb in the Nepal Himalaya in 2002 resulting in revenue amounting to Rs 120 million. That's the highest number of expeditions the country has seen since 1998 when 141 expeditions were permitted to climb in Nepal. Officials say the increase in expeditions is a result of recent amendments to climbing regulations, but others attribute it to the Everest 50th anniversary year. Most of the climbing is concentrated in the Solukhumbu, Annapurna, Langtang and Kanchanjunga regions.

Poisonous pesticides

A study conducted in KathmanduValley has revealed an alarming rate of toxic substances - many of them banned - in vegetables, fruits and crops grown in Bhaktapur, Kathmandu and Lalitpur. The study reported that 78 percent of vegetables and crops tested by scientists at Tribhuvan University's Zoology department, were contaminated with critical levels of hazardous toxins. The levels were higher than the acceptable daily intake level set by the Central Food Research Laboratory, a regulatory agency of the government. The study says farmers were often ignorant about the safe waiting period between spraying and harvesting the crops, and many were prone to pesticide induced illnesses owing to weak protection.





From left to right:

sorting plastic from

naterial to sell to the unkvard. Kuntev's

friend with his pet dog.

Balley is glued to glue.

Kuntey's dog shares his

precious bed space.

have picked up the habit of

sniffing glue. The children tell

me it makes them feel happy

and disregard the cold and

hunger. But when we ask

them more questions, they

don't want to talk about it.

the boys have no qualms

into old milk packets and

inhale the fumes. Kuntey's

friends know it's worse than

White glue is easily available,

the shopkeepers who sell it to

about it. They pour out a little

Kuntey (centre, in cap)

netal for his sack-load of



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by PUSKAR BHUSA

SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL

ou have to hand it to Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli and his reformist ardour ahead of the UML's seventh convention in Janakpur next month. Oli's dissent at the party's four-day central committee meeting this month may have resonated with his passion for power, but the tone was hardly off key.

The central committee's obsession with the party's leadership structure obscured the ideological fissures most of us thought the comrades would thoroughly expose this time. The decision to designate "regressive forces led by the palace" as the UML's main centre of attack appears aimed more at appeasing restive grass-roots cadres. The proposal to add the party election symbol, the sun, on the hammer and sickle would probably satisfy the Maoists, who have benefited from Balkhu's crisis of conviction in the past. As for those who want everything of the party except the word "communist", the sun might one day shine bright enough on the flag to eclipse the emblems of workers and peasants for good.



throw up a reformer.

If you're flustered by the way Oli focused his campaign almost exclusively on the leadership question, consider where he's coming from. Having pranced into the palace for talks two months ago when general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal had designated a loyalist stand-in before flying abroad, Oli came out brimming with brightness. The cabinet expansion announced the following day was a definite letdown.

That Oli didn't get the deputy premier's post complete with the home portfolio wasn't the real problem. The palace communiqué gave Nepal a good reason to censure Oli for approaching the palace and foreign diplomats in his a public show of it. a public show of it. a public show of it. It's easy to sniff person

We need to go back a little further, though, to get a better sense of the power struggle. When Oli and other UML members on the House of Representatives Public Accounts Committee went along with the rest of the panel in forwarding corruption allegations against former UML tourism minister Bhim Rawal two years ago, Nepal was furious. The general secretary re-jigged the UML line-up on the PAC, giving Oli and others slots on less prominent panels. Nepal wasn't worried too much by the stain on the party's standing. He was infuriated by the way Oli turned Girija Prasad Koirala's Lauda Air

It's easy to sniff personal vendetta in Oli's tirades against Nepal. But his campaign also has a distinctly democratic dimension. A party that long transformed itself from a flock of decapitators to a fraternity of democratic head-counters couldn't afford to continue with an

old-style communist organisational chart. Having come of age during Chairman Mao's and General Secretary Brezhnev's stewardship of the two strongest communist machines the world has ever seen, Oli could be forgiven for getting lost in a structural maze.

Collective leadership is

the best safeguard against personal dictatorship over the proletariat. Determining whether the chairman, general secretary or both are required is part of the larger identity crisis the UML has been confronting since its inception.

Caught between two deputy prime ministers, Nepal and Bam Dev Gautam, Oli used the ploy that worked during the last convention and eventually split the party. Except this time, he used Gautam against Nepal. Or at least tried hard to. Towards the end of the central committee meeting, Gautam restricted his combativeness to his rhetoric. Not that Gautam didn't have his grudges on the Mahakali

Treaty and the marginalisation of his supporters after he returned to the UML last year. He didn't want to codify them because he didn't want to be criticised for a second party split, especially when the eternal red dissenter, C.P. Mainali, was out of the picture. When a political player as proficient as Gautam gives up the post of general secretary of his own party to return to the fold, he probably has a lot of ideas Oli would love to unearth.

Oli has a pointed question for the political class. How could the palace muster the confidence to step into active politics 12 years after the country thought it had receded into the background for good?

If Oli keeps asking these kinds of questions right up to the Janakpur convention, he stands a good chance of refining a reformist image. Since Nepal says he's not sure whether he will seek another term as general secretary, Oli might consider rallying behind some other comrade for the top job, even if the name happens to be Bam Dev Gautam. ◆



There has been an impact on new projects"

⊨⇒ from p1

Nepali Times: How do you assess Nepalís current politico-economic situation?

Richard Vokes: On the political side, Nepal is going through a very critical time, the most pressing issue being the insurgency itself. It is having an impact on the economy and on the whole development process. On the economic side, recent indicators show negative economic growth last year, for the first time in 19 years.

For a low-income country like Nepal this is a very serious situation. Unless you have more rapid, sustainable and broad-based growth it's difficult to achieve a significant reduction in poverty. The insurgency has had a major adverse affect on both the industrial sector and tourism._This in turn has contributed to the current fiscal crisis. The immediate prospects of recovery depend on finding a peaceful solution to the conflict. After the sharp downturn, we expect some recovery in growth this year, to between 1-2 percent, but this is lower than the rate of population growth. So, this is a pretty worrying situation.

What has been the impact of the Maoist insurgency on ADB-assisted projects?

Certainly there has been some impact. Implementation of a few projects has been seriously affected, including Upper Sagarmatha, Rural Infrastructure Development, as well as Melamchi, mainly because of restrictions on the use of explosives for road construction. However, most projects are continuing to function though there are some difficulties. There is also an impact on the identification and preparation of new projects aimed at poor areas and those districts that are more affected by the insurgency. The insurgency also requires us to look at new ways to continue to support poverty-focused projects in conflict-affected areas.

Would you say, then, that Nepal is spiraling downwards towards disaster?

No, I wouldn't say this. Yes, different components of the economy have been hit hard, but we are probably reaching the bottom in several areas. Take tourism. Despite the problems quite a few tourists are still coming. Secondly, there has been a sharp increase in the export of labour. While, of course, it would be better to see more employment generation within the country, overseas opportunities are a safety valve. But the exodus of a large number of people from the hills can be expected to have an adverse impact on agriculture. However, this is too early to assess. Agriculture production also depends on weather and prices in India. Nepal's economy is clearly linked with that of India. So, if India experiences strong growth it will have a positive impact on Nepal. Most of the macroeconomic fundamentals of the economy remain sound and Nepal has a comfortable level of foreign exchange reserves.

Yes, there is a fiscal crisis. But we and the number of other donors have indicated our willingness to try and help alleviate this problem and ensure that funds are available to finance critical development expenditure. However, there is a need to improve effectiveness of this development expenditure at the same time.

We hear Melamchi is further delayed. What is the status?

There has been some delay, and as a result the expected completion is now year-end 2009. This revised date assumes that a private operator for distribution will be in place by early 2004 so that tunnel construction can begin during 2004. While, there have been some delays, but the government and development partners are working to keep this complex project on track.

But given the record of privatisations in this country, isnít it a gamble to try to privatise water distribution?

People have said that the donors want to privatise the Nepal Water Supply Corporation (NWSC). That is not what we are talking about. The government and donors have reached a consensus to introduce a private sector operator, working under a performance-based management contract, to manage Kathmandu's water distribution. This is not a privatization and the assets of NWSC will remain with the government. Looking at the poor track record of NWSC in water distribution — significant inefficiencies, sizeable leakages, and poorly managed development funds — there is broad consensus that change is necessary, and introduction of a private operator at this point is the most reasonable option. Clean water is a scarce resource in the Kathmandu Valley. Given the large size and cost of Melamchi it is critical that the water is not wasted and equally crucial that it reaches the poor. Both the government and donors recognize the need for sound water management and a new institutional structure, including an appropriate regulatory mechanism – all to be developed in consultation with concerned stakeholders.

Now that Nepal has surplus power after Kali Gandaki-A, do you think it is time we started investing in developing infrastructure for transmission and distribution?

There is now quite significant surplus in the wet season and some surplus in the dry season. And, of course, you need to expand transmission and distribution to make full use of available power. ADB is supporting the rural electrification transmission and distribution project with this in mind. You have a power exchange agreement with India, but it is not fully exploited given lack of transmission lines. But you can't afford to ignore generation because bringing new generation capacity on stream takes time.

No one seems to be talking anymore about the 20-year-long Agriculture Perspective Plan (APP). Do you see lack of commitment on the part of government to implement this plan?

I don't think there is lack of commitment. If you look at the Tenth Plan sections related to agriculture and rural development these are within the framework of APP with an emphasis on a package of measures to support commercialisation of agriculture and increase productivity.

The removal of subsidies for shallow tubewells has been controversial. Is this an ideological issue, or an economic one?

It's difficult to give a short answer as this is quite a complex subject. Certainly it is not an ideological issue about whether subsidies are good or bad. Rather, the aim is to create a policy environment that supports a more rapid growth in groundwater development. The old subsidy effectively prevented private sector traders from coming in and making available what is very clearly a private good, designed to serve an individual farmer or small groups of farmers. This, coupled with limited funds for the subsidy was limiting the numbers of wells installed. In addition, due to the collateral requirements, the old subsidy was captured mainly by large and medium sized farmers who didn't need it. Under the government's Community Groundwater Irrigation Sector project, supported by ADB and CIDA, small farmers are being assisted to gain access to this technology. Certainly, immediately after the removal of the subsidy, there was a significant fall in the number of wells installed. While some such dislocation is to be expected, it was made worse by the sharp fall in the prices of rice and wheat at that time. But now the number of installations is picking up again and equally importantly, a much wider range and cost of shallow tubewell technology is being offered to farmers.

Despite the ADB/s strong anti-corruption guidelines, some procurement procedures leave room for irregularities. There is also the perception that the ADB hires expensive foreign consultants when local expertise is available.

We have well established procurement policies and procedures designed to minimise corruption. And we do closely monitor the implementation of these procedures. Regarding use of local expertise, ADB allows a margin of preference for domestic manufacturers or contractors in the supply of goods and civil works. But they still must be able to meet the quality specifications and have a financial position to provide the required level of production. Local suppliers may also form a consortium within the country or with companies outside Nepal to meet such requirements. ADB also considers whether there is local consulting expertise available during design of assistance, and where local expertise is not sufficient, foreign consultants team up with local consultants.

The donor community, including ADB, has been pushing for holding local elections as soon as possible. But do you think it is realistic? First, let me make it clear that ADB has not pressured the government on this sensitive political decision. Still, the suspension of the local bodies has complicated development activities at the grassroots. The system of local government based on elected local bodies had been working reasonably well, and there was considerable donor support to strengthen them as part of their support to decentralization. The present government is aware that the current interim arrangements are not as effective as the previous system and this is hampering development of new

programs at the local level. The government has itself indicated its intention to hold local elections but it is for the government to decide on the timing.

How optimistic are you that the Tenth Plan will be able to attain its objectives under the present circumstances?

Based on the current situation and recent data, even the lower growth scenario included in the plan is optimistic. But, it depends critically on the insurgency. If the conflict can be resolved in the near future and there is an effective program of rehabilitation and development that really addresses the underlying causes of the conflict, including the problem of exclusion, then I believe that the prospects for economic recovery and addressing Nepal's persistent poverty, are good.

BIZ NEWS Scorpio re-incarnate

Mahindra & Mahindra the legendary Indian jeep and fourwheel maker has brought its latest Scorpio MUV (multi-utility vehicle) to Nepal. Scorpio's makers say the car's new body lines, unique athletic styling, wraparound lamps, contoured cladding and the assertive new grille design give this car a distinctive new look. Scorpio has definitely transcended the common jeep look of its ancestors, but retains their ruggedness and durability.



The seats are designed by Lear Corporation, are formfitting and give you a soft ride no matter what the terrain is outside. It even has a state-of-the-art music system from Kenwood in case you don't want mother nature to intrude. Besides a diesel engine SZ 2600, the Scorpio is built like a tank and its extra-wide tyres help it hug the road better. There are adequate crumple zones, and side impact beams which are probably designed to withstand the worst that the Grand Trunk Road has to offer. Different versions of Scorpios come for a price range between Rs 1.85-2.4 million, which compares agreeably with other Indian-made SUVs. Scorpios are marketed in Nepal by Agni Incorporated.

Wai Wai Football Fundraiser

Nepali musicians played a fundraiser football match against Nepali cine artists at the Dasrath Stadium on 11 January. The actors thrashed the musicians 4-2, as thousands of spectators thronged to see their favourite celebrities do some fancy footwork. The proceeds of the match were donated to the hundreds of victims of the fire at Myaglung in Tehrathum. The fundraiser was organised by the Chaudhary Group, makers of Wai Wai instant noodles. Said Binod Chaudhary, managing director: "Together we can, we will."

Qatar Airways ups flights

Qatar Airways is planning to operate two weekly flights directly to Kathmandu from Doha, a senior airline official said. Akbar Al Baker, CEO of Qatar Airways made this announcement following the relocation of the airline's office in Kathmandu. "Kathmandu is considered an important destination for Qatar Airways (QA) since its launch in 1994," said Baker. He announced that the airline is planning to double the number of passengers outbound on Qatar by operating bigger aircraft with capacity of up to 400. Qatar brought 90,000 tourists to Nepal last year, and is the airline most of the 35,000 Nepali workers in Qatar take to come home.

Nepali delegation in US, Canada A joint delegation of the private sector and the government

À joint delegation of the private sector and the government left for the United States and Canada Saturday, to promote Nepali exports. The focus of the visit would be to obtain duty and quota-free access for Nepali products in US markets, in addition to exploring the market potential in Canada. Last year Canada announced free imports of all commodities from Least Developed Countries (LDCs), except a few farm products. In 2000, the US had also provided such concessions for garment imports from Sub-Saharan African and Caribbean countries. Uday Raj Pandey, general secretary of Garment Association Nepal (GAN), said the delegation would present Nepal's case to the US State and Trade Departments and discuss with US Congressmen, importers and consumers.

India to help in rural electrification

India has provided grant assistance worth Rs 55 million to Nepal for rural electrification through solar photo-voltaic cell technology in Parsa, Sarlahi, Baglung and Dhading districts. The project is expected to benefit about 1,400 households with over 15,000 people. This would also light community centres, schools, hospitals, VDC offices and public spaces, the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu said. The project will be executed by India's Central Electronics Ltd (CEL), Ghaziabad and through consumers committees in the villages under which each household is to get 75 watts of home lighting.

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8 BOOKS

rely on the muse of hard work.



Manjushree Thapa has a writer-towriter chat with Samrat Upadhyay about his new novel The Guru of *Love*, and also how life has been since his first short story collection, Arresting God in *Kathmandu,* catapulted the Nepali author to literary fame around the world last year.





Can you say something about the process of writing The Guru of

Love? My daughter Shahzadi had just been born, and somehow the overwhelming energy of her birth transferred to the writing process. The novel finished in about ten months. That sounds fast, but I think that this novel was a culmination of two 'practice novels' I had written earlier, which allowed me to understand the form in my own terms. While writing those, I was influenced by preconceptions of how a novel ought to be written-partly garnered from bad "how to write a novel" booksso I was overly concerned with plot. With The Guru, I followed the character, like I do in my stories. The novel was written without a plot sketch

The idea of a tutor having an affair with his tutee came from my being in the teaching profession, where this happens all the time, with dire consequences for both parties. As I'm always interested in putting my characters in trouble, this seemed like a good way to do it. I placed them in the wider canvas of the jana andolan-a fascinating period for me as my formative years were spent in Panchayat's repressive atmosphere. I became interested in the gap where the old was dying and the new was about to be born: the troubles of the protagonist echoed the troubles of the nation in impressionistic, not-so-tangible ways. The novel became an exploration of the dance between the private and the political, where they meet and where they drift apart.

Writing the novel was more taxing than writing my earlier story collection, Arresting God in Kathmandu. But the novel didn't go through the same extensive revision process—my wife Babita, my agent, and my editor thought it was complete as it was. It merely went through some copy editing before it was published.

In your stories, your characters often turn to illicit love and sex amid emotional turmoil. Your novelis protagonist has an extramarital affair. Why are you drawn towards such transgressions?

As they say, only trouble is interesting in fiction. Trouble can galvanize an awareness of parts of ourselves we hadn't considered before. Trouble makes us realize the value of pain and the value of happiness, how transitory both are, and how life is a constant negotiation between the two. Love, in all its myriad forms, has always been of interest to me. Illicit love in particular fascinates me because it violates the traditional boundaries to which we become attached and take for granted. The indiscretion of my characters, especially of the novel's main character, leads to a maddening mixture of pain and happiness, where the two merge and are hard to separate, and so the transgression becomes an almost-spiritual experience.

SUKETU MEHTA

here is an international fraternity of artists of the middle class-the lineage whose patron saint is Chekhov and that takes in Ibsen and Ozu, Cheever and Mahfouz. Their dragons are poverty and in-laws; their Holy Grail, college degrees and good marriages for their children

and their transcendence, adultery. What animates these artists' moral vision is, above all, compassion.

The universality of this class and those themes is demonstrated in Samrat Upadhyay's first novel, "The Guru of Love," which considers the middle class in a place one would not normally look for --in the city of Kathmandu.

Ramchandra is a 40-ish schoolteacher married to Goma, daughter of a rich family connected to the royals. They have two young children, and Ramchandra has an assortment of acquaintances in his school and neighbourhood but no real friends. He is a hapless sort of fellow, pushed around by more confident people. His life is spent in unremitting anxiety about money, and his inlaws constantly snub him over his poverty. "He'd thought his full-time, permanent status would change his in-laws" minds, that they'd begin to see him as a full-time permanent son-in-law. But Goma's parents had quickly shifted their focus. "You must build a house Ramchandra babu," they said to him at family

This interplay between the erotic and the spiritual seems to me is a fundamental part of our universal psyche, but is not often addressed or attended to, especially in our culture, where the erotic is publicly shunned in favor of over-religiosity.

The protagonistis wife, who asks her husbandis lover to move in as a second wife, sounds very strong

The protagonist Ramchandra's wife Goma's evolution as the novel's strongest character was a very pleasurable aspect of writing the book. I have been working with the concept of "reversal," where I make the character or situation move in exactly the opposite direction than I had initially planned. If I think a character is going to act a certain way, I ask myself, "What possibilities open up if I make the character act differently than how I expect him or her to act?" This thwarts predictability. Initially Goma seeks refuge in her *maiti*, but later, instead of resigning herself to her husband's infidelity, she gains control by "demanding" Malati into the same bedroom with her husband. Goma shows the complexity with which women must negotiate their existence in our culture.

You have fans around the world. You've earned the Whiting Award, and many Nepalis feel genuinely proud of your achievement. Are you enjoying your celebrity status?

Yes, I am. Although the basic elements of my life haven't changed—I still struggle with my writing, prepare for my classes, wash the dishes, paint with my daughter—I have become a recognizable name for many lovers of literature. Sometimes I see my name in print as if it were someone else. After Arresting God came out, I was flipping through an interview of Amitav Ghosh. In answer to a question about which South Asian authors he admired, Ghosh mentioned my name! Only my name! So it's been wonderful in many ways.

Youíve just been offered a new teaching position.

I'll be joining the MFA faculty at Indiana University in the fall. It is one of the oldest programs in the country, started by the great southern writer Peter Taylor. Robert Frost, Robert Penn Warren and John Crowe Ransom have taught there, so it's an honor for me to be a part of that heritage. I'll be teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in fiction writing and literature. I'll also be active in the admissions committee, and I'm eager to attract an international community of writers, especially young Nepali writers who might benefit from a rigorous three-year program where they are fully supported through teaching assistantships

I've loved being in the classroom since the first day I taught more than a decade ago. I come alive in my interaction with students,

discussing their writing or a piece of published literature. I'm lucky to be in a vocation where my writing is stimulated by my teaching. My students' writings give me new insights on issues of craft. My courses on postcolonial literature and contemporary short story are closely connected to my own placement as a writer in a world where English writing from Africa and Asia have emerged as strong alternative narratives to the master narratives of the West.

Word has it that, taking offense at a literary exchange between you and them, some professors at the Tribhuvan University English Department have discouraged academic discussion of your writing, in what amounts to an unofficial boycott. I, too, have heard the same thing from multiple sources. I hope someone from the English Department can clarify this, for indeed if it has happened or is happening, it suggests an intellectual depravity that doesn't speak well for a department that has the role of nurturing students to be future critics, writers, and teachers. I mean, even a curmudgeon like VS Naipaul, who has very nasty things to say about academics and critics, gets his readership in English departments across the world. And I am only a green writer.

As teachers, we exercise enormous influence over our students' intellectual growth, and to discourage, either explicitly or implicitly, discussion of a literary work is an abuse of that sacred power, a violation of both faculty's and students' academic freedom. It also gives the impression that some people in the English Department at TU feel threatened by new voices in Nepali literature in English—an impression that stigmatizes the entire department.

Youíre a devoted husband and doting father. From your essays itis clear youire a passionate teacher. You work hard, waking up at 4 in order to write. Youíve shared your success with Nepali writers, translating their work and helping them to be published in the US. You're extremely affable in person, and seem very much a squeaky-clean Nepali boy next door. (Correct me if lím wrong here). Isnít this unusual for a writer?

I'm hardly squeaky-clean, but yes, my family and teaching are as important to me as writing. I also think there's also a great myth surrounding the writer as a "man" of genius, probably a bit bairagi, inspired by fits of hand-waving, mouth-whispering madness, with deep descents into alcoholic stupor or depression that spawns even more brilliant work. While there are iconoclastic writers who only need to wait for the muse, most writers I know rely on the muse of hard workwriting as meditation where devotion and daily practice connect you to the spirit.



gatherings. "Without a house of one's own in this city, it doesn't matter what you do."

Into this unhappy but settled existence walks Malati, a pretty young girl from the countryside determined to get ahead in the city by passing the school-leaving exams. She is also a single mother. Ramchandra begins tutoring her and quickly falls in love. When his wife finds out, she demands that Malati and her year-old daughter move in with them, installs her husband and his mistress in the bedroom and moves into the kids' room. Ramchandra's guilt redoubles, and he becomes the butt of jokes and barbs from his in-laws, the school and the neighbourhood. Not that they prevent him from continuing to make love to Malati while his wife sleeps in the next room.

Goma is a strong woman, Shakti incarnate. Her husband has visions of her as a goddess, and his mistress, too, seems to think of her as one. It is as valid an excuse for adultery as any: being married to a goddess.

All this occurs against the background of the pro-democracy agitations around 1990.

But the political turmoil is just a backdrop; none of the characters are active participants in the struggle. The beginning of the last chapter sums up this disconnection: "Eleven years later, during the tense days when the Maoists looted, terrorised and killed people across the country, and a month before the crown prince obliterated most of the royal family, Ramchandra, his hair turning gray, went on his morning walk to the local market in Kirtipur." The implication is that empires and tyrannies may rise and fall but life goes on much the same for the broad mass of people. This is certainly a valid point, but such passages seem strewn about the novel as if the writer felt the need to paint on a larger canvas, to depict a whole nation in transition.

Upadhyay lives near Cleveland and has previously written a fine book of short stories, "Arresting God in Katmandu." He excels at depicting the thousand small cuts that afflict a middle-class married man having an affair: the continuous expenditure of money in taxis and restaurants; the furtive, guilt-ridden rendezvous in pursuit

of a moment of pleasure; the shame he feels in front of his children. The writing is emotionally restrained and doesn't call attention to itself. There are no lyrical bursts of exuberance over the country's beauty or the torments of love. The family scenes—particularly one set in an amusement park where every entertainment bleeds Ramchandra's wallet—are suffused with tenderness. The juxtaposition of the father imagining himself walking free and light with his girlfriend amid the rides with the fixed, present reality of wife and children is rendered with skilled understatement. A little later, there is an inspired passage about Ramchandra and Malati's first attempt at lovemaking, in an abandoned temple. He is on the verge of possessing the girl of his dreams when they are attacked by monkeys, which yank off Malati's sari and run off with it. The incident, which could have been farcical, quickly turns dark, another obstacle in the path of true lust. But I was uncomfortable when too

much was explained — when the reader is assumed to be a foreigner. It is one thing to use a Nepali word in dialogue and then to recast it in English in the next sentence; it is quite another to place the translation within the quotation itself. This need not detract from a non-Indian's overall grasp of the narrative, but enhances the pleasure for readers who are familiar with the words. Those who get it feel that they're reading something authentic — in the subcontinent, spoken English as well as written is widely spiced with words from the local languages. But as a practical matter, many of these decisions are taken out of the writer's hands and made by the editor with one eye on the Western market. 🔶

writer and journalist who . lives in New York. He is a winner of the Whiting Writers Award, the O Henry Prize for his fiction, a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in fiction. This review appeared in The New York Times this week.

Suketu Mehta is a fiction

The Guru of Love : A Novel by: Samrat Upadhyay List Price: \$23.00 Amazon Price: \$16.10 Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Co (January, 2003)

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Operating Prof

Banking with a difference

10 world

Berlusconi's failed right



. ROME — Italy now looks as unsettled and decrepit as Britain did when Margaret Thatcher assumed power 24 years ago. Fiat wallows in crisis, university rectors resign en mass, judges attend the opening session of the judicial year carrying copies of the constitution as a warning to the government. When he eturned to power, Silvio Berlusconi promised bold Thatcherite reforms to set things right. His reforms, nowever, have been few and insipid. aimed mostly at benefiting himself,

Italy is in economic decline. Its share of exports in world markets is contracting. On the list of "most competitive countries" prepared by the World Economic Forum, Italy has fallen in one year from 26th place to 39th. Unemployment is higher than the EU average (9% against 7.6%). Inflation is nearly twice that of France and Germany, though all three countries use the euro. The ratio of debt to GDP (110%) is almost twice the European average and is growing. Fiat's crisis may see the country lose its last great internationally competitive industrial enterprise

In response, Italy's President has asked the entrepreneurial classes to help shore up the country's competitiveness. Unions should return to the policy they adopted during the successful struggle against inflation in the 1990s. The state must improve public services, strengthen the educational system, and devote greater resources to research and development. The government must reform social welfare and pensions.

The entire political spectrum, indeed, must recognize the country's predicament and find common ground for legislation. But this will be impossible so long as Prime Minister Berlusconi dominates Italian politics. Berlusconi is a new phenomenon on the European right. In recent decades, mainstream right-leaning parties in most Western countries evolved from a defence of tradition (sometimes with a tinge of nationalism) to a more liberal worldview favoring a limited role for the state and greater individual responsibility. Coming from the pinnacle of Italian business, Berlusconi might have been expected to conform to this pattern. In fact, however, Berlusconi represents political extremism and programmatic ambiguity. (Project Syndicate)

Rogue creditors threaten debt plan

LONDON — The World Bank and IMF's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative for debt relief is looking increasingly threadbare because of rogue creditors, according to economist Romilly Greenhill.

Because it is not addressing the central issue of unpayable debts and is not seen to be independent from both debtors and creditors, the process is perceived as unjust and ineffective. Conditionalities attached to HIPC relief through IMF programmes have been lambasted by NGOs as veiled economic mechanisms for transferring resources from debtor to creditor countries.

Now, however, the initiative is under threat from another quarter —non-participating creditors and governments like Iraq and Taiwan, which are refusing to write off their share of HIPC debts. According to Ann Pettifor, Director of Jubilee Research, the long-term solution would be to implement the Jubilee Framework for international insolvency, by which HIPC debt would be treated like middle-income country debt. A public, transparent insolvency framework would give legitimacy to the sovereign debtor's insolvency while protecting the fundamental human rights of the debtor nation, Pettifor says. (IPS)



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COMMENT

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Hawks fly higher

Why should anyone listen to the retreaded hawks who came to prominence under Reagan and flourished under the Bush I and Bush II?

hen the devastating possibilities possibilities of atomic bombs had just become apparent to the world, heroic, victorious WWII generals George Marshall, Douglas MacArthur, Dwight Eisenhower, Omar Bradley, and even the right wing's favourite, George Patton, ndependently made public statements along these lines: If we don't get rid of nuclear veapons they will get rid of us. The following year a directive from President Harry Truman still operative-barred activeduty military personnel from making public their individual opinions on nuclear weapons. A few military heroes, after retirement, publicly expressed such beliefs. Most said nothing at all publicly.

Why were the heroes' admonitions to get rid of nuclear weapons ignored? There were many developments which show how that happened over the course of the nuclear era. But behind the scenes, hawk strategies have served to keep political

decision-makers pushing even more money into the "military-industriallabour-university complex" for over 50 years with only brief, minor reversals

by ALAN F KAY

Hawks make one powerful argument that, reluctantly or not, most people accept: "It makes sense to begin to develop some anti-missile capability. Even initially when it is very expensive and has only a small chance of working, if it is needed and it does work, it will save millions of lives. What is a human life worth?

You cannot put a number on it. We cannot afford NOT to proceed with missile defence.'

This argument seems to trump all possible responses, but leaves open one crucial possibility: the United States could both save the colossal amount of money such a system would cost and cut the probability to near zero that anybody will ever launch a nuclear missile attack by countering the outside world's reaction to our behaviour by nonviolent means.

By using diplomacy and the forms of conflict resolution that in recent years have successfully resolved both new and ancient

LUKE HARDING in NEW DELHI arun Tejpal is sitting amid the ruins of his office.

There is not much left - a few dusty chairs, three computers and a forlorn air-conditioning unit. "We have sold virtually everything. I've even flogged the airconditioner," he says dolefully.

Twenty months ago Tejpal, editor in chief of tehelka.com, an investigative website, was the most feted journalist in India. He had just

broken one of the biggest stories in the country's history—an expose of corruption at the highest levels of government.

His reporters, posing as arms salesmen, had bribed their way into the home of the defence minister, George Fernandes, and handed over £3,000 to one of the minister's colleagues. The journalists found many other people prepared to take money senior army officers, bureaucrats, even the

Tehelka pays for president of the ruling Bharatiya Janata party, who was filmed shovelling the cash into his desk.

> The scandal was deeply embarrassing for the BJP prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Vajpayee sacked Fernandes and ordered a commission of inquiry The scandal promoted a mood of national catharsis, and congratulations poured in from ordinary Indians tired of official corruption. Tehelka, which had only

been launched in June 2000, was receiving 30 million hits a week. But the glory did not last. "I had expected a battle. But we had not anticipated its scale," Tejpal said. "The propaganda war started the next day.

> Nearly two years later, he has been forced to lay off all but four of his 120 staff. He has got deeply into debt, sold the office furniture and

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Tarun Tejpal, Billy Singh, CEO NuBazaar.com and reporter Aniruddha Bahal

ethnic, economic, and factional violence and war all over the world, the US can save time, money, and lives. What is needed is a "Marshall plan without the war", "building friends instead of enemies."

Abe Lincoln was accosted by an angry northern senator at the end of the Civil War, who told him, "I believe in destroying enemies." Lincoln replied, "I agree with you, sir. And the best way to destroy an enemy is to make him into a friend."

For years the US people have preferred dismantling and rendering impotent and obsolete all nuclear weapons of all nations as soon as possible to our current strategy of allowing a few "trustworthy" nations including the US to maintain and possibly upgrade a reasonable stockpile of nuclear weapons. (In December 1987, responses were (a) 56 percent and (b) 41 percent.)

The hawks now make the case that the danger of "nondeterrable" dictators acquiring nuclear weapons may leave the United States with no recourse but a pre-emptive military strike to remove the weapons. Ken Adelman, as head of Reagan's Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, thought unnecessary (and fought against) bilateral verifiable nuclear arms reductions, particularly the nuclear freeze referendum which was supported by over 80 percent of the American people beginning in the early '80s.

Twenty years later Adelman says that the only recourse the US has in the case of Iraq may be an imminent pre-emptive strike, and the longer it is delayed the more difficult and necessary preemption will be.

Yet for twenty years the US pursued the hawks' approach during which Adelman (and the

rest of the hawks) never sought what he now says would have been the best course. Doves have known for decades that the failure to reduce worldwide nuclear arsenals convinces everyone that pre-emption may ultimately become our only recourse. Adelman should have figured that out long ago. Why should anyone listen to him or any of the retreaded hawks who came to prominence under Reagan and flourished under the Bush I and

With an Iraq invasion probable we may soon know the outcome of our first major preemptive strike. The belief that certain dictators can never be made into friends is a racist assumption without scientific basis. Populist leaders like Fidel Castro, Lula da Silva, and Hugo Chavez, one a dictator the other two popularly elected, wish for good relations with the US, but so far find only hostility and death threats. A dictator of the greatest "evil empire", Mikhail Gorbachev, was totally redeemed in US eyes after a few years in office. Redemption is preferable

to pre-emption. Upstaged by nuclear era upstarts, an 80-plus percent consensus of the American people is frustrated. The WWII heroes will roll over in their graves as billions more are spent on a course the heroes predicted, and the people rightly fear, will ultimately end in our destruction, while the possibility of stopping our own demise grows increasingly remote. \blacklozenge (IPS)

(Alan F. Kay is a mathematician, social scientist, and pioneer of public-interest polling. He is the author of "Locating Consensus for Democracy" and numerous public policy articles)

Ganes southeast Asia

SUNANDA K DATTA-RAY in BANGKOK

hroughout the day, devotees offer flowers and incense to a large gilt Ganesh, the elephant-headed Hindu god. The statue squats on its high pedestal under a canopy outside Bangkok's World Trade Center. If passers-by do not have a gift for the god, they offer a simple sawasdee.

The respect accorded to the Ganesh is a reminder that Southeast Asia has had a thousand years of interaction with India. Yet modern Southeast Asians seldom mention the Hindu kingdoms that once flourished in Java, Sumatra, Laos, Cambodia and Malaya.

Princess Sirindhorn of Thailand, erudite in Sanskrit and Pali, once warned me not to speak of Indian influence, even though her father's formal title, King Rama IX, recalls the legendary Hindu god-king, hero of the epic Ramayana, which Thais call Ramaken. "They probably think even the Buddha was born in Thailand," the princess said with a smile.

Such is the degree to which things Indian have been absorbed into Southeast Asian culture. A Thai dignitary once reportedly asked a high-ranking Indian visitor, whom he accompanied to a dance drama of the Ramaken, whether he didn't have something like it in his country too.

With rabid Hindu chauvinists in India claiming Ganesh as the original Santa Claus, I can understand local sensitivities. Hindu art languished in Southeast Asia with the rise of Theravada Buddhism. Islam wiped out many Hindu traces, and 19th century Western history, which stressed the benefits of European colonialism, further helped to play down India's influence. Cold War politics compounded the estrangement.

But while more exalted deities were forgotten, Ganesh remained a vibrant reminder of the synergy of Indian and Southeast Asian cultures. His elephant head stands for sagacity, wisdom and prudence. His mount, a rat, gnaws through every obstacle.

Indians believe that Ganesh has only one tusk because the other was worn down writing the Ramayana at a sage's dictation. Traders, travelers, artists and statesmen but above all business people claim his patronage. The first Southeast Asian Ganesh I saw was a sandstone carving from Cambodia in the Los Angeles County Museum. The first I acquired was Indonesian. The cast iron figure is not especially beautiful, but I was intrigued to find a roadside shop in the world's most populous Muslim country stacked with Hindu icons.



Hinduism's lofty philosophical message may have been lost in Thailand, but its symbol of material success is flourishing.

My guide explained that Indonesians keep Ganesh in their gardens and treat him as a decoration and not a deity. I wondered therefore who had left flowers at the feet of the Ganesh in the 1,100-year-old Prambanam complex near Jogjakarta. And why the 20,000 rupiah note should flaunt his visage. Some Western scholars even called him the "Indonesian god of wisdom'.

I came across another form of internalisation in Chiang Mai in northern Thailand, where a little brass Ganesh in a wide-brimmed coolie hat rowed a boat, just like Bangkok's food sellers before the city's muddy canals were filled in for roads. A depiction of Ganesh is also the Thai Fine Arts Department's logo.

Burma knows him as Maha-Pienne and Cambodia as Prah Kenes. Ganesh lives in an ancient iron ring from Laos, a terra-cotta in Kedah and a Japanese scroll. His images have been found in China and Turkmenistan. Ganesh is the god with the common touch. That is one reason for his abiding popularity as a source of good fortune. Perhaps a more compelling one today is his association with commerce, underlined by the World Trade Center backdrop as well as by Bangkok's other large Ganesh, in the lobby of the Rama Hotel.

Hinduism's lofty philosophical message may have been lost—but its symbol of material success is flourishing.

(Sunanda K Datta-Ray is he former editor of The Statesman in India, and is currently senior fellow at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University.)

raising hell

Two years after this muckraking investigative website went undercover to expose corruption in India's defence establishment, it has been hounded out of business and is nearly defunct.

scrounged money from friends. "They drop by for dinner and leave a cheque behind." The website, which once

boasted sites on news, literature, sport and erotica, is "virtually defunct". George Fernandes, meanwhile, is again the defence minister.

The saga is a depressing example of how the Kafkaesque weight of government can be used to crush those who challenge its methods. In the aftermath of the scandal, the Hindu nationalist-led government "unleashed" the inland revenue, the enforcement directorate and the intelligence bureau, India's answer to MI5, on Tehelka's office in suburban south Delhi.

They did not find anything Frustrated, the officials started tearing apart the website's

investors. Tehelka's financial backer, Shanker Sharma, was thrown in jail without charge. Detectives also held Aniruddha Bahal, the reporter who carried out the expose, and a colleague, Kumar Badal. Badal is still in prison.

"It got to the stage that I used to count the number of booze bottles in my house to make sure there wasn't one more than the legal quota," Tejpal recalls.

The government commission set up to investigate Operation West-End, Tehelka's sting, meanwhile, started behaving very strangely. "The commission didn't cross-examine a single person found guilty of corruption It was astonishing," said Tejpal. Instead, it spent its days rubbishing Tehelka's journalistic methods.

The official campaign of vilification against the website has attracted protests from a few of India's prominent liberal commentators, such as the veteran diplomat Kuldip Nayar and the respected columnist Tavleen Singh. Tehelka's literary supporters, who include Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and VS Naipaul, have also expressed their outrage. But in general, India's civil society has reacted with awkwardness and embarrassment to the website's plight.

"I read all of Franz Kafka when I was 19 and 20, but I only understand him now,' Tejpal wrote in a recent essay in the magazine Seminar. "He accurately intuited that all power is essentially implacable and malign."

The treatment of the website's investors has scared away anybody else from pumping money into Tehelka. The company owes £620,000. Vajpayee's rightwing government has bounced back from the scandal and is expected to win the next general election in 2004. Last month, it won a landslide victory in elections in

the riot-hit western state of Gujarat after campaigning on a virtually fascist anti-Muslim platform.

Tehelka's expose was not about "individuals", but about "systemic corruption", Tejpal insists. He admits that his sting operation would have gone down badly with any government, but says that the BJP's response was venomous "The degree of pettiness has been extraordinary. They have a crude understanding of power and a lot of that stems from the fact they are in power for the first time. Our struggle is emblematic of a wider issue: can media organisations be killed off when they criticise governments?".

The gloomy answer appears to be yes. Last night Balbir Punj, a leading BJP member of parliament, claimed the government had nothing to do with the website's collapse. "Just because you do a story exposing the government doesn't mean the gods make you immortal," he said. "Many other internet portals have closed down. The boom is over." (The Guardian)

Sri Lankan talks on track

NAKHON PATHOM, Thailand - Negotiators of the just-concluded Sri Lankan peace talks have deferred trying to seek an immediate remedy for explosive issues, particularly those that could destroy the still fledgling peace process between Colombo and the Tamil Tiger rebels.

But this does not mean shying away from politically sensitive matters. Rather, the two sides appear to be willing to soldier on by seeking solutions that will, in the end, satisfy the warring parties.

This was how the negotiators overcame the first major obstacle at the just concluded talks — a sharp difference of views between a Sri Lankan military commander and the Tamil Tigers over the resettlement of Tamil civilians in lands under military occupation in Sri Lanka's north. It arose after the military commander suggested that the Tigers should disarm and decommission its heavy weapons in the north before Tamil civilians are permitted back to their homes.

During this fourth round of talks, which ran here from 6-10 January, the Tigers pulled out of a special committee set up in the war-ravaged island's north to discuss the sensitive issues such as de-escalation and normalisation.

But this act of protest did not result in the collapse of the talks. On the contrary, the Tigers agreed to Colombo's proposal to speed up resettlement in areas beyond the disputed territory and, further, to seek the views of an Indian military expert on striking a balance between humanitarian and security needs.(IPS)

More nuke tit-fot-tat

ISLAMABAD - India's disclosure of its nuclear doctrine this month was supposed to quell fears by clarifying the conditions under which it would use nuclear weapons, but it has only increased uncertainty in the subcontinent, Pakistani analysts say.

The atmosphere is not helped by the latest tit-for-tat moves by India and Pakistan on the missile front. Four days after India explained its nuclear doctrine, Pakistan handed over the Ghauri, a mediumrange missile capable of carrying nuclear warheads, to its army. A day afterwards, New Delhi announced that it had successfully test-fired a short-range version of its Agni-1 intermediate ballistic missile.

Predictably, Pakistan's foreign office dubbed the Indian disclosure of its nuclear policy and formation of its nuclear command authority (NCA) as further evidence that nuclear weapons and their use is very much part of India's strategic policy.

India had previously publicised only a draft doctrine in 2000, and Pakistan itself announced its NCA in February of that year. (IPS)

$12\,$ from the Nepali press

"The king doesn't see democracy as a free-for-all"

Trained as a power engineer in the former Soviet Union, Dipak Gyawali studied resource economics from Berkeley. He is the Minister for Water Resources. Excerpts from an interview in Gorkhapatra.

Gorkhapatra, 12 January

गोरखापत्र

You have returned to the ministry as minister. How does that feel? When I was at the Water Resources Ministry 16 years ago, the staff used to be professionally motivated. This time, I found them demoralised due to excessive politicisation. I am trying to change that. In 2011, we will be completing 100 years of electric power generation in Nepal. My goal is to make cheap and reliable power available. By cheap, I don't mean reducing tariff. A number of agreements are in place which make this option difficult. We will have to make arrangements for cheaper electricity and making it available to industries. We can also generate cheap electricity by developing efficient infrastructure. Privatisation doesn't necessarily bring efficiency, competition does. A commodity like electricity should be partially privatised to promote competition.

Can the Maoist problem be resolved through dialogue? First of all, the Maoist leadership should prove that its cadre are under

its control. If a political negotiation is to take place with the Maoist leadership, the armed cadre must be listening to them. You can hold political dialogue only with political side. To deal with those who are carrying arms, you must use arms to bring them to dialogue.

How do you analyse Maoistsí strategy of destruction?

The Maoists have adopted the Hegelian philosophy. They are destroying power plants and productivity itself. This will not take us towards socialism by enhancing productivity. There are a number of contradictions within the Maoist fold, they must correct these.

How do you see the political future of the Maoists?

I think the book, *Future of Maoism* by noted Marxist thinker, Samir Amin, is still relevant in case of Nepal. Amin called the USSR "bureaucratic socialism", and referred to the Maoist model in China as a good socialist path. But it was only after Deng Xiao Ping turned China on a strong, capitalist productive road that China has now turned into an economic superpower. Nepali leftists and Maoists, too, need to understand this. If they continue the tradition of worshipping neo-feudal elements as was seen in case of Pol Pot no achievement is possible.

When will this government hold elections?

His Majesty has asked us to focus on holding elections. We want early elections, but because of climate and other reasons elections can only be held during April-May or December-January. But local elections can be held at any time. My personal preference is to hold local elections first for the development of local leadership followed by general elections as early as possible.

But arenít there political obstacles?

There are two or three hurdles. The prime minister has said elections can be held within two hours of the political parties saying that they are ready to face polls. They are citing two reasons for not going to the polls. The insurgency may only be 40 percent of the problem, but 60 percent of their problem is that they have got nothing to tell the people.

What is your impression of the king?

I had an opportunity to know him when I was with the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC). Chairing its board meetings he used to listen to all, but took decisions himself. He had a "no nonsense" attitude and took criticism seriously. I have felt that he doesn't see democracy as a free-for-all system. He wants things managed. During my last meeting, His Majesty said the invoking of Article 127 of the constitution was a compulsion and that he had not acted unconstitutionally.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

If you talk about conduct - political conduct, individual conduct, the conduct of parties, then democracy is alive. A question arises when you talk about the workings of the constitution.

- Chakra Bastola, Nepali Congress leader in Ghatana Ra Bichar, 15 January, 2003.

A State of the sta

Left umbrella: all-party government Right umbrella: reinstitute parliament Wave: right-left extremism

हिसाडा Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 15-29 January, 2003.

30 years, 12 years

THIS PAGE CONTAINS MATERIAL SELECTED FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

Editorial in *Himal Khabarpatrika* (31 December-15 January)

हिमाल Nepal's economy grew by an average of 2.5 percent per year over the last 12 years. But during the three decades (1960-90) when there was no violence in the country and the king ruled directly, the economy grew at only 0.5 percent. During 1960-90, the child mortality rate declined by only 2.6 percent, whereas in the following next 12 years Nepal's child mortality rate declined by 4.2 percent. Similarly, the average life expectancy of Nepalis rose to 59 during 1990-2002 as against only 42 years in the three decades preceding it. Only 48 percent of the men and 14 percent of the women could read and write in Nepal till 1990, whereas over the last 12 years (1990-2002) the male literacy rate has reached 59 and that of women 24. The expansion in the Nepali economy, level of awareness among common citizens and unprecedented and positive changes seen in the social sector over the last 12 years should be compared with the entire history of Nepal, and not only the previous three decades.

Respect privacy

Anju Chhetri in Kantipur, 9 January

Amnesty International (AI) last month published its *report* (*Nepal: A Deepening Human Rights Crisis*) giving the identities of the rape victims in Nepalganj. Whether it was right in doing so is an issue of debate. Probably, AI needed to identify the rape victim women for international credibility. However, it was expected of Nepali media to protect the identities of these victims. A trend has been set by the Nepali

victims by not publishing names and photos in the recent years. But the victims of alleged rape by two senior army officers in Chisapani barrack of Nepalganj were not accorded such respect. The English language Nepali *Times* newspaper even reproduced a picture (#125) of the victim earlier broadcast by Royal Nepal Army on its weekly Nepal Television program. Protecting identities of victims does not mean the press should leave out crimes against women, but to respect the privacy of a victim. If the woman voluntarily wants to reveal her identity, then it is her decision. But in the Chisapani incident, nobody bothered to ask if she wanted to be identified. The government and the army repeatedly inflicted mental torture on the women publicly by showing their pictures and revealing their identities. But the press and human rights organisations should have been more sensitive. Instead of forming different committees to probe on the incident and making the victims to relate their horrific experiences afresh, everyone should respect the credibility of the Amnesty International report to pressurise the government and the army to punish the

press to protect identities of rape

Sikkim

perpetrators of the crime.

Dhruba Adhikary in *Samacharpatra*, 16 January

The Nepali Times is regarded

counted as a quality English language newspaper. It is cited as the paper regularly read by Kathmandu-based diplomats. Since it is edited by a professional and skilled journalist, one doesn't come across too many mistakes or weaknesses in this paper. But there are exceptions. One such exception may be the 3 January issue which has an article on Sikkim. Written by the editor

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himself, this article carries a strapline that says: "Sikkim is one-tenth the size of Nepal, but it seems to be governed ten times better." Maybe. Kunda Dixit went to Sikkim, looked around and there is no reason to doubt what he has to say. But the message of the piece is incongruous. Sikkim is a state of India. Nepal is an independent nation. How can you compare the two? It may sound like Nepal also needs to move in the direction of becoming like Sikkim. Certainly, that was not the editor's message. Timely cautiousness doesn't do anyone harm.

Change bank

Nepal Samacharpatra, 14 January नेपाल समाचारपञ The Finance Ministry has issued directives that all UNDP-assisted programs open their accounts with Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) instead of Standard Chartered Bank as presently. A source at the ministry said that the decision was part of the government's initiative to bring about transparency in foreign aid. Similarly, the UNDP-funded projects in the districts will have to operate their accounts through local branches of the state-owned Nepal Bank Limited and Rastriya Bainjya Bank. Nepal received nearly \$15 million worth assistance in 27 UNDPassisted projects in 2002. Nepal Standard Chartered Bank following the government's directives.

हिमालरा टाइम्स

Huddled masses

Birendra Rawal in Himalaya Times, 13 January

Kailali – Since the government abolished the bonded labour system nearly three years ago, the ex-kamaiya have not been able to enjoy their biggest festival–Maghi. For some, it is a time for merrymaking but for others it is a time for more debt and sorrow. While rich Tharu landlords are preparing to spend lavishly on their biggest festival, freed bonded labourers in far west Nepal are struggling to make ends meet. They are concerned that Maghi, the day when kamaiyas traditionally decide which owners they're going to work for the rest of the year, is here.

Despite the abolishment of the kamaiya tradition by the

government, the tradition of bonded labour is still alive in this part of Nepal. With the approach of Maghi, many landowners are scouting the kamaiya camps in search of bonded labourers. "They're promising a lighter workload," says Ananta Chowdhary, a freed kamaiya of Durgauli VDC - 9 in Jagatpur.

Last week, Chaudhary sent his eldest daughter to work as a dishwasher in a hotel in Tikapur bazaar for a year. With no certainty of food, shelter and an education for his children, Chaudhary was compelled to take the step despite being a freed kamaiya. This year, it's been harder for the kamaiyas in the camps. If there is no help from support organisations, he'll have to put his other children to work.

Tarka Bahadur Sawad of Baliya VDC - 8 is on the lookout for a kamaiya to look after his young children at home. The older children go to school, his wife is busy with home affairs, and he has to look after the business. The family requires house help. As most of the freed kamaiyas don't have the basic necessities it's difficult to talk about their rights, says social worker Laxman Kunwar.

The careless and unplanned manner in which the government announced that bonded labourers were free has resulted in more abject and miserable conditions for the kamaiyas. Previously, the kamaiya were oppressed by their owners, now they are oppressed by the government. More than 300 freed kamaiyas have been given identity cards. Says Jokhram Tharu of Narayanpur VDC "Last year various NGOs and Ingos helped the kamaiyas celebrate Maghi by providing a pig, a goat, rice, lentils, salt and oil to each of the kamaiya camps. This year, there's no sign of them. They must be enjoying their warm houses and big cars at our cost."

CULTURE

FICTION

by GEETANJALI A. LAMA

Kanchi's Tale

t's raining incessantly, a monotonous drone drearily knocking on wooden panes... I lean over the window of the wooden house that I call home... gazing at the myriad colours unfolding under a luminescent grey sky and the smiling gold rimmed eves of Lord Buddha on a hilltop boring down into infinite stretches o stench, filth, poverty and brilliant sunsets.... Blowing away a lingering stray hair, listening to nature's rhythm alternating between a frenzied climactic din on tinned roofs and a stealthy hushed up muffle. This is a world where the rich and the poor lie closely juxtaposed, constantly surveying each other under a microscopic glance, one envying the full throated laughter seeping to the streets below from winding stairwells and the other ...? It's the sanctified grounds of the Pashupati temple; undying expanses of glistening idols gaping blankly into eternity, compassionate and avenging deities freely mingling with a stream of humanity; fat, skinny, poor and wealthy, beggars and tramps. Shiny Mercedes and green Maruti taxis, tooting rickshaws, muddy river water and soap bubbles blending with fragrant incense and fuming pyres and glowering embers of scorched corpses; the remains of someone's aunt, father, son or mother.

When I start the story of Kanchi... I wish to begin from the start, not that her birth was anything near to being momentous, there were no celebrations and no sawing heads off goats and even chickens. She was born because she had to be born... sad but a bitter truth! Her mother kept mourning repeatedly deeply hurt by yet another daughter. "I can't put her back in my stomach, *didi* (sister), so she might as well come out..." I suppose she was an accident formed in a passionless coupling where biological urge prevailed over any emotion that came close to affection and in due course became a newborn wrapped in a bundle of tattered saris, abandoned to suckle her thumb in the corner of a dingy shack while her mother trudged along to the gates of Pashupati temple joining hands in supplication, bowing, rubbing red vermilion paste on her forehead, praying for a son and promising the lord a coconut and undying devotion in return.

Tolling temple bells from the banks of river Bagmati harken the valley of fierce deities into golden shadows, the clanging bells herald no blessed sacred showers but scream through a gathering dusk, splitting, screeching, vibrating over trees sullenly naked and seeping into a surrounding dreariness which by now you know is the world that the likes of Kanchi, my heroine inhabits. A little shack against the wall of my building with our windows curiously staring at each other its as if we view each other's lives through these gaping holes intent and absorbed with faces pressed against the panes. Stripped off all warmth she sits pale today squatting on the floor, a stainless steel plate glaring up at her, scantily furbished with whatever "*ama*" (mother) has been saving all day, a little rice and a lump of watery potato curry. She gazes at it wistfully. She has just come back from her neighbours' house across the street, thankfully for her they have a daughter of her age, her playmate and she has had her fill of yellow haired dolls and brilliant coloured plastic toys and not even the steel plate glinting at her can wrench away the thrill that has enveloped her guts.

"Chaali chapli setting in dewal Couting nummer sikty pho...."

(Charlie Chaplin sitting on the wall Counting numbers sixty-four....)

She hums the rhyme twisting words of a language largely incomprehensible, nibbling at the meal and licking off morsels running down her hands. After the meal she will go down to the river and come back lugging a copper water pot on the crook of her hips, moving a little from side to side with the lightness of a pendulum. Dodging greedy, street dogs milling around the butchers' shop. Smiling at the potbellied shop keeper busy cracking betel nuts while spitting out a flame of red spit on the floor. "*Aye,* Kanchi wants to marry my son," the mustachioed neighbourhood drunk, raucously teases her as she hurries home where nightly chores patiently await her little chapped fingers. "C'mon hurry you good for nothing girl," screams her mother swaying on the doorstep, a heavily pregnant mother of three who by day sells little amulets and flowers on leaf plates on the portals of the temple where the massive bull *Nandi* sits towering on a stocky potbelly, dolefully gazing down at worshippers tripping past.

I get up to familiar sounds in the morning with the loudest blare imaginable from my neighbours' made in China radio churning out latest Hindi film songs very close to my ears and the swoosh of onions on frying pans. It's nine o'clock and every one is hurrying past my door. First comes Santa *didi* freshly powdered with pink lipstick in a bright green sari, proudly touting her children "Bye bye... going to school" the two heavily oiled students call out to neighbours. Maya auntie my landlady waddles down the rickety stairs, sighing and loudly blowing her nose at every step, with betel leaf stained teeth, the official commentator of anything "hanky panky," that is worth a gossip in the narrow nooks and crannies of the neighbourhood, presently on a self imposed exile from things that she deems mundane like, cooking and cleaning. Dedicating herself passionately to match making, *bhajans and puja* (hymns and prayer) and churning out "top of the line" comments on a wide variety of subjects ranging from teenaged pierced

belly buttons, mini skirts and greedy politicians to ongoing scandals and controversies. Maya auntie drops into my room once in awhile on her way to the temple, hastily examines my room, sniffing nosily as if she were on the look out for condoms and scandals, plomps herself cross-legged in my armchair turning over the pages of a magazine and wrinkling her nose at the pictures of actresses in bared midriffs and after a hot cup of chiya (tea) offered out of mere compulsion and habit on my part and heartily welcomed with a gracious smile by her she continues her pilgrimage. Down below in the gates of the temple, Kanchi's mother has started cajoling and coaxing pilgrims hoisting her sari up above her knees and swearing on the entire pantheon of gods and goddesses that her flowers come from the cleanest plots in the valley.

I think Kanchi's mother exists in a microcosm, wrapped up in a vignette of dreams and personal cravings and a deadly desperation to feed her children, relishing bits and pieces of diverse emotions and outbursts of cruelty. Sometimes she brings radish pickles to me and asks me if I could teach Kanchi ABCs and sometimes she releases her rage that must be locked up all inside and once unlocked flows out lava like seething with fury. She is screaming today in the middle of frenzy that her kids do not understand. "Hurry before I tell your father and he thrashes you and move quickly you... lazy girl," she lashes out stinging her poor daughter into instant action. Kanchi runs into the hut and starts vigorously pulling the strings of the straw cradle wherein lies her sister cuddled up in the warmth of tattered rags, faintly smelling

Second in the British Council Short Story Competition (18-35)

of urine- dank and fetid. "Hush baby go to sleep", she mutters, mumbles and dozes crawling close to the coal stove, its soft embers giving off a feverish heat... the only living warmth in the shack. It's night this little study of tragedy and misery of my time must be sleeping, probably dreaming of holding a little yellow haired and blue eyed doll, softly sighing and tossing involuntarily closing her ears to the sound of creaking wooden planks and occasional grunts; her father and mother are at it again... Making babies... So many babies and so little rice....

Little THOUGHTS, few LONGINGS, innocent DREAMS and A PLATEFUL OF HOT STEAMING FOOD and probably boring into her drowsy soul are blue eyed dolls and English rhymes as she consigns herself to sleep and the all pervading labyrinth of noise; barking dogs, a restless river, quivering wooden planks and noisy grunts. Night draws to an end... her night as usual has been an ordeal puffed up with trifle heartaches and a half full stomach.

My Kanchi has joined her mother they are allies, sharing a gunny bag on the floor of the temple complex selling flowers. Running after tourists and worshippers alike tugging at the corner of brilliant red saris, handing out amulets she has been taught to say "Six rupees only madam please, buy, please," if things go well she will pocket at least three rupees and happily strut back to her mother who closely follows the progress of her young protege. Kanchi's father, Rame dai an irresponsible man, rather a Casanova in his sober state, quite handsome in a rugged way, flaunting his looks to get sympathy from the fairer sex, an out and out male chauvinist pig, beats up people at the drop of a hat and apologises for his wrong doings when sober, cries broken heartedly when drunk, perpetually in a state of stupor. He sits close by drinking tea, letting life slide by... Nonchalance suits him well. Leaning on the table of his early morning habitual den "She is six... old enough to help," he mutters at the old women huddled together on the doorsteps of the dilapidated Pashupati old home, nodding their heads in unison. Wisdom and age oozing from every word uttered, senior citizens, the gnarled habitants of the Pashupati old home come together for a biweekly ritual of prayers and hymns, a cantankerous loud affair with hooting conch shells, jangling of bells and sudden outbursts of "Hare Shiva." They will totter back gaily to their tiny corners with armful of alms from the wealthy to pacify wrathful deities, shooing off halfdressed street urchins and familiar beggars waiting on the stairs ways to jump on the old selfish hags. At dusk the river Bagmati swells dwindles and turns murky washing away the feet of corpses as a red bridal sari torn away from a dead woman reluctantly trails along. As evening settles down and the temple silhouette blends into the night... I hear Kanchi singing

"Aija chuneri chunu munu chunu mun aija,

"Come pretty sleep come

Aija chuneri aija ho baba hoho.'

Come to my little baby."

An ancient lullaby that has echoed within walls of marble laden homes and fragrant white palaces lined with Jacaranda trees hummed by fragile bejeweled mothers in imported nighties. Her hands are busy and intent pushing the cradle suspended from a tin ceiling... I hear the familiar Creak! Creak! Creak! The beams in the ceiling sing out in rhythmic protest as the grown up sister of six puts her sister to sleep.

Kanchi's mother has stopped making her routine dish washing calls on me and when I meet her occasionally on the temple stairs she smiles awkwardly, bursting and swelling with her pregnancy, she tells me it's the... "Lords work," raising her eyes towards the sky and confiding... "*Didi* what to tell you, I have nothing to do in this matter, my husband wants a son. Kanchi sits close by looking up with eyes that are little dream pools of hope suspended... fluttering, waking...dying... spinning, her fingers hovering over the wilted flowers.

It is early morning and I wake up to an agitated noise and loud shouts from the street below and get up, leaning over the window to see a small crowd gathered behind the tea stall. Animated gesticulating and loud shouts from below. Sarita *didi* comes screaming up the stairs spluttering, "Come quick... somebody has thrown a newborn baby in a sack, it's dead." "*Hare! Shiva!* ... Bad times are here... Imagine! Doing it so close to the temple... may the witch get sores and die..." yells my landlady spitting arrows of white saliva on the ground below, hitting her palms against a leathery forehead and leaning over the railing and directing a "I told you so" look at the increasing volume of bystanders below and gaping tenants. I look down at a world suddenly turned awry, mad and bewildering.

Monsoon has long gone from the valley foraging for victims in stranger places falling on unknown tin roofs and courtyards. It's a sunny Tuesday in the valley, my neighbours have roused themselves up, down below people squat bundled around teashops, transistors gaily blaring out film songs

and business is in full swing with the vegetable vendors and flower sellers. It has been many months since I last saw Kanchi and her mother. I was told in a conspiratorial tone by Maya auntie that Rame dai had taken them back to Panchthar, their village in the hills and Kanchi's mother was accused of strangling a live baby girl and would serve ten years in a prison in Charkhal Adda, Dilli Bazar in Kathmandu. She was found inside the temple premises clutching her dazed children close to her breasts in a state of delirium, smelling like a *sutkeri* (woman who has just delivered) raving and ranting at the gods and accusing Rame daiÖ who always wanted a son swearing on the stony

idols .that she had not killed the stony idols.... That she had not killed the baby... she was innocent! As I write this, I wonder where Kanchi is. She is most probably running bare feet along a muddy path with hair streaming in the wind, down to the village school with a book tucked under her arm. Squatting for hours in a shop handing out betel nuts to customers and keeping coins under a mat or sweeping the floors of a big house and given a square meal in return. Well! Who knows she might still be in the streets of Kathmandu, salvaging plastic bags and bottles from under a pile of rubble by day and by night humming lullabies and gently patting her sisters to sleep while Rame *dai* looks on nonchalantly... letting life slide by...

noisily sucking at a Khukhuri brand cigarette and flicking ashes on the ground.

A pile of . puppies

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ANIMAL KINGDOM



One page from the memoirs of an unaffiliated aid worker.

t was to be a great day in the life of an unaffiliated aid worker in Nepal, and today's mission was to help a dozen puppies noticed yesterday piled in the mound in the lot behind my office. A dozen puppies huddled together for warmth, while 3 or more mothers with udders watched from afar or wandered out in busy Pulchok in search of scraps, invariably being kicked or beaten away from the open-air tea shops or chicken stands. I was ready, and armed with the following: two cans of dog food purchased from a neighbourhood foo-foo grocery store at Rs100 each, a cheap metal spoon also purchased there for Rs35, and one pair of rubber gloves. I came prepared to help the down-trodden, sheathed in rubber, and with a silver spoon other than my own.

I find 12 street urchins playing next to a pile of 12 one-month old puppies of various colors and conditions of health. All of which were very excited to see me—a white boy on a motorcycle, looking vaguely like the Marlboro Man. Their excitement increased as I started opening a can and produced a spoon. Disappointment quickly ripped through the crowd once they realised the food was not for them, but for the dogs. Still, one small boy was deeply honored when I handed him the task of feeding the puppies and the mothers who were starting to growl at my closeness to their pups

The young lad clearly had to resist the urge to sample the can himself. I then donned my rubber gloves and began picking up the pups and placing them in my specially equipped side boxes, ready to be whisked away to the SPCA Animal Shelter of Nepal where a doctor was waiting, but I was suddenly and surprisingly stopped by a few elderly residents of the neighbourhood.

"What are you doing with those puppies," asked a woman in guttural Nepali.

Luckily, I had brought my friend Prakash from the nearby teashop for translation support. I instructed Prakash to tell the rather large and well-dressed woman of our plan: to bring the dogs to the shelter, get them medical treatment, and then to find good homes for them where they would live happily ever after. Well, she was nearly-violently opposed to the idea, as she waved her hands telling us that while we could bring a vet to the dogs, the dogs were not going to a vet.

I had assumed the dogs were stray. After all, I had seen one of the puppies just yesterday running in the traffic. She gestured to her house, "The puppies belong to us." Feeling confused and well aware of the Nepali neighborhood-care system of stray animals I asked her: "But who exactly is taking care of them, who is feeding them, who is keeping them warm?"

She replied with a shrug and a gesture that indicated that she would share no more information with this *kuire*. But I had one more question for her: "And just who is looking after the puppies like that one." I pointed to the rotting corpse of one who had not-so recently departed the litter. With that she stomped off.

And so did I, puppy-less. I wondered just what I was doing in this country as an unaffiliated aid worker trying to save starving puppies. Once home, for the rest of the afternoon I sat contemplating Buddha's teachings on Idiot Compassion—with an emphasis on the idiot part. \blacklozenge

Jigme Gaton is the pen-name of a rarely-employed American "aid" worker in Nepal. Despite his abortive rescue attempt, the Society of the Prevention to Cruelty–Nepal, SPCAN is making a difference to help people and animals who suffer needlessly everyday. spca_nepal@hotmail.com

14 _{сіту}

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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- Paintings by Stina Haldorsen at Siddhartha Art Gallery. 11AM-6PM from 10-19 January. 411122
- EVENTS
- CAN Info Tech 2003 Experts, professionals, buyers, sellers, manufacturers and suppliers provide a forum for networking and exchange of ideas in Information Technology. Technical seminars and workshops. 23-28 January 2003 at Birendra International Convention Centre, New Baneswore. Book in advance: www.can.org.np
- * Au Coeur du Mensonge Showing at Alliance Francaise, 2PM Sunday January 19. Free. Moliere Auditorium, Alliance Francaise, Thapathali. 241163
- * Weekly dialogues on life and living and borrowing of books/audio tapes at K Study Centre,
- Swoyambhu, open 2PM-6PM every Saturday. Contact Kumar at 279712. Monks from Lo Manthang to Create and Destroy Sacred Sand Mandala. The sand mandala brings benefits not only to the makers, but also to the donors and viewers, 17-19 January, Hotel Ambassador, Lazimpat. No admission, but donations accepted. 410089



MUSIC

- ♦ Live music by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 ½ ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel. 414336
- Rusty Nails presents their blues, jazz and beyond, 7.30PM every Friday at The Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel, Battisputali. 479488.
- Sur Sudha and friends performs "Shukrabar" at Patan Museum, Patan Durbar Square, 5 PM onwards 17 January, Rs 350 (Rs 600 with "Shukrabar" CD)
- Cadenza Collective Live, 17 January 7.30PM onwards. Entrance Rs 300 inclusive of welcome drink. Specially discounted menu at the Jazz Bar Shangrila Hotel, Lazimpat. Contact Aishwarya.412999

DRINKS

- Kiwi Sensations Cocktails, mocktails & desserts made with organic Kiwis 11AM till midnight daily at The Piano Lounge and Bar, Hotel Yak & Yeti. 248999 ext 2865
- Paddy Foley's Irish Pub A wide range of drinks and food. Live music on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday nights. 416096. Rang Mahal Buy one drink and get one free from the house of Seagrams and Carlsberg Beer. Dinner
- and performances by Kathmandu's top dancers. 7-10 PM, Hotel Vaishali. 413968/ 423878

FOOD

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- * Oriental Express From the fragrant spice coast of Southeast Asia...Fiery Thai Cuisine to subtle Japanese. Wednesday nights at The Sunrise Café, Hotel Yak & Yeti. 248999
- * Patan Museum Café Mixed menu, garden seating. Lunch only, 11AM-2PM. 25 percent off with Summit Card. 526271
- Rox Restaurant Enjoy Italian cuisine for lunch on Sundays with a wide selection of antipasti, main course, varieties of pizzas and a dessert buffet at Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 491234
- * Taste of Beijing Roast duck and other Chinese meat, fish and vegetarian delicacies. Beijing Roast Duck Restaurant, Birendra International Convention Centre. 468589
- * Traditional Newari and Nepali Cuisine 6 to 20 course meals at Krishnarpan Restaurant. Lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. 479488 extn: 230
- * Tukche Thakali Kitchen Buckwheat, barley, bean, and dried meat specialities. Also brunch with porridge and pancakes, all raw material from Tukche village. Darbar Marg.
- Vegetarian specialities and clay oven pizza at Stupa View Restaurant & Terrace, Boudha. 480262 Wood fired pizzas, cocktails and coffee at the Roadhouse Café, Thamel.

GETAWAYS

- Tea House Combo Room, breakfast, Nepali thali dinner, swimming, jacuzzi. Rs 700 per head on twin
- sharing for Nepalis and expats, Tea House Inn, Nagarkot. 410432 Sirdwatching, short hikes at Bandipur. Rs 1,850 per person with dinner and breakfast, Rs 925 per
- child 5-14 years Shivapuri Heights Cottage, info@escapes2nepal.com, 370616 The Secret of Kathmandu Package Local residents buy one night for \$99.00 plus tax and get the
- second night at 50%, single/double at Dwarika's Hotel. 4/9488 The Great Godavari Getaway Special weekend packages including room with breakfast and dinner, 25
- percent discount on health club facilities. Godavari Village Resort. 560675 Writing Retreat Full board package. Aesthetic living, innovative thinking, creative writing and nature at
- Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha. 375280 * Bardia Bonkers Freshwater dolphins, giant tigers, elephants, safaris, rafting, evening cocktails,
- traditional food. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com. Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge Rs 2750 per person per night (Tax included) for accommodation, meals, arrival and departure transfers from Bijaypur, walks, bar snacks and swimming. 01-361500

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com

NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



Those expecting an end to the devastating fog in the tarai will be disappointed to learn that it will persist at least till the weekend. As can be clearly seen in this satellite picture taken Wednesday morning, the fog blankets the entire Indo-Gangetic plains from Lahore to Guwahati. The only hope lies in a weakening of the highpressure zone over Tibet that is drawing icy Siberian winds rom the north into South Asia. A fresh westerly front is emerging in Afghanistan and may enter western Nepal by Friday. That could see the end of the fog, but not the haze. Expect some light snow over the high mountains this weekend, isolated drizzles across the midhills. Morning frost and fog in Kathmandu valley.

KATHMANDU VALLEY





Sage Publications, 2003

The flaws and contradictions in the process of post-colonial nation building in many countries of South and Southeast Asia have been highlighted by the intractable and continuing phenomenon of ethnic conflict. This volume incisively analyses six such ethnic conflicts in the region in order to understand not only the internal destabilisation and havoc that they have created, but also their dynamics and

BOOKWORM

Jihadis in Jammu and Kashmir: A Portrait Gallery K. Santhanam, Sreedhar, Sudhir Saxena



tanzeenms



Vishnu on Freud's Desk Editors T.G. Vaidyanathan and Jeffrey J. Kripal Oxford University Press, 2002

Part One deals briefly with the origins of the Kashmir dispute. Part Two is a handy reference with portraits of 31

Freudian psychoanalysis, commonly critiqued for being rooted in a male-centric, Central European ethos, has surprisingly been an extremely fertile ground for the study of the Indian psyche. This volume brings together a rich variety of classical and contemporary writings in aspects of Hindu culture, and places these within the frames of understanding of psychoanalysis.

Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 227711, mandala@ccsl.com.np

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"clash of civilisations" genre of which this year's low-budget hit, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* is one. When people from a culture largely defined by Bollywood find themselves in an environment that is saturated with Hollywood, the result is a state of mind that celebrates these two seemingly disparate worlds. A "Bollywood/ Hollywood is a madcap love-song to both East **JAINEPALCINEMA** and West with Bollywood music, Hollywood 12PM, 3PM, 6PM choreography, North American locations. And the Actors? Bollywood's best! Telephone booking: 442220 From Friday, 10 January onwards. Online booking www.jainepal.com



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GAMES

17 - 23 JANUARY 2003 NEPALI TIMES #128

An ancient Nepali board game enjoys a revival in Switzerland,

in the tournament, eventually winning the Bronze Tiger. Silver was won by newcomer Martin Moser of Bern who played an excellent game against Daenu Wyss, which ended in a stalemate after 10 minutes. Due to time limitations, Crazy David was forced to determine a winner by coin toss, which Martin lost.

played well against all opponents

and was the highest-ranked woman

There was even a Green Trophy for the worst player, 15year- old Samuel from Wallis in southern Switzerland. Plans are already afoot for the next *Baghchal* Tournament which will be held in May in the Bernese Oberland. "I love this game and the way it brings people together," Crazy David told us.

Back in the land of its origin, baghchal is in slow but steady decline. A tournament was held in

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A foreign-owned Nepali company,

Janakpur during the Panchayat days, recalls organiser Visma Iwalananda Rajopadhyaya. But since then there have been no concerted efforts to revive this ancient game. Legend has it that none other than Gautam Buddha himself was a baghchal fan. The game has a strategy similar to chess and drought. There are 25 spaces on a *baghchal* grid connected diagonally or on a straight line. These are the only valid lines of movement the challengers may take. The *bagh* attempt to leap over and devour lonely, unprotected bakhri. The *bakhri* find their strength in numbers. They throng together,

attempting to surround the bagh

real wild tigers in the tarai,

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and limit their movement. Just like

baghchal tigers are constantly on

the prowl for food. If the goats are

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SRADDHA BASNYAT

rom the Himalaya to the Alps, baghchal has now traversed the continents with the First Swiss Bagh Chal Tournament held in Bern last week where 200 participants battled it out for the Bronze Tiger Trophy.

The tournament was organised by "Crazy" David Levine, who became a *baghchal* aficionado after a visit to Nepal. He sells baghchal sets and organised the tournament in an old church in the Swiss capital. Bagchal is thought to have been discovered by Himalayan herders, whose occupation the game mimics. Shepherds spent many hours playing baghchal on a grid scraped

into the dirt, using larger stones to

represent *bagh* (tigers) and smaller

bebbles as *bakhri* (goats). In Nepal, *ighchal* is played much the same way it has been for centuries: school children scribble a board on paper during breaks or we find grids etched into dirt patches. Today, the baghchal grid is carved into a wooden or brass game box to sell to tourists.

At the Bern tournament last week, Raya Gurung from Gorkha advanced to the semifinals with brilliant moves only to be beaten by his Swiss wife, Ruth Kaeser. Ruth

R BEREKAK GAETE

Das Strategie Spiel aus Nepal

How to play Baghcha

Requirements

• A family of 4 Tigers (bagh) and a herd of 20 Goats (bakhri) • The game board is a 25-point grid

Positions....

Baghchal is a challenge between predator and prey:

The Tigers assume their positions, one prowling on each corner of the board. One Goat appears in the distance, cautiously occupying a vacant space on the board. Following the placement of each Goat, a Tiger stalks along the line of movement.

Note: All twenty Goats must first appear before any may move from its position. The objective is SURVIVAL!

Q To satisfy their hunger, the Tigers must "eat" a total of five Goats. Leaping over a Goat, the Tiger devours its prey. (A variation to the game may be played where the Tigers eat all the Goats.)

To protect themselves, Goats throng together, surrounding the Tigers and limiting their movement. Tigers win when five Goats are "eaten." Goats win when all Tigers are surrounded, unable to leap over and eat the Goats or make regular movements.

Prowl or Press?

One Tiger is on the prowl at a time, moving from one space to an adjacent space along a connecting line. To get one's Goat, the Tiger leaps over an unprotected Goat along a line of movement on to an open space. The devoured Goat is removed from the board. Once all Goats have appeared on the field, one Goat per turn moves to an adjacent space along a line of movement. Tigers cannot leap over more

than one Goat so Goats must press together to protect themselves. Note: Tigers cannot leap over Tigers or around corners and Goats cannot jump at all. Life in the jungle continues, alternating moves between Tiger and Goat...

Strategies ìGhost Goatsî

occupying a space, restricting the Tigers' movements. ìCircle of Deathî



- Goats can have the Tigers by their tails, without physically
- To lure the Goats into their grasp, Tigers cordon the Goats, leaving two vacant spaces in front of each Tiger.





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Vijay Kumar's makeover

hat does it take for Nepal's formerly most-arrogant journalist to suddenly go soft on us? Those who knew Vijay Kumar Panday 15 years ago

will wonder when they meet him today where that legendary swagger and haughty disdain have gone. Partly it is spiritualism.

Vijay has now become a devotee of Sai Baba and the Buddhist guru, Choikinima Rimpoche which has transformed his personality. "You may find it hard to believe," Vijay tells us, "but I was always an introverted person. I used my brashness to mask my shyness."

Still, who can forget his combative and blunt questioning of Amitabh Bachhan and some senior Indian ministers in the early 90s? Thanks to these highprofile television interviews in the pre-cable age, Vijay Kumar developed a reputation for being an interviewer who would chew people alive in the studio. Even senior political figures thought twice before agreeing to appear on his shows.

But watching him these days on his Monday night show, Dishanirdesh on Nepal Television, Vijay Kumar looks like he has reincarnated from a carnivore into a herbivore. "What my gurus did was point

out the goodness in me. I think I have become less arrogant, less of a hypocrite and I think I am a genuinely better person. Earlier, my ambition was to become fantastically famous fantastically fast. Now, I just want to be a good human being."

Easier said than done, but this fellow mellows with age. He has now launched Sara, Sarans & Vijay, a television production house named after people alive anymore? •

his daughter, wife and himself. Vijay has partnered with Siddharth S Rana of the Soaltee Group to set up SS&V, and it aims to produce news and current affairs for some of the four new television channels starting out in Kathmandu this year. He reasons: "The tv market has opened up, and people are looking for sharp, incisive and independent content." But promise not to chew



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Which brings us, finally to the looks. suffice to say that unlike other cars, it won't get lost in the airport parking lot.



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