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Because of the holidays there
will be no issue of this paper on
14 October. The next issue of
Nepali Times will be on 21 October.



Times NEPAL nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll # 268

Q. As what kind of a festival do Nepalis primarily regard Dasain?

Total votes:3,009

Category	Percentage
Secular Nepal	6.5 %
Religio-cultural	27.6 %
Family-social	28.5 %
All of the above	35.5 %
None of the above	2.1 %
Don't know	1.9 %

Weekly Internet Poll # 269. To vote go to: www.nepalilimes.com

Q. How would you characterise the situation in Nepal one month after the ceasefire?

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NARESH NEWAR

IN BUDDHA'S BIRTHPLACE: Saleha Fakir's husband and his two brothers were killed by Maoists last year in a village near Lumbini, she now takes care of her children and 29 members of her clan. (See: 'Homeward bound' p 9)

The next move

Two months of ceasefire left to build a peace process and the clock is ticking

KUNDA DIXIT

Just about everyone agrees that King Gyanendra is contemplating a new move but no has a clue what it will be.

Trial balloons from the royal regime could indicate he is considering the option of scrapping the constitution altogether, after all there isn't much left to destroy. Hardline army brass make no secret of their preference for a ban on parties and still seem to have the king's ear.

More moderate advisers, however, argue that the royal takeover instead of helping crush the Maoists has actually put the monarchy in serious jeopardy and have told the king he should quickly backtrack.

The question is whose advice

will the king take? He has been on the road constantly for the past two months and has met a slew of businessmen and advisers. He has admitted to them his regime has failed to deliver. Exactly three years after 4 October, 2002 and seven months after 1 February 2005 things are not going according to plan and King Gyanendra knows it.

"The capable are not loyal and the loyal are not capable," he was quoted as saying during a recent get-together. But the king retains a deep distrust towards the political parties, appears to believe that the Maoist-party link is a plot hatched by the India-US-UK and still seems to believe he can go at it alone.

The king's immediate agenda is to reduce domestic and

international pressure on his regime. A reshuffle after Dasain to induct less-tainted faces from centrist parties could be in the cards, but few will want to be seen as being coopted. He could follow this up with an announcement of local and general elections after municipal polls to show the parties as recalcitrant.

The king didn't meet the EU Troika, which warned on Thursday of "a strong risk of political collapse". The Troika statement added: "The changes of 1 February have been self-defeating." It said the Maoist ceasefire offered an opportunity for the government and that there may be a role for third-party involvement.

In meetings with the

Europeans, party stalwarts rejected elections outright but there will be pressure on them to contest given their thaw in ties with the Maoists.

Elsewhere, efforts are under way to forge unity among constitutional forces. The US-based Carter Centre is organising a two-week retreat in Boston between selected representatives of the seven-party alliance and monarchists next week. If the parties and the palace can iron out their differences and give the king a face-saving way to climb down, the hope is that they could begin negotiations with the Maoists at an international venue. Unless someone sabotages it first.

The Maoists' unilateral ceasefire ends on 3 December, and despite sabre rattling by radical royals there is hope the next eight weeks can be used to build a lasting peace process. Although under strong pressure from its republican rank-and-file the NC and UML could still give the king a face-saving way to backtrack to a constitutional monarchy while there is still time. ●

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DON'T

We're not mind readers. And you have to be these days to predict with any degree of certainty what the next royal move may be.

October Fourth, 2002 may have been driven by a genuine belief that such intervention was needed to save the country from the self-destructive activities of the political parties and the reckless anarchy unleashed by the Maoists. That is the charitable explanation.

But in the past three years it has become abundantly clear that even if that was the plan, the palace has strayed from it. The decisions since have been so retrogressive, the trial-and-error method so erratic, and the end result so devastating for democracy and the nation that it is hard to believe such irrationality is deliberate. The monarchy may need to be saved not from the republicans in the political parties or in the rebel ranks, but from itself.

Tulsi Giri's trial balloon in Biratnagar and the less articulate ramblings of his colleagues have set alarm bells ringing so loudly that ironically even neo-radicals in the mainstream parties who were calling for scrapping the constitution are rallying around in its support now. There has also been a chorus of outrage from the party leadership, opinion makers, genuine monarchists and political moderates. If Giri's scorn for the constitution was indeed a trial balloon it has been pierced in no uncertain terms. The message to the king from just about everyone is: "Don't do what we think you are thinking of doing."

The spontaneous respect Nepal's had for the monarchy has in just three short years turned into a situation where the palace needs to rent crowds and make school children line up for televised street walks. The monarchy needs to gain back the respect of the people but this is not the way to do it.

There has been ample proof in the past three years that level-headedness is not the forte of the absolute obscurantists who are taking the kingdom back to the days when partial solar eclipses were holidays. But we believe even they are not so daft as to scrap the constitution and take absolute control. But if experience since October Fourth has taught us anything it is not to underestimate their capacity to be rash and obstinate.

The Friday before Dasain has traditionally been the preferred occasion to spring nasty surprises on the people. But this Dasain, let it instead be a surprise gift of peace and democracy.

The art of giving

A new kind of Dasain sacrifice: self-sacrifice

I haven't celebrated Dasain in the almost 17 years since my husband's death. Since then I pretty much keep low on social events because initially I couldn't cope with the responsibilities of being single. Now, my two girls are married and do their own

GUEST COLUMN
Rita Thapa



things but we do sit together to eat a meal as a family. Also since I'm a practising Buddhist, I do not believe in animal sacrifice.

Initially as a Hindu widow, I fled from its ritualistic demands because you are expected to fulfil a certain role. You can't be fighting for feminist principles in such personal family and social situations. I respect all religions and if there had been teachers who could educate me more on

Hindu philosophy I may have stayed with it. However, after my husband's death I realised what it was like not to be in the mainstream.

If widowhood happens at a ripe old age so what if they get you a white sari or yellow tika but when it happens at 35 and you have to look after three children and hold your own? It strips you not only of colours but of your very dignity and esteem. So luckily I found solace in Buddhism. I chose to study and educate myself and I luckily connected with my spiritual teachers. It felt like I had finally come home.

I created a space for myself that was more conducive to my being and my work and this supported me. At the same time, if you go with clarity and understanding you can shield

yourself. What worth are ritual practices which insult your dignity and self esteem and are not at all compassionate and tolerant?

Our class system is very defined. I used to see my father feed many hungry people during Dasains past. We gave through our cultural and religious practices. Traditionally philanthropy was ingrained in the institution of religion but with modernisation we disengaged ourselves from that and didn't replace it with something else. There is no more pressure to give. That is why education and awareness of philanthropy is very important. All of us receive so much from our communities, we have to find a way to give back as well.

Perhaps there are not many who give but there are some and



DEEPENDRA BAJRACHARYA

LETTERS

STREET WALKS

I am appalled of the writers that contradict themselves. While the visit to Mangal Bajar cited as a 'PR event' is endorsed by D Mahat from Baltimore USA in support of Kunda Dixit's write up in 'The Royal Trek' (#266) in a subsequent sentence he writes: 'Why did the king wait for 7.5 months to go to the streets? Why did he not go to the people on 1 February itself?' So what's the problem D Mahat of Baltimore? If the king had gone earlier then it is fine and not a 'PR event'? Is it a question of timing or is it a question of the act?

**Samjhana Poudyal,
Nairobi, Kenya**

● Regarding all the letters published in your feedback regarding the royal trek I beg to differ to some misconceptions those letters tell the public. People ask in their letters 'instead of building something constructive with the money spent on arches, why not spend it on development? Why doesn't the king do this? Why not that?' Instead, I ask these people why not tell the political parties not to destroy the sidewalk railings? Why not let the people go to their offices in peace? Why not let the students go to their schools? Questions are all we have. Lets not be biased. Democracy doesn't necessarily need yellow journalism.

Prasanna KC, Kathmandu

● The overwhelming response about to Kunda Dixit's article 'The royal trek' makes me want

to put something to you:

1 When the political parties block the streets and burn tyres in the middle of the road, Nepali intelligesia stays quiet. Are we so afraid of their hooliganism that we take upon ourselves everything the parties throw at us? If it is the king's turn to walk along the streets of his kingdom, why such a hue and cry?

2 The welcoming crowd during the king's trek might have been school children. Granted. But look at the crowd the political parties manage to pull: career students who have nothing better to do than make their rounds from one campus to another spreading mayhem and arson on behalf of their party bosses.

3 One gets the feeling that the agitating parties are merely bargaining for the power. Do they really want to save democracy? I doubt it. Just look at their record while they were in charge.

4 the king is able to rouse nationalistic sentiments among us. We feel patriotic when he is around. Good on him. The parties, on the other hand, seek Indian assistance in everything they do. Why do they invite the Indians to meddle in Nepal's internal affairs? Answer: they want help to get back to power so they can hand our natural resources to them.

Sridhar Ghimire, email

● After reading 'The royal trek', I couldn't help thinking that since the country is also his, the king walk around as much as he pleases. His ancestors took the initiative to build the country

while ours hopefully helped. That is the most we can claim. If my father decided to walk, jump, run or just inspect the house his father built, what right do I have to complain? While all the hoopla about the king's walks is going on, no one seems bothered about Indian leaders who came to our country to lecture us. Is India so prosperous, so dignified and so peaceful that these leaders, virtually unknown in their own country, have the time to come here and lecture us? What is even more unfortunate is the undue media coverage that followed. While the Indian leaders were here, they didn't bother to talk about Bhutani refugees, or the encroachment of hundreds of sq km of land near the Nepal-india border, or the mistreatment of Nepalis by Indian security in Nepali territory. No siree, they came here to lecture us on democracy.

P Chhetri, email

SANCTUARY

Nepali tour operators should learn not to discriminate against Asian tourists and western tourists ('Peace sanctuary', #267). With more than two billion people across both sides of the border, Nepal could reap a good

harvest of tourists with proper public relations.

**Sandhya Amatya,
Philadelphia, USA**

● I see September tourist arrivals have gone up. If things go well we might total 250,000 this year, half of the total for 1999. Tourism is now more a hobby for the few than a national industry for the many. Like many other things tourism to Nepal has become 'Kathmandu centric'. Your page one picture (#267) should have featured Hanuman Dhoka Square not a Chitwan elephant safari. I was in Pokhara last week and Chitwan before that. Both are hurting badly and have been for the last few of years. My guess for hotel and lodge occupancy and trek numbers in those areas will be running at no more than 30 percent of what they were. The implications are grave.

Tourists are coming to Kathmandu for sightseeing Indians for the casinos, going onto Tibet and Bhutan (Incidentally how many doing that are booked into the country twice and count as two tourists not one, as argued by Hans Nix

in Letter section, #263). The trekkers that come are going to the Khumbu, which will again become overcrowded and problematic with a lack of bedspace, pricey food and accommodation, and flight delays to and from Lukla. The impression is set: Kathmandu and the Khumbu/Sagarmatha National Park areas are safe, the remainder of Nepal is not. Sad, because that is not true.



We can't pretend there are no problems but trekkers to the Annapurnas, Manang, Langtang or elsewhere will face nothing worse than perhaps a request for a 'donation'. Also the road from Mugling to Narayanghat is now fine and driving to Chitwan or Pokhara is once again a pleasure. So let us all try to give Pokhara and Chitwan a boost

I'd like to think that the numbers are growing.

When we look back at the old Nepal of our forefathers we see philanthropy was ingrained: people built *satals*, temples, roads, water taps. Today, people who are privileged tend to become self-indulgent. Globalisation has turned us into individual consumers and this can literally eat up all wandering beings who are have lost their traditional moorings but have not yet been inducted into modern philanthropy. This is why the organisation Tewa was begun—to promote philanthropy for social justice and the empowerment of Nepali women.

At a time when there are so many people displaced by the conflict, if each and every one of us extended support to one family from the displaced community and helped them have a better celebration this Dasain it would mean all Nepalis could be taken care of.

It is the same in society as it is in politics: you can wake up someone who is asleep but you can't wake up someone who is pretending to be asleep. Each of us must lead by example. It begins and ends with every individual Nepali and that is how brick by brick we can together build a self-reliant, just and equitable society. ●

Rita Thapa is the founder of Tewa, the Nepali Women's Fund, and is presently engaged in peace-building work through Nagarik Aawaj

Film South Asia's fitting finale this week of documentaries depicting violent conflict titled 'Barrel of the Gun' showed that terror like other human emotions is a universal trait. The immobilising fear that an unpredictable enemy generates has become a part of everyday life all over the world.



Insurgency and counter-insurgency operations have no difference other than the geographical location of the perpetrators of excesses. The military and the militants are often exact opposites, mirror images of each other. Dhruva Basnet's *The Killing Terraces* and Ellen Perry's *The Fall of Fujimori* are differently told stories of a similar reality.

In retrospect, the transformation of Abimael Guzmán's Sendero Luminoso into Pushpa Kamal Dahal's Prachanda Path in Nepal was a historic necessity. Hisotrians have been prophesising a Peruvian parallel in Nepal for more than 10 years. But will the Fujimori story repeat itself here? Developments since the sudden dissolution of parliament by King Gyanendra on 22 May 2002 point towards a parallel trajectory of autogolpe and *Fujimorism*.

Nepal and Peru share striking

A Peruvian parallel

From Shining Path to Prachanda Path

similarities. The Himalaya and the Andes are two of the harshest mountainous terrains in the world. Basking in the glory of the Inca civilisation till the end of sixteenth century, Peruvians thought they had historic justification for their hubris, primitivism, intolerance, xenophobia, jingoism, and totalitarianism. The Sugauli Treaty was a diplomatic compromise, but many Nepalis choose to believe that it was our military might that kept the British at bay. Delusions of greatness are inherently dangerous, it dulls people into doings things that they wouldn't do if they knew that past glory is no guarantee of future survival.

Nepali revolutionaries also had this curious affinity to an insurgency raging on the other side of the planet in Peru. But maybe there was a reason for this similarity. After all, Comrade Gonzalo was a professor of Kantian philosophy, a cousin of Vladimiro Montesinos (their grandmothers were sisters), the man from SIN and an achiever who had joined the ranks of the oppressed out of a sense of the obligation of nobility.

Kathmandu's chattering classes are in similar awe of the 'first-class-first' degrees of Baburam Bhattarai and his JNU PhD. We all know that the academic achievements of Badal, Bhattarai and Prachanda never swayed the Maoists away from excesses.



In Peru, Fujimori's US degrees and his tv persona helped him counter the charisma of Guzmán but the twin pillars of his regime's stability were the unflinching support of the IMF-World Bank and the Peruvian military. The constructive monarchy in Nepal is similarly blessed, but with an important caveat: no matter how hard he tries, King Gyanendra's carefully orchestrated road shows are no match for Fujimori's street-savvy populism. Fujimori tells the camera why he made the imprisoned Guzmán wear prison stripes even though Peruvian jails didn't have such uniforms: to make him look like a captured villain as seen in Hollywood movies.

Fujimori cultivated the press, shackled the judiciary and befriended activists in an unorthodox style. King Gyanendra had to rely on the services of Sher

Bahadur Deuba to offer apologia and is now depending on Tulsi Giri to hardsell his ambition. Here at least there is no comparison: for the Nepali media and rights activists, autogolpe had no future from the day it began.

Ironically, Fujimori's fall began the day he captured Guzmán. Had he read the writing on the wall, he would have changed tactics and reversed gear, but he took an authoritarian course. Finally, he had to flee into political asylum in the land of his ancestors where he now leads a life of quiet leisure, a minor celebrity in Tokyo's social circuit.

Peru's brutal insurgency and its ruthless suppression hold at least seven important lessons for us in Nepal:

- 1 Legitimacy doesn't come out of the barrel of a gun anymore, anywhere
- 2 Delivery of promised political results is no guarantee of the success of an authoritarian regime
- 3 Every leader has to face the consequences of his actions no matter how unchallenged he initially appears
- 4 In the court of public opinion, perception is the most powerful proof of guilt
- 5 The world keeps a careful vigil on all dictators
- 6 There are no waivers in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- 7 History treats its challengers with unconcealed contempt ●

for non- trekkers and point trekkers north and west. Not east.

Robin Marston, Sanepa

● I look forward every week to logging onto the internet and reading in *Nepali Times* or nepalnews.com all about Nepal which is for better or worse my favourite place in the world. This time I came across the letter by Sam Bleha ('Candid camera', #267) that struck a chord with me and brought back memories from 1997 of my first glide down over the Kathmandu Valley on a Thai International jet and touching down at Tribhuban International Airport. Three things stand out:

Firstly, the 'magic carpet' ride over an enchanted faraway land, walled in by mountains and under a sunny sky and the many greens pastures and crops, red brick kilns and buildings, winding roads and paths with a few slow moving vehicles and people, and a general aura of peacefulness . Secondly, the contrasting and overwhelming impression of chaos upon exit from the airport into crowds waiting for transport into the city, mixed inextricably it seemed with innumerable spectators and would-be porters and helpers of all sorts. Thirdly, as so aptly described by Bleha that inflight announcement just before landing that "the use of camera over Nepal and at Kathmandu airport is strictly prohibited". Of course, Nepal and her people very soon and forever after won me over with all their real beauty so that cabin announcement was consigned to the recesses of my memory until reading that letter in your paper

today. My dream is to return for a third and, hopefully, longer more relaxed time in Kathmandu Langtang, even the Annapurna Sanctuary. And maybe by then Thai will have dropped that silly inflight announcement.

Ron Tiesler, Melbourne

ZOOLOGY

Another great Under My Hat ('Nepal's zoological society', #268). The line about Mountain Guerrillas '...where their numbers are in decline because the species is known to devour its own children' struck a true and sad chord and corroborated Suchana Oli's story in the same issue ('Tortured by both sides'). I shake my head in pathetic disbelief at what Nepal is doing to itself. There were periods when I felt *Nepali Times* seemed to have lost its edge, but it appears to be back up to the early days when I couldn't wait to get hold of it on Friday mornings. And don't stop the golf column!

Shahdev Mehta, email

CORRECTION

The correct spelling in the photocredit in 'Workers of the world, unite' in Happenings #267 should have been Anna Shneiderman.

We inadvertently misspelled Kedar Sharma Badu's name in his Star Gazing column, #267.

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KIRAN PANDAY

MARTY LOGAN

On Friday in Geneva and New York the UN is launching an appeal for about \$65 million in humanitarian aid for Nepal. Although the amount is not huge, the World Bank alone has been providing aid of \$120-\$200 million a year, it does raise some large questions: is Nepal now a ‘failed state’? Is the appeal the first, small step in a grand power play by the international community?

“By no means should anyone think that suddenly the cowboys are arriving,” says UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Matthew Kahane, “money will be contributed for clearly designated projects, beneficiaries, etc. Money going to buy food for refugees will not go to fund protesters on the streets.”

The request will be made officially in November, via the Consolidated Appeals

Process (CAP). Last November CAPs were issued for 14 crises, all but two of them (Palestine and Chechnya) in Africa. By June, the UN’s Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was asking for \$2.6 billion to assist people in 29

countries, including those whose lives were shattered by the Indian Ocean tsunami. That appeal raised an amazing \$1 billion of the \$1.26 billion requested, according to OCHA. But most CAPs attract just over 60 percent of the money sought within a year.

Nepal’s CAP will include about 60 projects in five areas: human rights protection, refugee support, expansion of basic services,

natural disaster risk management and coordination. Setting up and running the appeal will cost only four to five percent of the money pledged, says Kahane. “It will be carried out through existing channels.”

The government has two major concerns

Aid appeal

The UN seeks funds for Nepal’s humanitarian needs

with the CAP, says Bidhyadhar Mallik of the Peace Secretariat at Singha Darbar. Can a process developed in a relatively short time address the complexities reflected in the government’s own development plans, and will donors be taking money from sorely needed long-term development projects to fund emergency needs?

“It’s not just a matter of the funding...ultimately things have to trickle down to the community if they are to work,” Mallik said, citing the issue of internally displaced people (IDPs). Any new programmes must recognise that in Nepal, unlike other nations, the majority of IDPs are not gathered in camps, they are scattered in various communities or in India, while the poorest of the poor have been left behind in the mountains.

Mallik says it would be wrong for the CAP to “make a policy to assist the ‘haves’ who had enough resources to travel from their homes to safe areas and not for the ‘have-nots’ who have been left behind”. The government’s own Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is flexible enough to accommodate the facts on the ground, he added. “The PRSP is focussed broadly on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and our commitment to the population. It does include emergency humanitarian assistance but it is integrated into a wider framework,” Mallik told us.

Kahane said work towards the MDGs targets for meeting the most basic needs of the people by 2015, “should not be sidetracked by the CAP”. He adds that some of the projects are anyway designed to provide essential services to people affected by the conflict and by doing that a setback in progress towards the MDGs could be prevented.

Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey met UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland during his recent New York trip and gave the government nod to CAP, as long as aid doesn’t leak to the Maoists.

The appeal is designed by 13 UN agencies, 12 NGOs and the Red Cross as contingency planning for humanitarian needs in case an emergency arises. “We hope it doesn’t,” Kahane added, “none of us is looking for a humanitarian crisis. But neither do we think it’s prudent to sit

back and say there won’t be one.”

Jean-Marc Mangin of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) says: “We want to protect people’s livelihoods so they don’t have to move...to stop a bad situation from getting worse.” Mangin pledged that Canada wouldn’t shift aid money from development projects to fund the appeal. “We need to adapt our development programmes to the reality on the ground but (for the CAP) we’re talking about specific new resources.”

Keith Leslie of Save the Children (USA) says his organisation chose to participate in the CAP because the humanitarian needs of the country must be kept in perspective with the development needs. “Within the humanitarian crisis, Nepal is still facing a much larger development crisis,” he added.

INGOs have also established a system of working with local communities so it was important that they be included to represent those communities, particularly people from disadvantaged groups. “It was also to push against this sense that Nepal is a failed state,” added Leslie. “It’s facing a major disruption at the national level. But at the district and community levels a lot of work is going ahead.” ●

Largest CAP requests

Organisation	Requirement (as of 23 Sept)
World Food Programme	\$12.8 million
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights	\$11.9 million
UN High Commissioner for Refugees	\$9.2 million
UN Children's Fund	\$7.3 million
UN Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs	\$3.2 million
Save the Children Alliance	\$3.0 million
UN Food and Agriculture Organisation	\$2.9 million
UN Development Programme	\$2.2 million
UNFPA	\$1.9 million
World Health Organisation	\$1.4 million
Lutheran World Federation	\$1.2 million
SC Alliance and Plan Nepal	\$1.1 million

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Come, let us grow together

Happy ending

The government has lifted the five percent tax it imposed on books imported from abroad in its last budget. The revenue ordinance issued on Sunday also lifted the 1.5 percent local tax. The Nepal Booksellers and Publishers Association has welcomed the move and said that the necessary paperwork will soon be completed so companies can collect the books piling up in Customs at the Nepal-India border. ('Balancing the books', #267)

Tourism up

Tourist arrivals soared 47 percent in September compared to the same month last year, reports the Ministry of Culture, Civil Aviation and Tourism. It said 27,511 tourists visited Nepal in the month, versus 18,785 in September 2004. Leading the increase were Indian tourists, whose arrivals skyrocketed 151.1 percent to 8,590 last month. Tourism entrepreneurs said many tourists were encouraged to visit after the Maoists announced their ceasefire on 3 September.

Melamchi

The meeting of the Joint Review mission of the Melamchi Water Supply Project (MWSP) started in Kathmandu this week to assess the project's progress and discuss its schedule, working environment, safety, security and funding shortfall. Representatives of all donor agencies are at the meeting with officials from the National Planning Commission, Ministry for Physical Planning and Works and Ministry of Finance. It is the first meeting since Norway decided to withdraw its assistance of \$28 million. The RCCC detained former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and former Minister for Physical Planning and Works Prakash Man Singh for irregularities in the project deal. Norway is also participating. "We are convincing Norway to reconsider its decision as the project is making good progress," Silesh Devkota, deputy team leader of the meeting told *Nepalnews*. (See: 'The Melamchi mirage', #263)

NRN meet

The Non-Resident Nepalese (NRN) Association will hold its second global conference in Kathmandu from 7 to 9 October at Hyatt Regency Hotel. Dr Hemant Dawadi, executive director of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries, said the meeting would focus on issues concerning Nepali workers in foreign countries, particularly how to earmark their earnings to the country's overall development.

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Economic eclipse

Do we fear becoming productive and contemporary?

Besides turning xenophobic, the country seems to be going backwards to medievalism by declaring a national holiday for a solar eclipse. Our quests for international acclaim and fewer

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed



working days have come to naught. But what would happen if Nepal was clearing a major global financial settlement or a firm here was performing financial transactions outsourced from the other side of the globe? Would we tell the person at the other end of the phone: "Sorry we're closed, there's a solar eclipse."

As we become more deeply embedded in the globalised world with its 24/7/365 working regimes, how can we still cling to these antiquated customs? We

always complain that our productivity is low but how many working days do we have to really demonstrate productivity? We still believe in keeping markets closed for weekly holidays. We have one of the shortest working days and in this age of 24-hour electricity and transportation, we close offices at 4PM in the winter. We still cling to the outdated system of working only to 3PM on Friday, making it practically a useless day. Days off for eclipses and the departures and arrivals of royal visits add to our already long list of holidays, making us one of the few countries in the world that closes more days than it opens.

We also confuse state holidays with a five-day working week. It is important that people work eight hours a day five days a week and then get two days off but those days don't have to be Saturday and Sunday. Markets should close one day a week but all markets don't

have to shut the same day, New Road could close one day and Putali Sadak another.

This plethora of holidays, especially in the financial sector, does not make sense. Today, more and more financial transactions are being done 24 hours a day via locations such as ATMs and the Internet. How can Nepal's banks close down for so long? Apparently because the Nepal Rastra Bank is closed. So, why can't NRB devise a system to work all days of the week so banks never have to close? The fact that bank employees will still work just five days but not all on the same days is an issue that should not be confused with the banks' hours of operation.

We need to escape legacies that are ridiculous in today's world, be they holidays on eclipses or the state sponsoring animal sacrifices during Dasain. How can the state actually pay for animal sacrifices

in the name of religion? In our quest for identity as a Hindu nation, why are we being so cruel when the majority of Hindus living south of our border and elsewhere have graduated to making offerings of coconuts or other vegetables? Our myopic regard for the *khasi* reflects the state of our vision, our reluctance to accept globalisation and modernisation.

It is important that we embark on these debates and hopefully the holiday-hungry state machinery will realise that the other players in today's global economy do not close for eclipses but that every state is racing to eclipse the other. Wishing all readers a happy sacrifice-free and non-violent Dasain. ●



Birtamod - Jhapa • Hetauda • Ghorahi-Dang • Dhangadi • Tansen-Palpa • Damauli • Charikot-Dolakha • Bhaktapur

सुन्दर शान्त नेपाल

शान्ति संगीतयात्रा २०६२

TRAVELLING PEACE CONCERT 2005

Meera Rana

Kanti Moktan

Om Bikram Bista

Jyoti Ghimire

Nepathya

Satya Swaroop Acharya

Along with Buds Band in Hetauda, Nandakrishna Joshi in Dhangadi and Deurali Pariwar in Tansen- Palpa.

Birtamod - Jhapa
Date : 15 Oct 2005, Saturday
Time : 1pm
Venue : Devi Lower Sec. School Ground
Local organisers and Ticket Contact: Dhulabari Campus, Federation of Nepalese Journalists-Jhapa, Mechi Badminton Club-Kakarbita, Devi Lower Sec. School.

Hetauda
Date : 17 Oct 2005, Monday
Time : 1pm
Venue : Siddhartha Sec. School Ground
Local organisers and Ticket Contact: Siddhartha Sec. School, Federation of Nepalese Journalists-Makwanpur.

Ghorahi-Dang
Date : 19 Oct 2005, Wednesday
Time : 1pm
Venue : D.D.C Ground
Local organisers and Ticket Contact: Federation of Nepalese Journalists-Dang, Saraswati Lower Sec. School.

Dhangadi
Date : 21 Oct 2005, Friday
Time : 1pm
Venue : Trinagar Sec. School Ground
Local organisers and Ticket Contact: Sarwangina Bikash Kendra, Srijangshil Samaj ko Srijana, Trinagar Sec. School, Federation of Nepalese Journalists-Kailali.

Tansen-Palpa
Date : 24 Oct 2005, Monday
Time : 1pm
Venue : Tundikhel
Local organisers and Ticket Contact: Palpa Jaycees, Federation of Nepalese Journalists-Palpa, Janta Higher Sec. School.

Damauli
Date : 26 Oct 2005, Wednesday
Time : 1pm
Venue : B.P. Ban Batika
Local organisers and Ticket Contact: Federation of Nepalese Journalists-Tanahu, Rolaract Club-Damauli, Vyaasnagar Jaycees, Satyawati Sec. School, Barahi Sec. School-Farakchaur.

Charikot-Dolakha
Date : 28 Oct 2005, Friday
Time : 1pm
Venue : Kalinchowk Sec. School Ground
Local organisers and Ticket Contact: Federation of Nepalese Journalists-Dolakha, Kalinchowk Sec. School, Pashupati Kanya Sec. School, Kutidanda Sec. School - Makalbari, Devi Sec. School - Boch, Sarva Sec. School - Jilu, Bhim Sec. School - Dolakha, Mahendrowaya Sec. School - Mali.

Bhaktapur
Date : 30 Oct 2005, Sunday
Time : 2pm
Venue : Bhaktapur Durbar Square
Local organisers and Ticket Contact: Khawapa Nasa Khala, Shree Padma Higher Sec. School, Shree Changu Narayan Higher Sec. School

Entrance Rs. 10/-

Ticket contact Local Organisers

Organised by: Nepal Journalists Association

Managed by: nepa-hya

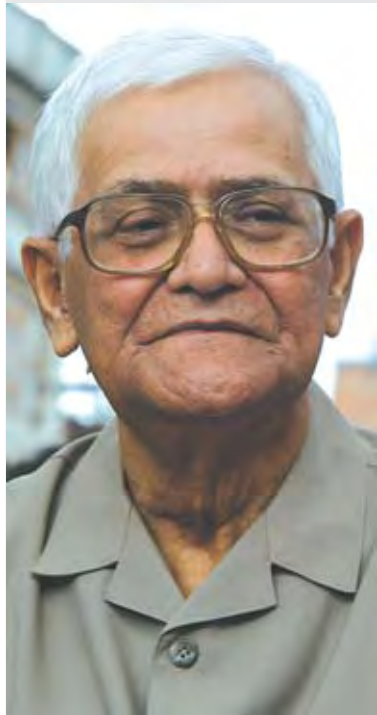
“Keep the constitution”

Former Chief Justice Bishwonath Upadhyaya in *Deshantar*, 25 September

बिश्वनाथ उपध्याय

If efforts are on to abolish the present constitution, it will be suicide for the monarchy. The king's close aides know that, which is why they are inclined to continue with the current one. If it is abrogated, a new constitution will be needed to rule the country. But the people are not prepared to accept a new constitution created alone by the king. And there is a danger that a constitution prepared by the people may not include room for the monarchy.

As for Tulsi Giri's words on the constitution, they might have been his personal comment and they are not surprising. It is quite natural that a staunch supporter of the undemocratic, partyless Panchayat system vent his ire on a democratic constitution. What more can one expect of a person who indulges in politics under the blessings of the palace?



MIN BAJRACHARYA

It would not be unusual for people to assume that whatever the second man in the government says is in line with the king's wishes. But if this is what Giri thinks about this constitution, he should not have accepted his present job and taken an oath to abide by the constitution. If the king wants to retain the present constitution, he should not let Giri continue in his present position.

One needs to realise that the constitution did not come about just because the king and the political parties backed it. It was possible only because the people were for it. It is for this very reason that the parties support the present constitution. Personally I believe this constitution has given the political parties more than what they had aspired.

I fail to understand what kind of new, inclusive constitution people are talking about. Has the present one excluded any community or class from any constitutional process? If intentions are good and clear, all the nation's goals can be achieved through the present constitution. I don't believe that a new constitution with whatever new provisions will be able to solve all the existing problems.

There should not be a caste or communal-based constitutional system created in the name of inclusion. That would create rifts between the Nepali people. Such a constitution would not favour Nepal's social stability and development.

King's priority

Information Minister Tanka Dhakal in *Nispakchhya*, 4 October

निष्पक्ष

In a democratic system it is natural for political parties to take to the streets. Every movement has a specified objective, which should be about establishing sustainable peace and solidifying democracy. But how can these goals be achieved when stones are pelted from college rooftops? Such activities have perturbed the people. On the other hand, businessmen and shopkeepers are bearing the brunt of the chaotic situation in the streets. Shops remain closed due to these disturbances. On the eve of Dasain, this has had a huge economic impact. The activities of the parties have further deteriorated the law and order. They have added terrorism. This movement has achieved nothing. The parties have been saying that their activities are aimed at democracy. But the fact remains that multiparty democracy has not been snatched because we still have a democratic system, the parties have been able to hold their conventions, meetings and protests. Free speech through the media has been allowed. The situation is conducive for everyone to join hands to work together. The parties should stop their street protests and reach for an understanding. Everyone knows that the main contributing factor to today's crisis is Maoist terrorism. Even that quarter should do away with all the strategic tricks and come up honestly to fulfil the people's wish for peace. Peaceful activities are what we need today. The government is very much willing to establish peace. It was not the government that declared the war yesterday. That is why it is not for the government to announce a

ceasefire. The government is committed to protecting the law and the constitution. Dasain is a great festival. The government is alert to maintaining law and order so that people can celebrate this festival happily. The king's priority has been the people. The mark of a true people's leader is his desire to remain with the people. In the present situation, the king wishes to stay within the country, with the people, instead of going on foreign tours. It had not been decided that the king would attend the UN summit so how could it be cancelled?

Leo E Rose

Obituary in *Samaya*, 6 October

समय

Leo E Rose's first academic tribute to Nepalophiles was the book he co-wrote with Bhuban Lal Joshi, *Democratic Innovations in Nepal* written 39 years ago. They had dedicated the book to two personalities who had their own ideas about Nepal's future: King Mahendra and the first elected prime minister, BP Koirala. The two stood at opposite ends of Nepal's political spectrum, yet they also represented a meeting point. That analysis was proven right when 10 years later BP Koirala returned to Nepal from eight years exile in India with the slogan of 'national reconciliation' with the king.

Today, the republican slogan is in the air and the king is hankering for a more active role.

Born in Oakland, Rose's interest and worry was always about Nepal. Rose first came to Nepal in 1957 and did his PhD on Nepali history in 1959 from the University of California. Even though his book published in 1966 was banned by the



Panchayat government, everyone including King Mahendra who could read English had read it.

Besides Nepal, Rose was also interested in the rest of the South Asia including Sikkim. Even when terrorism spread and there were restrictions on foreigners, Rose had access to those countries. Although he was a government employee only for a short period 1984-5 he was, for 60 years, an unofficial South Asian resource person for the US government. Rose was also an important person in academia. After suffering Alzheimers, Rose died two weeks ago in Oakland. He was always single and till the end he was in contact with experts in Nepal.

Rose helped make the South Asia Centre at Berkeley an important thinktank. Today it has 5,600 books and documents on the Nepali language, history and politics. Rose said the Maoists would never capture state power in Nepal but would remain an "irritant". Being a believer in reconciliation and democracy, he may have not given political violence too much credence. There is a rumour that Rose had a copy of the draft 1990 constitution even before the rulers in Nepal had theirs. His source seems to have been the drafters and not the US



Dove: Ceasefire
“Oops”

हिमाल Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 17 September -1 October

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“There is still a possibility of reconciliation between the king and the political parties and the government is open to dialogue with the parties.”



Vice-Chairman, Tulsi Giri on Kantipur TV, Sunday 2 October.

Where is my son?

Two letters in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 2 October

हिमाल

My youngest son, Kubir Prasad Aagain, was disappeared by the state two years ago. He was living in a rented room in Biratnagar near the Appellate Court from where he was taken by about 15 armed men in civilian clothes. As he was being abducted, eyewitnesses said he shouted out that he was being detained. No one has seen him since. International and local activists looked for him but to no avail and his name is not on the Home Ministry list. All of us friends and relatives are drinking tears. There is some information that my son, handcuffed and blindfolded, was first taken to Itahari barracks and tortured. Then we heard he was in Ilam barracks. We still haven't lost hope that we will see him. If he has broken any laws he should be tried under existing laws—that would be acceptable. But imagine the torture his mother and relatives are going through not knowing whether he is alive or dead. The state should understand this.

Subhadra Aagain, Uurlabari, Morang

My husband, Gyanendra Tripathi, was the former education chief of the ANFSU (Revolutionary) and was detained two years ago. No one has any ideas where he is today. Krishna KC, whose whereabouts was made public because of international pressure and was detained at the same time as my husband, said in an interview last week that my husband is being held in the Yuddha Bhairab barracks in Maharajganj. Another news report recently quoted a prisoner taken to Sundarijal who said Gyanendra Tripathi and 48 others were being held in Maharajganj. In another news report in July, human rights activist Sudip Pathak said my husband had been located and was alive. Despite these reports, the government is not concerned about the uncertainty and grief this situation is causing us, his family members. Please find him.

Sharmila Tripathi, Kathmandu

government channels. Although he told friends his relations with King Mahendra soured after 1960, Rose was an admirer of King Birendra. His other books on Nepal include Strategy for Survival, the Politics of Nepal Change in an Asian Monarchy and the journal, Asian Survey. The US and Nepal have lost a prolific academic who introduced Nepal to the world.

Boys beaten

.....

Jana Aastha, 5 October

आस्था

Shovit Rai, 13, from Bhojpur was among a group of children arrested on 20 May for allegedly being Maoists. They were taken from Panitanki Bajar in Bhojpur

by drunken army personnel and badly beaten. Among those arrested, Jasin Rai was freed four days later while Shovit and Bam Bahadur Rai were only released on 16 August. After he was released, Shovit said, “Three drunk soldiers beat us up real badly and told us to sign a paper that said we were sent by Commander Dipesh to do *reki* and then they locked us up.” Bhojpur DSP Nalprasad Upadhya says investigations showed the arrested were innocent so they were released. However the DAO forced the three children who had never been involved in Maoist activity to sign ‘surrender’ papers before their release. Another boy arrested with Shovit, Santosh, has not yet been released.

Too hot for kids

Samaya, 29 September

समय

While small schoolchildren were elbowing each other on the sidewalks in the scorching heat waiting for someone to give them water, the volunteers responsible for coordinating the royal visit to Birganj last month were drinking Real juice. The children had been waiting in the hot sun and were watching this with their parched throats and eyes swollen due to dehydration. They were made to skip classes, weren't given any food or water and had to stand in the sun for over five hours. All this because the organisers wanted to gather a big crowd to welcome the royal couple. Some of the children and a few women fainted due to heat stroke. Pravin Manandhar, chairman of the Parents Association of Parsa protested against the practice of forcing children as props for royal tours. “By making children stand in the heat, the organisers have mentally and physically tortured them,” he said, adding, “these organisers have to be punished, can they do anything in the name of the king?” Coordinator of the committee entrusted with giving the king a tumultuous welcome, Sambhu Chaurasiya, said over 150 volunteers were on duty for the visit. “We never put pressure on the schools to make their students miss classes,” Chaurasiya added. But the children were made to line up at 11AM even though the royal couple only arrived in Birganj at 3 PM. When the king and queen did arrive, they sped past waving at the children from inside the car.



Letter to His Excellency Bloomfield

Khagendra Sangraula in *Kantipur*, 25 September

कान्तिपुर

Your Excellency,
We are thankful to you, the British government and citizens of Britain for the firm support you have provided the Nepali aspiration for freedom and democracy at a time when it is being cut down by the monocracy of King Gyanendra's medieval feudal ambitions.
But that is not why I am writing this letter. I am writing to you from my own experience about the British visa procedures which is reminiscent of the abusive reign of the Nepali king. I was invited to Britain to speak at the first anniversary of Nepali Sandesh, a weekly published there. It had sent a letter of invitation guaranteeing that my travel, lodging and living expenses in Britain would be taken care of. My visa application was rejected in the most insulting manner. I was given a written note explaining that this was because there was a possibility I may not leave Britain after entering.

Any embassy can reject a visa application. I understand that. But if a diplomatic mission in Nepal insults and demeans a Nepali citizen in his own country it is not acceptable. Later, a Nepali employee of the British Embassy whose name I forget called me up to apologise and say that if I still want to go I could apply again. I said thank you but I am not going to Britain out of someone's mercy. I have a small question for your excellency: after insulting me in writing and filing a copy of the note is it enough to verbally say sorry?

My bitter experience is that there is still the residue of a feudal crown and its arrogant, ugly, conservative and inhuman face at the British Embassy. And this is not directed at anyone in the visa section, they are just the actors. The issue is of policy. What I went through was just an example of the way ordinary Nepali applicants are treated every day.

I was interviewed in Room No. 6 by an officious looking woman who interrogated me in a rude manner asking me irrelevant questions. Where is your previous passport? Why didn't you bring any of your articles printed in Nepali Sandesh? What do you usually write about? Where is the anniversary being held and what are you going to be speaking about?

Excellency, Britain is known as the country that gave the world the concept of democracy. I want to ask you what does such nakedly feudalistic behaviour have to do with such democratic values?

The rejection letter I got says: 'I am neither

satisfied with the reasons you gave for entering the United Kingdom nor am I convinced that at the end of your visit to the United Kingdom you will leave the country.' This makes a direct accusation against me and also hints that all Nepalis want to stay on illegally in Britain. You must know that the reality is different. Nepali citizens have spilled their blood for the expansion of the former British Empire. Nepalis who have gone to Britain have contributed with their minds to British intellectualism and with their sweat to the British economy. It is not in the Nepali ethos to lie to go somewhere and hang around there being a burden to the host country. It is when you start to generalise based on sensationalised exceptions that democracy disappears and a Hitlerite culture emerges.

Excellency, suppose the Nepali embassy in Britain rejected in writing the application of a British citizen and gave him a slip saying: 'Since we suspect you are going to be a smuggler when you go to Nepal, your visa application has been rejected'. Imagine the uproar this would set off in Britain.

The British Embassy lacks the basic democratic culture of treating everyone equally. In the three days that it took me to wait, I found it was a long distance between the guards at the gate and the counter where the officials sat. I tried to look for a shortcut but couldn't find any. Meanwhile, people in cars and suits could be seen going in easily. Dressed simply, I got to personally experience the offensive and undignified way ordinary Nepalis are treated at the embassy. The gates were open for anyone at the pinnacle of political power, party power, economic power, religious power or academic power or those who could twist their tongues and speak in British English. And

those who couldn't were insulted and cheated.

Not only was my visa refused, but the Rs 7,000 I paid for it was not returned. I thought such cheating was restricted to sleazy third rate manpower agencies preying on the poor. Excellency, I now know better.

In the waiting area outside the visa section there isn't a single bench to sit on. Why is it so difficult to provide at least a place to sit? And why not use a fraction of the money charged for visas to place someone at the gate who can politely answer some basic questions people may have? Is it representative of British culture to torment those who are the weakest? There is a contradiction between your avowed support to Nepali democracy and the feudal and insulting behaviour of your visa section.

Regards.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

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NATURALS

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NATURALS

SHAMPOO

BLACK SHINE

FOR OILY HAIR

and Sunflower Extracts

“We want to go home”

A television crew rescues students abducted by Maoists in western Nepal

KASRA NAJI in SURKHET



SCHOOL SAGA: (From top to bottom) After rescuing the students, Naji leads them back to the road. Ganga tells her story and breaks down. At the bridgehead, the Woman in Pink talks to Shoba and Khum convincing them to go back. Ganga decides not to return and accompanies Naji across the Bheri. Ganga has her first meal of the day and boards a bus back to her home in Chinchu.

Last week we travelled to Chingar in western Nepal, hoping to interview some Maoists who control the area. As we walked on jungle trails outside the village of Dasrathpur, we spotted a girl in a blue and white school uniform who approached to tell us she was hiding from Maoists. It was clearly a cry for help and she was not alone, a boy and a girl in the same uniform were standing some distance away.

The three were among some 300 students who were abducted from their school on Thursday 29 September and taken on a long march into the jungle for what the rebels called The 16th District-Level Gathering Program.

Despite the ceasefire, this was just the latest report of abductions of teachers and students coming in from all over Nepal in the past month.

One of the girls, Ganga, is 16 and in Grade Ten. She told us nine unarmed rebels arrived at Satakhane School on Thursday, exam day, ordering the class to follow them to the district meeting. No other explanation was offered. Some students fled, many were recaptured, beaten with sticks and forced to march. The children said the teachers offered no resistance and some even encouraged students to go with the rebels.

“I am so worried. My parents don’t know where I am. I thought they would take us away and kill us,” said Ganga, wiping tears from her eyes with her white shawl. The other girl, Shoba Thapa, also 16, seemed worried in equal measure about her exams and her life. “I thought about my exams and I thought they may kill us,” she said sitting on a rock. Shoba said she knew nothing about Maoism, she just wanted to go home. “We were really scared, they beat up those who ran away,” said the boy, Khum Chapai.

The Maoists had marched the students into the jungle. They walked the entire day before Ganga and her friends took a chance and just peeled off from the rest when no one was looking. They had no money, they did not know where they were and had nowhere to stay. Overnight, the students stayed in the village with a family who gave them shelter but they left first thing in the morning without having eaten. When we met them, they were looking for a way home.

We decided to change our own plans and take the children home. But already a number of villagers had gathered around us and we felt there could be Maoist sympathisers among them. We had to move quickly or we could lose the children to the rebels. We started walking back through the jungle towards a bridgehead to take a shaky *tween* across the Bheri. But alas, we had not moved quickly enough.

A young woman in a pink salwar kamij appeared from nowhere to corner the students. Before we noticed, she was in deep discussion telling them to follow her. The Woman in Pink claimed to be a cousin of two of the students. She insisted she would take them to their parents through a shortcut. I couldn’t tell what was being said and whether her claim to be a relative was true.

After about 20 minutes of arguing, two of the students decided they wouldn’t accompany us after all. But they were certainly not happy about it judging from the miserable looks on their faces. There was nothing we could do, we couldn’t force them. But Ganga remained unflinching during the arguments with the Woman in Pink. She wanted to go with us and she had no doubts.

Fearing more rebels would arrive to prevent us from leaving with the girl, we took the first cart-lift across the river, the bridge having been long since blown up by the Maoists. Across, we stopped at an open village café, where Ganga had her first meal of the day. As we headed back to Chinchu, we gave the girl some money and put her on a bus home. She was in tears as she left.

Kasra Naji is a tv journalist who also works for CNN.

Nepalis just

KISHORE NEPAL

One month into the Maoist’s unilateral ceasefire and two months to go, the people along the trails leading north from Okhaldhunga towards Solu are still reluctant to talk.

There is a resigned air as teashop owners, farmers and women collecting fodder shake their heads and refuse to speak to strangers. At Jantarkhani, a trader mutters under his breath: “Hard to tell who is a Maoist and who’s a monarchist. Despite the ceasefire I am still forced to give rice to the guerrillas and then the soldiers come and kick me because I fed them.”

These spectacularly scenic mountains of Okhaldhunga were immortalised by poet Siddhicharan Shrestha and the contrast between the natural beauty of the place and the strain of conflict couldn’t be more stark. Okhaldhunga is also one of the few remaining districts in eastern Nepal that doesn’t yet have road access.

Even so, there is a sense of relief that there haven’t been any major battles for the past month. People here say they have just two wishes: that the ceasefire is extended and that the army also declares a ceasefire. “Why should the government keep quarrelling with everyone?” asks a lodge owner in Samle. “It should be trying to find a solution, not make things worse and try to kill people. How can guns ever bring peace?”

Bhala Kaji Magar lived for 40 years in Bhutan before coming back to his ancestral village of Patale near Okhaldhunga. Over the years he estimates he has been forced to hand over Rs 200,000 to the Maoists. He is glad the rebels have said they will not be extorting money in the district anymore. “We have come to a point now where we can’t find a solution if we keep distrusting the Maoists, the government should take the ceasefire as an opportunity. But these days around here we hesitate to even say that the government is making a mistake by not reciprocating.”

The first Dasain at home

NARESH NEPAL

The Maoist ceasefire will not bring back Saleha Fakir’s husband but she believes it is one way to prevent more Nepali women from becoming widows. “The only justice for the death of my husband is peace and no more guns in our village,” she says.

Last year, when Maoists shot her husband Namdan and his two brothers in cold blood in Masina VDC, 20 km from the birthplace of the Buddha, hundreds of Muslims and Hindus from surrounding villages fled across the border to India leaving behind their wives, children and elderly parents.

Since then, Saleha and two of her sisters-in-law have been looking after 29 family members. “We eat rice and salt. The government didn’t give us any support even after the police

came and saw our miserable state,” she tells us.

But one month after the ceasefire, the men are trickling back from Uttar Pradesh border, including a son of the murdered Fakir brothers, 12-year old Kamrauddin. The boy had dropped out of Grade Seven in Mahadiyama to go all the way to Mumbai to work in a ration shop, earning Rs 1,000 a month to support his family. “I thought it was safe now and came to check on my family,” says Kamrauddin, who intends to go back to Mumbai.

Returnees are now confident their lives will not be at risk from the Maoists, who had been on a witchhunt against members of the notorious Krishnanagar vigilante group of Kapilbastu. The Fakir brothers were the first victims, killed to make the point that no one should dare challenge the rebels.

Rebels now abduct s

DAMBAR SHRESTHA

Life has not changed one bit for the people of the Arun Valley a month after the Maoists declared their ceasefire on 3 September. The locals are now asking why it was called in the first place.

The Maoists continue to collect taxes, abduct locals, force others into indoctrination programmes and restrict people’s movements from villages to the district headquarters. The attacks on the army may have stopped, but the attacks on the civilians continue.

The situation is especially bad for teachers and young students for whom the ceasefire announcement has meant being force-marched to attend Maoist indoctrinations and training. Last week, 150 students and teachers in the Jaljala and Barabise areas were abducted and forced to walk to Maoist areas. This week another 300 students and teachers were marched off in Panchthar. “Many students stay in class with fear as we don’t know what’s going to happen next,” says Dinesh Katwal from Mamling Higher Secondary School.

The Maoists have stopped many villagers from travelling to the market to sell their livestock and other goods in the runup to Dasain. “They won’t let us sell anything. Instead, they eat our food and meat,” said local trader Rajan Sakya. Villagers are getting poorer by the day as each of them has to pay Rs 5,000 every month to the rebels as tax. Families whose relatives work abroad reportedly have to hand over half of their monthly salaries.

want peace

in OKHALDHUNGA

The local district leader of the UML agrees: “The ceasefire has not really made that much of a difference, abductions are going on and the government side is also not showing tolerance.”

But over and over, from young and old, farmers and children going to school, attendants at water mills and porters, visitors hear the same refrain: “The ceasefire has brought some relief, now we want the government to also declare a ceasefire.”

Kul Narayan Shrestha is a civil society activist in Solu and recently went into the hinterland to secure the release of two people the Maoists had abducted. “There is no doubt in anyone’s mind that there should be negotiations, life in the villages is at a standstill. You have walked these trails, you have seen with your own eyes what it is like,” he tells us.

It used to be just two hours from the airfield in Rumjatar to the ridge-top bazar of Okhaldhunga. After 1 February, Maoist activities saw a spurt and most local politicians haven’t dared walk the trails. “It seems Okhaldhunga has been divided into two parts– they can’t come here and we can’t go there,” says Harka Maya Gurung of Rumjatar. Despite the ceasefire and a thaw in ties with the Maoists, the activities of the political parties here are minimal.

Okhaldhunga’s isolation is complete– only eight of the former 650 telephones work after the Maoists destroyed telecom towers. The road from Udaypur via Katari is not open because there is no bridge over the Sun Kosi. The people have many grievances against the Maoists and the government but they have stopped expressing them because it doesn’t seem to make any difference.

But for now the Maoists have reaped a public relations bonanza here with their ceasefire. ●

me in Nepal after years

VAR in LUMBINI

“Our fears have subsided for now, the ceasefire has lifted our hopes,” says Ram Naresh Lodh in Jituwapur, who returned home a few weeks ago. Most of the rebels who used to visit this village regularly, have themselves fled to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to evade security dragnets– yet another reason for locals to feel insecure.

On Monday morning, the army arrested three young men near here. None of the villagers know why. “Dasain is coming, I don’t know if I will ever see them again,” says the mother of one of the arrested men.

Security was scaled up on the eve of King Gyanendra’s visit to Rupendehi district last month. While his tour was all the buzz in Butwal and Bhairawa, not many in the villages know about it. Their main concern has been peace.

Adds villager Rajendra Yadab,

“there is no reason to hide and run. Now the government has to make a positive move as well by declaring a ceasefire.”

At the Sunauli border crossing near Bhairawa, hundreds of Nepali families are returning every day from New Delhi, Mumbai and other cities after many years. “My mother finally called me home. She is now certain that the rebels will not cause any harm,” says Ramesh BK as he gets on a bus to Butwal, from where he will walk five hours to reach Argakhanchi.

“At last we can celebrate Dasain with the whole family,” says 50-year-old Uttam BK from Gulmi, who had come to fetch his young sons and said the situation was much better in his village after the ceasefire. ●

students, not soldiers

A in SANKHUWASABHA

Those who have fled their homes live miserable lives in district headquarters Khandbari. “Only Kathmandu seems to be safe,” says Palpasa Gurung who fled from her village in Sidhapokahri VDC fearing forced recruitment by the rebels.

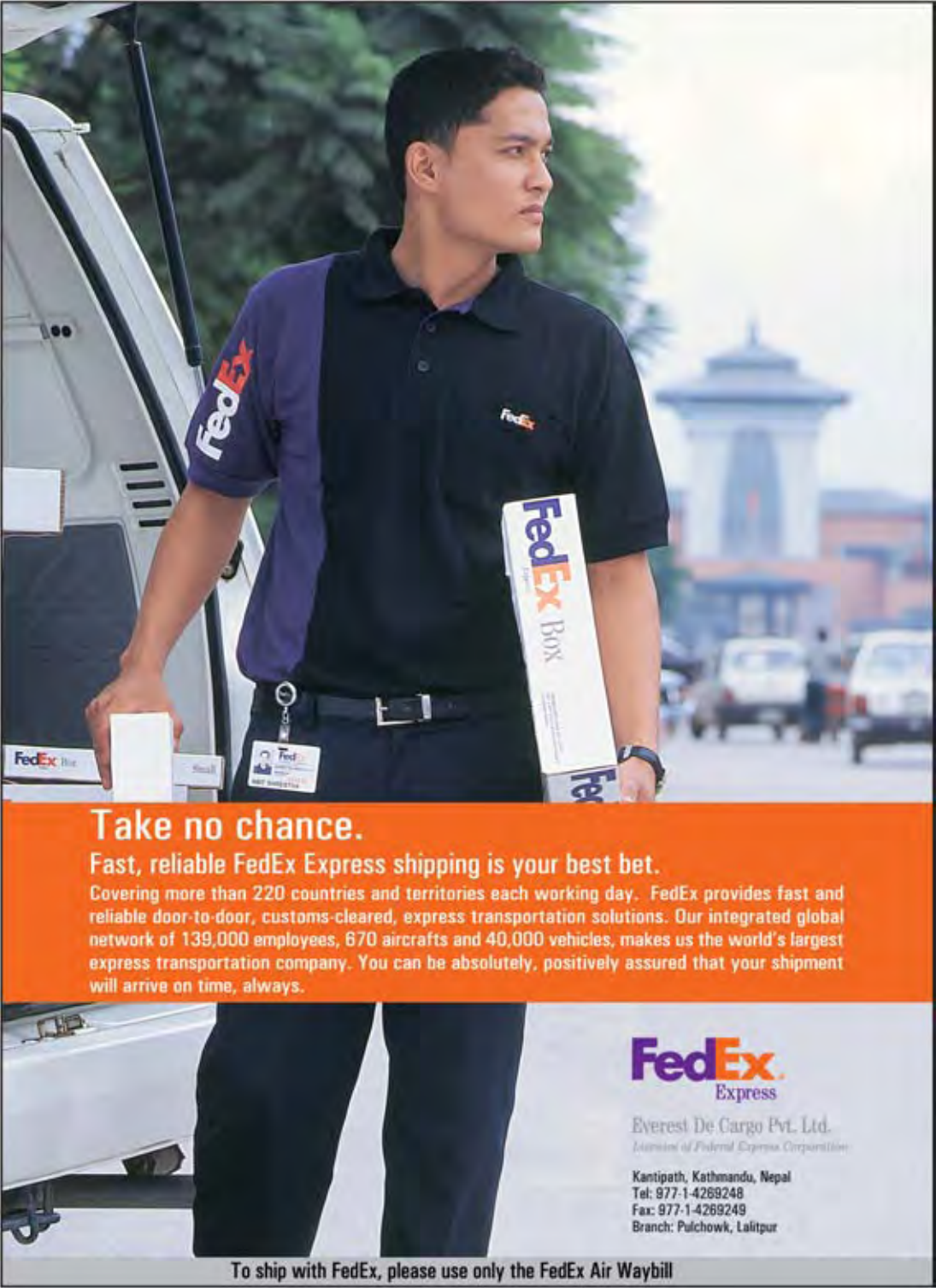
The government has totally withdrawn from the villages. VDC secretaries and development offices health workers are all in Khandbari with no work to do. “All the VDC buildings have been destroyed and the Maoists have not called us, so how can we go back?” asked former DDC Chairman Tulsi Prasad Neupane. A senior UML leader, Neupane says the rapprochement between the parties and the Maoists has had no impact on the ground. Police officer Yagya Prasad Shibakoti says the Maoists are simply exploiting the vacuum left by the parties in the villages but the police don’t venture out to the villages either.

Business and trade are in shambles. In Chainpur, a third of the shops are locked and the owners have left, says trader Ashish Sakya. Besides lack of customers, the rebels’ demand for money has taken its toll. “Until now the business community has been very patiently waiting for peace to return so that business will pick up,” says hotelier Madhab Karmacharya who runs a lodge in Khandbari. He remembers a time when 300 tourists stayed at his hotel every season but only three of the 40 lodges here are now open. ●



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A new look at Nepal's history

'Sudden and violent political change has...been a recurrent part of the country's history'



FROM THE COLLECTION OF SHANKER RAJ SATYAL

Outside Nepal, the Troubled Kingdom is often in the news these days, although rarely for encouraging reasons. Triumphant accounts of ever faster Himalayan ascents have given way to puzzled field reports by foreign journalists about Nepal's home-grown Maoist revolutionaries and

their violent battles with an

BOOK
Mark Turin



increasingly unforgiving state.

Even though John Whelpton's very readable *History of Nepal* was not written as a primer on the nation's present political crisis, it nevertheless provides

FIRST TIME: The hasty enthronement of King Gyanendra in 1950 by the last Rana prime minister Mohan Shumshere after King Tribhuban escaped to India.

much helpful context for understanding the thorny question now posed so often by commentators on the situation: How and why did seemingly peaceful Nepal suddenly erupt into brutal civil war? In keeping with the seriousness of the subject matter, the author's position is historically nuanced and judicious, providing a healthy corrective to the 'from Shangri-La to Hell' type of reports which are common in the international press.

'Sudden and violent political change has...been a recurrent part of the country's

history' (page 1), and the history of Nepal's royal lineages is one of intrigue, assassination, poisoning, exploitation and corruption. As a case in point, one may begin with Prithbi Narayan Shah, king of the principality of Gorkha and the founding father of the Nepali nation state. As ruthless as he was shrewd, this first Shah king issued an order to 'cut off the lips and noses of the inhabitants of Kirtipur after its surrender in 1766' (page 38).

A History of Nepal will be of interest to any student of South Asian studies since it fills a serious lacuna in scholarship on the region. An example of the narrow scholarly gaze on Nepal is that while ethnographic descriptions of Nepal's Sherpa and Thakali communities are plentiful, Whelpton's text appears to be the first accessible overview of Nepal's political history published by a university press in English. Well, not quite. Almost 130 years ago, in 1877, Daniel Wright, surgeon to the British Residency in Kathmandu from 1873 to 1876, submitted a manuscript of the same title to the same publisher. Wright's text, essentially an edited compilation of manuscript sources translated by Shiva Shanker Singh and Gunanand, would become the first *History of Nepal* to be published by Cambridge University Press, and Whelpton's the second.

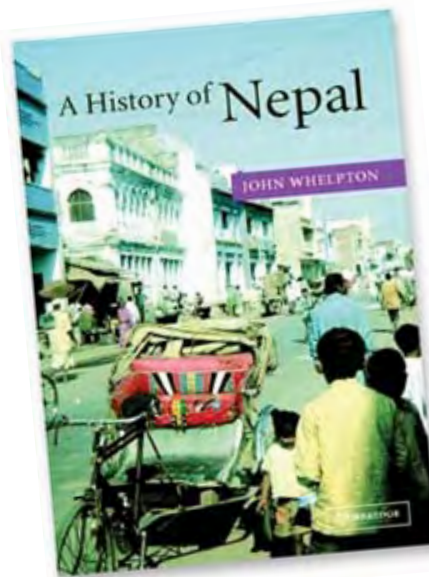
Whelpton's choice to use a photo of a street scene in the tarai town of Birganj on the front cover, rather than a clichéd image of a plume of snow above some Himalayan peak or one of Kathmandu's much photographed temples, deserves special mention and is a gesture that will be appreciated by the still underrepresented inhabitants of the tarai.

After a slightly choppy first chapter on the environment, state and society of ancient Nepal through the mid 1700s, the book settles down to six increasingly robust sections with ever more specific focus. Whelpton is particularly fluent in the political history of Nepal's last 150 years and his observations about this period are insightful and impressive. Since Whelpton's reading of Nepali history is on the whole even-handed, it is surprising that he is so restrained when it comes to evaluating the vicissitudes of Rana rule. The Rana family autocracy, lasting 104 years and finally overthrown in 1950-51, was striking for its nepotism and violence, with the titles of maharaja and prime minister passed on by direct

descent and agnate succession respectively. Passing off the 'systematic discrimination against those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy' as sustaining 'values that had underpinned the Nepalese state since its creation' and therefore as a 'more positive ideological defence' (page 84) of the Rana's repressive and bigoted policies, strikes the reviewer as unnecessarily charitable. Most scholars and citizens regard the Rana century as a dark age from which the nation is still recovering. The monograph also suffers from an unfortunate number of errors for such a basic primer, although these will surely be weeded out in the second edition.

Regardless, Whelpton deserves much praise for rising to the challenge of writing a comprehensive yet orderly history of the nation that ranges from the geological formation of the Himalaya many millions of years ago to the political intrigue of 2003, and all in under 300 pages. ●

Mark Turin is a linguistic anthropologist and director of the Digital Himalaya Project, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge. An earlier review of this book was published in the *Times* Higher Education Supplement (THES) in the UK.



A History of Nepal
John Whelpton
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Atlas of Nepal's development

Transforming dry census data into colourful maps

NARESH NEWAR

A picture is worth a thousand words and this is also true of the newly published *Population and Socio-economic Atlas of Nepal*.

With 210 maps on 10 different themes related to social, economic and demographic indicators, the atlas offers graphic versions of data from the 2001 census, dissecting Nepal into cross-sections viewed through a host of parameters.

Want to know where Chepang-speaking people live in Nepal? Which districts have the most disabled people? Where is the sex-ratio most glaring? How does Kathmandu's migrant population compare with Chitwan's? Where are the most young people living? Which districts are the farthest behind in girl enrolment? Where are the female-headed households?

Find all the answers in these clear, colourful and illuminating maps that put the data at your fingertips. "All it takes is one glance to see the density of population in Kathmandu and how the rest is

distributed over the country," says Suresh M Shrestha from the government-run National Geographic Information Infrastructure Programme (NGIIP) implemented by the Survey Department.

Shrestha and his small team of GIS experts, cartographers, statisticians and demographers worked hard to make the atlas of international quality, developing new software to ensure perfection in all technical inputs.

"The atlas will be a very useful tool for geographers, development planners, policy makers and researchers," says Shrestha, who believes the project is the first of its kind in the country. Jointly conceived and produced by the Survey Department and Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) with support from the EU, the main objective was to present demographic socio-economic indicators based on the last census. Since socio-economic indicators have changed rapidly because of internal displacement and other effects of the conflict in the past four years, some of the data could be outdated today. Also, there is a puzzling lack of data

and parameters for Kalikot and Salyan.

In 2003, ICIMOD and Dutch aid group SNV published a similar atlas with the same 2001 census data, which was a lot less bulky and also carried a trend analysis of district-by-district figures from previous censuses that allowed comparisons of how socio-economic indicators were changing over time. (See: 'A time atlas of Nepal', #185) To be sure, this atlas makes comparisons between the 1991 and 2001 censuses for male and female literacy but it could have done that for more parameters.

The atlas carries a mine of data and some of the maps stand out to remind readers which ethnic groups are concentrated in certain areas of the country. It even includes the population of non-Nepali origin like the Sikhs and Marwaris. This atlas will tell you that Brahmins and Chettris make up the largest segment of the population and also where they live. ●

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Being Nepali (in LA)

The diaspora settles down and begins to take care of its own

Recently, visiting Los Angeles, I went walking through the neighbourhood of Venice and saw a restaurant called Mao's Kitchen, and at that very instant tripped on the sidewalk, twisted my ankle and fell with a thud on the curb. I lay flat on the asphalt, stunned. Mao's Kitchen? There was a long queue outside. The interior was decorated with posters of rosy-cheeked factory workers. Customers, blithe and jovial, huddled over Gang of Four Fried Shrimp and Model Citizen Noodle Soup.

I got up, brushed myself off and took pictures to show the folks back home.

NEPALI PAN
Manjushree Thapa



The day before I had attended

a 'Friends of Nepal' potluck at the house of its president, Jo Anne Pandey, in San Fernando Valley. There had been only a little talk about the Maoists back in Nepal. At a time when Nepalis are leaving Nepal at record rates, the destination of choice is America. The numbers of Nepalis in LA has grown exponentially in the past few years. Yet there is not much nostalgia for the homeland. To me, most people seemed busy shoring up their positions in America, as though they knew they were lucky. Their problems—of long work hours, of mouthy Americanised children, of the health/home/car insurance blues—seemed minor, even to them.

Long-time residents estimate that there are now about 10,000 Nepalis in Southern California, of whom a couple of thousand live in LA. In a metropolis of 15 million, such a small migrant community is almost invisible. It does not help that Nepalis easily pass for Chicano or Central American. Many Nepalis also blend into LA's Punjabi and Bengali enclaves, working at Indian restaurants, renting from Indian landlords and living in Indian neighbourhoods.

Almost 200 Nepalis live in LA's 'Little India' in Artesia, in cosy apartments splashed with hand-carved wood, hand-woven carpets and even odd-shaped Nepali flags.

In between taking in LA's tourist sites, I went there to talk to families who had come after winning the 'green card lottery'. The

State Department's Diversity Immigrant Visa Program gives out over 50,000 green cards each year, over 5,000 to Nepalis. For most winners, the move to America—though much desired—proves unexpectedly difficult.

Durga (who asked that I not use her real name) was seven months pregnant when she and her husband came to America on the green card lottery. "A lot depends on whether you know anyone here," she said to me, sitting with her son, now two years old. "We didn't know a single person when we got here. We didn't know the language and we didn't know how anything worked. And there was no one to explain things to us."

A new non-profit centre—the first Nepali non-profit in America—has opened in Artesia to address exactly this problem. Kiran Upadhyay, the executive director of Nepal Sewa Centre, says it was launched after three incidents.

The first was the discovery, by prominent Nepalis here, of a 67-year-old Nepali woman who had been physically abused at an Indian restaurant where she worked. The second case involved a Nepali man who lost his sanity, unable to adjust to life in America. And in the final case, a Nepali couple nearly lost custody of their daughter because they did not know where to obtain medical care for her when she fell ill.

Though individual Nepalis helped out as best they could, they recognised the need to reach out more systematically to those in need, explains Upadhyay. "The South Asia Network and other non-profits do help," he says. "But they are dominated by Indians and Pakistanis and we come from very particular circumstances. Trafficking is a problem for us: our own middlemen swindle new immigrants, charging for services that should be free. And our people have a very unreal sense of America, they have no inkling of the way things work here. I haven't met a single Nepali who hasn't at some point cried, overwhelmed,

wanting to go back."

Upadhyay and other members of the Nepal Sewa Centre counsel new arrivals, setting them up with jobs, orienting them to schools and health services, and even helping them to seek professional training.

This has made adjustment easier for recent arrivals. When Karma Raj Sharma landed in LAX with his family last May, they took a taxi straight to an apartment in Artesia.

"We thought America would be very alien," his wife said, laughing. "But that first evening we had a home-cooked Nepali meal. The next day, the Centre showed us the neighbourhood and took us to the grocery store. And the day after they helped my husband find work." She too has since found work and is learning to drive, preparing to take the test in Hindi.

In any immigrant community there is, of course, economic disparity and social tension. The better-off Nepalis in LA—white-collar professionals—need less community support and they tend to keep aloof from the newer arrivals.

"We who live in San Fernando and San Gabriel, have our own circles," a software expert had

explained to me at the Friends of Nepal potluck.

Another professional had said, "We earned our green cards working for years on an H1. The DVs just win their green cards in a lottery and all they can do with them is wash dishes at a restaurant." He shook his head. "I don't know why the American government makes it so easy for them and so hard for us."

Yet it was obvious to all of us that as long as Nepal continues to self-destruct, increasing numbers of our compatriots will come to America with peace, rather than prosperity, as their main goal.

At the very fringes of the Nepali community here are the political refugees, who are fleeing Maoist persecution at home and the undocumented workers, who are fleeing hardship and poverty. These are the Nepalis whose personal stories one doesn't inquire about in too much depth, lest it feel like prying. One man I met told me he was applying for refugee status, and talked about his case, then begged me not to identify him. "It's sensitive," he said. "It's risky. We have to be discreet."

The Nepal Sewa Centre is now starting to help refugees and undocumented workers as well, arranging pro-bono legal services. Lamu Stadler, the organisation's board president, says the need for legal counseling is urgent and growing. Word of the organization's work has spread through the Nepali diaspora through the US, and requests are pouring in for help in setting up similar organisations elsewhere.

I ended my tour of LA at a Nepali restaurant off Venice Boulevard. Though not ultra-hip (like Mao's Kitchen), the Kathmandu Kitchen has a cheery décor and reasonable prices. I got off on the wrong foot, though, offending chef Premu Rana by asking if the food was actually Nepali (as many 'Nepali' restaurants in the US serve Indian food).

"Oh, it's Nepali," he snapped. "Real, 100 percent authentic Himalayan cuisine."

I mumbled a hasty apology.

It was indeed very authentic. It was also very good. Polishing off plates of spiced soybeans and lamb kabab, I realised that I had rarely had such tasty Nepali food even in Nepal. ●



Urdu, Hindi, Hindostani

There is no need to invent a new word for an old language

There was a time when the *jubaan* of a large part of North Southasia used to be called Hindustani, and films of Lahore and Bombay both used it un-self-consciously as their lingua franca. Then came the

SOUTHASIA BEAT
Kanak Mani Dixit



terrible partition, and Hindustani lost out. To the extent that you could not even say 'Hindustani classical music', with some people veering towards 'Southasian classical' as a way out.

Hindustani's decline was dictated by the hegemonic rise of Hindi and Urdu in India and Pakistan. While there was genuflection towards Urdu in the beginning (including the opening credits of Bombay flicks in Arabic script), the politics of demography and language has made Hindi the true hegemon of

the Subcontinent as a whole. In the last decade, it is Hindi's Bambaia patois which has become ascendant ("Apan koroz roz ka lafada nahi mangta hai!").

Now television has slipped into the role prepared for it by latter-day Bollywood and Hindi is the unquestioned transnational mass-market vernacular, having crushed Maithili, Braj Bhasa, Bhojpuri, Rajasthani, Magadhi, Awadhi, Bundeli and others along the way. In the larger region, the power of Indian multinational satellite television makes Hindi the medium of entertainment right across the east-west expanse of the Subcontinent.

Hindustani has lost this war of the vernacular. As the name of a language, it supposedly does not exist any more, with the Indian state and society preferring Hindi and Paksitan favouring Urdu. For the parochial Indian establishment, 'Hindustani' refers to the tongue

of the Muslims (almost as much as Urdu), whereas for the chauvinists of the Pakistani establishment, 'Hindustani' is marred by the reference to 'Hindu' which is retroactively inconvenient.

It is all very confusing. It turns out that Hindi and Urdu are one and the same tongue that differs only in the upper reaches infiltrated by Persian and Sanskrit. As the scholar Afroj Taz (born District Etah, Uttar Pradesh, now teaching Southasian languages in North Carolina) says: "Hindi and Urdu, which share a common, identical grammatical structure must be considered a single language: Hindi-Urdu."

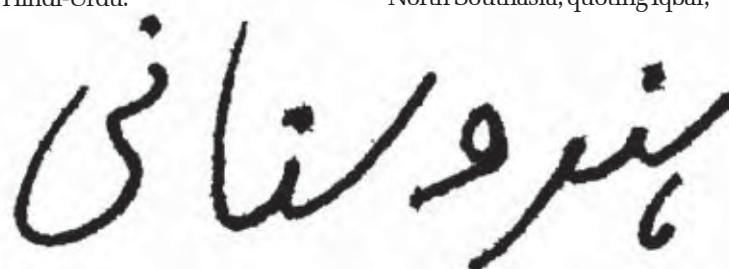
The fact that Urdu is in fact Hindi and vice-versa would be a matter of some discomfort to a few on either side of the LoC, but the very fact that Bollywood films are consumed voraciously in Pakistan proves the point. No one would claim that Pakistanis watch Bollywood blockbusters because they know Hindi. Ergo, they are listening to Hindi-Urdu as one and the same language. Which means that even though the Bombay producer and director thought they were making a film in Hindi, they are heard in Lahore as Urdu. When this Nepal-based writer goes to Lahore, he is ridiculed for his bad Urdu, and in Delhi for his atrocious Hindi. Or Hindustani.

In heavyweight gatherings of Southasian states, diplomats from Kathmandu, Dhaka, New Delhi and Islamabad alike are found succumbing to what is/has become the common jubaan of North Southasia, quoting Iqbal,

Faiz and Shair Ludhianvi. Away from diplomatic decorum, they ascend to a language that is neither Hindu nor Urdu but an evolved medium of conversation carrying the heritage of the Indus Valley, Awadh, the Padma, Tipu Sultan and Dilip Kumar. Hindustani.

Naming of the shared language as 'Hindi-Urdu' does not really work. Nor would it help to call the tongue 'Hindurdu' or 'Urdhindi'. Another time, another day, when the geo-political hackles are down permanently, perhaps we can indeed go back to 'Hindustani', which would be most satisfying. It is an evolved name, it packs in just the right amount of multi-layered-ness of Southasian society. With 'Hindustani' there would be no need to invent a new word.

It is just possible that the need for a name for the joint language will be felt among the people once the India-Pakistan thaw accelerates, and the economic, social and cultural links between Northern India and Pakistan take firm root. When that happens, lets pronounce it and spell it as the original 'Hindustani'. ●



Make windy play a breeze

The key to playing well when it's blowing—keep it low

Springtime, and Dasain, often brings windy conditions to golf courses. Facing headwinds, tailwinds and side-winds, amateurs get puzzled and flustered when trying to make adjustments to compensate and unnecessarily add at least five strokes a round to their scores.

When Mother Nature huffs and puffs, your expectations must be readjusted upwards. Tour pros know that a 20mph wind will raise their scoring average 2-3 strokes. For bogey golfers I reckon an increase of 5 to 8 strokes a round. However, you can play your handicap on gusty days if you correctly judge the wind's effect, know how to hit a low, controlled shot and take advantage of wind at your back. Constant adjustments are demanded but you mustn't let frustrations take over. If they do, your judgment will get clouded.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



Most golfers underestimate the wind's impact. For example, a shot that carries and rolls 270 yards on a calm day will only travel about 235 yards if hit into a 20mph wind, while the same shot might carry 295 yards on a downwind, a 60 yard difference. Increase the wind speed to 30mph and the distance difference between a shot hit into a headwind and a tailwind would be even greater.

The flight of a ball hit into the wind will balloon (fly much higher than normal and sit down quickly) and any curve (fade or draw) will be exaggerated. With a tailwind though, the ball will carry farther and curve less but it won't stop quickly after landing. A shot that curves with a crosswind will carry and roll even farther; conversely, if the ball is curving into a crosswind, it will go a shorter distance and stop faster.



The best way to penetrate any wind is to "keep it low". This is the key to playing well in windy conditions. To produce a "wind cheater" golf shot, follow these tips: To get solid contact and a lower trajectory, maximise your body's stability and make a shorter swing. For stability, widen your stance a couple of inches more than normal. Grip down one to two inches for added control.

Set a little more weight on your front foot (left). Position the ball up to six inches farther back in your stance (more towards the right foot for right-handed golfers). Moving a ball right causes it to go right therefore align your body and stance a bit left of the target.

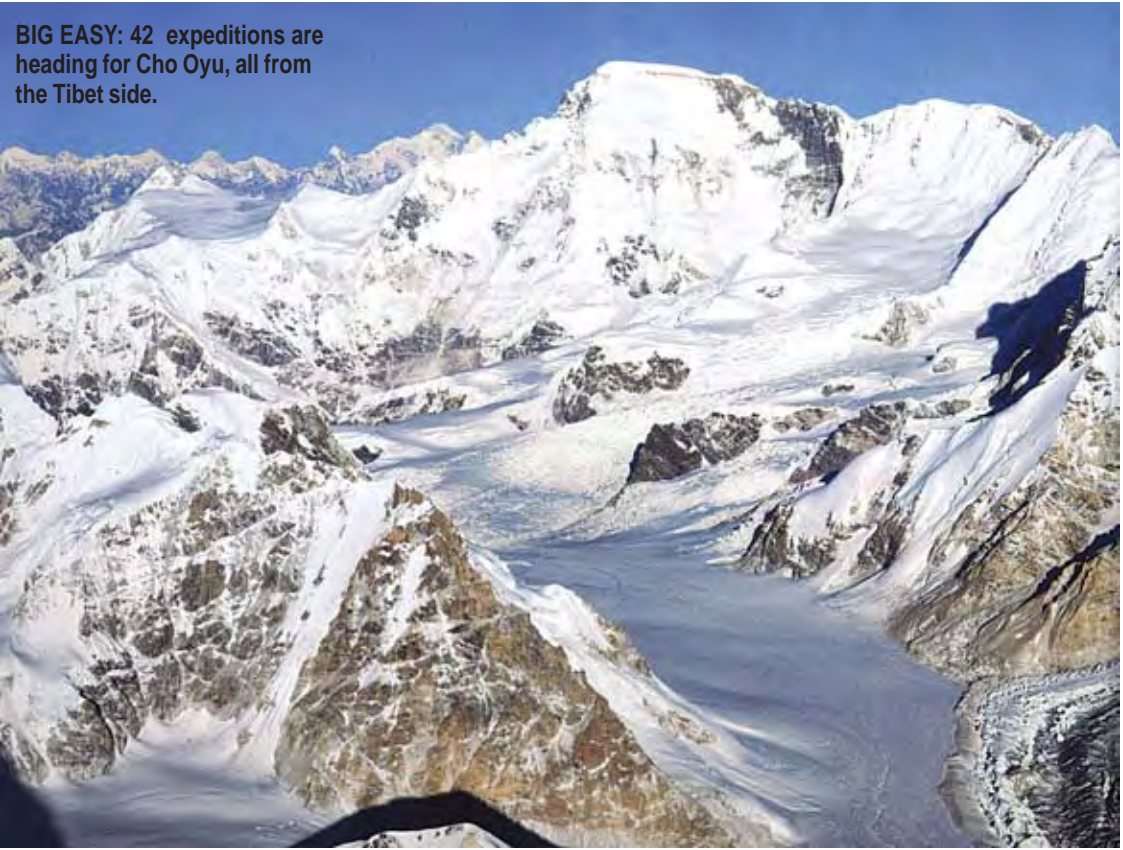
For all wind shots except straight downwind, try more controlled shots, taking one or more extra clubs and gripping them two inches down on the shaft. Only take a three quarter back swing. Your wrists should be a lot less active than on a normal shot. Resist the temptation to rush the swing—maintain your normal tempo, keeping your arms relaxed. At impact, the shaft should be ahead of the clubhead to keep the ball low.

For downwind shots, switch to a more lofted club to control the distance. When driving, tee the ball up high and take full advantage of the helping wind by hitting it high.

Try these tips and you will find yourself maintaining your low scores even in the strongest gusts. ●

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.
prodeepak@hotmail.com

BIG EASY: 42 expeditions are heading for Cho Oyu, all from the Tibet side.



KOICHIRO OHMORI

Is climate change changing climbing?

Mountaineering patterns in the Himalaya seem to be affected by global warming

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

Until a decade ago many climbers favoured the spring season for expeditions on the peaks of the Nepal Himalaya because the weather was more stable than the colder shorter days of autumn. "There has been a perceptible shift in monsoonal patterns, they start later and stay longer," says meteorologist Ngamindra Dahal, "we don't know whether it is a result of climate change, but it is happening."

But the jet stream which lashes the tops of the mountains is now less predictable, snow is less firm and there is more objective danger from avalanches even in the autumn season. This has influenced major changes in terms of seasonal choice among serious mountain climbers.

"The weather is much more unstable. There is more risk of snow in the spring and the monsoon is more unpredictable. While autumn is drier," says James Frush former president of the American Alpine Club and managing editor of the American Alpine Journal. Frush attempted Makalu in 1983 and has been coming back to Nepal since preferring to go after remote area

mountains like the unscaled 6405m Fwaksakang west of Dhaulagiri which he is climbing this season with a team of two other Americans and a German.

This year, the monsoon sputtered out in July and was lingering long after the traditional end of monsoon date of 22 September. Even in the trans-Himalayan areas like Manang, there was little rain till two weeks back and most expeditions were patiently trying to wait out the weather.

Historically, during the age of first ascents in the 1950s, climbers preferred the spring on eight thousanders because the temperatures were higher and there would be less wind. But as climbing gear and clothing improved, many mountaineers switched to the less-crowded autumn season despite the jet stream. Now, because of the shift in monsoonal patterns it seems climbers prefer spring again.

There were a total of 133 expeditions last spring, 141 in autumn and five in winter. Sagarmatha however continues to attract more climbers in spring. There were 64 expeditions in spring 2004 and a phenomenal 101 this year compared to only two last autumn and one this

season.

Although the ceasefire has come as a much needed blessing to the trekking and mountaineering industry, there has been no big surge in the number of expeditions this autumn. The royalty to climb from peaks from the Nepal side is much higher than for the same peak from the China so Nepal is losing out to Tibet, even though the high altitude porters and guides there tend to be Nepalis and Kathmandu-based companies do the handling. Last year the Ministry of Tourism even announced a 50 percent discount on all 8000m peaks, but there seem to be few takers.

For example, there are 41 expeditions are headed for Cho Oyu, considered the easiest eight-thousander but all are from the Tibet side this season, even an expedition to mark 50 years of Nepal-China diplomatic relations.

Lakpa Sherpa who is a part of the Nepali delegation is confident about the success of the expedition but has his fingers crossed about the weather. "We are ready, now it is up to the weather," he told us last week before he left for Tibet. ●



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"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, even a man with a bad goatee can be a hero.) - as translated by UNACOOTs, the United Nation's Association of Cartoonists



The Adventures of HeroJig can also be seen at www.extreme-nepal.com

#87 2062 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Art Walk** Traditional artworks at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg. 4248999
- ❖ **Arts from Tibet, Dolpo and the Himalaya** by Pasang at Baber Mahal Revisited

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

- ❖ **Celebrate Dasai** the Nepali Style at Moksh Live, 7 October.
- ❖ **Changa Chait** kite flying competition at Club Himalaya, 8 October. 4411706
- ❖ **Modulate** at Rox Bar with DJ Whosane, 8 October. Rs 600
- ❖ **Open and Shine** at HBMC, 8 October, pre-register. 4414843
- ❖ **World Post Day** 9 October.
- ❖ **World Mental Health Day** 10 October.
- ❖ **Fulpati** 10 October.
- ❖ **Ashtami** 11 October.
- ❖ **Dashami** 12 October.
- ❖ **World Food Day**, 16 October.
- ❖ **International Day for the Eradication of Poverty** 17 October
- ❖ **Football Tournament** at Dasrath Stadium, 30 October. trophy@tbs.edu.np
- ❖ **Plight of Widows** in Nepal by Lily Thapa, 23 November, 9.30am Shankar Hotel.

MUSIC

- ❖ **Amber Gurung**, live in Lalitpur, 7 October, Nepa-Laya-R-Shala, 6.30 onwards.
- ❖ **Reviving Pearl** Abhaya and the Steam Injuns pay tribute to Janis Joplin, 8 Oct at Black Pearl Yak & Yeti, 9 pm onwards. 4415246
- ❖ **Live at Home Ground**, 1974 AD live concert, 8 October, 3PM, Jawalakhel ground.
- ❖ **A Legend at a Legendary Place** live performance by Deep Shrestha at the Absolute Bar, 9 October, Rs 1200. 5521408
- ❖ **Gaine** and Nepali folk music program at the Absolute Bar, 10 & 11 October, 6PM onwards. Free entry. 5521408
- ❖ **Sundar Shanta Nepal** traveling peace concert, 15-30 October.
- ❖ **Jatra Friday** nights wine sale and much more. 4256622
- ❖ **Live Music** at Juneli Bar, Hotel de l'Annapurna. 4221711
- ❖ **Ladies Night** Wednesdays, one free cocktail to the ladies at Jatra.
- ❖ **Musician Night** every Tuesday at Moksh, 7.30 PM onwards. 5526212
- ❖ **Cadenza Live!** Upstairs Jazz Bar Lazimpat, every Saturday and Wednesday.
- ❖ **Live Jazz** by the pond at 1905, Kantipath. 4225272



FOOD

- ❖ **Tawa & Kadai**, 2-9 October, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **The Kabab Curry Karkhana** at Radisson Hotel, till 15th October
- ❖ **The Sidewalk BBQ** with live jazz, Fridays, Shangri-La. 4412999
- ❖ **BBQ Dinner** at Summit Hotel, Fridays, 6.30-9.30 PM. 5521810
- ❖ **The Chimney Restaurant** Signature dishes at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **BBQ by the Pool** at Le Meridien, Kathmandu Rs 888
- ❖ **Daily Delite** lunch at Shambala Café, Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat. 4412999
- ❖ **The Jazz Gourmet** fine dining redefined, Shangri-La. 4412999
- ❖ **Dikhri** rice dumplings with special jungle sauces at the Tharu Kitchen, Jungle Base Camp. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Annapurna Value Lunch** at Rs 299. 4221711
- ❖ **Autumn Chill Out Moments** at 1905 Kantipath, delightful entrées and lounge grooves by DJPj. 4225272

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Junglewalks**, rafting, elephant rides all at Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bardia. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Exciting Holiday** Packages with Le Meridien, Kathmandu. 4451212
- ❖ **Unbeatable** holiday discounts with Malaysia Dream Holidays, Tel 2012345
- ❖ **Nature Tour** at Shivapuri national park from Park Village Resort. 4434705
- ❖ **Gokarting** Rs 200 for 4 laps, 4361500

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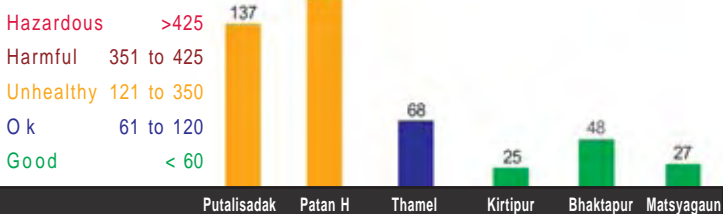
Call 4442220 for show timings www.jainepal.com



KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

With winter just around the corner, the average PM10 particles (matter less than 10 microns in diameter that lodge in the human body) level for Kathmandu has increased by almost 12 percent. Of the six monitoring stations, the average PM 10 level at the Patan station has increased significantly, indicating Dasai rush. However, the more polluted Putalisadak area reveals a drop in pollution level by almost 12 percent as compared to the previous week.

25 September - 1 October 2005 in micrograms per cubic metre.
Source: www.mope.gov.np



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



Dasain and Tihar coincide with Nepal's driest season. October and November are the months with the lowest mean rainfall, less than 60 mm. Early this week sporadic rainfall was reported in Jomsom, Dang, Jiri and Okhaldhunga, suggesting that drifting patchy clouds are likely to produce local showers. This satellite image taken Thursday indicates fair weather in the week ahead with the possibility of foggy mornings and daytime patchy clouds. The cloud front heading towards the northeast Himalaya shouldn't affect us except to reduce the daily mean temperature by 2 degrees. Expect fair weather throughout Dasain with the possibility of sunny intervals.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

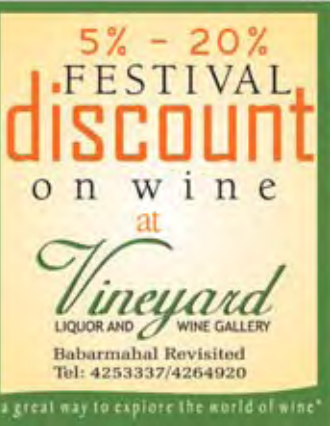


परस्परका नाममा अन्धविश्वासी हुनु र आधुनिकताका नाममा भ्रष्ट र छाडा हुनु उस्तै हो । त्यसैले आफ्ना परस्पर, संस्कृति र संस्कारहरूको सूक्ष्म अध्ययन र विश्लेषण गरी कमसल पक्षहरूलाई समायानुकूल परिमार्जन गर्दै राम्रा पक्षहरूलाई सगर्व अनुसरण गर्नुपर्छ । आधुनिकताका नाममा सभ्यताहीन र छाडा प्रवृत्तिलाई प्रश्रय दिनु हुँदैन । बरु समय, स्थान र परिस्थितिअनुरूप आधुनिक प्रविधि सीप र शैलीलाई संयमतापूर्वक ग्रहण गर्दै जानुपर्छ । यसैमा सबैको भलो छ ।

श्री ५ को सरकार

सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय

सूचना विभाग





SAGAR SHRESTHA

SOUND ADVICE: The EU Troika concluded its three-day Nepal visit on Thursday, urging the king, Maoists and parties to unite to avoid “political collapse”.



KUMAR SHRESTHA NEPALNEWS.COM

DAUGHTER SLAUGHTER: Debi Sunuwar at a press meet on Monday to demand a civilian trial for soldiers involved in the disappearance and death of her daughter, Maina, who was 15 when she was killed in army custody in Kabhre in 2004. The army last week said it had punished and fined three officers involved. “I want to see the murderers of my daughter behind bars,” Debi Sunuwar said.



KIRAN PANDAY

LET'S SEE WHO BRUSHED: Dogs and their trainers get close at Canine Care's Dog Show 2005 last Saturday.



NARESH NEWAR

FOR THE KING: One of the hundreds of welcome gates under construction in Butwal on Tuesday for the royal visit on Thursday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

SPECIALY MENTIONED: Nishtha Jain from India answering questions from the audience after the screening of her film City of Photos which won Special Jury Mention at the Film South Asia '05.

The Castrator

At first glance, Drona Kumari Pandey is like any ordinary Nepali woman from the hills with a migrant worker husband working in the Middle East and two children to raise. But when she is introduced, it is her profession that raises eyebrows. Officially she's a *Gramin Pashu Swastha Karyakarta*, a rural animal health worker. In layman's terms she's a castrator.

In her mid-30s, Drona Kumari is the only woman in Sankhuwasabha district, and one of only a handful countrywide, to practice a profession that does not welcome women, to put it mildly. Earlier she was plagued by criticism and mockery from men. “They would tell me, being a woman, how can you even touch the vital organs of animals?”

In tears, she sought advice from her husband, who has worked in Saudi Arabia for the past six years. He told her to ignore the public jeering and gave her his full support. Encouraged, she persevered and today is making a living out of castration.

In 2003, Drona Kumari took part in a 50-day training session in Jhapa under a women's empowerment initiative funded by the British agency, DfID. Afterward, she was given a tool called Burdzzo Castrator. Since then, she has been crisscrossing Sankhuwasabha district and has castrated over 450 goats and bulls in the last two years. “I used to feel guilty seeing goats suffer but



SAGAR SHRESTHA

now I find it normal,” she recalls.

As Dasain approaches, there is a lot of demand for Drona Kumari's services. She dreams of settling in a larger town and having a proper professional set-up so that she can turn her job into an industry. She also wants to learn more about animal health.

“If ever my dream comes true, I will employ a lot of women,” she says, “it may seem like one needs a lot of guts to do this job but it's a job like any other.” Adds Drona Kumari with a big smile: “and it feels good when people call you a doctor.” ●
Kapil Tamot

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Mountain goats to get transit visas

As Dasain approaches, alert readers will have noticed that there is less and less space in the papers these days for important news about what is not happening in the country. So, before even this space is sold to Royal Stagger, and taking our responsibility as a newspaper of record very seriously, let me quickly run

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit



down the list of the week's main items of news that had to be sacrificed at the altar of Mammon to make

way for ads with Dasain Tihar Special Offers like these:

- Flying Panda Motorcycles** (buy one and win a holiday for two in Malaysia)
- Air Nepal Irrational** (go to Malaysia and never come back)
- MI-24 Helicopter Gunships with Rocket Pods** (buy two get one free)
- Tero Cell** (1,000 minutes of free call time, conditions apply, viz.: offer valid only if you can get the darn thing to work)
- Eat All You Can Boka-Flavoured Instant Noodles** (hundreds of goats, chicken are waiting to be won)
- Snow Flake Anti-dandruff Shampoo Special Scratch Offer** (win free hair conditioner and/or air conditioner).

And now in the space that is left we can finally bring

ourselves up-to-date with important international and domesticated events.

New holidays announced

BY OUR VACATIONING CORRESPONDENT

His Majesty's Government has brought out a new list of nationalistic holidays for the Fiscal Year 2062/2063 that will take into account days that have symbolic cosmic significance.

All solar and lunar eclipses, comet passages, Leonid Showers, meteorite strikes and collisions with asteroids will henceforth be commemorated with nationwide (and in some cases planetwide shutdowns). All Super Novae will be declared holidays retroactively since it would take two billion years for light from the distant explosions in the Andromeda Galaxy to get to us. The activities of all heavenly bodies will be strictly monitored by a special Celestial Committee, and the sun and moon will henceforth be under added surveillance since they are also depicted on our national flag.

"The Gregorian Calendar is not suitable for theocracies like Nepal," said the Astrologer General in an interview, "that is why we have decided to follow the Lunatic Calendar."

Bhaisepati Residents Also Want Royal Tour

BY A CORRESPONDENT WHO (SURPRISE, SURPRISE) WISHES TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS

The residents of the upscale suburban settlement of Bhaisepati have signed a petition humbly requesting His

Majesty the King to make a royal tour of their neck of the woods as well.

"His Majesty just came up to Jawalakhel last week, I'm sure it would be no trouble for him to travel up the road a bit," said KP Bhattarai, longtime resident who said he was impressed with the efficiency with which all the potholes were patched overnight in Kopundole for the royal tour. "We feel that is the only way that the road from the Ring Road to Bhaisepati will ever get repaired."

A spokesman for the Roadless Department said he had no problem fixing the road if the "order came right from the top".

Mountain Goats To Get Transit Visas

BY A BORDERLINE REPORTER

Thousands of mountain goats who had been waiting patiently on the Tibetan Plateau to enter Nepal for the Dasain festivities have been finally granted one-way transit visas for the kingdom, the Department of Livestock and Immigration at the Ministry of Animals announced today.

"They wanted multiple entry-tourist visas, but we were convinced they had no intention of going back, so we gave them one-way entry permits gratis and threw in a free medical checkup," said an official in the Alien Goats Registry at the Department.

The first mountain goat to cross the border on International Tourism Day was garlanded, given a Nepali topi and taken around town in a caparisoned elephant before being led off to be castrated.

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