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 one 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 to 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 next move

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 tawh in ties with the Maoists. Elsewhere, efforts are underway to forge unity among constitutional forces. The US-based Carter Centre is organizing 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 NCP and UML could still give the king a face-saving way to backtrack to a constitutional monarchy while there is still time.
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 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 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 irresponsibility is deliberate. The monarchy needs to be saved not from the Republicans in the political parties or in the rebel ranks, but from itself.

Tush Girl’s trial balloon in Biratnagar and the less articulate ramblings of his colleagues have set alarm bells ringing so loudly that ironically even neo-radicalists in the mainstream parties who were calling for scrapping the constitution are rallying around it in support now. There has also been a chorus of outrage from the party leadership, opinion makers, genuine monarchists and political moderates. There is no room now for such a balloon to be taken seriously. In Nepal, no decision can be taken without consultation with the republicans in the political parties or in the rebel ranks, but from itself.

Regarding all the letters published in The Royal Trek (as a ‘PR event’) is endorsed by D Mahat from Baltimore USA in support of Kunda Dixit’s write up ‘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 streets earlier? And then he收缩 himself so? What is the problem D Mahat of Baltimore trying to come from this? The monarchy 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 the newspaper 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 archeats, why not spend it on development? Why doesn’t the royal family lead the way?’ Instead, I ask these people why not tell the political parties not to do any fuss over the royal trek? Why not let the people go to their offices in peace? Why not let the students go to their offices in peace? Questions are all we have. Let’s 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 fies in the middle of the road, Nepal intelligence stays quiet. Are we so attached to their highmindedness 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 police had to deploy to guard: career soldiers who have nothing else 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 ruling 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 no不足e to slight the sentiments among us. We feel patriotic when he is around. On him. Good. The king is on the other hand, seek Indian assistance in everything they do. Why do they invite the Indian army to meddle in Nepal’s internal affairs? Answer: they want help to get back to power so they can handle 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 white 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 at 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 Bhutan refugees, or the encroachment of hundreds of 4 km of land near the border, or the mistreatment of Nepalis by Indian security in Nepal. Indian leaders didn’t even come here to lecture us on democracy.

P Chhetri, email

Sanctuary

Nepal’s four operators should learn not to discriminate against Asian tourists and western tourists (‘Peace sanctuary’, #267). With more than 2 billion people across both sides of the border, Nepal could reap a good harvest of tourists with proper public relations.

Sandhya Amaty, Philadelphia, USA

I see September tourist arrivals have gone up. If things go well we might total 350,000 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 Hamurand Dhoka Square not a Chitwan elephant safari. I was in Pokhara last week and Chitwan before that. Both are hurting badly. Why was never been for the last few years. My guess for hotel and. Nepali trekkers and trek numbers in these 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 and trekking. But few Indians for the casinos, going to Tibet and Bhutan incidentally how many doing that are booked into the country worldwide. Nepal is also their own 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 few children and hold your own? It strips you not only of colours but of your very dignity and esteem. I couldn’t help thinking that since I am a practicing Buddhist, I do not believe in animal sacrifice. Initially as a Hindu widow, I fled from its ritualistic demands because you are expected to fulfill 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 are Christians 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. TheDashain holiday 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 few children and hold your own? It strips you not only of colours but of your very dignity and esteem. I couldn’t help thinking that since I am a practicing Buddhist, I do not believe in animal sacrifice. Initially as a Hindu widow, I fled from its ritualistic demands because you are expected to fulfill 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 are Christians 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. TheDashain holiday 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 few children and hold your own? It strips you not only of colours but of your very dignity and esteem.

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 to give a ‘donation’. Also the road from Mugging to Narayangadh 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.

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 died. 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 thing but we do sit together to eat. My girls are doing fine. When I am practising Buddhism, I do not believe in animal sacrifice. Initially as a Hindu widow, I fled from its ritualistic demands because you are expected to fulfill 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 are Christians 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. TheDashain holiday 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 few children and hold your own? It strips you not only of colours but of your very dignity and esteem. I couldn’t help thinking that since I am a practicing Buddhist, I do not believe in animal sacrifice. Initially as a Hindu widow, I fled from its ritualistic demands because you are expected to fulfill 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 are Christians 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. TheDashain holiday 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 few children and hold your own? It strips you not only of colours but of your very dignity and esteem.
A Peruvian parallel

From Shining Path to Prachanda Path

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 monopoly 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 press why he made the academic achievements of Badal, Bhattarai and Prachanda never swayed the Maoists away from excesses.

In Peru, however, the over-reliance on the services of Sher Bhattarai and Prachanda never swayed the Maoists away from excesses.

Similitudes. The Himalaya and the Andes are two of the hardest mountainous terrains in the world. In those of the journey of the Inca civilization and the Andes, Peruvians thought they had historic justification for their huallas, primitivism, intolerance, xenophobia, jingoism, and totalitarianism. The Sugauli Treaty was a diplomatic compromise, but many Nepals choose to believe that it was not as military might that kept the British at bay. Delusions of greatness are inherently dangerous, it duels people into doing things that they wouldn't do if they knew that past glory is no guarantee of future survival. Nepali revolutionaries also had to rely on the services of Sher Bhattarai and Prachanda never swayed the Maoists away from excesses.

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In the court of public opinion, perception is the most powerful weapon and the twin pillars of his regime's stability were the unflinching support of the IMF-World Bank and the Peruvian military. The constructive monopoly 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 press why he made the academic achievements of Badal, Bhattarai and Prachanda never swayed the Maoists away from excesses.

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Aid appeal

The UN seeks funds for Nepal's humanitarian needs

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 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, where the poorest of the poor have been left behind in the mountains."

Kahane said work towards 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," Kahane 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 added 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.

The appeal is designed by 13 UN agencies, 12 NGOs and the Red Cross as contingency plan a matter of the humanitarian needs in case an emergency arises. "We hope it doesn't," Kahane added, "none of us is looking for a bigger crisis. But neither do we think it's prudent to sit back and say there won't be one."

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. NGOs have also established a system of working with local communities so it was important that they be included to represent these communities, particularly people from disadvantaged groups. "We also have 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."

MARTY LOGAN

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Largest CAP requests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Requirement (as of 23 Sept)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
<td>$12.8 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>UN Children's Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN Food and Agriculture Organisation</td>
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<td>UN Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
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<td>World Health Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lutheran World Federation</td>
<td>$1.2 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC Alliance and Plan Nepal</td>
<td>$1.1 million</td>
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The Final Round:

1. Nepal Bangladesh Bank
3. The Best Magazine
4. Times Sunil & Credit Co-operative
5. Hitchock Valley
6. Nabil Bank Ltd.
7. Nepal Investment Bank
8. Nepal Credit & Commerce Bank
9. Premier Insurance Company
10. Maropoco Travels
11. More Travels Pvt. Ltd.
12. Casino Nepal
13. Mittal Electronic
14. Himalayan Smoke & Noodles

KITE FLYING COMPETITION CHANGA CHAT 2062

SUN 22nd ASWIN 2062 (8th October 2005)

CHITWANGY WINDY HILLS, NAGARKOT

NINA KHANDERI & LEGEND RKI, ZINDA AMBA 2062 (9th October 2005)
Economic eclipse

Do we fear becoming productive and contemporary?

Besides turning xenophobic, the country seems to be going backwards to mediavalism by declaring a national holiday for solar eclipses. Our quest for international acclaim and fewer working days have not taught us anything. But what would happen if Nepal was clearing a major global financial settlement or a firm here was performing financial transactions on bounced from the other side of the globe? Would we tell the person at the 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 evening. 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 confude state holidays with a five day working week. It is important that people work eight hours a day five days a week and not 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 Patuli 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 it 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 so quick to crucify the majority of Hindus living south of our border and elsewhere who have graduated to making offerings of coconuts or other vegetables? Our myopic regard for the Khatis 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. ♦
“Keep the constitution”

Former Chief Justice Bishowath Upadhyaya in Cheshanar, 25 September

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 same. 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, painless 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?

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 talking about just because the king doesn’t want to lose his powers, the constitution did not come by his own wish. It is for this reason that the parties support the present constitution.

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 disturbed 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 back because we still have a democratic system. The parties have been able to hold their conventions, meetings and protests. Protests through the media have 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 wishes 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. If it was not decided that the king would attend the UN summit so how could it be cancelled?

Leo E Rose

Obituary in Samaya 6 October

Leo E Rose’s first academic tribute to Nepalphilosophy was the book co-written with Bhadur Lal Joshi, Democratic Innovations in Nepal written 30 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 the US and spent eight years in India with the slogan of “national reconciliation” with the king.

Today the republican slogan is in the air and the king is backing a move for 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 1969 from the University of California. In a democratic system it is natural for political parties to take to the streets. Every movement has achieved nothing.

Subhadra Appain, Uribari, Morang

My youngest son, Kubir Prasad Appain, was disappeared by the state two years ago. He was living in a rented room in Biratnagar, 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. Interest and local activity 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 taken to human barracks and 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 brothers are going through not knowing whether he is alive or dead. The state should understand this.

Where is my son?

Two letters in Himal Khabarpatrika, 2 October

My youngest son, Kubir Prasad Appain, was disappeared by the state two years ago. He was living in a rented room in Biratnagar, 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. Interest and local activity 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 taken to human barracks and 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 brothers are going through not knowing whether he is alive or dead. The state should understand this.

Subhadra Appain, Uribari, Morang

My husband, Gyantendra Tripathi, was the former education chief of the ANFSU (Revolutionary) and was detained two years ago. No one has any idea 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 states a detachment taken to Sundaraju who said Gyantendra Tripathi and 48 others were being held in Maharajgan. In another news report in July, human rights activist Sudip Pariyar said my husband had been located and was alive. Details these reports, the government is not concerned about the uncertainty and guilt this situation is causing us, my family members. Please find him.
Letter to His Excellency Bloomfield

Khagendra Sangrula in Kantipur, 25 September 2005

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 monoracy of King Gyendana’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 British to speak at the first anniversary of Nepal 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 filling a copy of the note it is 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 Nepal 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 get 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 that the 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 buses could be seen going in easily. Dressed simply, I got to personally experience the undignified 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 be 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 could politely answer some basic questions people may have? Is it a representative of British culture to torment those who are the weakest? There is a contradiction between your stand for support to Nepali democracy and the feudal and insulting behaviour of your visa section.

Regards.

Khalendra Sangrula
L ast week we travelled to Chitgar in western Nepal, hoping to interview some Maoists who control the area. As we walked on jungle trails towards the village of Dasratpur, we spotted a girl in a blue and white school uniform who approached to tell us she was hiding from Maoists. She had almost a day to help her. 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 into effect across 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 were reportedly 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 one hand and the back of her school bag. The other girl, Shoba, 15, 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. We beat up those who ran away,” said the boy, Khum. 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 going. But it was worth the risk for the teachers and students staying in the village with a family who gave them shelter but they left first thing in the morning without eating. When we met them, they were looking for a way home.

We decided to change our plans and take the teachers to the village. 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 through the jungle towards a bridgehead to take a shaky little walk across the Bheri. But also, we had not moved for too long. A young woman in a pink salwar kameez appeared from nowhere to come close 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 judging from the miserable looks on their faces. There was nothing we could do, we couldn’t force them. But Ganga remained unhurting during the argument. We knew she especially had wanted to go with us and she had no doubts.

Fearing more rebels would arrive to prevent us from returning, the group with the girl and Baraha first went off across the river, the bridge having been long since blown up by the Maoists. Across, we stopped in a remote village called, which happened to be 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.

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.

"We want to go home" A television crew rescues students abducted by Maoists in western Nepal

KASRA NAJI in SURKHET

We are glad the rebels have said they will not be extorting money in the district any more. 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 Maoist ceasefire will not bring back Saleha Faki’s husband but she believes it is only 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 homes, children and elderly parents.

Since then, Saleha and her husband-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 still running back from Uttar Pradesh border, including a son of the murdered Faki brothers. “I thought it was safe now and came to check on my family,” says Karnrauddin, who intends to go back to Mumbai. Returnees are now confident their lives will not be in danger from the Maoists, who had been on a witchhunt against members of the notorious Parama vigilante group of Kapilbastu. The Faki brothers were the first victims, killed to make the point that no one should dare challenge the rebels.

Rebels now abundant sale

DAMBAR SHRESTHA

Life has not changed one bit for the people of the Arun Valley anymore. Since the Maoists declared their ceasefire on 3 September, the locals are now asking where 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 have stopped, but the attacks on the civilians continue.

The situation is especially difficult for teachers and young students for whom the ceasefire announcement has meant being forced-march to attend Maoist indoctrinations and training. Last week, 150 students and teachers in the Jaljala and Barabise areas were abducted to the border to India leaving behind their homes, children and elderly parents.

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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 have stopped, but the attacks on the civilians continue.
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 bajar 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.

“We want peace,” 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 Rupandehi 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.

“Despair has subsided for now, the ceasefire has lifted our hopes,” says 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 as he gets on a bus to Butwal, from where he will walk five hours to reach Argakhanchi.

Those who have fled their homes live miserable lives in district headquarters Kathmandu. “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 Kathmandu 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 Shikobati 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.
A new look at Nepal’s history

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

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...by John Whelpton...is a manuscript to the same publisher. Wright’s text, essentially an edited compilation of manuscript sources translated by Shiva Shanker Singh and Guernaz, would become the first History of Nepal to be published by Cambridge University Press, and Whelpton’s second. Whelpton’s choice to use a photo of a street scene in the tiniest town of Birgunj on the front cover, rather than a cliched 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 tara.

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 unforgiving states. 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 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 Hells’ type of reports which are common in the international press.

“Sudden and violent political change has...been a recurrent part of the country’s 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 86) 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 intrigues 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.

From the Collection of Shanker Raj Satyal

Mark Turin
BOOK
A History of Nepal
John Whelpton
Cambridge University Press
2005, xx + 296pp
ISBN 0 521 80026 9 and 80470 £40.00 (hardback) and £15.99 (paperback) in the UK
Asian edition by Foundation Books ISBN 0 521-671418, Rs 375 available in Nepal

First Time: The hasty enthronement of King Gyanendra in 1950 by the last Rana prime minister Mohan Shumshere after King Tribhuvan escaped to India. A History of Nepal

Women in Concert
Part III
Come not only for the Music, but also for the Cause
in support of Sona Kendra

Women in Concert

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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 (NGIP) 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.

The Population and Socio-economic Atlas of Nepal
HMG Survey Department and Central Bureau of Statistics
Kathmandu 2004
Rs 2,500

Short or Long
Take your hair to the clinic everyday
Dust and pollution have damaging effects on hair, making it look dirty, dry and rough. The longer the hair, the worse the problem can be. Use Clinic Plus with Milk proteins to keep your hair clean, healthy and problem-free.

Has your hair been to the Clinic today?
Being Nepali (in LA)

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

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 can deny that Pakistanis watch Bollywood blockbuster hits 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 being sold in Lahore. As the newspaper that this Nepal-based writer goes to Lahore, he is ridiculed for his bad Urdu, and in Delhi for his atrocious Hindi. Or Hindustani.

In heavy-weight gatherings of Southasians, dialogues from Kathmandu, Dhaka, New Delhi and Islamabad alike are found executed in Sinhala, departed to the geo-political hackles are not really working any longer. Which means that even though the Bombay producer and director thought they were making a film in Hindi, they are being sold in Lahore. As the newspaper that this Nepal-based writer goes to Lahore, he is ridiculed for his bad Urdu, and in Delhi for his atrocious Hindi. Or Hindustani.

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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 monsoon patterns; they start later and stay longer,” says meteorologist Ngunmintra Dhakal, “we don’t know whether it is a result of climate change, but it is happening.”

But the jet stream which lavers 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 Frash former president of the American Alpine Club and managing editor of the American Alpine Journal. Frash attempted Makalu in 1963 and has been coming back to Nepal since preferring to go after remote area mountains like the unscaled 6405m Pekaasangkum west of Dhaulagiri which he is climbing this season with a team of two other Americans and a German.

This year, the monsoon snapped out in July and was lingering long after the traditional end of monsoon date of 22 September. Even in the term 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 monsoon patterns it seems climbers prefer spring again.

There were a total of 131 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 year. The royalty to climb from peaks from the Nepal side is much higher for the same peak from the China side. 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 20 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-thousandner but all are from the Tibet side this season, even an expedition to mark 50 years of Nepal-China diplomatic relations.

Lalita Shrestha 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.
14 CITY

- 13 OCTOBER 2005 #268

"Lata ko desh ma gaando tandel" (In a land of fools, even a man with a bad goat can be a hero) - as translated by UNACOOTS, the United Nation's Association of Cartoonsists

EXHIBITIONS
- Art Work Traditional artworks at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg. 4248999
- Arts from Tibet, Dolpo and the Himalaya by Pasang at Babar Mahal Revisited

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS
- Celebrate Dasiai the Nepali Style at Moksh Live, 7 October.
- Changa Chait kite flying competition at Club Himalaya, 8 October. 4417106
- Modulate at Rux Bar with DJ Whorase, 8 October. Rs 600
- Open and Shine at HBMC, 8 October, pre-register. 4418483
- World Post Day 9 October.
- World Mental Health Day 10 October.
- Fulpati 10 October.
- World Food Day, 16 October.
- International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 17 October.
- Football Tournament at Dasrath Stadium, 30 October.
- trophyl@lbs.edu.np

Pleight of Widows in Nepal by Nepal-Tibet, 23 November, 9.30am Shankar Hotel.

MUSIC
- Amber Gurung, live in Lalitpur, 7 October, Nepal-Laya-R-Shala, 6.30 onwards.
- Reviving Pearl Abbasya 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, Jashokathel ground.
- A Legend at a Legendary Place live performances 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 night wine sale and much more. 4256322
- Live Music at Janjeli Bar, Hotel de Annapurna, 4221711
- Ladies Night Wednesdays, one free cocktail to the ladies at Jatra.
- Musician Night every Tuesday at Moksh, 7.30 PM onwards. 5529212
- Cadenza Live! Upstairs Jazz Bar at Lazimpat, every Saturday and Wednesday.
- Live Jazz by the pond at 1905, Kantipath. 4252722

FOOD
- Tawa & Kadal, 2-9 October, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- The Kabab Kurry Karkhana at Radisson Hotel, 9th October.
- The Sidewalk BBQ with live jazz, Fridays, Shankar-Li. 4412999
- BBQ Dinner at Summit Hotel, Fridays, 6.30-9.30 PM. 5521603
- 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 Shamballa, Hotel Shankar-Li, Lajimal. 4412999
- The Jazz Gourmet fine dining redefined, Shankar-Li. 4412999
- Okteli rice dumplings with special jungle sauces at the Tharu Kitchen, Jungle Base Camp. junglебасеcamp@yahoo.com
- Annapurna Value Lunch at Rs.295. 4221711
- Autumn Chill Out Moments at 1965 Kantipath, delightful entrées and lounge grooves by DJF, 4225272

GETAWAYS
- Junglewalks, rafting, elephant rides all at Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bara, junglебасеcamp@yahoo.com
- Exciting Holiday Packages with Le Meridien, Kathmandu. 4415212
- Unbeatable holiday discounts with Malaysia Dream Holidays, Tel 201245
- Nature Tour at Shivapuri national park from Park Village Resort. 4434705
- Gokarting Rs 200 for 4 laps, 4361500

ABOUT TOWN

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

When wither 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 a Dharahara rush. However, the more polluted Putalisadak area reveals a drop in pollution level by almost 12 percent as compared to the previous week.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Call 4442220 for show timings www.jainepal.com

NEPALI WEATHER

When an experimental space voyage goes awry, four people are changed by cosmic rays. Reed Richards, inventor and leader of the group gains the ability to stretch his body, and takes the name, Mr. Fantastic. His girlfriend, Sue Storm, gains the ability to turn invisible and create force fields, calling herself the Invisible Woman. Her younger brother Johnny Storm gains the ability to control fire, including covering his own body with flame, becoming the Human Torch. Pilot Ben Grimm changes into a super-strong rock creature calling himself Thing. Together, they use their unique powers to explore the strange aspects of the world, and to foil the evil plans of Doctor Doom.

KATmandu WEATHER

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 a Dharahara rush. However, the more polluted Putalisadak area reveals a drop in pollution level by almost 12 percent as compared to the previous week.

© 2002 by jyana getten - read, love, write.
The Castrator

A 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 now I find it normal,” she recalls.

As Dasain approaches, there is a lot of demand for Drona Kumari’s services. She dreams of setting up in a bigger 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.”

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.
A s 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 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 Tilak 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) Mini-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 Beka-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.”

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.