



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

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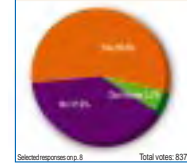
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Times magazine/feature/section
Weekly Internet PCRs #15

Q. Would it be better to have a re-elected non-Maoist Communist Party of Nepal?



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DASAIN WISHLIST

For whatever it's worth, here is our Dasain wishlist:

1. That the government and the Maoists stop twiddling their thumbs and take secret high-level talks to their logical conclusion. Otherwise we will be tempted to believe that both are just using the time to prepare for a final showdown.
2. To make the most of the present moment and not let it pass too many days of it. But it can't wait for talks to conclude, rural development has to go on as a Marshall Plan-style campaign.
3. That there is a serious and massive push to create new jobs by spurring domestic and foreign investment. This is the only way to reduce poverty, and the frustrated middle class, at present.
4. Rescue the tourism industry by: a) lifting passport and ID requirement for Indian tourists, b) launching aggressive promo in India, East Asia and Australia, c) rescue sabotaged deals like the one with Taiwan's Mandarin Airlines, sign cheap agreements with airlines and allow code-sharing.
5. To implement point 4, Royal Nepal Airlines needs to look at its political shackles and allowed to function as the efficient, modern airline it can be. Add aircraft, start ferrying tourists from regional hubs and turn the decline in inter-continental travel to our advantage.
6. Land reform with the most blatant example of graft: the nationwide adulteration of diesel and petrol with subsidised kerosene. This is not only a health hazard and a drain on the economy—kerosene meant for the poor is being siphoned off by criminals. Everyone knows who they are. Catch them.
7. Let sleep our eyes on the big prize and pragmatically renegotiate the trade treaty with India. Why should our bilateral trade be held hostage by a bunch of smugglers? The sooner we legitimise trade, the better prepared will be to play by WTO rules.
8. The government and the cashmere industries are reeling. Half a million jobs are at stake. (Read 'Labour pain', p.64). Act now.
9. Restore business confidence by maintaining the truce with the Maoists. Even if the talks are unsuccessful, regressing to the killings floods of pre-July should be prevented at all cost.
10. Implement the above points as if our nation's existence depended on it. It does.

TRUTH IS THE FIRST CASUALTY

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

But what is it about superpowers like America or regional powers like India that when the nation goes to war, its supposedly free and independent media suddenly goes ballistic with patriotic jingoism? Combined with global satellite and cable, this has the effect of turning wars into programme highlights. Learning the lesson from the Vietnam debacle, Washington is playing the propaganda war through a pliant media, which has made pacifism a dirty word and any talk of finding the root causes of terrorism heresy. As Michael Massing of Columbia Journalism School argued in this paper two weeks ago ("One voice," #63), the US media's one-source treatment of this war is reminiscent of the Soviet Union, China

The western media has always reflected the interests and concerns of the western world. That is to be expected. But the trouble is that the western media is the source of news for not just the west, but also the rest of the world. When defeating the Soviets in Afghanistan was in the western interest, the war was interesting for the western media. The Islamic jihad was glorified as a war against the Evil Empire. When the Red Army retreated beyond the Oxus in 1989, the west and western media lost interest in Afghanistan. When the mujahideen started killing each other and destroying Kabul in vicious a fratricidal war, not many foreign journalists were interested even though the carnage was much worse than during the Soviet occupation.

The west's neglect of Afghanistan in the 1990s meant that the country remained in the penumbra of global media. As fundamentalism dug its roots and the Taliban shook its iron fist, the interests of those who fought proxy wars in Afghanistan became limited to seeing it as a transit for Central Asian natural gas. Now that we have concluded Afghanistan is the hotbed of global terrorism, the country is back in the news. The moral double standards of Cold War media coverage continues: just replace Communism with Al Qaeda. And the battlefield is still Afghanistan.



AMAZING NEPAL...



LETTERS

TU AND KU

ASYLUM

I was alarmed and disappointed by the misconceptions in "Asylum" (#63). Asylum seeking in the UK is made to sound like a holiday but this is far from the truth. The article claims that, after arriving, surviving is easy. "Even those without acquaintances to help don't have to worry much: the British government gives you 36 pounds per week as survival allowance, 10 pound in cash and 26 pounds as food vouchers." In reality, asylum seekers find that the weekly allowance is not enough for a dignified existence and

the voucher system is intensely humiliating. Entering the UK in container trucks is also made out to be easy but surely the fate earlier this year of the Chinese people who died while they were hiding in a refrigerator container, is enough warning about the dangers of illegal entry. Only desperate people are forced to take these desperate methods to flee persecution and seek asylum. Sadly, asylum seekers in the UK often face hostile treatment from the authorities. The *unpleasant* treatment, *mean* *authorities*.

**Clare Woodall
Lazimpat**

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

Sudhir Sharma
UK

TU AND KU

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

**"Shreeram
Thailan**

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

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

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

*Aruna Kandel
Kathmandu*

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

*Rajyalaxmi Hamal
Birgunj*

CK Lal is right about most of the things about Tikapur (#64). But he is wrong in saying that Maoist scourge is on the wane. Tikapur is the Rolpa-Rukum of the tarai. The terror of Maoists is still very much there, and that is why farmers have not been able to harvest the paddy even though it is ripe. Lal's views about Tikapur's isolation is wrong. Fifteen km is not a long distance, and Tikapur can easily be connected with Mahendra Rajmarg if the existing road is black-topped. Connection with India is bad but that is not important because there is no major Indian town nearby.

Naresh Singh Thakuri
Nepalgunj

Prakash A Raj (Letters, #62) misses Samuel "Mad Dog" Huntington's hate for all races other than his own in *Clash of Civilisations*. Either Mr Raj has not read the book or he is hopelessly dim-witted. In any case, as long as Colin Powell calls the shots in Washington CK Lal need not worry an all-out war in his neck of the woods. Good paper, keep up the spirit.

Satyendra
Berkshire, England

AMAZING NEPAL...



BIN LADEN

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



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

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

Suzanne Silvers
Houston, Texas

SUBLIMINAL

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

Wendy King
Kathmandu

CORRECTION

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



"Cynicism is the obstacle to Nepal's

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

How did you end up at UNICEF?

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

Long way from Gulmi to New York...

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

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

What is your job at UNICEF?

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

Has the destruction of the UNICEF office in Quetta affected your holiday?

It happened when I was here. Every morning New York time, or evening Nepal time we have a conference call involving our executive director, who was in Russia last week, myself in Nepal and our regional director here Nigel Fisher who has also been appointed to be the overall

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

We are now trying to bring in some supplies, certainly from the borders with Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan.

How does the situation of Nepali children look?

In this country we still have high female illiteracy and HIV/AIDS is becoming alarming. But our leaders are not quite awake to the issue of women's illiteracy, where we have one of the highest maternal mortality rates, where girls are trafficked in huge numbers. We are now having this debate about property rights for women, which should have happened 20 years ago. And the most progressive legislation being proposed is not progressive enough. We still have a long way to go. The progress is excruciatingly slow.

A few women leaders are coming out, and girls' enrollment is increasing quite rapidly. And that ought to be the highest priority for UNICEF action in the coming years in Nepal—girl education. It is important not only on its own right, but girls' education is perhaps the best investment that a nation can make.

In Nepal, different UN agencies have begun working together to address issues affecting poverty, and not just do things under their "mandate". Is this a strategic move, or did it just happen?

It was a deliberate plan of colleagues here. This is the way to go because poverty is the ultimate cause of many of the ills. But poverty is not just lack of income, poverty has at least three dimensions: income, which is related to productive employment, second the lack of basic social services, then lack of education and health are both consequences of poverty as well as the cause of poverty. We realized that if we worked in some of the same districts, in some of the villages with an integrated plan, with good poverty alleviation activities including employment, income generation, micro-credit

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

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

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

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

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

development..."

—Kul Chandra Gautam

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

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

I think the situation of women in Nepal continues to be deplorable. Yes some progress has been made but it is not enough to be proud of, or brag about. A country that still has 65 percent of women illiterate, where we have one of the highest maternal mortality rates, where girls are trafficked in huge numbers. We are now having this debate about property rights for women, which should have happened 20 years ago. And the most progressive legislation being proposed is not progressive enough. We still have a long way to go. The progress is excruciatingly slow.

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So we're just better than the really bad ones?

Yes, I see Nepal on the average and we should not be happy with being an average. We should be doing much better than that and that is the challenge. Nepal in many ways is in a fortunate situation. Here is a country that everybody likes. If we could produce results, there is no limit to donor support. Many other countries face hostile neighbours, there is war. Except for the unfortunate Maoist insurgency—which is also quite recent—Nepal has been a peaceful country. We have good relations with our neighbours, and have everyone's goodwill. We really should be



PHOTO BY K. CHANDRA GAUTAM

doing much better.

Do you see fatalism as being one of the obstacles?

Many of us in Nepal tend to be excessively pessimistic and cynical. Sometime ago Dor Bahadur Bista wrote that fatalism was one of the obstacles to development in this country. I would say fatalism is an old obstacle to development. A new obstacle to development in this country is the cynicism. We should look at some of the things we have achieved despite all odds and be a little bit more optimistic. We are not at the bottom of the heap, we need to redouble our efforts. Last year in Washington

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

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Fake bankers...

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

...also teachers?

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

Khadka Down Under

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

Bad blood

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

Food for school programme

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



HERE AND THERE

Collateral damage

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

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

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

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

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



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

Reluctantly, near the end of the first week of raids, it was acknowledged that several ordinary folk may have died in Kabul during one late night blitzkrieg. Note please that this was after US claims of "air supremacy" were widely made across the international media, but they kept on bombing at night. The four admitted deaths in Kabul came, we're told, as a 2,000 pound bomb was being dropped on—wait for it—a helicopter! And they missed. Instead a house 500 m away is hit and at

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

Here cars? Don't get me wrong. I still hold out hope that the vicious Taliban can be toppled. I thought, I prayed that perhaps our American friends were going to encourage evolutionary change in Kabul and Kandahar while concentrating their understandable anger on finding and catching Osama Bin Laden. But not.

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



by DANIEL LAK

This one little episode speaks for the numerous indignities people of 'ethnic' features (and, to be sure, others who do not look decidedly powerful and/or parbatiya) have to endure daily in government offices.

More than anything else, the destiny of the nation lies in the hands of the political parties and the government machinery. There can be no doubt in the minds of Nepalis that Chetris, Newars and especially Bahuns have got a bigger slice of the representational pie in these spheres. In the last decade of democracy, the peoples' representation was supposed to grow increasingly to reflect the given proportions in the population. This has not happened, and it is only the service examinations and were assigned to ministries, 69 percent were Bahun/Chetri in 1983-1985, this was up to 81 percent in 1992-1993, and now the number has reached to 98 percent. The proportion of Newars who made it into the civil service during the same period is down from 19 percent to 11 percent, and rested at 1 percent in 2000. The figure for the janajati category has dipped from 3 percent to 2.5 percent in all we speak.

There are of course some

service examinations and were assigned to ministries, 69 percent were Bahun/Chettri in 1983-1985, this was up to 81 percent in 1992-1993, and now the number has peaked to 98 percent. The proportion of Newars who made it into the civil service during the same period is down from 19 percent to 11 percent, and rested at 1 percent in 2000. The figure for the janajati category has dipped from 3 percent to 2.5 percent to nil as we speak.

Turning from the civil service to the political parties, which play the overwhelming role today in giving (mis)direction to the state, here again we find an over-representation of Bahuns in comparison to their proportion in the population as a whole. The top leadership of the major political parties are almost exclusively Bahun, with a few Chettris included and nothing but a sprinkling of the hill ethnics and other communities. This is true for all the large parties—from the extreme left to the far right. The Nepali Congress has a 31-member Central Committee. Within it, 18

accepting these arguments, one should ask whether it is correct to maintain the status quo where one community that makes up less than 15 percent of the population has had to fend off doubt over the direction of the entire country and its people. And it is also necessary to ask whether a corrective mechanism must not be sought so that both Nepal's political terrain and bureaucratic echelons are more representative of the people that inhabit this differentiated land.

We remain an incomplete

Writer's note: When a version of this article first appeared in the 1-16 September issue of *Himal* (Kathmandu), the letters in support of the article came in such force from the *Janajati* fold and the brickbats all from the *bahun* side, indicating a divide that in a more progressed society would have been less obvious. The writer would suggest that readers also refer to an earlier piece, "Need to know your Nepal" (#45), to get a fuller picture of this undercurrent of ethnicity, language and the modernizing Nepal state.

government on a three-pronged formula: promises of phase-wise cabinet expansions to accommodate and pacify supporters, peace talks with the Maoists, and a "revolutionary" land-reform agenda.

In a highly deceptive sign of the times, the communists gave a thumping endorsement to the prime minister they wanted as he read out the eight-point agenda for change in parliament. Now that Deuba has faltered on all three fronts well before completing 100 days in office, the people don't know whether to blame celestial compulsions, political

Impatient *kangresis*

The easiest way out for the prime minister—creating more vacancies by splitting ministries and setting up new ones—is not feasible for a country that apportions half of its annual budget on regular expenditure. Moreover, that course would be in clear violation of the pledges given to the donor nations, agencies and consortiums by two sitting members of the cabinet. So Deuba may have bought time by appointing a government panel to suggest ways of reorganising the ministries, but he cannot avoid the day of reckoning.

By giving him a free hand to

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

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Kathmandu on NHK

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

Dasain shopping

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

New motorbikes

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

NTC discounts

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

NTV Unplugged

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

COMMENT

by BHOLA NATH CHALISE

What does India want?

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

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

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

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

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

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

But this is easier said than done because nobody in government seems to know what the value addition means in practice. By one measure it could mean: *output minus input divided by output*. This means the added value in hydrogenated vegetable oil—Nepal's main export to India—would be around 14 percent. But the FNCCI says Nepal vegetable oils would still be eligible for duty-free exports without quantitative restrictions. That leads to the next question:

How is the added value India is talking about calculated? The FNCCI is mum on this though its officials claim the 30 percent was something they had proposed.

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

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

if he can explain them to the Nepali public?

The best that can happen for Nepal is automatic renewal. If that is not possible, the minimum we expect Mr Acharya to come back with is a clear understanding of what India wants. India can help by telling us clearly whether it wants trade under the Most Favoured Nation regime or continue the preferential treatment granted by the treaty to Nepal exports.

Nepali officials who see the treaty working well to boost exports cannot go about guessing what India wants—they have simply never been told.

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

A win-win scenario for Nepal and India is to agree on renewing the treaty as it is, automatically, before it expires. Nepal would also need to do its take immediate actions to address the sensitive issues of "surge" and "dumping" of certain Nepali and assure India such acts will not be allowed to happen again, because we must accept that there are certain things just not right with how we are trading. □

(Dr Chalise is the former Secretary of Industry)

Bleak Dasain

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



BINOD BHATTARAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

in donor assistance—because we won't be able to spend it. All of which would have a domino effect on fiscal discipline and inflation. The political stability business need now is not only restricted to resolving the Maoist problem. It is equally important to have a strong government that can focus on public policy. Whether and when this will happen is hard to tell, given the ruling party's well-known propensity for inflighting. A best-case

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



WOULD IT BE THE BETTER TO HAVE A REUNITED NON-MAOIST COMMUNIST PARTY OF NEPAL?

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

Babu Ram Panthi, Wuhan, PRC

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

Dr Krishna Kapile

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

Ajaya Gurung

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Pakistan's Afghan problem



The search is on for the 'right' Pashtun-led government in Kabul.

NAJAFI SETHI

In the aftermath of the air strikes launched last week by the US and its allies against Osama bin Laden and the Taliban, Pakistan's president, Gen Pervez Musharraf, called for a rehabilitated Afghanistan with a new broad-based government whose formation should be "facilitated" rather than imposed by the West. This was reiterated by Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar's warning last week that a puppet regime must not be installed in Kabul.

Sattar should know what he is talking about. Since the Soviets were kicked out of Afghanistan in 1988, Pakistan has tried to cobble together and prop up four governments in Kabul and failed. Except for the government led by former President Burhanuddin Rabbani, (an ethnic Tajik), which is still recognised as legitimate by the United Nations, all of Afghanistan's regimes, including the Taliban, were led by ethnic Pashtuns. With the imminent demise of the Taliban, the search is on again to find the "right" Pashtun-dominated government for Afghanistan.

Muslim Pakistan has a natural interest in seeking a friendly government there. It is tinged by India, which is Hindu and deemed hostile, and Iran, which is Shi'ite. Pakistan and deemed untrustworthy. Pakistan therefore feels that a new

government in Kabul dominated by the opposition Northern Alliance, whose constituent Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara minority communities have received economic and military assistance from both Iran and India, would compromise its security.

This is the idea of Pakistan's need for "strategic depth," first articulated in 1990 by Pakistani army chief Gen Aslam Beg. Gen Beg believed that in the event of a long, drawn out and difficult war with India, Afghanistan's friendly territory could serve as a staging zone, providing secure operating bases for Pakistan's air force and army.

But times have changed. Given the development of nuclear weapons and the deployment of ballistic missiles and faster jet planes, it has never been clear what Pakistan might want to "park" in Afghanistan, or why, in the event of a war with India, it would want to establish a military presence in the country. Pakistan's defence establishment has consistently refused to learn lessons since it began cultivating relations with the Taliban in 1996, the biggest lesson of all: A rigidly ideological government with a narrow worldview cannot be a reliable partner. No wonder Gen Musharraf had to sideline one of his pro-Taliban generals, a move aimed at consolidating his position.

Pakistan's current predicament follows two decades of intervention in Afghanistan. This was based on a policy of picking Pashtun favourites to

install in power. Over time, however, this transformed Pakistan's natural requirement for a friendly neighbour into an unending obsession for a clear case. Consequently, Pakistan has ended up alienating Afghanistan's ethnic minorities, and driven their leaders into the laps of India or Iran. Pakistan's obsession with a friendly neighbour has been either the largest or second largest recipient of Tokyo's aid—analysts say Beijing gets 11.4 percent of Japanese ODA. Loans make up the bulk of Japanese ODA to China, which is also the top recipient of technical transfer from Japan. Japan wants aid to be channelled to environment protection and agricultural projects. For south-east Asia, the cuts could mean less funds for expensive infrastructure and more for environmental protection.

Advisors also suggest that Japan cooperate with countries such as Singapore and Thailand to provide bilateral aid to poorer countries like Laos and Cambodia. (IPS)

Grameen goes to Venezuela

CARACAS - Mohammad Yunus, who 25 years ago launched the Grameen Bank to provide the poor tiny loans for micro-enterprises, is helping revitalize a similar initiative in Venezuela. In late 1999, Hugo Chávez's government created the Bank of the Sovereign People, with credit lines for "solidarity," "women's" and "productive" micro-loans. The bank granted small loans totalling just \$2.8 million last year, despite \$30 million in credit, and earlier this year, the directorate was first used to poe results and corruption charges. In another approach, Chavez announced in January the creation of the Women's Bank to serve the population that, in the Grameen Bank's experience worldwide, makes greatest use of micro-credit. The Women's Bank began operating in August with \$3.4 million in capital and offering loans ranging from \$420-\$7,000 for small-scale development projects.

The Grameen Bank of Bangladesh has over two million debtors, 95 percent women. Over the bank's 25-year history, the default rate has averaged just one percent. Yunus said despite "enormous commitment" in the Chavez administration, Grameen Bank evaluations in Venezuela, "micro-credits are not reaching the areas that most need them."

Yunus also said micro-credit projects must not involve government entities alone, but also the private sector and civil society organisations, must be self-sustainable. "It must become a truly commercial banking system," he said. The government has pushed a micro-Finance Act through Congress and is drafting Banking Act reforms covering micro-loans to encourage private banks to provide such services themselves. Yunus says that while the Grameen Bank has no intention of opening "branch offices" in other countries, it is willing to take the system to others, who can then adapt it to local conditions. (IPS)

Najam Sethi is editor of the Friday Times, an independent weekly based in Lahore, Pakistan.

Quality over quantity

TOKYO — Japan's Finance Ministry has suggested slashing the country's foreign aid budget—the largest in the world—for the next fiscal year. Earlier this month, the ministry requested that the official development assistance budget of just over \$918 billion or \$90 billion, down from \$102 trillion the year before. This will be the first time in a decade Japanese official development assistance has slipped below \$10 billion. Japan's overseas aid budget, the backbone of the country's pacifist foreign policy, was reduced 3 percent in fiscal 2001. Along with the financial pressure—a long recession, record unemployment and rising corporate bankruptcies, Tokyo's aid priorities have also been affected by the global political situation after 11 September. Indonesia, the largest ODA recipient after China, received a project of an increase in funds soon after Finance Minister Masajiro Shikawa expressing Japan's gratitude to President Megawati Sukarnoputri for Indonesia's support of the US war against terrorism. Pakistan is also scheduled to get about \$40 million as emergency aid as part of its support for the US.

The new ODA budget will emphasise quality over quantity—grant aid, which forms 47 percent of the overall aid budget, is expected to remain intact, but loans will likely be reduced. The repercussions will be severe for China, which has been either the largest or second largest recipient of Tokyo's aid—analysts say Beijing gets 11.4 percent of Japanese ODA. Loans make up the bulk of Japanese ODA to China, which is also the top recipient of technical transfer from Japan. Japan wants aid to be channelled to environment protection and agricultural projects. For south-east Asia, the cuts could mean less funds for expensive infrastructure and more for environmental protection.

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Effective from 15th of Sep, 2001

The state has to compensate us.

Jana Aastha 10 October

Excerpts from an interview with Bal Bahadur Bishwakarma, MP UML

You must have been happy being an MP despite being a Dalit...

You become happy when you become an MP because you are actually able to work for the welfare of the people. I have realised that if you tackle a problem correctly then the chances of getting something done are higher. People used to say 'untouchability is something created by the people, I say it is a creation of the state that makes the law—it is there in the courts, schools and police. It exists in all institutions and it is most rigidly enforced in the army. Dalits in the army are discriminated against. After I raised this issue in parliament, the chief of the army wrote to all battalions stating that untouchability should not exist in the army. So you issues in a proper manner, something gets done. So I am happy.

Don't you want revenge for what the state has done to Dalits, how?

The state must compensate us. If someone's house is burnt down, they receive compensation in cash and kind. If the Maoists kill a policeman, then his family gets Rs 800,000 as compensation. Those injured also get paid. We must also be provided compensation. The state labelled us Dalits, as a result of which we have suffered mental and physical problems. We have been excluded from society. We should be compensated.

Has untouchability disappeared after Prime Minister Dauda ordered its end?

The government announced it but its agencies have not implemented it. Policies need to be implemented.

The Maoists say they want to liberate the Dalits, what do you think about that?

The Dalits cannot be free until a social revolution takes place. The Maoist struggle is not a social struggle. In fact, it works in favour of the rich. The Maoists have collected a lot of money and their leaders control it. They collect money from business people, who make it up from poor people like us. The money the Maoists collect from schools, is the hard-earned money of people like us. The money paid by government officials comes from the bribes they take from us. The Maoists have increased the burden of the poor.

They say the situation of Dalits will change after they come to power...

We first would like to know what exactly they have done for us Dalits. Just because they say so, should we believe them? Have they ever said Dalits should be provided free education? They too are killing Dalits. How can I believe them?

Is it said the Dalits themselves have a caste hierarchy...

Yes, it exists. The caste system is slowly breaking up in other societies but in Dalit society, it is becoming more entrenched. It exists between rich and poor Dalits.

Some Dalits are also taking on Bahun surnames. Why?

There are a small number of people—some in high positions—who do that. They may not like what they are but it is reality. Are they really emancipated after changing surnames?

What do you say to those who think that changes things?

It is wrong. A Kami was called a Kami because he used to do Kam work, not because he worked with iron. My forefathers were all Kamis. I am proud of this. It will not help us if we just keep on changing our titles. In fact it would help if we kept our identities and fought for our rights. We Dalits have done a lot. After all we produced weapons and ploughs, jewellery, furniture. Almost everything in use today, has been made by us. We have done a lot for society. We clean the streets every day. Who made the crown that the king puts on, the royal jewels? We stitch the national dress... When others do the same work now they are not called Dalits.

What will you do if you see one call you a Kami?

I would be happy. I will not become small if someone calls a Kami. I have the skills. Just because someone made my family a Dalit 2000 years ago, that does not mean that I am a person of a lower standing.

Do you still carry out your vocation?

After I became a politician, my father did the same job and taught me this way. We feel proud that we manufactured sickles and ploughs. Just because the upper castes look down on you should not mean that you give up your profession. You should continue doing your work and at the same time fight for equality.

Do other members of your party treat you differently?

Sometimes things have happened differently because this is the society we live in. We have to change society, so these issues do not make a difference. There is class differentiation between the Dalits, definitely it will exist among the other castes too. In fact, untouchability is very prevalent in the Far West.

Is the situation changing?

My party people in my district, Kanchanpur, treat me as they treat everyone. There is no discrimination. But maybe people treat me differently because I am a politician.

It's said you had problems finding a house in Kathmandu after becoming MP, because you are a Dalit?

Yes. First I stayed with a friend near my party office in Balkhu. I then started looking for a place of my own. I found many places but could not rent because of my caste and name. I told this to my friends and they said that because of my caste, people were not renting their houses to me. I did not believe it first but later realised it was true.

You still commute by bicycle and not a Prado or Pajero?

Many MPs bought Prados and Pajeros and the people protested against that. Why should an MP from a place where there is no road buy a vehicle? In Kathmandu, you have to live according to your means. Actually MPs can only afford a motorcycle. They earn Rs 15,000 per month. You cannot buy a car with this, unless you are corrupt. I still commute on my bicycle. I was ill and the doctor advised me against using my cycle. Once I get well I will start using it again.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

I didn't want to acknowledge as right what my inner self told me was wrong. That's why I opposed the Women's Property Rights Bill passed by Parliament. Rather than opposing the government, I was demanding my rights.

—Ambika Pant, Nepal Congress MP in Dharhi Saptakhi, 16 October.



Man: The day to worship Durga is approaching. I have to finish this statue soon. I still have to make arrangements for Dasain celebrations...

Woman: Stay away. Why are you coming to see me...

Man: "What kind of tradition is this, when I can't worship even the statue I made?"

Biya Dahanu Greeting Card by a local NGO.

Chasing Maoists

Nepalipatra, 12 October

Locals from Jorpati village in Kathmandu chased away representatives of the 'people's government' recently. Uday Baladhar Bhatt, formerly of the Marxist-Leninist, joined the Maoists and was made leader of the local people's government. He ordered the villagers to attend a meeting and asked them to provide food for all the people there. That infuriated the people, who chased him away.

Earlier in a nearby village, the residents beat up 20 Maoist party members. Padam Bhandari and Gopi Lal Guni, while they were holding a public meeting. The villagers were respecting the doors of the Village Development Committee offices (which had been shut by the Maoists earlier). The Dalits decided it was they who had the right to decide whether or not the VDC office should be closed, and agreed that it was not proper to lock up the buildings. The Maoists realised that there was little they could do and are now renouncing the papers they had stolen from the offices. They do this at the fear that the people, who will definitely beat them up, might catch them...

While the government is setting up the Armed Police Force the Maoists are also organising their fighting forces. They already had 'people's militia' and a regular fighting force going up to the battalion level, in line with their game plan to first capture the villages and then take on the towns and cities. These are the fighting forces after the party's second convention. The Maoists realised that they are in a very long and drawn-out battle with

Maoists re-organise

Jana Aastha, 10 October

The Maoists are re-organising their fighting forces. They already had 'people's militia' and a regular fighting force going up to the battalion level, in line with their game plan to first capture the villages and then take on the towns and cities. These are the fighting forces after the party's second convention. The Maoists realised that they are in a very long and drawn-out battle with

working, organisation and goals between the existing forces and the new 'urban guerrillas'. The urban units are formed for a political purpose, to systematise the party's organisation in urban areas...

The Maoist core fighters are members of what they call a 'people's army', which functions under direct orders from the Central Military Commission (headed by Prachanda).

UN salaries, tax

Deshanet, 14 October

A 10 percent income tax is deducted at source from every employee working in the organised sector. But people working for the United Nations do not pay income tax. They can thousands of rupees every month but do not have

to pay any income tax at all. The law says a 15 percent income tax is payable by every individual who earns more than Rs 55,000 per year, in the case of a family this amount is fixed at Rs 75,000. Under this law, all people employed in the formal sector pay tax. Only Nepalis working in the various UN projects, programs and other related areas do not.

The 'Etna' Commission of 1961 clearly states that all local personnel employed by the UN will have to pay taxes in their respective countries. The UN, when appointing Nepalis, makes it clear that they have to pay taxes. A very good statement in theory, but in practice it does not work. All Nepalis are taxed at source. The UN does not tax its local employees at source and these employees do not make the effort to go and pay their taxes.

According to the information provided to Deshanet by a UN official, 12 UN agencies have offices in Nepal. 390 Nepalis and 190 foreigners work at these agencies. Of these, over 150 are of the office level or higher. None pay taxes.

The salary of local UN staff ranges from Rs 35,000 to Rs 179,000 per month. Yearly income taxes payable by these people would range from Rs 437,000 to Rs 2,148,000. According to Nepal law, individuals who earn more than Rs 75,000 per month and couples who earn more than Rs 150,000 are taxed at a flat rate of 25 percent. The truth is they do not pay and the government does not ask them to pay. It is strange that even though more than 150 foreigners are employed by the UN in Nepal, officials have no information from them. The chief of the internal revenue department at Patan says the government requested the UN to provide the information last year and there was no response.

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email: info@onlyatnepal.com np Web URL: www.onlyatnepal.com

BOOKING STARTED

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ABOUT TOWN

MOVIES

- ▮ **Nepali and Hindi movies** online ticket booking at www.nepalshop.com

EXHIBITION

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

EVENTS

- ▮ **The Culture and Future of the Internet** Lecture by Prof Kim H Veltman, Scientific Director, Maastricht/McLuhan Institute Universiteit Maastricht, The Netherlands. 10.30AM, 19 October, Russian Culture Centre, Kamalpokhari
- ▮ **Contemporary Jazz dance classes** by Meghna Thapa. At Alliance Francaise Sundays and Tuesdays 4.30pm-6.30pm, 241163. At Banu's, Kamal Pokhari, Wednesdays 6.30pm-8pm, Saturdays 1.30pm. 434024, 434830

MUSIC

- ▮ **Weekends at The Jazz Bar** The Jazz Commission on Thursdays, Chris Masand's Latin band on Fridays and on Saturdays An Fainne. 7pm onwards, Shangi-La Hotel, 412999
- ▮ **Live music** Tuesday and Friday nights at the 40,000 ½ ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, 414336
- ▮ **Live acoustic music** Dinesh Rai and Dependra every Friday at the Himalite Café. 7.30pm-10pm 262526



EATING OUT

- ▮ **Barbecue lunch** with complementary wine or beer for adults, soft drink for children. Saturdays and Sundays at the Godavari Village Resort. 506075
- ▮ **All-new at Dwarika's** Krishnarpan Nepali ceremonial four-course lunch, \$13, daily. Three-course course set lunches daily at the Toran Garden Restaurant, \$11. Friday Night Sekuwa with fusion music by Himalayan Feelings. Special price throughout October. Rs 555 per person, Rs 1,010 per couple. All prices net. 479488
- ▮ **Rox Restaurant** Traditional home style European cuisine straight from a wood-fired oven. Steaks, trout, garden vegetables and desserts. 491234.
- ▮ **Peking Duck and Mandarin Music** Chinese chefs' mild and spicy delicacies from the far east at the Tien Shan. Every Sunday. Hotel Shangi-La. 412999
- ▮ **Saturday lunch** at Restaurant Kantipur, Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. BBQ buffet Rs 500 per head. 410432
- ▮ **Spa Brunch** Aerobics, yoga classes and salad buffet. Includes complimentary use of swimming pool and the health club. Rs 750 per person plus tax. Every Sunday. 11.30am-5pm. Hotel Yak & Yeti 248999
- ▮ **Juicy steaks, chilled beer**, Mexican cuisine, great breakfasts. Starts from \$11. All week long. Live band Wednesday, Sunday evenings 6.30-10.00. K-tool Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 433043
- ▮ **Barbecue dinner with music** by Las Sonidos Latinos. Every Friday night through October. Rs 500 per adult, Rs 250 per child, plus tax. Summit Hotel, 521810
- ▮ **Two for one** International buffet lunch with main courses, on-site cooking, seven kinds of dessert, eight kinds of salad and dressings. Rs 700 plus tax, this month two lunches for the price of one. Garden Terrace, Soaltee Crown Plaza, 273999
- ▮ **Saturdays at the Mallia** Swimming and French chef's barbecue lunch. 11am-5pm. The Mallia Hotel, 413835, 410966
- ▮ **Splash Bar and Grill** New fifth-floor outlet with view of city and surrounding hills. Radisson Hotel, 411818
- ▮ **Kolkata to Kathmandu** With recipes from the famous Sonargon restaurant in Kolkata, exotic preparations like kalkori kebab, dal sonal gaon, murg malai kebabs and more. Hotel De L'Annappa. 221711

GETAWAYS

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

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

NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



Unlike some previous years, this is not going to be a *hile* (muddy) Dasain. A glorious high pressure system dominates the Tibetan plateau and Nepal. The few clouds that do accompany a retreating monsoon circulation over southern India are being blown off by the newly-assertive westerlies. The storms from central India are being blown off to the east to merge with a cyclone over the South China Sea. Some of these clouds will graze the eastern Himalaya, bringing the first showers of the season. The weakening sun and cloud-free skies will bring down the minimum temperature in Kathmandu to as low as 12°C.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
26-12	26-12	26-14	24-13	25-11

YAK YETI YAK

by MIKU



BOOKWORM

Staying Alive: Memories of Women in Prison Durga Ghimire Jagdish Ghimire, Kathmandu, 2000



Rs 350

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

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Manjushree's Rishi

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

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

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

While old feudal Nepal brought

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

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

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

For us Nepali-speaking readers the Nepal world presented in the novel is in some senses a given. We proceed to read the novel with prior knowledge.

This, however, should not make us complacent that we know all there is to learn about ourselves and our society. The novel having been written in English, a language alien to the community described, assumes the aspect of clinical detachment and so the picture that emerges is, in large measure, an evaluation of us. A mirror is held to us and the picture that

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

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

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

literary system, English, too.

Towards the close of the narrative, we begin to view Rishi, the protagonist, as a harbinger of a new realisation, a re-affirmation of valuable principles we have lost sight of—that all theorisation and practice of democracy, liberty and equality boil down to the actualisation of the private dignity of individuals'. Once Rishi dreamed of 'collective liberation'. Now he is a rebel against totalitarian revolution. He is a rebel against various manifestations of social, political and religious mores. Manjushree Thapa's accomplished first novel will not be a one-time hit. She will be a recurrent success story. □

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

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The ten days of Dasain

ALOK TUMBHAHANGPHEY

After the monsoon ends and autumn begins, the biggest thing is the biggest festival of the year. Just saying "Dasain" conjures images of windy days and blue kite-dotted skies, new clothes, plenty to eat and family gatherings that bring the entire clan together. Celebrated by a majority of Nepalis, the festivities mark the mythic battles between good and evil between goddess Durga and the demon Mahisasur. If he was living today, Mahisasur would be called a terrorist. The only difference is that he had taken on the form of a water buffalo. Dasain probably has pre-Vedic origins in harvest festivals and in a sense it has come a full circle to a cultural festival rather than a purely religious one. The longer holiday of the year provides the perfect opportunity for family reunions, and a time to relax.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



SADHUS AGAINST BIN LADEN: Hindu holy men took out a procession on 14 October to protest Osama bin Laden and terrorism.



LEFTIES AGAINST US: Leftist parties took out a counter-procession protesting the US strikes against Afghanistan on Sunday, later George W Bush was burnt in effigy.



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

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Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Lights, camera, action!

Now that every next movie coming out of Hollywood is featuring animals speaking in English, it is a only a question of time before a Bollywood film called *Janwar* will also be released starring a provocatively dressed cow romping around with udders swinging in the parking lot of a Swiss resort, while being chased by an el toro in heat from a nearby stud farm, and both belting out the duet, "Abto aajaa... ancin hain par rera". And if Bollywood stars talking bovines, can Kollywood be far behind?

The fact that most animals are fluent in human languages, can actually sing quite well in karaoke bars, and can secretly speak to each other in American English is something that has been overlooked by our film industry for far too long. It is only to be appreciated, therefore, that our producers are catching up with time lost and finally turning their attention to releasing copies of movies like *Cats and Dogs*, *Shrek* and *Dr Dolittle* and creating characters like Mr Tinkles who (if it wasn't for the timely intervention of a Beagle puppy 007 secret agent named Lou) would have gone on to become the world's only feline super-power.

So, what's the buzz in the animal kingdom? When are we going to have our own Nepali *Dr Dolittle*? The simple answer to these very pertinent and timely questions is quite soon. With a name like that, *Dr Dolittle* will have to do little to be an instant box office hit in Gopi-Krishna Hall. It will also not be difficult to find a Nepali Eddie Murphy lookalike who can understand what animals from all walks of life are saying as he passes them on the street every day.



I myself couldn't help but overhear snippets of conversation between members of Kathmandu's non-human citizens this morning while on my way to work, and was pleasantly surprised to note that their concerns mirror the concerns of the human denizens of the kingdom's capital as we prepare to mark the festival season.

Dog #1: "Wow! Bow, wow! Tenderloin, mountains of tenderloin on my garbage pile."

Dog #2: "That's nothing, look at the lamb chops and spare ribs I found on mine."

Miggggghh...skarp, slurp."

Duck: "Hi guys, how is the garbage today?"

Dogs #1 and #2 (ignoring Duck): "Good thing no one sacrifices dogs in Dasain. Mwahahaha...harharhar."

Duck: "You don't know what you are missing. I go straight to paradise like Goat here. Right, Goat?"

Goat: "Yup. We go to heaven, unlike you carnivores who are stuck in your mundane, putrescent world."

Dogs #1 and #2 (staring): Hey, watch yer mouth. Who you calling mundane?"

Buffalo: "Hi Goat, hi Duck. I'm off to the Kot. What's it going to be for you guys this year, the Banepa Bus or the Safa Tempo?"

Goat: "Actually, ahem, I've been booked for the 757."

Buffalo: "Woa, moving up in the world, I see."

Dogs #1 and #2 (sniggering): "See bits of you all here next week, then."

Director: "Cut! OK, excellent. Thank you everyone, and see you all after Dasain."

NEPALI SOCIETY

FM's tri-lingual RJ

Multi-cultural, multi-lingual Nepal needs more radio jockeys like Prabhat Rimal. In the studios of Kantipur FM in Patan, Prabhat weaves seamlessly from Nepali into English and Newari. "I guess you rarely find a *bahun ko chhoro* who speaks fluent Newari," he says. The Makhan-born-and-bred Prabhat hosts

Nepalaya during which he chats to his callers in Nepali and plays Newari songs for half an hour every Tuesday.

"Initially, speaking entirely in Newari was

difficult. I'd drop in a word or two of Nepali. But not anymore," says Prabhat whose childhood in inner-city Kathmandu made him easy with Newari language, culture and food. "Practice has improved my Newari," says Prabhat. Now he can even tell by the accents of the phone-in callers whether they are from Bhaktapur, Patan or Kathmandu.

He also hosts *Online Demand*, a popular request program for Nepalis abroad. "It's amazing what multimedia can do. We have Nepalis from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Dubai, Singapore, the US, UK, even Argentina, requesting Nepali songs," he says. *Hot Tracks*, another one-hour programme

he hosts, is his personal favourite—rhythm and blues, jazz, rock, music of the 70's and 80. For someone who grew up listening to Led Zeppelin and Bob Dylan, and used money for school fees to buy the latest tapes, hosting the show is more like a hobby than a job.

The RJ still has a fan following from his Mariboro Music Hour days, a show he hosted everyday for an hour for a year-and-a-half, switching easily from Nepali to Newari and English. Those were the heydays of FM in Kathmandu. He says: "FM was new, people wondered at the persona behind the voice."

Six years down the line, FM's novelty might have worn off, but its popularity hasn't despite there being six FM stations in Kathmandu Valley. "There's a new generation of Nepalis hooked to it. I think FM has become more informative, responsible, and mature," he says.

There are those who think FM is too light. But Prabhat shrugs this off:

"Bill Clinton can go play a saxophone in a bar, and people applaud. But if the PM or a politician did it here, the Nepali intelligentsia would frown." Maybe not, if Prabhat himself became a politician! □



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