WAR ECONOMY

It is a classic Catch 22 situation: the Maoist war is sucking money away from development which is needed to address the root causes of the insurgency, Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat, who was already finding it difficult to balance the budget, the task is near-impossible. How is he going to find enough money to pay the initial price tag of Rs 5 billion for the war effort while ensuring that there is enough cash for education, health and other development work? There is no way he can do it without donor support. “We are looking at an immediate increase of Rs 4-5 billion on security spending,” Mahat told us this week. “It could go depending on how long we have to continue the operations.” Mahat has already made one round of the donors, and initial indications are positive. There is a consensus in the donor community that the government was negotiating in good faith with the Maoists, and it really had no choice but to unleash the army after the Dang attack on 23 November. “All donors feel the Maoists have brought this on themselves, and the time has come to go beyond moral support for the government and put our money where our mouth is,” one Kathmandu-based diplomat told us.

To make the additional grants more palatable to donor governments, which have rules against supporting the military, Mahat plans to ask for development assistance to meet the shortfall in the budget caused by reallocation for security. “Budget substitution would just be fudging, but there are extraordinary circumstances, so it may be the trick,” said another donor representative interviewed for this article. However, this time some donors say they would need guarantees that the development assistance goes directly into poverty alleviation of the least-developed areas of the country. Most donors have passed on Nepal’s request to their headquarters, and are awaiting a response.

Most counter-insurgency experts in the Royal Nepal Army are confident they can squeeze the insurgents in the areas they are either defeated or forced to the negotiating table. But, they add, it is up to the government to show that it can deliver development. And the government’s problem is that with the budget it has, “it can’t do both; fight the war and fight poverty at the same time.” Nepal is already spending nearly 10 percent of its Rs 100 billion annual budget on security. This may need to be doubled, in the next three months, depending on how the war goes. As it is, the war has already delayed planned spending and the government will be coming up with a new supplementary budget with re-allocations.

INTERVIEW

MIN BAJRACHARYA

The army has been trying to acquire helicopters for some time now. There was a need for more helicopters even before we declared a state of emergency. There was a need for more helicopters even before we declared a state of emergency. The army has been trying to acquire helicopters for some time now. There was a need for more helicopters even before we declared a state of emergency. In a sense this is also an information war. But don’t you think that curbing the press and the media is more effective? I want to clarify some things here. The government has given some instructions to the media but we’ve said we will also increase information flow, and keep the media informed of the operations, even provide them access to the frontline. We’re mainly concerned about one thing, that the point of view of the terrorists and reports that would justify their actions be restricted. Besides, we have told the media they can report on operations by visiting the field but they should coordinate first with the security authorities. The government is also trying to see how it can conduct media visits in a coordinated manner. So far that has not very good. We have limited resources, and the security expenses can affect development, and lead to imbalance and disparities. We need donor help with logistics, in whatever form, to manage the present crisis. We are holding discussions with them, and have received some positive assurances. Many are sympathetic about our problems.

Are there plans to purchase from India? We have been explaining the situation to the donors, telling them that the situation is not very good. We have limited resources, and the security expenses can affect development, and lead to imbalance and disparities. We need donor help with logistics, in whatever form, to manage the present crisis. We are holding discussions with them, and have received some positive assurances. Many are sympathetic about our problems.

In a sense this is also an information war. But don’t you think that curbing the press is counterproductive? I want to clarify some things here. The government has given some instructions to the media but we’ve said we will also increase information flow, and keep the media informed of the operations, even provide them access to the frontline. We’re mainly concerned about one thing, that the point of view of the terrorists and reports that would justify their actions be restricted. Besides, we have told the media they can report on operations by visiting the field but they should coordinate first with the security authorities. The government is also trying to see how it can conduct media visits in a coordinated manner. So far that has not been difficult because of logistics. After the attack at the army base in Ghorahi the press was reporting responsibly and was generally supportive of the government. Why, then, did you feel it necessary to impose restrictions? We have not censored the press. We have only given directives asking them to be careful about venting the point of view of terrorists—who for some years have managed to gain a firm hold in the Nepali press and have managed to get them to publish reports almost everyday justifying their activities.
The pressure cooker war

Nepali public opinion is sluggish, but it is cautiously in favour of the government’s decision to impose an emergency. No one has done a public opinion poll, but there is considerable support. Most Nepals are saying: we understand you have to take away some of our rights temporarily, and if that’s what you need to solve this crisis once and for all then go ahead, don’t take too long. If the emergency is to keep this support, the rumblings of police high-handedness in some hill and tarai towns need to be addressed urgently.

Let us not forget that there is a strong peace constituency in this country. And although both the government and the Maoists have lashed out at each other for scuttling the negotiations, it is they who have lashed out at the public media. This may have given the government and the military a sense that it will always be that way. So far, the all-too-quickly supportive press has ensured that only the official version of events is getting out. This has lulled the public for now. But the peoples’ opinion is fickle. You can never tell when you have crossed a certain threshold of credibility after which no matter what you do—even if you tell the truth—the public will not believe you.

The government has been sparing in its use of emergency powers vis-à-vis the media. But actually it has been required to do much, since self-censorship is near complete. Little, besides the contents of the Defence Ministry’s “Four o’clock Follies”, ever makes it to print. In fact, most mainstream papers have gone beyond the official version to paint a picture of utter ruin of the Maoist cadre, headlining reports of deaths—exaggerated, it turns out—of top comrades in Rolpa.

It is tempting for observers everywhere when caught in conflict to keep a tight lid on information. But officialism has difficulty learning that this does not mean it should make things up, or give such a one-sided version of events that it squanders the public trust, that it is short-sighted that the government will need, even to make its own version of events believable.

The official version of events may actually be true. It may be true that some of the “people’s government” at the local level is resigning every day in Sindhupalchok (by the way, why is this only happening in Sindhupalchok?)? Or that Maoist attackers are irreparably repelled by army units using “long range weapons”, and the Maoists always suffer heavy casualties. But the bulletins are beginning to sound a bit like, er, Pancahayat-era Radio Nepal.

People want the truth, not just the news. Ignorance is much more dangerous than an informed public. And there is a clear and present danger of a credibility gap that could undermine one of the most important accomplishments of the past 12 years of democracy in this country: a healthy, professional, and credible media.

The media guidelines of the Defence Ministry (see box, p. 5) are fairly crude. In hints, the ministry needn’t have bothered, since media in seem to have been most willing to go along. No, the real problem is not whether or not the media will toe the line. It is to ensure that the various organs of government get their facts right, and do not contradict each other as they are doing now. Information Minister Jayrakesh Prasad Gupta assures us the government is in the process of coordinating the dissemination of information and making it more reliable (see interview p. 1). Let’s hope his efforts bear fruit.

The moral of the story is that even during an emergency you cannot afford to insult the intelligence of the public. After a decade of free press, Nepalis are now alert, sensible and show that only the French can begin to match. The logic sounds convincing. It’s true. In times of war, truth is the first casualty.

Facts are facts. Nepalis are not fools. They have even un-earthed an ISI link and a revolutionary zone. But the bulletins are beginning to sound a bit like, er, Pancahayat-era Radio Nepal. Temple had been burned, bombs had been laid. Then they lead with shootouts in Nepalgunj when Nepalgunj was completely calm.

L ille, France—People from more than 125 countries are gathered in this pretty French town. For next ten days, they will gather in this pretty French town. For next ten days, they will deliberate on making the world a better place. It could do with some improvement. At the end of the week, the hosts expect to come up with a charter that will like the United Nations and the one on Human Rights. It expects to have an equally far-reaching impact on humanity.

The working papers available at the very instant are—very French. Every French intellectual’s obsession with theory is supposed to be so strong that there is a popular joke about it: when shown that something really works, a French social scientist replayed, “I know it does, it works in practice, but does it work in theory?”

The theory behind the vision of an alternative agenda for a global future is based on the assumption that the world cannot go any further than if we insist on following the path followed by industrialized countries. Resources are not infinite, neither are our wishes. The dismal performance of economics has to be humanized. Societies must be made accountable not only for their present actions and future programs, but also for the sins of their pasts. The logic sounds convincing. Just take one example: why should Nepal protect its Charkoshe fries and let function as a natural thermostat for the North Indian plains? Partly, it is in the interest of India to pay for the sins of its high-handedness in some hill and tarai towns need to be addressed urgently.

If the emergency is to keep this support, the rumblings of police high-handedness in some hill and tarai towns need to be addressed urgently. If the emergency is to keep this support, the rumblings of police high-handedness in some hill and tarai towns need to be addressed urgently.

Alternatives to armed rebellion have to be explored to bring changes in dormant societies.

When domestic sources of credible information dry out, Nepalis have always turned to international news outlets. During the Panchayat it was the static faraway face of the BBC’s Nepal and Hindi service. Today it is cable and the Indian satellite channels. But we got a dose of how completely wrong satellite information can be with the Zee News coverage of the IC814 hijacking. Even though this channel has been pulled out of the cable listings, take it from us: Indian satellite news mesmoons are not going to be reformed when covering Nepal. First off, they don’t get their facts right, they have no news sense or ability to gauge the importance—or lack thereof—of events, and when they find out they got it wrong, they never issue retractions.

For six years while the Maoist insurgency raged in Nepal, the Indian press couldn’t be bothered. Now they can’t get enough of it. A blast at a petrol pump in a trans-national Maoist plot to set up a “compact revolutionary zone”. And they are still getting things wrong. Wron on the Indian TV news went on the air to say the Maoists had been defeated. When three Maoist-bombers killed themselves “by assembling an explo-
WAR AND PEACE

During the last two years I have visited Nepal four times. It is with sadness that I am reading about the violence in Nepal. You have one of the most beautiful countries in the world and the Nepalese people are one of the kindliest. Whatever you do, please do not destroy the tourism industry. Whichever government is in power, the present Maoist regime in Nepal will still need to make a living from tourism. Who's the last in the country? I read that they are planning to make the hotel business, the restaurants, in the transport sector, in the Annapurna and Everest areas where the tourists don't come in the spring of 2002? Please go back to the negotiating table and try one more time. There is no alternative. The Nepali people deserve it.

Claus Andersen Kokkedal, Denmark

I pray for peace for all Nepal. I don't think the legitimate objectives of the government will be reached swiftly, but I hope the civil rights of life or destruction of property. A country and people who have lived on tourism cannot be further harmed with the current situation. All the peace leaders and civil rights freedoms are returned to the people of Nepal, everyone's country. You will notice that great gods help heal our minds and deeds.

D Michael Van de Vier
Hawaii

Let us suppose that the Nepali Communist Party ( Maoist) has a right to raise demands and wield all resources to establish a communist regime even through bloodshed. Yet I have two questions to our Maoist leaders:
1. How do they justify setting free prisoners from prisons in Dang and Syangja? Very few of the inmates were there on a political charge since the government had already set the Maoist prisoners free during the talks. The Maoists ended up freeing murderers, robbers and criminals. So, for the Maoists such crimes acceptable? Such behaviours are not social evils for Maoists. Is the type of society they are trying to establish is the root of the nation, and the Maoist movement as it is, we will see a lot more people.

Kunda Dixit is not funny, he must have a real talent for telling jokes.

Paradise Paradise

Thank you for the lovely photo of Padma Shali. (“Mero Pyang Kangchenjunga”, “73). The Arun and Tamur valleys, as he says, is the Paradise, the utopia for leeches, rhododendron and orchids. A small correction, orchids are not parasite but epiphytes. The difference is that epiphytes only depend on the emer- plant for mechanical support, while parasites actually derive nutrition from them.

Daniela Quinn Dhakan

JADE

I have been reading the latest from Nepal, the Everest flight from Bermuda and the latest from Nepal, the Himalayas. I am impressed with the feedback and comments you get. However, it is with dismay that I notice a tendency among Nepalis living abroad to generally be more cynical, caustic, and intolerant about their fellow countrymen in Nepal. Why is that? And why do you insist on publishing such utterly hopeless letters and infect us with those jaded, jaundiced viewpoints of people who have foresaken their homeland to live in western “comfort”?

Rima Pandey

Kathmandu Immigration

I am more than surprised to meet with this notice in Tribhuvan International Airport for donations. I arrived in Kat- mandu a few weeks ago on an evening flight from Bermuda. Having already visited Nepal once this year I knew that the visa-on-arrival fee was $50. On submitting my application form and photograph, the immigra- tion official asked me for $50 more, inquiring that the extra $5 was for, he nonchalantly replied: “It is very hard to work, this late shift, it would be very nice for me and my friends to have a drink for a drink after-wards.”

I was quite taken aback by the viability of the answer. When I refused, he threw the visa form back at me and told me to stop going another queue. After waiting in this queue for a number of minutes the immigration officer came back and said he’d let me go if I paid $51. Still, I refused, and placed the $50 before him, which he finally accepted grumpily. It takes little effort to work out how much this extra immigration officer may make in a night when one counts the number of arriving tourists. It does Nepali small credit to start thinking of these tourists before they have even left the airport.

(No Subject on request)

POSITIVE

I was really impressed by the courage of Rajiv Kafle to confess his mistakes with his HIV status in a place like Nepal (“Who will look after us,” #70). He is a young man who has taken a lot of this young man to overcome family pressures, and the prejudice to do that. And despite that, what he says in his article is so full of hope, and so positive. My heart goes out to him, and many young people like him who are struggling in their own small way. Thank you, Rajiv.

Rita Fabian Kathmandu

SERIOUS STUFF

Can I raise a small voice of dissent to all the hate mail that Kunda Dixit seems to be getting for his satirical columns? Under My Hat, I have a selfish motive, I don’t want him to get disheartened by the letters and stop writing and thereby deprive us all and all my friends of the only thing to look forward to every Friday. It is hard enough for the old with his hilarious column in these sad times, don’t make his or hers life any miser- able by making him stop.

Kunda Dixit is funny, he is not serious, just read between his lines.

Mina K by email

CORRECTION

The founder of the Nepali Communist Party, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, was incorrectly identified in “Prachanda’s war path”, #70.

-END-
What about the circular issued by the Royal Nepal Army asking the press not to print any operational information without its approval? The army’s concern is about verifying news and reports on its campaign, the Home Ministry has done the same. In a way they have tried to be persuasive by saying that if there is something you’re writing about the operations, we will help you verify and confirm the reports.

But how can you win the hearts and minds of the public by preventing the press from writing what is really happening?

The role of the press is different now because it is an emergency. The right to information has had to be temporarily restricted. But you have to realize that when things were normal, the government had no restrictions on the press. And the press helped expose many things that the Maoists stood for. Even today, the press has had no restrictions on the press. And the press helped expose many activities of the Maoists, we have no problems with things that the Maoists stood for. Even today, the press has had no restrictions on the press. And the press helped expose many activities of the Maoists, we have no problems with things that the Maoists stood for. Even today, the press has had no restrictions on the press.

The right to information has had to be temporarily restricted. But we have not been able to organize more sophisticated press briefings, which we hope to begin this week. There are practical problems both in the collection of information and also in its dissemination. Now that the operations against the Maoists have begun on the ground, we will have a better idea of their casualties. So far the campaign has been conducted from the air, and because of difficult terrain we could not get enough information out.

You may increase the number of briefings, but how about the content. Will that be more credible? We never had to deal with this type of a situation in the country before and so we didn’t have a mechanism for disseminating information. I must also admit we don’t have the professionalism needed to manage information flow in such times. We understand that the press does not conduct from the air, and because of difficult terrain we could not get enough information out.

Do you think the Nepali press is being too tame?

Do’s and Don’ts for Media

- Matters that cannot be published or broadcast:
  - a. That which is likely to generate contempt or disrespect towards His Majesty, or any other members of the royal family, or that which lowers the image of His Majesty.
  - b. That which endangers the sovereignty and unity of the nation
  - c. That which may negatively affect the security, peace and administration of the Kingdom of Nepal
  - d. That which will create enmity between different castes, tribes, religion, sector, community or that which will incite communal tension
  - e. That which will hit the good behaviour, moral, and social standing of the common people.
  - f. That which is against the constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal
  - g. News that insults the standing of multi-party democracy
  - h. That which will harm the national identity, bring about social breakdown, spread terrorism, and fear
  - i. News that demeans charitable works of the Royal Nepal Army, the police and civil servants
  - j. Matters that tend to cause unnatural fear and terror among the common people
  - k. Matters that demean, disregard, disrespect or undervalue any race, language, religion, and culture
  - l. Matters that can be published or broadcast:
    - a. News that detail the criminal activities of Maoist terrorists without encouraging them
    - b. News that mention the bravery and victories of the Royal Nepal Army, the police and civil servants
    - c. Official news received from His Majesty’s Government and other government means

A week of living dangerously

By DANIEL LAK

F rom the distant war against terror, Nepal’s state of emergency seemed somehow unreal. Through the Afghan dust and the haze of propaganda, a crisis in the Himalayan kingdom was difficult to imagine. I recognised puzzled colleagues of late, John’s massacre. They usually nodded, and wondered how a place with such a placid reputation could be one with such a dark past. Then they turned back to Afghanistan. Osama and the Americans and forget that Nepal even existed. Not me. I came back home, as a journalist but also as a resident and family man.

As my plane touched down, the mobile started ringing. A Coca Cola bottling plant had been burned. Could I get over there and start doing my duty? My editor’s reprimands overrode my own desire to see the family and I complied merely. That was Thursday. On Friday, I arranged a visit to Salleri, the district headquarters of Sindhupalchowk. The carnage there at the beginning of the week was the drawing card, not the presence of Everest or the Sherpas’ famed mountain-climbing skills.

We flew out from Kathmandu, joking with each other about sitting on bullet-proof jackets to protect our posterior from Maoist gunfire. What is it about risk that lowers our threshold of humour so low? It was a clear and splendid day. The Sagarmatha massif soon loomed and immediately. What is it about risk that lowers our threshold of humour so low? It was a clear and splendid day. The Sagarmatha massif soon loomed and immediately.

We walked around the town and took measure of peoples’ fear. By midday, a warm winter sun shone down. Families sat outside, soaking up warmth for the long cold night ahead. They smiled and talked each other, so that they told tales of horror. Sixty-year-old Lak Maya Shrestha showed us her raincoat, blown up because it was next to the District Administration Office. “I told the Maoists, as God is my witness, kill me, because you’ve destroyed everything I own.” She wiped away a tear as she spoke, the fruits of a lifetime’s labours lost.

Down a grassy slope from the bazar, two young girls were starting into a small rainy season. At the bottom, dogs gnawed a camouflage-clad corpse. The girls said the body was a Maoist fighter and showed me pipe bombs and medical supplies strewn nearby. “It was a base,” they said, for the attack. Other bodies lay in clumps of grass. The gunfire was between Maoists trying to recovering slain comrades and vigilant soldiers.

On the way back, shuddering through now-chilly skies, we glanced upon a mournful sight, just at the edge of Ramchehpauk district, a massive public meeting was taking place. As the helicopter circled overhead, the pilot pointed to people running towards the jungle.

“Maoists,” he said, and pointed up on the controls to gain height. “Can’t have them shooting at us,” he said. This time, there were no jokes about bullets in the behind.  •

November, they stumped two places simultaneously. At one end of the village, the army fought back fiercely. At the other, government buildings and workers fell victim to the outrage. In the white-wrapped bundle was the body of the land revenue official who had been taken off the night by Maoists. “We found him this morning down there,” said the Assistant CDO, gesturing back towards the bottom of the valley. “His arms and legs had been slashed off with a machete.” His face was grim, and our expressions hardened immediately.

We’re the only country in the world which has been so flexible during a time of national emergency...”

A group of men wandered over and said they wanted to use the aircraft for an emergency medical evacuation. Not a casualty from Maoist fighting, but a local man who was haemorrhaging—probably stomach cancer, according to a health worker. Feel free, we said. One of the party that had greeted us, the Assistant Chief Development Officer, gestured at the bundle on the table. “We’ll be taking that back too,” he said. Then he explained what ‘that’ was.

When the Maoists attacked Salleri late at night on the 23rd of

A visit to Salleri now means forbearance, tears, and for sanity’s sake, a dose of gallows humour.
I think this situation was also very unexpected for the press. Maybe it also had no idea how it would handle itself during such a time. The government does not want to exert total control over the press, it just wants journalists to be careful about certain things. For example, those reports that will help the operation and those that would prevent the morale of those in the operations from sagging are okay. We've been victims of confusion in the past also and we don't want a repeat of that, especially because of incomplete information. And even after emergency, our constitution allows all institutions such as the judiciary and parliament to remain functional. And all of them will be monitoring the emergency to prevent misuse of its provisions. For example the Supreme Court, despite the suspension of some articles on civil liberties, is still the agency that will verify it and then makes it public. We will make the process smoother.

What is the role of the Royal Nepal Army in providing information?

During the emergency, all security agencies are deployed under the army's command. So the armed police, the civil police and other security agencies are all under it. The government wants information on the operations to come from one window, but has not barred the media from going and collecting the information on its own. The government has also set up the institutional mechanism to get the Royal Nepal Army's information on security operations to the public every day. All information comes to the government, which verifies it and then makes it public. We will make the process smoother.

The Royal Nepal Army has not dealt with an internal situation like this before. What makes the government confident that the military can handle the propaganda end of the battle?

We are talking about coordination here. The army is coordinating the work of security agencies. On the propaganda war, I believe that the best strategy for us would be to allow the flow of correct information, not stop it. We are not cooking up stories to glorify only our action, we are focusing on communicating facts.

So is the civilian government in charge of news flow?

That is what I am trying to clarify. The army is in the best position to inform on the operations level facts. It provides us information on the status of the military campaigns. That information is made public by the Ministries of Defence and Home. So let us be clear: the information is not coming directly from the army.

The press should not be confused about the circular sent out by the Royal Nepal Army. What the army has said is that it is undertaking the operation, and is willing to help the press verify operational level facts before getting them out. It is a proactive role. Generally, people take such notices as control. But I believe that if it is willing and ready to help verify facts, maybe that is the right thing to do.

What if the media cannot, or will not, take up the offer?

If people don’t take their support and verify facts, then wrong information could be disseminated.

What if you find media not abiding by your restrictions?

So far, we have not taken action against any media. We think that the directives are not being implemented fully in many places, but we have refrained from harsh measures. We are only drawing the notice of the concerned media, because we know we will need to have the support of the national media in this campaign. We don’t view the press as supporters of the terrorists, but as partners of the state in the campaign it is now undertaking. It is the past eight days, we have not sought written explanation from any media. Perhaps we need the support of the national media in this campaign. We don’t view the press as supporters of the terrorists, but see them as partners of the state in the campaign it is now undertaking. It is the past eight days, we have not sought written explanation from any media. Perhaps we need the support of the national media in this campaign.

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The government does not want to exert total control over the press, nor was there a denial in the same daily. Last week government officials told us it was contemplating taking “action” against the “erring” paper.

Dramatic faux pas

Almost two years after Macau, first a colony and then a protectorate of Portugal, was handed back to China, Sheetal Nivesh had not figured out what the status of the island was or even cared to find out and make amends. And it was none other than the Nepali Consul General in Hong Kong, Kanak Lekhak Shrestha, who made the discovery. Apparently, the Foreign Ministry had written to him on 23 March 2000—four months after Macau was formally handed over—to represent Nepal in Macau as well. The latter referred the Portuguese government of Macau. Because that has not been corrected, Shrestha still has not been able to present his credentials to the new authority in Macau, and some 500 Nepalis living and working in Macao do not have diplomatic representation.

A warm bowl

The news may find few believers in these cold wintry days, but scientists say Kathmandu Valley is actually heating up—globally warming terms. The Department of Hydrol- ogy and Meteorology says the temperature of the bowl-shaped Valley is increasing by 0.05 percent on average every year. This means we are looking at an average increase of 1 degree Celsius every 20 years. The last week has been pretty chilly, but records of the last two decades show that Kathmandu winters are actually getting just a little less cold. The annual maximum in winter for the last 34 years has ranged between 15.7–22 degrees Celsius, but last year the maximum temperature in December–January, the coldest months, soared to 27.4 degrees. The last seven years in Kathmandu experienced in 1787 when temperatures fell to -3.5 degrees.

Not only are the winters getting less cold, the summers are getting hotter, the maximum has also been slowly going up in the summer. Scientists at the Department caution against blaming this entirely on the Greenhouse Effect, they suggest that the growing population pressure on the Valley floor and increasing human activity perhaps play a greater role in our weather patterns.

Foreign print

Nepal generates printing business worth over Rs 4 billion every year, but the Nepali Printing Industries Association says, over Rs 3 billion of that is spent outside the country. One of the reasons for that is that those who require bulk print jobs—mainly government offices and large businesses—are generally unaware of the print quality that Nepal now offers. Baburaja Shakya, chairman of the association, says Nepalis have invested over Rs 15 billion in the business and can produce quality to compete with the best in the world. The industry currently employs about 20,000 workers.
Facts, fairness and the future

Estimating the number of people with HIV/AIDS in Nepal is as tricky as a business task in making predictions about the future of the epidemic.

What can be done and who should be doing it? We need to change our behaviour. The responsibility of fighting AIDS falls on the government, most especially the Ministry of Health and Science, which has the lead role in HIV/AIDS control and family planning. As for all other countries, that is the size of the problem and the size of the challenge. The number of women visiting sex workers, including men who go away from home. The number of other women with whom they have sexual relations, for example when their husbands are away from home.

Amnesty International’s concerns

Apologies International to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba this week.

We are concerned about the vagueness definition used which includes “any individual who is arrested and detained should be produced before a judicial authority within 24 hours of arrest, will the government clarify what directions the detainees held in the custody of the army?

Applications are invited to fill the post of Office Manager in an international non-governmental organisation based in Kathmandu. The Office Manager is responsible for all routine financial and administrative matters of the organisation. The selected candidate will independently manage the day-to-day business of the organisation, including liaising with government agencies and programme partners, handling media and other visitors, organising and arranging events and workshops, managing and maintaining accounts etc.

An attractive salary package is offered. Only applicants with a background in administration and accounts, fluent in English and Nepali, and having adequate computer skills to undertake these responsibilities in a modern office environment need apply. Please mail your hand-written application along with your CV and contact telephone number to:

Regional Director
GPO Box 13651
Kathmandu, Nepal

W

by Dr. John Dickinson

Office Manager

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Regional Director
GPO Box 13651
Kathmandu, Nepal

Only applicants short-listed for the final interview will be contacted. Last date for receiving applications: December 28, 2001

W

by Dr. John Dickinson

Facts, fairness and the future

Amnesty International’s concerns

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Amnesty International would like to raise a few questions with regard to the operational aspects of the decision to arrest and detain people. We are concerned about the vagueness definition used which includes “any individual who is arrested and detained should be produced before a judicial authority within 24 hours of arrest, will the government clarify what directions the detainees held in the custody of the army?

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Shock therapy

...textbooks had begun going back to the list of reasons why multiparty democracy was not suited to Nepal's water, air, and soil for some historical perspectives. The government has clarified how our curiosity is rooted in our sanctimonious judgement of politics. The worst moment of reflection has broken hours before actualisation. If politicians all three years kept on making promises they could not keep, maybe it's partly because we insisted on holding them accountable in standards we could never live up to. The nation's short attention span makes it hard to hold a political discourse that is freely distorted by its disengagement from time and context. People reacted to the emergency proclamation in all kinds of ways. Those old enough to remember the summer of 1974 attempted to show parallels where few actually existed. Younger Nepalis who recalled the 1975-77 emergency in the world's most populous democracy understood how soon the suspension of individual rights for the national interest could stimulate excesses by those in power. In anything, the fact that we would quietly partake of the nation that once formidable Indian political machine only served to further metaphysical relativisms.

What was the order of questions that came to mind the moment the emergency proclamation was read out on state radio? Would the FM channel broadcast their newspaper roundups the next morning? Would the people feel military force, if necessary, would take up and feel, of not knowing what to expect next weighed heavily on us that evening. Those old enough to remember the 1974 summer and to the nation's future. Anxiety in the nature of parliament 

A state of emergency has compelled Nepal to take a hard look at the liberties and civil rights we had taken for granted. Administratively, properly, this should be the moment of inspection could help the nation pull shock therapy of collective introspection, which can become a source of frustration to the Maoists’ ‘settlement’. But he commanded enough strength in fight of forces being worried to see, though the government didn’t arrive at a decisive move. The prime minister showed great personal fortitude in pledging to uphold the people’s freedom, 'I could be good for, I would only be because, he too, would have joined the ranks of the aggrieved.' Structures in New Delhi, Beijing, Washington and Moscow were stuff and unoriginal, even to the extent of actually saying something about the nation's future. Analysts in the nature of parliament’s deputy prime minister to point out that 2001 for Nepal has been an annus horribilis. "The war in Nepal reads like Shakespeare's" devastatingly updated to include animal liberation and "Mission," the Independent said in an editorial. The Daily Telegraph put matters in a wider global perspective: ‘The focus of the war on terrorism may be in Afghanistan but it is also being played out in the Himalayan kingdom to its east.’ Across the Atlantic, an influential group of US analysts detected in Nepal’s call for international help for a chance for the United States and India to work together and reaffirm ties without destabilising US-Pakistan relations. "To also open the door to greater US influence next-door to China," STRATFOR said in an inadvertent briefing. What has stood out clearly amidst the fog of forwarding, however, is that the ethos of multiparty politics, despite all its palpable and perceived ills, has struck deep roots in the Nepalese consciousness. It took a suspension of civil liberties to make us realise we still risk losing the ethos of multiparty politics.

Where to cut?

Donors are watching keenly to see what gets cut. 

BINOD BHATTAJAI 

As the government struggles to re-allocate money earmarked for development to the Maoist war, it will need to figure out a way to cut spending without affecting development. This is an impossible task and cannot be met without donor support. Donors will also be watching keenly to see what gets cut. For instance, if prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba’s 41-member jumbo cabinet stays intact, and the budget for basic health and primary education is cut it will send all the wrong signals. The government is damned if it does, and damned if it doesn’t. Security spending cannot be cut, nor can development be put on hold. Aid can provide short-term relief, but it will not come forever. Borrowing from the private sector may initially sap liquidity in the market, but will prove out potential investment in productive activity. Printing more notes will increase money supply and trigger inflation—which, again, will hit the poor hardest. The government has approached some donors for military hardware, mainly helicopters. The army says it has a problem of logistics fighting a guerrilla war in mountainous terrain. The military has a wish list that it is showing some donors, and these include fixed-wing aircraft, short-take off and landing aircraft, transport helicopters and light attack helicopters with night-vision equipment. 

The ideal situation would be to have a business-like framework as it might be. The army may be getting at least two Indian-assembled Chetak helicopters for the para military, and even ask for the heavy-lift attack helicopters with night-vision equipment. The government has approached some donors for military hardware, mainly helicopters. The army says it has a problem of logistics fighting a guerrilla war in mountainous terrain. The military has a wish list that it is showing some donors, and these include fixed-wing aircraft, short-take off and landing aircraft, transport helicopters and light attack helicopters with night-vision equipment.

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**Developing rituals**

**we need a reform movement in development.**

Saturday morning trend to be kept for the lord. However, last Saturday, 1 December, started out anything but. Driving along Explain placed streets, one was hit over the head—repeatedly, I might add—by what appeared to be the capital not being supported for the World AIDS Day celebrations. So enthusiastically, or at least widespread, was this futility that one might have been forgiven for thinking little else of import was happening in this nation.

Gone is one of the traffic snarls that inevitably accompanies such fervid affirmations of global citizenship, parades we found whether our ritualistic instincts, most notamment the re-enactment of the anniversaries of a few world events, were extending to other “development” events as well. Last, but certainly last, was a day of double a few in this regard. On that very day, people were not just bringing in, administrating with, volunteers all over to ensure that the Intensive National Immunisation Day was successful.

There is no denying that public awareness and participation are key to running a better health for the country’s multiplies, but perhaps we are taking this matter more seriously. On one hand, we should be determining whether or not we have started celebrating these designated days in a meaningful manner. That is, celebrating them with great pomp one day of the year, focusing their discussion and making extravagant promises, and for the rest of the year letting them go the way of all flesh. To treat, say, IQWALD’s two-day seminar in December as something to be discussed one day of the year, rather like the work of a somewhat quiet, yet law-abiding, do we not forget for the rest of the calendar that a terrible epidemic is raging in this country? Similarly, do we forget to offer other epidemics that plague the country? Do we remember that problems relating to water borne disease kill more people in Nepal than any other disease? Is there no development or government ritual associated with this, or are we not to be forgiven for our inattention? Do we have to start satisfying for a Clean Water day for all day?

Doors are agency to help people’s participation as the most reliable form of awareness raising. Fair enough, at the same participation is an organic response of the people. But what do we do when we have use of the numerous stories of people speaking, all these products qualify for export. If diseases in India come down, will they be in trouble and that the business risk these investors have taken. What do we do in Nepal? India has decided to let the Rastriya Beema Sansthan (National Insurance Company) pick up all uncovered risks after private insurers announced last week that they would discontinue policies covering terrorism and sabotage. This decision has forced the Insurers’ Association to reconsider their decision to withdraw coverage for losses caused by terrorism and sabotage after Maoist looted banks and took Rs 220 million on and after 23 November. The insurers activated the clause in the policy that says the agreement ceases to remain operational in “war and warlike” situations among others, and sent banks and financial institutions into a tizzy worrying about their insured cash and other investments. “The companies were panicising for no reason,” Finance minister Ram Shahar Mahat told us.

**Trade treaty update**

India has decided to keep the trade treaty that it was to have expired on 5 December intact for another three months, up to 5 March. Both sides now have some more time to decide—or put off taking a decision—on how to resolve the sticky matters, especially the formula on calculating value addition, and the issue of the sudden “surge” in certain Nepali exports. The Indian Embassy in Kathmandu said India agreed to extend the treaty taking into account the “difficult situation” in Nepal, following the outbreak of Maoist violence and the military operations against the rebels. The two countries have met four times since August to negotiate changes to the treaty, but have failed to come to a mutually acceptable understanding.

**Chinese tourists, perhaps…**

Nepal and China have finally agreed on a mechanism to get Chinese tourists to Nepal. The requirements for visits to China’s only approved “outbound destination” in South Asia are simple: They would have to travel in groups of at least five and through one of 47 travel agencies approved by the Chinese government. But it may still be some time before our northern neighbours thaw Thamel streets. Nepal does not have the desired number of direct flights to China, and Royal Nepal’s schedule is unreliable. Then there is the issue of the convertibility of the Yuan, and finally a few dilemmas of Chinese-speaking Nepal tour guides. Still, given the recent nosedive Nepali tourism has taken, any hope for a better future is welcome.

...but not too many others

It was expected, but here are the painful figures. Tourist arrivals in November were down 43 percent compared with the same period last year, says the Nepal Tourism Board. That takes the overall January to November drop in tourist arrivals to 17 percent. And it was not only Indians who avoided Nepal last month, even tourists from overseas did not come.

The arrival of third country tourists was down 43 percent and that of Indians 42 percent (with China accounting for 65 percent). Tourist nights were down 39 percent. The Tourism Board is predicting an overall 15-20 percent drop in arrivals.

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Frank Wisner is a former US ambassador to Egypt, the Philippines and India. He is currently executive-vice chairman of American International Group Inc which is investing in the American Life Insurance Company (Allico) in Nepal. During his brief visit to Kathmandu this week during which he met King Gyanendra, senior government officials, and the leader of the opposition, Wisner spoke to Nepal Times about the insurance business, politics and governance.

Frank Wisner: “Let’s go to Nepal and launch our insurance”, they say, “that’d be crazy”. And yet I felt that it was right that we come, if we’re going to be a long-term insurer in this country then we ought to come and stand here. When life isn’t super-easy for you guys we ought to come and toughen up for three months. Watching this, general insurers decided they wouldn’t re-insure for acts of terrorism or sabotage. What is your take on that? Since we’re not a general insurer, obviously this is not my business, but I think you need to interpret that fairly to your readership. Your general insurance companies did not cancel coverage. But they’re discovering, ‘I understand this correctly, that their re-insurers outside of Nepal are canceling terrorism coverage not because of the state of emergency in Nepal, but because around the world re-insurers, having been hammered by 11 September, are not prepared to cover terrorism. Now, your situation doesn’t help matters at all, it makes them tougher. But you certainly don’t build a democracy and toughen up for three months. India, Philippines, Egypt and South Africa, it’s on the checklist a country need to break out of underdevelopment. Will we start with the political aspect? I would think that where countries are afflicted with a crisis between internal war, or even with the deep-seated inequities within their borders, the establishment of a political process, the development of a will to settle the dispute as opposed to war or picture. Two, I am absolutely persuaded in my mind that free markets, properly regulated, incorporated in a rule of law, is the right economic model for increasing the goods and services of an economy, producing the resources needed for the just prosperity of all, education and health, and fundamentally alleviating the burden of poverty. Third, I believe that democracy is the best institution to mobilise consensus. Even though it’s painful and takes a long time, it offers the best hope to transparency, to deal with issues like corruption, it’s the best political model within which to get things done. So, lifetime of experience, get your peace house in order, free your economy, and strengthen and expand your democracy. I think it’s the best formula for success in the twenty-first century. Where have you seen it working?”

It is the Nepali market worthwhile for big players like yourselves? LIC, the parent company whose board I sit is present today in about 140 jurisdictions all around the world. We have insurance operations in all of them. No, it’s not too small a market. I believe that it is also a very under-insured market. Our present estimate is that no more than two percent of Nepali citizens are insured, and about one percent of that if two percent are insured in India with Indian companies. So it’s a good, sensible policy decision on the part of government to bring Nepali insurance industry and people better competition. I believe we’ll introduce competition, strengthen the financial marketplace. There are all wise decisions on behalf of government. Is that what you would also say to reassure smaller players that are feeling threatened by your arrival? Actually, it isn’t the smaller players that feel threatened but the national insurance companies that think the format of the play has changed. The experience is that once you open a market and put competition in place, the knowledge of insurance increases exponentially, the taste for insurance now new people are developed. The product I launch, you copy, and vice versa. And if you look at the first year of opening the Indian insurance market, LIC’s business has grown by fifty percent— it was good for all. From my diplomatic experience, the twenty-first century is coming up strongly. Prospects for Russia, bring those areas aspects together— free markets, democracy. Not to mention the already developed nations. I think it has the prospect of working well in India. I want it to work here. You’re having a messy transition. You simply don’t build a democracy that functions to everybody’s complete satisfaction in ten years. But you certainly don’t build a sustainable form of government by having one party an opposite to the one that you know what truth is and pushing it down everybody else’s throat with violence. It’s unaccept- able. Nowhere in the world is that acceptable.

Are you also thinking of moving into general insurance, maybe? From your present perspective, is that the right course? From the side of government?

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What do you understand by the term ‘trekking peak’ and how do Nepal’s designated trekking peaks fit with your expectations? GP: The common prejudice is that a trekking peak would be an easy ascent with little technical difficulty. While this is true to a few of the trekking peaks, it is obviously quite untrue for the majority. Indeed, Island Kangri and Kwangde have three of the most technically difficult routes done in the Himalaya yet.

JN: The term ‘trekking peak’ has come to mean to many experienced mountaineers—a peak that is overcrowded, boring and not worth the effort. Go to the norms—Island Peak, Mera, etc.—and you will certainly run into this situation. But the trekking peaks that no one thinks of—Kusum Kangri, Paldor, etc.—are anything but overcrowded and boring. I find the trekking peaks to be a nice break from the circus of 8,000 m peaks, and they offer superb climbing at affordable prices and within most people’s time constraints.

CM: Many underrate the trekking peaks; they are 6,000—8,500 m peaks, ie., bloody big hills that should command the utmost respect. The main danger is overcrowding on some standard routes and being caught up with poorly equipped people who should really be learning the rudiments of climbing before they shouldn’t be dealing with altitude first off.

JN: Many don’t have any business being there by themselves. I have seen a lot of people get into trouble on the trekking peaks simply through lack of preparation and skill.

The peaks were partly designated in this way to spread the financial benefit of tourism to include people living in the surrounding areas. Has this had the desired effect?

GP: Absolutely. When climbers go into trekking peak areas in smaller groups, they are far more likely to use locals as porters, stay in local homes and tea houses and buy local food: when they go on the big peaks (especially in organised groups with large agencies) they have little to do with the locals. They stay outside of villages, have all their meals prepared, and use porters that the agency typically hires, often from Kathmandu.

JN: Yes and no. Yes, in that these peaks tend to attract many people, and thus the local economic benefit. Take, for instance, the Langtang Valley. My first trip there was in 1992, the village of Lama Hotel had one tea-house; it now has seven. The people along the main trekking route of the Langtang are far better off than they were a decade ago. But many are left out of the picture. Most groups hire their trekking agent in Kathmandu, and the agent hires cooks, porters, support staff etc. Most of these hired are Sherpa, and thus, members of another ethnic group. Is this considered. The concept of the ‘trekking peak’ was simply to spread the benefit of tourism to include people living in the surrounding areas. Has this been marginal. I wouldn’t recommend it if you have a general standard of guiding. I’ve never used one, but I’ve seen many in action on Mera and Island Peak. Frankly, I’ve been appalled. The client to guide ratio is huge, the guides’ skills at rope and route setting have been minimal, and the client care, especially with the language barrier, has been marginal. I wouldn’t recommend it for a moment.

CM: Most Nepalis can handle guiding on a standard route when the conditions are favourable, but are limited when things get rough, especially in decision-making with the guides' skills at rope and route setting have been minimal, and the client care, especially with the language barrier, has been marginal. I wouldn’t recommend it for a moment.

CM: Most Nepalis can handle guiding on a standard route when the conditions are favourable; however, the language barrier, especially in decision-making with
clients they don’t really know or who are weak/unskilled.

JN: You get what you pay for. Overall, the standard of guiding in Nepal is exceptional: the Nepalis are incredibly helpful and giving people, and this is evidenced in the way they lead and run trips.

What would be your advice to a hiker with minimal high altitude/climbing experience who wanted to try a trekking peak? Which peak would you recommend and why?

JN: For someone with little altitude or climbing experience, I would recommend Naya Kanga in the Langtang Valley, or Mera Peak in the Khumbu. Naya Kanga offers reasonable altitude, and the Langtang Valley is far less travelled than the Khumbu (number three in trekker numbers, after Annapurna and Khumbu). Additionally, the Langtang has some great peaks to hike to acclimatise outside of Kyanjin Gompa, and stunning scenery.

IE: I have to say that Mera perhaps offers the best all-round attractions. The peak is the highest of them all; it is in a remote-ish area but can still be included in a trek to the Khumbu and the HImaya valley. The climb is technically no more than a walk—however it is a long way, highly4crewed and seriously committing if the weather is poor. The ascent is a real challenge with a typical ‘alpine’ start, and being nearly 6,500 m, really does test the stamina and determination. One does feel as if one is on a much bigger mountain. And the view is the best of all—with a stunning panorama of five 8,000m peaks—Kangchenjunga, Everest, Lhotse, Makalu and Cho Oyu. Those looking for something with just a bit more technical climbing should try Imja Tse, Parchamo, Ramdung or Paldor.

GP: Mera, Parchamo and Imja Tse are probably the most straighforward yet still interesting. They require some rope handling and glacier travel experience, but the level of skills needed can be quickly learnt in a weekend course (shot of, of course, until something like really bad weather. Then, you’ll wish you had 25 years experience...) CM: Always be careful in joining a group to climb any trekking peak where you don’t know the others in the team or their background in climbing. You are best training up with one or more friends of similar experience so you can learn together in your home country, then again together in Nepal.
A advance in digital technology means that anyone with a computer and image-manipulation software can easily cut and paste a wide range of images into an apparently seamless whole. The old advertising slogan “Is it live or is it Memorex?” takes on a whole new meaning when trying to separate truth from fabrication in photos that appear to be real. Presumably, both the science and the journalism are proving more than ever that, at least sometimes, we can’t believe everything we see.

Examples exist in all visual media. In October 2001 the National Post featured an article about the Queen being given a cell phone for her birthday, accompanied by a photo of a smiling Queen Elizabeth waving her birthday. It turned out that the “face of America” on the cover was not one model, but a composite picture created by combining pictures of six different women. Online marketers are eager to tap into the digital possibilities for creating virtual environments in which visitors interact with human-like interfaces. On 19 April, 2000, ananova.com, the world’s first virtual newscaster, made her debut on ananova.com. Designed to provide a “fake” world-wide news, ananova.com’s “back” was composed of “the most striking feature and face from fashion magazines.”

Recommended Links
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Under the UN

The west wants to rebuild Afghanistan in its own image.

Recent events point to the important role the UN plays in helping globalisation benefit all.

Birth rights

A new report from the Panos Institute, London, titled Birth rights, in a bid to long-term illness, disablement, or death.

The report cites a number of factors that contribute to these deaths. One major reason for maternal deaths is that maternity facilities are under-resourced—local experts say in a study of 49 developing countries that almost half of maternity services would not be able to carry out one or more of the life-saving procedures they are meant to offer. Many countries also have practices enshrined in law and culture that inhibit women’s chances of surviving pregnancy and childbirth. Early marriage, for example, can lead to childbirth before physical development is complete. Lack of access to safe, legal abortion and advice is another reason. This has recently become harder in many parts of the world as a result of the so-called gag rule. The rule requires organisations that receive US funding for family planning to refrain from advocating for changes in abortion laws, or even to speak in their own country about a pregnancy-related cause. Only $2 per person could cost as little as $2 per person.

Women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa

Across regions, lifetime risks of maternal death vary from a low of 1 in 4,000 in Northern Europe to a high of 1 in 11 in sub-Saharan Africa and 1 in 12 in East and West Africa.

In south-east Asia the lifetime risk of death is 1 in 55, in the Caribbean 1 in 75 and in South America 1 in 140.

The World Bank has estimated that the financial cost of basic maternal and newborn health services is, on average, $3 per person per year in developing countries; maternal health services alone could cost as little as $2 per person.

Each year more than 525,000 women die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth, and over 1 million experience pregnancy-related complications. 15 million of which to lead to long-term illness or disability.

Maternal deaths are second only to deaths from AIDS.
Pakistan and the US must update their perception of Afghanistan

By Jean-Pierre Lehmann and Parwin Ahmad

Globalisation and openness now have more than purely economic benefits.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are inextricably linked by history, politics, economics and culture. Afghanistan has been a strategically important country to the United States since the 1950s. The US has a long-term interest in Afghanistan's stability and its willingness to become a stable neighbour is central to the South Asia strategy. The US has been involved in Afghanistan since the 1990s, when the US invaded to topple the Taliban regime. Today, the US continues to have a significant presence in Afghanistan, providing military and economic support. The US has also been involved in the Afghanistan Pakistan Regional Economic Co-operation (APREC) agreement, which aims to promote economic cooperation between the two countries. The US has also provided financial assistance to the Afghan government to help it build infrastructure and develop its economy. However, despite the US's involvement, Afghanistan remains a fragile and conflict-prone country, with ongoing instability and challenges such as poverty, corruption, and terrorism. The US must update its perception of Afghanistan to address these challenges and work towards a stable and peaceful Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship.
You have seen what the army is capable of. Even now, when the Maoists are on the defensive and going into hiding, the army is attacking them. The Maoists are suffering huge losses. The army could reach a stage where they run out of arms and ammunition. This will not happen to the army.

What else does the army need?

Right now, nothing. What was necessary was the mandate to take action, and they have got that. The most important thing was the support of the people and all the political parties. The second mandate was imposing an emergency. The first was labelling the Maoists as terrorists. Now that these have been granted, the army can do anything it wants—shoot at people, uso bombs, arrest people. The army could not act earlier because it did not have these three mandates.

When the army finds a Maoist, will it immediately shoot, or first disarm?

The army follows the Geneva Convention, the Maoists do not. The army will only kill if the enemy is fighting. If they raise their hands, they will be taken prisoners of war.

Is this just a play to disarm the enemy?

The killing will go on as long as the fighting continues. Only those who surrender are taken prisoner.

Are such operations expensive?

It is only natural that once the army leaves the barracks, additional expenditure is incurred. Support and supply lines must be made and maintained. The government must take care of this expense, or the campaign will stop.

The army is said to have big ambitions. Apparently the purchase of helicopters and new weapons is linked to this campaign. Link until democracy is restored, the police and the army used to get what they wanted.

After that, the yearly 10 to 20 percent increment in their budgets was stopped. The army could not even fulfil its basic requirements. When the Maoist movement was beginning, the government asked the then Chief of Army Staff for a plan to bring them under control. He submitted his plan to the government. It categorically said that the Maoists had to be fought and this would require Rs 500-600 million. The government believed the army was asking for too much and instead ordered the police to quell the Maoists. To this day the army is fighting with 7,62 mm rifles, weapons first bought in 1972/73. GPMG (General Purpose Machine Gun), the weapons we use for aerial attacks are pre-WWII models. We do not have helicopters with night-vision. At least the Maoists have night-vision. The Maoists have been able to select their targets after it has been put on alert. If the Maoists continue with a guerrilla war, it will take longer.

How much longer?

At least 20 to 25 minutes. After the peace at the barracks was shattered. The Maoists attacked the town, overpowered the police and the district administration, and moved towards the army barracks. They burnt down the barracks and put into the barracks compared at five minute past 11. The rebel then split their forces, set fire in the area where the soldiers were sleeping and the other towards the ammunition that was being guarded by 12 soldiers.

The 15 fought back as long as their ammunition lasted. The Maoists numbered in the thousands. It is believed that though all 13 soldiers died, they had managed to kill 300 Maoists. So, the Maoists focused more on capturing their important and form, rather than on attacking. As a result, they were killed in large numbers. Those who escaped the firefight started loading their incapacitated and dead into trucks. Army sources say the Maoists were not capturing the barracks, and kept fighting for more than ten hours, trying to get the army to exhaust its ammunition. What this policy ended up in was causing a large number of casualties. Maoist campaigns were then targeted towards the army’s replenishment ammunition. He was shot in the neck and died immediately. After he fell, Captains Karthikeya took care and moved towards the army for the sake of the Maoists. He was shot in the neck and died immediately. After he fell, Captains Karthikeya took care and moved towards the army for the sake of the Maoists. He was shot in the neck and died immediately.

How much longer?

It is difficult to tell. What we have heard is that the Maoists have been decimated. So many soldiers have been killed and many others have been captured. The army has seized many of their hideouts.

Dhakal’s mental weakness and inability to get things done. A few days earlier Dhakal had said that the fourth round of talks should go ahead. In fact, before all else, if anyone were to say anything against the Maoists, Dhakal would condemn him, as if they were his long lost brothers. He would not tolerate any criticism of them. He always told his soldiers that he would lead to a solution, but the Maoists blew up this belief of his in a flash. This is why the Maoists had been completely frustrated and saddened at the turn of events, and that there was no...sense for dialogue anymore and that he had never believed in negotiations.

Kabul and Kathmandu

Kabul, 30 November

Both (Nepal/Indian) are mountainous countries. Both are landlocked and have no access to the sea. Both are home to many people from a single community who are determined and who have been a source of support for a long time.

Is Nepal going the Afghanistan way?

There have been the Taliban, how we have the Taliban. They have been Lalu and Mulath, Omar, how we have Congress (Prakashchandra and Pratapchandra, who have been similar no?)

The question is this: what decision will they take in the near future, and what will they do in the future?

What is similar to Afghanistan?

Our police and army have been doing similar things.

Kabul is the capital of Afghanistan. Both are landlocked and have no access to the sea. Both are home to many people from a single community who are determined, who have been a source of support for a long time, and who have been a source of support for a long time.

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Indoors, outdoors and no-fly zones

As preparations for the football World Cup get underway, England worries about playing indoors, and the Japanese about airplane attacks.

**MARTIN LIPTON**

England has asked Holland to help them out after learning that Amsterdam’s Hiroba Dome will be the first competitive game England has played in a covered stadium and Football Association (FA) officials were trying to persuade Holland to close the roof at the Amsterdam Arena for the 13 February friendly in an attempt to replicate conditions in Japan.

Even that would not fully prepare England for the space-age technology of the Hiroba Dome. The seats on one side of the arena part as the pitch, which is kept outside under natural light, is brought in on a hoisting stage before being spun through 90 degrees and set in place.

It has been suggested that the darkly lit stadium, with no view to the ball, especially for goalkeepers, and England wants to leave no stone unturned in their preparations for the Group Four.

FA executive director David Davies confirmed that the roof in Sapporo was not retractable and added: “It is a coincidence that we are playing Holland in Amsterdam in February. Whether the roof remains in place is for the Dutch to decide, but we have asked for it to be closed.”

Davies and the FA were working on England’s pre World Cup itinerary to prepare for the other Group F games against Sweden and Nigeria.

Paraguay, second to Argentina in the South American qualifying groups, are the likely choice to fill the first two choices—after arriving in Japan are Cameroon or South Africa and their kit-bags and meals checked for anthrax as part of the biggest security clampdown in World Cup history. The stringent measures also include establishing no-fly zones over stadiums and training camps.

FA chief executive Adam Crozier said: “Awaji is the easiest training location to secure. We’ll have our own security team but will liaise extensively with the Japanese authorities.”

England’s players will have their kit-bags and meals checked for anthrax as part of the biggest security clampdown in World Cup history. The stringent measures also include establishing no-fly zones over stadiums and training camps.

It’s a Tequila Sunrise. Mexican cuisine sets your tastebuds aflame with enchiladas and nachos matched with Margaritas and Tequila Shots.

Mixed Business and fun with our quick ‘n’ light Buffet combos or A la carte.

Sunrise Café

**FULLBRIGHT/NY UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC POLICY PROGRAM**

The Nepal Fulbright Commission announces a Post-Doctoral fellowship for senior scholars under a new Fulbright/New York University (NYU) Center for International Cooperation (CIC) Fellowship in International Public Policy. This is a 10-month research grant to pursue a project in international public policy. Applications are being accepted from 15 countries, including Nepal. Only three grants will be made worldwide.

Applicants must have completed a Ph.D. within ten years of their application, i.e. not earlier than March 1992.

Applications require research proposals in the international public sector in the areas of economic cooperation, education and culture, health and human development, human rights, humanitarian affairs, international law, peace and security, scientific and technical cooperation or alternative sources of funding for international public goods. The CIC is particularly interested in projects that examine the management and financing of multilateral commitments and/or the division of responsibility between global and regional multilateral actors, such as partnerships in peace operations or humanitarian assistance among the UN, regional and sub-regional organizations, and civil society.

To be competitive, candidates must have an unusually strong academic and professional record. In addition applicants must be citizens of Nepal: have very strong English language skills; be in good health and not approaching retirement age; and have significant experience in both academic research and practice in government or an intergovernmental or non-governmental organization.

Applications must complete and submit a standard Fulbright Scholar application form (available from the Nepal Fulbright Commission) to the Nepal Fulbright Commission no later than 5 pm on Friday, February 22, 2002. Interested persons must contact The Fulbright Commission (USEF-Nepal), and speak to Ms. Prabirii KC, Program Manager, to discuss their eligibility.

For information/reservation, Ph. 248999, Ext. 2665

Dina goes that extra mile

Related news from Britain of Dina Gurung who ran the London Marathon and raised £2,100 for various charities, including the Pahar Trust and Gurkha Welfare Trust. Dina went through 26.2 miles of pain and exhaustion just to show she could do it. 43 + £1,700, and something, but it wasn’t winning or losing that mattered,” says Dina who studies at Kingston University in London.

Dina practiced for months, sometimes in the rain and cold at Richmond Park. As the day of the marathon approached she had pangs of uncertainty and tension. Dina told Parabole magazine: “I just kept myself going, what have I got myself into.”

After the start gun went off, Dina did the first nine miles and realized that she was running too fast. At the halfway point all she could feel was pain, but the cheering crowds on the sidewalks pushed her on. “From the 20 mile on, it was a psychological rather than a physical battle, and after we turned the corner at Parliament Square, the sight of my mum and sisters made me sprint to the finish line,” Dina says of the race that she clocked in 4 hours, 43 minutes and 36 seconds.

Helping Dina raise money by running were members of the Brigade of Gurkhas in London, Singapore Police and Nepali restaurants in Britain, including The Everest and The Gurkha Place in Farnborough, and The Mural in London.
The Other Side to Belief

1. Settlement after settlement has been razed by neutron blasts
All greenery has wilted
The peacocks have stopped dancing
Springtime is waiting
Haven't you gone mad even now?
If not
I must believe you've lost your head
2. Things are so far gone now
with each new birth a martyr is born
a funeral procession is born
with each new birth a martyr is born
I must believe you've lost your head
3. Vying to extend the boundaries of nations
I must believe you've lost your heart
If not
He left Nepal before he was a year old and has never since seen his biological mother nor the country of his birth. "I have a spiritual connection with Nepal," he says. "I don't speak the language and I know little of the culture, but I want to do some reading about it and to find Toronto's Nepali community. I would like to go back to Nepal and experience it." Such an expensive trip to reach out to his roots is a lot of pipe dream at the moment, so his dancer's salary. When Grider joined Toronto Dance Theatre in 1997, he was particularly glad to learn that it is a touring company, and had danced in India. "If I were ever to get that close, then surely I'd say in a whisper, 'I love you to the moon and back,'" he remembers.

Born Nepali

Dinesh Adhikari
PACIFIST POEMS AT A TIME OF WAR

Poet and songwriter Dinesh Adhikari is capable of taking on the darkest human realities in his writing. In the pacifist poems translated below, he takes on the theme of war and its many dehumanising consequences. These poems hark back to earlier wars, when enemies were clearly defined, when national borders were clearly at stake, when brute manpower played as important a role on the battlefield as did technology. Today, when national guerilla warfare and international terrorism complicate any simple understandings of war, these poems can seem slightly dated. Yet they speak to the eternal truths of the battlefield: the loss of love, the hardening of the heart, and the insanity of violence.

What is so special about Christopher Grider, dancer?

Christopher T. Grider flings himself into the air in the Toronto Dance Theatre’s new production Persephone. I watch, what melts the eye is dazzling. But beyond that are stories you couldn’t guess at. The work itself, by company artistic director Christopher House, was inspired by Homer’s epic poem The Odyssey, Grider can relate. His whole life has been something of an odyssey, and the story of this start in life has an aura of legend.

Born in Nepal, raised in places as diverse as Kathmandu and Somaliland, Grider finds to his surprise that he is the younger dancer in the company this year.

Grider was born in Kathmandu. His mother, a secretary in a Peace Corps office, and a college graduate, was unmarried. His married father offered to make her his second wife. She declined, deciding that she must see something better for her child, and chose as his adoptive parents an American couple working there with the Peace Corps at the time.

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And now, let us look at a few selected poems from the above.

And if you ask me, listen! I say a soldier never dies—
Or else he is dead the day he accepts his appointment
These poems are found in Dharmko Geet, an older collection of Adhikari’s poems. Adhikari is also the author of several other poetry collections, book-length poems, and song collections. By profession he is a high-level advocate in government service. As a secure country
You are the wife of a soldier
for the baby with an empty stomach on the cot
I will not say your husband has died
And if anyone should insist he is dead—
Be proud!
Your husband hasn’t died for nothing
He has enriched the soil of this country
on which you sow grains
Amid the dearth that makes one pick rice grains from rice-teeka
he has arranged for one meal of rations each day
for the baby with an empty stomach on the cot
You are the wife of a soldier
Like steam from water and water from steam
Don’t you know even this:
You are the wife of a soldier
Don’t you know even this:
For the baby with an empty stomach on the cot
Any other offering he has done
I will not say he has done it in vain
for the baby with an empty stomach on the cot
A child like this
Amid the dearth that makes one pick rice grains from rice-teeka
he has arranged for one meal of rations each day
for the baby with an empty stomach on the cot
In all his suffering and in his death
Like steam from water and water from steam
Don’t you know even this:
You are the wife of a soldier
Don’t you know even this:
For the baby with an empty stomach on the cot
I will not say he has died for nothing
He has enriched the soil of this country
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Like steam from water and water from steam
Don’t you know even this:
You are the wife of a soldier
Don’t you know even this:
For the baby with an empty stomach on the cot
Any other offering he has done
I will not say he has done it in vain
for the baby with an empty stomach on the cot
A child like this
EATING OUT

Special Swiss winter menu Specialties like fondu (Rs 1,200 for two) and ravioli (Rs 900 per head): Dinner daily at the Hotel Yat & Yeti, 249899.

BBQ and Thai buffet dinner every Friday with live band Las Sonidos Latinos. Adults Rs 500, children Rs 250.


Far Pavilion Indian cuisine with Sajan Panirh and Sureesh Manandhar. Everyday except Tuesdays. 8PM-11PM. The Everest Hotel.

Barbecue lunch with complementary wine for adults, soft drink for children. Saturdays and Sundays at the Godavari Village Resort. 560769.

Hot stone steaks All December choose the right cut of meat and sauces and cook your steak on a hot stone. Rux Restaurant, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234.

BEST ROOMS

Fresh air and tranquility in Kathmandu Valley Stay at Triple A Organic Farm Guesthouse in Ghamchu, south of Thimi. Rs 1,500 per person per night, all-inclusive. Email aad@winink.com.np 031766.

Silent Night Package Includes return airline between Kathmandu and Pokhara, buffet breakfast and more for a couple for four days and three nights. Rs 9,000 for Nepali nationals, Rs 270 for others. Shangrila Village, Pokhara. 412999.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

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MOVIES

Gandhi Richard Attenborough, India, 1982. English, no subtitles. 9 December, 3:00PM. Russian Cultural Centre, Kamal Pokhari. For booked contact 545986, also available at venue. Organised by the Inter Cultural Film Society.

EXHIBITION


Shaping the Elements and Textiles of Gujarati Ceramics by Carol Irwin and woodcutting by Dan Hogan. Until 15 December. Textiles on show 12 December-1 January. 8AM-6PM, Indigo Art Gallery, Narali. 415880.

TALKS

Buddhaya: The tenacious survivor of a pan-Asian Buddhist cult by William Douglas, Oxford University. 10 December, 4PM, Library Hall, Royal Nepal Academy, Kamaladi. Talk followed by discussion, snacks. The South Asia Institute, Heidelberg and the Royal Nepal Academy.

EVENTS

Children’s party. Food, drink and games. Rs 400 per head. 15 December, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 273999.

Kids Karnival Fun, food and festivities for children, including Santa Claus, poolside buffet, games, face-painting, clowns, carols, music and dance, and surprise gift for every child. Rs 600 per head. 22 December. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234.

MUSIC

Live acoustic music Dinesh Rai and Deependra every Friday and Sunday at the Himalata Cafe. 7:30PM-10PM. 265256.

The Jazz Bar The Jazz Commission Wednesdays, Chris Masand’s Latin band Thursdays, An Faline on Saturdays. 7PM onwards. Shangri-La Hotel. 410999.

Live music Tuesday and Friday nights at Rum Doodle Restaurant. 414336.

Himalayan Feelings Fusion every Friday night with live Sekuwa dinner and complimentary beer or soft drink. Rs 555 per head or Rs1010 per couple net. Traditional dances nightly in the lamp-lit courtyard, free entry. Dwarika’s Hotel. 479488.

Saturday and Sunday nights at Rum Doodle Restaurant. 414336.

Specialties like fondue (Rs 1,200 for two) and raclettes (Rs 900 per head). Dinner daily at the Hotel Yak & Yeti. 248999.

Christmas Eve buffet dinner with complimentary wine or beer for adults, soft drink for children. Saturday and Sunday from 6PM on. Special events on full moon, 3-8PM. 482802.

Kodari Eco Resort Peace in natural surroundings, good views of Nepal. Hibber, jungle-covered mountains, Buddhist monasteries, ancient Shiva cave. Hike to villages with various ethnic groups, antartage points to Himalayas. Comfortable accommodation, attached bath, balcony or terraces, good food, friendly service. 482802, kodari@mos.com.np.

The way to Mexico is too far. Botega Restaurant and Tequila Bar is near Thamel Chowk. 266433.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

The Borderlands Resort For canyoning, rafting, and Tequila Bar is near Thamel Chowk. 266433. 1518of;u/dfyf Sat 0615-0645 BBC Science in Action Daily 2245-2300 BBC World Tonight Mon-Fri 0615-0645 BBC World Today

NEPALI WEATHER

The present gloomy weather is caused by inversion layer stretching over the entire Indi-Gangetic plains trapping smog up to an altitude of 3,000 m. Prevailing winds are waffling this in our direction, making the effect of overcast skies even worse. This is likely to continue over the weekend as the effect of the westerly front continues to be felt up to central Nepal. The North Indian plains and the Nepal midilths have seen a sharp drop in minimum temperature with thick fog in the plains and valleys. The clouds are for the most part dry, but may bring snow to higher altitudes.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

MON-SAT

WED-THU

FRI-SAT

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thur

Sat

Fr

Su

20 35

17 45

19 40

20 15

20 35

17 45

19 40

20 15

For inclusions in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com.
Building cities, and society

An architect couple have been leaving their mark on our cityscape for 25 years. And they are going strong.

RAMYATA LIMBU AND ALOK TUMBANGHPEH

I t can be intimidating to design and construct modern buildings in a location like Kathmandu Valley, where centuries of highly refined architecture are still a living presence. Unfortunately, most contemporary and recent constructions just do not cut it, reflecting upon us some of the most hideous and uninspiring concrete blocks this side of the Great Wall.

Which is why, when a building like the Heritage Plaza near Darbar Marg goes up, the more sensitive among us breathe a sigh of relief. Not Marg goes up, the more sensitive like the Heritage Plaza near Darbar this side of the Great Wall.

and uninspiring concrete blocks upon us some of the most hideous contemporary and recent constructions. Unfortunately, most refined architecture are still a living presence. Among the several awards that they have won, the South Asian Architects Award for the SOS Children’s Village in Kathmandu stands out. Deepak Man has designed and built a dozen or so SOS villages around the country. “When your clients give you a free hand, and let you nurture your project, it becomes your baby till the end. That’s what architecture is all about,” says Deepak Man.

The Collaborative is today a well-known firm both at home and abroad, as can be seen by the numerous projects that bear their signature. The couple get more than their fair share of work. “We mostly design turn-key projects, from ground zero to the walk-in phase,” says Deepak Man.

In the case of the Collaborative, the aesthetics and environmental aspects of the buildings are also environmentally efficient. Inside the building, the all-exposed brickwork, slanted roof and NOTES.
Some miscreants nabbed, others absconding

By a staff reporter
KATHMANDU—Nepal’s mainstream media today facilitated the dissemination by national leaders of the national leaders of Tonga on the happy occasion of the Pacific kingdom’s national day. We wish the people and government of Tonga prosperity and happiness on the occasion of its national day and we hope they can keep their heads above the water as sea level rise around the world due to global warming,” a communiqué said. The statement also added that Tonga and Nepal have a lot in common, but this reporter didn’t quite catch what they were. Sorry.

Two tourists were captured while trying to sneak into Nepal’s Tribhuvan International Airport without paying the mandatory $5 baksheesh surcharge on their visa fees. Some miscreants were caught red-handed in the wee hours of Wednesday while they were in the process of being nabbed (including those located at altitudes of 6,000 and above) the hardcores beat a hasty retreat while they were in the process of being nabbed, and have so far eluded a widespread dragnet. According to highly placed sources the country was in a state of national conundrum.

In other news: Several miscreants were caught red-handed in the wee hours of Wednesday while making a public nuisance of themselves, and are currently cooling their heels at the local gaol. According to highly placed sources (including those located at altitudes of 6,000 and above) the hardcores beat a hasty retreat while they were in the process of being nabbed, and have so far eluded a widespread dragnet. According to highly placed sources the country was in a state of national conundrum.

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M una Bhandari is 24, married, and worries about whether her Caterpillar is leaking engine oil. We in the Valley may be used to female Safta tempo drivers, but news of a woman driving one of these enormous excavators is nothing short of groundbreaking.

Bhandari, the first female earthmoving operator in Nepal, took to this rather unusual occupation at the tender age of 18. She only has a school-leaving certificate, but when at 17 she fell in love with and married Ram Hari Bhandari, nine years her senior, Muna didn’t want to just sit around at home. So, she asked her excavator husband to teach her to drive a Caterpillar so she, too, could perform the essential part of any large-scale construction undertaking. He took her on as an assistant and Muna made her first professional journey from her hometown of Abu Khainen in Gorkha to a project out west.

Muna not only learnt how to do the job, she grew to love it. “Since then,” she says smiling, “I have worked on many projects—from Mahendranagar in the west to Taplejung in the east.” It was not a smooth ride all the way. Muna had to face many challenges before she could take up the trade. “Nepali society is so conservative. Instead of encouraging women, they scorn us. But to me it doesn’t matter what they say. In fact, I feel proud that I am capable of doing what I do,” says this pioneer.

The snide comments are not the only professional hazard either, sometimes Muna and Ram Hari cannot meet for months. Their special skills mean they are in demand all over the country. The separation is hard. “I miss not having a family—children and a small house, that’s all I want. I don’t really dream much,” says Muna, who is currently working on a resort project in Nagarkot.

She’s patient, though, and says she is working towards that goal. Every project Muna works on brings her a considerable pay packet. “I prefer to live off my own sweat. I never check my husband’s wallet to see how much money he has,” laughs the charismatic excavator.

In her free time, Muna sings, and writes in her daily journal, which she says someday to publish. All the best Muna, and keep moving our earth!