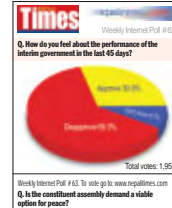




EXCLUSIVE Negotiating Peace

Major political parties have cautiously welcomed the Maoists' latest announcement of a negotiation committee, especially their proposition not to "physically eliminate" cadres of rival political parties and "sabotage" infrastructure. In a statement issued on Tuesday, Maoist chairman Prachanda said these decisions were taken by the party's politburo meeting attended by all members at an unspecified location. Analysts say the restoration of peace has a long way to go. "It is least likely that the Maoists will hold talks with the present advisory council type of government which doesn't enjoy executive powers," said Shyam Shrestha, editor of the pro-left Mulyakan magazine. The Maoist negotiation team, most likely to be led by Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, will probably demand elections for a constituent assembly.



"Cross-party approach to conflict a must."



Sir Michael Jay, the British Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of UK, arrives in Kathmandu on 6 December for a three day visit. Nepali Times asked him a few questions about the current situation in Nepal, and the prospects for resolving the insurgency. Sir Michael was unable to comment our question on the issue of Gurkha pensions and pay, saying it is sub judice at present.

SHARAD KC IN RAJAPUR
This is the grain basket of Nepal's far-west. Situated on a large island on the Karnali River as it discharges into the plains, the soil is fertile and yields three crops a year.

This year's rice harvest has been particularly rich. But the local residents have fled, the entire town and its surrounding are under the sway of the Maoists. Rajapur is right on their main supply route from India into their strongholds in the western hills of Nepal. Whoever controls Rajapur not only controls the food production, but also this strategic route to the border.

Seeing a group of human rights activists and reporters arrive, the operator of the Hotel Chautari at Rajapur breaks into a wide smile. He hasn't seen guests in a long time. There is fear and silence among residents who have dared to remain. No one talks or makes eye-contact with strangers.

Looking at an old man who was behind me when we were approaching Blinnapur, we greeted him. He nodded but did not say anything. After introducing myself we inquired if he was a government employee. "I am a retired Subedar from the Indian Army," he said.

When asked how things were going in his village, he said, "We can't sleep at night, and we don't even feel hunger because of the fear." We stopped to take a photograph of a vacant house belonging to his landlaid, Narayan Upadhyay, but now used as a Maoist "shikhar". When we turned around, the ex-subedar had already left.

The ward police officer Rajapur was shifted to the district headquarters at Guliyari seven months ago for security reasons. Since

Rajapur's mini-Rolpa



In Rajapur, there are mountains of grain but no people.

then, Rajapur island has turned into a mini-Rolpa. The Maoists have their own cutoff here from 9PM to 6AM. Vehicles can operate only during those hours.

In October, the security forces raided Rajapur, chased the Maoists away and withdrew. The Maoists then returned with a vengeance. They provided two options to over 200 families of security personnel living in the region: either ask their family members to quit their jobs, or leave.

Almost everyone left. Last month, even while the security forces were carrying out a cordon and search operation in Manpur Tegar, Maoists in the nearby Blinnapur were facing families of security personnel out.

The last Ranganbhai heard from his sister-in-law was that she had taken her two children and gone to Tikapur. "I haven't heard anything from my brother, Jangbhai, after the Maoists burnt down a post office in the area," he said.

Khim Bahadur Nepal, a resident of the nearby village of Godiyana, has also left his house along with his seven family members. Khim Bahadur's son serves at the Nepal Police. Back home, there is no one to harvest his field.

Unlike Rolpa, Rajapur was prosperous and vibrant. Because of the rich harvests, the Japanese helped set up a paddy-threshing plant here. The Maoists destroyed the plant after looting it. To further isolate Rajapur, the Maoists first destroyed a pontoon bridge and

then a steamer ferry that transported people and produce between Rajapur and Guliyari. People now have to go via Indian territory or neighbouring Kalitali. The army is trying to rebuild the pontoon bridge over the Karnali and resume transport, electricity and telephones.

The security forces have launched a major counter attack from Manpur Tegar to sweep the Maoists from looting the grain harvests, and fearing further violence many local Tharus have fled to India and are working as sugarcane labourers there. "At least they are safe there, here anyone can come and kill you day or night," said one resident of Dunga Nagar after making sure we were neither army nor the Maoists. Security forces have set up their base at Manpur Tegar, and say their intention is to provide a secure environment so locals can come back. But so far, the private schools that were shut down have not opened, and the political activists either keep quiet or have not returned. "How can you engage in political activities where there is no room for argument?" asked a local UML worker who does not want to be named.

Rajapur native, Gopal Dahal, is now a junior minister in the Chand cabinet. The local Maoists have called him a traitor, even though Dahal used to give fire speeches here not too long ago calling for Tharu autonomy.

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Nepali Times: The last support group meeting in Kathmandu of Nepal's donors coincided with the royal move to set up an interim government. What is your assessment of the past two months?

Sir Michael Jay: The Kathmandu meeting reaffirmed the international community's support for a comprehensive strategy to deal with the Maoist insurgency, encompassing real reforms to tackle the root causes of the problem such as social injustice, exclusion and poor delivery of government services, as well as action against corruption and human rights abuses, and reinforcement of the security sector. On the political level, the meeting called for a cross-party approach to the conflict, a negotiated solution and the early fixing of a date for elections. A good start has been made on the first part of this agenda and I hope the government will now be able to rapidly implement the policies it has announced, or is drawing up in consultation with donors. On the political agenda, we have yet to see real progress. The three key issues are clearly inter-linked. Without a cross-party approach, genuine negotiations are less likely, and without a negotiated settlement national elections would be difficult. Until everybody concerned realises this, the prospects for peace are dim.

What are the main concerns vis-a-vis the insurgency that you will be raising with government leaders you meet here?

The dramatic surge in violence since last November has taken Nepal by surprise. The armed forces are ill-equipped, under-resourced and under-trained to deal with this type of problem. There are valuable lessons to be learnt from similar conflicts elsewhere, and instinctive solutions are not always those that work best.

To people like Mr. Seddon, my only plea is, if you honestly think the Maoist revolution is such a good thing for humanity, please leave the capitalist hell-hole you live in now and go to the liberated zones of Rukum and Rolpa and experience eternal bliss. If, after living there for a full year, you still say theirs is the only way for humanity, I will gladly discard my bourgeois false consciousness and join you and your comrades in the struggle (perhaps by then you will start another front against the imperial occupation of Buckingham Palace?). White Progressives of the world! Until you have nothing to lose but your hypocrisy.

Sangram Limbu, via email





"Our descendants are doomed"

In a tragic mistake, security forces kill villagers who were actually members of an anti-Maoist resistance force.

MOHAN MAINALI IN BAJURA
CENTRE FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM (CINOPAC)

On the way up to Dhankane from the district headquarter at Martadi, we met a cheerful 12-year-old boy on the trail. He approached us and asked "Sir, would you like to buy apples?" How much, we asked. He said ten apples would cost Rs 25. "I want to buy a pair of shoes from the money I am selling apples," he said.

Two days later, on the way back from Kolti we were on the steep trail up to Pandusem on the way towards Angapani when we met the same boy again. We asked if he had bought his shoes. He looked at his shy, and said he couldn't because the money from selling apples wasn't enough. "I have bought salt, though," he said smiling. "And one day I'll surely have enough to buy

shoes." He scampered on ahead. What the boy didn't know was that bad news awaited him in the village. His father, Ramlal Damai, had been shot by the security forces a day earlier, and had just died of his wounds. When we reached the boy's house, his father's body was being carried out into the porch. Ramlal's wife and an eight-year-old child were crying in front of the house. There was not a dry eye among the neighbours who had gathered there.

Ramlal had been injured by a bullet in his head, and villagers carried him from Angapani to his house, half an hour down the road, thinking he could still be saved. Six other villagers were also killed: Suraj Raut, Tula Raut, Nara Bahadur Bohara, Chandu Bohara, Rup Damai

and Kashi Sarki. A unit of the army and police had left Martadi on the evening of 28 October on patrol. When they reached Angapani just after dawn the next morning, they saw a light inside Hari Krishna Raut's house and muffled voices from inside. They immediately cordoned off the house, and asked those inside to open up.

The seven people inside had just finished harvesting millet the previous day, and had been playing cards all night. Villagers think they may have suspected the people outside to be local Maoists, who have banned drinking and gambling. So they turned the lights off and kept quiet. This made the security personnel even more suspicious.

When the villagers did not respond even after the second

A grief-stricken young girl who had never seen so many bodies being taken for cremation from her village (top left), Bir Bahadur Bohara still finds it hard to believe that he has lost four of his "innocent" relatives in the security action (top right), the widow of Padam Bahadur Shahi who was killed at Pandusem (right)



order to open the door, the troops broke it down, stormed in commandeering style and shot everyone. Six of them died on the spot. Ramlal succumbed to his injuries just two hours before we arrived on the scene, following his son.

The troops left. The villagers

who had been cowering in their homes came out and were horrified by the carnage. They decided not to touch the bodies and sent some among them to Martadi to register the deaths at the district administration office of Bajura.

In Dhankane they heard

news over Radio Nepal that seven "terrorists" had been killed at Pandusem. Fearing that the local administration could harass them for being Maoists too, they decided not to go to Martadi and turned back to the village to cremate their dead and console the families.

by DANIEL LAK

Chia and conversation

HUMILA - The old man sits in a corner of a tea shop along the trail between Simlot and the Tibetan border, spinning raw wool into yarn. He sips from a dented metal cup. Three or four pointers sit on the bench beside him. The shop owner stirs a bubbling infusion of spring water and mountain mint, occasionally adding generous handfuls of sugar. The smoke is thick but the stone walls keep the warmth of the cooking fire inside; the funk is bearable. It occurs to me that this is the real Nepal. Time then to listen to what the real Nepalis have to say.

"So what's the situation around here," I ask, to get things going. A short burst of laughter is followed by contemplative silence. The man is wondering—obviously—whether to trust the Maoists who might well have come from Mars or even Army headquarters to intrude rudely on their lives.

"Well," the old man says, hands never pausing in their furious spinning, "it's bad, very bad." Then he lapses into silence again, still pondering how much to say.

"Back in Simlot," I venture, the Chief Development Officer says the situation is normal here, so does the DSP. More laughter, bitter now, "Normal is, risks, incredulous snorts and shaking heads.

"Normal is it," asks the older, cynicism overcoming earlier reluctance to speak to a stranger. "CDO sahib says this is normal! It is normal to have soldiers and police take jewelry from our women, and search our homes. Some people lost money too. Is normal having the Maoists steal our food and get us into more trouble with the army? This is what CDO sahib says is normal?"

Some of the pottery take up the refrain and everyone more or less tells a similar story. They say that a village down the trail lost money and jewellery after an army party came to investigate reports of Maoist movement in the area. Of course, the authorities deny this and over-stressed, modern Kathmandu-wallah that I am, I haven't



got time to go and investigate myself. I ask the old man how he copes, how the increasingly unbearable burdens of being a rural Nepali are affecting him.

"Well, there's rakshi," he says to general laughter, "and we have our work." Here he holds up his half spun skein of yarn, revealing the incredible fact that he pays Rs 3000 rupees for the raw material, works for four months on a blanket and sells it for Rs 4000. Something, I dare say, for the finance ministry and its generous Kathmandu-based donors to take note of next time their talk of increasing productivity amongst the Nepali workforce.

Another silence falls and we sip our fragrant tea. The sugar hits on my teeth but it helps ward off the evening chill that's building

Time to listen to what the real Nepalis have to say.

up outside. We discuss my video camera for a moment and I hesitate to tell them that I spent the equivalent of about ten years of their income to buy this crucial tool of my trade. But they simply marvel at the technology and speak approvingly of the need to have the best you can afford.

Then the old man gets agitated with all the small talk and starts at me, his eyes watering and barely visible through the smoke. "Look, you want to know how we feel, how the situation affects us. You tell those people back in Kathmandu the truth, you tell them how the Nepalis are feeling."

"If the Maoists come, and we feed them, 40 or 50 at a time, we watch our food supplies dwindle but what can we do. Ke garnai? And we know that next day the army and the police will come and accuse of being Maoists. They insult us and look at our possessions. It's like they're all working together to make us miserable. Well, tell them in Kathmandu that they're succeeding. We are miserable.

"But here's something else to take back there. We're alive today. Yes, and we're happy to be alive. Tomorrow, who knows, we might be dead. Does anyone care about us? We're all alone out here."

He calls for more tea and another round of steaming metal cups arrive on the table. Silence falls again. Outside, a few wisps of snow are blowing by. The old man keeps spinning, nodding and thinking. There's not much else to say. ♦



Bir Bahadur is a neighbour of the dead, and is weeping openly when we reach the village. "Where is the justice," he asks. "How can you kill innocent people in this way?" Ironically, three of the dead (Tula Raut, Nara Bahadur Bohara and Chandu Bohara) were members of the "Kaal Sena", an anti-Maoist resistance group that the villagers had formed after they couldn't bear harassment by the Maoist militia anymore.

Several times in the past months, they had driven away Maoist rebels from the village. They finally shot him dead at a place called Kandua and left his badly mangled body on the trail. Padam's father couldn't bear to look at his son's mutilated face, and even 24 hours later, he can't talk about it. Padam's mother is inconsolable. "Maybe he'd still be alive if he had joined the Maoists," she says, weeping uncontrollably.

All the VDCs to the northeast of the district headquarter, Martadi, are no Maoist areas. You see no Mao flags flying on trees. The cadre walk around freely and force villagers to donate money or food for the revolution. "The Maoists look us, the government kills us, we are trapped in the middle," says Padam Bahadur's father.

There is fear, panic and paranoia in this scenic little village. This year's harvest failed, there is a food shortage, but Jule Sarki is sowing wheat seeds, hoping that winter rain will at least

hail after being detained for three months on the charge of delivering letters to Maoists. Some half a dozen people, including Padam's father and his wife carrying a three-year-old son followed the troops, fearing something ominous.

They could see the security people beating Padam up badly. They finally shot him dead at a place called Kandua and left his badly mangled body on the trail. Padam's father couldn't bear to look at his son's mutilated face, and even 24 hours later, he can't talk about it. Padam's mother is inconsolable. "Maybe he'd still be alive if he had joined the Maoists," she says, weeping uncontrollably.

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There is fear, panic and paranoia in this scenic little village. This year's harvest failed, there is a food shortage, but Jule Sarki is sowing wheat seeds, hoping that winter rain will at least

give him an omelette. When he saw us approaching he ran into his house and shut himself up. When we introduced ourselves, he came out hesitantly and said "These are bad times. Look me, I was afraid of you gentlemen and ran away? No one must anyone anymore..."

After talking to villagers, we counted 60 villagers who have been killed just along the one-day trek from Martadi to Kolti in the past year alone. Most of them have been killed by Maoists murdered for opposing their orders, refusing to pay tax, or children killed by explosives they have left behind. Some have been found weeks later, hands tied behind their backs and shot.

A 76-year-old villager, known by his nickname Dahi Bhai told us: "We spent a lifetime in quiet happiness, but our descendants are doomed." The incident in Pandusem has generated distrust among local people against the military and police not only in Bajura but also in the neighbouring districts of Achham.

The locals understand that the security forces made a mistake, but so far it looks like the army and police do not want to admit it. And until they do, the families of those killed will be regarded as relatives of "terrorists". ♦

DOMESTIC BRIEFS

Goodwill choppers

The British embassy in Kathmandu has clarified that the two Mi-17 transport helicopters being supplied by the British government to the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) are not attack helicopters. In a statement issued Monday, the embassy said the agreement between the British government and the RNA restricts the use of the helicopters to logistical, medical and humanitarian purposes only. The helicopters, which are due to arrive in Nepal shortly, will not be used in attack or combat roles. The choppers are being supplied as part of the package assistance of £ 6.5 million for Nepal under the British government's Global Conflict Prevention Fund, the embassy said.

Rebuilding Jumla

The government has allocated Rs 10 million to launch reconstruction activities at Khatang, district headquarters of Jumla, devastated during the overnight Maoist attacks on 14 November. Home Minister Dharma Bahadur Thapa handed Rs 150,000 each to families of civilians who were killed during the attacks. Minister Thapa's visit two weeks after the attacks was the first from a senior official.

The Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre said 17 government offices had been destroyed and the local people had no access to drinking water, health services, education and telecommunications. The centre has demanded that the government launch immediate relief and rehabilitation work in this remote district.

Talks for talks

Home Minister Dharma Bahadur Thapa said the government is in contact with the Maoist insurgents through a group of human rights activists. "You can say that talks are going on for holding official talks," Minister Thapa said. The minister called upon the rebels to inform the government of their agenda and come to the negotiation table. He said he knew nothing about scenarios for rebel leaders or whether they were taking refuge in India. The minister also added that security matters need not be transparent to the public because they involved more than just guns and bullets.

New appointment

Additional Inspector General of Police, Shyam Bhakta Thapa, has been designated Acting Chief of Nepal Police. The nearing retirement of Inspector General of Police, Pradip Shumsher JB Rana, would leave the post vacant. AIGP Govinda Bahadur Thapa, the first policeman to acquire a PhD, made a brief play for the top spot arguing he was as efficient and suitable for the job. Sources said Shyam Bhakta Thapa's appointment was made on the basis of seniority.

Lights out

Despite excess generation of power within the country for the last few months, Nepal is likely to face load-shedding after suspected Maoist rebels damaged a tower of the 132 KV Lamangru-Shakrapur transmission line at Sakute on 26 November. The state-owned Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has appealed to consumers to reduce electricity consumption during peak hours, 5PM-8PM, to help NEA avoid load-shedding as its likelihood has increased after the blast. "Megh Raj Upadhyay, general manager of NEA, said load-shedding could be avoided if consumers turned off one or four lights in their homes during peak hours. NEA officials are still assessing the damage and are unsure if the other towers were safe from Maoist attacks. Meanwhile, newly appointed Minister for Water Resources Dipak Gyawali urged the rebels not to engage in destructive activities on national television saying, "neither Marx, Lenin nor Mao have called for such activities in the name of revolution."

Poaching in the parks

The government has formed a probe team to investigate the killings of one-horned rhinos in the national parks of Chitwan and Bardia. Thirty-three protected rhinos have died in these two conservation parks during the last seven months, poachers killed 29. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation reported eight rhinos were killed in the last month alone.

Out of the 33 rhinos, 18 were adult males and five were females. The rest could not be verified. The poachers managed to steal the valuable horns from 16 of the killed animals. Informal sources place the value of one kilo of rhino horn, wrongly believed to have medicinal value, at Rs 800,000 locally and Rs 2.2 million on the international black market.

In the meantime, the Regional Environment Office for South Asia under the US Embassy has expressed concerns over the adverse negative impacts of insurgency on Nepal's conservation efforts. "Trafficking in animal contrabands have reached an alarming scale," said Michael Datar, director of the program. Datar said the ongoing insurgency is collapsing the rural economy and withering sources for conservation funds, which put tremendous pressure on Nepal's ecology.

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Ire alarm

A disturbing feature of our national malaise is the prominence animosity has acquired as the operating emotion. It's a case of (Giri) Prasad Koirala or Madhav Kumar Nepal? They're the aggrieved party, after all, and are entitled to sit of fury. The new power can't quit blaming the multiparty leadership for creating today's mess. We know our leaders wereousy. That's why they're out of power and not too many of us are out on the streets yet.

For a political group free of electoral complacency, the temptation for candour becomes all the more irresistible. Ministers shouldn't involve our intelligentsia by mouthing platitudes. Not that moments of healthy honesty are entirely lacking. One minister asserted that the Maoist assaults on Jhams were an expression of their impatience for talks. Another shed some personal light on how Nepal was on its way towards the restoration of democracy before the royal succession of January 1972. The doctor who said this constitution wasn't worth the paper it's printed on may have been a little irrelevant, but you can't say he was untruthful.

Discrepancy in ministerial discourse isn't that unbearable either. You can't expect an assorted assemblage of enthusiasts to speak in one voice on an issue like the Maoist insurgency which has divided the

country for so long. Loud thinking is tolerable, moreover, when the perils of irrational exuberance are painfully apparent. (Remember how Sher Bahadur Deuba announced a truce with the Maoists before finalising his cabinet last year?) We need more ministers who don't cringe each time some big-party politician says the advice doesn't have executive authority. Since the people never see them where they are, we don't expect them to be answerable to us. The fact that the only legislator in the cabinet is a palace-nominated member of the upper chamber should help put things in perspective. Say the palace came out with a formal proclamation naming executive authority to the council of ministers. Would that discourage us from turning to Narayanhari every time someone in Singha Durbar bawled?

When this is the best bunch of leaders the country could find, you know who the joke's on.

The definition of politics as strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles is too universal to be ignored. The people recognise those who refused to let the government and reality whiz.

The two main political parties have an excuse to keep and are running out of ideas to contest their lack of support. These are considered themselves "untainted" enough to become ministers couldn't undertake not to contest the elections, which augurs well for our politics.

The international outlook is

how the people's rights have been taken away.

Ministers, for their part, need to be distracted by the dirt some of us in the media dig up from their past. When this is the best bunch of leaders the country could find, you know who the joke's on.

Arinades must change from the top. The prime minister who isn't fed advanced just to know some of his ministers just before the

sweating in ceremony. We were the ones who accused Koirala of packing the cabinet and party central committee with people he knew very well.

This may turn out to be a defining moment for Nepal democracy. As we questioned the moral and intellectual competence of the unfurnished business we saw since 1990, did we wonder whether people with superior

knowledge and vimre could be entrusted with the public good? From the day disgruntled and disgraced former members of the big parties have joined hands with the embroilment of purples administrative ruthlessness, this cabinet does set off alarm bells. Deeper down, though, lurks an opportunity to complete the unfinished business of Kathmandu Spring.

Doctors, engineers, activists and business people long complained how they were the real drivers of the People's Movement. A lot of them are ministers today because leading Kangreshi and comrades were too furious to serve. This fact shouldn't stop our experts and entrepreneurs from picking up from April 1990. Just try not to build a reputation on what you hope to accomplish.

How do you differentiate between market research and social research?
Market research deals with the marketing problems and certain business problems also in terms of investment. The research we do for Nepal CRSP Corporation and Family Health International (FHI) are very similar to market research. They are social organisations we take their activities into social research.

And, what is the difference between customer research and retail research?

Customer research is basically looking at specific problems for the client, which could be related to any of the dimensions of marketing. Totally focussing on a particular problem and aiming at suggested solutions for that. Retail is like a barometer, which on a monthly basis monitors the market trends in different product categories. We will be starting the monthly monitoring of the rural market very soon.

What are the major problems that you encountered during your nearly a decade long stay in Nepal?

Our team was very small for the first five or six years and we were very ambitious in terms of growing or attracting a lot of business. So whatever business came our way, we did it. It was only in 1999 that we had targets and thought of expanding significantly. Since then we have done very better. But the last one year has been a very difficult.

What has been the effect of being part of a world leader on your portfolio?

When the Soalte Group divested its stakes, divestment was done on its initiative. We were very keen to retain Soalte as our partner but they were not interested to be in a business, which is not their core competency. When they were our partners we had a lot of access to various sectors and always of research and marketing. With Mr. Siddhartha Rana as our chairman, we used to have a lot of influence also which is definitely not present at this moment. It has not been easy since Soalte left but of course, there are a lot of marketing tasks that need to be done.

and ordinary people against often brutal attacks and to convince the communities that they and they only, can deliver lasting security.

Do you see a role for negotiations?

A negotiated solution is the only way to avoid a long and bloody conflict, and the sooner the better. Experience has shown that the longer a conflict persists, the more polarised positions become and the more difficult it is for either side to envisage the necessary concessions. Of course, at the beginning of any negotiation demands look possible, positions inconceivable. Each side always has deep suspicions about the motives and intentions of the other, and often wrongly believes that delaying negotiations by a few months will strengthen its own position.

Skilled mediation can win the trust of both sides, help overcome these suspicions and suggest ways of removing blockages. It is not just a question of facilitating contacts—that is the easy bit. Nor should mediation be seen as outside interference or, in the case of international mediation, a blow to national pride. Political positions become rigid through constant public repetition and only a mediator can test what really lies behind those positions and identify how best to meet each sides concerns while still enlarging the area of agreement.

There is concern in Nepal and the US that military support for the European-Nepalese Army will prolong the conflict. How do you look at this issue?

What will prolong the conflict is to allow the Maoists to believe they can win by violence. Armed insurgents often fail, but when they win they win because of a collapse of will at the centre, often brought about by military pressure. It is the job of the security forces to prevent that from happening, and they cannot do that job without proper equipment and training. The assistance we are providing is not designed to increase body counts or win territory, but to save lives by helping the security forces defend themselves



Marketing Nepal

Chief of the AC Nielsen-ORG MARG, a leading market research company, in Kathmandu, Palas Bhattacharya brings with him a long experience in the field of research and marketing. An MBA and a graduate in chemical engineering from IIT-Kharagpur, Bhattacharya has been in Nepal since 1993. Happily married, with a three-year-old daughter, Bhattacharya says he has a great relationship with his wife who is a Chartered Accountant. He shared his experiences with Navin Subedi for Nepali Times.

Could you tell us briefly about your company?

AC Nielsen is an American multinational company, and the largest market research company in the world with offices in 110 countries. Last year I virtually took over ORG MARG and owns 100 percent of the company. Now we are known as AC Nielsen ORG MARG. We have been in Nepal since 1993.

What is the total size of market research in Nepal?
If you divide research into two parts, market research and social research, then the size of the market research here is roughly worth Rs 10 million.

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Customer research is basically looking at specific problems for the client, which could be related to any of the dimensions of marketing. Totally focussing on a particular problem and aiming at suggested solutions for that. Retail is like a barometer, which on a monthly basis monitors the market trends in different product categories. We will be starting the monthly monitoring of the rural market very soon.

What are the major problems that you encountered during your nearly a decade long stay in Nepal?

Our team was very small for the first five or six years and we were very ambitious in terms of growing or attracting a lot of business. So whatever business came our way, we did it. It was only in 1999 that we had targets and thought of expanding significantly. Since then we have done very better. But the last one year has been a very difficult.

What has been the effect of being part of a world leader on your portfolio?

When the Soalte Group divested its stakes, divestment was done on its initiative. We were very keen to retain Soalte as our partner but they were not interested to be in a business, which is not their core competency. When they were our partners we had a lot of access to various sectors and always of research and marketing. With Mr. Siddhartha Rana as our chairman, we used to have a lot of influence also which is definitely not present at this moment. It has not been easy since Soalte left but of course, there are a lot of marketing tasks that need to be done.

What were the major problems you encountered while doing market research here?

One of the main problems has been sometimes many of the large companies are not serious about doing business in Nepal, as they would be, possibly, in India or Bangladesh. Their drive to sell hard is relatively low. Even if their brands have declining sales, and their market share is receding, they don't seem interested to take any initiative. They just hope things will improve one day.

Why, would it be different in India or Bangladesh?
In Bangladesh, the population is 130 million and the market is relatively larger. Because of the comparatively low population of Nepal, the drive to increase market share is relatively low here, which creates some sort of problems for our profession because we are not exposed to very sophisticated tools. We use our own tools and techniques and give our clients the results, as they may not be very open to our techniques. I, however, must say that the awareness regarding market research in Nepal is definitely ahead of the entire belt of eastern Indian states, as well as Delhi, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

Which companies did you find more worried about their market share?

Multinationals are the leading companies. Coke is the largest followed by Nepal Lever. The multinationals are fiercely ambitious. For example, if Coke lose a fraction of their sales, the entire Nepal branch goes upside down. In family-run businesses there isn't that much accountability. Gorkha Brewery is relatively better and has spent a lot of money on market research.

Why is it that there is very high turnover among your employees?

The turnover of our recruits and relatively experienced people has been very high over the years. That is definitely unfortunate. We don't want our employees to leave us. ORG-MARG was taken over twice in the last five years. First, it was the Business India Group, which resulted in a total change in our Nepal company too. Before we could stabilise, the company was taken over again by Nielsen. Technically we were taken over any more since we are the largest company now.

How do you view your job?

Working in market research because the profession gives me a lot of learning experience and enables me to help some of the largest corporations and social development organisations in attaining their objectives. It is a very fulfilling experience.

In the December Himal

Dispositional dispositions:
Fashioning the NRI

The 'Madras' of Malaysia:
Being 'Indian' in Southeast Asia

Exposing the saffron brigade's
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Starvation amidst surplus:
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RNAC for sale

Businesses are preparing to take claims days after Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Kuber Sharma announced that anybody with a purse of Rs 1.5 billion could 'own' more than Rs 10 billion worth of state-owned Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RNAC). Some business houses are already preparing to file petitions at the ministry expressing their interest. Sharma made the announcement that the government would hand over the scam-ridden national flag carrier to anybody who comes with the funds at a facilitation program organised by the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI).

Relocated

Nanglo's Deli—another of Nanglo's exclusive ventures—has relocated from its premises in Thamel to Durbar Marg opposite Nanglo Café and Pub. They are promoting fusion style cuisine with snacks, beverages and other Italian and Indian dishes. The Nanglo Deli also has Nanglo's own, an air-conditioned cyber café with 12 workstations, where you can sample the new menu or enjoy a hot drink while surfing the Internet.

Promoting domestic tourism

Clean, green and eco-friendly Godavari Village Resort has come up with special packages to enhance domestic tourism. A half-hour drive from the city centre makes it an ideal gateway for short holidays. The resort offers one night and two night packages ranging from Rs 2,800 to Rs 5,800 for Nepalis and between \$50 to \$100 for expatriates. The special weekend barbecues, with tennis and swimming, are very affordable.

Trading non-consensus

Officials from seven South Asian countries failed to arrive at a consensus on major issues pertaining to lowering the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) during a meeting of the SAARC Committee of Experts (CoE). The meeting agreed to provide preferences and concessions to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) within the regional body while dealing with issues like rules of origin and trade liberalization measures. The next CoE meeting, to be held in Kathmandu between 27-29 December, will work on schemes and program in SAFTA, primarily related with tariff and non-tariff barriers. The SAARC Summit held earlier this year asked for the finalisation of the proposed SAFTA treaty within year end.

LIC-Nepal Earns Profit

Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) Nepal, a joint venture between Bishal Group and Life Insurance Corporation of India, has earned a profit in the first year of its operations. According to a press statement issued by the company, LIC Nepal provided insurance cover worth Rs 1.35 billion during the year and earned premium income of approximately Rs 81 million. Besides selling over 7,000 policies, the company recruited more than 600 agents and operates two branch offices in Kathmandu and Biratnagar.

Project Manager

(Second call—those who applied earlier need not to apply)

Training for Employment (TIE)

A project of Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) Implemented by Alliance Nepal, a private consulting firm

TIE project was developed three years ago with the aim to improve the training programmes of public and private training providers in order to enhance the employability and productivity of their graduates by narrowing the gap between the supply and the demand side of skilled people. The project supports Technical Training Providers and Enterprises in order to strengthen their institutional capacity, improve communication and strengthen linkage between training providers and entrepreneurs, and to enhance the quality of training and other services provided.

Alliance/SDC is looking for a dedicated, innovative Manager with experiences in project management for the implementation of the second phase of the project (2003 to 2006).

Tasks

- Overall project management (including administration and accounting)
- Leading a team of professionals
- Providing institutional development support to technical training providers
- Further development of training and models
- Capitalising the past experiences of the project
- Networking among the stakeholders

Profile

- Post graduate with experiences in vocational training or labour market related fields
- Very good social and communication skills for working with different partners and organisations
- Able to deal with changing environment and innovative enough to suggest new approaches to SDC (e.g. employment issues)
- Excellent spoken and written Nepali and English skills
- Commanding skills in the use of computer

Qualified women candidates will be preferred.

Visit web-site www.alliance.com.np to know more about the project before submitting application letter by 22nd of December 2002

Application with updated CV, salary expectation and reasons for applying should reach to:

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Phone—526145 and 545890



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Department for International Development



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The DFID programme in Nepal is designed and supervised by a team of advisers under the leadership of the Head of the DFID office in Kathmandu. The team includes specialists in infrastructure, governance, rural livelihoods, social development, economics, statistics, health and conflict studies. All members of the DFID Advisory team contribute to country and sector strategies and are responsible for designing and supervising DFID's programmes of assistance. There are currently 2 vacancies on the team.

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There will be an attractive and competitive local salary and benefits package. The successful applicant will be contracted for a 3 year fixed term appointment, during which time there may be an opportunity to apply for membership of DFID's professional advisory teams. You will be based in DFID Nepal's Kathmandu office, though some in-country and international travel will also be required. DFID is an Equal Opportunities employer and appoints on merit by open competition. Nepalese citizens and women are encouraged to apply.

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Working to eliminate global poverty and promote sustainable development

Bloom time in Nepal

Here is a floral tribute to Nepal's national flower.

REVIEWED BY TIRTHA BHADUR SHRESTHA

If you were asked to name one other recognisable symbol of Nepal besides our distinctive national flag, you would not hesitate to answer: the rhododendron flower. This amazing blossom that unites entire mountainsides and, white and pink in the Himalayan spring, has always been the botanical equivalent of the khukuri to remind Nepalis of their unity. And also diversity. What we think of as one flower elevated to a national icon actually has a huge diversity of colours, shapes and sub-species.

And this is what gradually dawned on readers as they go through Rene de Milleville's recent book on the rhododendrons of Nepal. Taking pictures of rhododendrons shouldn't be such a difficult exercise since the flower is so photogenic to start with. But Milleville has been successful in capturing not just the beauty of a rhododendron forest, but also the sheer variety of blossoms all over Nepal. Despite its technical details, this is still a book by an amateur for amateurs. Rhododendron-watching was a hobby for the outdoors-loving Milleville, but he has taken a lot of trouble to adhere to careful scientific accuracy throughout the book.

Latin names and botanical nomenclatures can be eye-glancers for the lay reader, but Milleville avoids drab academicism and punctuates the text with brilliant illustrations and informative charts. Here is a book that will tell you everything you always wanted to know about rhododendrons, and more. The taxonomical history of the flower, its botanical ancestry in the wet mountains and cloud forests of China's Yunnan province all provide fascinating facts.

Besides your Lonely Planet Guide and Birds of Nepal, here is

another book you must henceforth carry while on a spring trek in Nepal. And there is now a reason to time your trek for that particular week in April-May when rhododendrons explode across the Nepal's mountains. Just like tourists flock to New England for fall colours, rhododendron tourism can be a great selling point for trekking.

Milleville's book cuts through the jargon and technicalities of the flower and decodes it into simple terms. All 31 species of Nepali rhododendrons and their varieties are described and illustrated to guide the readers through the diversity of this floral treasure that adorns our mountains.

Its pocketbook size and 275g weight means it won't be too much of a burden in your rucksack. (At Rs750, it also won't burn a big hole in your pocket.) At 136 pages with soft cover, it is packed with information that is useful in the field to refer flowers, trees and shrubs that you come across on the trails. The 18 chapters are short and sweet, and they are not top-heavy with text. What is most useful is the graph that provides a simple guide to working out which species can be seen in which locality and altitude at which time.

Milleville has spent 35 years photographing these rhododendrons in the wild. None of the pictures taken between 1962 to 1997 were snapped in a garden or a

conservatorium. No artificial lights have been used.

These are pictures that take us to the wild and show us the flowers in natural light. Milleville is not only a passionate trekker and mountain climber, but a conservationist as well. His passion to establish a rhododendron reserve in the Milke Danda of eastern Nepal has been duly taken up by the IUCN-World Conservation Union, Nepal.

Milleville calls Milke Danda "truly a natural world heritage site", and the high ridge in eastern Nepal is already in the process of being preserved by local communities as a "People's Park". Milleville is donating all proceeds from the sale of the book to the Rotary Club in Nepal to be used for the welfare of the blind.

You don't have to be a trekker or adventurer to use this book. Any car-bound flower lover can also find it a useful guide. Perhaps try to domesticate the rhododendron in Kathmandu, which is no mean feat. (You have to find a shady and relatively dry patch in your garden.)

So, look out for the cover of a life-size Rhododendron arboreum in a bookshop near you with the Himalaya and alpine vegetation in the background. ♦

(Dr Tirtha Bhadur Shrestha is a well-known Nepali botanist and conservationist.)

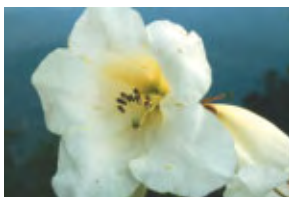
The Rhododendrons of Nepal
by Rene de Milleville
Himal Books, 2002
136 pages (plus preface, etc)
Rs 750
(Proceeds to go to the Rotary Club for its Anti-blindness Programme)



The R. arboreum is frequently found growing with magnolia (white) in Milke Danda, 2650 m, mid-April



Rhododendron ecnorum, Khumbu, 4800 m, end-June



Rhododendron arboreum near Ghandruk, 2500 m, west of Machhapuchhre and Annapurna III, mid-April

Among the most beautiful Himalayan trees are the rhododendrons, of which the greatest concentration occurs in the eastern Himalayas. About 110 species are found wild in India, of which only four occur in the western Himalayas. Several rhododendron species are widely cultivated for their brilliant and variously coloured flowers and evergreen foliage. Many hybrids are produced and have been extensively cultivated in Europe and America. Of these, Rhododendron arboreum Sm. is perhaps the most widely distributed and is the national flower of Nepal, locally called 'Lail guras'. It is also called 'tree-rose'. It can reach 2-4 m in girth and 14 m in height, and is seen at an altitude of 1,200 to 2,000 m from Kashmir to Bhutan and Assam. The flowers vary in colour from red to pink, spotted to white. The under-surface of the leaf also varies in pigmentation from silvery to brown. It grows in well-drained soil and is said to be averse to calcareous ground. The full beauty of the Himalayas cannot be experienced until one has seen the rhododendrons, washed in colour, festooning the mountain ranges.

In this region, one cannot fail to notice the richness of orchids perched on trunks and branches of trees, beckoning visitors with their enchanting flowers. But the very beauty of their flowers has been their

Himalayan Flowers

undoing. Flower lovers and commercial poachers have robbed this region of most of the showy orchids, necessitating a ban on the collection of these plants from the wild. At higher altitudes, we noticed that the trees become stunted and scarce near the snow-line, beyond which the mountains are covered with permanent snow. To reach here, one passes through the temperate coniferous forests of pine, deciduous, spruce, fir, cypress and yew.

Beyond these forests lies a fairland of alpine meadows. When the snow begins to melt in May-June, alpine plants begin to unfurl and are in full bloom in July and August. These meadows provide grazing grounds for sheep and cattle during these months. This is a fascinating region for flower lovers. We have the Himalayan poppies, anemones, primroses, paeonies, monkshood and meadow rue, buttercups and black peas, spurge and columbine, salvia and safflower, thistle and heather, thyme and mentha, balsam and gentian, campanula and chrysanthemum, orchids and lilies, and many other. In fact, there are several fairly extensive areas where, at times, it is almost impossible to step without crushing some of the lovely flowers carpeting the ground. The sudden outburst of bird-song, the headman's flute caressingly and hauntingly playing love songs, the tinkling of cow bells or pealing of temple bells and their reverberations, the scent-laden invigorating air, are experiences that linger in the mind longer than the passing joys of everyday life.



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Author: Asvin Mehta
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COMMENT by ROBERT WATSON

Green revolution

The starting point for most poor countries must be rural development and growth in agricultural production.

At the recent World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, the international community renewed its commitment to reducing hunger and poverty. Everyone agreed on a more responsible approach characterised by social equity and conservation of the environment.

The starting point for most poor countries must be rural development and growth in agricultural production. Agriculture is central to rural life, and to sustainable development and responsible growth with less.

The task is complex: we must feed a rapidly growing population, protect the environment, and promote social equity in a future that will little resemble the present. By 2050, the world's population—currently at six billion—will have grown by another three billion. Our planet will be warmer, and floods and droughts will be more frequent and more severe. We will need to produce more with less.

Meeting these challenges in a sustainable way will require scientific advances across a broad range of agricultural domains, generating information that decision-makers—including those in the World Bank—need in order to combat poverty more effectively. Agricultural practices that we take for granted today came about through public investment that led to mechanised farming, improved crop varieties and management practices, and improved plant nutrition and crop protection technologies. These advances increased food supplies and raised incomes. Given the need for greater food security and income, the investment in agricultural science and technology has all but dropped from the public agenda. Today, public investment is declining while private sector investments are increasing.

Public investment in agricultural R&D will come about only when policy makers have the information they need to understand the challenges ahead and the most promising options for meeting them. Given the time required to translate laboratory research into field applications, we must put agricultural science and technology back on the public agenda now so that we can begin the work of generating the type and quality of information needed for effective policy making. This will require the joint efforts of government, the private sector, scientific community, and civil society the world over.

Global assessments that bring all of these entities together can

The advances we will need to achieve in the coming years will likewise require the support of public investment in agricultural R&D. Yet, in the last few decades, agricultural science and technology has all but dropped from the public agenda. Today, public investment is declining while private sector investments are increasing. Public investment in agricultural R&D will come about only when policy makers have the information they need to understand the challenges ahead and the most promising options for meeting them. Given the time required to translate laboratory research into field applications, we must put agricultural science and technology back on the public agenda now so that we can begin the work of generating the type and quality of information needed for effective policy making. This will require the joint efforts of government, the private sector, scientific community, and civil society the world over.

Global assessments that bring all of these entities together can

help focus the public and policy makers on strategies for the future. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, perhaps the most renowned assessment, got most of the world's scientists and nearly all of the world's governments to agree on the nature and scope of climate change.

What is needed now is a global assessment that puts agriculture firmly back on the public agenda and evaluates the economic, environmental, and social implications of technological and policy options—from intensification, organic production, and biotechnology, to waste minimisation and more efficient use of natural resources.

Last month, 100 leaders from civil society, governments, the private sector, and the scientific community from rich and poor countries gathered in Dublin, Ireland, for the first meeting of a six-to-nine month global consultative process convened by the World Bank to bring together stakeholders to identify the kinds of questions decision-makers need answered.

Most importantly, they debated an initial set of questions that could form the underpinnings of an international assessment on the role of agricultural science and technology in reducing hunger and improving rural livelihoods.

Our ultimate goal is to reduce poverty and hunger in a way that actively conserves our planet's fragile natural resource base. An international assessment on agriculture that is transparent, inclusive, and devoid of political considerations brings us closer to this goal. ♦ (P)

Robert Watson is the World Bank Chief Scientist.

by DEVESH KAPUR

Corruption and liberalisation

Ever since the state from direct economic activity, curb its discretionary powers, and both economic efficiency and governance will improve. Developing countries have been plagued since this for years. By opening economies to international competition and investment, governments will undoubtedly be disciplined because they will be watched over by international financial capital. There is more to this than meets the eye. If the state makes it difficult for an intrusive, or official corruption has clearly not declined in the free liberalisation's promoters said it would, nor has governance improved markedly for the better in most countries. Why?

First, opening an economy back up the price of talent. In India a decade ago, students who chose careers in public service could expect lifetime earnings between a fifth to a third of their private sector counterparts. Today, they get less than 10 per cent. Of course, talent should go where it is most productive, and higher private-sector wages reflect the potential for higher productivity. But the lure of high private-sector wages has consequences for the quality of government, as South Africa is discovering.

Second, exposing the arrogance and venality of the state was no doubt necessary to exert liberal reforms. But these crises became self-inflicted potholes. Treating the state as a house of ill repute makes it difficult for governments to recruit honest, capable individuals. The quality of any organisation, private or public, depends on the quality of the individuals it attracts.

The winds of globalisation were supposed to blow away the cobwebs of bribery and inefficiency.

Third, although curbing the state's role in allocating goods and services that can be provided more efficiently by markets may reduce corruption, it is unrealistic to think that the number of fields in which the state deploys its regulatory powers can be reduced greatly. Although official corruption is greater when the state is involved in economic activities, shifting the focus of state regulation appears to change only the magnitude of corruption.

Unfortunately, globalisation/liberalisation and institutional development often work at cross-purposes because of their different time horizons. The bedrock economic, social, and political institutions in Western societies took decades, if not centuries, to develop. Exceptions to this time frame exist, like Singapore—but exceptions prove a rule, not negate it.

Institution building is painful and laborious, as evidenced in the recurrent crises faced by African countries from Nigeria to Botswana. Globalisation accelerates the pace of economic and social change in developing countries, which means that new institutions must adapt even before they fully take root.

The temporal dimension of institution building and the issue of human capital are also linked. The reality of successful institution building is that key individuals are critical in the early stages. But globalisation makes it more difficult for developing countries to retain the talented individuals needed for institutional development, because the wages of talented people are set globally.

Developing countries with lower levels of inequality are threatened by "human capital flight," as thousands of their most talented people remain abroad after studying at elite universities. They either lose people essential to their institutional development or tolerate higher levels of inequality.

These shortcomings may be improved by reducing the state even more through privatisation and outsourcing. This may be possible and, to some degree, necessary. But within limits. At best, the reforms promoted by international organisations sound, countries must be wary of short cuts in constructing their institutions. The path to good governance is more painstaking and bumpy than anyone believed when globalisation and liberalisation became popular rhetoric even ago. Minimising simplistic fashions is only likely to make the path longer. ♦ (P)

(Desh Kapur is Professor of Government at Harvard.)

More money to rural poor

WASHINGTON - The World Bank unveiled a new plan, Reaching the Rural Poor, to guide its lending for rural and agricultural projects in the developing world. The bank promises to increase loans for agriculture for fiscal years 2003 and 2004 by 20 per cent yearly, a net hike of about \$400 million. The first portion will mainly target sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, with subsequent phases to include East Asia. Projects in rural credit, irrigation, roads, sanitation and irrigation and to support farmers' organisations will benefit greatly. The strategy also recommends decentralising the provision of rural services, supporting rural organisations and promoting land reform as a means to increase the assets of the rural poor.

Agricultural and rural growth is seen as essentials for development because 75 per cent of the world's poor live in rural areas. The bank, whose mandate is to fight poverty and help sustain development in those countries, believes "poverty is predominantly, though not exclusively, a rural phenomenon". It says that agriculture must grow by at least 3.5 per cent annually to achieve the world's goal of halving poverty and hunger. (P)

Canada to ratify Kyoto

OTTAWA - Canada will ratify the Kyoto Protocol by mid-December, despite the poverty regional and financial opposition lining up against the accord. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, whose party has majority control of Canada's parliament, said, "the time has come" as he made the announcement to the House of Commons.

Chrétien had pledged Canada would ratify Kyoto before the end of the year at August's Earth Summit. Under the treaty, drawn up in 1997, Canada, the world's highest per-capita energy user, has committed to cut emissions of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, to six percent below 1990 levels by 2012.

Under a special compromise on Kyoto limits, the country's major industrial emitters will be permitted to emit 14 percent more than in 1990. Federal officials have been unable to clarify how these caps will be closed, but they are counting heavily on Canada receiving credits for its forests and other so-called 'carbon sinks', a position that is still opposed by the EU.

Industry groups and some provinces, especially oil and gas-producing Alberta, continue to fight the deal, saying it will hurt business and cost thousands of jobs. (P)

Howard's "gaffe"

WASHINGTON - Australian Prime Minister John Howard's support for launching pre-emptive military strikes against terrorists based in neighbouring countries if they posed a threat to Australia has outraged neighbouring Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. The Howard government's defence of his controversial comments is a reflection of a high-level rethinking of Australia's defence strategy in the wake of both the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the 10 October bombing of Bali nightclubs, when close to 190 people were killed, half of them Australian tourists.

Cabinet discussions began this week on counter-terrorism measures. The government is pressing the Senate to pass legislation to give sweeping powers—that have been subject to widespread condemnation from human rights and legal groups—to security agencies. Some Australians are displeased by this move. Senator Bob Brown of the Greens Party urged Howard to withdraw his statement, calling it "a major gaffe" and apologies. "It damages our relationship not only with the countries in our neighbourhood but obviously it creates a lot of tension," he said. Officials around the region described Howard's statement as "arrogant" and "very dangerous". (P)

The inspection returned to Tarni with sure knowledge the huge magnets were used to produce weapons grade nuclear materials. This time, Dr. Ahmed said, the inspection found that the maintenance equipment for Iraq's power stations.

At the same time a defector was telling a different story to US intelligence. Their source, Dr. Ibrahim Rami was told, had driven his American Ford out of Iraq to the American Air Force base in Incirlik in southern Turkey.

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COMMENT

by KHIDHIR HAMZA

Inspecting Iraq

It will be vintage Saddam: diversion with no real revelations.



The UN weapons inspectors are now at work in Iraq, trying to determine how many weapons of mass destruction have been developed in the last four years. If the track record of previous inspections holds true, Iraq will not come clean, and the inspectors will have to work their way through a maze of deception and distortion.

Hans Blix, the director of the new inspections effort, has been faked twice before by the Iraqis. In 1990, before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, he declared that there was no nuclear weapon program in Iraq. In 1994, Blix accepted the

And it still took four years for Iraq to admit to a biological weapons program. Only the 1995 decision of Saddam's son-in-law, Hussein Kamel, brought definitive proof of the existence of Iraq's huge nuclear weapons program.

Hans Blix, the director of the new inspections effort, has been faked twice before by the Iraqis. In 1990, before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, he declared that there was no nuclear weapon program in Iraq. In 1994, Blix accepted the

Iraqi story that their huge uranium enrichment program was only meant to produce fuel for future nuclear power stations.

None of the inspections or gadgetry can match inside information. For inspections to work, the UN will need defectors. The UN Security Council Resolution 1441 empowers the inspectors to talk to Iraqi scientists without government minders, outside of Iraq if necessary, and accompanied by their families. Incidentally, the UN

inspection team leaders indicate that they do not plan to do anything on physical inspection of their own. Their passive approach has already compromised their position. The UN team is smaller and less experienced than the predecessors, and faces Iraqi counterparts steeped in the art of deception.

I fear that the inspections effort is not intended to uncover the full extent of Iraq's illegal weapons program. The Europeans are treating Iraq as a prize to be denied the US, not as a strategic danger. What drives the inspectors is fear of an American invasion. The Americans will be accommodated up to the point that their attack is forestalled.

On December 8, Iraq is obliged to declare formally in full weapons program. We can expect the inspectors to be flooded with information about everything but the actual weapons. It will be vintage Saddam: diversion with no real revelations. The real test will be for the Americans. Either they get the information they need, or they will have to wait. Saddam will be the winner, ready to play another day. ♦ (Project Syndicate)

(Khidhir Hamza is a former adviser to the Iraqi regime. He is a member of the Organisation and former Director of Iraq's Nuclear Weapons Program. He is the co-author of "Saddam's Bombmaker".)

United Nations Development Programme South and West Asia Sub Regional Resource Facility (Kathmandu SURF) Vacancy Announcement

The Kathmandu SURF is the UNDP's Sub Regional Resource Facility for South and West Asia. We provide UNDP Country Offices in the sub region (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) with timely, high quality substantive support for the effective design and implementation of country programmes and projects. Our mission is to strengthen capacities of our Country Offices and enhance UNDP's position as the United Nations global development network and a trusted and leading partner of programme countries in overcoming development challenges. In keeping with UNDP's corporate vision of a knowledge-based advisory service organization, our objectives are: (a) to meet the policy advisory needs of Country Offices and (b) to enable Country Offices to more effectively develop and access knowledge and expertise

We invite qualified and interested persons to send their CVs and applications for the following positions:

- Administrative Assistant
 - Young Professional Programme (YPP)
- 1. Administrative Assistant:** The Administrative Assistant will work under the direct supervision of the Programme/Administrative Associate and perform routine administrative tasks as required (word processing, using spreadsheets and PowerPoint, maintaining office records/files, routine correspondence, travel arrangements). The applicant should have, at a minimum, completed high school (10+2), be fluent in spoken and written English and Nepali, and at least 3 years of experience in a similar position. The successful candidate will be offered a service contract for one year initially.
- 2. Young Professional Programme (YPP):** We offer an opportunity to exceptionally qualified young professionals, age - below 30 years, to work at the Kathmandu SURF for a period of 11 months. This will be an opportunity for young professionals from the sub region to work closely with the SURF's Policy Advisors and gain experience in developmental research and advisory services in UNDP practice areas as well as be exposed to UNDP's operations and policies. The applicants must have a Masters degree in an area relevant to UNDP/SURF's thematic focus (governance, poverty, trade, environment and gender) and a maximum of 2 years of professional experience.
- Interested candidates should submit their applications along with up-to-date CVs, by 31 December 2002, to:
- Chief, South and West Asia Sub Regional Resource Facility
U.N. House, P.O. Box 1, Kathmandu
Fax No. 977-1-548597
- We especially encourage qualified women to apply for these positions.**

Security measures

JAKARTA - Activists are divided about the Indonesian government's campaign against terrorism after the Bali blasts, saying it addresses the need to bring the perpetrators to justice—but also has unwittingly brought the country's security apparatus back into the political arena. Over the past weeks, Jakarta has made arrests and pinpointed the key figures behind the Bali bombings that killed nearly 200 people and injured more than 300 others, mostly foreigners.

Criticised by western governments for a half-hearted response to the activists of suspected terrorists, President Megawati Sukarnoputri issued an emergency regulation last month that gave intelligence units and security personnel full reign to crack down on any terrorist network operating in Indonesia. Police investigators can now arrest and prosecute suspected terrorists based on intelligence data. Suspects can be detained without charges for up to seven days, during which lawyers cannot accompany them.

Critics are afraid the people will be subjected to the abuses and rights violations the military and security apparatus of during Suharto's 32-year reign. They advocate the enforcement of existing laws to better fight terrorism instead of giving more powers to security agencies. (P)

Urban wastelands

HO CHI MINH CITY - Economic and population growth, bad infrastructure, low public awareness about environmental protection and especially bad management have worsened pollution-related problems in Vietnam's industrial cities. Rapid urbanisation has led to many factories now being established inside urban zones. In 1998 the government ordered polluting state-owned enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi to move to non-residential areas, industrial parks or outlying districts. With more than 600 large factories and 22,500 medium and small-scale factories, Ho Chi Minh City is at the forefront of Vietnam's move toward industrialisation.

In recent years, pollution levels have been rising due to the increasing number of cars on the roads and industries in and around the city. Around 10,000 residents from Binh Thuan district, one of the most heavily industrialised residential areas, have been demonstrating this month to urge local authorities to relocate two polluting factories near their community. Vietnam generates some eight million tonnes of industrial waste, eight million tonnes of urban waste, nearly 200,000 tonnes of hospital waste and over 1.2 billion cubic metres of waste water. (P)

Food fight

ISLAMABAD - In the first ever case of the sort in Pakistan's legal history, food rights groups have sought a court order to stay the import and sale of genetically engineered (GE) food in the country—spearheaded from the United States. Pakistan is importing the soybean as part of a \$467 million refund that Islamabad paid in advance to the US in the late 80s for the purchase of 28 F-16 fighter aircraft. The Islamabad-based Federation for Consumer Protection and the Pakistan Development Foundation maintain the imported soybeans may have hazardous effects on human health and the environment.

Most soybean in the country is consumed in the form of poultry feed, indirectly making the product part of people's diet. Currently, there is no law in the country that bans the import of GE products, though the country's 1981 Food Act requires exporters to label their products with a list of ingredients. However, legal experts maintain that the requirement cannot be stretched to include the labelling of GE foods, as genetic modification of a product ingredient does not necessarily create a new ingredient requiring labelling. (P)

40,000 ft BAR ...

Where the tales are as tall as the mountains

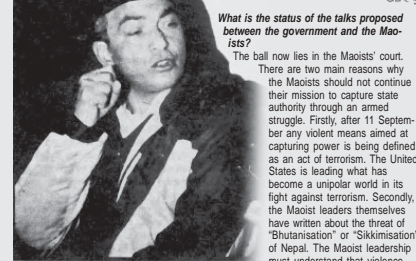
Succulent steaks and burgers bountiful, with a vegetarian variety. The friendliest bar between Tibet and Timbuctoo. Live band on Fridays!

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Violence begets violence

Within days after resigning from the CPN (UML), Kamal Chaulagain was appointed Minister for Labour and Transport Management as well as Minister for Population and Environment.

Excerpts from an interview in Jana Asha, 4 December



What is the status of the talks proposed between the government and the Maoists?

The ball now lies in the Maoists' court. There are two main reasons why the Maoists should not continue their mission to capture state authority through an armed struggle. Firstly, after 11 September any violent means aimed at capturing power is being defined as an act of terrorism. The United States is leading what has become a unipolar world in its fight against terrorism. Secondly, the Maoist leaders themselves have written about the threat of "Bhutanisation" or "Sikkimisation" of Nepal. The Maoist leadership must understand that violence begets counter-violence, which drags the country towards instability. This instability reduces the bargaining power of both the state and the Maoists. If it persists, foreign powers might intervene.

Has the government formally invited the Maoists for talks?

There is reason why we said the government has kept doors open for dialogue. Members of the erstwhile Deuba cabinet used to say that anybody could bring in the head of Maoist leaders and take away a bagful of money. But no member of this new government has defined the Maoists as terrorists. The prime minister is in touch with human rights activists and the government is taking initiatives towards holding talks. It will not be appropriate to discuss our issues beforehand.

How would you assess the failed peace talks last year?

Due to in-fighting, rival leaders within the ruling Nepali Congress (NC) tried to use the plank of talks with Maoists as a ladder to power. The Maoists also acted irrationally by walking out of negotiations. Instead of presenting their position to the government and going to the public, they attacked an army barracks in Dang. I feel that if the Maoists had not walked away, the in-fighting within the NC would have further escalated and the government would have been forced to accept their demands.

Do you hope the Maoists will sit for negotiations with this government?

The Maoists should not be influenced by what the parliamentary parties are saying. The latter do not want talks to take place between the government and Maoists because of their vested interests. There is no denying this government enjoys executive majority. How can you resolve the problem without accepting that the government always represents the state?

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

I talked about contracting the management of RNAC. I didn't offer it for sale.

—Kamal Sharma, Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation in *Himalaya Times* on 4 December. He had previously said to a gathering of Nepali industrialists that he was willing to let anyone with Rs 1.5 billion take over the ailing flag carrier.



Lock-'Talks'
"Oh, you're here already? I don't have the key right now! Wait a minute, it may be up there. I'll just ask and bring it..."

Jana Prakash, 3 December

Caution

Excerpts of Senior Advocate Ganesh Raj Sharma's interview on Nepal Television, 3 December

Those who resorted to pelting stones in 1990 now face bomb explosions. In the future another force could emerge in Nepal against the Maoists. Only a strong system can protect democracy or the Maoists.

People who benefited from the instability in Nepal want to prolong this situation. They think everyone will finally have to seek their patronage. In this light, the present instability does not favour any domestic force. At present, all Nepali face changing diets. In these trying hours we should be very cautious, and exercise restraint. We have allowed others to fall in the troubled waters of our own making.

Monarchy in Nepal is a symbol of national unity. Talk of a constitution actually has no relevance under the present circumstances. The history of monarchy in Nepal is quite long and has always provided for a 'sentimental unity' among the people. No other institution could unify a country as diverse as Nepal, and our people have always honoured the monarchy.

Importing Maoists

Kantipur, 1 December

Members of the All India Nepal Unity Society (AINUS), a Maoist front organisation, were seen heading towards northern Rolpa, past Bhavang a fortnight ago. More than 200 full-time Maoists from India are said to have reached the Maoist stronghold at Rolpa by crossing the porous international border at Rupaadhi, travelling through Nepalgunj and into the forest areas of Dang. The news report quoted a local Maoist leader who said the underground party had sent its activists to study the strategic location of the area and undergo higher-level training at their 'university'. The Maoists have set up a high-level training school at an unspecified location within the district to train their cadres in military science. The Maoist cadres, carrying green bags and speaking with an Indian accent, are said to have left India after their organisation was banned for actively supporting Nepali Maoists.

'Interference'

Himalaya Times, 26 November

Former Chief Justice Bishwambhar Upadhyay said the latest royal decree was a cumulative effect of the lack of resistance from political parties since 1990 to the king's repeated 'interference'. Upadhyay, who was the chairman of the present constitution's drafting committee, claimed the king violated the spirit and letter of the constitution from the very beginning. In a discussion program recently, Upadhyay said the king had exercised extra-constitutional powers to appoint ambassador and Upper House members without recommendations from the cabinet. He also criticised Deputy Prime Minister Badi Prasad Maini's announcement that the government was considering awarding citizenship certificates

to almost four million people, saying it was unfortunate the country would exchange citizenship for votes.

King's restraint

Deshantari, 1 December

Interview with Dr. Gopal Kishor Upadhyay, Reader at Nepal Law Campus.



Where does sovereignty lie in the context of the present constitution?

Sovereignty always lies with the people, whether it is mentioned explicitly in the document or not. The present constitution did not say that sovereignty lay with the people, but people used their rights and made possible the 1990 People's Movement. The present constitution envisaged the people would practice their sovereignty once in five years for five minutes, but people demanded and practiced their rights every three years.

But hasn't the king claimed his 4 October move was based on the royal prerogative assigned by the constitution?

Late King Birendra adopted this constitution using his royal prerogative, but the document says sovereignty lies with the people. It shows the links between the king and the people. In other words, the king is also a protector of the constitution and he needs to act when the people are being treated unfairly. The constitution begins and ends with the king. The political parties came in with a lot of promises but none gave us anything concrete. Sher Bahadur Deuba was given six months' time to hold an election. Instead, he asked for electoral postponement for a whole year, which was totally against the constitution. That was a kind of tyranny on his part.

Theoretically and practically, sovereignty lies with the people, but they are uninterested in politics. They choose their representatives to practice sovereignty on their behalf, entrusting them with everyone's welfare, be it in a multiparty democracy or single-party Panchayat system.

Nepal's monarchy is unique in the sense that there are people in villages who worship the king like a god. A few towns and Kathmandu alone cannot represent the sentiment of the entire nation. If we go for a referendum at this point, an overwhelming majority would vote for a tyrant monarchy.

Does that mean demands for a republican state do not hold ground?

Even if the demand for a republic can state were to be fulfilled, it would not lead for more than six months. The people would throw

it away in that time even if they come to power.

Where will the present conflict between the monarch and the parties lead?

The present conflict is not created by the monarch, but rather by the parties. The law of the land allows a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison for talking against the monarchy. I believe the king is practicing tremendous restraint. Even as the political parties push him to the edge, they are creating an environment for an active monarchy.

So, is the ongoing conflict between the monarch and the Maoists?

It is apparently a conflict between the monarch and the Maoists. But, instead of attempting a peaceful resolution, the political parties are fueling the fire. If they continue to challenge the king he will be forced to turn into a tyrant.

Mediating peace

Satvika Bhandari, Nepal Samachar, 3 December

At least four state parties and international agencies have offered intermediaries for peace talks between the government and the Maoist rebels. However, the government has not been able to accept the international goodwill and agencies of the local rights activists to this end.

High level sources say that Norway, Switzerland, Netherlands, Denmark and United Nations have through its office of resident representatives have already approached the government with an offer to act as intermediaries. A few foreign governments are said to have directly approached the Nepal government, while others have requested local rights activists to play go-betweens. They have also extended support for the reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure if the present conflict ends through a peaceful dialogue.

Padma Raju Tuladhar, an activist and mediator at last year's failed talks between the government and the Maoists, confirmed the representatives of the aforementioned nations have promised financial and humanitarian support for reconstruction at the end of the conflict.

Tuladhar said the donor countries are keen on a peaceful resolution of the conflict in order to continue and complete the ongoing development activities they finance. There are those who are adamant that foreigners should not be involved at this juncture when local forces are being made. Tuladhar said Nepal's monarchy is an independent neutral party that is trusted by both sides, so the involvement of non-Nepalis can bring peace then we should accept outside offers to provide us with a mediator. The four countries that have volunteered intermediary roles have maintained neutral positions with respect to the present Maoist conflict and are not likely to provide military aid in the future.

NEPALITERATURE

by MANJUSHREE THAPA

SING US A SAD SONG, Fatterman Dai

Songs that jilted cowboys listen to while crying into their beer aside, South Asia has probably cornered the market in sad songs. The quality of compassion so pervades the literature of this region, the lyrics that find their way into the most loved songs tend to be filled with pathos and heart. Witness the popularity of Narayan Gopal in Nepal, whose death in 1991 compelled thousands of mourners to join his funeral march, including those who in Panchayat times declared him as bourgeois for a time of revolt and revolution. There is a time for action, and a time for slinking back and feeling. Both ways of being may support each other. Even nepalaya and Music Nepal's new recordings of the songs of Fatterman—who at 67, after a gap of 20 years, has recently staged heart-stopping performances in a lovely butter-and-honey voice—allow us to feel sad in the most enervating way possible.

The first of his songs translated below is a classic by the eminent songwriter Nati Kaji, who reminds us that there is nothing as personal, or as universal, as the loss of love.

IT WILL NOT BE AS HARD TO DIE

Nati Kaji

It will not be as hard to die—
I just cannot kill my love for you

The greenery of springtime whirs with the flowers
The white clouds of the blue wind fly away with the wind
But your warm love remains warm, still—
I just cannot kill my love for you

It will not be as hard to die for you
I just cannot kill my love for you

A very long road we have walked side by side
Both of us have reached places far, far away
But my heart doesn't want to say that it ends here—
I just cannot kill my love for you

It will not be as hard to die
I just cannot kill my love for you

Amber Gurung, a legend of Nepali music, is the author of the next song, which is philosophical and intimate at the same time.

LIFE OF GALES

Amber Gurung

If life is a song of gales we must sing it in any way
If we can't meet joyously then we must meet in sorrow

The wounds may be different, our pain is the same
The faults may be different, our separation is the same
So when defoliation takes place in you my leaves fall—
My leaves fall

Your country may be different, our earth is the same
Your face may be different, our tears are the same
So when earthquakes move in you, my houses collapse
My houses collapse

If life is a song of gales we must sing it in any way
If we can't meet joyously then we must meet in sorrow

The next song, also by Amber Gurung, is the classic song of pathos—lamenting one's misfortune. It also captures the uncertainties and insecurities of life, the inability to know how to live in a way that makes sense.

I HAVEN'T KNOWN HOW TO BLOOM

Amber Gurung

I haven't known how to bloom, I haven't known how to sway
Laughter came but somehow I haven't been able to laugh
Tears came always but I haven't learned to cry

I have an essence: the heaviness of the heart
I have another essence: the heaviness of life
At the crossings I wasn't able to choose one path
But I belonged to walk on I couldn't stay where I was

In the darkness I couldn't distinguish the moon and stars
I couldn't seek and string together love
I couldn't transform and change my complaint
I couldn't bear the distress of seeing a flower fall

I haven't known how to bloom, I haven't known how to sway
Laughter came somehow but I haven't been able to laugh
Tears came always but I haven't learned to cry

Fatterman's classic song of the unrequited love, written by Nati Kaji, below, is enriched by its tone of open-hearted acceptance.

THINGS LIKE THIS SEEM TO HAPPEN

Nati Kaji

From time to time in life things like this seem to happen
I made a mistake in loving someone. Things like this seem to happen

There must be thousands who would give you love like mine
For you there must be thousands of hearts that cry like mine
A person I had thought my own has become a stranger now
I made a mistake in loving someone. Things like this seem to happen

Let your love, stepping over my love, always grow and bloom
Let your desire, killing my desire, always be fulfilled
My sad eyes too used to see dreams once, long ago
I made a mistake in loving someone. Things like this seem to happen

From time to time in life things like this seem to happen
I made a mistake in loving someone. Things like this seem to happen

Indeed, things like wrong choices in love do seem to happen—at the best of times, as at the worst.
Fatterman's live songs can be heard on event nepalaya and Music Nepal's newly released CD and cassette, "Gaayak Fatterman Saanjhi: Live Au."

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COMMENT

by PRAMOD K MISHRA

Patriarchy, female freedom & Shrisha Karki

Even as the scandal caused by Shrisha Karki's suicide has all but petered out in the face of bigger political issues in Nepal, the untimely death of an aspiring young woman must not go in vain. Her suicide ought to provide a site for Nepali civil society to ponder the agency of Nepal women caught between the contradictory messages of patriarchal tradition and consumerist modernity.

We need to ask some difficult questions about Nepal urban society, where contradictory desires and aspirations clash with discursive public institutions and cultures. Seen this way, Shrisha Karki's death provides a window to the hypocrisy, corruption, and pretensions of many Nepal urban inhabitants, whose ideological resources, both feudal and modern, have seldom received feedback from a tradition of rigorous critical interpretation.

Shrisha Karki's so-called media picture in *Jansatya* weekly speaks of matters that go beyond her suicide. It speaks of the professional identity of many Nepali journalists, their lack of systematic education and training in the skills, values and ethics of their profession. More disturbingly, it is also speaks of the significant blindness towards sexuality issues in the party line file, whose activist, *Jansatya's* editor has made out to be in the media.



If a Nepali man can brag about his prostitution, why can't a Nepali woman fight for her right to be nude by choice, and against forced nakedness? Or forced anything?

Not the least, it represents the moral confusion of many up and coming urban Nepal women—their desire for freedom but unwillingness to stand up and fight for their rights, their enthusiasm to participate in consumerist culture but lack of knowledge and courage to redefine their body and sexuality. It shows they cannot free themselves still harboured traditional notions of shame, modesty, body and a woman's place in family and society. Above all, it exposes the brutal and inhuman side of Nepali mainstream culture, which is still run by high caste Hindu patriarchal ideologies.

When I look at the *Jansatya* picture, I can't help but ask myself: What depth of illiteracy and insensitivity made the journalists and their editor permit the title "The Colourful Night of Filmdom" go with Shrisha's heart-rending picture? In fact, the scandal would have been about something altogether: how even learned middle class Nepali men themselves hold their in their capital at the hands of the powerful. For cultural critics, the nude photo ought to be known, studied, and interpreted as a classic text of Nepal women's cumulative oppression under Hindu patriarchy at the crossroads of tradition and modernity.

Anyone can read the mark of dances written all over the picture—the masculinized torso-striken eyes, panned but dishevelled hair, the mouth half open in scream, the chilling naked body hunched over folded knees, struggling to hide shame. Anyone can see that it's not the picture of a nude at all but a naked picture of a woman taken under extreme duress. This is a classic case of criminality of Hindu women's oppression under patriarchy, not just the work of a bunch of Nepali rogues with male and female genitalia.

Does the *Jansatya* journalists' thinking reflect even in minuscule the attitude of Nepal's male-dominated media? Their inability to read beyond the surface of cultural texts, their public righteousness about political democracy but private blindness towards cultural democracy? What qualifies them to call themselves journalists? The mere ability to run tabloids and write trash? And when one hears that such journalists served the cause of the left in Nepal and uncovered some serious scandals of the ruling class in the past, one's blood runs cold. Can personal aggrandizement supersede basic professional obligations and human decency? Whether what Karki Shrestha did amounts to criminal misconduct is for the legal institutions to decide, but this failure is indicative not just of the dirty underbelly of Nepali journalism but also its structural deficiency. One can excuse the democratic illiteracy and blindness of a nominated bureaucrat in a semi-feudal social structure, but how can one understand suicidal error in a neo-liberalist journalism?

In the sudden *razzle-dazzle* of global consumerism often disguised a middle class purchasing power and democratic freedom, Shrisha might have confused the thin yet deep divide between commerce and desire. Still, she deserves dignity and is entitled to her rights. The terrified and terrifying picture ought to have elicited just the opposite response from the *Jansatya* gang. It doesn't pounce a "Colourful Night". It offers a troubling glimpse of Nepal male culture of the powerful.

If Shrisha Karki is to blame for anything, it is for her suicide. She shedned all the values of patriarchy—traditional notions of honour and shame associated with a woman's body and sexuality. If she had been coerced into nudity, she ought to have raised hell in the media or with the law. But she succumbed to the tradition of honour and shame.

As a result, she became one of the countless victims of Hindu patriarchy rather than a soldier of change in the status of Nepali women. If Nepali women achieve equality it is by standing up for their actions and asserting their rights to be who they are and who they want to be. If a Nepali man can brag about his prostitution, why can't a woman acknowledge and deny her eros honestly and move on with life—and, yes, fight for her right to be nude by choice and against forced nakedness or forced anything? ♦

(Pramod K Mishra teaches English at Augustana College, Illinois, in the United States.)

Carlsberg Green Bar of the month

Jatra AT THAMEL

Jatra Ma Music Jam: Acoustic sounds by The Strings, 6 December at Jatra Restaurant & Bar, Chakrabarti, Thamel. Contact 211010

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ♦ **Trail Bridge** Photographic exhibition at Patan Museum till 14 December by Trail Bridge Program of Helvetas.
- ♦ **Snow and other Adventures:** "Poems in Frames" by Mark Wyatt from 7 December, Lazimpat Gallery Café, Lazimpat
- ♦ **Woodcutting in Kathmandu** from Dan Hogan, and **Unspoken Words:** New Tibetan Calligraphy by Dhurmkhang at Indigo Gallery, Kathmandu, 8AM-6PM, 14 December, 21 January, 413870
- ♦ **Cubism** by Surendra, paintings by Shova and ceramic sculptures by Cecile Houdret at Park Gallery till 25 December, Park Gallery, Patan, 528207

EVENTS

- ♦ **Bhagmati/Bishnumati conservation Awareness Campaign Festival** from 20-22 December organised by Environmental Camps for Conservation Awareness (ECCA). Email: ecca@mos.com.np. 268297, 268328
- ♦ **Kathmandu Mountain Film Festival 2002** at the Russian Cultural Centre 5-8 December, tickets available at Mandala Book Point, Suwal Music 'n' Movies, Himalaya Java, Saraswati Bookstore and Patan Dhoka Kitab Pasal. www.himalayasociety.org/kmff
- ♦ **Hyatt Winter Tennis Championships** from 16-21 December, all categories. Registration open till 10 December. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 491234
- ♦ **Christmas Bazaar** Courtyard at Dwarika's Hotel followed by Sekuwa Saanhy BBQ, 13 December, 475458

MUSIC

- ♦ **Live music** by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000% Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel, 414336
- ♦ **Carlsberg Rock Yatra 1974AD** in concert, 4PM onwards on 14 December at Dasrath Stadium. Tickets at Nanglo Bakery Café and Blue Bird Departmental Stores. 529726
- ♦ **Exclusive evening with 1974 AD** at Moksh (inside Club Hardhat) on 6 December. Win posters, t-shirts and tickets to Carlsberg Rock Yatra. Entry Rs 250. 528703

DRINKS

- ♦ **Friday Indulgence** Taste 12 Scottish single malts for Rs 999 at the Piano Lounge, Hotel Yak & Yeti. 248999
- ♦ **Paddy Foley's Irish Pub** A wide range of drinks and food. Live music on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday nights. 416096

FOOD

- ♦ **Vegetarian specialties and clay oven pizza** at Stupa View Restaurant & Terrace, Boudha, 480262
- ♦ **Mongolian Barbecue** on Sundays at Rex Restaurant, 12:30PM, 491234
- ♦ **Newari Bhoj** Traditional snacks, drinks and meals, outdoors or indoor in a restaurant designed by Bhaktapur artisans. Lajana Restaurant, Lazimpat, 413874
- ♦ **Barbecue with live band** 6:30 PM-9:30 PM, Wednesdays and Fridays, Splash Bar and Grill, Radisson Hotel
- ♦ **Authentic Thai food** Everyday at Yin Yang Restaurant, 425510
- ♦ **Patan Museum Café** Mixed menu, garden seating, lunch only, 11AM-2PM, 25 percent off with Summit Card, 526271
- ♦ **Wood fired pizza, cocktails and coffee** at the Roadhouse Café, Thamel, 260187
- ♦ **Special Thai cuisine** at Ban Thai Restaurant, Darbar Marg, 243271

GETAWAYS

- ♦ **The Great Godavari Getaway** Special weekend packages including room with breakfast and dinner, 25 percent discount on health club facilities, Godavari Village Resort, 560675
- ♦ **Christmas and New Year Packages** at Dwarika's Hotel includes dinner and breakfast, 479488
- ♦ **Adventure Camp & Country Kitchen** for day trips, picnics or overnighters, 981026337, 418922
- ♦ **Birdwatching, short hikes, writing** Rs 1,850 per person with dinner and breakfast, Rs 925 per child 5-14 years, Shivapuri Heights Cottage, info@escape2nepal.com
- ♦ **Writing Retreat** Full board package Aesthetic living, innovative thinking, creative writing and nature at Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha, 375280
- ♦ **Bardia Bonkers** Freshwater dolphins, giant tigers, elephants, safaris, rafting, evening cocktails, traditional food, junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

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

NEPALI WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Good thing we have the Himalaya to protect us from the Siberian winds blowing down from the north. But even despite this wall, temperatures have plummeted, worsening the inversion and making the fog and haze in the Indo-Gangetic belt worse. The haze reduced visibility in the middle to an altitude of about 3,300 m. There is an active weather system pushing in from Afghanistan, and early signs of winter rain and snow in Kashmir. But this front will have dissipated well by the time it reaches us. Conclusion: colder days ahead with hazy sunshine and morning fog in Kathmandu.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Day	Temp	Wind	Humidity	Pressure
20/07	20/07	19/07	20/06	21/06

BOOKWORM

Beyond Micro-Credit: Putting Development Back into Micro-Finance
Thomas Fisher and MS Srim
Vivax Publications, 2002
Rs 544

This book sets out how micro-finance can be designed, in practice, to contribute to social and economic security, promoting livelihoods, building democratic people's organisations and changing society. It challenges the dominant framework of financial sustainability and outreach to the poor.

Reflections on Meta-Reality: Transcendence, Emancipation and Everyday Life
Roy Baksh
Sage Publications, 2002
Rs 448

Though based in critical realism, this book goes beyond it by showing how the world of dual reality is sustained by a realm of creativity, love and intelligence. The topics discussed are the nature of being, modernism, post-modernism, the nature of the self and the ubiquity of transcendental phenomena in everyday life.

Understanding Journalism Lynette Sheridan Burns
Vastar Publications, 2002
Rs 384

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Rishtey

"Rishtey" follows the traditional Indian cinema theme of relationships: entangled, complicated and peppered with song-and-dance routines. Director Indra Kumar directs Anil Kapoor (Suraj), Karishma Kapoor (Komal) and Shilpa Shetty (Vijayanti) in a drama about love, family and friendship. Rumour has it that 'Rishtey' is a remake of 1974's 'Kunwara Baap'. Suraj and Komal were once happily married but circumstances tore them apart again. The one person who can bring them back together is Vijayanti, the colourful fisherwoman. This movie will undoubtedly follow true and tried Hindi film formulas—expect a tearjerker with a happy ending.

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MEETING

Climbing and 'superfluous thought'

How will Himalayan mountaineering evolve, and how can it be made more relevant to the people living in these mountains? More specifically, why don't urban Nepalis take to climbing as a sport, and what can be done to make the locals' benefit more from the economic bonanza of the climbing industry?

Legendary climbers and knowledgeable specialists were addressing these and other issues at a symposium Wednesday on "Directions in Himalayan Climbing". The event was a prelude to the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival 2002, which kicked off Thursday.

Seated on the podium in the chilly auditorium of the Russian Cultural Centre were Tashi Jungba Sherpa, Sipe Boice, Nawang Gombu, Harish Kapadia, Dr. Harish Gunung and Doug Scott. Brief presentations were followed by an open discussion moderated by Karan Mahit Dutt, editor of Himal. Nawang Gombu, the first man to climb Everest twice and a respected climbing elder who lives in Darjeeling, opened and chaired the symposium.



Climbing in Nepal since the 1970s, Doug Scott is a renowned mountaineer. He made his mark in the climbing world when he summited Everest by the south-west face in 1975, and went on to be an ace 'alpine style' climber who has lately taken to promoting the welfare of porters.

To consider the future of mountaineering in Nepal, we must examine the past, suggested Scott in his keynote address. He compared climbs of today to the hunter-gatherer of primitive society. "Resourceful, imaginative, exploratory, and cooperative," were qualities that the hunter-gatherer and the climber both displayed, besides



sharing a drive to face uncertainty and risk. They were social beings able to "tip the balance of the usual level of everyday consciousness...to develop spirituality." While on the slopes, the mountaineer relinquishes all that is materially cumbersome, as well as the "shedding of all superfluous thought".

Scott discussed the history of climbing in terms of a "progression of difficulty". Mountaineers were first tackled the easiest way up, then progressively by more difficult routes. The development of equipment such as nylon ropes and fixed plastic boots enabled a move away from the tedious fixed-rope technique to the alpine style, a self-contained approach to climbing. "There is something so fantastic about going alpine-style...committing...going for it," marvelled Scott, who felt that climbing a mountain with lots of fixed rope showed lack of that much-valued commitment.

One of the many critical issues Scott raised was why talented Nepali Sherpas had not blurred the alpine climbing trail. He critiqued the trend towards mass climbing and its negative impacts, particularly on Everest. He lauded mountaineers



porters, and maintained that the minimal wages they received were "intolerable".

Dr. Harish Gunung introduced his paper, "I am a mountaineer...I am a mountain chronicler." He is an eminent Himalayan specialist, and a geographer by academic discipline. Daring the audience with his wit, Gunung addressed two critical issues: the fact that mountaineering policies are made in the "plains", and that the people of the mountains are not being properly compensated from the climbing royalty that the national exchequer collects. Answering a question that it might be appropriate if only 30 percent of royalties went to the central government, with the remaining half being put into a trust fund to benefit people of the high Himal.

Harish Kapadia, Bombay-based editor of the Himalaya Journal and a mountaineer who spent many climbing routes in Kumaon, Garhwal and Kashmir, described the state of mountaineering in the Indian Himalaya. Mountaineering in India was concentrated between clubs and groups in the major metropolitan, he said. Kapadia's primary concern was the impact of war in Kashmir, which has closed many areas such as the Siachen Glacier to climbers. (He is proposing a peace park in the region.)

Goutam Chandra and film-maker Sipe Boice presented his concerns in a brief but succinct manner. The lack of rescue facilities for mountaineers in the Nepal Himalaya, he felt, was a major hurdle in the further development of the sport. He suggested training courses for local climbers as well as the initiation of a system of insurance. Boice will make a presentation on the "body mountains" of the

world on the evening of 8 December, the last day of the festival.



Former president of the Nepal Mountaineering Association, Tashi Jungba Sherpa, provided an overview of mountaineering in Nepal from the Darjeeling-based Sherpas taking the lead at the turn-of-century through the 'age of exploration', 'ice-style', and alpine-style, to solo climbing. He suggested that Western climbers had now begun to treat Nepali climbers less as 'porters' and more as peers, which was a positive evolution. However, Tashi Jungba felt that mountaineering would not develop healthily unless Nepali mountaineers gained international certification, such as a

modified "UIAGM" rating system of the kind used in Europe. "Their inherent climbing skills, backed by a recognised guide certificate, will give our climbers the confidence and credibility to be strong leaders," he said.

Ang Tshering Sherpa, the present president of the Nepal Mountaineering Association (which together with Himal Association organised the symposium), spoke from the floor and made a point-by-point presentation regarding the initiatives being taken regarding training, rescue, revenue-sharing, and the matter of the highly-maligned system of the 'laissez officer'.

Following the presentation by the experts, there was a give-and-take session with the audience, and the matters that came up for discussion included debate on the appropriate name—Everest/Thomson/Gangganga/Sagarmatha, the matter of royalty-sharing, environmental concerns, and, again, liaison officers.

The symposium closed on a note of optimism, with cultural activist Rishon Yangtsepho suggesting from the audience that the private sector ask itself what it had done to promote the "spirit of the Himalaya". ♦

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Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Democraticus Interruptus

Extracts from a speech delivered by the ex-Minister for Family Planning and Population at the Congress of Asian Parliamentarians on Pluralism, Democracy and Sex that was held in Singapore last week.

"Madame Chair, Honorary Desk and Tables, Chief Whips, Respective Academics, Darling Donors, Pretentious Fundis Full of Pompous Platitudes, Hyperventilating Hypocrites, Know-jerk Liberals, Ladies, Gentlemen, and last but not the least (since we don't want to be species here) Representatives from the Animal Kingdom who may be present, I end me your ears. I shall return them to you intact in a few hours.

We are gathered here today in the Lion City to look at what role, if any, sex plays in the restoration, preservation and growth of democracy around the world. Be it far from me to lecture such veteran politicians as you about the

importance of promiscuity and infidelity, since I know that I am among pros. You two back there on row 26, cut it out.

As I was saying, it is significant that this conference is being held here in Singapore, for it proves there indeed is a direct correlation between the frequency of sex and political freedom. In the destiny of our nations, libido and liberty are intertwined. We know from empirical evidence in Swaziland, for instance, that leaders who are self-satisfied and fulfilled are the ones that will go about the task of nation building in a more disciplined and committed manner. On the other hand, we know from the example of our own subcontinent that a population that doesn't find an outlet for manhood will fight for a separate statehood.

It is because repressed citizens are always looking for ways to vent their frustrations that democracy goes through boom and bust cycles. That is why it is imperative for adolescent democracies like ours which are still in bondage, and with our hormones raging, to be attracted by the perverse pleasures of the autocratic position. Multiple-partner democracies with coalition politics are, by definition, most affairs. Politics makes for strange bedfellows.

Since I notice that most you are now fast asleep, allow me to go off on a tangent. This is neither the time nor place to delve into an extended critique of post-modernism, but I'll do it anyway. The question we have to ask ourselves is: Is post-modernism dead? The answer must lie in unravelling competing paradigms in the present political discourse and intercourse so that we can be clear in our examination of the epistemological roots of socially constructed gender roles.

But, as Anthony Giddens points out in 'The Third Way', there may be a light at the end of the tunnel that will take us out of this present period of democratic interruption. Let's say, for the sake of argument, that in the post 9/11 unipolar world the sole super power is assuming a missionary position. What, then, is the fate of smaller nations and regional superpowers who can't afford to fool around any longer?

Thank you for your undivided attention, you may now wake up and collect your earlobes as you leave the hall." ♦



NEPALI SOCIETY

Low profile summiteer

For a two-time Sagarmatha summiteer, and the third Nepali woman to climb the world's highest peak, 32-year-old Pemba Doma Sherpa is surprisingly modest.

Before leaving for Tibet for her attempt from the Chomolungma side, she told her family she was off on short trek with friends. But there is a hint of pride as she recalls the moment on 19 May 2000 that she stood on the world's highest peak. "It was exhilarating and at the same time I was nervous about the descent," she recalls. And it was a harrowing one: she slipped and nearly slid down the near-vertical 3,000 m Kangshung face. Only after making it safely back to base camp did she call home to share the good news.

Pemba was on the same flight back to Kathmandu as

Lakpa Sherpa, another summiteer who made it to the top only a few hours ahead of her from the Nepal side. While Lakpa was received with great fanfare, Pemba herself left the airport unnoticed to meet her family outside.

Her second successful ascent of Everest from the Nepali south face in May this year received scant coverage in the local media. It could be that the public is getting blasé about Nepali women climbing Sagarmatha. And that suits Pemba just fine. This mountaineer prefers to keep a low profile. She works from the quiet of her home although as an Everest summiteer, Pemba travels abroad frequently to present

papers, and lecture and train other mountain enthusiasts. All the proceeds are channelled into a trust fund she established for underprivileged children.

Her grandmother, who raised her after her mother died, taught her to love the mountains and respect Sherpa traditions. As a child she walked 5 kms everyday to and from school in her native Namche Bazaar. It was only later in Paris, where Pemba was a computer science student, that she took up serious rock climbing. She doesn't believe in the Sherpa rituals and predictions that many others rely on before their expeditions.

Her only concession, in honour of her grandmother, before her climb was a prayer: "Mother Chomolungma, I am now setting foot on your snow. Please bless me with courage and success. I climb not out of disrespect, but because my soul rests in you." ♦



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