Achham’s agony

Things have never been this bad.

RABI DHAMI and RAJENDRA NATH BUDHA

It has been nearly two years since the battle of Mangalsen that devastated this district headquarters. More than 100 security forces and civilians were killed in that deadly night attack in February 2002.

The scars of that battle can be seen all along the valley, the historic Mangalsen Darbar still lies in ruins. But there are deeper psychological scars among the people here that haven’t healed. And now, fears of renewed fighting and the Maoists’ closure of schools across these 12 remote districts have spread more uncertainty. Embargoes, blockades and restrictions on travel have made the people of Nepal’s poorest and most-neglected region suffer even more.

News of the Madhabara incident in which four school children were killed last month in nearby Doti has spread and parents are afraid their children may get caught in the crossfire. “It is tragic, so many parents here have sent their children to India and this is repeated all across the midwest,” says Ram Bahadur Buda from Nandegada village.

Another AIDS Day

RAJIV KAFLE

Another year of talk, workshops, seminars and plans. We are spending a lot of money, but HIV infection is on the rise. And for people like me who live with it, nothing has changed.

I thought change would do me good, so I dyed my hair blonde. The next day, a journalist asked me if my hair was discoloured because I was HIV positive. Last week, I was stuck in a traffic jam in a taxi under that big ‘AIDS Birrudha Ekata’ billboard near Maitighar. The driver turned to me and said I felt sorry for Karishma Manandhar because she had AIDS.

Common sense is not as common as we’d like it to be. Who can we blame for such ignorance? Are the HIV sensitisation programs effective? At this rate, can we build or reverse the epidemic in Nepal by 2015, the UN’s target year? One thing we know for sure is that we have to work to implement the national strategy against HIV/AIDS. We are to avoid 15,000 deaths per year by 2005.

A young man, a former drug addict, runs a screen printing business. He has just finished printing AIDS prevention themes on cardholders to be distributed all over the world. This man and his 20 young employees live in a part of town with the highest HIV prevalence among injecting drug users. He doesn’t just want the business, he wants to help other young people like him.

In Pokhara recently, I worked with ex-drug users. The 70-member group held daily meetings and planned fund raisers to support rehabilitation. They work with community groups and even have a football team: ‘Recovery United’. This is the spirit that will allow them to meet the ‘Free by Five’ target of a drug-free Pokhara by 2005.

There are an estimated 60,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in Nepal today. According to the UNAIDS estimates, we will enter a generalised epidemic by the end of 2005 as prevalence rates cross one percent of the adult population. This will mark the beginning of a vicious circle of HIV/AIDS and poverty. In two years time, there will be an average of 35 deaths related to AIDS every day and our already overburdened health care services will not be able to cope.

It is time to start thinking of how we can all be a part of the solution to this looming emergency. We all have a personal stake in ensuring that the next generation inherits a future of less suffering and more hope. The answer lies with us.
Whose move?

Politics has become a game where players make their move, and pray.

I nchos, Deep Blue can defeat Bobby Fisher because both of them play by the same rules. It is a computer or a human brain, in a mind game it is the ability to manipulate memory that decides the outcome. Politics has often been compared to chess where a king is just a pawn in the hands of the master player.

There is one difference: the winner of a poker contest can control better than the control of the player make the outcome unpredictable. Politics is, in fact, closer to poker. When Sher Bahadur Deuba upbraided the chowkabaddi last year by dissolving parliament, Nepali politics ceased to be a mind-sport. Was it a game of chance where players make their move and pray.

Four players were simultaneously making their moves last week.

Surya Bahadur Thapa was put on a leash when the king supposedly asked him to proceed with his foreign visits ignoring the clamour for his resignation from his own party. Since his RPP is a royalist party, it doesn’t seem likely that his move to eat Thapa began without a nod from on high. It follows, therefore, that Thapa cannot continue if the king who appointed him wants him out.

This is classic Pandurang-style powerplay: two groups of courtiers try to run each other down. Thapa is a victim of this game and has been through it more times than he probably cares to remember. That is why he exhibited a certain panache in throwing early invectives against rival Prakash Shumsher’s客厅. The grandson of Mohan Shumsher is too sophisticated to stoop so low and ignored that remark with aristocratic disdain.

In hindsight, this storm in the teacup looks like it was orchestrated on the eve of Thapa’s trip to New Delhi to show palace dissatisfaction with a premier considered to be close to New Delhi. Reading, perhaps correctly, that Thapa’s days are numbered Comrade Madhav Nepal decided to pull off a headline-grabbing publicity stunt of his own. He made a private meeting involving Thapa the Nepal Congress by pacifying with Sher Bahadur Deuba, by forming an alliance with BBC, and giving a clear hint to the Mahasabha in Lucknow to accommodate the concerns of the king in a sort of consensus government led by him. But the plan backfired.

Even though the Lucknow meeting had the intended effect it proved the Indian UML leader he failed to convince New Delhi. Their article is not being published in the way that it was put on a leash.

A comrade Madhav Nepal résumé his tenets about not antagonising the people. But try telling that to our born-again comrades. How does keeping 400,000 children away from school in Bheri and Karnali help the cause? How can the public torture of villagers, and depriving those poor souls of dignity even in death by forcing the corpse to go on tour and serve the cause of societal transformation. Which values, exactly, are they trying to transform? Where is it written that barbarians have hearts and minds? Some has to ultimately take moral responsibility for the fundamentally unjustifiable act of taking another human life. Niche questions, perhaps, for those whose hands are steeped in the blood of fellow-Nepalis, and for whom thousands, even millions, of dead can be written off as means to an end.

The way to counter such savagery is not by being a savage yourself. You don’t battle terror by competing with the enemy in terrorism.

You stop the carnage by convincing it. We don’t pretend to be experts in counter-insurgency strategies, but isn’t the state supposed to show citizens that it is different? That it abides by the rule of law, and that it is there to protect the citizens from harm. And when civilians do get harmed, as they will in this fight, honestly the best one can do is to take steps to see that it doesn’t happen again.

It was dragooned into this mess exactly two years ago this week, the Royal Nepal Army had everything going for it. It had a good reputation, it did not manipulate the disunity in the political parties. When New Delhi once more thumbed its nose at Uncle Sam and showed it is ready to face the Maoists, the Indians are having fun.

While New Delhi is still trying to wear the Maoists around like a mitten, Kathmandu has become a national viewpoint and only helps to bring the latest developments from a national viewpoint and only helps to bring the latest developments

Who is this man? His message is that thanks to British ambassador to Nepal, the Mongolians, the last of thetyg let’s examine the words that the editor has to receive him at the British embassy. Girija Prasad Koirala was put on a leash and the Indian UML leader he failed to convince New Delhi. Their article is not being published in the way that it was...
Danger of a widening war

Despite the initial promise of a ceasefire and a return by the royalist government and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) to negotiations, these peace talks steadily deteriorated due largely to a failure to establish effective confidence building and monitoring measures in the field. Currently, the conflict continues to take on a triangular dynamic between the Maoists, the royalist government and the mainstream political parties that have been shut out of power since King Gyanendra suspended the democratic system in October 2002.

Both the Maoists and the government forces have adopted new battlefield strategies as the war has resumed. The Maoists have moved away from mass attacks on district police and army headquarters, and have instead used small cells to carry out a steady assassination campaign, including in Kathmandu. Army, police and political party officials, particularly those party members that are seen as close to the palace, are the most common targets. The Maoists have also significantly expanded their activities in eastern Nepal and the tarai—areas that had largely been spared the worst fighting earlier in the war. The Royal Nepali Army, having significantly upgraded its firepower and improved basic defenses during the ceasefire, has claimed a number of successful offensives and tried to carry the fight more directly to the Maoists. Substantiating the battlefield claims of the Royal Nepali Army is difficult, but it does remain clear that most of those being killed in Nepal are civilians.

Both the Maoists and the Royal Nepali government have argued that such armed village defense committees could better protect communities from rebel violence, but experiences from around the globe have already demonstrated that unchecked civilian militias are dangerous and almost universally prove a disaster. With no training and no experience from around the globe have already demonstrated that unchecked civilian militias are dangerous and almost universally prove a disaster. With no training and no

The Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG) is an independent, non-profit organisation working through field-based analysis to prevent and resolve deadly conflict. This is a shortened version of a testimony by the ICG’s John Norris at a US House of Representatives Human Right Caucus hearing on Nepal on 21 November.

The administration continues to portray Nepal as part of the broader anti-terrorism battle, and has strongly backed a royalist government which has indefinitely suspended the democratic system. Last year, in addition to generous amounts of development assistance, Washington provided Nepal with more than 5,000 M-16 rifles as part of a broader military package worth over $80 million. Meanwhile, US Ambassador Michael Malinowski has taken a very tough line on the Maoists, comparing them to the Khmer Rouge and the Nazis. Though the Maoists clearly do represent a serious threat, such incendiary language has done little to advance the peace process. Washington has also publicly and forcefully approved $70 million World Bank loan to Nepal, over-riding concerns by some Bank members about Nepal’s governance.

While US condemnation of Maoist atrocities has been rightfully quick and robust, too often the US has treated serious human rights abuses by the government as little more than an inconvenience. The overall US approach to Nepal is certainly ripe for review and the immediate priority should be turning around the decision on village defense committees.

It may indeed take some military pressure on the Maoists to secure a lasting peace agreement. The arc of the war thus far has only demonstrated that unchecked human rights abuses by the government directly contribute to Maoist recruiting efforts. Nepal’s return to violence is all the more unfortunate because it is not difficult to imagine a series of agreements around which the king, the Royal Nepali Army, political parties and Maoists could coalesce. It remains clear that the sooner a genuine multiparty government is established and democracy restored, the higher the chance for a durable solution to the conflict. Washington is well positioned to use its influence to help the Nepal government move in the right direction.
O ne of the abiding mysteries of expatriate Western life is why an organisation could otherwise spend to help poor people. Remember them?

Sometimes I think the United Nations and all other large international bodies have a secret deal with Toyota, Nissan and other producers of these monsters. That at least would make the whole thing comprehensible. The profit motive. We’ve all seen them. Many of us drive them. And I’m sure that we tell ourselves that they’re necessary for the Nepali terrain, the hills, the monsoon. That at least would make the whole thing comprehensible. The profit motive. We’ve all seen them. Many of us drive them. And I’m sure that we tell ourselves that they’re necessary for the Nepali terrain, the hills, the monsoon.

And you never know when the office might want you to go on a field visit. You have to think of the kids safety when you are on Nepali highways. You bought the vehicle from your predecessor for a fraction of its cost back then. And you never know when the office might want you to go on a field visit. You have to think of the kids safety when you are on Nepali highways. You bought the vehicle from your predecessor for a fraction of its cost back then.

Okay, I give you all that. You enjoy your life abroad with all its perks and exotic extras. But you have a conscience. All this is leading somewhere. To a suggestion, a humble request that you reconsider a few things. I know, I know. You enjoy your life abroad with all its perks and exotic extras. But you have a conscience. All this is leading somewhere. To a suggestion, a humble request that you reconsider a few things. I know, I know.

The majority of operators want the government to make it mandatory for every cable provider to carry all Nepali channels. “If the government itself will earn a big royalty, a big chunk of which is now going to pay foreign channels,” says Neer Shah who now owns Shangri-la Cable. “We would like them to sort our product as well and then decide which one is better,” an official with the first-to-air station being broadcast from New Delhi told us.

The pet experience of Shangri-la channel is a lesson for new TV stations. When that private station began airing day TV through state-owned Nepal Television, it failed because cable operators refused to carry it. “The reason is that the channel isn’t wired cable distribution,” says Neer Shah who now owns Shangri-la Cable. “The Ministry of Information and Communication has received petitions from operators that the government should ban cable operators from also owning cable distribution, as in India. We are in the process of discussing if the license laws can be revised,” one official told us. But another official in the same ministry told us: “It’s a free market, if any other television station wishes to begin a cable business what is the problem?”

The competition among cable channels is cut-throat, but the Nepali market is not among the six television markets in the world that have the widest range of second-tier programming. The majority of operators want the government to make it mandatory for every cable provider to carry all Nepali channels. “If the government itself will earn a big royalty, a big chunk of which is now going to pay foreign channels,” says Neer Shah who now owns Shangri-la Cable. “We would like them to sort our product as well and then decide which one is better,” an official with the first-to-air station being broadcast from New Delhi told us.

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to that some components of the survey may have misrepresented raw data gathered during a certain period (the last two months of 2002 and in January this year) that gave distorted results. “Media surveys are like times when there are so many players on the field because everyone claims to be number one and advertising agencies need to properly direct their clients to the right media outlet,” explains Joydeeb Chakravarty, director at Thomson Nepal.

But accuracy demands bigger sample size and the bigger the survey, the more expensive it is. Sometimes, sponsors of particular surveys influence what goes in or stays out of a poll, especially if it includes a product’s range manufactured by a sponsor. Polls, especially if it includes a product’s range manufactured by a sponsor.

Chakravarty says, “We have been tagged along other surveys,” says Chakravarty. “Even if they are being recruited in these ongoing or upcoming competitive surveys, they have been held incommunicado in army barracks. Officers told us. The officer said females would not be sent to the frontlines right now because of the lack of appropriate infrastructure. “Once they are ready, we will deploy them even in the field.”

Recruiting women for non-technical posts. It will recruit musicians. “Even if they are being recruited in these ongoing or upcoming competitive surveys.”

Several companies have their own research units. The Press Council does bring out the results of the ORG Marg monthly survey. The price is less for Rs 150,000 to subscribe to the entire survey result. The price is Rs 9,000 for their annual subscription.

The army is not happy with the NHRC’s monitoring units in cooperation with the United Nations.

False elections, we have heard of in the past. But despite constant alerts, the government received support from international rights groups to help monitor the elections. Each new seasonal collection is contemporary elan. Each new seasonal collection is contemporary elan. All the new autumn collections are made with wool, cotton, and cashmere and cashmere blend products that includes accessories, home, knitwear and outerwear takes mill fare at the Weaves & Blends showroom in Bhaktapur.

Since the breakdown of peace talks in August, there has been a rise in extrajudicial killings, torture and arbitrary detentions. “A large number of people have been held incommunicado in army barracks. Officers at army barracks have been refusing to accept habeas corpus notices issued by the Nepal Supreme Court on behalf of detainees,” said a press statement by International Commission of Jurists.

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Back to Nature

Excellence is our name

NEW PRODUCTS

OUR CHEVY: The all-American carmaker, Chevrolet is coming to the Himalaya with the Optra, the first in the lineup introduced by Vijaya Motors. The Optra from GM India aims to be the smart choice in a mainstream market.

PASHMINA SEASON: None of the run-of-the-mill items at the Weaves & Blends showroom in Bhaktapur. The manufacturers and exporters of high-quality cashmere and cashmere blend products that includes accessories, home, knitwear and outerwear takes traditional handwork craftsmanship and gives it a contemporary feel. Each new seasonal collection is exhibited at the best trade shows in Paris, Italy and the US.

MIG ATTACK: The washing soap market has a new contender. MIG is Rs 9 for a 200g cake and manufacturers Megha Soap and Chemical Industry say it removes dirt and stains at super sonic speed. Plus, the lemon scent leaves clothes smelling fresh and your hands feeling soft.

Women in arms

In May this year, Kabdai and Photo Concern pledged to set aside Rs 2 for Nepal Cancer Relief Society from every roll of film developed and printed at each of the 29 Kodak outlets around the kingdom. Last week they handed over Rs 500,000 to top off an earlier installment of Rs 200,000. Nepal Cancer Relief Society helps cancer patients who cannot afford expensive medical care.

Monitors at work

Nepal Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has received support from international right groups to initiate independent human rights monitoring of the conflict. But despite constant alerts, the government has ignored its call to establish five regional monitoring units in cooperation with the United Nations.

Instead, the government has proposed a parallel human rights cell in the prime minister’s office. It is known that the army is not happy with the NHRC’s findings on the Daramba and Mithibana incidents.

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Sharing life

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Nearly all the 342 schools in the districts has been shut due to Maoist threats to close schools in Bheri and Karnali Zones. Some 45,000 students in Achham alone are staying home, teachers have fled because the Maoists just raised the revolutionary tax to 15 percent of their meagre salaries. The village teachers while away their time in Mangalsen. “All the teachers do is sign the attendance register and sit in the sun,” says Basudeb Timisilna, district education officer. 

CDO Surya B Shrestha has come up with a solution to re-open schools, but there are no takers. “We are thinking of sending mobile army patrols so schools can open,” he says. But locals fear that this will only provoke the Maoists, and there could be a repeat of the Mudhbara firefight on 17 October in which classrooms became a battleground.

The only schools that are open are in the district headquarters where there is a security presence. These are bursting at the seams because they have enrolled new students who have fled their villages. Public Campus, Sodsa Devi in Mangalsen, Mahendra in Bayalpata, Tripura in Shri Kot are overflowing with students. “I have no choice but to admit as many students as possible,” says Prem Kunwar, principal of Tripura Sundari High School. “Where else would they go?”

From l-r: By early morning, Paru Bhandari is on the trail with her goat train, heading back to her village in Bajura. Chaukhutte on the Doti-Achham border where the Maoists have set up a food blockade. This primary school in Duri in Achham is among 342 school in Achham that have been closed down.

The Maoists have set up a food blockade and the army’s restriction on food transport has lead to famine-like conditions. Blockades here in Achham have impacted food security north in Bajura and Magu as well.

There is no food in public market. People have no choice but to walk for weeks to reach Chaukhutte and Achham. With almost all the men gone, women make the journey taking herds of mountain goats and sheep to carry home supplies. We run into Paru Bhandari along the trail who has left her children in Bajura and has come down to see if she can find some food. “There is a famine in our villages right now,” she tells us. It has been three years since Nepa Food Corporation stopped supplying grain in the area to cover the deficit.

Other Bahadur Shahi has come from Musu and he says shops along the trail don’t even have matchboxes. He has walked 11 days to arrive in Chaukhutte with 13 other villagers to buy food and basic needs. It will take him another two weeks to walk back. He says “Sometimes, by the time we reach home, we have nothing left from what we bought. Things have never been this bad.”

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Other Bahadur Shahi has come from Musu and he says shops along the trail don’t even have matchboxes. He has walked 11 days to arrive in Chaukhutte with 13 other villagers to buy food and basic needs. It will take him another two weeks to walk back. He says “Sometimes, by the time we reach home, we have nothing left from what we bought. Things have never been this bad.”

There is a famine in our villages right now.

From l-r: By early morning, Paru Bhandari is on the trail with her goat train, heading back to her village in Bajura. Chaukhutte on the Doti-Achham border where the Maoists have set up a food blockade. This primary school in Duri in Achham is among 342 school in Achham that have been closed down.

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There is a famine in our villages right now.
“Overall, the situation is not so gloomy.”

Qatar Airways began flying to Nepal in 1995. Since then, it has projected itself as one of the most convenient connections to the Middle East and Europe. The carrier has increased its share of the market and has just added more flights on its Doha and Kuala Lumpur links. Nepali Times spoke to Qatar’s area manager, Gyan Amerasinghe, about future plans.

Why did Qatar Airways recently increase flights to Kathmandu despite the tourism slump?

Gyan Amerasinghe: Yes, we have gone up to 15 flights a week—11 to Doha and four to Kuala Lumpur. I find it difficult to believe that Nepal has lost a lot of tourists. All our flights are coming in full and so are others like Gulf Air. Even Thai has upgraded Kathmandu flights to Boeing 777s so I really don’t think the overall picture is so gloomy.

Admittedly, this season is looking better, but compared to three years ago, it has declined.

We base our assessments on customers coming in from Europe like UK, Germany, Italy and France. We’ve seen a huge demand from that sector, which prompted us to increase flights into Kathmandu. It all comes down to inbound traffic.

So can we infer that Qatar is holding its own in the international market?

We are doing very well, actually Qatar is one of the fastest growing airlines in the world and certainly the fastest growing in the Middle-east.

Does Qatar have a target clientele?

The majority of our business comes from the labour market. For instance, we started with two flights in April to Kuala Lumpur; now we have gone up to four flights. That demand is actually from the Nepali labours working in Malaysia. Similarly for west-bound traffic. But of course there’s a mix of transnational labour, business and students. The majority of Kathmandu’s clientele comes from the labour market. Qatar hopes the situation of the country changes and there will be more business travel.

Both Qatar Airways and Royal Nepal started the Kuala Lumpur flights together and now you compete. How did you manage to pull this off, considering governments usually gives national flag carriers preference?

Traffic rights are discussed between the two governments and we received traffic rights allowing us to operate to three points out of Kathmandu. We chose Kuala Lumpur, Brunei and we also have another option. In return, Royal Nepal can operate out of Doha to any destination in the world. Normally, flights that come in have time schedules changed and new ones introduced. We decided on with the summer schedule and so did Royal Nepal. It was a coincidence.

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Why are roads bad in Sanepa and good in Dharan?

V"riting, Dharan in eastern Nepal last week, what was most noticeable were clean, wide and black-topped roads that led to residential areas dotted with kolshy-bulshy-built houses of ex-British Army soldiers and their families. Locals said most of the roads had been constructed within the last three years—with a part of the money contributed by enlightened residents who have insisted on keeping the level of maintenance high. Indeed, spending the whole day driving around the greater Dharan area to see places of historical interest was a sheer pleasure, worthy enough to be captured for a car commercial.

But the good times seldom last. I had to return to Kathmandu to attend meetings at my head office in Sanepa, where the road, at least in the last three years, has deteriorated to the point that only all-terrain vehicles can ply on them. Parts of it, in fact, have been completely washed away, with many a maintenance crew in sight since last monsoon.

This discomfort is all the more sold for this reason on both sides of the road stood either a row of multi-million-rupee private houses with cemented drive ways or iron gates or the Nepali offices of various foreign aid agencies. With many wealthy Nepali and enlightened foreign residents around, you might think that they would have demanded better road conditions. Surprisingly, that does not appear to be the case. Though I use the Sanepa road as an example, its conditions mirror those that exist in many areas of Kathmandu. So, what is Dharan’s secret? What does it have that Sanepa doesn’t?

For answers, it helps to look at three public institutions and see how they do business with one another for the public good. One is the Sewerage Corporation, which also issues tap water. Municipalities make up the second group, while the Road Department is the third party. Their dysfunctional relationships—made all the worse by an apathetic civil society that is weak in its demand for better public services— was the cause for bad roads.

Historically, Kathmandu’s drainage system along the residential areas was designed to collect storm water. In time, larger pipes were haphazardly added to this system to collect sewage as well. But as the number of houses increased with permits issued by municipalities to generate easy revenue, that system came under tremendous strain.

And one result has been that during rainy season, water collected in drainage pipes floods streets and, over time, washes away parts of it. As of today, neither the Sewerage Corporation nor the municipalities have bothered to set up a maintenance division. Frustrated by this, the Road Department was left incapable to spend money on routine maintenance.

Dharan seems to have found a way out of this sort of spiralling mess. Led by citizens who demand better public services, Dharan has learnt not only the fine art of how to mobilise local resources to partially pay for an effective delivery of public services. It has also learnt how to achieve better co-ordination among those who design the drainage, make the road and black- top the streets so that citizens can take pride in their streets. Can Kathmandu learn from Dharan?
VIPLOB PRATIK

When Nepali films started being made in the 1960s, the state tried to use the medium of movies to support Nepali nationhood, unity and to bolster government programs. The jobs of the Panchayat government’s Ministry of Information was to popularise and strengthen the party’s policy and making Nepali films was conceived as one of the most effective ways to do it. So at the request of King Mahendra, Bollywood filmmaker Hira Singh Khatri came to Nepal and started work with the Department of Publicity Film Division and, for the first time, Nepalis saw a film made in their own country, Aama. “It was a great thrill to see a film with a Nepali story, Nepali actors and in our own language for the first time,” recalls actor Gautam Ratna Tuladhar.

Nepalis craved for more films, but production was slow. It took the ministry and director Khatri another three years to produce a second film. Then came Pascharan, based on a drama by Janaudh Sama to popularise the Back to Village Campaign. Finally, it was with the production of Maiti Ghar that the development of Kollywood began. But it has been a long, hard struggle. It took almost another 15 years to attract investment from the private sector to make Junji, produced by Sujata Films and directed by Jhami Shumsher Rana.

The government’s Royal Nepal Film Corporation made movies at an average of one every three years. Yet they played to capacity crowds. It was only in the mid-80s that Nepali filmmakers like Tulsi Ghimire, Shambhu Pradhan and Uddhab Paudyal finally started the Kollywood trend. Ashok Sharma also moved from acting to producing and directing. One of the leading directors of today, Yadab Khadgi, also entered the scene along with stalwarts like Prakash Thapa, BV Thapa, Laxmi Maiti Ghar and Prem Baner. By 1999 Kollywood was putting out more than 20 films annually and Nepali filmmakers were making history. Those who went into debt no longer worried because films now guaranteed a return on their investment. Cinema became not only a breadwinner but also a platform for recognition and fame. There was a time when actors worked for a month and were jobless the rest of the year. They were now so busy that they had difficulties giving dates for new projects. Even before one film was finished, they signed another.

Kollywood made great strides technically, too. Filmmakers no longer had to go to India for recording, editing, processing and final production. Production gradually started taking the shape of an industry and also provided opportunities and created more jobs. Better studios meant songs were recorded in Nepal. Companies like Prime and Cinematix that saw potential in processing, dubbing and editing made huge investments that paid off.

Filmmakers like Tulsi Ghimire, Shambhu Pradhan and Kishor Rana, who concentrated on Bollywood, turned their eyes homewards and made Kathmandu their work base. The Royal Nepal Film Corporation was privatised into the Nepal Film Development Corporation and by 2000, 32 films were being produced every year. In 2001, that figure was 52.

Despite eight years of violence, killings and terror, film production has not ebbed. In fact, the number of films is growing. It seems escapism has its own market momentum. There are, however, challenges in expanding to the international audience. White films like Prem Punid and Curzov earned a reputation outside Nepal, very few films meet international standards. “I couldn’t afford it anymore. Our government’s fiscal policies have to change,” says Neer Shah, who believes that the government’s anti-art concept is a huge obstacle in the way of high budget quality films. And there, owners of movie theatres that are not certified deluxe are not allowed to decide ticket prices.

“Can’t a girl go ahead with her life after sex, VIRGO, virgins live ‘on’ lives! How can you get returns by selling tickets for just Rs 28?” asks Shah. When his film was shown at the old Jai Nepal cinema, he was just allowed to increase the price of the ticket. “There are people willing to pay more for a quality product,” adds Shah. His revenues from ticket sales came to around Rs 3 million, not even breaking even with the Rs 3.2 million invested in the film.

The financial side of the industry might frustrate Shah, but he is hopeful about a brighter future for Kollywood. “Our film direction and producers have become more quality conscious and that is a positive symptom,” he says. Producers can no longer afford to act hastily and put out just any film. They should evolve from the stereotypical subjects of ill-fated love, macho heroes duelling evil villains, exotic ‘item’ dances and strategy routines. There is room for growth and the audience is tired of the same old themes.

“People and social perspectives change according to time and should be reflected in the movies. If in one scene, there is a boy who dumps his girl after sex, the next scene will have her trying to commit suicide by throwing herself in the river or hanging herself. Should we be teaching today’s generation that the loss of virginity is the loss of dignity?” asks Shah. “We should be telling them that the only answer is to end one’s life.” Can’t a girl go ahead with her life after that?” he asks. It is necessary to abandon the four-decade-old conservative mentality of script writers, directors and producers if...
**Actor in a leading role**
2. Rajesh Hamal – Muktidaata
3. Shree Krishna Shrestha – Eh Mero Hajur
4. Shiva Shrestha – Mamaghar
5. Bhuwan KC – Babusaheb

**Actor in a supporting role**
1. Dilip Rayamajhi – Mamaghar
2. Sushil Chetri – Dhan Sampati
3. Harihar Sharma – Babusaheb
4. Santosh Pant – Mitini
5. Madan Krishna Shrestha – Sukha Dukha

**Actress in a leading role**
1. Gauri Malla – Sanyas
2. Bipana Thapa – Mitini
3. Niruta Singh – Lahana
4. Karishma Manandhar – Babusaheb
5. Jal Shah – Buhari

**Actress in a supporting role**
1. Rekha Thapa – Mitini
2. Gauri Malla – Mamaghar
3. Sushila Rayamajhi – Eh Mero Hajur
4. Melina Manandhar – Ke bho Lau na ni
5. Mithila Sharma – Sukha Dukha

**Music director of the year**
1. Maya Namara – Suresh Adhikari
2. Sukha Dukha – Shambhujit Baskota
3. Lahana – Sachin Singh
4. Biswaas – Shambhujit Baskota
5. Grahan – Shakti Ballav

**Playback singer of the year**
1. Dhadkinchau – Udit Narayan Jha (Lahana)
2. Dhadkinchau – Sanjeevani (Lahana)
3. Timi lai bhani – Ram Krishna Dhakal (Je Bho Ramrai Bho)
4. Chitko Saree – Sharmila Bardewa (Aankha Lobi Man Papi)
5. Samjhanale – Sunidhi Chauhan (Ziddi)

**Actor/actress in a comic role**
1. Deepak Raj Giri – Biswaas
2. Narayan Tripathi – Maya Namara
3. Jeetu Nepal – Pooja
5. Nitesh Raj Pant – Bhannai Sakina

**Actor/actress in a negative role**
1. Basundhara Bhusal – Afnopan
2. Sunil Thapa – Kranti
3. Mukunda Shrestha – Santaan ko Maya
4. Jimmi Gurung – Muktidaata
5. Sushil Pokhrel – Sukha Dukha

**Director of the year**
1. Shiva Regmi – Sukha Dukha
2. Deepak Shrestha – Afnopan
3. Kishore Rana – Santaan ko Maya
4. Narayan Puri – Mamaghar
5. Ramesh Budhathoki – Babusaheb

**Picture of the year**
1. Sukha Dukha
2. Afnopan
3. Babusaheb
4. Buhari
5. Mamaghar

**Screenplay of the year**
1. Suraj Subba – Buhari
2. Om Pratik – Babusaheb
4. Akhilesh Shrestha – Biswaas
5. Shiva Regmi – Eh Mero Hajur

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Nepali films are in bloom. It’s not as if Kollywood has never displayed originality and innovation; just look at the work of directors Chiring Ritar, Navin Subba and Ravi Batral. It is possible for Nepali cinema to take on a new lease with a new breed of bright and talented actors, technicians and producers. Today’s filmmakers are already more critical of their products than in the past. Recognizing mistakes and identifying room for improvement are the first steps to creating a better film. Efforts at breaking the mould, putting out a film worthy of the Nepali audience, should be recognised and applauded.

The first ever Lux Film Awards 2060 is just the kind of affirmation and support that Kollywood needs. It accords a kind of respect and sense of dignity that originates from the audience to all the artists who make Kollywood what it is. “This kind of event is a real inspiration to us all,” says actress Jal Shah. On Saturday, 29 November, when the crime-de-la-crimé of Kollywood walk the red carpet to the awards, our stars will have the chance to shine just a little bit brighter in the future.

Viplob Pratik is a poet and film critic.
After extensive deal making, Congress is set to provide $2.4 billion for global anti-AIDS initiatives in 2004, $400 million more than was requested by President George W. Bush. The money, part of a $1.71 billion foreign aid package that is being tacked onto a nearly $400 billion fiscal year (FY) 2004 spending bill, also includes $955 million for the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria—$350 million more than Bush asked for.

Anti-AIDS activists say they are encouraged by the increases, although they also stressed the totals still fell far short of what is needed to combat the epidemic, which, according to estimates from UNAIDS released Monday, will have taken three million lives in 2003, nearly 80 percent of them in sub-Saharan Africa. “This is a clear indication that the Republicans in Congress have broken with the president’s policy,” said Paul Zeitz, executive director of the Global AIDS Alliance.

The foreign-aid package also includes one billion dollars to set up the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), a controversial initiative announced by Bush some 18 months ago that would increase aid to poor countries that pursue economic and governance policies favored by the administration. The MCA is controversial primarily because most of the world’s poorest countries cannot satisfy the basic criteria for eligibility and because it sets up a new bureaucracy apart from the Agency for International Development (USAID), which has built-up expertise in poverty-reduction programs.

The total appropriations bill, which covers everything from highway projects to food labeling, comes to $373 billion and must still be approved by both houses of Congress, either when they return from Thanksgiving recess on 8 December or, if that proves impossible, after the Christmas vacation in January. While the overall bill’s fate still remains uncertain due to complaints from Democrats and some Republicans about specific provisions, virtually all of the concerns involve domestic programs; the deal struck over the foreign aid package is likely to survive whenever the bill is finally passed.

The $17.1 billion for aid represents a six percent increase over spending for FY 2003, which actually ended 30 September. But the total comes to less than the $30 billion in reconstruction and other aid to Iraq and Afghanistan that was approved by Congress in an emergency appropriation earlier this month and to less than four percent of the $460 billion Congress has approved for next year’s Pentagon budget.

Of the $17.1 billion, moreover, $3 billion are earmarked for Israel, whose per capita income far exceeds the vast majority of developing countries. Another $3 billion will go to three other countries: Egypt, Jordan and Colombia. Nearly one billion dollars is to be spent on international anti-drug operations. About $731 million of that total will be devoted to fighting drug trafficking in the Andes.

For development assistance, the package includes $1.8 billion for child survival and health initiatives ($161.5 million of which are wrapped into the global AIDS section), $195 million for other infectious diseases, $330 million for maternal and child health and $375 million for bilateral family planning programs. A total of $1.4 billion is allocated to other kinds of bilateral development aid, including education initiatives, but some of that money will also go to the MCA.

In addition, $913 million will go to the soft loan facility of the World Bank, the International Development Association and $95 million to the restructurings of bilateral debt held by poor recipients. Slightly more than $1 billion will be allocated for international disaster, migration and refugee assistance, while $321 million are assigned to international organizations, with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) getting the largest share—$200 million. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) is supposed to receive $34 million, the same amount that Congress appropriated for it in FY 2003 but was withheld by the Bush administration on the grounds that UNFPA’s support for China’s population program violated a 20-year-old law that bans aid to any organisation that supports or participates in coercive abortions or sterilizations. The administration’s position on UNFPA represented a novel and controversial interpretation of the so-called Kemp-Kasten amendment. Previous administrations, including Republican ones, merely subtracted the aid spent by UNFPA in China from its total annual contribution.
The world’s largest functioning anarchy

Recently, India’s Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said that despite the intertwined appearance of health, Indian democracy appears to have become hollow, with elections reduced to a farce and the “party system modelled due to unethical practices.” According to Vajpayee, “The outer shell of democracy is, no doubt, intact, but appears to be moth-eaten from inside.” Indeed, in the preface to a recent collection of his speeches, Vajpayee wondered whether democracy had truly taken root in India. This is a strange turn, for parliamentary democracy has long been a source of pride for most Indians. They have always been able to boast of the vitality of their parliamentary system. Nowadays, such boasts are heard far less frequently. Not only are India’s economic failures more obvious, so, too, are the failures of its political system. Unprincipled politics, cults of violence, communal rage and macabre killings of religious minorities have all combined to shake people’s faith in the political system’s viability. Small wonder, then, that people are life, but increasingly find expression in sectarian and religious conflict. Of course, politicians incite many of these conflicts, using caste, sect and religion—not political ideas—to build voter loyalty. But apathy about democracy is what makes so many ordinary Indians prey to poisonous appeals.

This vulnerability is the clearest sign that India’s experiment with the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy has failed to justify the hopes that prevailed fifty years ago when the constitution was proclaimed. Back then, parliament was seen as a means to bridge the divides of caste, religion and region. Parliament’s increasing irrelevance in sorting out these problems—indeed, its role in exacerbating them—is fueling a growing preference among Indians for a presidential system of government that removes executive functions from the Oversight of an institution that has been added and rendered impotent by undisciplined factions.

Sad, Indian society has rarely embraced the consensus value that India’s Constitution proclaims: a participatory, decentralized democracy, an egalitarian society with minimal social and economic disparities, a secularized polity, the supremacy of the rule of law, a federal structure ensuring partial autonomy to provinces, cultural and religious pluralism, harmony between rural and urban areas and an efficient, honest state administration at both the national and local level.

Instead, race and caste remain as potent as ever. Wealth is grossly distributed as ever. Corruption rules many state governments and national ministries. Urban and rural areas slight each other. But parliaments demand a minimal national consensus if they are to function, for they are creators of compromise in decision-making. Executive governments, on the other hand, are creators of decisions: a popularly elected president is ultimately responsible to his voters, not to his party colleagues.

The very doctrine by national sufragists of an executive provides the type of minimal consensus that India’s faction-riven parliaments have, sadly, never been able to calibrate. A president will undoubtedly need to compromise with his legislature, but the general consent that is gained by popular election implies at least some broader agreement behind the platform that he or she campaigned on.

Of course, no magic bullet will do away with the forces that divide India. But at least some of the maladies of the current parliamentary system, such as apathy, factionalism, inherent political instability and crippling coalition politics can be minimized, if not eliminated, by adopting an executive-dominant model of presidential democracy. In adopting such a system, Indians would have nothing to lose but the corruption and chaos of today’s discredited parliament.

Satyabrata Rai Chowdhuri is a Research Coordinator at the Stockholm International Peace Institute.
Students in crossfire

As the clashes between security forces and Maoist rebels were not enough, the indefinite education called by a Maoist student wing in 12 mid-western districts of Nepal has affected 400,000 students. Pre-SLC exams are also affected. The strike is called by All Nepal National Free Students Union (Revolutionary) who have demanded the release of their leaders who, they claim, were abducted by the security forces.

Helpless in this tug of war between the rebels and the government, many students have already left for the tarai and other urban areas. Guardians and parents who have not been able to send their children to safer areas are concerned about their educational future. Caught between gun-totting rebels and the helplessness of the security forces, students and their parents have every reason to feel hopeless about the future. What worsens their fear is the kind of bombing that took place in the district education office in Banke last Sunday. Other Maoist-declared protest programs like hoisting black flags in educational institutions, conducting ‘people’s action’, closing schools, organising shutdown strikes in transport and industrial sectors are yet to come.

People in the mid-western region these days are sure only about their insecurity: “Only god knows what will happen next,” they say. As a result of a flare-up in the violence, schools in Surkhet district have already closed. The shutdown strike in educational institutions may serve the interests of the organisers what will happen next,” they say. As a result of a flare-up in the violence, schools in Surkhet district have already closed. The shutdown strike in educational institutions may serve the interests of the organisers.

There is no government in any of the five districts of Karnali zone. Besides the army and security forces, government agencies are nowhere to be seen in Hamila, Jumla, Kalikot, Mugu or Dolpa. “The lack of government in any of the municipalities of the district has made it easy for the Maoists to increase their activities and terrorise the locals,” says UML’s Dil Bahadur Mahar, who just returned from a tour of Karnali. All the police chiefs, COOs and security personnel leave their offices and take refuge at the army barracks before dusk. “The COOs and police chiefs stay at the barracks all night and return to their office only in the morning,” says Mahar.

Maoists have destroyed all the suspension bridges at Kalikot, Hamila and Mugu. The government, meanwhile, has stripped supplies of medicines, food and other necessities from local districts to meet the Maoists’ demands. “Famine is gradually spreading outwards from the affected zones,” says UML member Chandu Bahadur Shahi from Maga. The rebels have even closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot and have also closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot and have also closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot and have also closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot and have also closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot and have also closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot and have also closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot and have also closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot and have also closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot and have also closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot and have also closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot and have also closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot and have also closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot and have also closed roads maintenance in Jumla-Sudhet, Hilsa-Simikot. After the Maoists met local Maoists and reminded them of the Maoists’ leaders’ commitment not to attack infrastructures, they got this reply: “We are not going to attack any origins from anywhere, we will do whatever we like in our area.”

Normally, a big country would like to have a stable environment in its smaller neighbour because peace in the neighbourhood allows it to focus more on economic and development activities. India appears to be doing just the opposite in Nepal. It has pitted Nepali political parties against each other and made it easy for the Maoists to increase their activities and terrorise the locals. “Is Surya Bahadur Thapa a partyless prime minister?” asks his son Rajendra. The only mistake Sapkota made was receiving a phone call from a local Maoist leader. His father has been targeted despite most of his relatives being in the army or police. His daughter’s father-to-law is a major in the army, but even that didn’t help Sapkota.
Back on the Burma front

W e despatched three or four miles down the Indian border when we saw the road leading to Manipur. We could see a caravan of human beings and mules. A group of British soldiers were on the march with their belongings laden on the animals. When we finally arrived in Manipur we had to beg for food as the government had made no arrangements for rations. We somehow managed to procure food from one place or the other in the village. None of the soldiers would eat meat and so we ate it raw. This led to another problem: diarrhoea. I, for one, caught it.

A gate had been put up at the 105-mile post where high-ranking officers such as colonels and majors conducted verifications. As soldiers poured in, they checked identification cards. We made sure no one with fake papers came inside. They let in those who had genuine ID cards and threw out those who did not have them, even though they were army personnel.

All sorts of people came there: Gorkhas, Indians and scores of others. In Burma, there were Bahun, Chhetri, Rai and Limbu villages and so women and children were also in the camp, although they were put aside. On arrival, everyone was given two meagre handfuls of ration. There was no shelter even for the troops. Those who died there were buried in shallow holes and covered with soil leaves. The smell was unbearable and we feared the possibility of cholera epidemics.

As the troops arrived, people fled, leaving behind cows, buffaloes and goats. It is likely that our forefathers had done some looting. Quite a few of the troops, on the pretext of killing mugs, killed buffaloes for meat.

The buffalo meat caused dysentery. We went down to Dimpur in groups and then after that to Nagpur. There we finally felt a regal atmosphere. We were provided with government scale rations. They provided us with uniform jackets, clothes, books and so on. There was a small stream and since we were issued soap we decided to bathe before we wore our new uniforms. Afterwards, there was a large office in the water because after our departure from Burma we had no chance to bathe or wash our clothes. It had taken a month and-a-half to get there.

There were approximately 1,000 troops at Nagpur at the time of our arrival. The number was only 375 as we approached the gate but once we got in, the personnel from other units were also taken in and our numbers swelled. All the hardships we had undergone became a matter of the past. Everything including mugs, towels and plates were all new.

We were given a full mug of tea each. A song blared from the loudspeakers and each of us was given a packet of biscuits that was enough to satisfy.

We spent about 15 days there. Since no tents were provided for us, we had to sleep under the sal tree. All of a sudden we were shifted from Nagpur to Hotshyarpur in Punjab where we were posted for three years.

Survivors from the Burma war came in waves of sometimes 15, sometimes 100. From 12 battalions we were barely enough to raise two. I have no idea how many people perished in the Burma front.

From the Gorkhas alone, my estimate comes to the equivalent of 10 battalions.

After another three-year training we were once again sent to Burma. En route we came to know that the Japanese had taken prisoner 4,000 of our troops.

Meanwhile, the Americans had broken through and some of our outposts were among those who escaped. When they came they were out beyond recognition even though some of them were in the same company as us in the past. Food, including meat, was taken from Durnaund airport in Cambridge and at Cornell University.

After another three years we were once again sent to Burma. We left the gate but once we got in, the personnel from other units were also taken in and our numbers swelled. All the hardships we had undergone became a matter of the past.
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The universally accepted symbiotic relationship between parties and parliament in the old (British) model has given way to a multiparty democracy. The universally accepted symbiotic relationship between parties and parliament in the old (British) model has thus become the new volume. They expound that the contextualisation of multiparty democracy has thus become the new agenda of today’s social scientists and politicians.

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The universally accepted symbiotic relationship between parties and parliament in the old (British) model has not addressed the overarching problems of a country like Nepal, advances the contributors to the volume. They espoused that the contextualisation of multiparty democracy has thus become the new agenda of today’s social scientists and politicians.

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The offal truth
Your favourite fortnightly food fadist takes a walk on the Newari wild side.

by BHATMARA BHAI

ow traveller Ludmilla Tudling has two centres in her life: Berlin and Kathmandu. She grooms for an English word to describe this state, gives up and says: “These are my Lebensmittelpunkte.” How Kathmandu came to be one of the two middle points of Ludmilla’s life was a simple encounter on a lonely road near Bhanwara in 1972. She had just crossed over from India and her bus had a flat tyre. “We had to wait an hour besides the yellow mustard fields and below a deep blue white sky while they fixed the wheel and I talked to some women who were carrying water in brass pots on their heads,” Ludmilla recalls. “I can’t remember what they said, but it seemed to me so friendly, so peaceful and so unaggressive. I was smitten by this land.”

She was 27 then, and the young environmentalist and writer was travelling the world to learn about the planet and its peoples. After the chaos and the overcrowded cities of India, Nepal was a haven. Thamel had only two hotels and some small restaurants. The roads the airport in Kathmandu was still rice terraces, the air was clean and the mountains were clear. “For all of us who were crossed from India, Nepal was such a big difference,” she observes. “Unfortunately, with the insurgency, pollution and corruption the difference is getting less and less.”

Ludmilla, a supporter of the German Green Party, started spending half the year in Kathmandu and half in Germany. She went on to write more than 12 books about Nepal, including Bhasa Bihars, which looked at eco-tourism and the links between sustainable development and the environment in 1984—long before it was fashionable to do so.

Her biggest inspiration was the founder of the Indian Chipko Movement, Sundarlal Bahuguna, whom she met in 1982 during his Trans-Himalayan march. “Whatever I am now, my development and the environment in 1984—long before it was fashionable to do so.”

Ludmilla today advises travellers on real conditions in a world plagued with terrorism and violence through the Tourism Watch website (www.tourism-watch.de). She tries to give a more nuanced picture of Nepal than alarmist and discouraging information provided by foreign embassies. “People need to be informed about the places they are travelling to and have a realistic assessment of the dangers,” she says. “In Nepal, for example, it is important to make a distinction between maobadis and khaobadis, and like everywhere else you have to be careful. The news you get in Europe or on the Internet sound more frightening than it actually is.”

Ludmilla is just back from a study tour of Dokhla and she is happy to see, despite Maistas activity and ‘donation’ drives, there are quite a few trekkers on the Rolwaling trail. And it is up there in the mountains of Nepal that she suddenly realises how happy she is. “I envy myself everyday for the life I have.”

R eal Newars don’t eat quiche. They eat tongs. And stomach lining. And brains. And a lot of other animal body parts that I couldn’t place. This week, in an external quest for culinary truth, Bhatmara Bhai went for a walk on the Newari wild side.

For the tourist, Newari cuisine comes in elaborate and vastly over-priced packages, often with a heavy dose of “folkloric” dance. A range of cultural experiences is on offer: some dances include a heavy pinch of “real Newars don’t eat quiche.”

The Newari wild side.

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Under My Hat
by Kunda Dixit

Oh FAQ!

For the first time in recent history, the number of unique online visitors to the official His Majesty’s Non-Government of Nepal website (www.hmg.non-gov.np) has exceeded the actual number of hardcopy visitors to Nepal. It is a matter of pride and an indicator of the rapid strides we have taken in information technology that more foreign investors made virtual visits to the kingdom than physical ones in the last fiscal year.

However, since no website is complete without a click for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), our homepage also needs a one-stop window containing answers to everything potential investors want to know about Nepal but are afraid to ask because they think they are stupid questions. So as a service to venture capitalists we present a list of the most stupid frequently asked questions with our equally asinine answers:

1. Where is Nepal?
   Good question. We’re just trying to figure that out ourselves. In a philosophical sense you could say that we don’t know where we are at the present time, and which way we are headed. Anyone who finds Nepal, please return it to its rightful owners.

2. What is Nepal known for?
   For the birthplace of Lord Buddha.
   For the in-laws of Lord Ram.
   For lapsi, timur and gundruk.
   For the world’s highest mountain.
   For the world’s deepest gorge.
   For the world’s fastest clock.
   For the world’s tallest dwarf.
   For the world’s most trustworthy crooks.

3. What kind of world records do Nepalis hold?
   Climbing Mt Everest 12 times.
   Faster ascent of Mt Everest by a human being.
   The person who has become prime minister most number of times in world history.
   The highest per capita producer of instant noodles on the planet.

4. What is the most common form of greeting in Nepal?
   “Khanu bho!” Translation: Have you partaken of your kickback for today?

5. What are some basic customs I should know about Nepal before deciding to invest there?
   Do as Nepalis do: never offer anything with your left hand.
   If it’s under the table, taking with either hand is OK.
   Take your shoes off when you enter a house.
   If you notice that the occupants have stopped breathing, take your socks off as well.
   Always pay at least five times what locals pay for all forms of transport within Nepal.
   Nepalis are naturally friendly, so don’t make them unnaturally unfriendly by refusing to pay the compulsory Rs 15,000 revolutionary tax in Kathmandu.
   Despite his outward appearance, the Great Asiatic One-horned Rhinoceros is a shy and thin-skinned animal, always ask for his permission before taking a photograph.
   Public display of affection is considered offensive, so refrain from holding hands in public unless you are of the same sex.
   Nepalis have a great sense of humour, in case you hadn’t noticed.

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