The Maoists have embarked on a risky end game by threatening Kathmandu’s lifeline.

There has been recent Maoist activity in the midwest. There have been signs of increased traffic on one-fourth of normal levels.

KIRAN PANDAY

EDITOiral
Unilateral truce, now

KUNDAl DICIT

Exactly one year after the collapse of the last ceasefire, the Maoists are testing a blockade on Kathmandu to pressure the palace. This is a move fraught with danger for both sides: the Maoists must win or lose and the army must try to keep a vulnerable highway artery open.

Kathmandu has seen siege in the past: Priyab Narayan Shah strangled the Valley before conquering it in 1760s, and in 1988-89 Kathmandu suffered an Indian blockade. This is ideal terrain for a siege: the narrow Nag Dunga pass is the only road to the plains. As the first three days have shown, the Maoists don’t need to physically have guerril-la blocking the road to stop traffic.

Putting the pressure on Kathmandu is a way for the Maoists to assert their presence after their central command was nearly wiped out by the security forces over the past six months. Two months after coming to power, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has been stonewalling on peace despite pressure from his UML coalition partners. The blockade has put the government on the defensive, but may actually have strengthened its resolve not to give in.

Deuba’s stand has been that he will not agree to talks just for the sake of talks. To this end, he has set up a plethora of agencies: a high-level peace committee, a Peace Secretariat, a working committee for the peace secretariat, a multi-party democratic coordination committee. The working committee is to be formed by the high-level peace committee even though a peace coordination committee formed by the past government already exists at the prime minister’s office.

All this is sounding like a farce to many peace activists. UML members realise that Deuba is running circles around them, but can’t do much. In fact, UML has now switched to blistering attacks on the Maoists for being anti-peace.

The government has said it is in touch with international conflict experts. “We have been consulting with them,” says Information Minister Mohmmed Mohlin. “Once the Peace Secretariat is set up, we will produce a dossier based on their ideas.” The army is happy with this sort of vagueness. Senior brass told us they have no intention to go for a truce now: blockade or no blockade. But that may actually depend on how tight the Maoist blockade will be and how long it will last.

New Delhi is learnt to be monitoring the blockade and the forced closure of businesses having Indian investments with growing alarm. Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran met Nepal’s envoy in New Delhi Karnal Bhok Asik in New Delhi on Wednesday to express concern. The Indian press reports Deuba is to visit New Delhi on 9 September.

(Reporting by Nask Singh Khadka)
Remembering Doramba
A Human Rights Accord needs to be implemented immediately

The first anniversary of the massacre at Doramba on 17 August was marked somberly. A ceasefire was in effect when 19 suspected rebels, including five women, were killed in an ambush. When news got out, the Royal Nepal Army initially said the rebels had been killed during an ambush. A few days later, the Army said it was the result of an operation to clear the path for a truce and talks. But the two needn't have happened together; we are told that the people have had no prior warning of a truce, that the political will to end the conflict in this country has now gone from tripolar to bipolar: we are not in it. Both sides were using it to rearm, and the Maoists to take their

T

10.

waste of time

state and wrote in this paper ("Skom over Darmaba", #165): ‘...the captives were then led to a forest and, with their hands tied behind their backs', An Amnesty International report stated: 'Observers in Nepal cite the Doramba killings as being instrumental in the breakdown of the ceasefire and the resumption of violence ten days later. An independent army investigation into Doramba ultimately put the blame on the major who had commanded the operation in Doramba, and the 2004 AI report stated that procedures to court martial him had begun. However, there are no indications of any legal action. The initial story that the 19 were killed in "an encounter", the troops being in civvies, the victims having been subbed some three hours before being executed, and the questionable assertion that a massacre of such magnitude could have been decided by a junior officer on the field.

Doramba had presented a real opportunity to bring the RNA back under civilian control, not least if the role of its international supporters was key. It was, and is, on them that the UNDP depends to successfully pursue the counter-insurgency war.

One year later, the legacy of Doramba lives on. Nepal lies in the world's number in ‘disappeared’, the widespread impunity cited in the Amnesty 2002 report continues unabated, and the people of Nepal are in effect disarray by its independence and authority undermined by the power of the army.

There is an immediate protection crisis in Nepal which needs to be addressed. The Government's recently-announced National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) backed by UNDP needs careful scrutiny. The official UNDP description of NHRAP says it 'outlines a detailed plan of actions to be carried out in the next five years or so to improve the overall human rights situation in the country'. Yet, as William O'Neill, the independent human rights lawyer brought in to review the NHRAP made clear in his internal report now in the public: the domain, the NHRAP is unclear on the nature of the wrong strategy at the wrong time for Nepal's human rights crisis.

Disregard

You must be out of your mind. How dare you put a picture of a woman who was brutally killed and her child next to her. The last thing that is happening in Nepal is that our people are hurting from the violence that comes out of Nepal, but your reputation went down a notch at least in my eyes because of your insensitivity to readers and a disrespect to this little infant. A few years down the road when this poor child comes across your archives, I hope you will have a good conscience on what you did to print this picture of her mother in such a traumatic state. You have added a lot of integrity to Nepali journalism, but this time around, you should really be ashamed.

Sushil Bogati, Seattle, USA

Ever since the Nepal Times started, I have been a keen and interested reader of your paper for regard your paper because it had class. But the extremely graphic photograph on the front page (#209) was disturbing and I was disgusted. I am sure a lot of other people who read this paper felt the same about such a violent picture. Just what was the motive? When the little boy in the picture becomes an adult and, by chance, he crosses across this photograph–his dead mother lying next to him–do you think he would make him feel great? The dead too deserve due respect.

M. Jung, Lalitpur

Bagmati

After reading Naresh Newar’s ‘Gorgeous Chobar’ (#207) and Nabin Singh Khadka’s ‘Sailing what’s left’ (#208) it is clear that time is ripe for all well-wishers and the supporters of the Bagmati to have a minimum common approach to save this river. If things go on like this, there will be no rivers or forests in the Heritage Site left to protect which are the only funds.

We should also correct the perception of the draining of the Kathmandu Valley which your Chobar article has repeated. Let’s not mix up the legend of Manjushri’s cutting the Tirtha encroachment across the Pachali Bridge and the UN Park are destroying this heritage. River beds don’t belong to anyone, they belong to the river. Flood plains give a river a place to go when there is too much water. When we constrict the river, there is disaster as has happened many times in the past inside the valley in the past 14 years. Give the Bagmati back to the people; give power to power in rural areas, power running during day and providing light. It was a pleasant to find a technical book that is so self-critical and covers so many dimensions of the implementation of this and other development cases. The study cases and anecdotes by several of the authors provide a personal touch and are an important chronicle of Nepal’s development history. I was inspiring to read the stories of pioneers who were willing to put their personal credibility and often also career on the line against the daunting odds of officials’s indifference/incompetence. Ajaya Dixit’s account of breaking a leg on an expedition to the Chobar river ropeway site and the personal basket made a ropeways believer out of both him and his account and this work on his book should go a long way towards convincing more readers.

Isabella C Bassignano Khadka, Bansbari

Flag waving

Thank you for publishing Capt Kul Bahadur Limbu’s interesting analysis of what is going on with Royal Nepal Airlines and what can be done with it (“Proud to fly the flag”, #209). People like Capt Limbu and others are the airlines’ main assets. There may be some bad apples in the airline, but for the most part the company has committed staff. It gives a good chance to own a share in the airline it will be airyway again, and very quickly.

J.R Pandey, Kathmandu

Not monopolistic

Allen us, the Buddhist monastics living in Lumbini are not and we strongly disagree with the following paragraph in Nabin Singh Khadka’s ‘Sakya Bab’ (#205). ‘It is no doubt that Buddhist countries are competing with each other to build monasteries and temples in the masterplan area.’ International Buddhist monastics of different traditions have not come to compete with each other to build monasteries and temples in the masterplan area.”

Letters
None of their business
Soldiers camouflaged in pinstripe suits

A partial truth is more deceptive than an outright lie. Government spokesman and Communication Minister Mohammad Mohsin may have been half-right when he said the Royal Nepali Army isn’t opening a bank. But the recently amended operational procedures of the Army Welfare Fund make it unnecessary for the RNA to do anything as crude as going corporate. Taking command of existing enterprises is a lot easier and far more lucrative. By getting the cabinet to approve its welfare fund rules, the generals have become soldiers in pinstripe suits. Now, the army can buy controlling shares in existing enterprises, including banks, by using the welfare fund war chest. And then it can have them run by select favourites. It is militarisation of the economy by the backdoor.

There is nothing new to stop the army to invest in parastatals like the Nepal Oil Corporation, Royal Nepal Airlines, Nepal Electricity Authority, Nepal Telecom, Nepal Water Supply Corporation or, even, Rastriya Baniya Bank. And if it needs extra cash, it can collaborate with foreign investors. The reservations from some donor quarters are just politically correct mutterings for the record. Parang donors are in such awe of the discipline, dedication decision-making capacity of retired and serving generals that they are happy if the crown jewels of public enterprise fell into the hands of generals than crony capitalists of party politics. It seems there is nothing new to stop RNA, Inc. from dominating the national economy in the years to come. Yet, experiences in other countries have shown that armies in business lose their legitimacy faster than the ones in peace.

With the possible exception of the People’s Liberation Army in China’s controlled economy, nowhere have the armed forces succeeded in business. The military in Argentina, Columbia, and Indonesia have tried, but failed miserably. The Thai military runs a bank and owns media channels, but the image or use armed forces more than ann 1 improved due to these extra-curricular activities. It seems the real role model for the junta in Bhaadarki is the Pakistani military which controls the largest chunk of prime real estate in that country. It deals in everything from housing to military exports. The result for Pakistan society, however, has been disastrous. Its military is now a law unto itself. It has turned into a dysfunctional state that tests nuclear weapons, but has a Human Development Index even lower than ours. What a paradox it was that a Pakistani, Mahbub-ul Haq, who first thought up human development

but out of vendition for Nepal’s most-eminent son, Siddhartha Gotama, Buddha and his sacred birthplace. Facing tremendous difficulties, we are sacrificing our lives for the development of Lumbini, for peace and spiritual development of Nepal. There is no doubt that Mr Khadka’s assumption that Buddhist countries are competing with each other is absolutely wrong, and the assertion creates the wrong impression about Lumbini. We invite anyone wishing to accurately investigate the real situation to visit and see the truth. All over the world and across the ages, people have built religious edifices as an expression of deep religious faith. This is also applies to the monasteries in Lumbini. ‘Monolith’ is defined as a ‘large single, upright block of stone, especially one that was shaped into a column by people living in ancient times’ or (often disappointingly) as a single very large organisation that is very slow to change and not interested in individual people. None of the monasteries here qualifies as ‘monolith’. If Lumbini were to be located in one of the traditional Buddhist countries such as Myanmar or Thailand the monasteries and temples would be much more magnificent. Except for that one paragraph, Mr Khadka’s article as a whole is interesting and worth reading. On behalf of the Lumbini sangha, Ven. Bhaddha Manika Panditarama International Vipassana Meditation Centre, Lumbini.

ANGLISH-SAXON
Congratulations to Daniel L. Pak for The Anglo-Saxon disease (Here and There, #205). I read it on my way to a trek in Mustang, and found the analysis excellent and well-worded. This disease is leading the world to catastrophe all right. Bravo again.

André Brugiroux, France

Venus, Lumbini, Nepal.

All lights are green

BROADLINK
Cable Internet

...where reality exceeds expectations
For the first time in Nepal, you have a better choice to browse the Internet. BroadLink gives you a superior and faster browsing experience with the pleasure of viewing more than 68 of the most popular channels. We use fibre optic cable connection in delivering you with quality TV channels along with an enhanced Internet service and your telephone still rings.

Roben Sampu
The Maoists are hoping the blockade will spread panic, fuel discontent and spark an urban uprising, which they have been demanding. “The Maoists are trying to see if psychological pressure will work,” says Royal Nepali Army spokesman, Rajendra Thapa. “All they are trying to do is magnify their limited military strength. It’s part of their strategy.”

Details have emerged that the Maoists had come to an understanding with the UML that the moderate left would join the government and try to convince the king to discuss the constituent assembly demand. In exchange, the Maoists had agreed not to set off blasts and suspended assassinations in the capital. Instead, there had been no major sabotage since the bomb on 15 July at the Nepal Telecom building in Jawalakhel killed an elderly woman.

However, the army killed Bharat Dhungana a few weeks after the UML joined the government and that is when the Maoists announced their Valley blockade. A pro-Maoist intellectual in Kathmandu told us: “The blockade will be effective in weakening the palace, which is the henchman of the capitalist class and its traditional supporters.”

However, it is clear that the upper middle-class will only be inconvenienced by the blockade. The real sufferers will be day labourers, transport workers and vegetable vendors. There is a danger for the Maoists that even if the blockade is “successful”, it will generate a backlash against them from the very people they seek to bring to their fold.

What the blockade could be is a dress rehearsal for more serious attacks in future. The Maoists could be using cloud cover on the Valley rim during the monsoon to move their forces while the army is distracted with protecting highways. The Maoists want to regain the strength they had in the Valley last year when 500 of their trailer, or the old woman who wants to find a chetvedi chess set published in Mexico, I was struck by how seemingly inconsequential possessions mattered. Devastation, survival, these paled next to a scattering of objects and collected symbols of a life lived.

Perhaps it’s wrong to dwell on such things. I should be commending the Florida authorities for a successful evacuation of the hurricane area, or telling the tales of survivors who rode out the storm in trailer homes that pitched up and down and moved along the ground. But I can’t stop thinking about how what we accumulate often defines us and how a catastrophe makes a mockery of a lifetime of accumulation.

So I layfood from my comfortable little flat in Miami. I live right on the water, in a perfect spot for a howling hurricane to pick up my possessions and float off into the sea. I started wondering about whether I shouldn’t just give a lot of my things away and learn to live simply, so that I could reinvent myself quickly in the aftermath of disaster.

I thought about it for a while...then I went shopping.
Tourists unfazed

A tourist van arrives at Nag Dhunga on Wednesday from Pokhara (top). Britons Martin Dow and Robert Hay from (above right), Francois Roston from France (above) and Rachel Bir from Israel (below)

On the wake of the blasts in the backyard of Hotel Soaltee Crowne Plaza on Monday and the transport blockade by Maoist rebels around Kathmandu Valley, tourists already in Kathmandu seem unfazed.

Some said they were anxious to know what would happen next, while others said the blockade a nuisance more than anything else. There were others who believed the whole world is now unsafe, and Nepal is actually quite OK in comparison.

Among the tourists we spoke to, some were preparing to leave for trekking in the Everest and Annapurna regions but others had cut their trips short and come back to Kathmandu.

Martin Dow and Robert Hay, backpackers from London, were among those who decided to play it safe. “We were on the trekking trail in the Langtang region when we heard about the blockade, so we came back to Kathmandu,” said Hay. “I see no problem in the streets, but there could be something going on,” added Dow.

The most anxious tourists were those transferred to other hotels from Soaltee following the blasts. “We came to know that we were transferred to Yak and Yeti hotel only when we arrived here from Tibet on Tuesday,” said Maria Rastelli from Italy. “To take stock of the situation, we will have to take stroll in the streets ourselves.”

Frenchman Francois Roston had also been outside the Valley and returned to the capital on Monday. “The situation looks a bit more tense now than it was when I left two weeks ago,” he said. “But the streets are calm.”

Israel tourists were the least worried. “We are used to more serious incidents back home,” said Rachel Bir from Israel. Her husband, Amit, said he is cautious but not scared. Even so, news of the blockade and the attack on a five-star hotel have gone around the world and there could be some cancellations in the coming months. The tourist industry, which was looking forward to recouping some of the losses of the past years this season is despondent. They have their fingers crossed that the blockade will be lifted soon.

However, airline bookings show few cancellations and most people are still continuing with their plans for a Nepal holiday this autumn.

(Kavind Singh Kharka)

Hearty Congratulations to Hotel Yak & Yeti on being awarded for earning maximum foreign currency in the fiscal year 2059-60 amongst all the 5 star hotels in Nepal consecutively for the eighth time.

Warm wishes:

Nag Dhunga pass to the west of Kathmandu on Sunday (top) and Thursday (below)
Outrage grows over journalist murder

Human rights activists, legal practitioners and journalists made common cause to express their outrage at Maoist violence with a street demonstration on Wednesday in Kathmandu (see picture). The silent procession protested the killing of journalist Dekendra Raj Thapa in Dailekh and the Maoists’ threat to kill 10 other journalists in the midst. Thapa was killed earlier this month by rebels who accused him of “spying” against them. The rebels have threatened to exterminate 10 other journalists because of news they say is critical of them.

The Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) has deplored Thapa’s murder and decided to organise a series of protest programs all over the country to oppose what it says is a systematic attack on the freedom of press. The federation has demanded that the Maoist leadership make a public apology for Thapa’s death and commit themselves to not repeating such acts. FNJ warned of a boycott of Maoist press statements, articles, and opinion pieces if they do not apologise and make public commitments to press freedom. The federation has also sent a strongly-worded open letter to Maoist chief Prachanda, asking him about the Maoists’ opinion of press freedom.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) issued a statement and Amnesty International wrote an open letter to Prachanda condemning the killing and expressing alarm at the increasing Maoist violence against journalists. The International Federation of Journalists called for international action against the Maoists for the killing and for threatening journalists.

The journalists from the midfield who have been threatened by the Maoists include Harish Singh Rathaur in Dailekh and Bed Prakash Timila, who have been reporting on the insurgency from Achham for The Times. They are among those who have been threatened by the Maoists and are calling for international action against the Maoists for the killing and for threatening journalists.

Chitwan's schools closed

While Kathmandu is preoccupied with the Maoist blockade, 100,000 children in Chitwan have not been able to go to school for the past two weeks due to Maoist threats. The Maoists have ordered that all schools located in areas with Maoist activity, including in the region of Chitwan, must close. In a complex web of tangled connections, Leon (Anthony LaPaglia), a young Aboriginal man accused of raping and murdering a young girl in the bush, is discovered to have confessed to the crime. However, the entangled web of the story comes to include a couple who have lost their business and their son, plus a former bank teller, Jim finds himself examining his conscience.

21 August, 11AM
The Man Who Sued God
Running time 1hr30mins
Director Mark Joff

21 August, 2PM
Black and White
Running time 1hr10mins
Director Craig Lahl

22 August, 11AM
Crackerjack
Running time 1hr30mins
Director Paul Mauney

22 August, 2PM
The Tracker
Running time 1hr45mins
Director Piti de Heer

In 1923, three men are lead across Australia by The Tracker (David Gulpilil) as they search for a missing boy, accused of murdering a white woman. On the way is The Fagan (Gary Sweet), The Follower (Damon Gameau) and The Tracker (Fran Kranz). In a remote bush setting, the men are on a treasure hunt in search of a missing boy. With the beautiful landscape, they reveal truths about their characters, reactions and attitudes. Soon there are shifts of power and racial conflict within the team, and the real question becomes who is leading whom.

24 August, 2AM
The Bank
Running time 1hr20mins
Director Matthew Cherry

24 August, 4PM
Lantana
Running time 1hr5mins
Director Ray Lawrence

In a complex web of tangled relationships, managers, journalists, Leon (Antony LaPaglia) is a police detective who is obsessed with his wife Sonya (Karen Armstrong) and her Japanese lover on behalf of the British government. Simon sets Jim up with everything he needs, but as more becomes clear about the bank and the story comes to include a couple who have lost their

Ozzie film roadshow

Australian films are not just about crocodiles, boomergangs and kangaroos anymore.

General knowledge question: where was the first East Australian film made?
Answer: 1906.

𠅈煤炭 ambassadors

The Australian Film Roadshow is continuing to develop, particularly in the areas of multicultural and indigenous film-making. It has also been involved with the digital technology of recent blockbuster successes such as The Lord of the Rings, The Matrix and the Star Wars series. New releases with Australian involvement include Master and Commander, Cold Mountain, and The Castle.

Through this rapid growth, there has been an expansion of production and training in Australian institutions. Universities and vocational institutes work with the industry in courses that give skills for the future of cinema. There are also programs that provide training and to effort into the next generation of filmmakers.

The Australian Film Roadshow has continued to tour Australia and the world with its Australian films, including The Man Who Sued God, The Tracker and The Bank.

Dundee, Take 1

Local television production has also expanded during this period, producing local and international hits such as The Man Who Sued God and Home and Away. The last decade has seen the rise of a new generation of truly international stars. Actors such as Nicole Kidman, Cate Blanchett, Russell Crowe and, more recently, Naomi Watts, Heath Ledger and Eric Bana have amassed a significant body of work which has won awards, acclaim and commercial success.

Directors Baz Luhrmann, Philip Hoffman and Simon Phelan have made many films between the local and international industry, often accompanied by awards and acclaim. Notable Australian movies from the 1980s include Murie’s Wedding, Strictly Ballroom, Kramer Stamps, Slimmer, Two Hands and The Castle.

The Australian film and television industry is continuing to develop, particularly in the areas of multicultural and indigenous film-making. It has also been involved with the digital technology of recent blockbuster successes such as The Lord of the Rings, The Matrix and the Star Wars series. New releases with Australian involvement include Master and Commander, Cold Mountain, and The Castle.
Misery piled upon upon misery

Kailash is six, but he is already grownup

RAMESHWOR BOHARA in NEPALGANJ

Kailash Gupta is six years old, and he sits by the road at Khajura Bajar near Nepalganj selling roasted corn to passers-by. He used to go to school, but these days he has to work from dawn to dusk to pay the hospital fees for his sister Tara, who is fighting for her life. Kailash’s tragedy is the result of the ‘people’s war’ being waged by the Maoists. On 13 July, his mother, Bindika Debji, was on her way to plant paddy on a landlord’s farm when a Maoist landmine blew up. Bimala was instantly killed, her sister died three days later and Tara is still in hospital. Kailash’s father, Ram Chandra Gupta sits with him by the roadside and wipes the tears from his eyes. Ram Chandra and Bindika Debji worked as labourers so they could earn enough to send their children to school. “Kailash really liked going to school,” Ram Chandra tells us, “I can’t afford to anymore.” The family used to live across the border in the village of MACHHIMARU in Uttar Pradesh, but dalcitti lootred everything they had five years ago so Ram Chandra migrated to the relatively safe valley of Nepal. Kailash used to be a fun-loving boy, always laughing and joking with friends. But he doesn’t talk anymore, and mostly stays down the road into the distance, as if waiting for his mother to come back. “He has nightmares and calls for his mother in his sleep,” says Ram Chandra.

Sushila lived a hard life, and she died the hard way

RAMESHWOR GAHAI and SURAJ KUNWAR in ACHHAM

Sushila, a 15-year-old girl from Janali Bandali village, who was nothing left when we spoke to her in the hospital. Sushila was dead.

While in hospital, Sushila had told us what had happened in her napsy voice. Her husband, who had left to India in search of work for four years and she hadn’t heard from him since. She was at home with two small children when, four months ago, a soldier from the nearest barracks entered the house when she was alone and raped her. Sushila realised three months later that she was pregnant. Desperate to rid herself of the Shameful burden and apprehensive of becoming a village outcast, Sushila went to the local midwife for an abortion. The traditional method of abortion in these remote regions of mid-western Nepal is to use a hot iron rod to burn the walls of the uterus. Most women who undergo this treatment never survive. Sushila knew this, but her desperation was such that she decided to do it. Sushila’s internal burn injuries never healed. She had a massive infection, her neighbours saw her suffering and took her to the district hospital.

After 34 years of life, after raising children on her own without a husband to pay for the family, after bearing the violation and humiliation of rape, after suffering excruciating pain for a month, Sushila died quietly in her village leaving behind two little children. Her house is now locked up and relatives are looking after the orphans. The villagers have not filed any complaints. They know better than that.

In Kathmandu, we approached the army headquarters. A spokesman denied that the soldier in question was ever in the area at the time of Sushila’s rape. He also cast doubts about whether Sushila had even been raped, saying the dates for her hospitalisation show that she was there three days before the date of the rape.

Prahladh was taken away by soldiers and hasn’t been seen since

BIBI FUNKAL in CHHIMAR

The Shri Krishna Secondary School in Chhimala hit the headlines last month with the Maoist abduction of dozens of grade nine students for three days. They were forced to listen to revolutionary speeches, raise lai salams and were then released.

But few people know that months before that, soldiers had come to the school and taken away 15-year-old Prahladh Waiba. His father, Chandra Bahadur, is an employee at the school where his son studied. One of his jobs is to ring the school bell.

He had just finished hitting the gong to mark the end of classes for the day when they caught up with him. “I haven’t slept properly a single night since my son was taken away,” says Chandra Bahadur, who wants to know if the journalists who came to cover the abductions can do something to find his son. “I just need to know that he is alive and where he is,” he says.

Prahladh’s classmate, Sudarsan, says his friends are all distraught and that he feels bad about Chandra Bahadur’s despair. “We see him cry for Prahladh everyday,” says Sudarsan.

It was on 1 March that three soldiers in plainclothes came to the school which is located 25km south of Kathmandu. They entered the principal’s office and showed him a list of three names. Only one of them was present at that time: Prahladh Waiba, a 9th grader. The headmaster was asked to go and get the boy and Prahladh was taken away without any explanation.

According to his teachers, the soldiers promised the boy would be returned soon. Prahladh’s father and the headmaster of the school have gone to the military base in Pharping several times but no one could tell them anything.

We approached senior military sources, who told us there are no civilians in detention in Pharping. They said that if Prahladh was a suspect, the boy might have been taken by army intelligence to the capital for interrogation. But the officer added: “We are convinced that the boy was directly involved in an ambush in the vicinity on 15 January that killed one soldier and injured two. Prahladh was the one signalling.”

The source says that one out of every five families in Chhimala is pro-Maoist, adding, “People cooperate more with Maoists than with the soldiers.” This may be true, but villagers in Chhimala told us they have no choice. Either way, they are victimised.

The chairman of the Sri Krishna Secondary School management committee and Prahlad’s teachers disagree that their student is a Maoist. “He is not just innocent, but was also a brilliant student. He should be returned to his family and school,” says the chairman. Prahladh’s younger brother has fled the village and now works in a restaurant in Kathmandu.

Chandra Bahadur has one simple question to visiting reporters: “The government calls the Maoists terrorists, but they released all the students they took away. Why doesn’t the government send my son back?”
Oil on troubled waters
Nepal Oil Corporation is battling to survive soaring international prices, fuel adulteration and discontents at home.

"If the prices of kerosene and diesel are brought closer, it will automatically check adulteration," admits Commerce Secretary Dinesh Chandra Pyakurel. "But the problem is we can't raise the price of kerosene up to the level of diesel because so many poor households depend on it.

Privatising the oil sector would take care of that problem. Under pressure from the World Bank and the IMF, the government has declared through its budget policy that it will open oil distribution to the private sector.

A rise in kerosene prices could fuel political unrest, but experts say this can be minimised by taking it to political parties not in the coalition. The UML, for instance, has retied in its student wing, which had joined the NC street protests against the fuel hike. "As long as you don’t mix politics with oil, it can be handled," said one official.

It's not just bailing out NOC that is the issue here. The government knows that ultimately it will have to pay the banks if the NOC can't. The government is now looking at private distribution in LPG to minus losses due to subsidies.

"Within five months we are allowing companies with paid up capital of Rs 1 billion to start distributing LPG," Pyakurel told us. After that, it is only a matter of time before the private sector gets into diesel and petrol as well.

For now, the government says it has told NOC to adjust prices in line with the international market and India so that the corporation is able to meet the deficit. But for that to happen, the government has to make sure the public discontent does not spill out onto the streets. "

"The prices of kerosene and diesel are brought closer, it will automatically check adulteration," admits Commerce Secretary Dinesh Chandra Pyakurel. "But the problem is we can’t raise the price of kerosene up to the level of diesel because so many poor households depend on it.

Privatising the oil sector would take care of that problem. Under pressure from the World Bank and the IMF, the government has declared through its budget policy that it will open oil distribution to the private sector.

A rise in kerosene prices could fuel political unrest, but experts say this can be minimised by taking it to political parties not in the coalition. The UML, for instance, has retied in its student wing, which had joined the NC street protests against the fuel hike. “As long as you don’t mix politics with oil, it can be handled,” said one official.

It’s not just bailing out NOC that is the issue here. The government knows that ultimately it will have to pay the banks if the NOC can’t. The government is now looking at private distribution in LPG to minus losses due to subsidies.

“Within five months we are allowing companies with paid up capital of Rs 1 billion to start distributing LPG,” Pyakurel told us. After that, it is only a matter of time before the private sector gets into diesel and petrol as well.

For now, the government says it has told NOC to adjust prices in line with the international market and India so that the corporation is able to meet the deficit. But for that to happen, the government has to make sure the public discontent does not spill out onto the streets.

The government knows that ultimately it will have to pay the banks if the NOC can’t. The government is now looking at private distribution in LPG to minus losses due to subsidies.

“Within five months we are allowing companies with paid up capital of Rs 1 billion to start distributing LPG,” Pyakurel told us. After that, it is only a matter of time before the private sector gets into diesel and petrol as well.

For now, the government says it has told NOC to adjust prices in line with the international market and India so that the corporation is able to meet the deficit. But for that to happen, the government has to make sure the public discontent does not spill out onto the streets.

The government knows that ultimately it will have to pay the banks if the NOC can’t. The government is now looking at private distribution in LPG to minus losses due to subsidies.

“Within five months we are allowing companies with paid up capital of Rs 1 billion to start distributing LPG,” Pyakurel told us. After that, it is only a matter of time before the private sector gets into diesel and petrol as well.

For now, the government says it has told NOC to adjust prices in line with the international market and India so that the corporation is able to meet the deficit. But for that to happen, the government has to make sure the public discontent does not spill out onto the streets.

The government knows that ultimately it will have to pay the banks if the NOC can’t. The government is now looking at private distribution in LPG to minus losses due to subsidies.

“Within five months we are allowing companies with paid up capital of Rs 1 billion to start distributing LPG,” Pyakurel told us. After that, it is only a matter of time before the private sector gets into diesel and petrol as well.

For now, the government says it has told NOC to adjust prices in line with the international market and India so that the corporation is able to meet the deficit. But for that to happen, the government has to make sure the public discontent does not spill out onto the streets.

The government knows that ultimately it will have to pay the banks if the NOC can’t. The government is now looking at private distribution in LPG to minus losses due to subsidies.

“Within five months we are allowing companies with paid up capital of Rs 1 billion to start distributing LPG,” Pyakurel told us. After that, it is only a matter of time before the private sector gets into diesel and petrol as well.

For now, the government says it has told NOC to adjust prices in line with the international market and India so that the corporation is able to meet the deficit. But for that to happen, the government has to make sure the public discontent does not spill out onto the streets.

The government knows that ultimately it will have to pay the banks if the NOC can’t. The government is now looking at private distribution in LPG to minus losses due to subsidies.

“Within five months we are allowing companies with paid up capital of Rs 1 billion to start distributing LPG,” Pyakurel told us. After that, it is only a matter of time before the private sector gets into diesel and petrol as well.

For now, the government says it has told NOC to adjust prices in line with the international market and India so that the corporation is able to meet the deficit. But for that to happen, the government has to make sure the public discontent does not spill out onto the streets.

The government knows that ultimately it will have to pay the banks if the NOC can’t. The government is now looking at private distribution in LPG to minus losses due to subsidies.

“Within five months we are allowing companies with paid up capital of Rs 1 billion to start distributing LPG,” Pyakurel told us. After that, it is only a matter of time before the private sector gets into diesel and petrol as well.

For now, the government says it has told NOC to adjust prices in line with the international market and India so that the corporation is able to meet the deficit. But for that to happen, the government has to make sure the public discontent does not spil
Nepal needs a lot more analysts than it has

Over the past fortnight there are many important business and economic issues that have hogged headlines, but very few pieces that actually analyse them. The Beed praises your indulgence for a few pointers.

The price of oil in the international market has doubled and we are still managing the supply side through a government corporation. While in India politicians have realised oil prices, like prices of other commodities, have little to do rather rely on politics but with global price mechanisms, why do our politicians still want to make it as an issue? We don't decline in opening it up to international players and the private sector? If India's retail prices and supply chains develop, why don't the Indian companies to operate directly in Nepal as Sri Lanka has been effectively?

The Royal Nepal Military Bank: is it on or off?
The government seems to leave a lame answer. Does the cabinet know what they approved was in fact the operating arena for the Army Welfare Fund. How does the Thai Military Bank function? How do Pakistani army businesses compare? Is it good or bad for the army to get into business? Who is going to regulate these investments?

The two foreign-managed erstwhile sick-government-owned banks reported turnaround and good profits this year. This has proved that government assets can be managed efficiently. This was also the Nepal Electricity Authority's anniversary year. This monopolistic-loss-making, private-sector-bashing SEB reported a colossal loss. Can we let private management run government banks, why not these public sector大佬s?

The closure of 24 major businesses in Nepal due to Maoist threat has received another round of analyses over the world. The government and people in the government, some of whom don't know the difference between an internet page and a word document, is only concerned about getting into the blame game and clearing its own conscience in the local media. Where is all the impact analysis?

What is the impact of this on foreign investment?
What will happen to government revenue (also read individual revenues for people in government)? If more businesses are asked to close and some of them decide to fully close shop?

The economic pages of our papers are limited to reporting demonstrations held against the petro-pride hike. We need a lot of analysts, and urgently. The type that will spend time on research, keep abreast of national and international developments in business and economy and provide a non-academic-common man perspective of the national economy in a globalised world. The Beed could do it for you, but he comes only once a fortnight. 

arthabeed@yahoo.com
Going, going, gone...

More than 2,000 years ago, when India’s Emperor Ashoka made a pilgrimage to Kathmandu Valley to spread Buddhism, he left his mark by building four chaityas. Also known as stupas, they mark the four cardinal points around Patan, giving the holy city its celestial coordinates.

Originally, the stupas were built on stacks of bricks, which have gradually become grassy mounds in the east, west, north and south of Patan. The ancient monuments still stand at Pulchok, Ebahi Toli, Lagankhel and Imadol. The Ashoka chaityas were built in 250 BC, when Patan was known by its Newari name, Yala, and they could well be the most ancient religious monuments in Nepal.

Historian Nici Gutechow says the chaityas were built to define the limits of the ancient town’s “meaningful sacred space against the profane and non-significant territory around. In ancient times, it would probably be possible from the top of any one stupa to see the other three. This is why it is sad to see the holy and historic sites being desecrated by urban sprawl, ugly pedestrian bridges, cress hoardings and real estate speculators encroaching on gahi land.

The west chaitya in Pulchok is the smallest of the four and is now dwarfed by apartment blocks, an overhead bridge and a huge shopping complex under construction across the street. A stone’s throw away is the Lalitpur sub-metropolitan office, with its tastelessly grandiose architecture, which is supposed to preserve the town’s heritage. With no mayor, the municipality is leaderless and rudderless. “Things would have been better if there was a mayor,” laments a staffer.

Two years ago, when Mayor Buddh Raj Rajacharya ordered the demolition of some houses built illegally near the stupa, he faced stiff opposition from private builders.

Even the government’s Department of Archaeology does not have the power to dismantle the buildings or even stop illegal new construction. “The law ties our hands,” says an officer. The land around all the four stupas has been legally acquired, and it seems the landowner can do anything with his property build a commercial complex, a car park or lease the land for a shop or a restaurant.

The government’s helplessness is apparent in Lagankhel, where the largest of the four Ashoka stupas stands. This stupa is built on higher ground, so it currently dominates the skyline with no buildings to obstruct its spiritual ambience. This will soon change...
Patan’s Ashoka stupas are Nepal’s oldest historical monuments, but they are being choked by construction

though as an empty plot of land owned by the semi-government Narayana Mahendran Secondary School is planning a huge two-story complex to raise funds for the school.

The building plan has already provoked a dispute between the school management committee and local residents. “We will do everything in our power to stop the school from destroying the stupa,” says Uday Man Shrestha, president of Laganikhel Environment Development Organisation, which has been actively campaigning against the school’s plan.

Shrestha says the disputed land used to be a holy moat that surrounded the stupa and has religious significance. Every year at the end of the Rato Machhindranath festival, priests release a pair of sparrows and a pair of fish into the water to send a message to Lord Indra about the successful completion of the festival.

“Centuries-old tradition will die because of some greedy individuals,” says Ajay Lama from Laganikhel Youth Club, which is also campaigning to protect the ancient site.

The school says construction will not jeopardise the holy site at all and maintain there was no holy lake on the land which the government handed over to the school in the late 1970s. School management says it decided to build on the site after locals started dumping garbage in the area. “Nothing can stop us, we have all the documents and permission,” says the school’s legal adviser, Purusottam Dhungana. “Besides, why aren’t the activists stopping the construction of the tall buildings all around?”

The Department of Archaeology says it tried to stop construction but the school had an air-tight legal case. Ex-mayor Bajracharya is in a watch with the unauthorised bridge was built in front of the Pulchowk stupa.

For the local community and conservationists, the issue is not just the school building or an overheard bridge, but that it will pave the way for even bigger buildings and more commercialisation. The Laganikhel stupas is the only one that still has some character left.

The ground of the east Ashoka stupa in Bihani Tol have narrowed. Most of the houses here are taller than the stupa, which seems to have lost its religious significance for the locals. When we ask for directions, most couldn’t even show us the way to the chaitya. “The blame goes to the Lalitpur municipality, which allowed people to illegally build houses on encroached land. Now it is impossible to remove the buildings,” says local resident, Luchan Mahajan, who has built his own shop attached to the stupa’s perimeter wall.

The north Ashoka stupa in Imadol is in an even poorer state. Private house owners have encroached on the land and built brick blocks. Nearby is an empty shell that the VDC spent Rs 1.6 million on building a water tank which was never completed.

Local residents don’t even bother keeping the holy site clean, flies swarm all over the garbage. The stupa’s grassy mound has become a pasture for goats and for children to play.

“It is so embarrassing whenever tourists come all the way here to look for the stupa,” says local resident Dana Sunvar. “Nothing of this will be left when our children grow up.”
Patna’s Ashoka stupas are Nepal’s oldest historical monuments, but they are being choked by construction

though as an empty plot of land owned by the semi-government Narayana Mahidroo Secondary School is planning a huge two-storey complex to raise funds for the school.

The building plan has already provoked a dispute between the school management committee and local residents. “We will do everything in our power to stop the school from destroying the stupa,” says Udai Man Shrestha, president of Laganikhel Environment Development Organisation, which has been actively campaigning against the school’s plan.

Shrestha says the disputed land used to be a holy moat that surrounded the stupa and has religious significance. Every year at the end of the Rato Machhindranath festival, priests release a pair of sparrows and a pair of fish into the water to send a message to Lord Indra about the successful completion of the festival.

“This centuries-old tradition will die because of some greedy individuals,” says Ajay Lama from Laganikhel Youth Club, which is also campaigning to protect the ancient site.

The school says construction will not jeopardise the holy site at all and maintain there was no holy lake on the land which the government handed over to the school in the late 1970s. School management says it decided to build on the site after locals started dumping garbage in the area. “Nothing can stop us, we have all the documents and permission,” says the school’s legal adviser, Purusottam Dhungana. “Besides, why aren’t the activists stopping the construction of the tall buildings all around?”

The Department of Archaeology says it tried to stop construction but the school had an air-tight legal case. Ex-mayor Bajracharya is of the opinion it would have never allowed the construction if it was still mayor. “All this is happening because there is no mayor,” he says.

However, it was under Bajracharya’s watch that the unsightly overhead bridge was built in front of the Pulchok stupa.

For the local community and conservationists, the issue is not just the school building or an overhead bridge, but that it will pave the way for even bigger buildings and more commercialisation. The Laganikhel stupas is the only one that still has some character left.

The grounds of the east Ashoka stupa in Bhicholi have narrowed. Most of the houses here are taller than the stupa, which seems to have lost its religious significance for the locals. When we asked for directions, most couldn’t even show us the way to the chaitya.

“The blame goes to the Lalitpur municipality, which allowed people to illegally build houses on encroached land. Now it is impossible to remove the buildings,” says local resident, Lucheman Maharanj, who has built his own shop attached to the stupa’s perimeter wall.

The north Ashoka stupa in Imadol is in an even poorer state. Private house owners have encroached on the land and built brick blocks. Nearby is an empty shell that the VDC spent Rs 1.6 million on building a water tank, which was never completed.

Local residents don’t even bother keeping the holy site clean, flies swarm all over the garbage. The stupa’s grassy mound has become a pasture for goats and for children to play.

“It is so embarrassing whenever tourists come all the way here to look for the stupa,” says local resident Dama Sunuwar. “Nothing of this will be left when our children grow up.”
The Maoist leaders are among the most important political actors in Nepal. They believe in the right of all people to self-determination and the right to participate in political processes. They have been involved in armed struggle against the Nepalese state since the 1960s and continue to operate in the rural areas of Nepal, where they have a strong following. The Maoists have been involved in the struggle for democratic rights and have played a role in the Nepal Peace Process. They are also active in the International Communist Movement, and have been in contact with other communist movements around the world. They have a strong base among the marginalized and oppressed communities in Nepal, and their struggle is seen as a struggle for justice and equality. The Maoists have been involved in the Nepal Communist Party and the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist), and their activities continue to be a source of concern for the Nepalese government and international organizations. The Maoists have been involved in the struggle for democratic rights and have played a role in the Nepal Peace Process. They are also active in the International Communist Movement, and have been in contact with other communist movements around the world. They have a strong base among the marginalized and oppressed communities in Nepal, and their struggle is seen as a struggle for justice and equality. The Maoists have been involved in the Nepal Communist Party and the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist), and their activities continue to be a source of concern for the Nepalese government and international organizations.
Easing fears

Burmese migrant workers are displaying new confidence after years of mistreatment, and most see a bright future ahead. Buddhist religious elements are prominent after the Burmese military junta ended the 22-year rule of General Than Shwe, who had come to power in 1988.

``I have less to worry now; I feel more comfortable when I go out to meet my friends,'' says Hla Hla Aye, a Burmese migrant worker employed as a maid in Bangkok.

Even migrant rights campaigners are witnessing the emerging shift in the environment. ``We can now work with them in the open, unlike before, when we had to work from the shadows of fear and confusion. The authorities have finally come around to respecting human rights and labour law,'' says Zaw Pyae, a human rights lawyer in Yangon.

Under the new migrant labour law, which provides more rights and protection than the previous one, workers can work up to 80 hours a week. Migrant workers can change employers every six months, and can have up to three dependents with them.

``The new policy is a huge step forward. It will be a great relief to Brazilians as well as to the Burmese workers,'' says Elke Treves, a social worker at the Centre for Migrant Rights in Brazil.

Most of the migrant workers are in jobs that Thai labourers are turning away from, including domestic work, farming and manufacturing. The number of registered migrant workers is now about 1.5 million of a total estimated foreign workforce of 2.5 million.

While the new policy has been welcomed, there are still concerns about the enforcement of human rights and labour law. ''The government needs to ensure that the new laws are enforced and that workers are protected from exploitation,'' says Zaw Pyae.

India battles resistance

The spread of polioviruses could be totally curbed worldwide this year and the disease could be eradicated by 2005, thanks to the removal of the last obstacles in Africa according to David Heymann, WHO special representative on polio eradication.

The polio immunisation campaign has resumed in the northern Nigerian state of Kano, where it had been suspended a year ago due to concerns about the safety of the vaccine.

Circulating around that largely Muslim area were rumours that it was contaminated with HIV or contained elements of family planning which sterilised young girls. Due to the rumours, Kano Governor Ibrahim Shekarau called off the vaccination campaign, as did authorities in other northern states in Nigeria.

The suspension of the campaign led to a resurgence of polio cases in Kano and other Nigerian states, and in neighbouring countries that had already declared disease-free. The Nigerian government subsequently set up a commission to evaluate the vaccine, and the authorities in Kano set up two separate teams of experts to do the same. The verdicts handed down by the commissions cleared up the doubts and resumed the campaign against the immunisation activities continues in Kano state.

On 29 November, the Governor recommended the vaccine to four children of government officials. Heymann said there were still some resistance from certain religious leaders but the Nigerian press had a "very positive" attitude.

Heymann said the renewed vaccination efforts would allow northern Nigeria to "catch up" with the southern states and the rest of West Africa.

Polio is an infectious viral disease of the central nervous system that causes muscular atrophy. The greatest incidence of the disease, also known as infantile paralysis, is in children aged five to 10.

So far this year, 538 children have been infected worldwide, including 430—80 percent of the total—in Nigeria. Affected countries include India, Afghanistan and Egypt, which Heymann said have the lowest ever reported numbers of polio cases this year.

``We believe that they will be able to interrupt transmission in the next few months,'' said Heymann. "The Asian countries have been able to maintain very low transmission levels and we have learned, however, that there are still risks in those countries, like the possibility that governments will feel confident, let their guard down, and allow polio to return.''

The four bodies behind the global campaign—WHO, the United Nations children's fund (UNICEF), Rotary International and the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention—have a goal of complete eradication around the world by 2005. In Africa, transmission could be cut this year. However, a period of three to six months is needed to be sure transmission is interrupted, and twelve months to be certain, so success would not be confirmed until next year. Heymann also said the religious leaders are "very important," and that UNICEF is working closely with them in Central Africa.

Recalling the story

Nearly five centuries ago, on 15 November 1505, Dom Lourenço de Almeida arrived off the harbour of Colombo in nine ships after being caught in a storm. That accident led to one and a half centuries of Portuguese rule, fuelled by missionary zeal, which can only be characterised by cruelty, greed and intolerance.

``What Lanka is preparing to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Portuguese, a group of scholars are on a mission to write their own version of history from the perspective of the colonised. The band of around 30 people are poring over ancient palm leaf manuscripts, scouring the museums of Western Europe, studying the details of paintings, checking out ancient tombs and digging for any clues from homes and temples.``

``History is written with a perspective and in the case of the colonisers, all other colonisers, the perspective is theirs,"' says Dr Sarath Chandar Prematilleke, a well-known Sri Lankan writer and scholar, adding, what is the colonised people’s perspective?''

The Sri Lankan government has initiated this project, motivated by the study, ``We will ask Portugal to admit to the atrocities committed in Sri Lanka and make a public apology, we will also seek reparation for loss of life and property during that time and get them to return the treasures spirited away from this land," says Culture Minister Viththal Herath.

The government is banking on the academic study unearthing enough evidence for it to seek compensation from Portugal. There were unsubstantiated claims that the Portuguese pillaged and plundered Sri Lanka’s ancient Buddhist temples. However, Minister Herath reveals that there is evidence the Portuguese destroyed 256 places of religious worship, both Buddhist and Hindu temples along the coastal belt.

In 1658, after the Dutch ended the Portuguese rule of Sri Lanka, the Dutch went on to occupy the country under the British until 1945—the Dutch gained its independence.

``Asked whether such an inquiry would stir up religious strife in a country that is already a sowing in a religious barren soil, Herath says, “I will help us to accept what has happened and move ahead to the future...it will put history in its right perspective.”''

Scores of churches have been attacked in the past two years by majority Singhalese groups, claiming fundamentalist Christians were all out to convert Buddhists. (Kumudini Heratharachchi/IPS)
Remitting development

Poor countries must make the best use of money their migrant workers send home

The number of international migrants has more than doubled since 1970. Worldwide, one in every 35 persons is now a migrant. In 2003 the money they sent home was $930 billion. If unofficial transfers are also counted, the volume of such remittances could be double this amount. These figures are staggering, exceeding the $68.5 billion that rich countries currently spend on official development assistance.

Migration has major implications for development. In every region of the world, remittances are raising the standard of living of millions of poor people by providing critical resources for food, shelter, health care and education. In many developing countries, remittances represent the most important source of foreign exchange, offsetting investment, lending and exports of commodities and manufactured goods.

Migrants have long been ignored as a resource. Instead, they have been perceived either as an economic burden on countries of destination or as a potential loss to their country of origin through “brain drain.” There is another side to this story. Migrants are helping to maintain important social and economic linkages between the developed and developing worlds that alleviate poverty in very significant ways. Flows of remittances and the return of migrants with new skills can offset the loss of migrants and may even lead to a “brain gain.” Modern communication and cheaper transportation make it easier for migrants to maintain links with their home countries, creating opportunities for investments and the sharing of knowledge.

Remittances alone are not panaceas for theills afflicting poor countries, and they should not be seen as a substitute for foreign aid. But as remittance flows increase, it is more necessary than ever that the migration and development communities to begin speaking more effectively with each other. The challenge is to design coherent policies that shape and best utilise the potential benefits of migration for development. This would also be entirely consistent with the recent recommendation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for improved policy coherence in the development arena.

There are some positive signs that governments are beginning to move in this direction. The first point of the new action plan to combat poverty in the developing world agreed upon at the recent Group of Eight summit meeting on Sea Island, Georgia, talks about the potential contribution of migrant remittances to entrepreneurship and private-sector development efforts.

There is much that could be done to enhance the development impact of remittances, such as:

- Reduce the cost of transactions. Transfer fees for sending remittances range from 1.5 to 3 percent of the remittance value, although the transfer could actually be made for as little as 1 to 1.5 percent. Increased competition among providers of remittance services would reduce costs and save hundreds of millions of dollars a year, with the benefit flowing to migrants and their family members.
- Provide more reliable information so that migrants are better informed about the real cost of remitting and the different options available.
- Increase the volume of remittances. Countries that send migrants need to promote financial instruments to make it more attractive for migrants to remit. Greater efforts must be made to reach out to migrant communities in developed countries and their families in developing countries to ensure access to basic banking services.

- Enhance development impacts. Remittances have the greatest development potential where they create jobs. Governments should support policies for providing management solutions that facilitate investments in entrepreneurial and other job-creating activities.
- Explore innovative practices, such as the creation of microenterprise lending schemes, bond issuance against future remittance flows, information campaigns on remittance management and capacity-building for consular offices.

British Moyo is director general of the International Organisation for Migration in Geneva.

A US federal court found in a recent ruling that Andrei Shleifer, a noted economics professor at Harvard University, and Jonathan Hay, a legal adviser also working for Harvard at the time, conspired in the 1990s to defraud the US government while helping to run Harvard University as well as Shleifer and his wife, and Hay and his then-girlfriend now wife, the two women were subsequently dropped from the suit.

The ruling, however, underscored the pitfalls in contracting out traditional functions and responsibilities of governments in foreign policy and assistance to a small, well-connected group. Hay and Shleifer were supposedly providing impartial advice while making personal investments with the benefit of insider knowledge. This was before the Bush administration began outsourcing military and nation-building activities in Iraq. Now, in a similar way, administration insiders who led the rush to war in Iraq are benefiting from foreign policy and homeland security strategies they advocated.

In the 1990s, during the heated years of sanctions against Saddam Hussein, Harvard Institute for International Development became a manager of US economic reform aid to Russia, with the help of influential Harvard-connected associates in the Clinton administration.

On alleged grounds of “foreign policy” considerations the Harvard Institute was granted some exemptions to competitive bidding and given authority over other contractors, some of whom were their competitors. The virtual carte blanche given the Harvard group enabled them to wear all manner of hats, from government to business and university.

Their conflicting roles went beyond investments in Russian securities, equities, oil and aluminium companies, property and mutual funds among the law suit. Although ostensibly a representative of American aid, Hay was able to approve some privatization decisions of the Russian state on authority given him by the Russian members of the Harvard-Russia group, some of whom also served as officials in the Russian government. Shleifer readily acknowledged making personal investments in Russia, but denied in court this was a conflict of interest.

A decade later, the outsourcing of government functions has accelerated. Harvard’s contracting coup was made at the time, to hire procurement officers tell it. But it pales in comparison with some of the huge, non-competitive awards, justified on national security grounds, granted for work in Iraq.

Defence companies linked to senior members of the administration’s inner circle have been the beneficiaries of some of these awards. To make matters worse, ‘private’ contractors not only implement policy but, occasionally, make crucial government decisions seconded or checked only by bureaucrats with contacts at the White House and this makes it difficult to pin down roles and responsibilities. It is sometimes impossible to determine who speaks on behalf of the state, or is even responsible to it.

Officials with the US Government Accountability Office, the congressional body charged with auditing public expenditure including on homeland security and anti-terrorism measures, recently told they had been directed on occasion to contractors rather than government officials. As became all too clear with the interrogator-contractors involved in the Iraqi prisoner abuse scandal, when roles are ambiguous accountability is elusive.

As long as the US continues to contract out critical government functions to small countries, America’s interests, along with its moral standing, will be repeatedly undermined by private considerations.

Janine Wedel is associate professor, School of Public Policy, George Mason University, and author of Collision and Conflation: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe.

Foreign Policy, Pvt Ltd

Contracting out the functions of foreign policy to well-connected private groups opens up opportunities for malfeasance

A US federal court found in a recent ruling that Andrei Shleifer, a noted economics professor at Harvard University, and Jonathan Hay, a legal adviser also working for Harvard at the time, conspired in the 1990s to defraud the US government while helping to run

Comment

Janine Wedel

Nearly $400m US-funded project to reform Russia’s economy.

The $120m suit, brought by the US justice department in 2000, named

Commercial

Janine Wedel is associate professor, School of Public Policy, George Mason University, and author of Collision and Conflation: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe.
If you start from the premise that all government is bad, aid is bad and donors are bad, your analysis will be bad.

---

**The aid reality**

The Manila-based IBON Foundation (named after the majestic Philippine eagle) has been publishing the annual monitors of foreign aid with its *The Reality of Aid* since 1992. Paradoxically funded by donors, the series often becomes an exercise in self-flagellation since it was a case of OECD countries and the NGOs they support bashing themselves. But in the past decade or so, the ownership of *The Reality of Aid* has shifted to the south, and IBON has tried to get its handle on the structural problems with foreign aid that makes it so ineffective in raising living standards of the poor both globally and within countries.

The 2004 edition looks at some good practices, where aid has worked. The lesson: it has worked wherever the local community has taken charge, and where donor agencies have made poverty alleviation the focus of their work. Nationally, greater attention to governance by the aid community has yielded results.

This year’s edition has a political overview which looks at the global mechanisms that hinder aid efficacy, including aid conditionalities to push neoliberal values in the Bush Junior Era. Our own Gopal Sivakoti ‘Chintan’ of the Nepal Policy Institute has a chapter which begins with the sentence: ‘Nepal is arguably the most beautiful country in the world.’ Ahem.

Chintan argues that western donors to Nepal have ignored human rights and governance, for which he has taken his pet projects Kali Gandaki A and Melamchhi as examples.

---

This is an easy-to-use guide for everyone who always wanted to learn a lot more about who gives what to whom and why, but couldn’t be bothered to ask. For example, did you know that Norway and Denmark gave away nearly one percent of their national wealth in foreign aid? The United States gave only 0.13 percent even though in volume terms it was the world’s largest donor with $15 billion in 2003. Foreign aid in real terms has remained stagnant at $60 billion since 1980.

---

**The Reality of Aid, 2004**

An Independent Review of Poverty Reduction and Development Assistance

Judith Randel, Tony German and Deborah Ewing


distributors@ibon.org

www.ibon.org
The Olympic hope

When anyone asks me why the Olympics are my favourite event, I give anecdotes, not examples or logical reasons. The hours are long, the travel often tedious. But invariably, there is a bizarre juxtaposition that holds out the possibility of hope.

Such a quintessential Olympic moment unfolded Monday at the Olympic Village. This was flag-raising day, when each delegation was welcomed into the village.

At about 5:30 on Monday evening, about 150 journalists packed an auditorium in the athletes' village to get their first glimpse of the Iraqi delegation. The delegation arrived shortly after 6 pm with the buzz and electricity that accompanies an important news event. The delegation’s tone was somber, as earnest as it was enthusiastic. A 24-year-old boxer spoke of the privilege of fighting for his country, showing the world that Iraq, despite being occupied — primarily by the United States — was on the way back. Others spoke about the hope of a new Iraq symbolised by its athletes. Some were starting from scratch. Others, like Dr. Taher Odeh, the director general of Iraq's National Olympic Committee, spoke of a tradition that dates to antiquity, when warring factions competed for glory that span generations.

The Games are a road map for possibility. Our politicians drag us into wars. But there is an uneasiness that is not just at any Games in the last 20 years, an acute awareness of being not just an American, but also being in and of the United States.

The US Olympic team is neither a peace movement, depression nor, as once was the case in the 1960s, a civil rights demonstration. But it is an expression of the American spirit. They are all grouped together in this setting. Members of the U.S. Olympic delegation decided that it wanted its athletes to settle in and get comfortable first. The explanation for the break in tradition is simply that it’s a different world now. There is an uneasiness greater than at any Games in a decade. There is an uneasiness that is not just at any Games in the last 20 years, an acute awareness of being not just an American, but also being in and of the United States.

The Games are a road map for possibility. Our politicians drag us into wars. But there is an uneasiness that is not just at any Games in the last 20 years, an acute awareness of being not just an American, but also being in and of the United States.

When you oppose the war in Iraq and its residue, as I do, or whether you support the war, as many do, people from the United States are all grouped together in this setting. Members of the U.S. Olympic team are being given pointed reminders and instruction about their behaviour. Herman Frazier, a former gold medalist in track, is the chef de mission, or general manager, of the delegation.

Will fans still be encouraged to chant “USA! USA!” at these Summer Games, or will they be asked to applaud and wave poetically an occasional flag? Jennie Finch, a star pitcher for the softball team, says she is not disguising her nationality.

The 46-member delegation from Iraq and the nearly 1,000-member delegation from the United States marched into the Olympic Stadium on Friday for the opening ceremony. The flag was not flown Monday. At these Games, the US delegation decided that it wanted its athletes to settle in and get comfortable first.

The second biggest upset occurred in tennis when: Top seed Roger Federer of Switzerland crashed out of the Olympic men’s singles on Tuesday losing 6-4, 5-7, 7-9 to unseeded Thomas Berdych of the Czech Republic in a second round tie. Michael Phelps of the United States won the Olympic Games men’s 200m butterfly gold. The United States also won the Olympic Games men’s 4x200m freestyle relay gold. So far, Michael Phelps had won five including three gold medals.

The 46-member delegation from Iraq and the nearly 1,000-member delegation from the United States marched into the Olympic Stadium on Friday for the opening ceremony. The flag was not flown Monday. At these Games, the US delegation decided that it wanted its athletes to settle in and get comfortable first.

The second biggest upset occurred in tennis when: Top seed Roger Federer of Switzerland crashed out of the Olympic men’s singles on Tuesday losing 6-4, 5-7, 7-9 to unseeded Thomas Berdych of the Czech Republic in a second round tie. Michael Phelps of the United States won the Olympic Games men’s 200m butterfly gold. The United States also won the Olympic Games men’s 4x200m freestyle relay gold. So far, Michael Phelps had won five including three gold medals.

Underdog Olympics

Like a lightning bolt from Zeus in a Big Fat Greek Olympics where crowds are thin

ATHENS: Basketball minnows Puerto Rico pulled off one of the biggest upsets in the 108-year history of the Games with victory over the United States ‘Dream Team’.

In the swimming pool, an expected showdown between the powerful Australian and United States contingent went out the window as South Africa, France and Japan snatched three out of the four golds on offer. South Africa’s 4x100 metres men’s freestyle relay team of Roland Schoeman, Lyndon Ferns, Duncan Townsend and Ryn Neethling, took gold with a new world record of 3min 13.17sec.

The Puerto Rican’s stunning 92-73 win over America’s team of pampered NBA millionaires rounded across the Games like a lightning bolt hurled by Zeus.

China remains on top with 10 gold medals on the fifth day of Athens Olympics. Over all 21 gold medals distributed in different events on Wednesday.

The biggest upset occurred in tennis when: Top seed Roger Federer of Switzerland crashed out of the Olympic men’s singles on Tuesday losing 6-4, 5-7, 7-9 to unseeded Thomas Berdych of the Czech Republic in a second round tie. Michael Phelps of the United States won the Olympic Games men’s 200m butterfly gold. The United States also won the Olympic Games men’s 4x200m freestyle relay gold. So far, Michael Phelps had won five including three gold medals.

Athens 2004 was outdone by unseeded Ronald Susilo of Singapore, losing 15-12, 15-10.

In the football tournament, war-wary Iraq’s fairytale campaign continued as they secured their place in the quarter-finals with a 2-0 win over Costa Rica. The only blemish on a memorable day was the fact that many events were played out in front of empty stands as concerns about sluggish ticket sales deepened.

Organising officials tried to play down the poor attendances, saying that they knew at the beginning of the Games some events would be badly attended because they were not popular sports in Greece. So far 2.9 million tickets have been sold out of a total of just over five million.

At the last Olympics in Sydney, most of the 9.5 million tickets on sale were snapped up. The International Olympic Committee, concerned the Games’ image could be tarnished if competition are held in front of half-empty stands, raised the issue with organisers on Sunday.

In the judo tournament, Iranian two-time world champion Arash Mirzameendi failed to make the weight for a contest against an Israeli fighter he had previously vowed to boycott.

Greek sprinter Kostadinos Kenteris and Ekaterini Thanou, who missed mandatory dope tests at the Olympic Village before the opening of the Olympic Games, have withdrawn from the games after leaving the RIO hearing into the case. Kenteris, who shocked the world by winning the men’s 200m sprint from the 2000 Games in Sydney, insisted he was innocent of any wrongdoing but said he would quit the Olympics. “I categorically declare that I was never informed or told to present myself for a doping control in the Olympic village,” said the 31-year-old. “But in the interests of the country, I am withdrawing from the Games and I also announce the end of my cooperation with my coach Christos Tzouvelekas.”

The biggest smile of the week belonged to pint-sized ‘Thai weightlifter Udomporn Polsak, who became the kingdom’s first ever female Olympic champion with victory in the 50kg category.”
**KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY**

![Kathmandu Valley Air Quality Chart](source.jpg)

**MAUSAM BEED**

Source: [www.mope.gov.np](http://www.mope.gov.np)

**KATHMANDU VALLEY**

With only one-third of the monsoon left, this satellite weather picture taken on Thursday afternoon shows more rains in store due to a prevailing low-pressure trough moving up to the Himalaya from the Bay. There is an active monsoon front moving across Nepal from east to west that will bring moderate to heavy showers all along the Mahabharat hills. Kathmandu/Valley will witness this weekend, with sustained fine night and rain but heavy afternoon showers.

In Kyuri ho gya na... Diya Mahotra (Ashwarya Rai) is an idealistic, sensitive girl, raised by her father. When she decides she should travel to Mumbai to help her friend Raj Chauhan (Amitabh Bachchan) run a small orphanage, he arranges that she stays with family friend, the Khannas. She then meets Anuj (Vivek Oberoi), a seemingly free-spirited, fun-loving, adventurous guy. The two realise that they’re staying at the same house—the Khannas are Kyuris parents. Their friendship develops, but their opposing views on love and marriage are at the heart of this romantic comedy.

**NEPALI WEATHER by MAUSAM BEED**

Heavy monsoon rains may cause the streets of Putali Sadak to fill with more water than the Bagmati on an average day, but at least they bring down the PM10 (particles small enough to enter the human body) in one of Kathmandu’s most notoriously polluted areas. This week pollution actually dropped to the “OK” level in Putali Sadak, as it did at most of the monitoring stations around the Valley—with the exception of the Patan Hospital area which remained “unhealthy”.

**NEPALI NEPAL CINEMA**

**CLASSIFIED**

**Visit Familiess, the Exclusive Lingerie Store for ladies undergarments, nightwear, bathrobes and more. Ladies staff.** Opposite Sajha Yatayat, Harihar Bhawan, Sitapaila. 9851024874.

**HOUSE ON RENT:** At Panipokhari, opposite the American embassy, behind the petrol pump station. 1 master bedroom/ attached bath, 3 bedrooms w/ semi-attached bath, drawing room, dining room kitchen, store-room, puja room, watchman room, an outhouse and garage. Total area of compound 7500 sq. ft. For details contact mobile no. 9851024874.

A new white Murari 9560 km Rs 600,000. For details, contact Sekhar 9851041293.

A modern bungalow with 5 rooms, 5 bathrooms at Comfort Stoping, Shalapau with community facilities of Security Guard, Swimming Pool, Health Club, Squash Court. Contact: 9851054427.

For insertions ring NT Marketing at 5543333-36.

**KATHMANDU VALLEY**

**NEPALI WEATHER**

**Dollies of the East & West Compared, part 2.**

**About Town**

**Festival and Exhibitions**

Charcoal drawing by Youdhishthar Mahajan at Indigo Gallery, until 29 August. 4413580, www.asianart.com/Indigo

Contemporary Expressions from India Various artists celebrating India’s 58th Independence Day. Until 30 August at the Siddhartha Art Gallery

**Events**

4th Bagmati River Festival till 21 August Bagmati Eco-challenge. Relay team event along the river on 20 August.

Jai Jatra, grand finale at Kalmochan, Thapathali on 21 August. Rs 150.

Movies 2PM onwards at the Alliance Française, Nikka, 22 August

Le Prix du Pardon. The Prince of Forgiveness. A film by Mansur Sora Wads, 22 August. 5:30 PM at Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikutih Manand

Discussions at Martin Chautari: How should NGOs finance their activities? 22 August. 3PM Importance of writing in higher education. 23 August. 3PM Junk food and food security. 24 August. 3PM Film show and discussion. 26 August. 3PM Coca-cola or Mon' 28 August. 5:30 PM

Discovering Buddhism. 10AM to 4PM at HMBC, August 21 and 22. 4414843

Creative Mandala Art workshop by Carolyn Body, 10AM-4PM on August 22 at HMBC. 4414843

St. Augustine’s (Kalimpong) School Day Celebration @ Hotel Nirvana, Thamel. 5:30 PM on 28 August. Tickets Rs 200 for 1996 batch & later and Rs 400 for everyone else. 9851022090

Surviving in culture Support the Blue Diamond Society. 31 August. 12 noon to 2PM, starting at Tribedi Marg, 4443350, bluediamondsociety@yahoo.com

Champa Chat 2001 @ X’mas Night at Club Himalaya, Nagaripak, 25 September, 2 and 16 October. Rs 100. 4410342

**Music**

Tri Groove at Mohak on 21 August. 7PM, Rs 300

Dee at Not Just The Jazz Bar, Friday @ Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat.

Jatra Friday Nites Live music by The Strings. 4256522

Live music at Mohak. Musician’s night and A-Four Guitar Quartet on Sundays and Full Circle on Fridays. 7PM onwards, free entry.

**Drinks**

Ultimate cocktail at Club Platinum. 8PM onwards, 21 August. Rs 600, includes one cocktail.

Island Bar with DJ Raju, Albatros and The Cloud Walkers. The Bar, Hyatt Regency. 449124

Free drink deals at Red Onion Bar, Lazimpat

Monsoon Wine Festival at King’s, Thamel. Rs 150 per large glass.

Lechene Martins and latest club hits at Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu.

**Food**

Delicious barbecue dinner Friday’s at Summit Hotel. 5528110

Friday Nights at Subterranea Club kilroy. 4413281

Farm House Café Nature with your meals at Park Village Hotel. 4375080

Café Bahal Nature with your meals at Park Village Hotel. 4413281

The Beer Garden at Vaijayantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675

** Classified Ads **

**FOR SALE:**

A new white Murari 9560 km Rs 600,000. For details, contact Sekhar 9851041293.

**FOR RENT:** At Panipokhari, opposite the American embassy, behind the petrol pump station. 1 master bedroom/ attached bath, 3 bedrooms w/ semi-attached bath, drawing room, dining room kitchen, store-room, puja room, watchman room, an outhouse and garage. Total area of compound 7500 sq. ft. For details contact mobile no. 9851024874.

A newly constructed 2 storied furnished house on rent at Civil Lines Shalapau. For details contact Sekhar 9851041293.

A modern bungalow with 5 rooms, 5 bathrooms at Comfort Stoping, Shalapau with community facilities of Security Guard, Swimming Pool, Health Club, Squash Court. Contact: 9851054427.

For insertions ring NT Marketing at 5543333-36.

**KATHMANDU VALLEY**

**NEPALI WEATHER**

For details contact mobile no. 9851024874.
A s a boy, Yudhisthir Maharjan loved to watch his painter father at work, knowing all along that someday he would be like him. He didn’t have to wait long. Barely 19, Yudhisthir has got his first exhibition.

After dabbling with oil on canvas and water colour he was inspired four years ago by artist Gobinda Dongol to take up charcoal. Since then, he has produced well over 100 charcoal drawings that are all unique and breathtaking: portraits of Jyapu farmers, the mysterious dark spaces above Kathmandu temples, traditional waterspouts, Ganesh posing with a flute and ancient wooden windows and pillars.

“My life means nothing without charcoal,” Yudhisthir tells us at the opening of his exhibition at the Indigo Art Gallery. Art was always in his genes, but Yudhisthir says he had to convince his parents that he could make a living out of his life’s passion. “Either you become rich or you are penniless as an artist, but that is the risk I want to take,” says Yudhisthir. His talent has earned him a scholarship at a college in the United States this year. So, is he coming back? “Most definitely,” he replies, “this is where I have always found inspiration.”

Yudhisthir’s inspiration comes especially from the shape and form of the god Ganesh, the popular ‘obstacle remover’. “His paintings give us a breath of fresh air. You soar into the space with his work,” says Indigo Gallery’s James Giambrone who encouraged him to exhibit his work. Environmentalist Anil Chitrakar is also ecstatic: “The concept of space is so beautifully crafted.”

With his first exhibition, Yudhisthir has already created a buzz. Even so, making a name for himself doesn’t seem to be Yudhisthir’s primary concern. As he says, “I really don’t care about fame and money. After all, art is not a commodity. It is a passion.”

(Naren Newar)

Charcoal drawings by Yudhisthir Maharjan at Indigo Art Gallery, until 29 August.
Tel: 4413580

KIRAN PANDAY
Kathmandu Olympics 2092

With the wide variety on offer on cable television these days a lot of couch potatoes in the prime of their lives, like yours truly here, are in the horns of a conundrum. What do we watch: 24-Hour Fashion TV beamed live from Paris, or Women’s Beach Volleyball in the Athens Olympics? Both are equally exciting and it is difficult to decide which one goes better with momos and the SanMig.

Luckily, as the Summer Olympics gets truly underway, there are other live broadcasts for us bored house husbands: Women’s Synchronised Swimming and Women’s Gymnastics (Artistic)—two games in which the term ‘sport’ is used in its broadest possible sense. After this week’s marathon tv watching, what puzzles me is if Women’s Synchronised Swimming is a sport fit for the Olympics, then surely the athletes saddling down the ramp on Fashion TV should have qualified for a category in Athens. And what about the Equestrian Eventing Jumping, how come only the riders get the gold medals and not the horses who do all the donkey work?

The good news is that the International Olympics Committee is on the verge of including more sports to test the stamina, endurance and strength of athletes in the Modern Summer Games lineup, and we in Nepal had better start training for them so we can win some medals by the time the Summer Olympics are held in Kathmandu in 2092, and I’m talking about the Gregorian Calendar.

If we are to be true to the Olympic spirit, there are a lot of things from the ancient games that need to be revived. For instance, in ancient Greece, athletes took part in various events stark raving naked. Here I must add that only men were allowed to participate, and only young unmarried women were allowed to watch and pass rude comments about the various male accessories on display—a tradition that carries on to this day, especially during the men’s Greco-Roman Wrestling Semi-Finals.

Anyway, we in Nepal shouldn’t waste any more time in this idle hunter and should get right down to practicing for the 2092 Summer Olympics. There is a lot at stake since the games will be held in our own country. By that time, the feudal in our national Olympic committee will have been resolved with the formation of the Nepal National Olympic Committee (Democratic) and the All-Nepal Independent Olympic National Committee (Revolutionary). The blockade of Kathmandu Valley will also have finished by then, but don’t bet on it. Kathmandu will have to be spruced up, and we have another 86 years to do something about Tin Kute and get the traffic lights at Mati Ghari to start working again. The Olympics is a showcase event during which the whole world will be watching us, and we must put our best foot forward and throw all the garbage below the bridge.

The reason we never win any medals in the Olympics is because the events have been selected in the west, and they’ve only included games they’re good at, like Men’s Double Trap Shooting or Canoe Slalom. We must lobby hard in the IOC so that by 2092, there are games we too can win, like:

- Men’s and Women’s 1.000km High Altitude Marathon from Kangchenjanga to Dhaulagiri in which Nepal has a good chance to win gold, silver and bronze.
- Mt Everest Pentathlon: Walking Race to Advanced Base Camp, Swimming Across the Khumbu Glacial Lake, Mountain-Biking Up the Ice Fall, Sprinting Across the Western Canyon, Carrying Sick Western Commercial Climber to the Summit, Rollerblading Down to the South Col and Hang Gliding Back to Base Camp.
- Team White Water Rafting down the Bagmati, nose clips mandatory.
- Weightlifting Race Relay: Carrying 90kg of trekking gear from Jiri to Lukla in a minimum time of two days. No stops.
- Men’s Individual 25km AK-47 Triathlon. We’ll have plenty of practice by them.
- Political Leg-pulling Heats. Only those who won’t let others get ahead qualify.
- Women’s Bikini Bungee Jumping 1/16 Elimination

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit