

NEPALI Times

WAR ECONOMY

BINOD BHATTARAI

It is a classic Catch 22 situation: the Maoist war is sucking money away from development which is needed to address the root causes of the insurgency.

For Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat, who was already finding it difficult to balance the budget, the task is near-impossible. How is he going to find enough money to pay the initial price tag of Rs 5 billion for the war effort while ensuring that there is enough cash for education, health and other development work?

There is no way he can do it without donor support. "We are looking at an immediate increase of Rs 4-5 billion on security spending," Mahat told us this week. "It could grow depending on how long we have to continue the operations." Mahat has already made one round of the donors, and initial indications are positive.

There is a consensus in the donor community that the government was negotiating in good faith with the Maoists, and it really had no choice but to unleash the army after the Dang attacks on 23 November.

"All donors feel the Maoists have brought this on themselves, and the time has come to go beyond moral support for the government and put our money where our mouth is," one Kathmandu-based

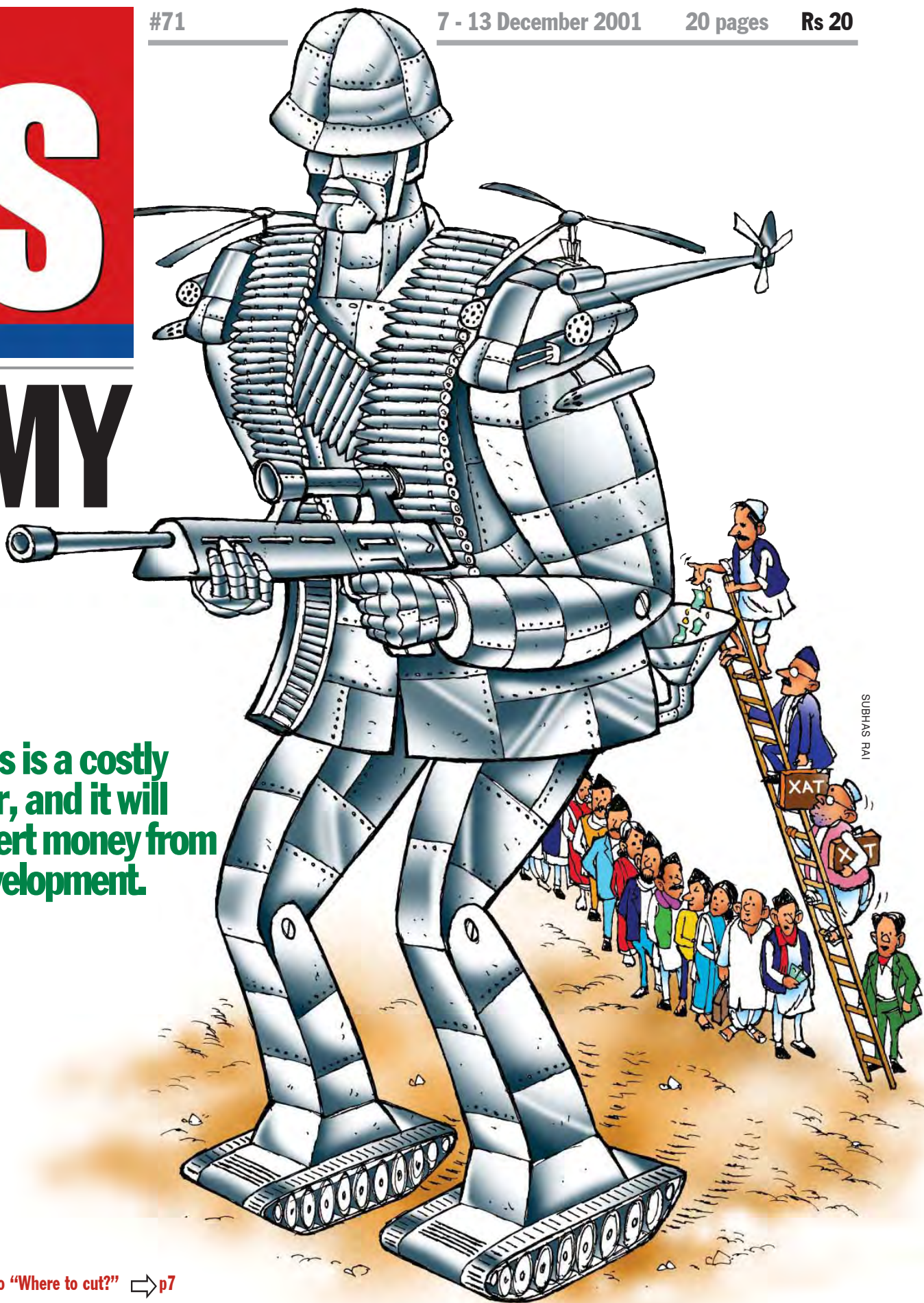
diplomat told us.

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

Most counter-insurgency experts in the Royal Nepal Army are confident they can squeeze the insurgents so they are either defeated, or forced to the negotiating table. But, they add, it is up to the government to show that it can deliver development. And the government's problem is that with the budget it has, it can't do both: fight the war and fight poverty at the same time.

Nepal is already spending nearly 10 percent of its Rs 100 billion annual budget on security. This may need to be doubled, in the next three months, depending on how the war goes. As it is, the war has already derailed spending plans and the government will be coming up with a new supplementary budget with re-allocations.

This is a costly war, and it will divert money from development.



SUBHAS RAI

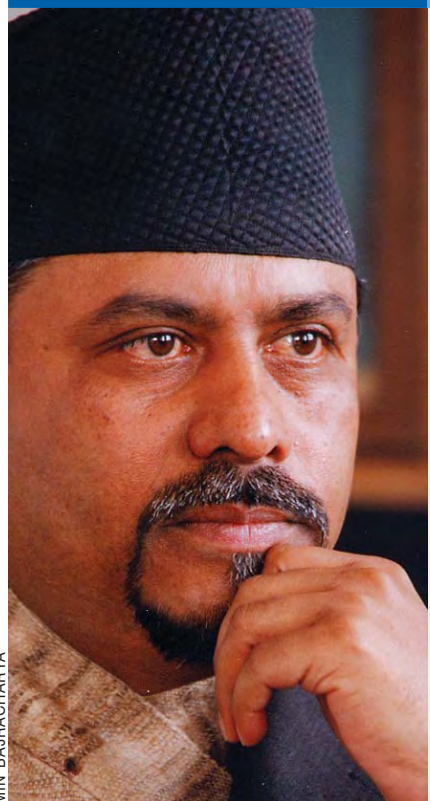
See also "Where to cut?" → p7

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 11

Q. Do you agree with the government call for a state of emergency?



INTERVIEW



Can you disclose the size of the security forces engaged?
No, I cannot tell you that.

Transport and logistics seem to be the main hurdle. Can you confirm that the government has requested India and the United States for help in this regard?
There was a need for more helicopters even before we declared a state of emergency. The army has been trying to acquire helicopters for some time now, and the purchase procedure was public. Now that the emergency is in force, we are trying to expedite that. Reports that we are getting arms and helicopters from India or the United States are not true. At this point, what we really need is the air transport capacity for forward deployment of security forces, because the Maoists have been most successful with ambushes along roads leading to their strongholds. Ambushes and booby traps that take advantage of the topography are their major operational strategy, and that has increased the risk to our security forces. This is why we need greater air-lift capacity.

So are we buying helicopters, or requesting grant aid?
We have made no requests, but we have been discussing possible purchase.

"We have not censored the press."

Minister of Information and Communication Jayprakash Prasad Gupta spoke to Nepali Times this week on how the emergency affects media freedom, the progress of the war against the Maoists and external assistance for military hardware and resources. Excerpts:

How is the military campaign going?
In the beginning we had problems because the Maoists attacked unexpectedly and we faced difficulties reaching the affected areas swiftly. Because of the topography, our only way to get there was by air. Now the army and armed police have reached most of the worst affected areas, ground operations have begun and the Maoists have been cordoned off. The army is doing massive search operations on the ground. We had to wait for some time to begin this. The progress has been encouraging.

Are there plans to purchase from India?

To acquire the aircraft quickly, we may need to consider who can supply the equipment fast, and how can the purchase be done within our regulations and guidelines.

Wouldn't it be more appropriate to seek aid for military hardware from governments who would be more than willing to extend such help?

There are several options. We are now reviewing the budget because we have a very unexpected situation at hand. We feel that the sudden rise in security expenditures may require a review of the budget, and that could affect some development activities. We will seek the support of friendly countries committed to democracy, and who are worried about our stability and sovereignty. We are also thinking about holding discussions with donors to seek support for development activities that could suffer as a result of the diversion of resources for security.

Have some rounds of talks been held already?

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

In a sense this is also an information war. But don't you think that curbing the press is counterproductive?

I want to clarify some things here. The government has given some instructions to the media but we've said we will also increase information flow and keep the media informed of the operations, even provide them access to the frontline. We're mainly concerned about one thing: that the point of view of the terrorists and reports that would justify their actions be restricted. Besides, we have told the media they can report on operations by visiting the field but they should coordinate first with the security authorities. The government is also trying to see how it can conduct media visits in a coordinated manner. So far that has been difficult because of logistics.

After the attack at the army base in Ghorahi the press was reporting responsibly and was generally supportive of the government. Why, then, did you feel it necessary to impose restrictions?

We have not censored the press. We have only given directives asking them to be careful about venting the point of view of terrorists—who for some years have managed to gain a firm hold in the Nepali press and had managed to get them to publish reports almost everyday justifying their activities.

Editorial p 2
The pressure cooker war

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THE PRESSURE COOKER WAR

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

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

The government has been sparing in its use of emergency powers vis-à-vis the media. But actually it has not been required to do much, since self-censorship is near complete. Little, besides the contents of the Defence Ministry's "Four o'clock Follies", ever makes it to print. In fact, most mainstream

papers have gone beyond the official version to paint a picture of utter rout of the Maoist cadre, headlining reports of deaths—exaggerated, it turns out—of top comrades in Rolpa.

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

The official version of events may actually be true. It may be true that scores of officials in "peoples' government" at the local level are resigning every day in Sindhupalchok (by the way, why is this only happening in Sindhupalchok?) or that Maoist attackers are invariably repelled by army units using "long range weapons", and the Maoists always suffer heavy casualties. But the bulletins are beginning to sound a bit like, er, Panchayat-era Radio Nepal.

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

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

The moral of the story is that even during an emergency you cannot afford to insult the intelligence of the public. After a decade of free press, Nepalis are now alert, sensible and show a remarkable capacity to fathom the truth even during an information blackout. It would be much smarter for the government to give it straight.

This is a pressure cooker war in more ways than one. The best safety valve is correct, reliable information that is swiftly and widely accessible to the public.

STAR WAR CORRESPONDENTS

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

For six years while the Maoist insurgency raged in Nepal, the Indian press couldn't be bothered. Now they can't get enough of it. A blast at a multinational cola plant gets a page one headline, suddenly interviews with Prachanda are the rage, and they have even unearthed an ISI link and a trans-national Maoist plot to set up a "compact revolutionary zone".

And they are still getting things wrong. When three Maoist bomb-makers killed themselves while assembling an explosive at a temple in Itahari last week, an Indian TV news went on the air to say the Manakamana

Temple had been bombed. Then they lead with shootouts in Nepalgunj when Nepalgunj was completely calm.

It's true. In times of war, truth is the first casualty.



Pressure cooker bomb captured in the Salleri attack.

STATE OF THE STATE

by CK LAL



Alternative futures

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

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

The working papers available at the venue are very intellectual—very French. French intellectuals' obsession with theory is supposed to be so strong that there is a popular joke about it: when shown that something really works, a French social scientist replied, "I know it does so in practice. But does it work in theory?"

The theory behind the vision of an alternative agenda for a global future is based on the assumption that the world cannot go any further than it has if we insist on following the path followed by industrialised countries. Resources are not unlimited, neither are our wants. The dismal science of economics has to be humanised. Societies must be made accountable not only for their present actions and future programs, but also for

the sins of their pasts.

The logic sounds convincing. Just to take one example, why should Nepal protect its Charkoshe Jhari and let it function as a natural thermostat for the North Indian plains? Partly, it is in the interest of Nepal itself to do so, but as a direct beneficiary, shouldn't India share the cost of saving the last remaining part of the once-famous and dense jungles of the Ganga plains? If this sounds too rhetorical and ultra-nationalist, let me speak for the Indians and say that the British Government owes it to the people of India to pay for the sins of its empire that pauperised the subcontinent beyond belief.

These are the kinds of questions that only the French can begin to ask, and participants here form an eclectic mix of professionals on the margins, activists operating in the back of beyond, and thinkers who do not mind being dismissed as nuts for being unconventional.

The insurgency back home in Nepal is big news here too. The world truly seems to have become smaller—a driver of a public bus here in Lille said he sympathised with the problems of Nepalis living in the mountains but did not believe that Maoism was an answer. Long at the forefront of commu-

nism, even the French working class seems to be getting tired of it. This despite the fact that Paris has a communist mayor, one who personally knew Man Mohan Adhikary.

Political ideology is not directly on the agenda of the Global Citizens' Meet, but it will form part of the discussions on governance in the age of globalisation. While capitalism and its inevitable consequence, organised crime, are globalising rapidly, the civil society movement is not doing so. The NGOs and INGOs that operate globally are not representative of civil society because they seek to impose the value system of the donors on recipient countries. They are merely global corporations with a different focus, different products to sell and a different kind of profit to make. What the world needs in the age of globalisation are civil societies that think outside the box of individualistic value systems, and practice the values of responsible global citizens.

All too often, neglecting the poor and shirking from the responsibility of caring for the less fortunate is practised in the name of tolerance. Tolerance is not just to respect the "otherness" of the "other", but also to be an agent of

change to reduce suffering according to the value-system of the other. Such an approach requires a redefinition of the concept of power.

In the grand narratives of colonialism, freedom struggle and Marxism, the central theme of power has always been inflected by a concern with ways and means of getting it in order to initiate changes in society. Grabbing power has been glorified as the first step on the road to emancipation. But as Gandhi showed, the more noble way is to create power.

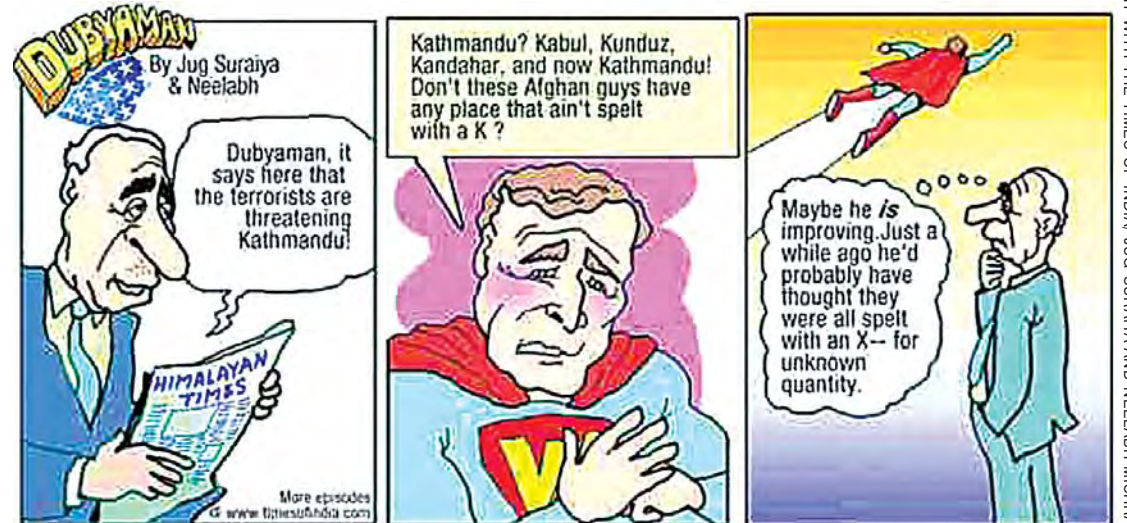
The Maoists in Nepal are also practising a mode of struggle that is outdated. Grabbing power is difficult, and what is more difficult

is that even if power is attained, the results that we are faced with often turn out to be counter-productive. That is exactly what has happened to all "revolutions" all over the world—they have ended up being tyrannies even worse than those they replaced. And we are not only talking here about North Korea.

Creating power is an extremely slow process. But it works. It finds a niche, and is concerned with creation right from the beginning. Positive contribution is the most effective tool of subverting the existing order. A road built in Baitadi does take the market and the state apparatus there, but it simultaneously sets the people there

free from their bondage: ideas and opportunities multiply with easier access. This is too physical example, but there is no denying that alternatives to armed rebellion have to be explored to affect changes in dormant societies.

A gathering of more than four hundred eccentrics from 125 countries of the world may develop its own dynamics and may even veer away from the agenda set by the organisers. But one thing I am sure of is that whatever the outcome, it will be an alternative way of looking at things. The French will make sure the meet does not turn out to be an affirmation of the values of American capitalism. Watch this space. ♦



BY ARRANGEMENT WITH THE TIMES OF INDIA, JUG SURAIYA AND NEELABH MISHRA

LETTERS

WAR AND PEACE

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

**Claus Andreasen
Kokkedal, Denmark**

I pray for peace for all Nepalis, and that the legitimate objectives of the government will be reached swiftly without massive loss of life or destruction of property. A country and people who are so reliant on tourism cannot be further harmed with the current situation. Until peace and civil freedoms are returned to the people of Nepal, everyone is the loser. May the gods help heal our minds and deeds.

**D Michael Van de Veer
Hawaii**

Let us suppose that the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) has a right to raise demands and wield all resources to establish a communist regime even through bloodshed. Yet I have two questions to our Maoist leaders:

1. How do they justify setting free prisoners from prisons in Dang and Syangja? Very few of the inmates were there on a political charge since the government had already set the Maoist prisoners free during the talks. The Maoists ended up freeing murderers, robbers and criminals. So, for the Maoists such crimes acceptable? Such behaviours are not social evils for Maoists? Is this the type of society they are trying to establish

through their revolution where murder and burglary will be rife? Crime is crime irrespective of political regimes. Even Mao wouldn't condone this.

2. How do they justify extorting money from people? The Nepali people are already suffering from bribery. Our political leaders are loyal to big business because they take money from them.

So, if the Maoists are carrying out a revolution how come they are just doing what the corrupt political parties are doing? Is this the way to bring *amul paribartan*?

**Dhruba Nepal
Kathmandu**

The comments by Kunda Dixit ("Let's get this over with," #71) and CK Lal ("A state in dire straits," #71) were constructive arguments for people from all sectors in Nepal, including opposition parties. If we recall the examples of developing states that went through emergencies we can easily come to a conclusion that it is like opening a Pandora's box. I hope Nepali politicians will realise that the state of emergency was the last resort, and they will not misuse it.

**S Khatiwada
USA**

I support the state of emergency that has been applied in Nepal. In fact, I believe it was high time the government started protecting its citizens against atrocities inflicted by the Maoists on innocent people. However, it was shocking to hear that medical personnel would not be allowed to treat wounded terrorists unless instructed to do so. Can this be possible? Whether they are Maoists or not, they are Nepali citizens, and as such, are entitled to their human rights. In fact, as a signatory to the Geneva Convention, Nepal has a legal obligation to the wounded. But more importantly, it would be morally wrong to ignore those who suffer because of who they are, or what they stand for. Fears about human rights violations by the government cannot be alleviated if such statements keep on being issued by our representatives. The government must act as humanely as possible if it is to win our war against terrorists.

**Sujala Pant
London School of Economics**

Kunda Dixit is quite right to say "the Maoist brought this on themselves". Perhaps he should have mustered sufficient courage to say that we Nepalis also brought the Maoist curse on ourselves. We elected these corrupt and the incompetent leaders and tolerated them for too long. The resulting social injustice alienated a vast majority of people and was the breeding ground for the Maoist ideology. The intelligentsia (this includes the *Nepali Times* and other mainstream media) flirted with the Maoists even after they engaged in criminal activities such as abduction, extortion, arson, murder of villagers, and slaughter of policemen. This coverage lent Maoists respectability. The insurgency is now a social cancer that needs to be cleanly and completely excised from the Nepali nation.

**Suresh K Kafle
UK**

Why are our opposition parties so knee-jerk? The government had no choice but to declare a state of emergency, but our unimaginative opposition parties led by the UML had to oppose it. Why can't parliamentary parties at least agree on certain things that is of common importance to all of them? Can't we have a consensus on at least the bare minimum: like safeguarding democracy? The opposition leaders in Kathmandu should be taken to a Maoist-affected district and left there for a month so they can experience first hand the face of terrorism. The government was sincere about talks, but it had to declare the Maoists terrorists, and use the army to flush them out. The Maoists were able to spread their influence because they were killing demoralised policemen, sometimes in their sleep. Now with the army's guns trained on them, life is not going to be easy for them anymore. It is only a question of time before they feel the heat.

**SRJ Thapa
Kathmandu**

The government decision to apply a state of emergency is correct to save innocent lives and handle terrorists who do

not want to join the mainstream of democratic Nepal.

**Balmukunda Prasad
Joshi, UK**

We need peace at this moment, both the Maoists and the government should cease all violence. Declaring Maoists terrorists may not have been such a good idea, because it may make it more difficult to bring them out in the open.

**Ishwor Kharel
Belgium**

The consequences of the emergency could be bad, but I am willing to accept the consequences if I see the end of the psychotic and insane acts of brutality of the Maoists.

**Lalanath Dev Acharya
By email**

I love my country, I am always proud to be Nepali. But recent events in Nepal make me ashamed. I don't believe in violence as a way to get to power, and it grieves me that my country is gripped by it. This violence must stop so that our country is a better place for us and for our children.

**Gyanendra Shrestha
Cyprus**

Reading your chronology of the Maoist movement ("Prachanda's war path," #70) I couldn't help thinking that the Left worldwide suffers from one problematic delusion, that they are right and everyone else is wrong. You either have to agree 100 percent with the ideology, or you are a reactionary puppet of the capitalist bourgeoisie class and a reformist. It is this fundamentalist streak that gives the Left its intolerant, self-destructive characteristic of splitting into fragments. Because anyone who doesn't agree with the leader by definition has to go off and form a splinter group. That happens at the international level: with the Sino-Russian split, the Euro-communists, the Stalinists, the North Koreans, the Lin Piao faction, the Maoists, the Deng group etc, and each had their proteges in Nepal. What we have always needed is someone to give socialism a human face and a democratic soul. Alas, there was no one to do that here.

**Kailash Gurung
Pokhara**

Both the government and the Maoists are responsible for the current situation. They must both beg for pardon from the Nepali people.

**Basudev Regmi
by email**

The Maoists and the government had a golden opportunity to resolve the crisis. But the Maoist never tried to move the talks towards the right direction. They killed hundreds of innocent and illiterate people in the villages instead of bringing the really corrupt people to justice. There is now no doubt that the emergency was the right decision and the Maoists must be eradicated. But the government must also be careful not to misuse its emergency powers for revenge. This would destroy the nation, and all of us Nepalis must be careful in this matter.

**Bishnu Pokhrel
Dublin**

Ultimately, it was the government's inaction that brought about the present situation. The emergency may lead to a further escalation of violence that may now affect a lot more people.

**Sameer Bajracharya
By email**

PARASITE PARADISE

Thank you for the lovely article by Padam Ghale ("Mero pyaro Kangchenjunga", #70). The Arun and Tamur valleys, as he says, are indeed a paradise for leeches, rhododendron and orchids. However, a small correction, orchids are not parasite but epiphytes. The difference is that epiphytes only depend on the another plant for mechanical support, while parasites actually derive nutrition from them.

**Daniela Quinn
Dharan**

JADED

I have been reading the letters column in *Nepali Times*, and am impressed with the feedback and comments you get. However, it is with dismay that I notice a tendency among Nepalis living abroad to generally be more cynical, chauvinistic, and intolerant about their homeland than Nepalis in Nepal. Why is this? And why do you insist on publishing such utterly hopeless letters and infect us with those jaded, jaundiced viewpoints of people who have forsaken their homeland to live in western "comfort"?

**Rima Pandey
Thapathali**

KATHMANDU IMMIGRATION

It came as a surprise to me to find how honest immigration officials at Tribhuvan International Airport ask for donations. I arrived in Kathmandu a few weeks ago on an evening flight from Bombay. Having already visited Nepal once this year I knew that the visa-on-arrival fee

was \$50. On submitting my application form and photograph, the immigration official asked me for \$55. Upon inquiring what the extra \$5 was for, he nonchalantly replied: "It is very hard to be working this late shift, it would be very nice for me and my friends to go out for a drink afterwards."

I was quite taken aback by the honesty of the answer. When I refused, he threw the visa form back at me and told me to go stand in another queue. After waiting in this queue for a number of minutes the immigration officer came back and said he'd let me go if I paid \$51. Still, I refused, and placed the \$50 before him, which he finally accepted grumpily.

It takes little effort to work out how much extra each immigration officer may make in a night when one counts the number of arriving tourists. It does Nepal little credit to start taking "donations" from tourists before they have even left the airport.

(Name withheld on request)

POSITIVE

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

**Rita Fabian
Kathmandu**

SERIOUS STUFF

Can I raise a small voice of dissent to all the hate mail that Kunda Dixit seems to be getting for his satire column, Under My Hat. I have a selfish motive, I don't want him to get disheartened by the letters and stop writing and thereby deprive me and all my friends of the only thing to look forward to every Friday. It is hard enough for this guy to keep on with his hilarious column in these sad times, don't make his or our lives any more miserable by making him stop. Kunda Dixit is not funny, he is dead serious. Just read between his lines.

**Mina K
by email**

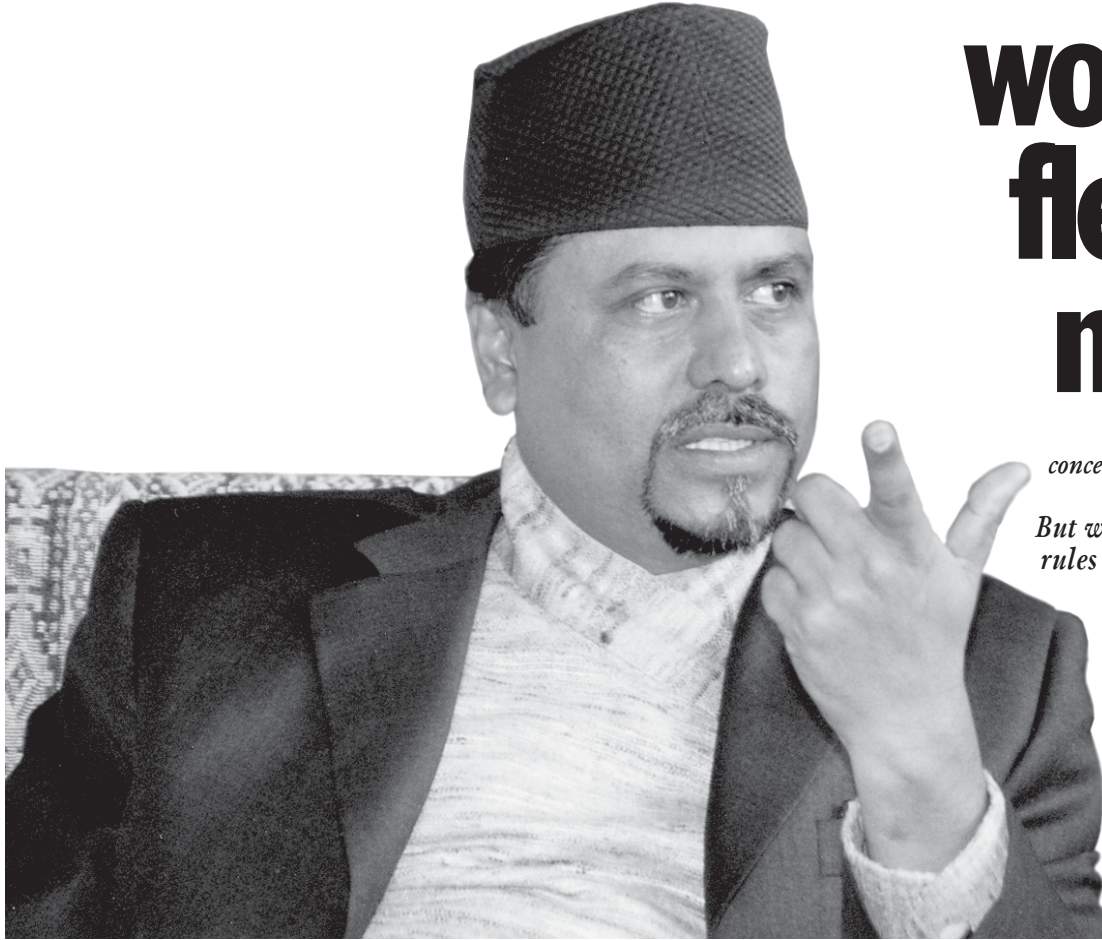
CORRECTION

The founder of the Nepal Communist Party, Pushpa Lal Shrestha, was incorrectly identified in "Prachanda's war path", # 70.

- Ed



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



MIN BAJRACHARYA

concerned about.

But won't such partial information rules hurt the credibility of the media?

It has only been a week since the emergency was declared. Our security forces had to get into operations immediately, and because of that we were unable to develop a mechanism for the smooth flow of information. Our priority now is to inform the Nepali public on what is going on, for that we have increased news bulletins on radio and television. I myself have briefed the

press twice in seven days and the prime minister has also met the press. The Ministry of Defence and the Ministry for Home Affairs are also issuing statements on the operations almost daily. However, we have not been able to organise more sophisticated press briefings, which we hope to begin this week. There are practical problems both in the collection of information and also in its dissemination. Now that the operations against the Maoists have begun on the ground, we will have a better idea of their casualties. So far the campaign has been conducted from the air, and because of difficult terrain we could not get enough information out.

You may increase the number of briefings, but how about the content. Will that be more credible?

We never had to deal with this type of a situation in the country before and so we didn't have a mechanism for disseminating information. I must also admit we don't have the professionalism needed to manage information flow in such times. We understand that the press does not get an opportunity to seek clarification when it has to rely solely on official press statements, that is why we are changing the system to have a mechanism that would allow two-way interaction. That can help improve the credibility of the briefings.

Do you think the Nepali press is being too tame?

From → p1

What about the circular issued by the Royal Nepal Army asking the press not to print any operational information without its approval?

The army's concern is about verifying news and reports on its campaign, the Home Ministry has done the same. In a way they have tried to be proactive by saying that if there is something you're writing about the operations, we will help you verify and confirm the reports.

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

The role of the press is different now because it is an emergency. The right to information has had to be temporarily restricted. But you have to realise that when things were normal, the government had no restrictions on the press. And the press helped expose many things that the Maoists stood for. Even today, the press has been exposing the activities of the Maoists, we have no problems with that. But justifying what they have been doing, glorifying an attack on a police post, for example, or attacking the army barracks, or saying we will now take on the monarchy—that is what we are

Do's and Don'ts for Media

Matters that cannot be published or broadcast:

- That which is likely to generate contempt or disrespect towards His Majesty, or any other members of the royal family, or that which lowers the image of His Majesty.
- That which endangers the sovereignty and unity of the nation
- That which may negatively effect the security, peace and administration of the Kingdom of Nepal
- That which will create enmity between different castes, tribes, religion, sector, community or that which will incite communal tension
- That which will hit the good behaviour, moral, and social standing of the common people,
- That which is against the constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 2047
- News that insult the standings of multi-party democracy
- That which will harm the national identity, bring about social breakdown, spread terrorism, and fear
- News that will demoralise the Royal Nepal Army, the Nepal Police, and civil servants, spread negative feelings, and which will damage their prestige
- News that aid Maoists terrorists, groups, or that which will upgrade their morale
- Matters that aim to use violent means to remove the elected government
- Matters that tend to cause unnatural fear and terror among the common people
- Matters that demean, disregard, disrespect or undervalue any race, language, religion, and culture

Matters that can be published or broadcast

- News that detail the criminal activities of Maoist terrorists without encouraging them
- News that mention the bravery and victories of the Royal Nepal Army, the police and civil servants
- Official news received from His Majesty's Government and other government means

HERE AND THERE

by DANIEL LAK

A week of living dangerously

From the distant war against terror, Nepal's state of emergency seemed somehow unreal. Through the Afghan dust and the haze of propaganda, a crisis in the Himalayan kingdom was difficult to imagine. I reminded puzzled colleagues of last June's massacre. They usually nodded, and wondered how a place with such a placid reputation was having such a bad year. Then they turned back to Afghanistan, Osama and the Americans and forgot that Nepal even existed. Not me. I came back home, as a journalist but also as a resident and family man.

As my plane touched down, the mobile started ringing. A Coca Cola bottling plant had been bombed. Could I get over there and start doing my duty? My editor's remonstrations overrode my own desire to see the family and I complied meekly. That was Thursday. On Friday, I arranged a visit to Salleri, the district headquarters of Solukhumbu. The carnage there at the beginning of the week was the drawing card, not the presence of Everest or the Sherpas' fabled mountaineering skills.

We flew east from Kathmandu, joking with each other about sitting on bullet-proof jackets to protect our posteriors from Maoist gunfire. What is it about risk that lowers our threshold of humour so low? It was a clear and splendid day. The Sagarmatha massif soon loomed and we dropped down into Salleri. As you approach the village, halfway up a towering ridge, the helicopter flies first due north then makes a tight U-turn by Phaplu airport.

"There," said Captain Dhakal, pointing up at the landing strip, "You can see the ruins of the control tower. Blown up by Maoists." When the chopper levelled off and started to mush gently down to the ground, the usual crowd of policemen and local officials was supplemented by soldiers carrying heavy machine guns and M-16s. "Commandos," muttered a friend. A strange bundle, wrapped in white cloth, lay on a lonely table by the helicopter. We gave it no more than a brief glance.

A visit to Salleri now means forbearance, tears, and for sanity's sake, a dose of gallows humour.



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

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

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

We walked around the town and took measure of peoples' fear. By midday, a warm winter sun shone down. Families sat outside, soaking up warmth for the long cold night ahead. They smiled and teased each other.

But they told tales of horror. Sixty-year-old Lok Maya Shrestha showed us her ruined home, blown up because it was next to the District Administration Office. "I told the Maoists, as God is my witness, kill me, because you've destroyed everything I own." She wiped away a tear as she spoke, the fruits of a lifetime's labour lost.

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

On the way back, shuddering through now-hazy skies, we chanced upon a worrisome sight. Just at the edge of Ramechhap district, a massive public meeting was taking place. As the helicopter circled overhead, the pilot pointed to people running towards the jungle. "Maoists," he said, and yanked up on the controls to gain height. "Can't have them shooting at us," he said. This time, there were no jokes about bullets in the behind. ♦



“We have problems with the media justifying Maoist actions, and glorifying them...”

I think this situation was also very unexpected for the press. Maybe it also had no idea how it should handle itself during such a time. The government does not want to exert total control over the press, it just wants journalists to be careful about certain things. For example, those reports that will help the operation and those that would prevent the morale of those in the operations from sagging are okay. We've been victims of confusion in the past also and we don't want a repeat of that, especially because of incomplete information. And even after emergency, our constitution allows all institutions such as the judiciary and parliament to remain functional. And all of them will be monitoring the emergency to prevent misuse of its provisions. For example the Supreme Court, despite the suspension of some articles on civil liberties, is still the agency that will monitor the legality of the government's actions under the new ordinance. The court has full freedom to do that. The press can also keep watch, and help ensure that there are no atrocities during the emergency and prevent innocent people from being affected. The government will always welcome such a role.



MINI BARACHARVA

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

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

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

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

So is the civilian government in charge of news flow? That is what I am trying to clarify. The army is in the best position to inform us on the operational level facts. It provides us information on the status of the military campaign. That information is

made public by the Ministries of Defence and Home. So let us be clear: the information is not coming directly from the army.

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

What if the media cannot, or will not, take up the offer? If people don't take their support and verify facts, then wrong information could be disseminated.

What if you find media not abiding by your restrictions? So far, we have not taken action against any media. We think that the directives are not being implemented fully in many places, but we have refrained from harsh measures. We are only drawing the notice of the concerned media, because we know we will need to have the support of the national media in this campaign. We don't view the press as supporters of the terrorists, but see them as partners of the state in the campaign it is now undertaking. In the past eight days, we have not sought written explanation from any media. Perhaps we are the only country in the world which is so flexible during a time of national emergency. We have arrested some people who were using press cards to aid terrorists. Besides that, the security forces have not taken actions against any journalists or the media.

No comment, no confirmation

Last week the government issued a 13-point list of guidelines to the media specifying what can and what cannot be done in an emergency. (See "Do's and Don'ts for Media," p.4) The press complied—perhaps more than was necessary—and was soon reporting the Defence Ministry blotter only. The army had a separate circular, asking the media to get all operational level information and pictures approved before publication. Then the state-run *Gorkhapatra* came up with a story reporting over 70 Maoist deaths in an army-Maoist clash in the mid-west. However, no official would confirm the report, nor was there a denial in the same daily. Last week government officials told us it was contemplating taking "action" against the "erring" paper.

Diplomatic faux pas

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

A warm bowl

The news may find few believers in these cold wintry days, but scientists say Kathmandu Valley is actually heating up—in global warming terms. The Department of Hydrology and Meteorology says the temperature of the bowl-shaped Valley is increasing by 0.05 percent on average every year. This means we are looking at an average increase of 1 degree Celsius every 20 years. The last week has been pretty chilly, but records of the last two decades show that Kathmandu winters are actually getting just a little less cold. The annual maximum in winter over the last 34 years has ranged between 15.7–22 degree Celsius, but last year the maximum temperature in December–January, the coldest months, soared to 27.4 degrees. The last severe winter in Kathmandu was experienced in 1978 when temperatures fell to –3.5 degrees.



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

Foreign print

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

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Facts, fairness and the future



Health Minister Sharad Singh Bhandari at the AIDS rally on 1 December.

Why does the National Centre for AIDS and STD Control report only 2,097 HIV-positives in Nepal, whereas the UNAIDS/WHO estimate for the end of 2000 was 34,000? Several recent articles have noted the discrepancy and criticised the National Commission on AIDS and STD Control (NCASC) for "getting it wrong".

This is very unfair. NCASC's monthly statistics depend on tests reported to it. These are complete and accurate as far as reporting goes. But there are a lot of reasons HIV-positives are not reported:

- "I feel well, why should I go for a test?" Many HIV-positive people do not suspect they are positive because generally there aren't recognisable symptoms for five, even 10 years.

- "I might be better not knowing if I am HIV-positive." People who think they may be infected may not wish to have a test because of social stigma and misunderstandings.

- "Where would I go?" There are not many centres where HIV antibody testing can be done in Nepal.

- Some testing centres do not make full reports to NCASC.

Nepal is not alone in having such statistical discrepancies. There is underreporting in most countries of the world. So where does UNAIDS get its figure of 34,000? The answer is complex and the science of estimating HIV numbers is far from precise. But it is based on several sources of information. UNAIDS can get figures from "sentinel surveillance", which consists of anonymous HIV testing at

selected "Sentinel Sites". These may be antenatal clinics, sexually transmitted disease clinics, TB clinics and blood donation centres. Some countries test at military recruiting.

Or, it may be based on reports from special studies, for example in sex workers, transport workers, migrant labourers and injecting drug users. And then there are the cases reported to the National Centre.

Using these measures, an estimate of 34,000 HIV positives was made a year ago, giving a prevalence rate of a bit under 0.3 percent in the age group 14-49. On this basis, Nepal is defined as having a "concentrated epidemic" of HIV. This means the prevalence of HIV in adults is less than 1 percent, but, according to special studies, HIV is present in over

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

5 percent in certain sub groups of the population. These groups are injecting drug users (up to 50 percent), sex workers (up to 18 percent) and, in a very small study, migrant labourers (10 percent). Needless to say, these people are the least likely to have HIV tests that are reported to NCASC.

A concentrated epidemic is bad for infected sub-groups, but not so bad for the rest of the population. But Nepal and other Asian countries are a relatively early stage in the epidemic. Clients of sex workers, including migrant labourers, could form a "bridge" to the general population, leading to a generalised epidemic.

The UNAIDS prediction is that by 2010, the prevalence of HIV in Nepal will be 1-2 percent, there will be 10,000 to 15,000 AIDS cases and AIDS will be the commonest cause of death in the 15-49 age group. AIDS deaths, currently 3000 per year, are predicted to reach more than 6000 per year by 2005.

Will these predictions come true? Changes in a whole range of socio-economic and human behaviour could make the reality better or worse, such as:

- The number of men visiting sex workers, including men who go abroad as migrant labourers and visit sex workers there.
- The number of other women with whom they have sexual relations in Nepal, that is, the size of

their "sexual networks".

- The number of men with whom the women have sexual relations, for example when their husbands are away from home.

- The increase or decrease of the sex industry in Nepal.

- The sexual interactions of injecting drug users with sex workers and the general population. This is another "network".

- The success or failure of "harm reduction" initiatives, especially condom use in sex workers and needle exchange in drug users.

Of course, we cannot predict how the behaviour of the population will change in the future. Will there be further liberalisation of attitudes to sex, increasing sexual networks and a disregard of the consequences of unprotected sex? If so, the predictions above will be exceeded. Will people grasp the risk factors and look for ways to protect themselves and their families? If so, the HIV situation will not be so bad as predicted.

What can be done and who should do it? Ultimately, only we can change our behaviour. The responsibility lies with each one of us. But there is a good deal that the government and non-governmental organisations can do, both to help those already affected and to prevent the virus from spreading.

In early October this year, there was an International Conference on

AIDS in Asia and the Pacific in Melbourne. Associated with it was a Ministerial Level meeting at which the Health Minister and Home Minister represented Nepal. A Western correspondent who clearly did not know Nepal was surprised to find the Nepal's Health Minister surrounded by about 50 Nepali delegates and engaged in deep discussion about what the government should do. Not so surprising? Well, it was an unusual sight in Australia, because they were all sitting in the floor!

Whether from the floor or from the Ministerial Meeting chamber, the Ministers seem to have got the message. By all accounts they have returned to Nepal determined to make the effort to prevent the spread of the HIV virus. They cannot succeed alone. At all levels, from the personal to the political, it depends on us. ♦

(Dr Dickinson is director of the United Mission Nepal's AIDS Sakriya Unit)

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It spreads by sexual contact, infected blood and from an infected pregnant woman to her child.

AIDS: Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome. The disease resulting from HIV infection after some years. The virus slowly destroys the immune system, which protects the body against infections and some cancers.

VACANCY Office Manager

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

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

**Regional Director
GPO Box 13651
Kathmandu, Nepal**

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

WOMEN APPLICANTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO APPLY

Amnesty International's concerns

Excerpts from the letter sent by Gerry Fox, Director, Asia & Pacific Program of Amnesty International to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba this week.

I am writing to draw your attention to several issues arising from the recent declaration of a state of emergency, the promulgation of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention and Control) Ordinance, 2001 (hereafter TADO), the declaration of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (hereafter Maoists) as "terrorists" and the deployment of the army to combat the Maoists.

First of all, I would like to stress that Amnesty International appreciates the grave threat to law and order facing the country after the Maoist leadership called off a cease-fire on 23 November and subsequently attacked army camps, police stations and public and private property... We acknowledge the government has a right and duty to protect the rights and safety of the people, and we have appealed to the Maoist leadership to bring an immediate halt to unlawful killings and other abuses of international humanitarian law.

However, any legislation enacted or action taken must be in full conformity with international human rights standards. Under Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Nepal is a state party, states may suspend certain rights in times of emergencies but only "to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation", as long as the suspension does not conflict with the nation's other international obligations, and if the government immediately informs the UN Secretary General about what rights have been suspended and why.

The suspension of Article 23 of the Constitution which denies people access to judicial remedy (apart from *habeas corpus*) is of particularly grave concern. It prevents judicial scrutiny of the measures recently taken by the government. In Amnesty International's view, this is contrary to the provisions of Article 2 (3) of the ICCPR.

Amnesty International is concerned at the grave threat to the right to life in Nepal under the current circumstances. Article 4 (2) of the ICCPR clearly states that there can be no derogations from the duty to uphold the right to life and the right to freedom from torture in any circumstances, even "in time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation". Given that the Constitution of Nepal does not explicitly guarantee the right to life, we are concerned that the

declaration of the state of emergency and the suspension of fundamental rights could be interpreted by army and police personnel to include a suspension of the right to life.

We are particularly concerned about reports that the army and police in [some districts] have been given the authority to "shoot on sight" any curfew violators. This appears to give official sanction to the security forces to commit extrajudicial executions. Providing such powers would be in direct violation to Article 6 of the ICCPR which guarantees the right to life and prohibits arbitrary deprivation of life.

While Amnesty International does not take a position on the deployment of the army *per se*, we would like to raise various questions with regard to the operational aspects of this decision:

- Under the Army Act of 1959, the army has the authority to arrest people and hold them for up to 48 hours. Given that this provision contradicts the constitutional requirement under Article 14(6) that anyone who is arrested and detained should be produced before a judicial authority within 24 hours of arrest, will the government clarify what directions the army personnel has been given in this regard?
- At which places of detention are people held after their arrest by the army?
- What safeguards are in place to ensure the safety of the detainees held in the custody of the army?
- What are the processes of accountability for any possible human rights violations by the army?

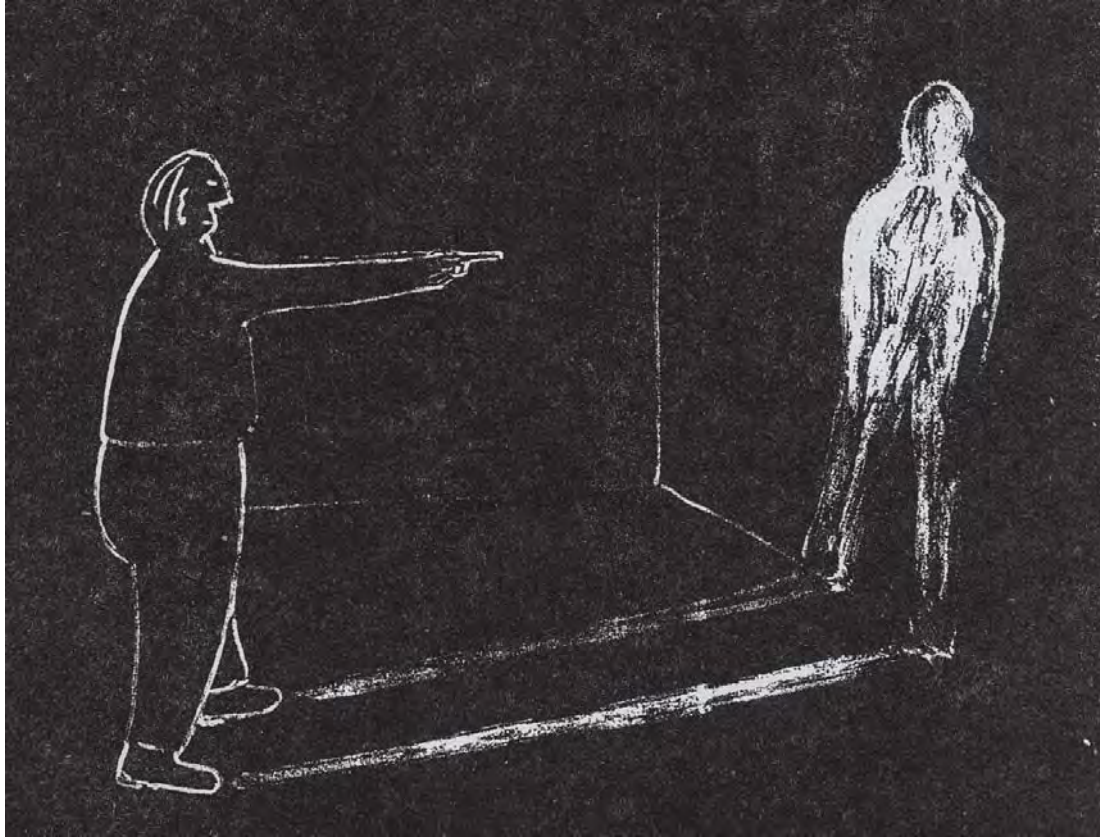
With regard to the definitions of "terrorist" and "person who works in collusion with terrorists" contained in the TADO, we are concerned about the vague definition used which includes "any individual who is in contact with or involved with the person involved in terrorist and disruptive activities" and "any person who directly or indirectly supports financially and by any other means a person or group involved in terrorist and disruptive activities". We are concerned that several of these terms may indicate activities which do not involve any encouragement to commit violent or criminal acts. On the contrary, it might include the peaceful, private discussion of political ideas. This wording could thus lead to violations of the right to freedom of expression as in Article 19 of the ICCPR. ♦

SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL

by PUSKAR BHUSAL



Shock therapy



It took a suspension of civil liberties to make us realise we still risk losing the ethos of multiparty politics.

A state of emergency has compelled Nepalis to take a closer look at the liberties we had taken for granted.

Administered properly, this shock therapy of collective introspection could help the nation pull itself out of the mire of negativism it has been caught in for most of the last 12 years. Although they saw it coming, the executive's recommendation to the royal palace shook the other two branches of government. Several opposition leaders complained that such a drastic declaration was unwarranted—at least, not one covering the entire country—but saw little reason to oppose it

once it was announced. The political consensus in favour of the emergency, for now, is contingent upon the care the state takes in resisting the temptation to misuse its sweeping powers, a stipulation that is expansive enough to give everybody sufficient cover. The legislature is watching and waiting for its turn to vote on the emergency proclamation and the anti-terrorism ordinance that came along with it. If the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, the country knows it must make that investment.

The Supreme Court, initially ambivalent about the fate of the

lawsuits before it, took little time in determining that the suspension of certain articles of the constitution did not block what was already on the way to the dock. Members of the fourth estate, like the rest of the people, are left wondering whether the constitution would emerge stronger or weaker from its latest trial.

Contrast these misgivings with the melancholy they displaced. We couldn't stop complaining how organised politics had brought to the fore all those fissures we didn't realise we were sitting on. Some of those who grew up memorising their high-school Panchayat

textbooks had begun going back to the list of reasons why multiparty democracy was not suited to Nepal's air, water, and soil for some historical perspective.

The past fortnight has clarified how our cynicism is rooted in our sanctimonious judgement of politics. Even the briefest moments of reflection have brought earnest realisation. If politicians all these years kept on making promises they could not keep, maybe it's partly because we insisted on holding them accountable to standards we could never live up to. The nation's short attention span makes it vulnerable to a political discourse that is freely distorted by its disengagement from time and context. People reacted to the emergency proclamation in all kinds of ways. Those old enough to remember *satra* sal attempted to draw parallels where few actually existed. Younger Nepalis who recalled the 1975-77 emergency in the world's most populous democracy understood how soon the suspension of individual rights for the supreme national interest could stimulate excesses by those in power. If anything, the fact that our ruling party shares part of the name of that once formidable Indian political machine only served to further apprehensions.

What was the order of questions that came to mind the moment the emergency order was read out on state media? Would the FM stations broadcast their newspaper roundups the next morning? Would the presses roll for the newsstands to open? Would it even be safe to venture outdoors? The fright of forced silence, of having to stock up on food and fuel, of not knowing what to expect next weighed heavily on us that evening. True, the Nepal bandhs were getting too frequent, but were they about to become a distant memory? The anxiety was exacerbated once the assorted musings of philosophers of yore

started sinking in. Corruption is the infallible symptom of constitutional liberty. Individual liberty mustn't be allowed to turn itself into a nuisance to others. Liberty is so precious that it had to be rationed, and so on.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba could scarcely conceal his sense of frustration at the Maoists' "betrayal". But he commanded enough strength to fight off traces of bitterness while seeking to assure the people that their government didn't arrive at the decision lightly. The prime minister showed great personal fortitude in pledging to uphold the people's freedoms as firmly as he could. It's not easy for someone whose optimism has just been shattered to make another solemn promise. Deuba perhaps drew strength from the realisation that if he were to break this commitment, it would only be because he, too, would have joined the ranks of the aggrieved.

Reaction from New Delhi, Beijing, Washington and Moscow was swift and unequivocal, even to the extent of casting an ominous shadow on the nation's future. Analysts in the mother of parliamentary democracy were quick to point out that 2001 for Nepal has

been an annus horribilis. "The unfolding plot in Nepal reads like Shakespeare daringly updated to include automatic weapons and Maoism," the *Independent* said in an editorial. The *Daily Telegraph* put matters in a wider global perspective: "The focus of the war on terrorism may be in Afghanistan but it is also being played out in the Himalayan kingdom to its east." Across the Atlantic, an influential group of US strategic analysts detected in Nepal's call for international help a chance for the United States and India to work together and reaffirm ties without destabilising US-Pakistani relations. "It also may open the door to greater US influence next-door to China," STRATFOR said in an intelligence briefing.

What has stood out clearly amid the foggy foreboding, however, is that the ethos of multiparty politics, despite all its palpable and perceived ills, has struck deep roots in the Nepali consciousness. It took a suspension of civil liberties for us to realise what we still risk losing irretrievably. Therein lies the therapeutic value of the latest constitutional prescription. ♦

Where to cut?

Donors are watching keenly to see what gets cut.

BINOD BHATTARAI

As the government struggles to re-allocate money earmarked for development to the Maoist war, it will need to figure out a way to cut spending without affecting development.

This is an impossible task and cannot be met without donor support. Donors will also be watching keenly to see what gets cut. For instance, if prime minister's Sher Bahadur Deuba's 41-member jumbo cabinet stays intact, and the budget for basic health and primary education is cut it will send all the wrong signals.

"Cutting the cabinet size would be the first thing the prime minister should do," one Congress insider told us. "After all, the need to appease Congress dissidents is no longer relevant." The enlarged cabinet was expected to cost the exchequer minimum Rs 5 billion a year extra, including claims some may have in the budget.

Asked this week whether he contemplated trimming his "jumbo" cabinet, Deuba had this flippant remark: "I cannot fly smaller aircraft, I can only fly jumbos."

Although the first impact of the war was felt on the budget, in the medium term it is going to hurt Nepal's macroeconomic stability. The government's economic growth estimate in July of six percent for this year now has to be re-calculated. The IMF's forecast of three percent may now be more realistic, but even that estimate doesn't factor in the war. Tourism has seen a 43 percent decline in November compared to last year, revenue collection has plummeted (last year was good partly because of advance payments), industrial production is down and so are all export items. Agriculture and overseas remittances are the only two sectors shoring up the economy.

The minimum any recovery in export will require is peace. Tourism recovery is an even more distant prospect—because in addition to all our marketing inefficiencies and image problems—the

emergency has put Nepal out of bounds for most tourists. The impact of a tourism slump will be felt downstream to hotels, banks, right down to transport, retailers, vegetable farmers and porters.

The government is damned if it does, and damned if it doesn't. Security spending cannot be cut, nor can development be put on hold. Aid can provide short-term relief, but it will not come forever. Borrowing from the private sector may initially mop excess liquidity in the market, but will crowd out potential investment in productive activity. Printing more notes will increase money supply and trigger inflation—which, again, will hit the poor hardest.

The government has approached some donors for military hardware, mainly helicopters. The army says it has a problem of logistics fighting a guerrilla war in mountainous terrain. The military has a wish list that it is showing some donors, and these include fixed-wing short-take off and landing aircraft, transport helicopters and light attack helicopters with night vision equipment.

The ideal situation would be if the new hardware came as aid. The army may be getting at least two Indian-assembled Chetahs (a version of the French Alouettes) light helicopters with high-altitude capability, and its order for two Russian Mi-17s is scheduled for delivery end-December. The government could activate earlier US offers for helicopters for the paramilitary, and even ask for the heavy-lift Lockheed C-130 Hercules.

"Helicopters may be good for tactical deployment, but the Hercules is a very robust aircraft that could also be useful for relief operations in peace time," says Sachit SJB Rana, former army chief. "C-130s cannot land in STOL airfields but are very good air support," adds Rana who saw action in the anti-Khampa operations in the 1970s and was in the paratroops when the British Royal Air Force flew C-130 sorties to drop food during a famine in Far West Nepal in 1983.

WANTED

An International organization seeks to identify individuals or companies with demonstrated experience in developing professional presentations using Microsoft Power Point and other presentation software like Adobe PhotoShop and Corel Draw. Services would be retained on an intermittent basis to coordinate the development of specific presentations.

Individuals or companies with this expertise are invited to submit expressions of interest and a summary of experience to the following address by not later than Friday, December 14th.

**Executive Officer
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Insuring the nation

The government has decided to let the Rastriya Beema Sansthan (National Insurance Company) pick up all uncovered risks after private insurers announced last week that they would discontinue policies covering terrorism and sabotage. That decision has forced the Insurers' Association to reconsider their decision to withdraw coverage for losses caused by terrorism and sabotage after Maoists looted banks and took Rs 220 million on and after 23 November. The insurers activated the clause in the policy that says the agreement ceases to remain operational in "war and warlike" situations among others, and sent banks and financial institutions into a tizzy worrying about their insured cash and other investments. "The companies were panicking for no reason," Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat told us. "There will be nothing to worry about because the National Insurance Company will take up all the risks and perhaps do better business." The Insurers' Association said it managed to get its international re-insurers to agree to cover the aforesaid risks—after the government decision to take on these policies.

Trade treaty update

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

Chinese tourists, perhaps...

Nepal and China have finally agreed on a mechanism to get Chinese tourists to Nepal. The requirements for visitors to come to China's only approved "outbound destination" in South Asia are simple: They would have to travel in groups of at least five and through one of 67 travel agencies approved by the Chinese government. But it may still be some time before our northern neighbours throng Thamel streets. Nepal does not have the desired number of direct flights to China, and Royal Nepal's schedule is unreliable. Then there is the issue of the convertibility of the Yuan, and finally a dearth of Chinese-speaking Nepali tour guides. Still, given the recent nose-dive Nepali tourism has taken, any hope for a better future is welcome.

...but not too many others

It was expected, but here are the painful figures. Tourist arrivals in November were down 43 percent compared with the same period last year, says the Nepal Tourism Board. That takes the overall January to November drop in tourist arrivals to 17 percent. And it was not only Indians who avoided Nepal last month, even tourists from overseas did not come. The arrival of third country tourists was down 43 percent and that of Indians 42 percent compared with November 2000 arrivals. The Americans were conspicuously fewer—US tourist numbers were down 62 percent, and the Japanese also stayed away (48 percent fewer came). The Tourism Board is predicting an overall 15-20 percent drop in arrivals by the end of the year.

Developing rituals



We need a reform movement in development.

Saturday mornings tend to be languid for the Beed. However, last Saturday, 1 December, started out anything but. Driving along usually placid streets, one was hit over the head—repeatedly, I might add—with what appeared to be the capital's overwhelming support for the World Aids Day celebrations. So enthusiastic, or at least widespread, was this fiesta that one might have been forgiven for thinking little else of import was happening in the nation.

Caught in one of the traffic snarls that inevitably accompanies such feverish affirmations of global citizenship, your Beed wondered whether our ritualistic instincts, most intricately evidenced in the announcement of the annual budget, were extending to other "development" activities as well. In fact, last Saturday was a bit of a double whammy in this regard. On that very day, polio drops were also being administered, with volunteers all over to ensure that the Intensive National Immunisation Day was successful.

There is no denying that public awareness and participation are the keys to ensuring better health for the country's multitudes, but perhaps are we taking this matter of participation too far. One wonders whether we have not started celebrating these designated days in a suitably ritualistic manner. That is, celebrating them with great pomp one day of the year, having heated discussion and making extravagant promises, and



Gai Jatra, 2001

for the rest of the year letting them go the way of all flesh.

To treat, say, HIV/AIDS as something to be discussed one day of the year, rather like the work of a somewhat insipid poet laureate, do we not forget for the rest of the calendar that a veritable epidemic is raging in the country? Similarly, are we to forget the other epidemics that plague the country? Do we remember that problems relating to water borne diseases kill more people in Nepal than any other disease? There is no development or government ritual associated with this, so are we to be forgiven for our inattention? Do we have to start agitating for a Clean Water for All Day?

Donor agencies love to harp on people's participation as the most reliable form of awareness-raising. Fair enough, as long as this participation is an organic response of the people. But what do we do when we hear one of the numerous stories of people in

villages persuaded by multilateral agencies to undertake Food for Work programs? The whole year they build roads or lay water pipes through various participatory programs. All well and good, in theory. But this Beed cannot count the number of times he has heard from people that at the end of the year they realised that they had lost a whole year working for programs they either didn't need or that were simply inefficient. It isn't even that difficult to find villagers who migrated here, or to other towns, to towns to get away from the onslaught of Food for Work programs.

The real problem is not that we have HIV/AIDS days or Food for Work programs. It is that for real development, we need real, continuous participation, rather than these little rituals. In a country where access to health services is limited either because it is expensive, or just not available, we have to consider the issue of preventive health services in a more long-term, holistic manner. We should judge the success or otherwise of people and organisations depending on their performance in terms of actual reduction in the number of HIV/AIDS cases reported, not on how many seminars and other rituals they conducted. The scarce resources of this country need to be used effectively keeping the long term in mind. Otherwise, apart from banner writers and sundry professionals, neither the people nor the economy will benefit. ♦

Readers can post their views at arthabeed@yahoo.com

BIZ CHAT



“Strong leadership, sincere intentions and trustworthy governance...”

signals that this time the treaty renewal would not be smooth sailing. Some of us in FNCCI had sensed this and we did try to do our homework. We got together with our counterpart CII in India and hammered out a set of recommendations for the two governments to consider. But frequent changes in our government and other political priorities overtook us, a vacuum in the decision-making chain created inattention.

The other sad part was that quite a few in Nepal misunderstood the signals and the importance of our effort, even going to the extent of calling some of us in FNCCI of trying to fix something that wasn't broken. They mistakenly had wishful thinking that if we did nothing to the treaty, it would be renewed automatically. When India served notice everyone woke up and jumped into the act, which by the way is not helping matters either.

To be fair, I must say that the present government negotiating team is doing very good and hard work. It is a difficult and highly technical work. We must wish them the best. The next three months can be used to collect facts and grapple a few remaining issues like "surge". I am pleased to see that FNCCI has already started work. In the next three months we should make a concerted, not fragmented, effort.

Do you really think that the five Nepali export items that the Indians are worried about is the real reason for the deadlock? If so, what would Nepali industry lose by being pragmatic and stopping those exports if we can make major gains in other areas?

It is true that these five products triggered the chain of events. Actually, only two seem to be the serious ones. The present political equilibrium in a some Indian states and a new wave of protectionism there have added to the difficulties. The chain of incidents and accidents in the last year or so also have not helped matters, though Nepal was not at fault in most of them.

Yes, there were quite a few people who said let us forget these few products who made money only because of duty differences and go forward with the treaty without them. I do not fully agree with this view. FNCCI has to look after investments already made in the country. Technically

speaking, all these products qualify for export. If duties in India come down, they will be in trouble and that is the business risk these investors have taken. But we cannot keep changing a treaty between two countries just because of a few products and a few complaints. Treaties are signed to give stability, continuity and to encourage legal trade and investments. So I think FNCCI took a correct principled stand.

What kind of measures need to be taken to restore business confidence and bring in a spurt of new investments to Nepal? The one thing uppermost in everyone's mind is how well will our country manage the phase of emergency. It can certainly take temporary care of violence, extortion and extreme measures we unfortunately have come to see in our society in recent times. But if, at the same time, we do not address the deeper issues of mismanagement, sense of alienation and hopelessness felt by a section of our society, we cannot have a peaceful future. We will only be walking a tightrope, not knowing when and where we will fall again. This is not good for business.

We need more discipline in every walk of life including in business. Labour law, company law, even our civic sense all sorely need accountability, rewards based on merit and punishments when needed. For example it is a very sad state of affairs that in a country badly in need of employment creation, no investor today wants to hire more manpower if he can help it. Trade unions and the political parties who control them have to wake up to this reality.

In your opinion, what three most important things the government needs to do to get that process rolling?

Strong leadership, sincere intentions and trustworthy governance are starting points. Political parties must listen to the cry of the people and make themselves relevant. They have to forget about getting votes in the next elections for some time at least. Paradoxically, those who do this will get more votes. How can we make more of our citizens feel involved in the nation building process? This is a question we have to answer.

Nepali Times is introducing a quick weekly interview in this space with personalities in the arena of business, finance and trade. This week's guest is Padma Jyoti, of the Jyoti Group of companies. He is a Harvard Business School graduate.

Nepali Times: We have got another three months to hammer out a new Nepal-India trade treaty. What kind of homework do you expect the government to do?

Padma Jyoti: These three new months are a sort of unexpected bonus. Our work should have started about 15 months ago when we started getting

Restore peace, free your economy, deepen and expand your democracy...

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

Nepali Times: Tell us: why Nepal?
Frank Wisner: I've come up to inaugurate our new life insurance operation in Nepal. We are the first foreign insurer to receive a license, and establishing under the brand name of Alico, the American Life Insurance Company. It will open its doors on the first of January 2002 and begin to sell policies. This is a company that will employ in the initial stages about 250 agents and about a ten-member headquarters staff, so it's a significant start-up. We expect to grow: in five years we should be investing reserves in the Nepalese market of around Rs 740 million. We will be making investments in the longest term, which is appropriate for life—and that depends on what debentures, bonds, options, the government offers to be able to make that sort of contribution. We are already insurers, life insurers, and general insurers elsewhere in South Asia—we're life insurers in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan—and so it's terrific to complete the suit right here in Nepal.

Alico had some legal problems have those been sorted out?
The request for a license went through constant iterations, there were filing problems, there were changes of government, there was a court case, but I don't remember each twist and turn. All I can say is I'm glad it's over. We're here, and we're starting.

Is the Nepal market worthwhile for big players like yourselves?
AIG, the parent company on whose board I sit is present today in about 140 jurisdictions all around the world. And we have insurance operations in all of them. No, it's not too small a market. I believe that it is also a very under-insured market. Our present estimate is that no more than two percent of Nepali citizens are insured, and about one percent of that two percent are insured in India with Indian companies. So it's a good, sensible policy decision on the part of government to bring Nepal's insurance industry up with better competition, bring it home, introduce competition, strengthen the financial marketplace. These are all wise decisions on behalf of government.

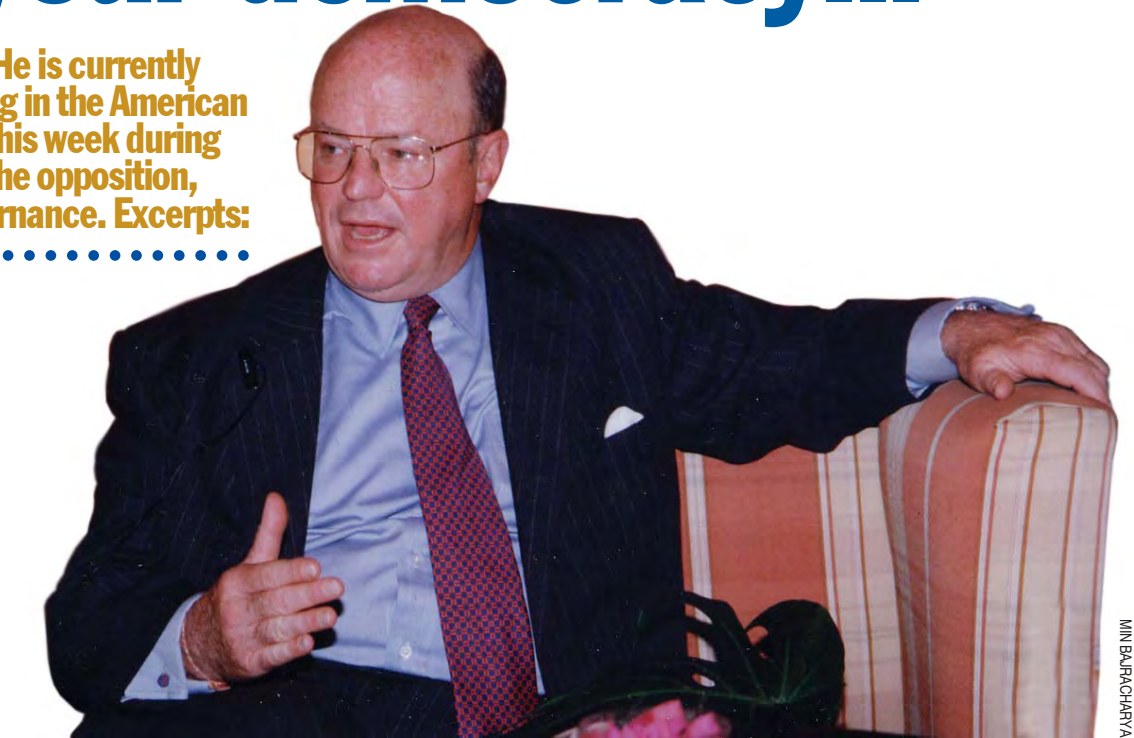
Is that what you would also say to reassure smaller players that are feeling threatened by your arrival?
Actually, it isn't the smaller players that feel threatened but the national life insurance companies that tend to wrongly feel threatened. The experience is that once you open a market and put competition in place, the knowledge of insurance increases exponentially, the taste for insurance increases, new products are developed. The product I launch, you copy, and vice versa. And if you look at the first year of opening the Indian insurance market, LIC's business has grown by 60 percent—

it never had such a good year in its history. The pie gets bigger and smarter. The same was true for us in Shanghai with the Chinese national company—we got in the market, they got bigger. So the fear of loss of market share is proved generally, to be over-stated.

There is a SAARC summit coming up, and many people say South Asia should go for trade and not wait for the politicians to get their act together. Do you agree?
You have terrific advantages in opening trade in the neighbourhood. Regional trade cooperation, whatever its political dividends has its own inherent logic. This market opened will not be dominated by India, it will be a much more interesting market place. It will be better for foreigners who want to invest. It will be better for national companies if their tariff barriers are very low. The pashmina industry in Nepal will be selling to a couple of billion people. I can only think that the most narrow, the most stifling political outlook limits a bold move in too close to a free trade agreement in South Asia.

From your present perspective, is that then the obstacle that you see—politics?
Absolutely. I cannot think of a sensible economist who would argue that high tariff barriers between neighboring states makes good sense. It's a poor idea.

From your diplomatic experience



MIN BAIKOPHARA

in India, Philippines, Egypt and South Africa, what is the checklist a country needs to break out of underdevelopment?
Well, let me start with the political aspect. I would think that where countries are afflicted with a crisis between several nations, or even with the deep-seeded insurgency within their borders, the establishment of a political process, the development of the will to settle the dispute as opposed to try to win or posture. Two, I am absolutely persuaded in my mind that free markets, properly regulated, encompassed in a rule of law, is the right economic model for increasing the goods and services of an economy, producing the resources needed for the best poverty alleviators of all, education and health, and fundamentally alleviating the burden of poverty. Third, I believe that democracy is the best institution to mobilise consensus. Even though it's painful and takes a long time, it offers the best hope to transparency, to deal with issues like corruption. It's the best political model within which to get things done. So, lifetime of experience: get your peace house in order, free your economy, and deepen and expand your democracy. It's the best formula for success in the twenty-first century.

Where have you seen it working well?
It never works well, it always works imperfectly. Those who tell you that I have an absolutely shiny model, are lying. We're dealing with human beings. But Brazil is working, terrific experience. I believe a number of southeast

Asians are working. Eastern Europe is coming up strongly. Prospects for Russia, bring these several aspects together—free markets, democracy. Not to mention the already developed nations. I think it has the prospect of working well in India. I want it to work here. You're having a messy transition. You simply don't build a democracy that functions to everybody's complete satisfaction in ten years. But you certainly don't build a sustainable form of government by having one minority party say that they know what truth is and pushing it down everybody else's throats with violence. It's unacceptable. Nowhere in the world is that acceptable.

Are you also thinking of moving into general insurance, maybe sometime in the future?
Not immediately. This is a pretty tough year. A lot of insurance companies are watching their expenses before they jump out and make new investments.

Here in Nepal, two international life insurers came in on the week that the country went to war with the Maoists.
Frankly, the correlation is purely accidental. The government finally approved licenses—in our case, we've been looking for this market for five years. We could have been sitting here five years ago having this conversation. But that it comes right now, at a time in which there's falling confidence in the Nepali economy...

Is that the message you're giving to government?
If I had sat down last week and said,

"Let's go to Nepal and launch our insurance", they'd say, "that'd be crazy". And yet I felt that it was right that we come, if we're going to be a long-term insurer in this country then we ought to come and stand here. When life isn't super-easy for you guys we ought to come and toughen up for three months.

Watching this, general insurers decided they would not reimburse for acts of terrorism or sabotage. What is your take on that?
Since we're not a general insurer, this obviously is not my business, but I think you need to interpret that fairly to your readership. Your general insurance companies did not cancel coverage. But they're discovering, if I understand this correctly, that their re-insurers outside of Nepal are canceling terrorism coverage not because of the state of emergency in Nepal, but because around the world re-insurers, having been hammered by 11 September, are not prepared to cover terrorism. Now, your situation doesn't help matters at all, it makes them tougher. But the re-insurers are pulling back because the perspective losses from terrorism are beyond anything they can insure against. Every company has a finite sense of dollars. So what do you do about it? Throw your hands up? Run around outside the circle? No. There are things you can do for terrorism. There's a very useful model in what the British did when the Irish were blowing up lots of central things. Something called 'pool-re'. You can establish a pool-re here and I understand that your insurers are doing it.

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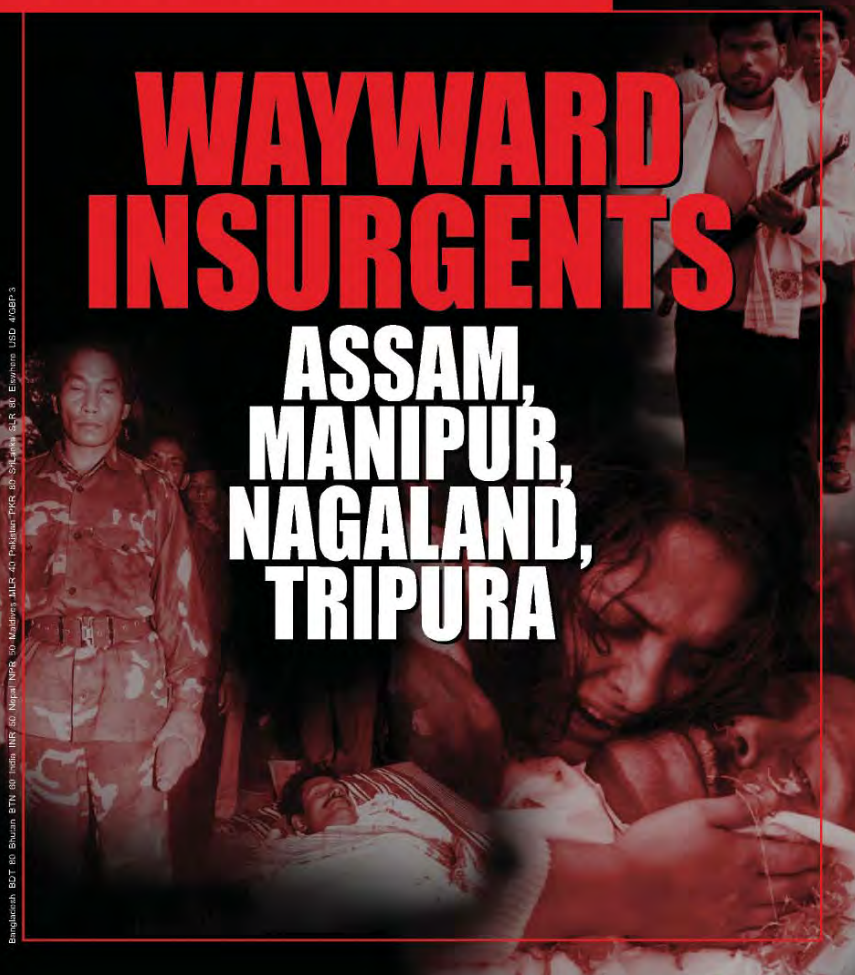
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Reaching yo



OVER THE HIGH HIMALAYAS/KOICHIRO OHMORI

Trekking peaks offer such a range of experiences and challenges, it pays to have the benefit of all the expert opinion you can muster. *Action Asia* magazine approached some of those who know the peaks best—climbing guides, mountain photographers and veteran explorers—for their opinions and recommendations. **Cohn Monteath (CM)** is an experienced mountaineer/explorer with long experience of the earth's wildest places. **Ian Evans (IE)** is an experienced mountain photographer who has climbed in most of the Himal around the trekking peaks. **Geoff Powter (GP)** is president of the Canadian Himalayan Foundation, editor of the *Canadian Alpine Journal*, and a veteran of eight trekking peaks. **Jake Norton (JN)** is also a mountain photographer and was a member of Eric Simonson's team that discovered Mallory's body on Everest in 1999.

What do you understand by the term "trekking peak" and how do Nepal's designated trekking peaks fit with your expectations?

GP: The common prejudice is that a trekking peak would be an easy ascent with little technical difficulty. While this is true for a few of the trekking peaks, it is obviously quite untrue for the majority. Indeed, Kusum Kangru and Kwangde have three of the most technically difficult routes done in the Himalaya yet.

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

What are the chief attractions/dangers of the trekking peaks? How

is the experience different from climbing on expedition peaks?

GP: On all except Mera and Imja Tse, I have never seen a single other person on a trekking peak. I've also been able to show up in Kathmandu, get a permit, get a flight into the backcountry and be on my way into a trekking peak in two days. Try and do that on an 8,000 m peak!

IE: The chief attractions are the simplicity in getting permission to climb, the low cost of the permit and the minimal regulations. This enables small groups of climbers to go together as a unit and climb as friends. The peaks are high enough to provide a good challenge and adventure, but small enough for the trip to be accomplished within a short time span—almost alpine-like. There is no need for any 'large expedition' style of operation or budget.

The principle danger is the damage that can be done to the mountain environment by the large numbers of groups that these peaks inevitably attract. Mera Peak and Island Peak base camps can be quite busy in peak seasons, and litter and waste are becoming a problem. The other danger is that climbers do not treat the peaks with the respect they

deserve. Some of these peaks are serious objectives, they are remote and quite high.

CM: Many underestimate the trekking peaks: they are 6,000—6,500m peaks, i.e., bloody big hills that should command the utmost respect. The main danger is overcrowding on some standard routes and being caught up with poorly-equipped people who should really be learning the rudiments of climbing somewhere else where they don't have to deal with altitude first off.

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

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

GP: Absolutely. When climbers go into trekking peak areas in smaller groups, they are far more likely to use locals as porters, stay in local homes and tea houses and buy local food: when they go on the big peaks (especially in organised groups with

large agencies) they have little to do with the locals. They stay outside of villages, have all their meals prepared, and use porters that the agency typically hires, often from Kathmandu.

JN: Yes and no. Yes, in that these peaks tend to attract many people, and thus the local economies benefit. Take, for instance, the Langtang Valley. My first trip there was in 1992; the village of Lama Hotel had one tea-house then. It now has seven. The people along the main trekking route of the Langtang are far better off than they were a decade ago. But many are left out of the picture. Most groups hire their trekking agent in Kathmandu, and the agent hires cooks, porters, support staff etc. Most of those hired are Sherpa, and, thus, members of the other ethnic groups are left out. It is rare to see a Tamang, Gurung, Magar, Rai, Limbu, or member of another Nepali hill tribe working in positions other than as porters. In this way, the 'desired effect' has fallen a bit short. But at least it's a start.

Another reason for the designation was to ensure that only guides

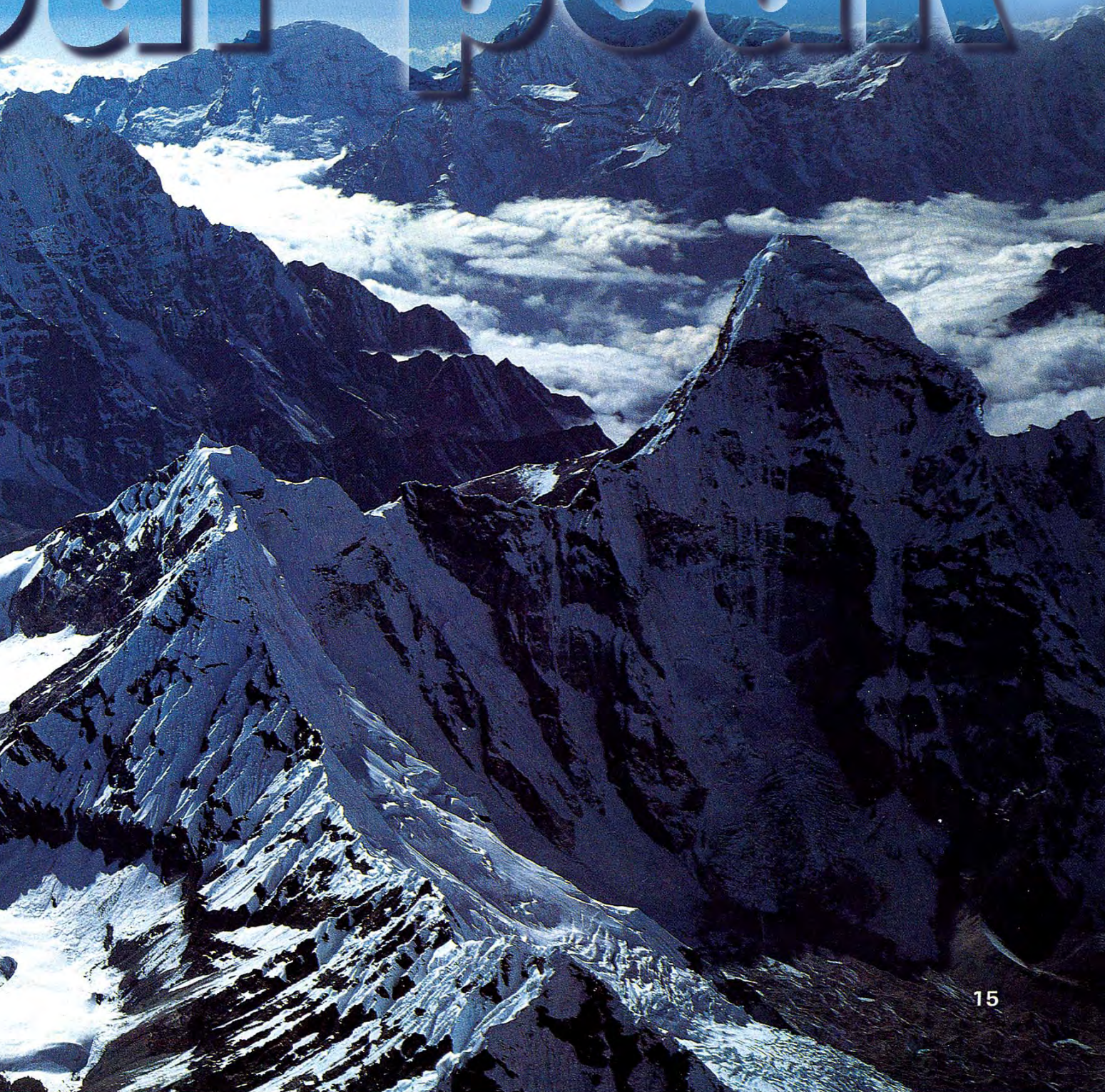
recognised by the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) would be able to run trips. Has this worked?

What is the general standard of guiding?
GP: One of the real attractions of the trekking peaks is that one doesn't need any contact with the NMA infrastructure. You don't need a guide; you don't need a liaison officer; you don't need complicated backcountry access permits. You just get one piece of paper in Kathmandu, then you're on your way. It's far more in line with the way that most climbers run their own trips in their home countries; freedom of the hills and all that...

As for the general standard of guiding, I've never used one, but I have seen many in action on Mera and Island Peak. Frankly, I've been appalled. The client to guide ratio is huge, the guides' skills at rope and route setting have been minimal, and the client care, especially with the language barrier, has been marginal. I wouldn't recommend it for a moment.

CM: Most Nepalis can handle guiding on a standard route when the conditions are favourable, but are limited when things get rough, especially in decision-making with

our peak



15



clients they don't really know or who are weak/unskilled.

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

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

JN: For someone with little altitude or climbing experience, I would recommend Naya Kanga in the Langtang Valley, or Mera Peak

in the Khumbu. Naya Kanga offers reasonable altitude, and the Langtang Valley is far less travelled than the Khumbu (number three in trekker numbers, after Annapurna and Khumbu). Additionally, the Langtang has some great peaks to hike to acclimatise outside of Kyanjin Gumpa, and stunning scenery.

IE: I have to say that Mera perhaps offers the best all-round attractions. The peak is the highest of them all, it is in a remote-ish area but can still be included in a trek to the Khumbu and the Hongu valley. The climb is technically no more than a walk—however it is a long way,

highly crevassed and seriously committing if the weather is poor. The ascent is a real challenge with a typical 'alpine' start, and being nearly 6,500 m, really does test the stamina and determination. One does feel as if one is on a much bigger mountain. And the view is the best of all—with a stunning panorama of five 8,000m peaks—Kangchenjunga, Everest, Lhotse, Makalu and Cho Oyu. Those looking for something with just a bit more technical climbing should try Imja Tse, Parchamo, Ramdung or Paldor.

GP: Mera, Parchamo and Imja Tse are probably the most straightfor-

ward yet still interesting. They require some rope handling and glacier travel experience, but the level of the skills needed can be quickly learnt in a weekend course (that is, of course, until something like really bad weather. Then, you'll wish you had 25 years experience...)

CM: Always be careful in joining a group to climb any trekking peak where you don't know the others in the team or their background in climbing. You are best teaming up with one or more friends of similar experience so you can learn together in your home country, then again together in Nepal.

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Ethics in the age of digital photography

Photo manipulation is as old as photography itself. But what now?

featured a beautiful cover model with a caption that read "Who is the Face of America?" It turned out that the "face of America" on the cover was not one model, but a composite picture created by combining pictures of six different women.

Online marketers are eager to tap into the digital possibilities for creating virtual environments in which visitors interact with human-like interfaces. On 19 April, 2000, Ananova, the world's first virtual newscaster, made her debut at [ananova.com](http://www.ananova.com). Designed to provide a "face" to web-based news, Ananova's "look" was composed of "the most striking features and faces from fashion magazines."

Recommended Links

- The PBS series "American Photography: A Century of Images" looks at the ethical ramifications of digital manipulation. An essay on Digital Truth outlines the problems associated with the "slippery slope" we risk sliding down when digital enhancement becomes the accepted norm. (Their adaptation of the famous "assassination of Lee Harvey Oswald" photo into "Oswald/Ruby as a Rock



Band" is a fascinating test to see whether we can identify the people shown in this different context.) <http://www.pbs.org/ktca/americanphotography/features/digital.html>

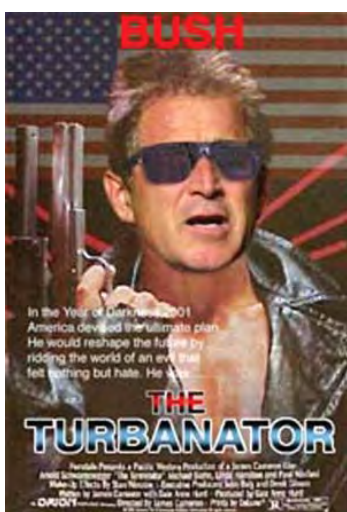
- The American National Press Photographers Association web site offers an excellent report, "Ethics in the Age of Digital Photography," with many famous examples of digital manipulation. <http://www.nppa.org/services/bizpract/leadp2.html>
- Poynter.org features the online essay "Photo Journalism or Illustration?" in which a digitally altered image on the

cover of the 5 February 2001 edition of Sports Illustrated is deconstructed and experts discuss whether this sort of unacknowledged manipulation is ethical. <http://www.poynter.org/centerpiece/021601.htm>

- "Designing Ananova" at Ananova.com provides a glimpse of the thinking behind the world's first virtual newscaster. http://www.ananova.com/about/story/sm_128668.html
- About.com features a gallery of political cartoons relating to 9/11. http://www.ananova.com/about/story/sm_128668.html

Advances in digital technology mean that anyone with a computer and image-manipulation software can easily cut and paste a wide range of images into an apparently seamless whole. The old advertising slogan "Is it live or is it Memorex?" takes on a whole new meaning when trying to separate truth from fabrication in photos that appear to be real. Pranksters, bucksters and even journalists are proving that more often than not, we can't believe everything we see.

Examples exist in all visual media. In October 2001 the National Post featured an article about the Queen being given a cell phone for her birthday, accompanied by a photo of a smiling Queen Elizabeth waving her Telus cell phone. When alert readers pointed out that this model of phone



was only available in Canada, the Post had to fess up that the cell phone had been digitally added to the photo. Filmmakers routinely integrate digital manipulation to enhance special effects in movies. A few examples include, Tom Hanks' image digitally integrated into actual historical footage in the film *Forrest Gump*, *Jurassic Park's* dinosaurs; the creatures, space crafts and worlds in *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*, and, of course, the technical (if not critical) triumph of computer generation, *Final Fantasy*. On television, advertisers display virtual ads on the playing fields of sporting events.

These ads appear to be part of the scenery, but they can only be seen by the television viewing audience. A more obvious example of digital manipulation is when cartoon spokescharacters "interact" with the live children who appear in cereal and snack food commercials. In magazines, photos of models and celebrities are routinely doctored to make the subjects more appealing. And, of course, digital manipulation is thriving on the Internet, where there are few gatekeepers and countless opportunities for misinformation.

Digital manipulation can add credibility to urban legends and hoaxes. In the days following the attack of the World Trade Center, a photo of a tourist being photographed just seconds before the tragedy was widely circulated. Supposedly, the camera

containing the shot was found in the rubble of the twin towers. It didn't take long to discover that this image was from the Tourist Guy web site—a digitally manipulated photo gallery of the hapless tourist plunked into a wide variety of historical and humorous scenarios.

Digital manipulation also feeds political humour. Since 11 September, the Internet has been flooded with digitally enhanced parodies—most often at Osama bin Laden's expense. Images like "Dr Evil and Mini Bin" and George Bush as "The Turbanator" are just a few of the hundreds of digitally enhanced images that have been making the rounds via e-mail.

Digital manipulation can have serious social ramifications. Presently law makers in Canada and the United States are grappling with the legal issues surrounding the possession and creation of "virtual child pornography"—computer-generated pornographic images that do not use actual children.

During the trial of OJ Simpson, Time magazine received widespread criticism for manipulating a cover photograph of OJ Simpson's police mug shot—intentionally altered to make Simpson look darker and more menacing. Not only were there concerns regarding Simpson's right to a fair trial, but these images also fed public debate about racial stereotyping.

Digital manipulation is the foundation of the fashion and beauty industry, where air-brushed and digitally enhanced portrayals of ideal male and female beauty promote standards of attractiveness that are impossible to achieve.

In 1995, *Adbusters* paired a 1990 *Esquire* cover that featured Michelle Pfeiffer and the caption "What Michelle Pfeiffer Needs... Is Absolutely Nothing" with a copy of the itemised bill for \$1,525 in photo touch-ups that Diane Scott Associates, Inc charged *Esquire* for their work in creating Michelle's flawless image. The September 1994 issue of *Mirabella*

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Welcome to our world

The west wants to rebuild Afghanistan in its own image.

JEREMY SEABROOK

As the B-52s make their parallel furrows in the sky over Kunduz, and a boletus of dust rises over each bombfall, western politicians have turned their attention to creating "a better sort of Afghanistan" in the words of Clare Short. She joined the World Bank's James Wolfensohn in recognising that rich countries remain in constant danger while poverty persists and resentment at injustice smoulders. But the model for rebuilding bears small relation to Afghanistan's realities: it is an off-the-peg version of economic restructuring crafted by global financial institutions with conspicuous success elsewhere in the world.

The Pakistan conference to discuss the reconstruction of Afghanistan was hosted last week by the World Bank. The Bonn conclave was different, to ensure the emergence of a broad-based government "freely determined" by Afghanistan's own people. And in Washington, another cabal, co-sponsored by Japan and the US, was looking to transform Afghanistan into a "market economy".

All this is doubtless facilitated by what British ministers hail as the Northern Alliance's restrained behaviour—illustrated by the historically modest scale of its latest massacres in Kunduz and Mazar-i-Sharif—and evidence of a new political

maturity. The new rulers of a large part of Afghanistan are being treated with fresh respect. No longer cut-throats, dealers in heroin, arms and variants of fundamentalism, Doctor Abdullah, General Basir, Professor Rabbani and General Rashid Dostum have been rehabilitated, their titles restored to them by the western press.

So desirable is our way of life that last week's conferences tried to find ways to export it to Afghanistan. "This time," said Tony Blair with an undertow of menace not missed by Islamic countries, "we will not walk away from Afghanistan." No, indeed. We are going to re-create it in our image, setting up a democracy after the fashion of our own thin and depleted electoralism, from which a majority, even here, are in danger of severe estrangement. Loya jirgas? Councils of elders? These are only for local colour, though the very demographic composition of Afghanistan suggests it is no nation-state, but an arbitrary agglomeration of peoples owing allegiance to elsewhere, a consequence of ancient colonial divisions, a far cry from a single governable entity.

The historical antecedents of imposing external models onto these disputatious territories speak for

themselves. The desire to bring the warring peoples of the North West Frontier under the Raj led to the deaths of 16,000 British soldiers in the first Afghan war of 1839. The wish to visit upon them the somewhat limited benefits of Soviet socialism contributed significantly to the dissolution of that ill-fated experiment. Attempting to unite them under the joyless shadow of a version of Islam is now drawing to its close in so much pain and blood. The only thing not yet tried is representative democracy and free market, and that will require as stringent enforcement as all the other alien ideologies.

The cost of reconstructing Afghanistan is estimated to be as much as \$20 billion (less than that for restoring a small part of New York). The west believes it knows the secret of engineering social peace—the healing balm of a large application of cash. This is the real western ideology. The rebuilders of Afghanistan are themselves fundamentalists, committed to the coercive dogmas of an economic reason that bears a slender relationship to human need.

The vision for Afghanistan's future is identical to that being experienced by all countries, bar

recalcitrants like North Korea, Cuba and Iraq; integration into the global economy under the superintendence of the warlords of the G-7. These combatants wish to impose upon Afghanistan an intensification of the injustice and inequality that made it so hospitable to terrorism. Surely the western powers are not animated either by the promise of oil pipelines, those aortas of their economic lifeblood, or by the possibility of contracts for their construction conglomerates, with profits even more bloated than the corpses now littering the landscape of the liberated territories.

The west dreams of spreading its doctrine of light all over the world, including to Afghanistan. They are so busy crying success over the melting away of the Taliban, the triumph in the north, the comradeship of the United Front, the net closing in on bin Laden, that they do not see the millions of displaced in dun-coloured tent cities, in dust, hunger and drought, the ruin of subsistence agriculture and the bitterness and resentment of a new generation, so many of whom have witnessed the death of their parents, the maiming of their siblings, the humiliation of their people. ♦ (The Guardian)



COMMENT

by JEFFREY D SACHS



Under the UN

The events of November demonstrated the resilience of globalisation and gave hope for a stronger international community, with consequent economic benefits.

First, more than 100 countries assembled in Marrakech, Morocco, to complete a unique UN agreement to limit global climate change by reducing their emissions of greenhouse gases. The US is not yet party to the agreement, though it is the world's single biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. But the world would agree despite the absence of the US, showing that no single country, even the world's largest economy, can stop the cooperation of others. The US will likely soon rejoin the discussion.

Second, the world community welcomed China to the WTO. For hundreds of years, China held itself aloof from the world economy. Then, in the middle of the 19th century, it suffered at the hands of European imperial powers, which gained technological and industrial superiority and used that to force trading concessions from the Ching Dynasty. For over a century, China was in turmoil. Only 20 years ago did it decide to rejoin the world trading system. Entering the WTO, China has joined the world community as a cooperative, stable, powerful sovereign nation that will be a leading trading country in the years ahead.

Third, more than 140 nations agreed in Doha, Qatar, to launch a new round of trade negotiations. After years of global protests about free trade, the world chose trade over protectionism. Importantly, developing countries achieved several breakthroughs in the new trade agenda. Poor countries won concessions on access to essential medicines; and they pressed for, and received, promises that rich countries would address protectionist policies in several areas.

Fourth, the war in Afghanistan has not only proceeded rapidly on the ground, but has led to a diplomatic breakthrough as well. The UN will play a central role in the reconstruction of a working government in that country, and in coordinating humanitarian assistance for the Afghan people. The growing role of the UN in this process puts the seal of international law and diplomacy over the global struggle against terrorism.

This grab-bag of achievements shows that the world community is finding ways to cooperate, even against a backdrop of terrorism and global recession. The

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

growing role of international institutions under the UN umbrella provides greater confidence that disputes can be addressed peacefully and sensibly, with significant inputs of scientific expertise as in the Climate Change treaty. No country wants to be outside this global process. China's membership in the WTO is sure to be followed by Russia's membership in the coming years.

Scholars and political observers debate whether globalisation is a real phenomenon or a slogan, whether it is beneficial or harmful, and whether it is a fragile process that could be reversed or a robust process likely to gather force. My view is that globalisation is a powerful and generally positive force. It offers countries the gains from increased international trade, faster diffusion of technologies to mutual benefit, and hopes for less cross-country violence and conflict.

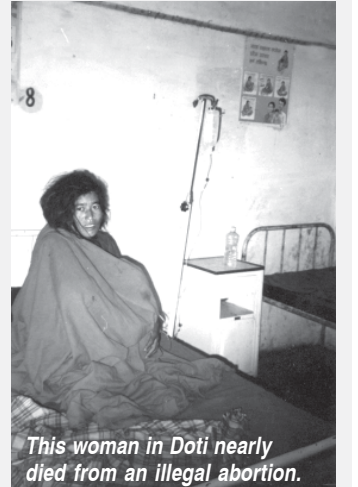
Of course globalisation requires international governance, laws and institutions. It cannot be a game of rich against poor. And so the preeminence of UN institutions in recent events is notable. The UN has shown its value in global environmental management, international trade, state building and reconstruction, and humanitarian assistance. UN agencies will have a critical role to play in future years in helping impoverished countries derive larger benefits from globalisation. November was a fitting prelude to 13 December, when UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and the UN organisation itself share this year's Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. The prize is a measure of the role the UN plays and must continue to play in promoting successful and peaceful globalisation. ♦ (Project Syndicate)

(Jeffrey D. Sachs is Galen L Stone Professor of Economics, and director of the Center for International Development, Harvard University.)

Birth rights

A new report from the Panos Institute, London, titled *Birth rights: new approaches to safe motherhood*, highlights the fact that since 1987, when an International Safe Motherhood Initiative was adopted, there has been little evidence of significant reductions in the number of women dying globally. The report, released in the run-up to World Human Rights Day on 10 December, gives out some grim figures:

- For every woman who dies of maternal causes in developed countries, 99 will die in the developing world
- The greatest risks of maternal death are faced by women in sub-Saharan Africa
- Across regions, lifetime risks of maternal death vary from a low of 1 in 4,000 in Northern Europe to a high of 1 in 16 in sub-Saharan Africa and 1 in 12 in East and West Africa
- In south-east Asia the lifetime risk of death is 1 in 55, in the Caribbean 1 in 75 and in South America 1 in 140
- The World Bank has estimated that the financial cost of basic maternal and newborn health services is, on average, \$3 per person per year in developing countries; maternal health services alone could cost as little as \$2 per person
- Each year more than 525,000 women die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth, and over 50 million experience pregnancy-related complications, 15 million of which lead to long-term illness or disability
- Maternal deaths are second only to deaths from AIDS



This woman in Doha nearly died from an illegal abortion.

The report cites a number of factors that contribute to these deaths. One major reason for maternal deaths is that maternity facilities are under-resourced—local experts said in a study of 49 developing countries that almost half of maternity services would not be able to carry out one or more of the life-saving procedures they are meant to offer. Many countries also have practices enshrined in law and culture that inhibit women's chances of surviving pregnancy and childbirth. Early marriage, for example, can lead to childbearing before physical development is complete. Lack of access to safe, legal abortion and advice is another example. This has recently become harder in many parts of the world as a result of the so-called gag rule. The rule requires organisations that receive US funding for family planning to refrain from advocating for changes in abortion laws, or except in limited circumstances, providing abortion information, counselling or services, even with their own funds. The impact in many developing countries has been immediate. In Nepal, where 1 in 10 women die from pregnancy-related causes—approximately half from unsafe abortion—the Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN) has had to relinquish a relationship with USAID which had lasted 26 years. "If I were to accept the restricted US funds," said FPAN director general, Dr Nirmal K Bista, "I would be prevented from speaking in my own country to my own government about a healthcare crisis I know firsthand."

The current target of the International Safe Motherhood Initiative is a 75 percent reduction in deaths from 1990 levels by 2015. "This target is achievable," says Judy Mirsky, author of the report. "But governments must be prepared to implement the necessary changes in their laws and policies and to improve maternity services for all women."

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ANALYSIS

by MUSHAHID HUSSAIN



Afghanistan's myths

ISLAMABAD - Interesting similarities are emerging between the Red Army's exit from Kabul in 1989 and the Northern Alliance's entry into the capital earlier this month. On both occasions, Pakistan was instrumental in helping the United States alter the Afghan status quo. Then, as now, a political vacuum exists in Kabul. In Pakistan today, as in 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, a military regime presides over the country. Both Gen Zia ul Haq and Gen Pervez Musharraf were virtual parrivals for two American presidents before 'new realities' propelled a somersault in American policy toward Pakistan.

But Afghanistan's second international war in a decade is being conducted in a qualitatively changed regional scenario. The CIA, through its 100-man Afghan Task Force, ran the largely covert 1980s war, unlike the current role of US troops via bases in Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and Russia. Also, China, India and Iran are its de facto allies. South Asia has two nuclear-armed adversarial neighbours, Pakistan and India, with opposing positions on the insurgency in Kashmir that began after the Red Army's pullout from Afghanistan.

The biggest question in Pakistan is whether America's 'rediscovery' of it will be sustained this time and whether the US will do more than it did in 1989, when it simply walked away from Afghanistan after the Soviet Union was defeated. *The New York Times* said last week that among the things US Secretary of State Colin Powell committed American diplomats to do, "even before the military work is fully accomplished" is help assemble a Muslim-led peacekeeping force in

Pakistan and the US must update their perception of Afghanistan

Afghanistan and establish a stable government there, repay and reassure the government of Pakistan, try to defuse the explosive border dispute in Kashmir and seek a new relationship with Iran.

A new realistic beginning for Pakistan and the US is only possible if both countries come to terms with the past, shedding the self-serving myths peddled to promote failed policies. Two such myths are noteworthy. The first is about the 'joint jibad' in Afghanistan by the US and Pakistan, which began well before the entry of Soviet troops in Kabul. President Jimmy Carter's national security adviser, Dr Zbigniew Brzezinski, said in a 1998 interview to a French newspaper: "According to the official version of history, CIA aid to the mujahideen began in 1980, after the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan in December 1979."

"But the reality is completely otherwise, it was 3 July, 1979 that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul," Brzezinski was quoted as saying. "And that very day, I wrote a note to the President explaining that in my opinion this aid would induce a Soviet military intervention."

Brzezinski added that "the secret operation was an excellent idea. We had the opportunity of giving the USSR its Vietnam War." Brzezinski's reply to whether he regretted having supported Islamic fundamentalism, and having given arms and advice to future terrorists was matter-of-fact. "What is most important for the



history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet Empire? Some stirred-up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?"

The second myth pertains to the Taliban and bin Laden. When the Taliban emerged in 1996, the US saw in Taliban control a semblance of stability that met two key American goals—an environment conducive to US-built oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia via Afghanistan to Pakistan and countering Iran on its western flank. At the time, bin Laden, apart from being a CIA-backed 'holy warrior' against the 'Evil

Empire' during the Cold War as late as 1996, or even 1998, was not yet on the top of the American 'hit-list' for the Muslim world.

US media reports say that Sudan was willing to extradite bin Laden but that the Clinton administration felt "it was lacking a case to indict him in US courts." Likewise, a recent interview of former Saudi Arabian head of intelligence, Prince Turki al Faisal, has not been refuted—it said that before the US cruise missile attacks on Afghanistan in August 1998, Taliban supremo Mullah Omar was agreeable to handing bin Laden over to a third country. ♦ (IPS)

Rebuilding Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD - In helping reconstruct Afghanistan, donor agencies and governments must take care to let Afghans shape what they would like to see in the country, officials from donor agencies said. Dr Paul Oquist of the UNDP said Afghanistan can look to post-war Japan and Germany as countries that managed to transform destroyed industrial infrastructure into an opportunity to construct modern, competitive economic and industrial infrastructure. The Islamabad meeting to

discuss the reconstruction of the social and economic infrastructure in war-ravaged Afghanistan ran parallel to a meeting in Germany on the country's future political dispensation. Of the over 300 participants at the meeting here, most are Afghans from NGOs, the assistance community and non-government groups. None are from the tribal mujahideen groups.

In recent years, international assistance to Afghanistan totalling \$200 to 300 million annually has gone overwhelmingly to humanitarian relief, usually in the form of food aid and other in-kind assistance. In the absence of an effectively functioning government, service delivery or leadership, NGOs have become the main actors in areas such as primary education (especially for girls), rural water supply, basic health units and de-mining. A World Bank paper explained: "Reconstruction will

need to be combined with a massive development effort: education and health, which never reached most of the population, will need to be greatly expanded." Afghanistan's agricultural production base has to be able to support more people and roads and infrastructure fixed to reach inaccessible parts of the country. One of the biggest problems of the last 10 years of aid to Afghanistan has been the extremely high overhead costs paid by donors to deliver aid, so there is a need to design future programmes around as few international staff inputs as possible. This would mean extensive management and control by Afghans, and development assistance aimed at building the capacity of Afghans to run these programmes. But doing economic and social reconstruction work in Afghanistan may not be easy even for major donors. For example, the Asian Development Bank (AsDB) has not had operations in Afghanistan since 1980 although the country is a founding member of the bank.

Afghanistan's economic situation has regional spillover effects—through unofficial trade, narcotics, terrorism and extremism, financial flows, and movements of people. These, says the World Bank, have undermined revenue collection, governance and the effectiveness of economic policies in neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan. Neighbouring countries are thus also expected to be beneficiaries of the rebuilding process. But none of the six countries around Afghanistan, including the host Pakistan, have been invited to the meeting and most speakers are either international bureaucrats or development specialists, in what some said looked like an effort to stay away from politics. Yoshihiro Iwasaki, an AsDB director, said that in recent weeks, the bank has had discussions with member governments, especially with those of the directly affected economies including the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. "Any Afghanistan rehabilitation and reconstruction will require a long-term approach for all the neighbouring countries," he confirmed. Expecting that the huge rehabilitation exercise next door would boost the country's struggling economy, the Pakistan government has prepared the business community to be ready to participate in the reconstruction work. Already, Pakistan has provided wheat to World Food Programme on credit and now is poised to offer its expertise for building irrigation infrastructure and clearing landmines in Afghanistan. (IPS)

High-flier in low times

JAKARTA - Just a couple of years before Indonesian strongman Suharto stepped down from power in 1998, the Indonesian Aerospace Company (PTDI), had been touted as the symbol of the country's entry to the high-technology world. Then Research and Technology Minister Baharuddin Jusuf Habibie had turned what was once part of the Indonesian air force into PTDI, meaning it to go full-time into commercial aircraft manufacturing. Habibie, an engineer and a close friend of Suharto who later succeeded him as President, snagged billions of dollars from the government to finance and operate the company. But the company soon came under fire for lavish spending, inefficiency and alleged corruption. Still, in 1997, the PTDI had profits amounting to \$75 million, out of sales reaching \$124.9 million, according to the country's Labour Forum. But since 1998, its profits have been declining, dropping to \$34 million last year. This year, profits are just clearing \$30 million. PTDI director Jusman says the firm landed only two aircraft-making contracts this year, one from South Korea, for nine CN-235 planes, the other from Pakistan, for five of the same. The contracts are together worth about \$182 million—enough to pay PTDI's 10,600 employees for three months. "Foreign buyers do not want to invest here because PTDI does not perform good and has no competitive advantage," says Jusman. There are questions about how the company has managed to remain open, pay its workers and be in the black despite dismal sales. Many suspect it is still subsidised by the government, despite no budget allocation for it since 1999. PTDI officials profess ignorance about any so-called "non-budgetary" discretionary funds being funnelled into the company. Business operations alone cost some \$20 million per month and workers' wages, about \$30 million a month. (IPS)

COMMENT

by JEAN-PIERRE LEHMANN

Growth, Asian-style

With the proverbial benefit (and embarrassment) of hindsight, it is clear that growth patterns over the last half-century were little understood and hardly ever forecast by economists. In the 1960s, right when Asia's tiger economies were beginning to take off, for example, Nobel laureate Gunnar Myrdal wrote *The Asian Drama*, diagnosing the causes of Asian poverty and explaining it appeared ineradicable.

Simultaneously, a strong consensus developed among economists and policymakers favouring the import substitution policies then being pursued by countries including India, Argentina, Brazil, Egypt and Turkey. After beggaring their adherents, these policies are now discredited. Meanwhile, no one predicted Taiwan's phenomenal growth, and Japan's economic "miracle" went unnoticed until *The Economist's* Norman Macrae published his seminal 1962 "Consider Japan" article.

Although we do not necessarily understand what precisely causes growth and development, we do know that some things work and others do not. Too few examples of "successful development" exist, but they deserve greater understanding.

Outstanding failures—countries that do poorly on purely economic criteria as well as in the Human Development Index—should also be closely examined. These failures are primarily in sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East, but the interesting thing about East Asia is that it has both remarkable success stories and abject failures. The achievements of South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong are next door to the catastrophes of North Korea, Laos, Cambodia and Burma.

When I first visited Taiwan in 1966, a major source of foreign exchange was prostitution for American soldiers on R&R (rest and recuperation) from the Vietnam War. Today, IT fuels Taiwan's economy. South Korea at the time had a lower per capita GDP than Nigeria. Today South Korea, an OECD member, provides aid to Nigeria. Singapore and Hong Kong have similar stories. I spent part of 1967 in Cambodia and also Burma. At that time, both were better off than South Korea, and Burma was one of Asia's more promising economies. Today Cambodia is among the worst tragedies of the last half-century, and Burma is most pitiful



Globalisation and open societies have more than purely economic benefits.

Korea's military dictatorship had no choice but to invest in education to improve its workforce. This sowed the seeds of its demise—"revolting students" took to the streets and sent the military back to the barracks.

The historical dynamics and empirical evidence from Asia are overwhelming. Globalisation and open societies, even if imperfect, benefit nations not only in purely economic terms, but in social, political and cultural ones as well. We should develop open societies and encourage better integration of global markets, rather than resuscitate bankrupt theories of economic autarky, self-reliance and protectionism that impede growth and inflict untold damage. ♦

(Project Syndicate)

(Jean-Pierre Lehmann is Professor of International Political Economy at the International Institute for Management Development, Paris.)

“This is a different army”

Himal Khabarpatrika, 1-15 December

An interview with Sachit SJB Rana, former Chief of Army Staff

By when do you think the Maoists will be brought under control?

That depends on the Maoists. Their strength will be exhausted in two or three months if they continue with the kind of attacks they carried out in Gorahi and Salleri. The army might have fallen short in Dang, but the Maoists have not even been able to enter areas after it has been put on alert. If the Maoists continue with a guerrilla war, it will take longer.

How much longer?

It takes time to identify the position of the enemy in guerrilla warfare. The army has to be able to stop their support and supply routes, only then will it be in a position to capture them.

Is finding their hideouts the only obstacle now?

No. After all, they withdrew when the army went on the offensive. This shows that the Maoists are not capable of taking on the army.

And how capable is the army that is now fighting the Maoists?

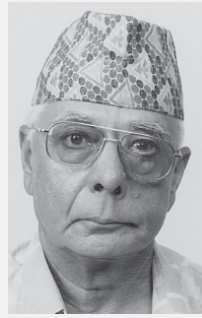
You have seen what the army is capable of. Even now, when the Maoists are on the defensive and going into hiding, the army is attacking them. The Maoists are suffering high losses. The Maoists could reach a stage where they run out of arms and ammunition. This will not happen to the army.

What else does the army need?

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

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

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



Is this just a ploy to disarm the enemy?

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

Are such operations expensive?

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

The army is said to have big ambitions.

Apparently the purchase of helicopters and new weapons is linked to this campaign...

Look, until democracy was restored, the police and the army used to get what they required.



After that, the yearly 10 to 20 percent increment in their budgets was stopped. The army could not even fulfil its basic necessities. When the Maoist movement was beginning, the government asked the then Chief of Army Staff for a plan to bring them under control. He submitted his plan to the government. It categorically said that the Maoists had to be fought and this would require Rs 500-600 million. The government believed the army was asking for too much and instead ordered the police to quell the Maoists. To this day the army is fighting with 7.62 mm rifles, weapons first bought in 1972/73. GPMG (General Purpose Machine Guns), the weapons we use for aerial attacks are pre-World War II models. We do not have helicopters with night-vision. At least the Maoists have drawn attention to this. If the army is not taken care of even now, we may soon have a bigger problem than just the Maoists.

Some say there are reasons other than those given to the public for imposing an emergency?

No, no there is nothing like that. I have also heard that once the army leaves the barracks, it will not return. Since the army helped the king in the 1960 coup, it is natural for people to be suspicious. But the situation is completely different now. Back then we had a mostly illiterate army, now it is educated. There is a vast difference between the two. I want to assure you that once the army has finished the work it has been given, it will return to the barracks. There is no doubt about this.

What are the chances that innocent people will die in this engagement?

People caught in the crossfire will definitely be killed. We already know that a 13-year-old was killed in Salleri. You cannot stop that. Once the army finds or sees anyone coming forward with their hands raised, they should not shoot at them, whether they are Maoist rebels or innocent people. The army must catch them and take them prisoner. The army is a disciplined force, it will not trouble innocent people. It will only take action against its targets.

Some people are of the belief that suppressing the movement this way will be counter-productive. Many innocents died in the police Kilo Sierra Two operation. That was certainly counter-productive.

If the police had only attacked places where the Maoists were, it would not have been counter-productive at all. The people had no alternative, they had to follow the dictates of the Maoists. People had to buy their freedom and get out of the hold of the Maoists in any way. Now, if the army behaves the way the police did, then that too will be counter-productive.

Maoist hit banks

Himal Khabarpatrika, 1-15 December

In the third week of November Maoist rebels attacked Dang, Syangja and Solukhumbu and looted cash and jewellery totalling almost Rs 150 million from banks, financial institutions and cooperatives. According to information available to us, they looted almost Rs 89 million in cash and about Rs 56 million worth of gold, silver and other valuables. In addition to this, they took 20 guns and hundreds of rounds of ammunition from the guards of the banks.

Salleri, Solukhumbu was attacked on Sunday (25 November) and the rebels also attacked the Rastriya Baniya Bank branch, looting Rs 15 million in cash and ornaments, and other valuables worth Rs 500,000. Bonds worth Rs 13 million set aside for government expenditure were taken, as well as four guns. The Maoists attacked both the district police station and the bank around midnight. A source told us on condition of anonymity that hundreds of Maoists attacked the bank, and asked the bank manager Sadanand Mehta to come and open the safe. Mehta told them that the safe could not be opened with his keys only, at which point they tried to break it open themselves. The Maoists then beat Mehta up and eventually succeeded in breaking open the safe. After looting the safe, the Maoists even took away the bank's curtains and bed sheets.

In an earlier attack in Gorahi, Dang, the Maoists looted a branch of the Nepal Bank Ltd (NBL) and a branch of the Agricultural Development Bank. In Narayanpur, they looted a branch of the Rastriya Baniya Bank, as well as other financial institutions and cooperatives. NBL sources say the rebels took away Rs 37 million in cash, Rs 25 million worth of valuables, a motorcycle, six guns and 50 rounds of ammunition from the Gorahi office. Of the Rs 37 million looted, Rs 20 million actually belonged to the Rastriya Baniya Bank. The rebels looted Rs 28 million from the Agricultural Development Bank and one 12-bore gun. From the bank in Narayanpur, they looted almost Rs 1.5 million and three guns.

That very day, the Maoists attacked Syangja's district headquarters Putali Bazaar, and also Waling town. They took away Rs 25 million in cash and valuables worth Rs 26 million from the branches of NBL and the Agricultural Development Bank. The Maoists also took Rs 6.5 million from the Putali Bazaar NBL branch, from the only safe they managed to open. They tried to blow open a second safe with explosives, but only succeeded in burning its contents. The Maoists could not break open the other two safes, which contained close to Rs 20 million belonging to the Rastriya Bank and earmarked for government expenditure. Similarly, the rebels looted Rs 18 million cash and Rs 1.5 million in valuables from the NBL, Waling.

The Maoist rebellion has entered its sixth year, and is mostly financed by looting banks, financial institutions and cooperatives. Since the insurgency began, the Maoists have looted more than 20 branches of the NBL, the Agricultural Development Bank and the Rastriya Baniya Bank, and carried away cash and valuables totalling over Rs 250 million. More than 100 branches of these banks have had to be shut down or merged with other branches due to these attacks. The Maoists have attacked 110 offices of the Small Farmers Development Program of the Agricultural Development Bank.

Blow-by-blow

Jana Aastha, 28 November

“The Maoists attacked a helicopter in Surkhet airport.” This was the message

conveyed to the officer in charge of the Dang army barracks, Major Naresh Uprety by the officer in charge of the battalion stationed in Surkhet. As soon as Major Naresh Uprety heard this, he called all his officers and the battalion and placed them on alert. Nothing happened until 10PM, after which Major Uprety called off the alert. All the weapons were deposited in the armoury and everyone barring the sentry and a few other soldiers went to sleep. It was about 10.45PM.

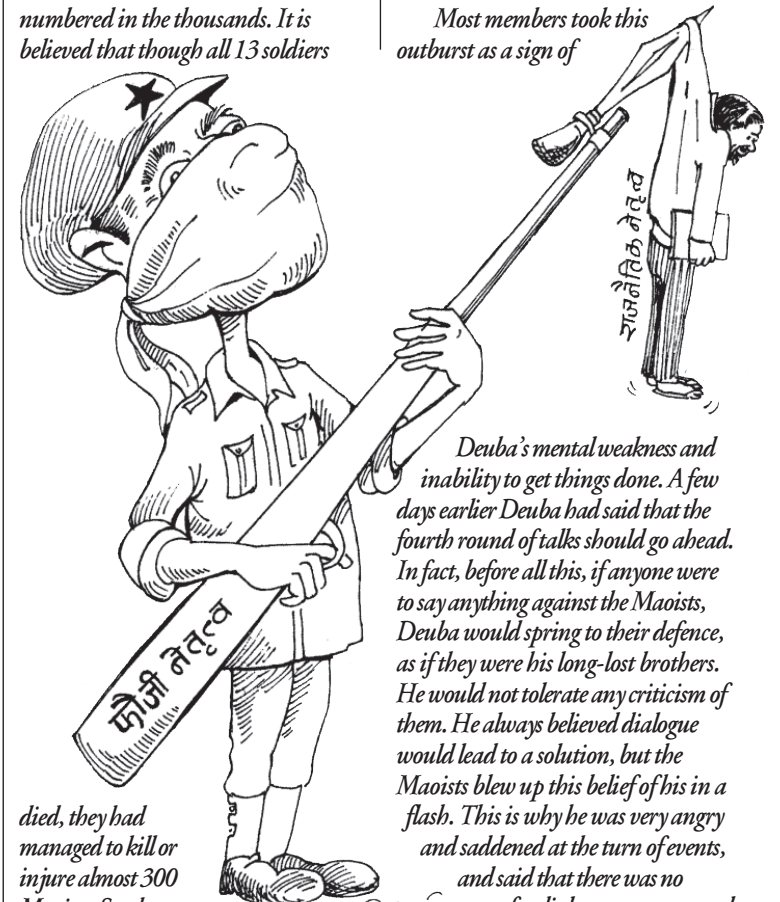
About 20 to 25 minutes, later the peace at the barracks was shattered. The Maoists attacked the town, overpowered the police and the district administration, and moved towards the army barracks. They crashed a Sajha transport bus into the barrack compound at five minutes past 11. The rebels then split into two groups, one moving towards the area where the soldiers were sleeping and the other towards the armoury that was being guarded by 13 soldiers.

The 13 fought back as long as their ammunition lasted. The Maoists numbered in the thousands. It is believed that though all 13 soldiers

such. He further said that though party members had been correct in calling them terrorists right from the start, the party and government should still leave the door open for dialogue. On hearing this, Deuba lost his temper and exploded. He shouted, “Now no dialogue will take place with the Maoists. They are terrorists. I was never in favour of a dialogue with them, and I shall never be.”

The minute he said this, many people had to try and control their laughter. They reminded Deuba that he was the person always in favour of dialogue. Deuba retorted that he had never believed the matter could be resolved through dialogue. He further said, “Kishunji trapped me. He asked me to form all sorts of committees for dialogue. He set me up. I was never for a dialogue, and I will never be in favour of it. Now there must be no dialogue with them. It is completely unnecessary to leave the door open for talks with them.”

Most members took this outburst as a sign of



died, they had managed to kill or injure almost 300 Maoists. So, the Maoists focused more on collecting their injured and dead, rather than on attacking. As a result, they were killed in large numbers. Those who escaped the onslaught started loading their incapacitated and dead into trucks. Army sources say the Maoists were intent on capturing the barracks, and so kept fighting for more than two hours, trying to get the army to exhaust its ammunition. What this policy ended up in causing was a large number of Maoist casualties. Major Uprety then moved towards the armoury to replenish ammunition. He was shot in the neck and died immediately. After he fell, Captain Karki took over and also moved towards the armoury to get more firepower. He, too, was shot down. As the soldiers could not get more weapons and ammunition either, they were killed by the Maoists.

Deuba's mental weakness and inability to get things done. A few days earlier Deuba had said that the fourth round of talks should go ahead. In fact, before all this, if anyone were to say anything against the Maoists, Deuba would spring to their defence, as if they were his long-lost brothers. He would not tolerate any criticism of them. He always believed dialogue would lead to a solution, but the Maoists blew up this belief of his in a flash. This is why he was very angry and saddened at the turn of events, and said that there was no room for dialogue anymore and that he had never believed in negotiations with them.

Kabul and Kathmandu

Bimarsa, 30 November

शाह ताहिक विमर्श

Both (Nepal and Afghanistan) are mountainous countries. Both are landlocked. Earlier both had also had a monarchies. Then terrorists destroyed Afghanistan and the army moved in to control the situation.

Is Nepal going the Afghanistan way? There they have the Taliban, here we have the Maoists. There they have bin Laden and Mullah Omar, here we have Comrades Prachanda and Badal. Is our country going to be similarly destroyed? This is the question on every citizen's mind now. The same people who raise this question reply that it is impossible, that they will not let it happen.

Whatever Osama and the Taliban did in Afghanistan, the Maoists have done in our country. A political analyst told us that both made the mistake of underestimating the enemy.

Within four days of the imposition of an emergency, the Maoists have been decimated. So many have died that it will be easier to count them in the dozens, rather than individually. It is difficult to give anything more than an estimate of how many Maoists have died, since it is their practice to take the bodies of their fallen comrades away. The army is carrying out its search-and-destroy operations with vigour. So far (after Dang) four army personnel have been killed and seven have been injured...

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Every democratic leader must try and solve all problems, small and big, through dialogue.

Former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai in Punarjigaran, 4 December



You say you don't see the papers? These are all newspapers!

Indoors, outdoors and no-fly zones



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

MARTIN LIPTON

England has asked Holland to help them out after learning that their grudge World Cup showdown with Argentina will be played indoors. The 7 June clash at Sapporo's Hiroba Dome will be the first competitive game England has

played in a covered stadium and Football Association (FA) officials were trying to persuade Holland to close the roof at the Amsterdam Arena for the 13 February friendly in an attempt to replicate conditions in Japan.

Even that would not fully prepare England for the space-age



technology of the Hiroba Dome. The seats on one side of the arena part as the pitch, which is kept outside under natural light, is brought in on a hovering stage before being spun through 90 degrees and set in place.

It has been suggested that the dark background makes it harder to see the ball, especially for goalkeepers, and England wants to leave no stone unturned in their preparations for the Group of Fear.

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

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

Paraguay, second to Argentina in the South American qualifying group, are the likely choice to fill April's friendly date and St James' Park is the favoured venue.

The FA will also seek dispensation from FIFA to play one of the other African qualifiers—Cameroon or South Africa are the first two choices—after arriving at their preferred pre-tournament base in Korea sometime around 17 May.

England will stay at the Paradise Hotel on Jeju Island, 15 minutes from the Seogwipo

World Cup Stadium, before transferring to the Westin Hotel on Awaji Island near Kobe five days before the tournament starts on 31 May.

Confirmation that England will be in Japan for their entire competitive programme caused unhappiness in Korea but delight on Awaji, which was the epicentre of the 1995 Kobe earthquake.

One of Japan's major television networks has run a special feature celebrating the fact that England will be on Awaji and Yutaka Maruyama, general manager of the hotel, recently said: "We cannot wait to see players like David Beckham and Michael Owen. Everybody at the hotel will now have English lessons."

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

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

FIFA has been forced to take extra security precautions after the 11 September attacks on New York and Washington caused its initial insurance deal for the tournament to collapse. ♦



Dina goes that extra mile

Related news from Britain of Dina Gurung who ran the London Marathon and raised £2,100 for various charities, including the Pahar Trust and Gurkha Welfare Trust. Dina went through 26.2 miles of pain and exhaustion

just to show she could do it. "I came 21,700 and something, but it wasn't winning or losing that mattered," says Dina who studies at Kingston University in London.

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

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

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

Sunrise around the Week

MONDAY

Italiano Nite-Aromatic antipasti, pastas, prosciutto, risotto's & the freshest seafood. The Sunrise goes Bistro chic.

Top off the evening with a Tira Misu and an espresso.....Capsiche?

From 7:00pm to 10:30pm (Rs. 700 + tax)

FRIDAY

It's a Tequila Sunrise. Mexican cuisine sets your taste buds aflame with enchiladas and nachos matched with Margaritas and Tequila Shots

From 7:00pm to 10:30pm (Rs. 700 + tax)

EVERYDAY

International Lunch & Dinner buffets with selection of salads, soups, Main courses, pasta bar, Carving station and desserts

(Lunch: 12:00pm to 3:00pm, Rs 700+tax)
(Dinner: 7:00pm to 11:00pm, Rs 700+tax)

DAY TO DAY

Mix Business and fun with our quick 'n' light Buffet combos or A la carte.

Lunch : Salads, Soups & Desserts @ Rs. 375+tax
Dinner : Salads, Carving & Desserts @ Rs. 400+tax

WEDNESDAY

The Oriental Express stops at the Yak & Yeti delivering the best in South-East Asian cuisine from fiery Thai to subtle Japanese and everything in between

From 7:00pm to 10:30pm (Rs. 700 + tax)

SUNDAY

Nirvana at Sunrise.

A poolside spa brunch introducing a 'healthy, but decadent buffet' with complimentary access to the pool and health club for the day.

From 11:30 am to 3:00 pm (Rs. 750 + tax)

PASTADAY

Through the week Unlimited interactive Pasta Bar with choices of sauces, spices, oils and herbs.

Available during Lunch @ Rs. 350+tax Including dessert

Only at the Sunrise Café



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FULBRIGHT/NEW YORK UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC POLICY PROGRAM

The Nepal Fulbright Commission announces a Post-Doctoral fellowship for senior scholars under a new Fulbright/New York University (NYU) Center for International Cooperation (CIC) Fellowship in International Public Policy. This is a 10-month research grant to pursue a project in international public policy. Applications are being accepted from 15 countries, including Nepal. Only three grants will be made worldwide. Applicants must have completed a Ph.D. within ten years of their application, i.e. not earlier than March 1992.

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

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

Applicants must complete and submit a standard Fulbright Scholar application form (available from the Nepal Fulbright Commission) to the Nepal Fulbright Commission no later than 5 pm on Friday, February 22, 2002. Interested persons must contact The Fulbright Commission (USEF/Nepal), and speak to Ms. Prakriti KC, Program Manager, to discuss their eligibility. Phone: 415845 ext. 258; email: pkc@fulbrightnepal.org.np

Dinesh Adhikari PACIFIST POEMS AT A TIME OF WAR



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

The Other Side to Belief

1. Settlement after settlement has been razed by neutron blasts
All greenery has wilted
The peacocks have stopped dancing
Springtime is wailing
Haven't you gone mad even now?
If not
I must believe you've lost your head

2. Things are so far gone now
with each new birth a martyr is born
a funeral procession is born
a shroud is born
You're seeing all this, aren't you?
In its first few hours
that baby there
is being deprived of his mother's lap
is being deprived of his mother's breast

on charges of treason against the nation
Your eyes haven't yet moistened?
If not
I must believe you've lost your heart

3. Vying to extend the boundaries of nations
giving up their own shelters
giving up the mouthfuls they had gathered
people have gone to live as refugees
east/west/in all directions
uncertain/aimless
The act of suicide banned by law
has proved inevitable in practice
The Bhandarkhal massacre is repeating
The Kot massacre is on the way to reviving
What, haven't you gone mad even now?
If not
I must believe you've lost your head

Fiery and romantic in its tropes, the poem below is addressed to a war widow. Though it reads like a poem from an older time, from the Second World War, say, it can still be seen as relevant today, with growing speculations that the British army may deploy Gurkha troops in Afghanistan.

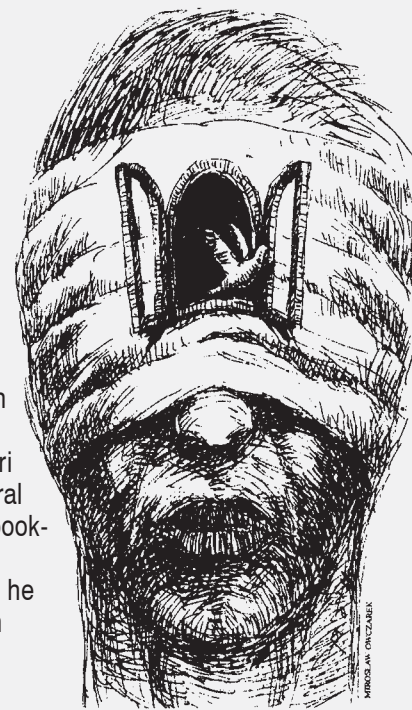
Soldier

Wait! Don't shatter the chiming bangles on your wrists just yet
The rhododendron pinned to your plaited hair
the way a baby's mouth sticks to a mother's breast—
it suits your youthfulness well
Stop! Don't desecrate your looks
washing off the sindoor in the parting of your hair
all for desire, leave it be! Don't kill yourself
breaking the strands of your beaded necklace
The round sindoor teeka
glimmering on your forehead

matches the blush of your cheeks
Just because a trifling letter
bound in handspun string arrived
I will not say your husband has died
And if anyone should insist he is dead—
Be proud!
Your husband hasn't died for nothing
He has enriched the soil of this country
on which you sow grains
Amid the dearth that makes one pick rice grains from rice-teeka
he has arranged for one meal of rations each day
for the baby with an empty stomach on the cot
You are the wife of a soldier
Don't you know even this:
like steam from water and water from steam
your husband who is said to be dead
returns now
as a secure country

And if you ask me,
listen! I say
a soldier never
dies—
Or else he is dead the
day he accepts
his appointment

These poems are found in *Dhartiko Geet*, an older collection of Adhikari's poems. Adhikari is also the author of several other poetry collections, book-length poems, and song collections. By profession he is a high-level advocate in government service.



Born Nepali



What is so special about Christopher Grider, dancer?

.....
finds to his surprise that he is the senior dancer in the 12-member company this year.
Grider was born in Kathmandu. His mother, a secretary in a Peace Corps office and a college graduate, was unmarried. His married father offered to make her his second wife. She declined, deciding that she wanted something better for her child, and chose as his adoptive parents an American couple working there with the Peace Corps at the time.
He left Nepal before he was a year old and has never since seen his biological mother nor the country of his birth. "I know I have a spiritual connection with Nepal," he says. "I don't speak the language and I know little of the culture, but I want to do some reading about it and to find Toronto's Nepali community. I would like to go back to Nepal and experience it."

Such an expensive trip to reach out to his roots is a bit of a pipe dream at the moment, on his dancer's salary. When Grider joined Toronto Dance Theatre in 1997, he was particularly glad to learn that it is a touring company, and had danced in India. "If I were ever to get that close, then surely..." he says in a wistful tone, his words trailing off.

Someday, he says, he may also try to track down his birth mother—he's heard that she eventually moved to the States, married and had another son—just to tell her that he has a happy life and understands how she came to give him up for adoption.

"I would reassure her that I have no hard feelings, and tell her I know

she did what she did out of love for me," he states simply. With his adoptive parents working in the Peace Corps, Grider grew up moving around every few years. He spent time in Pakistan, Ethiopia, Somalia and a number of US cities.

"I was always a wild, loud, movement-oriented child," he recalls with a disingenuous smile. He took up gymnastics at age nine, and complained that the men weren't able to do their floor routine to music as the women did. He found himself naturally moving into jazz dance-gymnastics routines. "I loved performing," he says. "I loved being on the stage." He briefly took a few ballet

classes when his family moved to Topeka, and lasted long enough to perform in one *Nutcracker*, but ended up dropping dance to concentrate on becoming a competitive swimming star.

Exposed to dance in first-year university, he fell madly in love with it. He immediately gave up a five-year swimming scholarship to take up dance seriously at the extremely advanced dance-student age of 18. "I knew right away that this is what I want to do," he says. After graduation, he danced with the Dayton Ballet Company in Ohio for seven years before auditioning successfully for the Toronto Dance Theatre. This required

him to move to a new environment in another country and to take up a new type of dance, contemporary instead of classical, but all of his instincts shouted yes. He listened. "I had other good offers, but everything seemed to be pointing me in this direction," he says.

Grider is able to blend a sensitive artistry with his dynamic athleticism in his work. And his love of what he does is palpable to the audience. "I hope to keep up my excitement about life," he explains. "We don't want to be jaded and cynical. I think we can all benefit from hope, and a sense of childlike wonder." ♦

(The Toronto Star)

ANDREW STAWICKI IN TORONTO

As Christopher T Grider flings himself into the air in the Toronto Dance Theatre's new production *Persephone's Lunch*, what meets the eye is dazzling. But beyond that are stories you couldn't guess at.

The work itself, by company artistic director Christopher House, was inspired by Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*. Grider can relate. His whole life has been something of an

odyssey, and the story of his start in life has an aura of legend.

Born in Nepal, raised in places as diverse as Kansas and Somalia, Grider fits beautifully into Toronto's human medley. His odyssey ends here, in a feeling of home.

In a dance company that functions as an ensemble, with no designated stars, there's no getting away from it: he takes the eye. He's a hotshot. And at a youthful and vigorous 33, he

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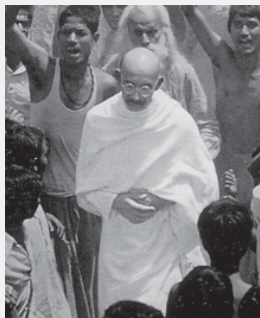
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ABOUT TOWN

MOVIES

❖ **Gandhi** Richard Attenborough, India, 1982. English, no subtitles. 9 December, 3.30PM, Russian Cultural Centre, Kamal Pokhari. For tickets contact 549386, also available at venue. Organised by the Inter Cultural Film Society.



EXHIBITION

❖ **Prints** by Finnish printmaker Juha Holopainen. Until 23 December. 12noon-6PM, Shivata Art Gallery, Pilgrims Book House, Kupondol. 521159

❖ **Shaping the Elements and Textiles of Gujarat** Ceramics by Carole Irwin and woodturning by Dan Hogan. Until 15 December. Textiles on show 12 December-12 January. 8AM-6PM, Indigo Art Galley, Naxal. 413580

TALK

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

EVENTS

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

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

MUSIC

❖ **Live acoustic music** Dinesh Rai and Deependra every Friday and Sunday at the Himalatte Café, 7.30PM-10PM. 262526

❖ **The Jazz Bar** The Jazz Commission Wednesdays, Chris Masand's Latin band Thursdays, An Fainne on Saturdays. 7PM onwards, Shangri-La Hotel. 412999

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

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

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

❖ **Special cake shop** Cakes, pastries, breads, cookies, yule logs, turkeys, stockings, pies, jujubes, terrines, mousse and other specialities. Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 273999

❖ **Christmas cakes and hampers** including stollen, mince pies, yule logs, cookies, marzipan, shortbread, toffee, wine and more. The Pastry Shop, Hotel de l'Annapurna. 221711

❖ **Creamy delights** Cookies, home-baked breads, stollen, plum cake, gingerbread, fruit tarts, log cake and more. Christmas gift hampers too. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234 or .

❖ **Christmas Eve buffet dinner** with roast turkey, exotic dessert, glass of mulled wine. Rs 650 per adult; 50 percent less children under 12. Also Christmas brunch at same rates with live folk music. Shangri-La Village, Pokhara. 412999



EATING OUT

❖ **Special Swiss winter menu** Specialties like fondue (Rs 1,200 for two) and raclettes (Rs 900 per head). Dinne daily at the Hotel Yak & Yeti. 248999

❖ **BBQ and Thai buffet dinner** every Friday with live band Las Sonidos Latinos Adults Rs 500, Children under 12 Rs 250. Taxes extra. Summit Hotel, Sanepa. 521810

❖ **Le Cafe des Trekkers** New Tibetan and French restaurant. Special 10 percent discount on Nepali menu until 7 December. Jyatha, Thamel, opposite Hotel Blue Diamond. 225777

❖ **Far Pavilion** Indian cuisine with Sapan Pariyar and Suresh Manandhar. Everyday except Tuesday. 8PM-11PM, The Everest Hotel

❖ **Barbecue lunch** with complementary wine or beer for adults, soft drink for children. Saturdays and Sundays at the Godavari Village Resort. 560675

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

GETAWAYS

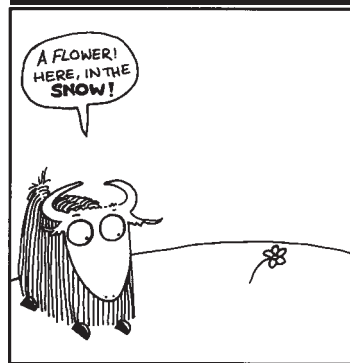
❖ **Fresh air and tranquility in Kathmandu Valley** Stay at Triple A Organic Farm Guesthouse in Gamcha, south of Thimi. Rs. 1,500 per person per night, all-inclusive. Email aaa@wlink.com.np. 631766

❖ **Silent Night Package** Includes return airfare between Kathmandu and Pokhara, buffet breakfast and more for a couple for four days and three nights. Rs 9,000 for Nepali nationals, \$270 for others. Shangri-La Village, Pokhara. 412999

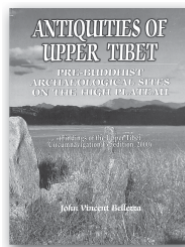
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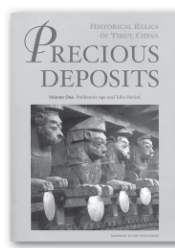
BOOKWORM



Antiquities of Upper Tibet: Pre-Buddhist Archaeological Sites on the High Plateau John Vincent Bellezza
Adroit Publishers, Delhi, 2002
Rs 2,560

This volume examines a host of ancient monuments and rock sites discovered by the author during his upper Tibet Circumnavigation Expedition in 2000. The physical traces unearthed by Bellezza are crucial in our understanding of Tibet's pre-Buddhist culture. Before the adoption of Indian Buddhism in the seventh century, Tibet was home to an indigenous culture that was responsible for creating an impressive network of citadels, settlements, temples and necropolises. Special attention is paid to archaeological parallels with other early civilisations of Inner Asia.

Precious Deposits: Historical relics of Tibet and China
Vol 1: Prehistoric Age and Tubo Period
Vol 2: The Period of Separatist Regimes
Vol 3: Yuan Dynasty and Ming Dynasty
Vol 4: Qing Dynasty
Vol 5: Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China
Morning Glory Publishers, Beijing, 2000
Rs 23,950 (set)



These picture albums, by means of over 700 pieces (sets) of precious cultural relics, introduces the history and culture of Tibet as it developed from the Paleolithic Age to the 1940s. Each volume has many special topics with brief essays about the important events and cultural features of that particular historic period. Most of the relics in this collection are rarely known or in print for the first time. Photo captions offer a great deal of background information on the historic, cultural and artistic values of the relics.

Courtesy Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 227711, mandala@csl.com.np

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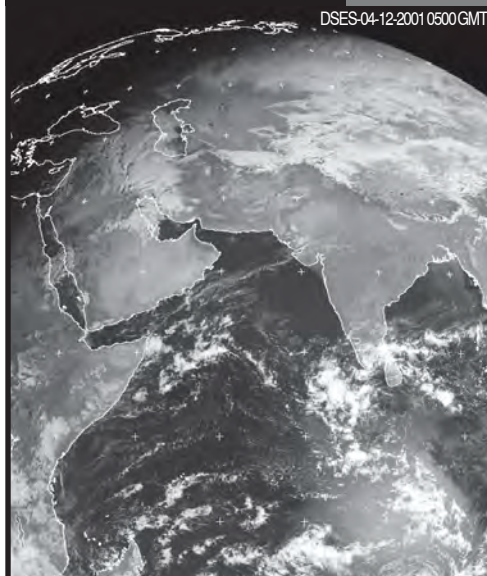
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NEPALI WEATHER

DSES-04-12-2001 05:00 GMT

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



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

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri 20-05	Sat 19-05	Sun 19-04	Mon 20-03	Tue 20-03
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Building cities, and society

MIN BAIRACHARYA

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



RAMYATA LIMBU AND ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

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

Which is why, when a building like the Heritage Plaza near Darbar Marg goes up, the more sensitive among us heave a sigh of relief. Not a blind copycat of traditional design, nor an unthinking nod to high modern glass-and-steel, its designers Jyoti and Deepak Man Sherchan say the complex represents "eclectically modern design". In this case, the eclecticism derives

from integrating an old-world look with new methods of construction and design that address concerns about ensuring efficient and pleasant workspaces that are also environmentally efficient.

Inside the building, the all-exposed brickwork, sloped roof and strutting creates intimate and sometimes surprising spaces without being constrictive. "As everything else, the whole game of architecture also has a drama to it," says Deepak Man Sherchan, chairman of Creative Builders Collaborative (CBC), which designed this impressive building and runs a tastefully decorated office there.

It isn't only Deepak Man driving the cart, the other wheel is his wife Jyoti Sherchan, managing director and chief architect of CBC. Deepak designs the aesthetically

appealing, yet functional and environmentally sound buildings the collaborative is known for, and Jyoti manages the work at the site and makes the vision take concrete shape. The couple met and tied the knot while teaching at the Engineering Campus two decades ago, but they never thought they'd climb this high on the architectural ladder. "When Deepak left his secure teaching job, we didn't know whether we'd make it or not," says Jyoti.

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

Among the several awards that they have won, the South Asian Architects Award for the SOS Children's Village in Itahari stands out. Deepak Man has designed and built a dozen or so SOS villages around the country. "When your clients give you a free hand, and let you nurture your project, it becomes your baby till the end. That's one of the reasons why the couple has stopped applying for government contracts. "Of course they're much bigger, challenging and, noticeable, but there's too much interference, and too many hassles," says Deepak Man.

The work CBC does has many admirers, but probably the best indicator of their successful teamwork are the considerable number of architect applicants they get everyday. It is, of course, difficult to accommodate



WORLD AIDS DAY: Procession in Kathmandu to mark World AIDS Day on 1 December also saw the cavalry out.



SHOOTING YOU SHOOTING ME: Gurung women in traditional dress marching during the AIDS procession on 1 December.



POLIO DROPS: Japanese minister Takamichi Okabe hands over 40 million doses of polio drops to Health Minister Sharad Singh Bhandari at the maternity hospital on 30 November.

everyone, especially given that they never compromise on quality. "With architects returning from India, the East Bloc countries, and even locally trained in Nepal, there's a bumper harvest of architects—but no new jobs," says Jyoti. "As the investment is low but the returns are high, most colleges have an architecture department. But one can't say that the quality of education is always sound." This quality—or lack thereof—that Jyoti talks about is evident in the large number of tasteless and unsafe high rises that keep cropping up in the Valley. Indeed, only 10 percent of Kathmandu's buildings are actually designed by trained and registered architects, the rest are left to civil engineers or even overseers.

Deepak Man is particularly concerned about this. "There should be more stress on following safety guidelines," he says. "The government should seriously look into all these new high rise structures because if there is an earthquake as big as the one that occurred in 1934, the devastation will be major," he says. (See also "Earthquake coming: waiting for the big one," #25) Reports from surveys conducted by various organisations such as the Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Risk Management Project, the National Society for Earthquake Technology and the Japan International Cooperation Agency confirm these fears.

True, not much can be done about the Valley's old cities, but the local authority could cer-

tainly factor in earthquake safety when passing plans for new buildings. Building is an expensive business, but cutting costs at the expense of safety standards cannot possibly be wise. "We should make do with what we have but do it well," warns Deepak Man.

It is a common conceit among architects that they not build houses and offices, but are instrumental in building society at large. For the Sherchans, this is more than idle talk. The couple want to give back to society, and believe that the best way is through education, to ensure a better future for the country. They are investing a lot of time, energy and money in designing and supporting the Malpi International School, something they call a pro-public institution. "It is almost like a co-operative with 50 investors," explains Jyoti. "Rather than send children outside to India to study, we want to retain them here by providing quality education and facilities. After being architects and former lecturers for so long, we need to give back what we've received in education."

After almost a quarter of a century after planning and executing all these plans, have the Sherchans completed their dream project? "For us there is no such thing as a dream project—we only help the client achieve their dream. It is up to them to decide what they want," says Jyoti, while Deepak Man nods. "Still, if you talk about satisfaction and enjoyment the SOS projects have been some of the most best." ♦



The elegant and delicate lines of the Heritage Plaza in Kathmandu.

MIN BAIRACHARYA



Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Some miscreants nabbed, others absconding

By a staff reporter

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

Two tourists were captured while trying to sneak into Nepal at Tribhuvan International Airport without paying the mandatory \$5 baksheesh surcharge on their visa fees recently instituted by immigration officials for those entering Nepal after 9:00 PM at night. The tourists later apologised profusely, and said they did not know the country was in a state of national conundrum.

In other news: Several miscreants were caught red-handed in the wee hours of Wednesday while making a public nuisance of themselves, and are currently cooling their heels at the local gaol. According to highly placed sources (including those located at altitudes of 6,000 m and above) the hardcores beat a hasty retreat while they were in the process of being nabbed, and have so far eluded a widespread dragnet. Security has been beefed up, and intense cordon bleu operations are going on to determine the exact extent of the mischief carried out by the perpetrators, if any, so that they can be brought to book without further ado.

"We have mooted a plan to quash anti-socialite elements and have taken stockpiles of the situation, and are currently working on the modalities of where other law-abiding citizens can

work hand-in-glove in order to apprehend the ultras while in hot pursuit," another even-higher placed source opined. He told this scribe in the presence of other scribes, pharisees and philistines that it was a matter of great pride that boys from the flying squad had rendered a yeoman's service by mooted a cunning plan to quash the unseemly fracas breaking out in isolated parts of the kingdom towards late afternoon. Although the finger of suspicion has been pointed at the usual suspects, the presence of unusual suspects has not been completely ruled out, this being Nepal.

Meanwhile, in a separate development, the Prime Meridian turned on the heat at an unofficial bonfire at his official residence for local journo and visitors residing at the Hack & Yeti. On the occasion, he called on all the

nation's governmental, un-governmental, quasi-governmental and pseudo-governmental organisations and non-organisations to lend a helping hand in formulating a new holistic initiative to realise sustainable human development and genuine empowerment of the toiling masses. "Only by taking a bottoms-up approach and the bull by the horns of its dilemma can we create the necessary enabling environment to galvanise and vulcanise all sectors of society so we can ensure grass for all those at the grassroots by the year 2015," he said, adding, "the time has now come for more words, not mere action. Only by exhorting the people and encouraging them to achieve further successes in the all-round development of the country can we make a great leapfrog into the next millennium." ♦



NEPALI SOCIETY

Groundbreaking Muna



the trade. "Nepali society is so conservative. Instead of encouraging women, they scorn us. But to me it doesn't matter what they say. In fact, I feel proud that I am capable of doing what I do," says this pioneer.

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

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

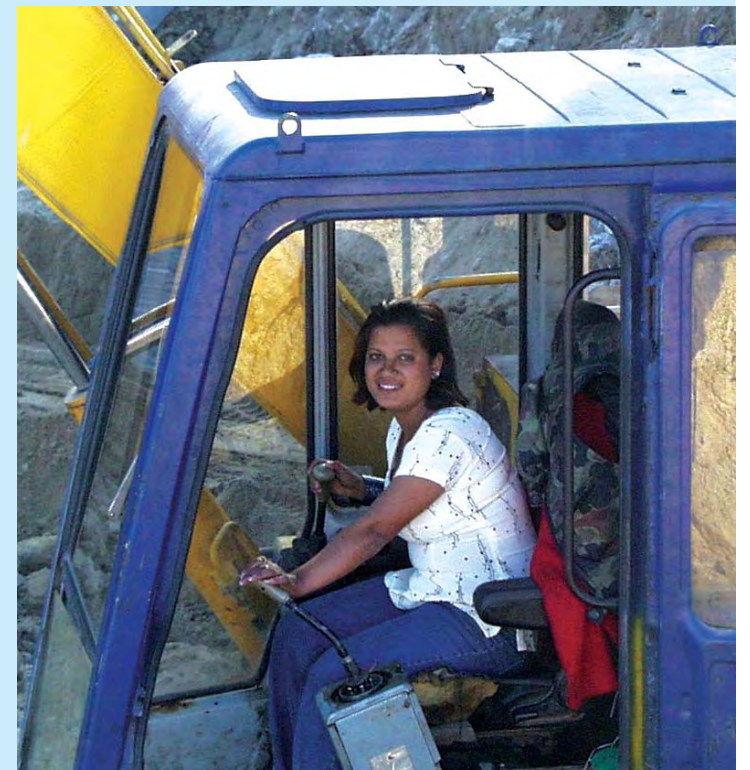
In her free time, Muna sings, and writes in her daily journal, which she hopes someday to publish. All the best Muna, and keep moving our earth! ♦

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

Muna not only learnt how to do the job, she grew to love it. "Since then," she says smiling, "I have worked on many projects—from Mahendranagar in the west to Taplejung in the east."

It was not a smooth ride all the way. Muna had to face many challenges before she could take up

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



कार्णिकारी
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