



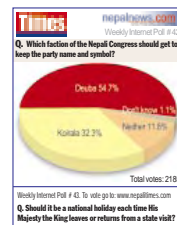
# EXCLUSIVE The bottomline

The news is so bad that the prime minister was perspiring as he read the budget speech at the NPC on 8 July. Kathmandu has always had a problem spending its development budget and this has got worse with the insurgency. Donors are now paying nearly our entire development bill. Revenue collection is so dismal, it is barely enough to pay for recurrent expenditure, which will overshoot regular spending this year. Civil service salaries have hit the ceiling, and defence and security expenses are up by Rs 3.66 billion—a nearly 35 percent increase from last year.

The army will get Rs 2.34 billion for expenses other than for personnel, including Rs 255 million for helicopters, fixed-wing

aircraft, assault rifles, machine guns and 5,000 new enlistments. The ISDP will get Rs 1.35 billion, more than double last year's allocation. The civilian police gets Rs 817 million over its usual expenses, and the paramilitary armed police gets Rs 506 million over its personnel costs. The price tag for the elections is Rs 1.5 billion, not including indirect costs such as civil service deputation and extra security. Costs for the royal household and palace will triple to Rs 387 million.

In addition to all this, the army has been asking for Rs 17 billion in upgrades over the next three years. There is the danger of a sharp rise in government spending before polls as it front-loads spending. The government is unlikely to get the budget support it is seeking from donors before the elections—they have their own disbursement cycles, and are also wary of the spending frenzy of a caretaker government.



# Starting out again in Gorkha

**As the military goes undercover, the Maoists are feeling the heat in central Nepal.**

**SHRI BHAKTA KHANAL**  
in CENTRAL NEPAL

A swathe of central Nepal from Gorkha to Myagdi has seen a dramatic decrease in Maoist activities in the past four months, and the Royal Nepal Army says this is a direct result of successful undercover work and its infiltration of Maoist ranks.

"They have lost many district-level leaders, their supply lines have been severed, their weapons caches have been captured and they are running out of food", one military officer told us. On a recent trip through Gorkha, Tanahu, Pabur, Baglung and Myagdi, local villagers confirmed that Maoist activities had gone down in the past few months, but that it was too early to say the rebels have been vanquished. Operations in these districts are under command of Brigadier General Prakash Banskota who heads the army Third Brigade based in Pokhara.

A year ago, the sight of armed guerrillas walking in broad daylight was common sight along the Gorkha-Abu Khairi road, and even in the hazy. The Maoist exodus from had exorted over Rs 4 million in "donations", and 13 schools had been forced to close. Maoists regularly ambushed security patrols. Eight police posts in the district had been abandoned, and police presence was restricted to the district headquarters.

Today, security forces are being deployed again outside district headquarters, and the army says intelligence breakthroughs have undermined Maoist strength and disrupted supply lines for food and explosives. The security forces have already set up 18 outposts—the largest security presence in any

district. Schools have started to reopen. An officer in Gorkha told us: "In the beginning we knew our goals, but didn't know where to start... deferring Maoists themselves showed us the way."

Gorkha has important symbolic value for both sides. It is the seat of the Shah dynasty as well as the home district of Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai who is the head of the rebels' central command. Army sources say the district had 178 hardcore guerrillas, 80 people's militia and about 400 active supporters. This number has been reduced by half, they say—some have been killed in encounters, others captured, and the rest have surrendered.

Documents captured in raids were shown to us, and seem to indicate a falling out among the comrades themselves. There appear to have been internal party pugnas against suspected informants, and disciplinary action taken against district leaders accused of using looted jewellery and cash for personal use. A letter written by Kaushalya Gurung (Comrade Shilpa) who was recently killed in an encounter seems to show a serious split among Maoist between those who support Baburam and those who don't.

In emailed and faxed statements, Maoist leaders strongly deny the differences, and say it is "reactionary disinformation". Most videos and photographs of Maoists that the army has captured so far have come from these districts. The army has used them for propaganda

purposes, broadcasting them over Nepal Television and releasing them to the press.

Aide from inadequate logistics and equipment, the army's main gripe is that the civilian administration has not been taking advantage of its successful pacification campaign to move in with development. The military is itself now engaged in a "hearts-and-minds" drive under the command of Colonel Dipak Prasad Bhattarai. His Banda Bahadur Battalion has already spent Rs 1.3 million rupees to repair about 30 schools, organic health clinics, and even air-lift the seriously sick locals to hospital in Kathmandu.

A 50 m Bailey bridge has been built under the Integrated Security and Development Program (ISDP) to link Tanahu and Gorkha districts, although this was washed away by floods on the Manyanguli last week. The army is also building four important feeder roads near Gorkha.

Go to p6

Soldier sits on a bullet box from the previous elections while keeping an eye on the valley below.

# Rhinos on the run

**With the army distracted, poaching in Chitwan has doubled.**

But after November, soldiers were pulled out of conservation duty. The 39 army posts set up to guard the 32 sq km area in Chitwan were reduced to 10 posts. Patrolling, especially at night, was stopped.

Economically and politically influential people are involved in poaching," states Anil Manandhar, at the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) in Kathmandu. A rhino horn can sell for up to Rs 800,000 per kilo within the country and for more than Rs 2.4 million in the international market. Besides rhinos, tigers are also being killed by poachers in Chitwan, but there is no way to tell how many. Poachers take away every part of the tiger they kill, whereas they are only interested in a rhino's horn.

But there is good news: park management in Chitwan has changed tactics and there hasn't been a single rhino poached in the past month. "Poaching is now under control," Chandi Prasad Shrestha at Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation told us. Officials are sceptical, but what did the trick seems to be the deployment of the army in villages outside the sanctuary, and a change in park management. In the last five months 52 suspected poachers have been arrested, and three were killed in an armed confrontation.

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# Poisoned wells

If the water you drink comes from a tube well, you might want to have it tested for arsenic.

## AVIDITY ACHARYA

Arsenic often goes ignored, associated with out-of-date murder mysteries involving lace and country houses. But there is arsenic in the water in many parts of South Asia, and it could kill you. Arsenic is an element found in rocks and sediments, can slowly poison humans when dissolved in drinking water. In the past drinking water in Bangladesh and West Bengal has been found to be contaminated with arsenic, but results from recent studies in Nepal's tarai are cause for concern.

Some 17,000 tube wells have so far been studied, and more than five percent of them have had arsenic concentrations over 50 parts per billion (ppb), the amount Nepal has set as its national guideline. Furthermore more than 25 percent are above 10 ppb, which is the guideline value set by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Kim Rud



Adamsen and Anil Pokhrel, working at Nepal Water for Health (NEWHA), say that their organisation's mathematical models, with the government's 50 ppb as the maximum acceptable arsenic level, translate to 20,000-40,000 deaths annually after 10 to 20 years of time. According to the mathematical model the

number of deaths are only reduced by 50 percent, if the national guideline value is set to 50 ppb.

The arsenic problem hence becomes comparable to the problem of bacterial infection. It differs in that the bacterial problem is one that affects weaker people more seriously, while anybody could die from arsenic poisoning. Furthermore the problem of arsenic is a long-term effect whereas the bacterial problem is instant. According to the latest statistics 30000 pass away from the bacteriological problem.

There are two kinds of arsenic poisoning: acute and chronic. Acute poisoning occurs in industrial locations, mines, and factories. In countries with lower levels of industrialisation such as Nepal, on the other hand, chronic poisoning is more common. Symptoms appear as darkening of skin colour and reddening of the eyes and other initial effects. These symptoms are visible depending upon the level of

standard. The policy states that this guideline value will be revised every year. These are part of the reasons the government set the national guideline value higher than the WHO standard. What this does, of course, is ignore the risk bracket between 10 and 50 ppb.

Arsenic research in Nepal began slowly in 1999 when the HMG's Department of Water Supply and Sanitation first began its surveying of tarai districts with the support of the WHO. Since then, the Nepal Red Cross Society has taken the lead with tests of more than ten thousand water samples. The National Arsenic Steering Committee, which includes NGOs, international and government organisations, was formed in 2001 to co-ordinate all arsenic research in Nepal, and the NGO Informal Committee also began to support the Steering Committee. Pokhrel says that NEWHA is in the process of building regional

forums to interact and identify solutions around quality water supply including the arsenic dilemma.

The tests to detect arsenic contamination in ground water are carried out either using field test kits or analysed at laboratories in Kathmandu. Most of the sector organisations are using field test kits as they are cheaper and the results are obtained instantly at the site. This also improves the necessary communication to the community in order to lower the arsenic uptake by the people in the remote tarai villages. Initially these kits were imported, but now a Nepali NGO named ENPHO, has also started making the kits locally. The laboratory tests are relatively expensive and the water samples have to be sent to Kathmandu.

There are an unknown number of tube wells in Nepal—probably more than 300,000—of which more than 17,000 samples have been tested. Approximately



PHOTO: ANIL POKHREL

The foot of a Nawalparasi man with arsenic poisoning

two-thirds of these tests have taken place in labs, so while statistical information was finally available, very little was done to inform communities around high-risk wells that their water was contaminated.

Though researches admit that field testing is far less precise than tests conducted in the lab, they still support it. But researches might have to rethink their testing strategy if the government can be persuaded by the other members of the Steering Committee to change the guideline value

now we don't have enough resources to bring the standard down to ten. The private sector might have enough money to work with this standard, but we don't. Our priority is to close all the seriously affected wells before we proceed. Of course, we too would like to ultimately bring down the standard to 10 ppb but we need to take things slowly." Currently, an estimated 50,000 people consume water with arsenic concentrations of over 50 ppb, and 26 million drink and cook with water that has over 10 ppb of arsenic.

The roots of the problem go back to the 1980s—the Decade of International Water Supply and Sanitation. As traditionally used dug-wells were easily microbologically polluted, UNICEF, WHO and a host of other international organisations advised that tube wells be drilled to provide safe drinking water. Arsenic was in no one's mind, until large amounts were detected in drinking water in Bangladesh and West Bengal in 1986, and arsenic research began in those parts of the region. Over a decade later, in 1997, when some 90 percent of tube wells in Bangladesh had been tested and 20 percent of these closed due to high levels of arsenic contamination, water experts in Nepal decided it was time to look into the quality of water supply here.

It is difficult to explain the whys, wheres and hows of arsenic contamination in Nepal, and there are plenty of theories to choose from. Scientist and water expert Dipak Gyawali thinks delving into the causes can wait. "No one knows which theory is

right. What's important is to find out which process contributes to arsenic contamination." That may not be happening fast enough. Going by the data from the studies being conducted currently, the death toll is increasing, and will continue to do so at a much faster rate than the concentration of arsenic.

The cheapest way to remedy the problem is to stop using the water for drinking and cooking purposes in any well that is found to be contaminated and for example start harvesting rainwater for use instead. It is expensive to investigate contamination, and the costs to do so will only increase if the government decides to reduce the guideline value to 10 ppb. An added difficulty is that testing only one well in a locality is not an accurate measure of the arsenic contamination or lack thereof in neighbouring wells. Therefore all wells must be measured. Despite the difficulties, research teams are trying to survey all of Nepal's tube wells. Of the 17 tarai districts studied so far, Nawalparasi, Rautahat, Bara, Kailali and Panchajanya have the highest incidence of groundwater contaminated with arsenic. □

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## DOMESTIC BRIEFS

### Novel protest

Residents around the Pashupatinath, one of the seven areas in Kathmandu that make the Valley a World Heritage Site, have reason to protest. Intra locals, including priests, are angry about the decision of the Pashupatinath Area Development Trust (PADT) to demolish the settlements around the temple core on the grounds that they are not built according to construction regulations. An independent authority, the PADT issued a public notice on 29 April detailing its decision to acquire 183 houses and temples in the Pashupati core area. Angry residents said at a recent press conference that 119 of those properties belong to families who have been living there for generations and are actively involved in the traditional rituals and festivals, and the PADT decision would put more than 40 religious festivals and jatras in jeopardy. Locals, including a well-known sadhu, are suing the PADT and asking the government to intervene. Some have even threatened to convert to Christianity.

### Sen update

There are still conflicting statements on the alleged disappearance and death in police custody of Krishna Sen, the pro-Maoist editor of Janadisha, who was reported to have been arrested on 20 May. The weekly Janta Asha announced that he had died under torture, and this was confirmed by the international organisation Reporters Without Borders (RSF). A Home Ministry statement said that Sen was never arrested by the police and dismissed as "baseless". Sen's reported death in custody, but acknowledged that he had died under torture. "This latest statement is as revealing as it is ridiculous," maintains Robert Menard, secretary-general of RSF.

Sen's case has triggered off an outcry among human rights and journalists groups here too. On 4 July the Federation of Nepalese Journalists announced the launch of a two-week long protest campaign demanding an official inquiry into cases of journalists who have been killed or tortured in prison, the release of journalists still in custody and the lifting of all press censorship. A number of vernacular websites left their editorials blank on Tuesday as part of the campaign.

### Hot air

Balloon Sunrise Nepal says that it hasn't been ordered to shut down by the palace or anyone else, contrary to a report that appeared in Janadisha weekly recently. "April to October is off-season. We only operate flights after October," says Ratan Singh Pal an official with Balloon Sunrise, the only hot air balloon company operational in Nepal. "Early this year, when we flew over the palace area, there was an inquiry. But we were never ordered to shut down. The company recently had to send a clarification to a vernacular paper that published a news item about a balloon landing on a roof. 'I don't recall us ever doing that', says a bemused Pal.

## HERE AND THERE

# Living in the moment

Past wars and national obsessions such as comedy are being sidelined in today's USA.



reddening in the blazing sun. My choices are stark, and all almost militant in their patriotism. There's one saying "US Marines," another with "FBI", the letter embroiled on a camouflage t-shirt. The New York police and fire departments are honoured as well, still powerfully venerated here for their heroic last September. Various other police forces have their logos on baseball hats, along with myriad US government agencies concerned with security. I choose "CIA" on plain navy blue in hopes that someone choosing the symbol of the agency that got me most wrong is a fashion statement. Later I realise that I also got it wrong.

The most powerful of Washington's memorials and monuments, the

low black wall inscribed with the names of slain veterans of Vietnam, is for once not thronged with emotional families and surviving spouses and children. It's always been the most moving moment, for me, of a visit here. The sight of a teenager who probably never knew his father or in rare cases, mother, pointing the name out to his friends, finding it among 58,000 victims of what surely still is one of the world's more pointless wars, never fails to make me weepy, confirmed in my opposition to militarism. You often find yourself in conversation with a Vietnam veteran here, and usually he feels much the same. But today—in the unseasonable heat and the security scare—the crowds are sparse. Just a few people run their fingers over the black marble lists of the fallen, just a few tears sizzle on the pavement below. That morning's New York Times brings dire warnings of another war and I can't help but think about the consequences of a military invasion of Iraq. Will that one require another controversial monument to be filled? Hope we never find out.

Later, night brings a little relief and the din and delight of the fireworks display. Nothing too fancy, just fountains of light and colour etched against the eastern sky. A lone gunman—mad, apparently, and able in today's America to purchase weapons easily—has been the only incident of violence. Commentators seem quick—too quick—to tell us that it's not related to al Qaeda or terrorism, despite the fact that the attacker was Egyptian and his victims Jewish Americans standing at the check-in counter for the Israeli airline El Al.

It's been a peculiar day and I wonder what lies in store for America, and for all of us, between now and the next Fourth of July. □

by DANIEL LAK

Washington DC: This is truly an imperial city, the capital of the global superpower. Except that most of the architecture that seems designed to cow down the visitor and impress with its soaring, imperious lines is from the 19th century or the first half of the 20th. Yet Washington hums with power, even in the blazing heat of their first Independence Day since the 11 September, 2001.

The Mall, a slash of green running from the Houses of Congress to the Potomac River, is, as ever, the setting for planned displays of patriotic exuberance. From the US Capitol, the lone remaining bit of topography here, a sound stage will boom out the musical backdrop to the fireworks ignited at the feet of Abraham Lincoln, or at least outside his neo-classical and oddly moving memorial at the far end of the Mall. The plan is for Americans and visitors to line the parks and streets between the two extremes, taking in both the sound and vision of the Fourth of July, 2002.

The normally open spaces at the centre of the city are blotched with security checkpoints and thousands of men and women in uniform are funneling us through gaps in hastily erected fences, searching handbags, rucksacks, coolers full of ice and water, even cigarette packets. "Ya can't be too sure," I heard one Howard County Maryland sheriff's deputy tell a tourist from Mexico, who nods his head in vigorous assent. Even this morning, the newspapers were full of vaguely worded yet dire warnings of more terror attacks, and the need for vigilance on America's national day. The mood is odd, light and celebratory yet somehow watchful. People glance about them and take in hushed tones in the shade.

No one, I repeat, no one, makes jokes about terrorism, attacks on the US, anything like that. This is definitely something different about comedy-obsessed America. I go to a vendor's stall to buy a hat, some protection for my follicularly challenged scalp that's now

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## SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL

W edon't know what the chairman of last month's meeting in London actually had in mind when calling for the "strongest possible political leadership" to prevent Nepal from becoming a failed state ("Nepal must not be allowed to become a failed state", #10). A democratic version of Jang Bahadur seems to have been the most sought after politician in the country. This obsession with the ayomym obscurer Nepal's primary ailment: it's addition to a brand of politics it can't afford.

Multiparty elections are getting fiercer. There are too many variables only way of money can control the purification in power benefits from incumbency. Political evil in rival camps breeds unhealthy competition. At the macro-economic level, elections entail great costs.

Although state failure is not a new phenomenon, it has become much more relevant to the post-9/11 international discourse. "In less interconnected era [in the past], state weakness could be isolated..." Robert I Rotberg, director of the Programme on International Development Studies at Harvard University's John F Kennedy School of Government, writes in the July/August 2002 issue of Foreign Affairs. "Now, these state dangers not only to themselves and their neighbors but also to peoples around the globe. Preventing states from failing, and resuscitating those that do fail, are thus strategic and moral imperatives."

But lack of homogeneity poses a problem. "The nature of state failure varies from place to place, sometimes dramatically. Failure and weakness can

## Addictive disorder

Maybe donors should fund political parties here, and NATO deploy soldiers.

flow from a nation's geographical, physical, historical, and political circumstances, such as colonialism and Cold War policy mistakes," Rotberg adds. (Back to the Air and Water Theory of Politics, eh?) Lack of development could trigger hostility and violence that could spill over to other countries, which believe they have the right to act in self-defence. Call it "nation building", "humanitarian intervention", "defensive imperialism", the fact remains that national sovereignty is shattering—and faster—in poorer countries.

Nepal must begin the process of breaking the cycle of poor governance and corruption by overhauling election-campaign financing. Public awareness against corruption cannot wait in a vocation that puts a monetary value on achievement. Barring corrupt politicians from consequent elections would raise nasty questions in a society susceptible to political witch-hunts. Requiring members of the House of Representatives to seek re-election from the same constituency could infringe

their freedoms of movement and choice. Running background checks on candidates runs the risk of infuriating our increasingly vocal civil libertarians. Term limits can be effective without the cooperation of those affected. Setting minimum education qualification for candidates is out of the question in a country with rampant illiteracy. Parties and candidates can't be expected to make a full disclosure of donors and expenditure unless they're reasonably sure everybody else's being honest.

We must mobilise external resources. Donor governments should be encouraged to become more generous in the case of saving democracy. Since they already influence our politics through the thicket of micro-credit projects, they might as well become more active in directly funding political parties. The Bretton Woods institutions could design a basket fund that would support parties by calculating the percentage of popular votes they received in the last election weighted with their voting record on legislation facilitating structural

adjustment programmes. Electoral laws should be amended to ease the flow of direct foreign political investment. This way, donor governments, agencies and consortiums could provide matching grants to candidates whose campaign pledges conform to their respective philosophies.

The nation's self-minded focus should be on holding free and fair elections in November. (Even if the Supreme Court reinstated the Lower House, it would only be postponing our moment of truth by three years at the most.) Election manifestos have always looked alike and we know that the star campaigners are going to say, anyway. It is important to ensure that the people and their leaders feel the results are genuine.

We should consider ways of drawing international assistance for the mechanics and logistics of elections. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, torn by an identity crisis since the fall of the Berlin Wall, may find a useful niche here. After 9/11, NATO headquarters in Brussels invoked for the first time in the organisation's history the mutual self-defence article of its charter, whereby an attack on any member is deemed an attack on all. Once Nepal's political stability is established as an integral part of the global war on terror, our embassy in the Belgian capital can go into the details of deploying NATO's aid and supplies across the country during each election cycle. Even if we don't get a modern-day version of the world's 19<sup>th</sup> century authority, we might be able to breathe easier. □



by PUSKAR BHUSAL

## SPONSORED SECTION

## BIZ NEWS

## Warning signs

The economy is doing even worse than the annual Economic Survey for 2001/02 suggests. Central bank statistics covering 10-months of the fiscal year (up to mid-May) show that exports have tumbled, government spending has dropped, especially on development, and that service receipts continue to decline compared with the same period a year ago. Domestic credit is slow and the private sector is hardly borrowing. Government spending is slow and very little money going into development activities—regular spending was Rs 36.5 billion in mid-May, while development spending decreased by 17 percent to Rs 13.3 billion. Growth in revenue collection has almost disappeared at about one percent, given that it grew by about 21 percent in the same period last year.

Exports have declined by about 12 percent to Rs 41 billion, reflecting largely the slump in overseas exports. Export to third countries dropped by almost 38 percent to Rs 15.67 billion, from about Rs 25 billion in the same period last year. The Balance of Payments statistics based on data until March reported a major decline in receipts from services (including tourism). Even though transfer remittances continued to grow and imports remained low, the central bank reported a current account deficit of Rs 10 billion, almost double that in the same period last year. The foreign exchange holdings increased by about 2 percent to Rs 104.5 billion in mid-May, but the share of convertible currencies has continued to erode from about 78 percent last year to about 73 percent in May 2002.

## Real trim

Dabur Juices has launched its entire range of Real natural juices in a new 200 ml 'Tim & Tall' packs. The Real nectar variants of Dabur juices contain 25-30 percent pulp and the Real juices, up to 50 percent, which the company says is higher than similar products, mostly imported to India, but the 200 ml packs are aimed at Nepali consumers.

## More banks in trouble

Prithvi Bahadur Pande, CEO of the failing financial health of two more public financial institutions starting the new fiscal year, beginning mid-July. The two problem institutions are the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) Nepal and the Nepal Industrial Development Corporation (NIDC). The study is to be supported by an Asian Development Bank grant. The study shall take about 10 months and will formalise what many already know—the poor state of the two banking institutions due to years of meddling by bureaucrats and politicians. Any reforms needed would be supported by the ADB. Meanwhile, Deloitte Touche Tomatsu, which was to have taken over management of the Rastriya Banijya Bank under the financial reforms project, has indicated that it is backing out. The central bank says that it does not have a formal word yet, but is exploring possible legal action for breach of contract.

## More flights to Doha

Nepal and Qatar have revised their Air Services Agreement to increase the number of Qatar Airlines flights to Nepal from seven to 11 every week. The 8 July agreement also permits up to four cargo flights each week. The additions to the ASA include Fifth Freedom rights for onward connections to Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and Bandar Seri Begawan (Brunei), while a third destination is to be decided shortly. It also allows stopovers in Muscat (Oman), Karachi (Pakistan) and a third stop, which will be announced later.

## Divestment

The Nepal Rastra Bank has given the Bank of Ceylon the green light to sell its stock in the Nepal Bank of Ceylon (NBC). The Sri Lankan bank has been allowed to sell its 35 percent holding to nine of its promoter partners, who will reportedly buy at Rs 196 per unit. The 10 percent rule, which sets a ceiling on the amount of stock a single promoter can own, applies here too. The NBC's paid-up capital was Rs 350 million, and its authorised capital Rs 500 million. A recent Nepal Rastra Bank rule says this figure must be Rs 1 million in seven years. The bank had planned to raise Rs 150 million from the market but has not yet made a public offer.

## INTERVIEW

## “People investing here are loyal to Nepal...”

Nepal Times: So, do you miss the “French connection”?

Prithvi Pande: It is too early to tell. We as investors have taken the 50 percent shares belonging to Nepal Indusuez/Credit Agricole, the rest still belongs to Nepalis. Our major clients, international companies, INGOs, embassies, the UN institutions have told me they are very happy that the bank came to the so-called “Pande Group”. We’ve only lost one big account, and even that was a domestic one.

We have to leave that behind us. We wanted to come into operation by about March, but eventually it was delayed by four months.

So there’s no residual bad blood?

No, there cannot be. We are business people, and everybody is entitled to try and make a bid for anything. But once that is passed, what is the point having bad blood with anyone?

You have your own investment bank, now what?

We are hoping that we can get into investment banking activity, and this can only happen after capital is increased. We hope to get there in a year or so if the central bank allows us to. We are gearing up for that. We feel that if we can get into investment banking, it would contribute to the growth of the country. Investment banking will have long-term lending, which normally commercial banks are not supposed to do. They are supposed to borrow and lend short. We will be going into medium- and long-term lending. We also hope to undertake [share] issues, go into acquisitions, mergers, etc and get brokerage. Because the economy is so small we have to do both commercial and investment banking. We hope also to do equity investments, if there is a big project coming up we can act as promoters.

The Rastra Bank says it is going to be very strict about regulating commercial banks, how are you going to cope with that?

The Rastra Bank is a sleeping giant that has woken up. They have been activated now with a more dynamic governor, and of course the World Bank and IMF are waving the stick. But the central bank sometimes tends to go overboard. If someone has been involved in insider lending, why have they not been punished? The tendency is to punish everybody not just the ones involved in impropriety. Recently they said you cannot borrow if you are promoters with over one percent stock. This is not correct. In a liberalised economy anybody should have the right to borrow anywhere. What they could have said is if an investor borrows and does not pay then we will take action. I think commercial banks are being over-regulated.

Isn't the size of the pie shrinking with 16 banks already here...

The pie is definitely shrinking, trade has come down, hotels are being subsidised by the central bank. This bank is small and the capital is high. This bank after the rights issue will have capital of Rs 520 million. Despite having a big name, this bank was underperforming, mainly because of the country risk in Nepal for which they had to have provisioning at head office.

How can you grow bigger?

Being a Nepal bank we have more access to investment opportunities. We don't want to keep a low profile. But it is clearly not the right time to rush into things. We have to find a balance, we need to increase the size of the bank and hope to grow in the next two years by at least 40-50 percent.

What investment opportunities are there, given that this country is awash in cash but has no investors?

I am not looking at it from that perspective. My perspective is that this bank has capital, the rest of the banks are already up to their necks in lending. The new NRB rules and requirements are stringent. Capital adequacy has to be 10 percent this country. That is the opportunity for us, our capital adequacy is nearly 14-15 percent. So some of the good clients of other banks have to find new lenders. And that is our opportunity.

What needs to change, in the economy and in government policy?

We are concerned with the economy, which is clearly related to the political scenario in two ways: one is the behaviour of the politicians themselves and the other is the Maoist insurgency. I'm not in a position to say if the insurgency will be settled in the three years. I think it may take longer than that. But the political side can be settled very quickly, if there is the will.

There is a silver lining?

Let's say the insurgency goes on but is isolated in certain regions, then I think tourism will rebound. I feel that 50 percent of the problems we face are of our own making, the other 50 percent are progress. But I also feel that business community needs to get over petty interests and see the broader interests of the country. We want all facilities from government, but don't want to pay taxes. We expect other country's taxpayers to take care of us.

It's a Catch-22: you need to attract investment, which requires tax breaks. We need investment to generate employment. The bottom line is to launch a massive employment generation campaign. I am investing in Nepal now, because this is my country. It is still a reasonable profession to get into, and you are helping your country out. People who are investing here believe in Nepal and are loyal to the country.

## “They are terrorists...”

Despite successes in Palpa, Gorkha, Baglung and in the Pokhara area, the Maoists are still active in Lamjung where they haven't stopped collecting donations from shops around Sundharbar. In Tanahu, Maoist extortion and threats have diminished after the army moved in, which was enough to sap the life of what little of the rebel presence there was. Bandipur's Japanese-built Notre Dame school re-opened this week and is being run by the community.

It is not possible to return to villages provided there is a security presence, says DDC member Satish Chandra Neupane, who was himself abducted by Maoists three years ago. Schools have begun reopening in and around Damsai, and the district administration is distributing voter ID cards for the November elections.

The Chaudhri Armed Police Force stationed in Parbat district is in charge of security in the Dhaulagiri Zone, although the army has also set up a garrison there after the emergency. Maoists attacked the Modi Khola hydroelectric plant in April, and the rebels were said to be active in one of its two decision constituencies made up of 28 VDCs. The soldiers use the main roads and the Maoists control the shortcuts, one village told us.

Other villages told us the Maoists are losing support, and that one of the reasons for their decision to retreats and forced beat-eating. Last year they killed a bull near the village school in Barjanga in Myagdi, and forced villagers to eat the meat. It is clear from speaking to locals that the support there is for the Maoists is from largely out of fear.

In Baglung, Maoists have destroyed all but one of the 59 VDCs buildings. As in Myagdi, there are no phone connections left anywhere, except in the district headquarters. Besides telecom towers, Maoists have also destroyed four health posts and a government food godown with 50 quintals of rice. The rebels have also disrupted construction work on the Baglung-Bhurnagar (105km) road but they have burnt down four community buildings built with ADB support.

The security forces have imposed quantitative restrictions on food supplies to 16 VDCs in the district's western regions, where two VDCs are said to be under strong Maoist influence. Each family is allowed to take in only 35kg of rice each week, but there are reports that the Maoists are taking away even that. The western regions of

Baglung are facing a serious food shortage.

Local Rastriya Jani Mardha leader Amar Bahadur Thapa says his party has fundamental differences with the Maoists. “We used to be together, but having seen their destructive activities up close, we have no hesitation in calling them terrorists,” he tells us. Local leaders of parliamentary parties had organised resistance to Maoists in various Baglung villages, but the rebels responded with death threats and forced them all to move to the district headquarters. They’ve been there since October last year.

Baglung CDD Preeti Narayan Sharma says he has proof that the Maoists are forcing members of other parties into their cause, but adds: “We are in a position to take rapid action in any part of the district the moment we get information of Maoist activity.”

In Myagdi, the Maoist hardcore strength is said to be only about 50. But the rebels use threats, intimidation and arson attacks to spread panic and magnify their presence. They have burnt down all but one of the 39 VDC buildings. Schools have begun reopening, but last year the Maoists attacked a private school and the small hydro plant at Tatopani. All this has affected tourism, even though the northern districts of Mustang and Manang are free of Maoist activity.

The army's Kaili Prasad Battalion (engineering) has begun work on the Galewote-Mustang-Jomsom and the Mulkhanga-Besi-Dandabang. Says one Nepali Congress worker: “The army's presence has made life easier, but we don't know what will happen during the elections and after that.” □





Haven't been there? Haven't done that?  
Then this survival guide's for you.

# PLATEAUING OFF IN TIBET

A photograph of three white stupas with golden spires, situated in a mountainous landscape. The stupas are arranged in a row, with the central one being the largest. They are set against a backdrop of steep, rocky mountains. A small village is visible in the distance, nestled in a valley. The sky is clear and blue. The text 'CHINA' is visible in the bottom left corner.

...entire benefits from preparation.

Improving the quality of life is fine of course, but in that I share some prior knowledge makes your travels a lot more fruitful and enjoyable. A recent article in *the Japan Times* caught me some things worth knowing, and it may save you some time and hassle to know them, too.

**Where to begin**

The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu is open for visa applications Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays from 10AM-11:30 AM. The screening process is not too difficult, and you can come back for your visa. If you simply can't wait, the embassy will give you a letter for the Japanese Consulate, for express processing. Do so for the shortest time, just an hour and a half, getting to the embassy early in the morning. It's a good idea to get yourself a travel agent. You're

above have a greater chance of getting a visa. The visa can cost anywhere from \$8,200 to \$56, depending on the nationality, with you're applying in Japan, and how fast you want to get it.

**Someone to watch over you**

The idea of travelling independently might sound tempting in comparison with the prospect of a travel agency watching you every move. But agency travel is different in the Tibet Autonomous Region, and it is definitely easier to negotiate all those checkpoints with an insider, instead of having to answer a million questions (and give your documents, passport, camcorder, dictionary, everything, etc., photographs of family—visiting cards—come under loan, you're staying in a hotel, and you're not going to get yourself a travel agent. You're

listed, and everybody's happy.

**Has the mud**

It's a bit of a catch on your way there's a whole lot of muddy, open roads. There's dust, but, bar, mud, and shade solve that problem. The weather is never nice. Moving across this pastoral plateau in their time-honoured pace are nomads, masts, heads of yak and sheep drying their hills, horses grazing, birds flying over the grassy hills, and antelopes and hares scurrying right past you, rolling hills, and crazy cloud formations in blue skies. That's why thangka clouds look like that. (I say they're not clouds, but they are the same twice. It's! Zhangmu, Tiring, Hsiao, Shigane and Tsering on your way to Lhasa, the joy you could be taking in the landscape as you walk by the shores of the arid way named

Yamdo Yung (the Tumpane Lake), Gyasne and Shigane. And if you're lucky you could just happen upon a breathtaking panoramic view of the Himalayas, including Mt. Everest from the south. Travelling by yak and mule solves the problem of altitude sickness and provides many, many photo-ops.

**Traces of Nepal**

Newspapers read from Kathmandu have left their second home, but you can find a good number of them in Ramche temple in Lhasa is probably the oldest reminder of the link between Nepal and Tibet. The idol of the 19-year-old Sakayama here was a gift from the New Empire of Nepal, to Sengten Gongpo. The Jokhang's architecture also has some distinctly Newar touches. And if you visit the Jokhang, you'll find the New Restaurant on the outskirts of

Bardok on Monastery Road. Not just dal-bhat, here you'll get *adum dum*, also *sando*, *kalo dala* and *well*, you get rice. There is even a Nepali consulate not far from the Jokhang.

Lhasa locals also have a taste for Nepali chis. Maybe it's not as strong as we're used to it here, but it is wonderful to be able to drink the fragrant, milky tea in little restaurants. The tea is served in shiny yellow glass, so it always needs several cups to really get into it. Waitresses come around, fill up empty glasses and collect the cups already placed on the table. They do this constantly, as long as you're sitting there.

**Natural cats**

Be prepared to venture out into the mountains, and you'll find a lot of the government's to-do list.

There are a few public toilets, but not nearly enough, and even residences, especially in the Khyang area of Lhasa, have significantly poor toilet facilities and no running water. In Lhasa, bringing the toilet and plan to it is your only option.

**Shopping...anyone?**

You will witness when you see the prices on economic goods, because you can't possibly take back as much as you'd like to. The prices are high, but it's always needed several cups to really get into it. Waitresses come around, fill up empty glasses and collect the cups already placed on the table. They do this constantly, as long as you're sitting there.

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**Spécialiste du Tibet**


L'agence francophone de Katmandou, dont l'un des responsables est un tibétologue français. Spécialiste du Tibet, Mandala Trekking organise de mai à Octobre des excursions en groupes de 8 à 9 jours avec guide francophone au Tibet (dates et prix sur demande) et des programmes à la carte en jeep. Accueil sympa et service efficace.

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**RAMYATA LIMBU**  
Ever since Tibet opened up to tourists in late 1984, resulting in an influx of eager foreign visitors entering the once closed region, Kathmandu has been a popular entry point to the plateau.

And as tourism to Nepal continues to suffer, it is the Tibet traffic that is keeping many Kathmandu hotels in business this monsoon season.

"Tibet has its own particular charm, and it complements a Nepal holiday very well," says Peter Chu, of Arniko Travel. Chu is one of the pioneer operators of tours to Tibet, and began offering overland trips to Tibet nearly 20 years ago. Things have changed in Tibet since that time. "Infrastructure has improved, logistics are better managed. But the asphalt road to the border at Khasa was definitely better, then," he says. The Arniko Highway today is blocked in many places by nasty landslides and these days it takes up to five hours to reach Khasa, a journey that used to take three hours.

Of course, you can bypass the landslides by taking the twice-a-week one-hour flight to Lhasa from Kathmandu. At \$255 one-way flight it is steep, but it saves time. Many people fly one way. Opinion is divided over whether it is better to fly there and drive back, or drive there and fly back. Flying straight into Lhasa at 3,600 m can give people problems with altitude, whereas driving first can create acclimatisation problems.

because the highway first crosses the Thingri Pass at 4,300 m and Shigatse at 3,900 before descending to the Tsang Po plain.

# Gateway to Tibet

Nepal cashes in as the entry-point for pilgrims and tourists to Tibet.

A photograph of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet. The palace is a large, multi-story building with white walls and red roofs, situated on a hill. In the foreground, a person is riding a bicycle on a paved road. There are some cars and other people in the background. The sky is blue with some clouds.

ous for people with problems with the altitude," says Ang Tshering Sherpa of Asian Trekking, which is also the agent in Nepal for China Tibet Mountaineering Association. In April, representatives of the T-ravel Agents Association Nepal visited the CTMA to talk about the possibility of reducing fees on some peaks and providing transport for climbers right back till Kodari at the Nepal-Tibet border

15,000, and so far this year 7,000 have done so. Tour operators expect a 15 percent drop in Tibet traffic via Nepal this year. As a result, China Southwest, which operates the Lhasa connection has reduced flights from three a week to two this season.

However, to offset the drop, there has been a spurt in Indian tourists to Tibet, most of whom are bound for Manasarovar and Mt. Kailash. "That's

With tourist arrivals to Nepal down by 40 percent, tourists and climbers going to Tibet via Nepal have been helping local tour operators keep afloat. "The numbers may have decreased but they are still coming," says Chu whose company handled about 500 tourists last year, compared to the 200 tourists it has handled so far this year.

The total number of tourists (which includes mountaineers climbing Himalayan peaks on the border from the Chinese side) going to Tibet from Nepal last year was approximately 100,000. Most of them go to Simikot, and walk to Hilsa on the Nepal-Tibet border. From the border it is a four-hour drive to Mansarovar, and another four hours to the base of Mt. Kailash. People continue to take the

route despite the presence of Maoists—for a price. Travellers who recently made the round-trip journey to Kailash via Simikot told us that the Maoists have a sliding scale for the "donations" required to pass through the area, ranging from \$100 per head for foreigners, to Rs 7,000 for Indians.

While Indian pilgrims are keen to get close to Kailash as quickly as possible, other tourists, apart from the classical seven-day Lhasa trip, have cycling tours, cultural tours to choose from. Among the most popular are the 10 day expedition to the north base camp of Mt Everest, 10 day trans Himalaya Tibet tour, 12 day Lhasa-Tsedang-Sangkagutok-Gyantse-Zhangmu. With the area east of Lhasa opening up, the tours are gaining in popularity. Not much is restricted and it is possible to travel virtually anywhere in Tibet now.

The flooding of the market with cheap tours has led to cost cutting phenomenon also seen in Nepal, and has been hurting the travel agencies in Nepal. Despite an increase in volumes, they say the profit margin is getting less.

Nepal may be 20 or 30 years ahead of Tibet in terms of tourism development, and many Nepali companies still provide the expertise and logistics required to run tours and mountaineering expeditions in Tibet. But as China builds up its own tourism potential, this could soon change. There is talk of Nepali climbing support teams being replaced by entire teams from Tibet itself. □

Since early May, there have been crowds of pilgrims around Mt Kailash circumambulating the holy mountain. "It is believed that if you circle the mountain in the year of the Iron Horse, it is equivalent to circling the mountain 13 times so you can do the inner *kora*," says Manod K Shrestha, who recently returned from the area.

Mt Kailash is considered the supreme pilgrim's destination for Tibetan Buddhism, Hindus and Tibetan followers of the Bon-po religion, and this year, there was an unbroken human circle moving around its base. Located in the far west of the Tibetan plateau, 1,600 km from Lhasa and about 1,000 km from Zhangmu, Mt Kailash is believed to be a manifestation of Dachok, a tantric god and Lake Mansarovar is supposed to be the manifestation of the god's consort. Hindus believe it to be the abode of Lord Shiva.

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# Hold all elections

Interview with Krishna Prasad Sapkota, president of the Federation of DDCs, in Chhaprahat, June 30

**The terms of local body officials ends in Asar (the current Nepali month). The government has also announced dates for general elections. How best do you think the local governments can operate in this scenario?**

According to the Local Governance Act, the terms of local bodies can be extended for a year in case of unusual circumstances such as natural disasters or economic indiscipline. I feel that the term of the local bodies should be extended in keeping with this legal provision. In normal circumstances, local representatives are elected for a term of five years. Although five years have passed, the government is making excuses that it cannot hold local elections. On the other hand, the government has dissolved parliament and has announced the date for general elections. How can it say local elections cannot be held on the grounds of insecurity and unusual circumstances, and then propose that general elections be held? We feel that the dates for local elections should be announced immediately so that both local elections and parliamentary elections can be held on the same day.

**On what grounds do you say that both elections should be held on the same day? Is there a precedent for this in other countries?**

It happens in many parts around the world. Local and general elections take place on the same day. We could do the same. By holding both elections simultaneously, we'd save on administrative and economic costs, and have a handle on security. Also, this election would enable those people from all parties to go to every ward who believe in this constitution but have been unable to go to the villages. It will facilitate political movement and activity at the local level. It will help make democracy more effective at the local level.

**Have you presented this alternative before the government?**

We have. We have set clearly before the government the thoughts of the Federation of District Development Committees. We have met with Prime Minister Deuba. He said that he would extend our term in office. But we heard him saying on Nepal Television, while attending some program, that he would not extend the local representatives' terms. It doesn't bode well for the country when a person in his respectable position keeps changing his line of thought. It leads to instability and weakens the democratic process. All democratic forces have to challenge such autocratic actions.

**The government says that it won't extend the term of local representatives; you say that it should. Is there an alternative?**

I feel that the alternative to democracy is autocracy. For those who believe in democracy, there can be no alternative. A sovereign people exercise their rights through the representatives they elect. There has been an alternative to capture power by nominating individuals, party workers, and enlisting people, and not through associations of people's representatives. This trend will continue despite criticism. There is absolutely no alternative to democracy.

**Has the government discussed the unusual current circumstances with locally elected representatives and the Federation of DDCs?**

It has not, yet. The government should take the correct path. In a democracy you solve crises through talks, debate. We were prepared to talk. The local bodies play an important role in institutionalising and strengthening democracy and bringing about social change. In fact, it is the local bodies that have been effectively carrying out work and make the presence of the state felt. If it weren't for the municipalities, the VDCs, and the DDCs, the people wouldn't experience the rule of the state. If at this point the government removes the locally elected representatives, the majority of the people will be alienated.

**Maybe the government decided not to hold local elections because it is unable to...**

If you can't hold one election, you can't hold any election. The same electorate votes at the same polling centres, the process is the same. It's laughable to say that in the case of the local elections they cannot, but for parliamentary elections they can. If the government can guarantee security during parliamentary elections why can't they guarantee it during local elections? The government's stand is ridiculous, wrong.

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

None of our Nepali journalists engage solely in journalism. Therefore, it is always controversy how the Nepali press should react if a journalist should carry out an activity in a non-journalistic capacity. For instance, it should be more clear whether an editor is arrested for writing an editorial or for playing another role.

—Yuhang Ghimire, Editor of Kantipur and The Kathmandu Post in Jana Astha on 3 July

## Too long in prison

Kantipur, 7 July

Dhankuta resident Padma Maya Gureng was released from prison last week after spending six extra years behind bars due to the carelessness of the justice department. Her daughter also spent three of those years with her in prison with her.

In 1990 (2048), Padma Maya Gureng was raped while on her way back home after collecting fodder in the forest. She became pregnant as a result of the rape. A few days after the baby was born, she killed it by burying it. The court in Dhankuta sentenced Gureng to life imprisonment, but the Birtamgar Court of Appeals overturned the decision and sentenced Gureng to ten years of imprisonment.

Three years later in 1993, the Supreme Court sentenced Gureng to five years of imprisonment showing the reasons that she was compelled to kill the baby.

According to the judgement, Gureng should have been free by 1995. But there was a delay in the papers from the Supreme Court reaching the Dhankuta and Birtamgar courts, and Padma Maya spent six extra years in prison.

A human rights group in Kathmandu has exposed the injustice suffered by Padma Maya owing to the carelessness of the courts and the demand that she receive compensation, and that the guilty be punished. Padma Maya, who is illiterate, has not appealed to any sector so far. Sindhuham Prakash, president of the Nepal Bar Association, says Padma Maya had to spend six extra years in jail because of the failure of the Supreme Court judges and the judicial system to follow-up on whether judgements have been implemented. "There has to be an investigation and the guilty must be punished," he said. The joint bench of justices Uday Raj Bajracharya and Kedar Bahadur Neupane decided Padma Maya's case. Both have since retired.

At a recent function organised by the Manas Adhikar Tatha Shanti Samaj, lawyer Ekamra Rautana said that the chief justice at the Court of Appeals was to be blamed. "It is their duty to inspect the jails and monitor whether inmates have served their term, and are entitled to be freed," he said. Human Rights Commission member Indira Rana says that it is not unusual for inmates to spend a few extra months in prison even after the term of their sentence, but that six years was an exceptional occurrence.

Secretary of the Judicial Council Kashi Raj Dahal has acknowledged the flaws in this case. He says that the delay in the judicial system is due to the traditional process followed by the courts. There are provisions for punishing those who attempt the implementation of a judgement. Human rights activists have warned that they will organise demonstrations to ensure that Padma Maya is compensated by the state for the six extra years and mental torture she endured in prison.

## Contradictions

Harihar Bishal in Birmasra, 2 July

The Nepali Congress statute was not contested by anyone before the present party division. There is no point expressing differences after the

party has split. If you look at the party constitution, you will see that Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was not even a member of the party on 16-19 June (when he held the 'general convention'), because he had already been expelled by the party, on 26 May. He had not challenged the legality of the expulsion or that of the disciplinary committee or the central committee of the party. In fact, on 9 June he had sought a review of the decision of the disciplinary committee by writing to Gita Prasad Koirala, acknowledging him as president of the party.

But even before the time for a review to begin had elapsed (35 days after the application is submitted), on 16-17 June, Deuba called a meeting of party workers for 'party unity', and declared it a general convention, also announcing his unanimous election as new president of the party. President of the party of which he was not even a general member! Now the Election Commission is expected to accept the meeting as a general convention and Sher Bahadur Deuba, and not Gita Prasad Koirala, as president of the NC.

Otherwise we are told there will be chaos! The party will fall! Now note another date: 22 May. That evening, Prime Minister Deuba submitted his recommendation for the dissolution of parliament, and declared fresh elections to his Majesty. The king approved the recommendation. The following day, the king's decision to dissolve parliament was effective immediately, unless specified otherwise. In other words the House of Representatives ceased to exist, and the status of MPs and parliamentary and constituency constituencies became invalid. All MPs, except the Speaker of the House, became former MPs. By his own decision, the prime minister also ended his membership in parliament. The day he was expelled by the party, Deuba was also not the "leader of the parliamentary party", because the party had taken action against a cadre who had vowed to abide by the party constitution and processes, not against the leader of the parliamentary party. Now Deuba claims to have convened the meeting by virtue of being the leader of the parliamentary party, and that was the basis for the decisions that followed.

**104 districts**  
Birmasra, 5 July

How many districts does Nepal have? This question has become relevant after 4 July, when president of the Nepal Students' Union (NSU) from 60 districts issued a statement relating to the split in the Nepali Congress. Nepal may have 75 districts, but we already have such statements from 104 presidents of the NSU. Immediately after a statement saying that 44 NSU presidents supported Deuba, 60 other NSU presidents issued a statement saying that they were siding with Gita Prasad Koirala.

## For royal attention

Yuhang Ghimire in Kantipur, 8 July

...The respected and well-known singer Narayan Gopal was perhaps not decorated for being what he is best known as—an artist. He was also the general manager of the

## 12-18 JULY 2002 NEPALI TIMES



Cultural Corporation. All self-respecting artists think it disgraceful to seek favours of the Home Ministry for being awarded. As long as the culture of neglect in the distribution of awards remains, the nation cannot look up to the recipients with respect. The king has to begin reforming the process, because the awards and honours are awarded on his behalf, and because the queen is the custodian of all national awards. Another reform that needs to happen is more relevant now, on the eve of the king's state visit to China. The Panchayat tradition of declaring a holiday on the day of His Majesty begins and ends a state visit abroad. It is still in vogue. It is time to rethink the rationale and relevance of this tradition. Such a tradition, which directly affects productivity, cannot perhaps be found in any other country of the world. How relevant is it to think that the institution of monarchy can be respected by a human rights group in Kathmandu?

There may not be a direct relationship between the decorations and public holidays. But that does not stop anyone from initiating a disciplined, professional and constructive campaign, shutting down administrative, educational and other general activities! Is not the continuity of such a tradition equivalent to the waste of 'man-days' or 'man hours' during a general strike? There may not be a direct relationship between the decorations and public holidays. But that does not stop anyone from initiating a disciplined, professional and constructive campaign, shutting down administrative, educational and other general activities! Is not the continuity of such a tradition equivalent to the waste of 'man-days' or 'man hours' during a general strike?

**Suicide bomber**  
Khatmandu, 16 July

A Salman Rushdie has been born in Nepal too. Her name is Manisha, last name, Darji. Someone who is in terms of caste, wealth and religion tends to be victimised by those intoxicated by the strength resulting from [higher] caste, [lower] wealth and [dominant] religion. Manisha Darji of Nagbhand of Parbat district became a victim of a, by a group of four led by Indra K.C. What happens when a woman is raped? As far as possible she tries to hide the wound and as best as she can, or even commits suicide for fear of being shamed socially. Or she may even resort to the help of a woman trafficker, and begin a (voluntary) journey to the hell that is Mumbai's prostitution dens. But Manisha is different, she did not pick any of these options...

Wailing and screaming, she told the village the story of her rape. She named the perpetrators and filed a lawsuit against them. Then she came to Kathmandu and faced the people's court (sic) at the auditorium of the Nepal Bar Association, where she lamented her plight and stretched her hands out seeking support in her fight... All this prompts a question: what was the motivation of the organisers of the meeting in getting Manisha to speak out? Who will take responsibility for her security now? In a sense, Manisha Darji has become some sort of a suicide bomber...

## HISTORY

## Back at Sundarjal >14

# "I have no time for depression"



**At the end of his first month in Sundarjal, BP is trying to keep his spirits up through the worst of the winter. He tells himself that there is no time for gloominess, as he has only seven more years to make the best of before he hits 70, and his mental and physical faculties start to decline. Every week Nepali Times brings you entries from BP's 1977 prison diaries, handwritten in English.**

## 29<sup>th</sup> January 1977

Sundarjal! It looks like winter rigour will not let up. The night was extremely cold and in the early morning the whole landscape was bright white from heavy frost. The water in the earthen pit, that GM keeps in the open for birds, was frozen into a thick lump of ice. I think this morning was the coldest period of the winter. On account of this severity of the winter my body hasn't felt relaxed ever since I arrived here. Two days ago there was hint of the spring in the atmosphere, and I had felt happy contemplating the comfortableness and ease that my body would feel when the winter would be over. But it was a false hope. I didn't feel like taking bath. I sometimes feel that excess cold affects our psychology through diminishing cerebral activity. My present state of pessimism—it is not really pessimism as it is deepest state of uncertainty—may have been induced by this long spell of severe winter. At my age man feels the severity of cold excessively—if I were free, perhaps the normal daily round of work would have given me help in mitigating the severity of the winter. As I am cooped up in a small area, with the company of one person, no work except reading some book which had been brought inside just by chance, far away from dear ones who can't visit me—all this makes for a mental state in which the vigour of the winter is felt abnormally.

bewildered and a little lost too. A month which is like an infinity separates me from that time and place and dear ones.

Today too it was extremely cold. In the morning frost was thick and the water froze in the open. I shivered in the whole morning. Didn't rest. Didn't get relief even under the pale sun. When back to my bed and tried to get warm under the wool.

I have wasted the past one month that I have lived in prison—wasted being psychologically weak, being homesick, being excessively concerned about how my family members would fare in a nervous—wasted being moody, sad, depressed listless or absent, disturbed, impatient, restless. I must put myself up. Enough is enough. I have not many years to live—I am already past 62. By September I will have completed 63 years. Among the seven years are left in which I can be actively engaged in the pursuit of my calling with full physical and mental vigour. I may live beyond 70 years but I can't expect to be in full possession of my mental and physical faculties. Hence I have to be extremely careful, methodical and organised so that every minute of my life is accounted for. And carefully looking towards the end of my life. Enough is enough. I know nothing is lost by my improvement. anything this has improved our political position. I have to look forward to a time when after my release I will be called upon to shoulder responsibilities of political nature. There will be our party to organise on a new basis—which will entail a lot of work. Then I will start having to be done to educate the people and our rank and file. I have my ideas on various subjects to put into writing. When is the time for all this? I have to hurry up. Time is short. I have no time, absolutely none, for depression and black moods.

## 31<sup>st</sup> January

The day continued to be cold—the morning was as cold, if not colder, as yesterday, but during the day the wind was not strong, hence the atmosphere was tolerably cold. I bathed today after a lapse of four days.

I finished Basham's book. It is a bigish book, but he has made his subject very interesting. For the beginner this book on current and medieval history of India can be easily recommended. I read the book with a half mind, and was not keen on going on, but this morning I found to my satisfaction and surprise that I have finished the book. I will again read it with attention. I had already covered the ground during my study of Indian history with school. I had read Smith's history for my matric exam in 1950. Perhaps Smith's more academic and detached. Basham's appears to be a love's labour as such Basham is an admirer of India's heritage. This subjective attitude of the author makes the book readable. His dealing of the arts and literature of ancient India is very satisfactory and some of his own translations of Sanskrit poems are reflective of the originals' moods and nuances of feeling and felicity of expression.

I was under the impression that I haven't done any reading during the 30 days I am here. It is not so. All told I have read 600 pages. Not a remarkable achievement. But considering my present state of mind and disturbed psychology I haven't expected that I would be able to do even this much of reading. Since yesterday my mood is all right. From tomorrow I am going to organise my daily routine with reading which will occupy the primary place. But where are the books? I will be really unimaginable hard if we are not supplied with reading materials. As it is we have books, not a very high quality, but books all the same, to last us till the end of February. After that if the isolation is not lifted and contacts with people at home are not allowed then I don't know how we will spend the time in jail.

Today we were informed that our clothes would be washed by navies attached to the platoon doing guard duty here. We said that we will wash our clothes ourselves.

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## VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Helvetas is looking for a Programme Officer to join the small central country programme office team (PO) in Kathmandu

The PO is responsible for providing support and guidance to all Helvetas projects in Nepal, including may civil society partners. A team of three professional staff design and monitor programmes and various organizational policies across the country. We are looking for a fourth team member with rich proven hands-on experience and clearly demonstrated leadership qualities.

### Major responsibilities:

- Provide a proactive backstopping role for social, economic and technical activities in the sectors of Rural Infrastructure, Green Sector, Skills Training and Business Promotion.
- Facilitate practical learning/complementary linkages within and between own programmes, and with other agencies.
- Take responsibility for managing the implementation of a Learning through Monitoring System (LTM).
- Act as watchdog and support person for qualitative vectors across all programmes.
- Continue to improve and manage support modalities for civil society, private sector and government partners.
- Work with the programme team in developing new concepts and programmes for the organization.
- Provide other forms of conceptual and managerial support, as required.

### Qualification and Experience:

- Good common sense, good judgement and an ability to think logically.
- Willing and able to work long hours, independently and productively.
- Flexibility to take on new responsibilities when required, and the willingness to help other colleagues at all times.
- Ability to liaise, and support partners and Helvetas projects, in a mature and highly professional manner.
- At least 5 years experience in a similar position, and at least 3 years full time work directly in the village.
- Good negotiating skills and smart strategic thinking.
- Holder's degree would be an appropriate qualification for the post.
- Excellent knowledge of English and Nepali, both written and spoken.
- Excellent knowledge of computer application, or willingness to learn.

### Candidate Profile:

- In order to balance the current team, we will be giving preference to women (especially) and men from less represented ethnic groups.

Interested candidates should send their C.V., two references and a passport size photograph to Helvetas. Only short listed candidates will be called for interview. Telephone enquiries will not be entertained.

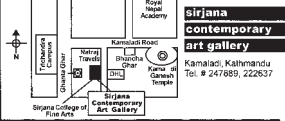
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## ABOUT TOWN

## FILM

- Simple mortal French, 1991, starring Christophe Bourseiller, directed by Pierre Jolivet. 21 July, 2PM, Alliance Française.

## EVENTS

- Facilitation skills and group dynamics workshop organised by UK charity ELD from 15 July. [www.eld.org.uk](http://www.eld.org.uk), 54202.
- Alumni meeting Loreto Girls, St Teresa's, 13 July, 3.30 PM, Sri Shakti, Kamaladi, 247072
- Friends of the Bagmati Membership open to all. Email [friends@thebagmatinepal@yahoo.com](mailto:friends@thebagmatinepal@yahoo.com) for details.

## MUSIC

- Dinesh & Pemba Live every Friday 7PM-9PM, Himalatte Cafe, Thamel, 262526
- Teesta Rox the house Friday and Saturday nights from the 1950s-1990s. Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 491234
- Live music by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 1/2 ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel, 414336

## DRINK

- Bottomless Draught Unlimited draught beer between 5-10 PM everyday, Rs 400, at the Splash Bar & Grill, Radisson Hotel, 411818
- Metro of Malt's Single malt exhibition and tasting, Twelve single malts for Rs 999. Evenings, Piano Lounge, Hotel Yak & Yeti, 248999

## FOOD

- Weekday buffet lunch Rs 350 plus tax, 50 percent discount for children under 4 ft. 12.30 PM - 2.30 PM at the Sumeru Coffee Shop, Godavari Village Resort, 560675
- Plat du jour with a glass of wine and dip in Sundhara pool, Rs 700, Shangri-La Hotel, 412999
- Pasta Mania Choose from a variety of pastas for Rs 111 plus tax at lunch and dinner, and 20 percent off bottled wines, La Dolce Vita, Thamel.
- Wines from around the world Pair wines from Chile, Argentina and Australia with Italian specialties at the Olive Garden, Radisson Hotel, 411818
- Sandwiches of any kind Steak, pesto chicken, lamb and more on olive focaccia, croissant, pita, baguette and other home-baked breads. 12-27 July, The Café, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 491234
- Weekend lunches at Dwarika's Hotel. Rs 700 per head with a bottle of beer and swimming, 479488
- Thai Food Festival 1-8 July at the Clubhouse Restaurant, Le Meridien Kathmandu, Gokarna Golf Resort, 451212, 224399
- Fine dining and table top cooking Dinner at The Chimney, Hotel Yak & Yeti, starting 6.30 PM everyday, 248999
- Wood fired pizzas at the new Roadhouse Café. Completely redesigned with separate bar seating and coffee bar. The Roadhouse Café, Thamel, 222636
- BBQ and mome evenings 5PM onwards at Nanglo Café and Pub, Darbar Marg, 243271
- Special Thai cuisine at Ban Thai Restaurant, Darbar Marg, 243271

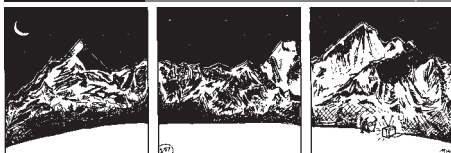
## GETAWAYS

- For pilgrims and holidaymakers Dakchinkali Village Inn overlooking Dakchinkali Temple and Pharping's Buddhist monasteries. Weekend package Rs 1,300 per person on twin-sharing basis with half board. Children from 6-15, Rs 800. [dak\\_vinn@hotmail.com](mailto:dak_vinn@hotmail.com), 710587
- Monsoon at its best Walk in the rain through the pristine countryside. \$35 per person per night on full board basis at the Horse Shoe Mountain Resort, Mude. [resort@horschoe.wlink.com.np](mailto:resort@horschoe.wlink.com.np)
- Monsoon in Shivapuri for birdwatching, short hikes, writing, 20 minute drive and 10 minute walk from Kathmandu, two acres 6,000 feet on the edge of the Shivapuri National Park. Rs 1,850 per person with dinner and breakfast, Rs 925 per child 5-14 years, Shivapuri Heights Cottage. [info@escape2nepal.com](mailto:info@escape2nepal.com)

For inclusion in the listing send information to [editors@nepalitimes.com](mailto:editors@nepalitimes.com)

## YAK YETI YAK

by MIKU



## BOOKWORM



**Anthropology of Tourism: A Case Study of Chitwan, Saranath Ramesh Raj Kumar**  
Adroit Publishers, Delhi  
Rs 512

Kumar analyses the ways in which tourism which tourism contributes to changes in value systems, individual behaviour, family relationships, ethics and moral conduct, creative expressions, traditions and ceremonies and community organisations. The author focuses on the processes of trivialisation, reification, tinkering and commodification.

**Nepalese Climbers on Mount Everest** Ang Phuwa Sherpa and Ramesh Raj Kumar  
Pembu Chhampi Shree, Kathmandu, 2002  
Rs 1,100 (hardback), Rs 700 (paperback)

A former mountaineer and anthropologist explore the long list of Nepalis who have summited Everest from both the North (Tibet) side and the South side (Nepal). The authors provide extensive information on and photographs of Khumbu, as well as biographies and photographs of numerous Nepalis to have climbed Everest, as well as descriptions of climbing rituals and first person accounts by Sherpa and foreign climbers.



**Frank Kingdon Ward's Riddle of the Tsangpo Gorges** Kenneth Cox, ed  
Antique Collectors' Club, Suffolk, UK, 2001  
Rs 4,180

Tsangpo Gorge, the world's deepest gorge, rises through Tibet's great river Yarlung Tsangpo and emerges far below in India's Plains. In 1926 Ward published an account of his travels and plant-hunting through the gorge. Kenneth Cox, Kenneth Storm and Ian Baker spent ten years retracing the route and managed to reach only part of this area. This volume includes Ward's text, updates, as well as information on the history of exploration in the area.

Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 22711, [mandala@ccsl.com.np](mailto:mandala@ccsl.com.np)

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## CITY



## JANAKI GURUNG

Before Jai Nepal Chitragarh became Nepal's first cinema 52 years ago, it was a crocodile hatchery. Yup, it was the residence for the pet crocs of the Rana prime ministers.

But the reptiles were relocated in time for the cinema's formal opening in 1945 with the screening of the religious Bollywood epic, Ganesh Mahima. Movies used to be such a novelty in those days that Kathmandu audiences used to stand in the aisles in the packed hall for three hours watching black-and-white



## HAPPENINGS



**WARM SEND-OFF:** King Gyanendra shakes hands with members of the Kathmandu-based diplomatic corps before embarking on the royal visit to the Peoples' Republic of China on 9 July.



**BUDGET SPEECH:** Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba delivers a one-and-a-half-hour speech at the National Planning Commission on 8 July.



**DEMOLITION MEN:** The Pashupati Area Development Trust continued demolition of illegal construction outside the temple this week. Owners threatened to convert to Christianity if it continued.

perhaps to civil aviation. After a six-month Rs 20 million revamp, a completely re-equipped and refurbished Jai Nepal has opened its box office to customers this week with the Hollywood potboiler, Spiderman.

Not that Jai Nepal has not been an innovator. Owners took a risk by showing the Oscar-nominated France-Nepal production Caravan two years ago, and the film ran for an unprecedented four months. Bhaskar Dhungana remembers going to see Caravan, and says he couldn't stand the stuffy interiors with its beken

benches and dirty floor for more than 15 minutes. That is when Dhungana realised that Kathmandu was ready for a modern cinema. He told us: "The time had come for Kathmandu to have its own world-class cinema, and we have brought it." Dhungana is partner in a consortium called Vision Quest (with Rajesh Siddhi, Nirmal Pradhan and Nimak Uddin) which leased the cinema and invested in the revamp.

At a invitations-only screening of Spiderman this week, the audience marvelled at the reclining velvet covered seats with neat cup-holders, carpeted floors, and a modern interior. There is no garish and gaudy chandeliers and drapes, the interior is elegant and functional.

The cinema's 500 seats are cleverly inclined for unobstructed screen views. The projection and sound equipment is state-of-the-art with Dolby Digital and the latest THX-approved three-way sound system which is so effective that when Spiderman and his acrobats have their due-to-death sequence, the reverberations feel like they are slugging it out right in the cinema.

Dhungana is not hung up on just

[www.jainepal.com](http://www.jainepal.com)





## Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

# Spiderman to the rescue

With great power comes great responsibility. We must bear this in mind as Nepali researchers take rapid strides in the field of science, technology and reflexology.

After all, we are now a nation capable of producing test-tube babies at labs on Putali Sadak, so we have to ask ourselves: do we have adequate security safeguards to prevent miscreants from nabbing our scientists in broad daylight as they stop for a snack at the sekwa shop at the Dilli Bazar intersection?

What is to prevent international terrorists from selling them (the scientists, not the sekwas) to rogue states? And are we prepared for the nightmare scenario of our labs running out of test tubes? The short answer to all these questions is: How should we know?

Even so, we must use the current global war on terror to reassess other domestic lacunae in our security situation. For instance, there are serious questions about the vulnerability of our biogas reactors nationwide. We have not done enough to stop the proliferation of fissile materials in our strategic stockpiles of cowdung.

And we therefore can't be sure that our weapons-grade bull manure will not fall into the hands of Saddam Hussein.

These are issues that every technologically-advanced nation like ours must ask as we learn to get out of the clutches of the axis of evil.

But help is at hand, and we can now rest easy. Lower alert level to Amber Two. There are reliable reports in today's edition of

the *Daily Bugle* that Spiderman has finally arrived in Kathmandu to take care of our law and order situation. We can't trust humans with crime control in this city anymore, that is why we have subcontracted the job to a private sector mutant arachnid which doesn't need the stairs to walk up buildings, and can shoot a chewing gum-like substance from his wrists to incapacitate crooks. Spiderman has his work cut out for him in Kathmandu, and he can start with:

□ Cleaning the city of crime first means cleaning it of garbage. And it is in this direction that Spiderman's attention will be initially focussed. Before you throw the laundry out with the laundromat on the heads of unsuspecting passersby on the street below from your balcony in Asan, glance around to make sure Spidey is not looking.

□ Next, our friendly neighbourhood Spiderman will turn his attention to the power-hungry, putrescent, anarcho-syndicalist Green Goblins in Singha Darbar, entangle them in his world-wide web, and restore the nation to its past glory.

□ Then he will give special lessons in upward mobility at the Nepal Mountaineering Association's climbing school in Manang on the art of walking on walls.

□ But before he does any of that, Spiderman must first untangle the traffic snarl near the Nepal Bar Association so that an urgent consignment of test tubes can be rushed to Putali Sadak.



## NEPALI SOCIETY

# Dhurba, the peacemaker

When filmmaker Dhurba Basnet decided to join a group of journalists on a trip to Rukum, Rupsa and Jajarkot last year, the 37-year-old didn't imagine that his work in the epicentre of the Maoist insurgency, would result in a powerful, provocative film.

Dhurba's *The Killing Terraces*, was recently screened at Mountain Film Festival in Colorado, and travels on to the Banff Mountain Film Festival in Canada this autumn. Australian SBS TV recently bought the rights to the film, which has won critical acclaim and been described as a powerful anti-war film depicting the futility of violence and the human suffering it unleashes.

*Terraces* was the opening film of Film South Asia 2001 in Kathmandu, and exposes the roots of the Maoist crisis. Although it was shot two years ago, before the insurgency moved into last-forward, it delves deeply into the neglect, disinterest and disillusionment that fed the frustrations that contributed to the rise of Maoism. Now what worries many viewers is that things are actually much worse in the midwest, and that many Maoist prisoners, villagers, and security personnel in the film have since been killed.

"The response has been overwhelming. I'm just glad that the film has been able to provide viewers in Nepal and abroad an insight into the roots of the Maoist problem," says the soft-spoken Dhurba modestly. "It is a film about war, but the underlying

message is of the need for peace." Dhurba is not just sitting back and basking in his success. He has just finished another documentary on people living with HIV for the UK-based Television Trust for the Environment (TVE), which was shown at a global AIDS conference in Barcelona this week.

A graduate in sociology, Dhurba was born in Chitwan, and started out as a trainee cameraman at Nepal Television. In 1994, he helped set up *Ankhiyaal*, a popular fortnightly television magazine with investigative reports and documentaries on development and social issues produced by the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists.

Dhurba has travelled through 70 of Nepal's 75 districts, and he likes

his job more and more, "mainly because digital cameras are getting lighter," he jokes. But there have been moments when Dhurba has wondered why he ever became a filmmaker. In 1996, while lugging his heavy camera equipment up over the 5,300 m Larkya Pass between the Buri Gandaki and Manang valleys, he was struck with acute mountain sickness. And while fighting off the effects of altitude, he was hit by typhoid. He was sure his time had come. Fortunately for us, just as they were running low on food, Dhurba and his crew were rescued by helicopter. □



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