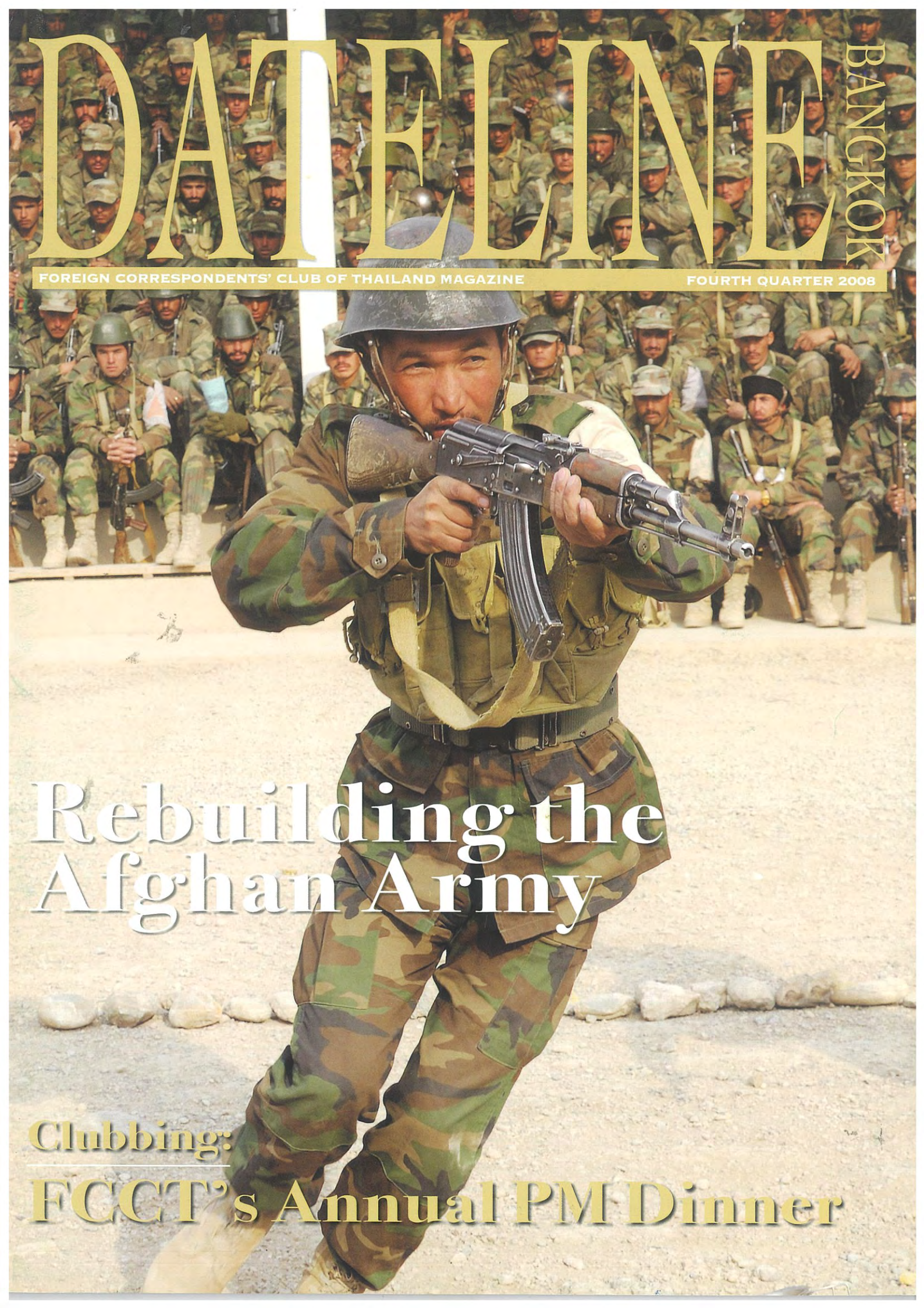


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BANGKOK

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FOURTH QUARTER 2008

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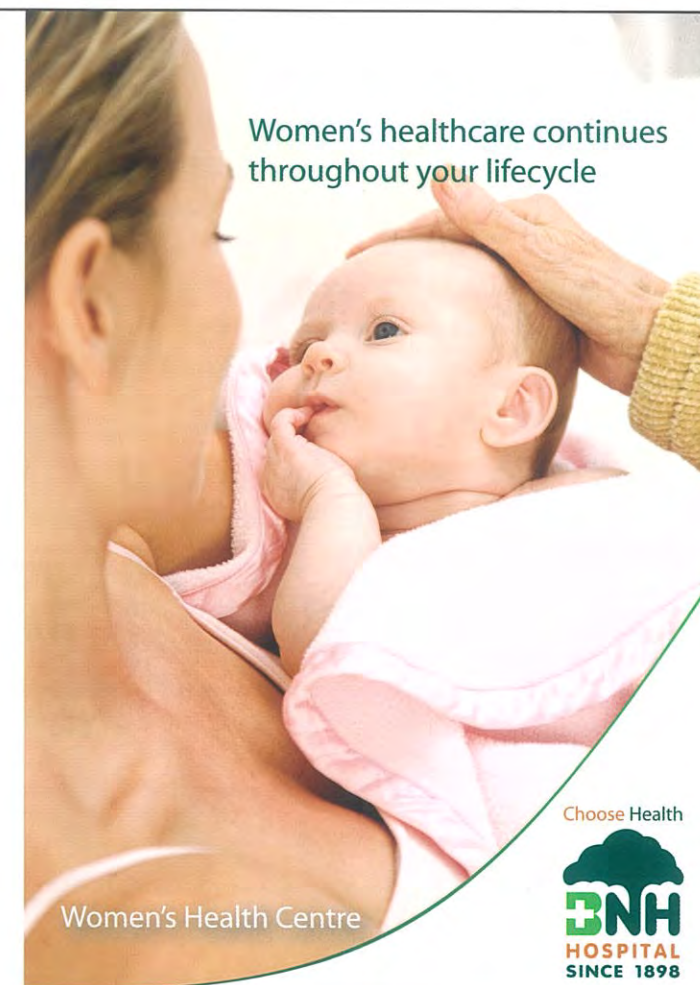
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Contents

Fourth Quarter 2008

PRESIDENT'S DESK

6 A Wild Year

CLUBBING

- 7 • Back by Popular Demand
- 8 • The Annual General Meeting
- 9 • Soi Whispers



END-OF-YEAR PARTY

10 Ringing in the New Year

ANNUAL FCCT PM DINNER

12 A New Beginning for Thailand

14 Meeting the Prime Minister

FROM THE FRONT LINES

16 Building a New Afghan Army



PHOTO ESSAY

20 Ghosts in the Temple

IN REMEMBRANCE

- 24 Dying for the Truth
- 26 An Editor of Rare Courage



Take a front line seat at world events and be part of the buzz in the region by joining the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand.

Found at the heart of Asia's news and providing a hub of conviviality and professional commitment, the FCCT is a must for anyone wanting to engage in our times.

Frequent programme nights reveal and explain current affairs. Meet friends, colleagues and leading figures from the region's business, government, diplomatic and media circles at the bar. Press conferences, film nights and international receptions all happen here.

Members have special privileges: exclusive Internet access; this unique quarterly magazine for free; a weekly bulletin detailing upcoming events; insight into path-breaking photography and art, Jazz on Friday nights, special gourmet nights, and more. For street cred and sustenance in these trying times, the FCCT is the only choice.

FEEDING THE MACHINE

Dateline magazine looks at the stories behind the stories. All offerings will be considered, from articles and photo essays to letters, essays, haiku or sonnets. How you covered a story, what you think about how journalism works, or even some gossip for the Soi Whispers column – send it all in, to editor Patrick Barta (Patrick.Barta@wsj.com) or deputy editor Marwaan Macan-Marker (marwaan@ips.org). Submissions are paid for with glory and bar coupons.

A Wild Year

By NIRMAL GHOSH

The past year has been a turbulent one, during which the FCCT has had the highest profile in recent memory. As the country's – and the region's – pre-eminent forum for discussions on current affairs, the Club is bound to attract attention and occasionally, controversy.

There are some fundamental misunderstandings out there however, on what role the FCCT plays, and how the foreign media functions. The FCCT is not an advocacy or watchdog body like the Committee for Protection of Journalists. We are a social organization.

However, we have an inherent and unshakeable belief in media freedom, and our role as provider of a neutral space for free discussion and debate on current affairs. The FCCT's professional membership would have an issue with any attempt to undermine or subvert this principle.

We have always welcomed voices from across the spectrum of Thailand's political and social opinion. In our programmes – and we have had a rich schedule this past year – we always attempt to encourage balance.

For months at the height of Thailand's political turmoil in late 2008, we had a standing invitation extended to the leaders of the People's Alliance for Democracy and senior figures in the government at the time. Kasit Piromya, now Foreign Minister, spoke at the FCCT in his capacity as an advisor to the Democrat Party as well as the PAD. Then-government deputy spokesman Nattawut Saikuar – now a key leader of the "red shirt" movement – also spoke at the Club.

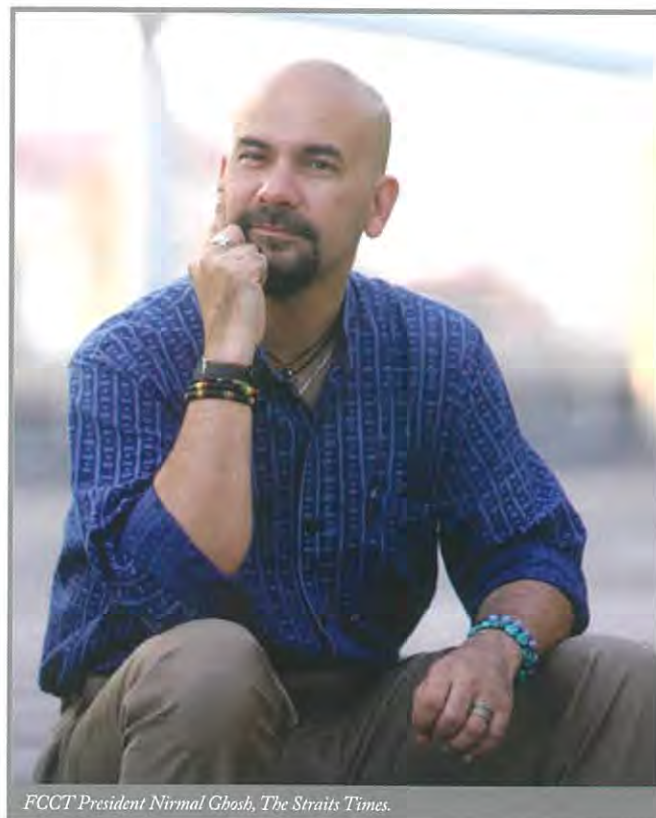
A panel discussion on the unrest in Tibet saw the Embassy of the People's Republic of China send a senior diplomat to share the floor with activists sympathetic to Tibetan autonomy/independence and human rights in Tibet. The result was a riveting, at times intense, and certainly very illuminating and cordial debate.

We have also routinely invited representatives of the government of Myanmar to take part in discussions on Myanmar issues, or even mount their own exclusive talk. There has been no response so far.

The media community is no stranger to pressure, which whether from political or corporate-industrial or other interest groups, exists in almost every country, and is an occupational hazard. The foreign media is often a subject of extra focus because it is the lens through which the international community sees a country, so the government of the day is normally sensitive to it.

In a charged political atmosphere, in which much of the mainstream local media may take sides, there are elements who wish the foreign media would do so as well – or accuse it of doing so if it does not suit whoever is doing the complaining.

The foreign media is not unlike local media in any country with a reasonably free press. Opinions are aired in editorials and opinion pages, and writers are entitled to their opinions in those



FCCT President Nirmal Ghosh, *The Straits Times*.

pages. Counter-opinions can be and are expressed, and letters to the editor provide a right of reply and an avenue for readers and interested parties to express their opinions. Strong and sometimes contrarian opinions are not unusual, and often productively insert critical thinking into any constructive debate.

News reportage and analysis is on the other hand just that – reportage and analysis of bare facts. News reportage is necessarily reactive to news events; it does not dictate the course or nature of breaking news, it simply reports it.

The term "foreign media" is also often conflated to mean the western media. Many forget that the international media comes from a far broader spectrum. We have among our professional membership media from the UK, the USA, several countries in Europe, south Asia, Japan, China, south east Asia, Australia, and the Middle East. They range from print and radio and television, to the Internet and the blogosphere. It is therefore misleading to paint or see the foreign media as monolithic.

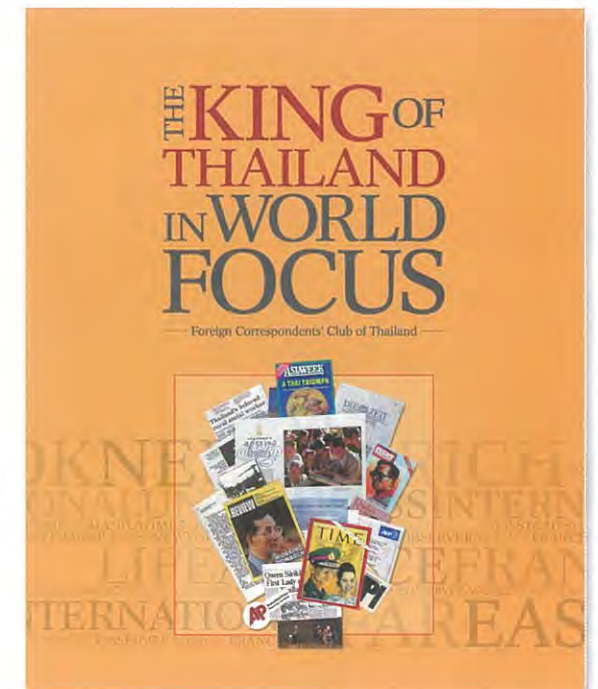
We have had a year of interesting debate and discussion within our doors, where all have been welcome whatever their opinions may be. This will continue.

Malice has no place in the premises of the FCCT.



Back by popular demand

The King of Thailand in World Focus, FCCT's hugely-popular collection of articles and writings about the world's longest-reining monarch, is back in a new and expanded edition. It offers a comprehensive account of His Majesty as seen through the eyes of foreign media – including newspapers, magazines, wire services and photographers. The new, updated edition, published in conjunction with the King's 80th birthday, includes scores of new articles from recent years and during critical moments in the country's political history, offering the absolute last word on one of the most influential leaders of. Copies are available from the FCCT office and all leading bookshops.



FCCT on Facebook

FCCT has launched a new page on Facebook with news and updates about FCCT events and media issues in Thailand. We welcome all members to take a look and join the group. Find us on Facebook by searching for "FCCT: Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand".



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Ready for action: The new FCCT board.

The Annual General Meeting

The FCCT held its annual meeting and election on February 6. After a year of fine service to FCCT members, President Nirmal Ghosh offered a few remarks on the state of the club and then handed over the reins as a new board was elected. Here are some excerpts from his speech, and a roster of the new Executive Committee of the FCCT. Congratulations to all the new board members!

The primary objective of the Executive Committee, to my mind, is to maintain and uphold the dignity and credibility of the journalistic profession and the Club as a space for free and fair discourse on issues of the day. In the process we must also ensure that we deliver value to our members.

A parallel objective is to maintain and improve on the FCCT's financial viability and through that our survival, leaving the Club in good health for the next Executive Committee to take over. I am happy to say that we have succeeded through a year that has at times been difficult.

We successfully managed a great deal of long overdue housekeeping. With the help of Tony Doherty and Art Moritz, we overhauled our membership database and streamlined our systems. We set out with ambitious refurbishment plans in order to give something back to you, our members. We managed to push some through,



notably the backdrop that you see behind me, which features our new logo. More will follow soon, specifically we will replace the carpet and get new furniture. The walls have been painted and the lighting improved. The bar has a new look. The aim is to make the FCCT more modern and also more comfortable, without sacrificing any of the easy informality that is our hallmark.

We inherited a Club in fairly good shape, and have left it in better shape. Our reserves remain untouched and intact; and all maintenance and Clubhouse improvements have been comfortably met from operating revenue. Through all this we have also had to manage and safeguard the credibility and dignity of the FCCT, a Club that we are justifiably proud of and whose name we will not allow to be tarnished.

It has been a roller coaster of a year. To me it was an especially interesting one, since I spent more than half of it on crutches after breaking my leg in a motorcycle taxi accident on January 12, 2008. The year

seemed to flash by, yet it was packed with so much that looking back, I almost have trouble remembering everything that happened. Thank you very much for being with us through it all, and sticking with us.

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SOI WHISPERS

♦ If one were to place bets on which country in the world is most removed from reality – or at least ‘reality’ as most perceive it – North Korea and Zimbabwe would certainly be worth a punt. So too would our dear friend next door, Burma – latterly known as Myanmar. Certainly not the most popular state in ASEAN, it manages to completely confound the United Nations and the best efforts of the diplomatic corps. It often confuses the detached and supposedly objective press kept firmly beyond its borders. Last September, one small agency solemnly reported:

“Aung San Suu [sic], has started a partial hunger strike. This news came from her party, the National League for Democracy, which said the 63-year-old dissident hasn’t accepted her daily food rations brought by the regime in three weeks.”

All a bit odd. Aung San Suu Kyi usually has a maid do her shopping, and in most other parts of the world “a partial hunger strike” would probably be called a “diet.” Suu Kyi may need many things, but a diet is not one of them. Furthermore, the first rule of a hunger strike is: make sure everybody knows you are doing it. It’s pretty pointless starving to death for a cause when nobody realizes you are trying to make a point.

Another small news agency reported that tour agencies doing business in Burma were going into paroxysms of delight at the prospect of visas on arrival being introduced. This was actually first experimented with in 1996 for Visit Myanmar Year, arguably the greatest tourism marketing failure in history, anywhere. The Burmese junta’s hospitality offensive somehow never got much air under its wings – a bit like the ignored 1990 general election and most other things in Burma, latterly known as Myanmar, where nothing ever really changes except the place names.

Indeed, journalists continue to be subjected to another fine old piece of Burmese official hospitality: deportation on arrival. Veteran correspondent **Bertil Lintner** was threatened with the big bounce at Mingaladon International Airport if he dared to tag along with a Swedish minister and aid team visiting in the chaotic aftermath of Cyclone Nargis. A few weeks earlier, CNN’s **Dan Rivers** had the rare distinction of being taken off a departing flight after embarkation so that the Burmese authorities could search him and stamp “deportee” in his passport. When the passport expires, Dan plans to have the relevant pages framed for his master toilet.

An actual victim of a classic Burma bounce last year during the Nargis crisis was the BBC’s **Andrew Harding**. He was unceremoniously ejected on the same plane he had arrived on from Suvarnabhumi. Andrew had actually passed through immigration and was waiting at the carousel for his baggage when he was collared. (Tip for neophyte undercover Burma-watchers: carry-on baggage only.) Since leaving Thailand last July, Andrew has been doing a bit better with clandestine live reports from Harare in Zimbabwe – where Auntie Beeb is also officially banned.

Andrew’s replacement in the region is **Alastair Leithead** who arrived in the Land of Smiles and the very same day proposed to his longtime partner Jackie. The FCCT’s bugs in the Beeb report she was delighted, and no doubt hugely relieved to have Alastair back from lengthy reporting in Afghanistan all in one piece. He kicked off his reporting from Thailand with a story comparing the kingdom’s well established and largely successful opium eradication projects with those of his former stamping ground. Afghanistan, attentive viewers gleaned, may still have some way to go kicking this particular habit. No mention was made of whether it has given any thought to developing a decent foot-massage industry.

♦ **Graham Watts**, a veteran editor with the *Financial Times* and now a stellar figure in the world of journalism training, is based in Bangkok, where he has been recovering from a serious back problem. The upside of being flat on his back is the time it allows him to dissect the local English-language press. Blessed with a wonderful eye for the absurd, Graham has found plenty of delights to share with friends.

“I love living here,” he declares. “I am never bored.” Here are two examples of local journalism he circulated that may explain why:

(I) “The Civil Court last night ordered the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) to immediately move out of Government House and its grounds. Nine PAD leaders also face arrest warrants approved by the Criminal Court on four charges, including treason. ... Termsak Jarupran said the PAD respected the order but appealed to the court to allow them to stay inside the compound of Government House to fulfill their mission to topple the government.”

(II) “The Royal Thai Police Office is investigating how 161 applicants

that sat an exam for the posts of non-commissioned police officers all ended up with the same score. According to deputy police spokesman Pol Maj-Gen Ruangsak Jaritek, the applicants aroused suspicion as they all had the same correct and wrong answers and received the same scores in each subject.”

♦ While it wouldn’t take a *Thai Clouseau* to sniff a rat there, it’s anybody’s guess who is behind *Not the Nation*, an exceedingly mischievous little website which recently claimed that the FCCT had just admitted its first Thai member. This is absolutely not true. Among those “quoted” commenting on this landmark event (which emphatically did not happen) were former President **Nirmal Ghosh** and Treasurer **Dominic Faulder**. Nirmal was somewhat concerned that the entirely false quote attributed to him was less funny than the equally false one attributed to Dominic. The latter was meanwhile spotted rummaging through old dictionaries trying to figure out what the words fraudulently attributed to him actually meant in simple English.

♦ Numbers played an important role in former President Nirmal Ghosh’s concluding speech at the FCCT’s very successful dinner in January for Thailand’s latest prime minister – one of four who popped up in 2008. **Abhisit Vejjajiva** is by one count the 27th prime minister of Thailand since the abolition of absolute monarchy in 1932. This number in fact relates to the number of people who have served as premier since that time – but not to the total number of times they have served.

If one counts the number of Thai premierships since 1932, account must be taken of the number of people who have served more than once. These include **Seni Pramroj**, **Khuang Abhaiwong**, **Thanom Kittikachorn**, **Anand Panyarachun**, **Chuan Leekpai** and **Thaksin Shinawatra**.

Not everybody wants to talk to the FCCT. General **Suchinda Kraprayoon** never got his dinner in 1992; neither did **Somchai Wongsawat** last year. **Samak Sundaravej** loved food as much as he loathed the foreign press. For him, as the old saying goes, having a root canal would have been preferable to any encounter. So there was a certain irony to one regular FCCT visitor, new Finance Minister **Korn Chatikavanij**, arriving very late and unusually subdued at the most recent PM’s dinner. It transpired he had been waylaid at his dentist’s having a root canal.

The figure for actual premierships is 36, and much higher than 27. This being a democracy, you therefore have a choice between the two depending on how you choose to count. We can all agree to differ at this point, but the story does not quite end here.

Both 27 and 36 are numbers divisible by 9. Their digits both also add up to 9. (2+7=9 and 3+6=9). In Burma, latterly known as Myanmar, this has some significance. The power number of longtime Burmese strongman **General Ne Win** was 9. It may just be a coincidence, but the name of the Thai politician who played a significant role in bringing about the current government coalition was **Newin Chidchob**, who was born on 4 October 1958 – about the time of the first Ne Win caretaker government was asked to take charge in Burma (when it was still known as Burma). Newin’s father, **Chai Chidchob**, was evidently rather an admirer of General Ne Win.

Although the FCCT can’t afford to pay too much heed to numerology (the power number in Burma these days is 11) and other regional superstitions, a board member was instantly dispatched to buy a Newcastle United shirt with the number 36 and “Mark Vegg” emblazoned on the back. The 27th/36th prime minister of Thailand was born in Newcastle and for reasons as unlikely as his taste in music idolizes the northern city’s premiership football team.

The board member returned with a magnificent Newcastle United shirt costing 550 baht to present to Prime Minister Abhisit, only to discover that a very similar stunt had already been played by another local comedian – the British ambassador. However, since the football shirt in question appeared on closer inspection to be an absolutely top quality fake, it was obviously not appropriate as a presentation gift. Instead, Prime Minister Abhisit was given yet another copy of the FCCT’s *The King of Thailand in World Focus*. In the chronology on page 259, Abhisit will not yet find his name but he will find most of the details relating to how the number 36 was reached.

And Mark Vegg? Well, it emerges that in an earlier life young Abhisit was known as Mark Vegg, or Veggie, to his friends in Britain. He is a close chum of **Boris Johnson**, London’s new mayor. In fact, Johnson claims to be one of the few people in the UK who can spell Abhisit’s supposedly difficult Thai surname correctly. It’s actually one of the easier ones around, but don’t tell Boris.

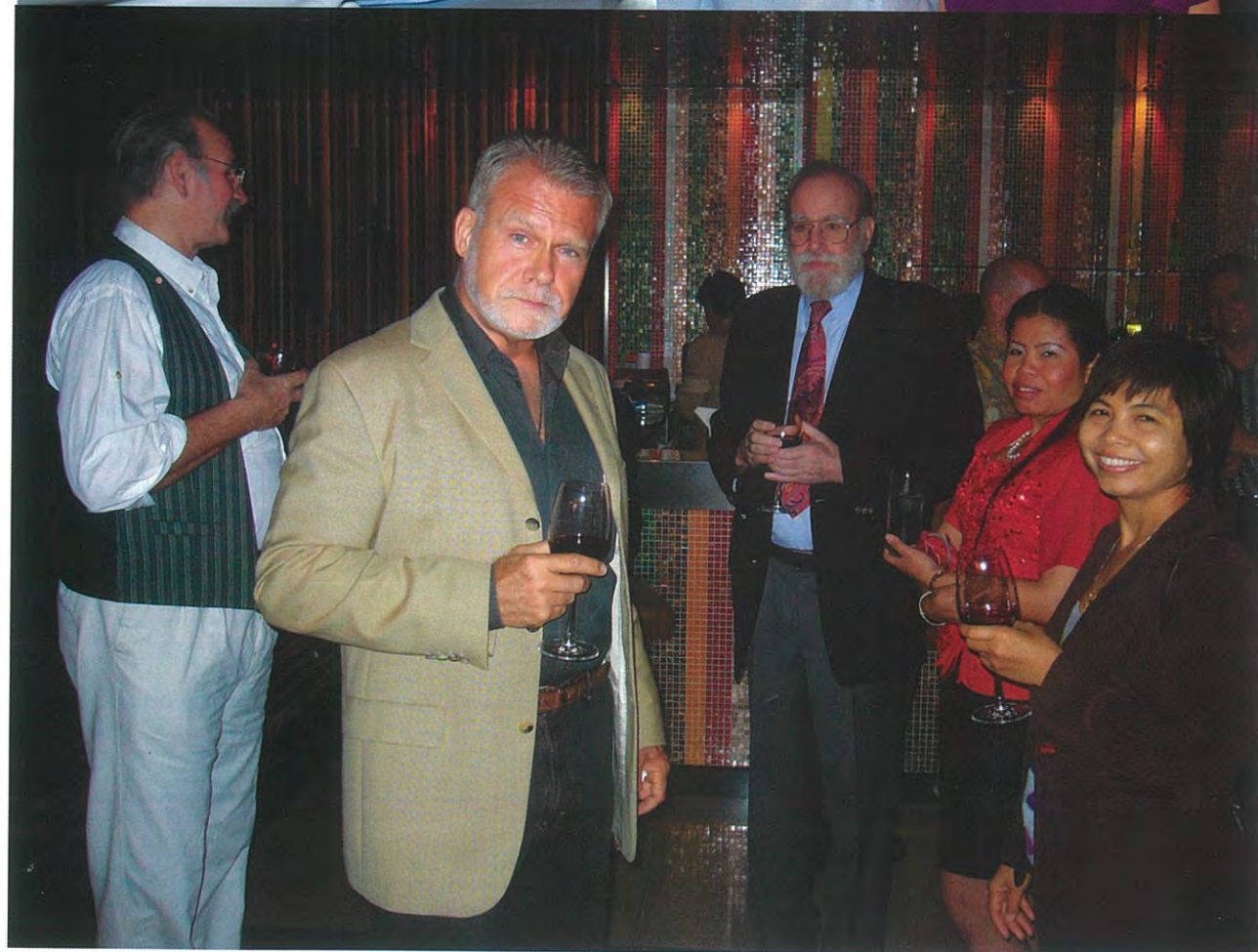
REMEMBER, YOU READ IT HERE FIRST.





Ring in the New Year

THE FCCT'S ANNUAL END-OF-YEAR HOLIDAY PARTY AT DREAM HOTEL IN BANGKOK WAS A STAR-STUDDED SUCCESS. MANY THANKS AS ALWAYS TO ALL OUR GREAT SPONSORS — AND TO EVERYONE FOR ATTENDING!



MANY THANKS TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS





He even likes Metallica: The new PM meets the FCCT board.



A New Beginning for Thailand

ON JANUARY 14, PRIME MINISTER ABHISIT VEJJAJIVA RENEWED AN OLD FCCT TRADITION: THE ANNUAL FCCT PM DINNER. SPEAKING BEFORE A CROWD OF NEARLY 500 GUESTS, HE COVERED A RANGE OF TOPICS, FROM STABILIZING THAILAND'S TUMULTUOUS POLITICS TO EASING TENSIONS IN THE COUNTRY'S RESTIVE SOUTH. THE EDITORS OF DATELINE HAVE SELECTED A FEW EXCERPTS FROM THAT NIGHT. PHOTOS BY NICK NOSTITZ.

On whether his government can last after a succession of short-lived administrations: "...whether the Government stays or falls will depend on our performance. If we can carry out our pledges, then I can't see why we can't survive..."

On the impact of last December's airport shutdown: "...I tracked the number of passengers coming into the airport. During the first half of December, it was 50% from normal.

But by the New Year there were more passengers, with the number settling at around 80%. The numbers therefore suggest that the problem is more about the global economic recession and decreasing purchasing power."

On how he plans to get Thailand's economy back on track: "...we have looked at experiences around the world and discovered that to keep the economy moving, and to make sure there is domestic consumption – by far

the biggest component of our national income – you need to put money into people's pockets. There have been very good researches and analyses, especially in the United States, that when you give cash handouts, that is the best way of getting domestic spending going. And when you try more sophisticated schemes of tax incentives, it would take too long and often you don't see the clear results in terms of stimulating the economy."



Meeting the Prime Minister

Meeting a Prime Minister is always an exciting event – especially when you're his host, writes FCCT president **Nirmal Ghosh** in this column reprinted from the Straits Times.

His critics complain he got into the premiership through the back door. But last Wednesday in my capacity as President of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand, I saw him make a real backdoor entrance of a different kind.

I had to welcome newly installed Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva for dinner with some 500 guests – including most of Bangkok's foreign media, and many from the diplomatic, business and NGO communities.

Around 30 protestors had gathered at the front steps of the InterContinental Hotel where the event was being held. They were polite, but were armed with eggs which they intended to throw at the Prime Minister. I was told to stand by because the Prime Minister's security would change his entry route at the last second.



Eventually I was led into the bowels of the hotel, right down to the service entrance. This is where the food

Security was especially tight at the big event...

supplies for the day arrive early every morning, and are inspected and sorted before being sent to the kitchens. At that late hour though, it was the garbage that was being taken away.

The security men hurriedly cleared the area. A garbage bag hanging out of the back of a truck was stuffed into it to keep it out of sight. Within seconds motorcycle outriders swept in followed by a car which disgorged the Prime Minister accompanied by Chulalongkorn University professor of political science Panitan Wattanayagorn, who is his acting spokesman.

.... yet somehow, they let this guy in...



As we made our way into the hotel building we passed the kitchen where the food for our own dinner was laid out in rows. The Prime Minister got a sneak preview. We then went up in the service lift, and I quipped that this was a first for me – being in a tradesman's lift shoulder to shoulder with a Prime Minister. With us were only professor Panitan, the General Manager of the hotel, and a couple of Mr. Abhisit's bodyguards.

Upstairs the ballroom was packed, with a long queue still waiting to get in. Security was quite tight. My colleagues on the FCCT's executive committee, and I, sat and chatted with Mr. Abhisit for a while in a holding room, where he had a glass of water, and we took a group photo before making our way to the ballroom.

The conversation at the table of 10 including 9 journalists, was a lively one. We talked about his football club Newcastle United, whose supporters were apparently delighted when he became prime minister. I asked Mr. Abhisit where finance minister Korn Chatikavanij was, and he showed me



a text message from him saying he had just had a root canal and would be late.

Mr. Abhisit told us about the hate calls he had received on his mobile phone for the first couple of days after he was voted into the premiership. Many were just a barrage of swear words, and often he would just hang up. But when he spoke to the more moderate ones, trying to engage them, they seemed to calm down and listen to him, he said.

He is sticking to the same mobile phone he used when he was opposition leader – which means many of us foreign correspondents have it. That is quite unusual; most politicians on assuming positions of importance ditch their old numbers. Mr. Abhisit remains relatively accessible. He has also rejected recommendations that he should move around in a bullet proof vehicle – and in his speech at the dinner apologized for the tight security.

Mr. Abhisit likes music, and we asked him – at the table and later in the open forum – what he has been listening to lately.

His commended the comeback albums of Oasis, Metallica and Guns n Roses, and also mentioned The Killers and Arctic Monkeys.

After the event I saw him off at a side entrance, again avoiding the protestors who were gathered hopefully at the main door. This time, the prime minister hopped into an ordinary police car and sped off.





US Marine Colonel Jeff Haynes on a ridge overlooking the Tagab Valley during "Operation Golden Spike."

Building a New Army

BANGKOK-BASED PHOTOGRAPHER ROGER ARNOLD RECENTLY TRAVELED TO THE FRONT LINES OF THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN, WHERE HE SAW FIRST-HAND HOW WESTERN FORCES WERE TRYING TO BUILD A NEW, MODERN AFGHAN ARMY. IN THIS FIRST-PERSON ACCOUNT FROM THE FIELD, HE RECOUNTS SOME OF THE THOUGHTS AND CHALLENGES EXPRESSED BY ONE OF THE KEY SOLDIERS BEHIND THE EFFORT, COL. JEFF HAYNES.

Most counterinsurgency efforts "ignore or downplay the role of the indigenous government and its security forces. This focus on winning counterinsurgency campaigns by improving the capabilities of external actors has become conventional wisdom among numerous military officials and counterinsurgency experts. However, such a strategy is misplaced.... Most counterinsurgency campaigns are not won or lost by external forces, but by indigenous forces."

— Seth G. Jones, RAND Counterinsurgency Study – Volume 4, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan"

When I landed in Kabul in August 2008, I started chasing stories with Western armies and veteran Afghan correspondent Tony Davis from Jane's Information Group, I realized he was on to the real story. He was filing detailed reports on one of the few viable Afghan institutions – The Afghan National Army (ANA). He asked me if I would shoot stories he was working on, and it became obvious that no matter what direction Afghanistan proceeds in, the ANA will be a pivotal factor.

We were briefed at Camp Eggers, in Kabul, where the Western-led Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A) is responsible for turning out a 1,200-soldier ANA battalion every two weeks. From there we were sent on operations with Marine Colonel Jeff Haynes, Commanding Officer, 201st Regional Corps Advisory Command, whose 700 advisors were mentoring 11,000 ANA soldiers, from Kabul to Wardak and Logar provinces and to the eastern provinces out to the Pakistan border.

With Afghan public outrage growing

due to coalition airstrikes and a chorus of experts admitting the war effort is failing, I found hope in Colonel Haynes counterinsurgency (COIN) approach.

Colonel Haynes was eager to discuss his advisors' biggest success mentoring the ANA. In July 2008, the ANA 201st Corps, 3rd Brigade advanced into the Tagab Valley, 2 hours drive east of Kabul. The valley runs north from the Jalalabad Road, the strategic supply route linking Kabul to Pakistan. Since then, the ANA have waged a full-spectrum counterinsurgency campaign in the valley. Tagab Valley became the first ANA controlled battle space – though it technically lacked official recognition as such – on International Security Assistance Force maps (ISAF is the 41 nation coalition controlled by NATO).

One of the main strategies is a new road through Tagab Valley that will allow traffic to bypass Kabul, creating a more direct link between Pakistan and destinations north, including Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The Colonel was positive in his assessments of the ANA, but also posed provocative questions. Some extracts from the Tagab Valley story follow, with Colonel Haynes stating:

"Why aren't contributing nations, particularly the US, demanding more, and or, allowing the ANA to do more – after (spending) US\$13 billion? All Brigades in the ANA should be able to execute a successful counterinsurgency campaign like the 3d Brigade, 201st Corps in Tagab Valley."

Haynes was confident about the Afghans' potential, indicating they inherently understand COIN. The ANA is a national army with each unit strictly reflecting the ethnic make-up of the nation. Unlike foreign forces, they speak the same languages and understand the culture and people. Haynes stated, "Heck, they even invented the corps religious officer who they use to relate to the people. I never heard of it before, but I love it!" Each ANA brigade deploys a religious officer, or mullah, who preaches to villagers the sins of supporting violent insurgent groups. Unconventional and innovative ideas like this are essential in COIN.

Colonel Haynes continued, "The insurgent often wants to provoke a heavy-handed response and we can't fall into that trap. You kill one kid in a village and you've lost that village." He cited a number of instances where insurgents tried to get the ANA to fire on a village, but credits them for not taking the bait. He preaches COIN strategy, emphasizing, "It is all about the people. We are reaching out to the people first and using them as combat multipliers. You know how many mines and IED's (Improvised Explosive Devices) we've detected with our equipment in Tagab Valley? Zero!"

According to Haynes, the significant break-through came in their first month working with the population. Villagers alerted his advisors and ANA commanders to four IED's planted by insurgents.

To win the Tagab Valley, Colonel

Haynes said, "The creeping barrage of goodness, really centers on the road going up the valley, because then you can begin development projects and increase prosperity. The cab fare for villagers went from \$8 down to \$1 just because the ANA graded the road." As the ANA move north through the valley they are building combat outposts to sustain the gains. Haynes confirmed this is an ANA campaign – the first of its kind. His soldiers (approximately 50) are mentoring the ANA; there are no coalition troops.

The battle plan, "the creeping barrage of goodness" to win the hearts and minds of the Tagab Valley, includes: A paved road, wells, radio stations, solar power, humanitarian aid, and medical outreach. It includes agricultural development teaching how to package goods, and pruning techniques to increase crop yields. Saffron cultivation has started too, as a replacement to poppy. More projects like schools and police checkpoints will follow as resources allow.

Key to starting the Tagab Valley campaign were specialized, precise units from "other organizations" which eliminated several top insurgent leaders, mitigating messy village battles. However, Haynes said fixating solely on the enemy is a mistake. His men are on the sharp end of the fight, taking calculated risks as COIN doctrine prescribes. The Colonel's

Afghan instructors training new ANA recruits at the Kabul Military Training Center (KMTC).



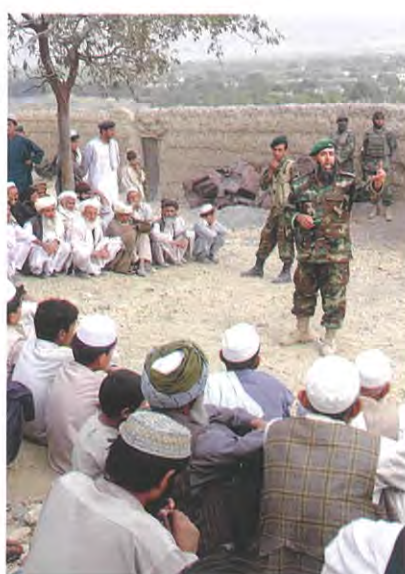


Candidates for ANA officer cadet school take academic tests given by American, ISAF NATO, and Afghan soldiers at the National Military Academy of Afghanistan (NMAA), modeled on the US Military Academy at West Point. Out of approximately 3,000 applicants only 300 are selected each year during three days of academics and fitness tests. The first class will graduate in 2009 with four year degrees majoring in civil engineering, computer sciences and law. By 2012 the campus will be housed in a new \$150 - 200 million facility named the Afghan Defense University (ADU). The school is run by Afghan instructors with mentors from the 41 nation coalition International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) forces.

Marines and ANA soldiers are renting houses, or "Qalats," as forward operating bases in Tagab Valley villages, and living with the population.

The Marines' COIN strategies come from lessons learned by the French and British as well as their own history. During the Vietnam War, the Marines employed a similar COIN idea with some success known as "Combined Action Programs (CAP's)." They lived in villages and fought alongside indigenous Vietnamese security forces. Marine General Victor "Brute" Krulak defended the program and waged his own internal policy war with Army General Westmoreland. Krulak lost his battle with Westmoreland, who preferred massive firepower and body counts - a strategy that wreaked havoc on the civilian population.

Forcing institutional change through the US Military and 41-nation NATO International Security Assistance Force



An ANA Mullah preaches to Tagab Valley villagers during "Operation Golden Spike."

(ISAF) in Afghanistan continues to be a challenge. Many ISAF forces are doing

a good job mentoring the ANA, but all have different military cultures, and some little or no knowledge of COIN. Colonel Haynes confirmed the challenges stating, "What we are doing in Tagab Valley is not a coalition, ISAF vision. They didn't even know we were doing it. We've been marketing it to them to show them a model we think will work."

As of November 2008, the ANA was 68,000-soldiers strong and projected to reach 134,000 by 2012. CSTC-A and the Kabul Military Training Institute continue to churn out a new 1,200-strong battalion of soldiers every two weeks. However, Colonel Haynes cautioned there is a real shortage of capable senior officers to assume command positions at the battalion and brigade levels. He commented, "If we grow the army too fast we run the risk of losing some of the modest gains we've achieved." A poorly-led and undisciplined battalion of soldiers misbehaving in the battle space could

lose the support of the population.

"What we need are larger battalions that are well-led with the ANA controlling more battle space. When the ANA know they own the problem, they excel; when large coalition units are with them, they tend to sit back."

Haynes says it is impossible for the Afghan government and military to develop without giving them manageable parts of the problem. Getting this right should be the first step in the exit strategy. Unfortunately, the ANA is not demanding battle space. Why should they when responsibility includes risk? Haynes stated that if he could fix one thing, it would be the management of battle space. "Everything cascades from the ANA not having responsibility in a given area. No wonder President Karzai is said to have referred to the coalition as the 'Shadow government.'"

Colonel Haynes is adamant about leadership too. He indicated good ANA leaders can get their soldiers to the field and manage their own logistics effectively. He explained, "You can have a bad leader who is given everything and it gets squandered. Counterinsurgency - more than any kind of fight - is about good leadership." His irritation comes from fighting for eight months to overcome one ANA brigade commander's political connections, describing the officer as, "Disinterested, incompetent, not engaged, and involved in criminal activity." The brigade commander was transferred, but his poor leadership severely impacted his men. According to Haynes the situation had become intolerable stating, "His behavior in Nuristan and Kunar



An American Army mentor with new ANA recruits at the Kabul Military Training Center (KMTTC).

Provinces was putting my people, the ANA soldiers, and the mission in danger."

COIN tactics rub up against high level Afghan style leadership, requiring delegation of authority to lower level non-commissioned officers (NCOs), allowing them to make decisions in the field. Colonel Haynes credits development of ANA leadership to Marine Sgt Major Patrick Dougherty, who commented, "Many NCOs' abilities exceed the Jr Officers, thus posing a threat in the officer's eyes." He said the brigade led by the commander Haynes had insisted the ANA transfer, "felt abandoned and hopeless," due to being poorly equipped. During fire fights their machine guns would only fire one round and some had no boots. When

NCOs' raised the issue with the brigade commander they were belittled, eroding their leadership. Sgt Major Dougherty said, "Once the Sr NCOs' started to take responsibility, they became obsessed with making sure the soldiers were taken care of."

Before leaving Afghanistan, Colonel Haynes transferred his command to Marine Colonel Mike Langley, whose Marines and National Guardsmen will continue mentoring the ANA. Haynes said, "I'm optimistic about the future, but I would still like to see the US and ISAF leadership demanding more of the ANA. We should insist on the ANA being further along than they are," but he adds counterinsurgency takes a long time. It's a thinking man's game. "It's more art than science. What works in one valley may not work in the next. Turning this rural insurgency will not happen overnight."

Colonel Haynes thinks with good leadership and COIN practices, the ANA can round the corner in this fight. He is convinced ISAF can't go it alone. "We need to stop rejoicing over 12 hour ANA independent operations and insist the commanders lead. The ANA must be more than a token element behind ISAF forces." He said they should plan, lead, and execute long term campaigns with the coalition in support. "Once the ANA do that, they can be an unstoppable force and transform this great country."



ANA soldiers provide Tagab Valley villagers with medical assistance as part of their counterinsurgency effort.

Ghosts in the Temple

THE ONGOING BORDER DISPUTE BETWEEN THAILAND AND CAMBODIA OVER PREAH VIHEAR TEMPLE CAPTURED HEADLINES AROUND THE WORLD IN 2008. PHOTOGRAPHER MASARU GOTO WENT BEHIND THE LINES TO TELL THE STORY OF CAMBODIA'S FORMER KHMER ROUGE SOLDIERS WHO ARE NOW GUARDING THE PRECIOUS MONUMENT.

"If we die in battle,
we will become
ghosts. Then we will
protect our land and
our temple forever."

— former Khmer Rouge soldier



Top Right: Sochiatra, age 3. He lives with his father who has been a Khmer Rouge soldier in Phrea Vihear province.

Above: The Preah Vihear temple in early morning.

Left: Kire, age 19. He joined the army two years ago in Anlong Veng. His father was a former Khmer Rouge member who died in the early 90's during fighting with the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces.

In July 2008, UNESCO approved Cambodia's bid to make Preah Vihear temple a World Heritage site. The decision ignited long-standing tensions between Cambodia and Thailand, who both claim land around the temple, which lies on the border between the two countries.

It was ten years ago that the Cambodian government signed the peace deals that ended decades of civil war with the Khmer Rouge. As part of the deal, rebel soldiers were folded into the Cambodian army. Now, the Cambodian government has sent these former Khmer Rouge soldiers to the frontline to fight the Thais.

Some of these men have been soldiers for over 40 years. The long civil war left them uneducated — they only know how to fight. Driven by poverty, these soldiers' children now join them in the army. This is the destiny of the former Khmer Rouge soldiers, a destiny that now envelops their families.



Left: Sophy, age 5. She lives in Preah Vihear temple with her father, who has been member of the Khmer Rouge. She used to sell souvenirs for tourists before fighting. She and her older sisters don't go to school.

Bottom Left: Soldiers carry guns and ammunitions in Dongrak Mountains.

Bottom Right: Khom, age 42, is a soldier in Phrea Vihear. He cuts soldiers hair for half a dollar anywhere along the front lines in the jungle.



In a replay of the civil war years, the Khmer Rouge find themselves back on alert in the Dongrak mountain range along the Thai border. It was here where they fought and died in the last heavy battles of the civil war. The deep jungles surrounding Preah Vihear remain heavily mined from those times. The soldiers on the frontline carry their old weapons again. They think they will carry them until they die – until they become ghosts in the temple.



Top: The Preah Vihear temple in early morning.

Bottom: Socheat, age 49, a veteran Khmer Rouge soldier, stepped on a land mine in 1991. He has never been to school and still has no knowledge of writing and reading. Most former Khmer Rouge soldiers are illiterate.

Masaru Goto has 20 years of experience photographing social and human rights issues in Southeast Asia and South America. He has participated in numerous campaigns for human rights and social issues, and his reportage has been featured internationally.

He received "The International Fund for Documentary Photography (IFDP) from the Fifty Crows Foundation (2002) for his documentary project, "Human Rights in Colombia." His reportage of Kashmir received The Ueno Hikoma Award (2004) in Japan. His images of HIV/AIDS in Cambodia won two of the categories in The River of Life competition sponsored by the World Health Organization (2004), as well as The Grand Prize from Sagami-hara city in Japan for the book "Smile in Despair: Stories from a Cambodian AIDS Ward" in 2005.

He immerses himself in long-term documentary projects, spending time with the people in his images and sharing their sense of humanity.

Dying for the Truth

ON JANUARY 8, 2009, FAMED SRI LANKAN JOURNALIST LASANTHA WICKREMATUNGA WAS KILLED WHEN A GROUP OF GUNMEN ON MOTORCYCLES PULLED IN FRONT OF HIS CAR AND OPENED FIRE. AN EDITOR AT SRI LANKA'S ESTEEMED *SUNDAY LEADER*, HE WAS KNOWN FOR HIS UNCOMPROMISING COVERAGE OF CORRUPTION IN SRI LANKA AND HE WAS ESPECIALLY CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR ERODING CIVIL LIBERTIES IN RECENT YEARS AS IT WAGES WAR AGAINST THE COUNTRY'S SEPARATIST TAMIL TIGER COMMUNITY. HE WAS AN INSPIRATION TO MANY JOURNALISTS ACROSS ASIA. IN HONOR OF THIS GREAT JOURNALIST, A FRIEND TO MANY JOURNALISTS IN OUR REGION, FCCT DATELINE IS REPRINTING WHAT IS BELIEVED TO BE HIS LAST COLUMN, WHICH WAS LATER REPORTEDLY FOUND BY HIS BROTHER AND WHICH FAMOUSLY FORETOLD HIS DEATH.

No other profession calls on its practitioners to lay down their lives for their art save the armed forces and, in Sri Lanka, journalism. In the course of the past few years, the independent media have increasingly come under attack. Electronic and print-media institutions have been burnt, bombed, sealed and coerced. Countless journalists have been harassed, threatened and killed. It has been my honour to belong to all those categories and now especially the last.

I have been in the business of journalism a good long time. Indeed, 2009 will be *The Sunday Leader's* 15th year. Many things have changed in Sri Lanka during that time, and it does not need me to tell you that the greater part of that change has been for the worse. We find ourselves in the midst of a civil war ruthlessly prosecuted by protagonists whose bloodlust knows no bounds. Terror, whether perpetrated by terrorists or the state, has become the order of the day. Indeed, murder has become the primary tool whereby the state seeks to control the organs of liberty. Today it is the journalists, tomorrow it will be the judges. For neither group have the risks

ever been higher or the stakes lower.

Why then do we do it? I often wonder that. After all, I too am a husband, and the father of three wonderful children. I too have responsibilities and obligations that transcend my profession, be it the law or journalism. Is it worth the risk? Many people tell me it is not. Friends tell me to revert to the bar, and goodness knows it offers a better and safer livelihood. Others, including political leaders on both sides, have at various times sought to induce me to take to politics, going so far as to offer me ministries of my choice. Diplomats, recognising the risk journalists face in Sri Lanka, have offered me safe passage and the right of residence in their countries. Whatever else I may have been stuck for, I have not been stuck for choice.

But there is a calling that is yet above high office, fame, lucre and security. It is the call of conscience.

The Sunday Leader has been a controversial newspaper because we say it like we see it: whether it be a spade, a thief or a murderer, we call it by that name. We do not hide behind euphemism. The investigative articles we print are supported by documentary

evidence thanks to the public-spiritedness of citizens who at great risk to themselves pass on this material to us. We have exposed scandal after scandal, and never once in these 15 years has anyone proved us wrong or successfully prosecuted us.

The free media serve as a mirror in which the public can see itself sans mascara and styling gel. From us you learn the state of your nation, and especially its management by the people you elected to give your children a better future. Sometimes the image you see in that mirror is not a pleasant one. But while you may grumble in the privacy of your armchair, the journalists who hold the mirror up to you do so publicly and at great risk to themselves. That is our calling, and we do not shrink it.

Every newspaper has its angle, and we do not hide the fact that we have ours. Our commitment is to see Sri Lanka as a transparent, secular, liberal democracy. Think about those words, for they each has profound meaning. Transparent because government must be openly accountable to the people and never abuse their trust. Secular because in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society such as ours, secularism offers the only common

ground by which we might all be united. Liberal because we recognise that all human beings are created different, and we need to accept others for what they are and not what we would like them to be. And democratic... well, if you need me to explain why that is important, you'd best stop buying this paper.

The Sunday Leader has never sought safety by unquestioningly articulating the majority view. Let's face it, that is the way to sell newspapers. On the contrary, as our opinion pieces over the years amply demonstrate, we often voice ideas that many people find distasteful. For example, we have consistently espoused the view that while separatist terrorism must be eradicated, it is more important to address the root causes of terrorism, and urged government to view Sri Lanka's ethnic strife in the context of history and not through the telescope of terrorism. We have also agitated against state terrorism in the so-called war against terror, and made no secret of our horror that Sri Lanka is the only country in the world routinely to bomb its own citizens. For these views we have been labelled traitors, and if this be treachery, we wear that label proudly.

Many people suspect that *The Sunday*

Leader has a political agenda: it does not. If we appear more critical of the government than of the opposition it is only because we believe that – pray excuse cricketering argot – there is no point in bowling to the fielding side. Remember that for the few years of our existence in which the UNP was in office, we proved to be the biggest thorn in its flesh, exposing excess and corruption wherever it occurred. Indeed, the steady stream of embarrassing exposes we published may well have served to precipitate the downfall of that government.

Neither should our distaste for the war be interpreted to mean that we support the Tigers. The LTTE are among the most ruthless and bloodthirsty organisations ever to have infested the planet. There is no gainsaying that it must be eradicated. But to do so by violating the rights of Tamil citizens, bombing and shooting them mercilessly, is not only wrong but shames the Sinhalese, whose claim to be custodians of the dhamma is forever called into question by this savagery, much of which is unknown to the public because of censorship.

What is more, a military occupation of the country's north and east will require

the Tamil people of those regions to live eternally as second-class citizens, deprived of all self respect. Do not imagine that you can placate them by showering "development" and "reconstruction" on them in the post-war era. The wounds of war will scar them forever, and you will also have an even more bitter and hateful Diaspora to contend with. A problem amenable to a political solution will thus become a festering wound that will yield strife for all eternity. If I seem angry and frustrated, it is only because most of my countrymen – and all of the government – cannot see this writing so plainly on the wall.

It is well known that I was on two occasions brutally assaulted, while on another my house was sprayed with machine-gun fire. Despite the government's sanctimonious assurances, there was never a serious police inquiry into the perpetrators of these attacks, and the attackers were never apprehended. In all these cases, I have reason to believe the attacks were inspired by the government. When finally I am killed, it will be the government that kills me.

The irony in this is that, unknown to most of the public, Mahinda and I have been friends for more than a quarter

An Editor of Rare Courage

By Marwaan Macan-Markar

Those of us who believe in the immense possibilities that critical and independent journalism has to offer for the development of Sri Lanka lost one of our stalwarts with the murder of Lasantha Wickrematunga. The editor of *The Sunday Leader*, an English-language weekly, was killed on the morning of January 8 this year. His assailants got him barely 100 meters from *The Leader's* editorial office.

Lasantha's murder was particularly painful to me. We had been friends since early 1983, having first met in the press gallery of the country's parliament. He was already a rising star by then; his forte, political journalism. But war-torn Sri Lanka had to wait till 1994, when Lasantha and his elder brother Lal launched *The Leader*, for him to reveal his true calling – as a fearless and courageous editor driven to expose corruption and the abuse of power with an aggressive style of reportage.

Two years after its launch, *The Leader* had gained a reputation for its brand

of investigative journalism without peer in the country's English language media. Lasantha exposed scandalous deals running into the millions of dollars. Neither the president nor the ministers were spared; the private sector was fair game, too. He made it cool to be a reporter or editor for the paper. To be identified as a journalist for *The Leader* often elicited a reaction of respect or encouragement or even that inevitable question: "Aren't you scared?" I know; I worked as the paper's features editor for three years.

But there were already disturbing signs in those early years of *The Leader* that the country's powerful were not ready for the verbal swords that Lasantha struck them with. By 1998, he and his wife had been attacked by club-wielding thugs when they were returning home one night; on another night a round of bullets were pumped into their house. In the years that followed, more attacks were directed at him and the paper, including, on one occasion, the burning down of *The Leader's* printing press.

Such assaults and near-death

experiences would have prompted other journalists in similar circumstances to flee. But not Lasantha. There was something rare about the bravado he displayed; there was a streak of courage that cannot be taught. Either you have it or you don't. Just how much he had struck me when I flew home for his funeral. There seemed nobody to follow in his path.

Yet Lasantha knew that his enemies would never give up. He knew that a violent death was possible. For there were numbers of such killings in the country that foretold his murder. And he had such a feeling soon after the New Year dawned, when Sri Lankan troops captured the de facto capital of the Tamil Tiger rebels in their successive drive through the Tiger's territory in the north.

"If they are going to get me, they will do it now. The mood is with the president and the government," Lasantha had told his brother Lal, *The Leader's* publisher. "They cannot do anything wrong."

Four days later, those words came true.

century. Indeed, I suspect that I am one of the few people remaining who routinely addresses him by his first name and uses the familiar Sinhala address oya when talking to him. Although I do not attend the meetings he periodically holds for newspaper editors, hardly a month passes when we do not meet, privately or with a few close friends present, late at night at President's House. There we swap yarns, discuss politics and joke about the good old days. A few remarks to him would therefore be in order here.

Mahinda, when you finally fought your way to the SLFP presidential nomination in 2005, nowhere were you welcomed more warmly than in this column. Indeed, we broke with a decade of tradition by referring to you throughout by your first name. So well known were your commitments to human rights and liberal values that we ushered you in like a breath of fresh air. Then, through an act of folly, you got yourself involved in the Helping Hambantota scandal. It was after a lot of soul-searching that we broke the story, at the same time urging you to return the money. By the time you did so several weeks later, a great blow had been struck to your reputation. It is one you are still trying to live down.

You have told me yourself that you were not greedy for the presidency. You did not have to hanker after it: it fell into your lap. You have told me that your sons are your greatest joy, and that you love spending time with them, leaving your brothers to operate the machinery of state. Now, it is clear to all who will see that that machinery has operated so well that my sons and daughter do not themselves have a father.

In the wake of my death I know you will make all the usual sanctimonious noises and call upon the police to hold a swift and thorough inquiry. But like all the inquiries you have ordered in the past, nothing will come of this one, too. For truth be told, we both know who will be behind my death, but dare not call his name. Not just my life, but yours too, depends on it.

Sadly, for all the dreams you had for our country in your younger days, in just three years you have reduced it to rubble. In the name of patriotism you have trampled on human rights, nurtured unbridled corruption and squandered public money like no other President before you. Indeed, your conduct has been like a small child suddenly let loose in a toyshop. That analogy is perhaps inapt because no child could have caused so much blood to be spilled on this land as

you have, or trampled on the rights of its citizens as you do. Although you are now so drunk with power that you cannot see it, you will come to regret your sons having so rich an inheritance of blood. It can only bring tragedy. As for me, it is with a clear conscience that I go to meet my Maker. I wish, when your time finally comes, you could do the same. I wish.

As for me, I have the satisfaction of knowing that I walked tall and bowed to no man. And I have not travelled this journey alone. Fellow journalists in other branches of the media walked with me: most of them are now dead, imprisoned without trial or exiled in far-off lands. Others walk in the shadow of death that your Presidency has cast on the freedoms for which you once fought so hard. You will never be allowed to forget that my death took place under your watch. As anguished as I know you will be, I also know that you will have no choice but to protect my killers: you will see to it that the guilty one is never convicted. You have no choice. I feel sorry for you, and Shiranthi will have a long time to spend on her knees when next she goes for Confession for it is not just her own sins which she must confess, but those of her extended family that keeps you in office.

As for the readers of *The Sunday Leader*, what can I say but Thank You for supporting our mission. We have espoused unpopular causes, stood up for those too feeble to stand up for themselves, locked horns with the high and mighty so swollen with power that they have forgotten their roots, exposed corruption and the waste of your hard-earned tax rupees, and made sure that whatever the propaganda of the day, you were allowed to hear a contrary view. For this I – and my family – have now paid the price that I have long known I will one day have to pay. I am – and have always been – ready for that. I have done nothing to prevent this outcome: no security, no precautions. I want my murderer to know that I am not a coward like he is, hiding behind human shields while condemning thousands of innocents to death. What am I among so many? It has long been written that my life would be taken, and by whom. All that remains to be written is when.

That *The Sunday Leader* will continue fighting the good fight, too, is written. For I did not fight this fight alone. Many more of us have to be – and will be – killed before The Leader is laid to rest. I hope my assassination will be seen not as a defeat of freedom but an inspiration for those who survive to step up their efforts. Indeed, I hope that it will help galvanise forces that

will usher in a new era of human liberty in our beloved motherland. I also hope it will open the eyes of your President to the fact that however many are slaughtered in the name of patriotism, the human spirit will endure and flourish. Not all the Rajapakses combined can kill that.

People often ask me why I take such risks and tell me it is a matter of time before I am bumped off. Of course I know that: it is inevitable. But if we do not speak out now, there will be no one left to speak for those who cannot, whether they be ethnic minorities, the disadvantaged or the persecuted. An example that has inspired me throughout my career in journalism has been that of the German theologian, Martin Niemöller. In his youth he was an anti-Semite and an admirer of Hitler. As Nazism took hold in Germany, however, he saw Nazism for what it was: it was not just the Jews Hitler sought to extirpate, it was just about anyone with an alternate point of view. Niemöller spoke out, and for his trouble was incarcerated in the Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps from 1937 to 1945, and very nearly executed. While incarcerated, Niemöller wrote a poem that, from the first time I read it in my teenage years, stuck hauntingly in my mind:

*First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out because I
was not a Jew.*

*Then they came for the Communists
and I did not speak out because I
was not a Communist.*

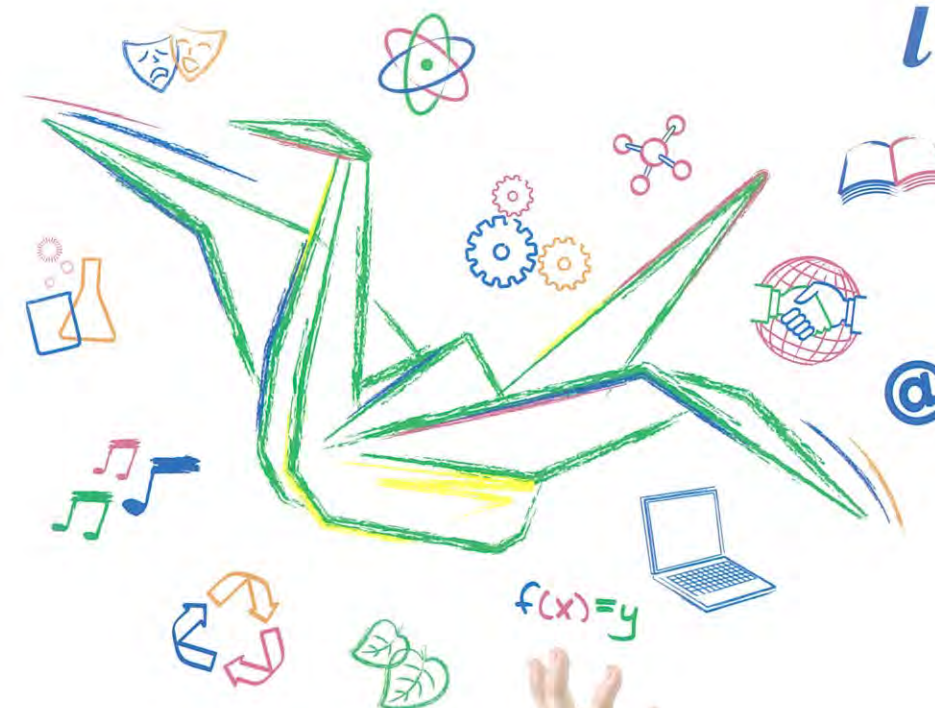
*Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out because I
was not a trade unionist.*

*Then they came for me
and there was no one left to speak
out for me.*

If you remember nothing else, remember this: The Leader is there for you, be you Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim, low-caste, homosexual, dissident or disabled. Its staff will fight on, unbowed and unafraid, with the courage to which you have become accustomed. Do not take that commitment for granted. Let there be no doubt that whatever sacrifices we journalists make, they are not made for our own glory or enrichment: they are made for you. Whether you deserve their sacrifice is another matter. As for me, God knows I tried.



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