Just like King Gyanendra nine months ago, Girija Prasad Koirala made a second midnight address. This may be enough for now.

The response from madhesi activists to the Wednesday address is cautiously positive. The prime minister, flanked by Madhab Nepal and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, agreed to redraw tarai constituencies to reflect population and geography, and committed to a federal system.

The pressure came as much from the virtual blockade of Kathmandu and the long queues for fuel, as from the rising death toll in the plains. Many madhesi community leaders say this is the first time a historically subjugated region will have a balanced say in governance. “Kathmandu had to give in to madhesi demands,” senior Janakpur journalist Ram Bharos Kapadi told us.

If Wednesday’s proposals for tarai representation and federalism push through it will be a dramatic shift in Nepal’s state structure. The tarai will no longer be seen just as a strategic strip of plains bordering India, but a vital political, economic, and social component of the state.

But it might be too early to rejoice. None of the other militant tarai groups such as the ex-Maoist factions of the JTMM have made a statement. Curfews remain in place in Biratnagar, and Birganj and Janakpur saw none of the traditional victory rallies.

The MJF, which on Thursday evening welcomed the speech, is said to have withheld comment until it had considered the implication of the proposal for the tarai’s dalits and indigenous groups. Of the 31 people killed in the protests over the last three weeks, most were from indigenous and dalit groups. The tarai has 1 million plains dalits and 500,000 hill dalits. Saptari has the highest proportion of dalits of any district.

Emboldened perhaps by the successful tarai uprising, a whole new pandora’s box of new autonomy demands have erupted. The Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, the Indigenous Nationalities’ Joint Struggle Committee, the Nepal Backward Community Association, and the Janajati Student Union encircled Singha Darbar on Thursday, calling Koirala’s speech “insufficient”.

An indefinite blockade is on in the tarai called by the Tharuwan, who differentiate themselves from the madhesis. In the east, a broad-based federalism activist group has declared a shutdown of the eastern region on Sunday.

Tensions in the tarai will de-escalate, but disruptions of the highways will continue.

WAITING GAME: Valley motorists, such as these amassed around Bhadrakali on Tuesday afternoon, have had up to 10-hour waits for small rations of fuel.
Muharram in madhes

The population of the plains is united by Kathmandu’s neglect.

Last week, it was Muharram. It is observed by Muslims in Nepal to commemorate the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain, the younger grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, in Karbala in the year 680 AD. The influence of Sufism has transformed this solemn occasion into a symbol of the eternal conflict between forces of virtue and evil.

STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

On the tenth day of Muharram, the Tarai, also called Dusha in the vicinity of Janakpur, is taken around town in procession with mourners beating their chests and shouting ‘Ho Hussain, Ho Hussain’. In the evening, the Dusha is burned, symbolising the victory of good over evil, enthusiastically in Holi, Hindus share the burial. Just as Muslims participate in Tazia, also called Daha in the vicinity of Kathmandu’s neglect.

Enthusiastically in Holi, Hindus share the burial. Just as Muslims participate in Tazia, also called Daha in the vicinity of Kathmandu’s neglect.

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The population of the plains is united by Kathmandu’s neglect.
Dear Wave Customers,

TODAY (Magh 26, 2063) is the last date of Pushu bill

Pay the bill within the stipulated period and ensure interruption free service for your phone.

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- Taplejung, Okhaldhunga
- Butwal, Rupandehi

If the bill is not paid until today, it will be automatically suspended—subject to cancellation of the service contract. It's advisable to settle the outstanding amounts to avoid any inconvenience.

We are open on all days, including Saturdays.

PATRAS

PAYMENT MADE
Acute hearing

Don’t forget other groups when you sit down to talk

We wonder what the government must do before the Madhesi Loktantrik Forum (MLF) comes forward for dialogue. Utpendra Yadav’s group resolutely refused to talk until Home Minister Krishna Sitaula was fired. The MLF has also demanded that Nepal be declared a federal republic, and that electoral constituencies be redrawn on the basis of population.

After marathon sessions at Baluwatar with his allies, Prime Minister Koirala put on a sober face Wednesday night (pictured) and said what he had failed to say the first time round: sorry for the deaths, we shall compensate the victims, your grievances are genuine and we shall meet your legitimate demands. Then he spelt out the eight parties’ commitment to a federal government, and promised that electoral constituencies would be redrawn to give the tarai 49 percent of parliamentary seats. Exactly how these will be done remains to be negotiated.

Whether this is seen by madhesi protestors as enough of a climbdown by a haughty pahadi-dominated government, we shall see in due course. But the more important point is that momentous political declarations have a way of separating the moderates from the radicals. Something like that is likely now.

The first indications from the tarai are that most moderate madhesi leaders and politicians, though not fully satisfied, are leaning towards accepting Koirala’s concessions. One prominent madhesi journalist told me by phone: “The prime minister could have gone further, but we think what he said is good enough.” The fight will move off the streets and into parliament and negotiations committees.

Another madhesi civil society leader said Koirala’s concessions could split the madhesi because there will always be some who are unsatisfied. “Theonus is now on the MLF. We all want to see whether it truly represents the broad sentiments of the madhesi or is just another spoiler,” he said.

The MLF can keep fighting it if it wants, since Koirala did not fire his Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula. But Utpendra Yadav and his MLF will be missing a critical point if they continue to refuse talks. With each day’s delay in dialogue, they become as much responsible as the police for the needless deaths in the tarai. At least 15 lives could have been saved in the past two weeks if Yadav had only talked.

I didn’t take long for teachers and administrators at RMS School and Eyeban School in the Valley to realise something was deeply wrong. Last year, Pavitra Samaj Seva Sangha, a children’s home in Jurpati, enrolled 88 students in Eyebane and 35 in RMS; however, less than a month later, the children started dropping out, often with new ones arriving in their place. To date, 88 children have gone missing from Pavitra Samaj.

“Pavitra Samaj enrolled the students with us in May. By June, most were nowhere to be seen. We didn’t get an explanation, instead they started enrolling new children every week,” says Baburak Chhaleti, vice principal at RMS, where only 11 of the original students are still attending classes. The home’s chairman, Siladitya Gautam, was defensive when the schools started asking questions, and made vague excuses about the children being taken home by relatives. “When we tried to probe deeper, we were told to do our job and not poke around in other people’s business,” says principal Anil Parajuli, adding that on admissions forms the details of each child’s parents or guardians were left blank.

Rajesh Bista, Eyebane’s principal, describes a similar experience. “Only 24 of the 88 students originally enrolled by Pavitra Samaj are still attending school,” he says. He never got concrete answers from the organisation about where the children went either. “When we asked the other students, they said ‘uncles and aunts come to pick them up; if we ask about them, they say they will hang us.’ “Some children were enrolled as orphans but later said to have been sent back to their parents’ care.

The two-year-old Pavitra Samaj Seva Sangha runs on donations, and had 126 orphaned and destitute children listed in its care, mostly from Rolpa, Rukum, Dhading, Dang, and Makwanpur. Gautam admits children have disappeared, but places blame on the organisation’s financial manager Biruta Lama, who hasn’t been to work since 28 August last year.

He did everything; I just signed papers that said how many children had arrived and how long they would be staying. I have no idea what he used to do or how much money he used to make,” says Gautam.

In addition to the home in Jurpati, Pavitra Samaj also has branches that collect donations and care for children. Eleven children are said to have been receiving aid at their premises in Balkhu, but none are still there. Narayan Punnal, chairman of the branch, says four of them returned to their parents in Dhading, and the remaining seven were taken away by a midliner over Dhanauti. He claims he was away when this happened and denies all knowledge of the children’s whereabouts, adding, “The children were brought here from all over by midliners. The parents don’t know anything, just that we provide them with food, shelter, clothing, and education until SLC.”

Pavitra Samaj has also been “trafficking” children to other organisations. In early 2007, five girls were sent to Malai Klinick, a children’s home. Gautam says this was done in the girls’ “best interests”, but admits that she received Rs 12,000 for the deal.

Gyana Lama of Kathmandu’s District Administration Office’s Child Welfare Council says such monetary transactions are illegal. A total of 1,040 centres for orphans or destitute children operate in Nepal, with 360 centres and 615 children’s welfare organisations in the capital alone. Lama says that 50 of these, including Malai Klinick, are blacklisted.

In mid-January, the government intervened, and took the remaining children from Pavitra Samaj into government care. Executive director of central Child Welfare Council Dipak Raj Sapkota says, “We’ve seen repeatedly that children are being smuggled both inside and outside the country for household employment, sexual abuse, circus labour, or organ transplants. If society keeps turning a blind eye to this, it will have unimaginable consequences in the years to come.”

Himal Khabarpatrika

Where are they?

Disappearances from children’s homes in Kathmandu give rise to fears of trafficking

Having said that, are Yadav and the MLF the true interlocutors of the madhes? Let’s hear madhesi themselves answer this question. With all due respect for the MLF, it must be said that the slogans it is raising today were first raised by Nepali Sadbhavana Party, back in 1990. The truth is, the MLF happened to be in the right place at the right time by one of those quirky accidents of history. There is no question about the legitimacy of madhesi grievances, but there are many questions about whether the MLF really represents all the tarai constituencies. It would be a travesty, then, if the government focussed all its negotiating energies on the MLF alone.

There will be talks, eventually. But should the table be occupied by only the government and madhesi groups? What about the pahadis who have lived in the madhes for years? Should they not get a seat at the table? History’s lessons have shown that excluding groups whose fates are decided by others would have unimaginable consequences in the years to come.”

It’s time to sit down and talk, with concrete answers from the government and madhesi leaders about the problems. Let’s talk about where the children are, and how to find them. Let’s talk about where the children will go, and how to protect them. Let’s talk about how to deal with the problem of trafficking, and how to prevent it in the future. Let’s talk about how to compensate the victims, and how to prevent such tragedies from happening again. Let’s talk about how to ensure that the children are safe, and how to protect their rights. Let’s talk about how to ensure that the children are provided with food, shelter, clothing, and education until SLC.

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Soumitra Roy, chief manager of sales and marketing at Asian Paints Nepal, talked to **Nepali Times** about the challenges and rewards of doing business in Nepal.

**Nepali Times**: What is Nepal’s paints market like?

**Soumitra Roy**: The total market for paints is over Rs 900 million and Asian Paints’ share of that is approximately 33 percent. Our clients range from the general public to big housing complexes to offices.

**What are some of the challenges you face?**

Paints require a large number of raw materials, and for an international standard paint you need many additivies. If there is a shortage of any one, the product suffers. For the last 25 days, the Biraj border has been closed—and this has happened regularly over the last few years—which means we often run out of raw materials.

Countries such as Singapore and the US have stringent laws about discarding paints past their expiration date, but often they are sold to India and Nepal at a cheap rate, pretty much making us their dumping ground. Many importers bring in these products to repack and sell. They are fooling the customers. In fact, it is easy to identify these products—they will have no maximum retail price, be missing the dates of manufacture and expiry, and be cheap.

Another issue is under-invoicing of the finished goods by other companies that come from India or other countries. Most shops in border areas sell these products without any problems. The idea is that while paint is expensive, the paint lasts, the more you get out of the paint. Apex Ultima has already made use of our paint for a certain period of time before repainting, and that drops with time because the customer has more confidence in the product that is being used.

**You mentioned a new product, Apex Ultima. How is it different from the range you’ve marketed so far?**

Apex Ultima is meant for exterior surfaces, and this is the first time any paint company has offered a seven-year warranty on certain criteria of product use, such as fading (due to ultra violet rays) and flaking, and a five-year warranty on certain criteria of product use, such as fading, wear and tear, and a five-year warranty on fungus, provided they follow standard instructions. We use high quality chemicals resistant to UV rays and fungus, and issue warranty certificates to our customers along with the bill. We know it’s possible to do things differently, proactively, and that makes a big difference in the lives of citizens over a relatively short span of time. In four decades Singapore has become the first world country. Malaysia’s vision of 2020 has fast-tracked growth and development. Vietnam is following suit.

We don’t need to re-invent the wheel but we do need to be proactive enough to build the road on which wheels can run. And to all the doomsday predictors who earn consulting dollars please, for once, do some proactive thinking about how we can build a better Nepal.

**What are Asian Paints Nepal’s future plans?**

Next month we’re launching a new product, the Asian Exterior Patti, a product to smooth exterior walls and protect them from the plaster, the exterior paint is applied on top of this. Apart from that, we’re working on the last 23 years and will be here for a long time to come. We will expand, reach out to customers, and offer the best products.
Transparency

Punarjagaran, 6 February

Maoist leader CP Gajurel claims that the number of Maoist fighters has increased from 10,000 to over 37,000 since the Maoists gave up arms and joined mainstream politics. Such a claim is a direct challenge to Ian Martin and could hamper arms management and the verification of fighters.

On paper, it is clear that those who have joined the Maoist army after 1 June 2006 and 'soldiers' under 18 years of age will not be considered fighters. But this has not happened in practice. The third clause of the 25-point agreement of 1 June between the Maoists and the government states clearly that the PLA will not recruit any more fighters. The Maoists have not only violated the agreement but also the ceasefire code of conduct. Reports say the Maoists have used force and in many cases threats to get young people to join their army.

When newspapers started reporting that more young people were joining the PLA, lured by promises of a permanent place when it merged with the Nepal Army and a $100 stipend, the UN said those joining the ranks after 1 June 2006 would not be verified. But even before the November peace agreement, the Maoists had started training new troops in their cantonments.
Hindu fears

Chhafulal, 4 February

It is becoming clear that royalists were involved in insulin violence in the tarai, intending to push back the constituent assembly with noise. Meanwhile, Hindu organisations and the royalists are planning a big religious ceremony around Shivaratri.

At a meeting in Gorakhpur, former chairman of the World Hindu Federation, Bhim Kesari Simha, reportedly asked for publicly raising funds for the Shivaratri and a seminar in Kathmandu to discuss whether Nepal should have been made a secular. Even some ministers are opposing the idea of a seminar in Kathmandu during Shivaratri.

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Packing up?

Ghanta Rau Bihari, 7 February

News is the king thinning about bags and packing the country. A source says the king is busy meeting with his relatives, usually at Niraula’s, the Nagyana palace. He meets political or semi-political people in the afternoon, and goes out at night to meet family members. So far he has visited Surya Bahadur Thapa, Raja R upholstered Pushpashri Shanker Rana, and Bisho Bandhu Thapa.

At these meetings, he says reportedly that he is tired and wants to take a break. Sources say that in the last few weeks the king has been talking about acceding the throne to Prince Himal and going abroad with the queen to spend some time alone. Talking about his 1 February 2005 takeover, he says, “I took the step thinking it would be good for the country. It did not turn out that way, but I have no regrets.”

He is said to be consulting his advisors about giving the young princes all power, saying that the monarchy is much more important and powerful than a king. Apparently the king has even tried to share his ideas with Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal. In a statement two weeks ago in Chitwan, Dahal said, “The king invited me to talk and said he is willing to let go of his powers under certain conditions, but I refused to meet him.” The king also has reportedly tried to meet Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, who has also refused.

The palace is now expressing interest in meeting with NC-D leader Gopalman Shrestha.

This is not the first time that the king has suggested making over all his powers to Surya Bahadur Thapa. He has not said anything about what will happen to Prince Paras. Apparently, the king’s visitors are strictly advised not to mention the 1 February takeover or any other monarchy issues in trouble as such statements may “irritate” the king. Some say the king’s decision to give up his powers is just another way for royalists to divert attention from real issues. Others say that the king is angling for sympathy from the Nepali people.

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• Students who enter with a BA can continue at Kathmandu University for a PGDIE.

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What’s love got to do with it?

A Valentine’s Day special edition from Auntie

What is the appropriate response when a man that you’ve been exchanging meaningful glances and light banter with all evening fills a pause in a conversation with “ani... ke chha?” This has happened on more than one occasion, and I’m beginning to wonder if this is some Kathmandu male-testing-the-waters question. Am I meant to respond with “[husband/boyfriend/empty apartment/other noun] chha/chhaina” to signal my willingness or unwillingness to proceed?

Ke Bhanne

Dear Ke Bhanne,

You raise an interesting question and one that Auntie has had some years to ponder over. Clearly, if you are over 15, the answer is not “akas nilo chha” or “timro pyant chus chha”. If the question is asked looking straight at you with a mild expression, you can get away with a polite smile and no answer (as in, an ambiguous “if you have to ask...” look). As with all such things, often it comes down to the eyebrows. If you get a distinct wiggle of the eyebrows, the man wants a simple answer: “kei chhaina”, “gharma buda kurira chha”, or the opposite. Now any man who wiggles his eyebrows at you is probably a short step away from leering, but sometimes we cannot be choosy.

Matters get complicated when a questioner mutters the dreaded phrase with a Genuinely Nice Smile™. If you simper, you might be answering a question you have not really even been asked. If, on the other hand, your retort is a stony look, you might as well flush off forever the fountains of love he left behind a socially-inept exterior.

The best course of action is to ask the question back. He’ll ask it back again. So will you. Both of you will try on different expressions each time, and after a while you’ll lose track of what it is you want to know and just keep on in an endless loop, and your throats will be parched and you’ll want to throw heavy things at his head, and you still won’t know what it’s all about. Then, in the best tradition of Katharine Hepburn-Tracey films, you’ll find this whole exchange terribly sexy and get together. Unlike the films, this will end badly. Why, yes, Auntie does speak from experience.

On a recent naughty weekend to Nagarkot, my girlfriend and I realised that the hotel we were in had amazing acoustics. We overheard a number of things revealing specific and rather strange preferences from the adjacent room. Imagine our mortification when we realised that the loud couple are from our close social circle. Now not only am I worried I’ll never be able to look them in the eye when we meet again (which is sure to be soon), but my partner is expressing an excessive interest in duplicating their activities. Am I being too prudish?

Don’t wanna know

Dear Don’t wanna know,

The answer is yes. Prudishness and prurience share more than just the first syllable, you know. Such judgmental ‘questions’ sound like that arch-conservative self-righteous man who every young woman in the vicinity knows is a groping ogler. Do you really want to be like the gossip who spreads malicious rumours in the guise of helpfully warning neighbours about immoral elements in their
Valentine’s Day is all about the heart: broken, bloodied, bruised, burnt, or beloved, shot through, stomped on, speared, or satisfied.

The myocardium may be the strongest muscle in the human body, but it wasn’t its durability and r that led the heart to represent love and romance as it does today. The ancients figured out early on that the heart was fairly vital. Still, while the ancient Egyptians may have aced architecture, by today’s standards their grasp on biology was a little sketchy: they attributed most of the functions that we now associate with the brain—intellect, reasoning, will, and emotion—to the heart. Because of this, the heart was the only organ not removed from the body during mummification, as it had to travel with the corpse to be weighed against a feather by Anubis in the underworld—a heart heavy with sin would not pass the test. The brain, on the other hand, was considered to only be responsible for mucous production and so was liquefied, drained through the nostrils, and thrown away.

Philosophers, including Aristotle, tended to agree with the Egyptians, seeing the heart as the seat of the soul and the centre for thought and emotion.

Heart of the matter

It wasn’t until the Middle Ages that the heart became associated with love and romance. The stylised heart shape was particularly connected to romantic poetry of the period. Though the symbol predates Christianity, it became popular with the rise of the church and depictions of the sacred heart of Christ, representing the love he had for mankind.

How the stylised heart took on this particular form is a matter of some debate. It bears little resemblance to an actual human heart, so some theories say it’s a representation of other body parts—the curve of a woman’s buttocks or breasts being the most popular guess. However, another theory is that the heart shape comes from the shape of silphium seed, a type of fennel that’s been extinct for over two millennia. It only grew on the coastal plateaus of Kyrmaika, and was believed by ancient Greeks to be a gift from Apollo. However, there’s evidence it was used before that in Egypt and Libya as well. It was rare, resisted cultivation attempts, and so expensive that it was harvested to extinction. Its use: silphium was the main ingredient for the most effective natural birth-control medicine of its time.

Louche Lady

Dear LL,

You cut through right to the heart of the matter. The boys are so used to behaving in this manner, I suspect it threatens them to see a woman do it. Any woman who does not want to automatically cuddle right after, or who treats them the way they’ve often treated the ladies becomes a mission that must be accomplished. It’s a little humiliating to be used casually by the kind of intelligent, witty, and ravishing woman you doubtless are. The men are skilled tacticians trying to kill with kindness. Treat invitations to take tea with the grannies as a test. If you fall into the trap, they get their chance to behave as they often wish to, and you may as well have insisted on snuggling and baby talk right at the outset. Hold firm to your principles, and if your cad is a true bounder, as they were back in the day, you can establish a fulfilling short- to medium-term relationship for some simple lovin’. PS—Consider changing your initials to stand for Love’Em Leave’Em.
Nepal is looking good. From a distance, anyway.

not. One way or another, federalism is coming, and soon. It’s why
responsibility for governance.

interim before a new constitution. Give the people what they want,
autonomous and very influential in the country’s federal system.

dreams. Quebec remains part of Canada but is both hugely
up our own country”. It’s a tactic that worked beyond their wildest

generation ago. Basically they said “give us our share or we’ll set

people of business, palace, and politics partied in Kathmandu.

other community in the country that has been left out while the top

their space now, and they want lasting title to it. So does every

demanding a share of it. They don’t want empty promises or

the democratic space created by various Jana Andolans and

rest of the country lacks.

line or the shivery dark moments during power cuts, think of them

with a little discomfort and inconvenience in the capital. Too much

sudden seems almost comprehensible. What’s going on around

no hope. When you talk to the same people all the time, the

stuck-in-the-moment vision. No distance, no history, no context,

and joined another conversation.

“Wrong…” he sputtered…then grabbed a beaker of amber nectar

and had no appetite for the chicken momos. “It’s, it’s…..just

Dhara Works, which was

reopened.

the government, familiar scenes of a prime minister blithering

while Lahan burned, the same old collection of high caste men

the country becomes logical and even a good thing.

What’s happening here is

Because you know what? That’s exactly what’s going to

This is so obviously the way ahead for Nepal. The only way to

Sitting in Canada, a diverse place that has had more than its

discrimination and cynicism.

As I flew out of the erstwhile kingdom two weeks ago, the jaws

situation looks grim from Kathmandu but at a distance, one

This dry season Kathmandu

will see a water shortage like

never before.

Private water,

what’s happening here is

positive, though it doesn’t

It’s all good

MALLINA ARYAL

COMMENT

W

The Melamchi Project was

started in 1985, when Prime

Minister Ranbe Pratap Singh

commissioned it to relieve

Kathmandu of its water crisis.

Now, the project is almost

complete, and some are

complaining about a rise in

the cost of water in

Kathmandu. But the

government is blaming the

increased cost on the lack of

discipline in the customers.

The project has been

completed in three phases.

The first phase was

completed in 1994, the

second in 1998, and the

third in 2004. The total cost of

the project is estimated to be

Rs 48 billion. The project

will provide water to

Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and

Lalitpur.

The project has faced

several problems, including

the lack of land for the

treatment plant and the

delay in the construction of

the transmission lines.

The project has also faced

corruption allegations, and

there have been delays in

the implementation of the

project.

The government has

promised to complete the

project by 2022, but it is still

under construction.

The project is expected to

provide water to about 1.5

million people in the

Kathmandu Valley.

The project is also expected to

improve the quality of water in

the Valley.

The project has been

supported by the Asian

Development Bank (ADB) and

the World Bank.

The project has been

criticized for its cost and

the delay in its completion.

The government has faced

criticism for its handling of

the project.

The project is expected to

provide a significant boost to

the economy of the

Kathmandu Valley.

The project is also expected to

reduce the pressure on

Kathmandu’s existing water

sources.

The project is also expected to

improve the health of the

people in the Valley.

The project is also expected to

improve the environment in

the Valley.
paying Rs 50 for 10,000 litres will now have to pay Rs 66.

“Whether water can be considered a commodity in itself, but water and sanitation are public utilities. If they are to be looked after by private companies, what then is the government going to do?” asks lawyer Bhola Nath Dhungana, who has researched Manchahi’s experience with water privatisation. In a country with a patchy history of privatization, handling over an essential commodity like water to the private sector is fraught with risks, he says, adding that it has failed in Bolivia, Argentina, and the Philippines.

NANCY, as Pradip Bhakul says the state-owned company was never given a chance to prove itself. “Instead of interfering with NANCY, the government should have made it autonomous and freed it from political interference,” he says. Experts say the government has never looked at alternatives to Melamchi. Just upgrading the ageing water mains and cutting back on leakage would augment supply by anywhere between 40 to 70 percent. Cutting back on waste by picking up could conserve water, and rain-harvesting would provide water for construction of reservoirs on the Valley rim to store monsoon runoff would be much less expensive than drilling a long tunnel.

“The problem of water scarcity did not arise overnight, and we have alternative ways of bringing in water besides Melamchi,” says Dhungana, “it’s not too late to look at them.”

remained unanswered. In a classic display of donor competition, the Asian Development Bank jumped in to fill the vacuum.

The story put out about a private water service provider in Kathmandu is a compilation of piecemeal statements about how the world ought to be. But were alternatives pilot projects and lessons documented for up-scaling in the last ten years, or was the selected mode pushed as the only alternative? How should Nepali organisations be reformed?

Recent thinking on the governance of natural resources suggests that a mix of institutional arrangements—government, market, community initiatives—is necessary for the policy terrain to remain dynamic and stable. Competition, not selection of one institutional style, contributes to efficiency.

The decision on the nature of the mix is a political one, which is why Nepal’s interminable parliament must enter the debate by first educating the public of past mistakes and examining alternative ways to provide citizens with safe water services such as drinking water. Then it can propose principles for a re-structured Nepal.

Ajoya Dixit is a water analyst with Nepal Water Conservation Foundation.
Kyoto can be made to work

The European Commission proposes unilateral cuts of 20 percent in European emissions from 1990 levels. The U.S. Senate is considering four similar bills.

The British government will soon present a landmark Climate Change Bill mandating 60 percent emission reductions from 1990 levels by 2050. All this is welcome. But the biggest issue has yet to be confronted: how to forge an equitable global compact that sustains the development aspirations of poorer countries and contributes to the battle against climate change.

Consider the facts framing this debate. At the moment, the United States accounts for 25 percent of global emissions and the European Union 14 percent. Per capita, emissions from developing countries (accounting for 5 billion of the world's 6 billion people) are a fraction of that. But by 2050, total emissions from developing countries, led by India and China, will be greater than emissions from the industrialized world. How leaders deal with this evolution will determine how well we adapt and cope with global warming.

In discussing these issues, developing countries have traditionally adhered to a simple view: developed countries caused the problem, and it's theirs to solve. By the same token, developing nations have a right to develop, a climate change or not. Any global agreement dealing with our shared problems, then, must acknowledge these two principles. First, not only have developed countries indeed caused the problem, but it's they that possess the greatest capacity to reduce emissions. Second, by historical irony, developing countries will suffer the most from climate change. They therefore have a strong incentive to seek development that protects the natural environment. I call this “leapfrog economics.”

For the poorer countries in the world, development is, rightly, nonnegotiable. But there's a critical choice. Will that development be high carbon or low carbon? A leapfrogging economy will embrace the latter without restricting its own development.

When developed countries take on emissions-reduction commitments, they can either reduce their own emissions, or pay for low carbon-energy investments in developing countries. Under the Kyoto Protocol, for instance, the European Emissions Trading Scheme allocates emissions allowances to companies operating in the EU. They are allowed to trade these allowances and, subject to an overall limit, purchase credits from emission-reduction projects around the world.

This has created a lively international market in carbon finance. Already there are some $3 billion in established global carbon-trading funds. By the end of the decade this market is projected to be $40 billion annually. Obviously, the larger the carbon-reduction commitments that industrial nations make, the greater this figure will be. If all industrialized countries took on emissions-reduction commitments of 60 to 80 percent, according to the UN, and if they purchased half of their reductions in the developing world, and if the carbon price were at least $10 per ton, then the global financial flows would be of the order of $100 billion per year.

This sort of money could help bridge the gap between high- and low-carbon development. It could help fund the extra cost from carbon capture and storage technology that reduce emissions from coal-fired power stations by 85 percent. It could make the difference for governments choosing between “chaos” fossil-fuel powered and more expensive hydroelectric projects. It could help make solar power a reality.

Of course, carbon finance alone will not be sufficient. Technology cooperation, higher product-efficiency standards, and adaptation to climate changes are vital. But it is a big headstart. The stakes are high. Unless developed countries take a lead, there will be no progress. But without developing countries as part of the solution, the problem will get worse. We are all in this together.

David Miliband is a British Labour Party MP and secretary of State to Environment

Weathering this storm

Climate change is serious, but not worth the current hysteria

The IPCC report is a good summary of what the world's scientists know about global warming. Unlike the Bush administration, which was caught downplaying the science, the IPCC squarely tells us that mankind is largely responsible for the planet’s recent warming. Unlike Al Gore, who has travelled the world warning that our cities might soon be under the oceans, it refrains from scaremongering.

But this report is no dreer than the IPCC’s last one in 2001. It has two important ways, it is actually less so. The report reflects the fact that since 2001, scientists have become more certain that humans are largely responsible for global warming. But the estimates of temperature increases, heat waves, and cold waves are nearly identical to those produced six years ago.

Two surprising facts in the report went unmentioned. First, scientists have changed their estimates of how much sea levels will rise. In the 1990’s, America’s Environmental Protection Agency expected oceans to rise by several metres by 2100. By the 1990’s, the IPCC was expecting a 67cm rise. Six years ago, the figure was 48.5 cm. In this year’s report, the estimated rise is 38.5 cm on average.

But the report reveals the improbability of another scenario vividly depicted by Gore and in the Hollywood film The Day After Tomorrow—that global warming could make the Gulf Stream warm and turn Europe into a new Siberia—saying it is “very unlikely.” Even if the Gulf Stream were to weaken over the century, under current emissions, it could help make solar power a reality. I call this “leapfrog economics.”

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A 38.5 cm rise in the ocean’s levels is a problem, but will not bring down civilization. Last century, sea levels rose by half a metre. And Europe currently grows rice and wheat even when the sea level rose by 2.5 metres. The UN tells us we can do virtually nothing to affect climate change before 2020. So let’s ask this: why would this be good, as there would be less net warming over land areas.

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For Ryszard Kapuscinski, who died last month aged 74, journalism was a mission, not a career, and he spent much of his life, happily, in uncomfortable and obscure places, many of them in Africa, trying to convey their essence to a continent far away. No one was more surprised than he when, in his mid-40s, he suddenly became extremely successful, with his books translated into 30 languages. He won literary prizes in Germany, France, Canada, Italy, the US, and was made journalist of the century in Poland.

Kapuscinski was born in Pirnak, now in Belarus, and in 1945 was taken to Poland by his mother, searching for his soldier father. War was the norm for life was deep in his young psyche after those early years of ceaseless hunger, cold, sudden deaths, noise, and terror, with no shoes, no home, no books in school. Decades later he wrote: “We went through the war knowing how difficult it is to convey the truth about it to those for whom that experience is, unfamiliar. We know how language fails us, how often we feel helpless, how the experience is, finally, incommunicable.”

After university in Warsaw, where he studied history, he found his métier as a 23-year-old trainee journalist on a year's report. A story exposing mismanagement and drunkenness in a showcase steel factory set off a political firestorm that sent him into hiding. He was implicated and sent abroad as a treat, to India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, the first Polish journalist to have that opportunity. Later he moved to the Polish News Agency (PAP), and stayed there until 1981.

In 1957, he went to Africa, and returned there as often as possible over the next 40 years. He covered the whole continent, including 27 revolutions and coups, and was exiled by the feeling he was in at history in the making. He and his employees had no money, but he was a deal maker who often had the contacts to help other journalists who did have the money to hire planes, and thus both arrived at the scene of the latest drama. “Africa was my youth,” he said later, describing how much the continent had meant to him.

In his early years as a journalist he developed the technique of the notebook: one allowed him to earn his living with the bread and butter of agency reporting of facts, while the other was filled with the experiences he too modestly believed incommunicable, but which became his facts, while the other was filled with the experiences he too modestly believed incommunicable, but which became his facts. He hated what he called the “metamorphosis of the truth,” the essence of which was lost, and not only from experience. If you read articles from that time in Le Monde, in The Times, you’ll find that the authors really had background, a knowledge of the subject. It was a very highly qualified sort of journalism — we were all great specialists.

Kapuscinski described his own work as “literary reportage”. And, although he was personally a modest man, he believed in its importance for understanding the world. “Without trying to enter other ways of looking, perceiving, describing, we won’t understand anything of the world.”

The European mind, he believed, was often too lazy to make the intellectual effort to see and understand the real world, dominated by the complex problems of poverty, and far away from the manipulated world of television. In the last years of his life he spent a considerable amount of time traveling in Mexico, often with his friend Gabriel García Márquez. He spoke always about the importance of reportage, and delivered stinging attacks on news as a commodity, and on the flying “special correspondents” who report on instant drama without context or follow up. He hated what he called the “nefarious manipulation of the media”. The value of news in his day, he said, had nothing to do with profits, but was the stuff of political struggle, and the search for truth.

(Thé Guardian)
VALENTINE’S DAY
Spark the flame of passion at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Radisson Hotel on Valentine’s Day.
Valentine’s specials and exotic cocktails at the Roadhouse cafe, Thamel 4282768, Bhatbatihati 4426587 and Pulchok 5521755.
L’amour with a free rose and Irish coffee on Valentine’s Day at K-to-ko! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4700043
Romance by the fireside with a free rose and chocolate souffle on Valentine’s Day at Khilya’s, Thamel, 4250440.
Valentine’s dinner with live music by Side B at Fusion—the bar at Dwaraka’s. Rs 3,500 per couple. 4479488
Love Poem recitals at the Rimal Nakalgarh, Gurukul, on Valentine’s Day, 2PM onwards, Rs 50 entrance. 4466956.
Candle-ill dinner this Valentine’s Day at the Ballyh, Shangri-La Hotel, Rs 2,000 per couple. 4412999
Valentine’s Day at Le Meridien Kathmandu, Rs 6,000 including accommodation, lunch, and a special candle light dinner. Rs 1,500 for dinner only. 4451212
Valentine’s Dinner at Rox Restaurant, Hyati Regency, 6.30 PM onwards, Rs 5,000 per couple. 4491234
Live music by Rashmi Singh and the Kitcha Band at the Absolute bar, Hotel Narayani, 6PM onwards. 5521406

EXHIBITIONS
My World, My View 1 exhibition of photos by underprivileged children, until 13 February at the British Council from 9AM-5.30 PM. 4410798

MUSIC
Jamm at Jatra with Jerry Julian and the Power of Joy, on 10 February from 7PM. Rs 200, 4256822
Classical music concert with Shalli Shankar and Navaraj Gurung on 14 February at the Nepal Academy Hall, at 5.15PM, Rs 100 entry. 9801798661
Fusion and classical Nepali music by Rudra live at the Courtyard, Le Meridien, Gokarna every Friday, 7PM onwards, Rs 800.
Open Mic Night at VaYa Café, Thamel every Friday, 8PM.
Gaine (Gandarbhas) perform at every lunch and dinner, Club Himalaya Nagarkot. 6688080

DINING
Light nouvelle snacks and elaborate cordon bleu meals at La’Soon, Pulchok, behind the Egyptian embassy, 5537166
Shop Talk Drink and dine at the Old Bar and Bistro, Radisson Hotel.
Cafe Bahal at Kathmandu Guest House, 4700632.
Smorgasbord lunch at Park Village Resort, every Saturday. 4375280
Gyakok lunch and dinner at the Shimba Garden Cafe, Hotel Shangri-La, minimum of four guests at Rs 450 per person. 4412999
Retro brunch barbecue with the Crossfire Band at The Poolside, Le Meridien, Gokarna from 12 noon-4PM, Rs 1,000 inclusive of swimming and complimentary drink.
International Brunch weekends 11AM-3PM for Rs 499 per person (Rs 299 for children) at Hotel Himalaya. 5523900
Te Tibetan delicacies at Nepal’s first noodle bar, Bluebird Mall Food Court.
Calcutta’s rolls, biryani, kebabs Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735.
Pizza from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519
Some Like It Hot live music from Side B every Friday at Fusion—the bar at Dwaraka’s. Rs 799 includes BBQ dinner. 4479488
Soul Warmers Inner Groove live at Fusion—the bar at Dwaraka’s. Rs 599 includes a Fusion platter and cocktail. 4479489
Woodfired Pizzas at Roadhouse Cafe, Thamel, 4282768, Bhatbatihati 4426587 and Pulchok 5521755.
Momo and Sekuwa Revolution Saturdays at the Tea House Inn, Nagarkot. 6680048
Cocktails and Mocktails Daily happy hour, 4-7PM at Kathmandu Revolving Restaurant, Rata Plaza, New Road.

GETAWAYS
Winter retreat three days and two nights at Shangri-La Village Resort, Pokhara, Rs 7,499 4412999
Harmony of the mind, body, and soul at Club Oasis, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4491234
Aesthetic living with nature at Park Village. 4375297
Pure relaxation at Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge. 4361500

ABOUT TOWN

YAK YETI YAK
by MIKI
A series of episodes that centre around life at a traffic signal, the movie traces the lives of those that make a living off the signal, including the boss of the signal, a young girl who works the signal hawking traditional outfits, a prostitute, a drug-addict, and a variety of other assorted characters, who breathe life into the film.

NEPALI WEATHER

KATHMANDU VALLEY

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL
The month-and-a-half long drought finally ended on Tuesday, when we pretty much averaged monthly quota of rain for February. The same thing happened in December, when a single burst of rain brought up the average for the month to normal, though the rest of the days remained dry. Thursday afternoon’s satellite pictures show fragmented clouds over the Himalaya and a low cloud blanket in the southern plain. The weekend will bring sunny intervals in the mountains and weak sunshine in the plains. Expect the mornings in the Valley to get colder again due to the clear skies. Expect the mornings in the Valley to get colder again due to the clear skies.
HELP US HELP YOU: Maoist cadres at Basantapur on Thursday solicit donations to support their central-level public meeting next week at which party chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal is scheduled to speak.

ON GUARD: A female Maoist cadre waits outside Royal Singhi Hotel in Kamladi during Pushpa Kamal Dahal’s press conference last Thursday on the madhesi rights protests in the tarai unrest.

SOLIDARITY: Journalists hold a protest vigil at the Maitighar mandala on Sunday to protest the beating of four journalists in Biratnagar that same morning.

YOUNG ACHIEVERS: The winners of VOW magazine’s annual Top Ten College Women Competition take the stage at a function in their honour at Yak and Yeti Hotel on Sunday.
War in the time of cholera

The triple massage that departing passengers get during security check at Tribhuvan International Airport has by now become legendary. There is the full-body massage at the luggage x-ray, then one is subjected to the butt pat at the departure hall and finally the full-frontal fondling on the tarmac before you board. Having been at the receiving end of all this ayurvedic kneading during a recent foray, the Ass couldn’t help giggling, or whatever it is that donkeys do when they’re tickled.

But if any of you thought Maoist extortion was getting too much, then you haven’t yet seen extortion by policemen on duty at the security check at the airport. That mandatory massage is not free.

Police extortion at the airport security check has got so bad that the Japanese embassy has put up a notice at the x-ray queue in Japanese to warn its nationals to beware of the wallet search. This prominently displayed notice says, in part: “Except the airport tax, no one has the authority to demand any other payment from you at this airport. If anyone asks you for money answer with a firm ‘No’. Report all incidents by calling the embassy at 4426680…”

That should’ve done the trick. But recently a relative of a European envoy returning after a visit to Nepal had to fork out cash to the frisker. Now, how about notices also in French, German, Spanish, and (as long as we are at it) Czech?

Our formerly-subterranean comrades are still finding it difficult to get used to life above ground and slip back into some of their ultra-radical jargon. That’s what recently happened to Comrade Gaurav aka CP Gajurel in New Delhi for a conclave of regional revolutionaries at that cradle of subcontinental Maoism, JNU.

For the record, let it be known that this time he was not travelling on a forged British passport but a Nepali citizenship certificate. Anyway, to cut a long story short, knowing that the People’s War Group delegates at the conference would be accusing the Nepalis of abandoning the revolution and compromising with the devil Gajurel pre-empted it all by declaring that the Mao-Mao was increasing its men under arms from 10,000 to 37,000 to launch an “urban uprising”. And in dramatic doublespeak he added: “We are going to elections to ensure that the results are in our favour, if the opposition captures one booth we will capture five.” And that’s an exact quote.

It’s a grand tradition in Nepali politics to pass the buck. Our politicians never miss the opportunity to exhibit opportunism especially when the faeces hits the fan as it did recently in what has come to be known as the Jaundice Kanda. The donkey now has evidence it wasn’t jaundice, or hepatitis B, or typhoid but the dreaded cholera. A pale looking Foreign Minister Oli was medevaced to Bangkok for treatment, and now there is the mother of all the buck-passing about sewerage contaminating Baluwatar.

The present government has blamed past governments for neglect, the politicians blame the doctors for inaccurate diagnosis, the bureaucrats blame the engineers, Comrade Makunay has blamed the government of which he is a partner and communist stalwart Lila Mani Pokhrel just threw up his hands and was observed praying fervently at a saptaha in Chitwan.

As far as the Ass can tell, no one has yet blamed faecal contamination. After all, if one mixes excreta with H₂O and calls the relevant authority the “Department of Sewerage and Water Supply” what do you expect?