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Weekly Internet Poll # 432

**Q. Does the Maoist leadership control its cadre?**

Total votes: 4,140



Yes: 17.7%  
No: 78.8%  
Don't know: 3.4%

Weekly Internet Poll # 433. To vote go to: [www.nepaltimes.com](http://www.nepaltimes.com)

**Q. Is the rift within the Maoists for real or a ploy?**

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## "Unacceptable crime"

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

In an interview with *Himal Khabarpatrika* and *Nepali Times* on 27 December, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal says he is trying hard to work towards a political consensus. He calls the violent attacks and threats on the media "an unacceptable crime" and promises that the guilty will be prosecuted.

**Nepali Times:** Recently you gave yourself only 60 per cent marks for performance. When will you reach 100 per cent?

**Pushpa Kamal Dahal:** That was two weeks ago. I believe we have now reached 80 per cent. And in two weeks we may even get 100 per cent.

**Why were you scoring so low?**

It was because we were finding it difficult to forge unity with the main parties, but this problem is being resolved. The issue of rehabilitating the displaced and army integration have been nearly addressed through the special committee. There is now an agreement in place with our coalition partners to give the people the perception of change

and newness, to set up local units and allocate budgets to them so development can take place. All the committees of the CA are taking shape. We now have an agreement with the UML on the setting up of various commissions. These moves will take the country forward and we can exceed 80 per cent.

**Where is the Congress in all this?**

I think we will soon reach an agreement with the NC. There have been tripartite talks between the Congress, UML and the Maoists. We will try to lift the boycott of CA sessions by implementing past agreements.

**Any chance of the Congress joining the government?**

I don't see that happening at the

moment. But there is a good chance that the NC will be part of the constitution-writing process and to conclude the peace process.

**What do you say about the attacks on the media?**

Actually I have described the attack on Himalmedia as an unacceptable crime and called for the prosecution of the guilty. There are no 'buts' and 'ifs' and the guilty should not go free. I have asked the two to be handed over to the police. Such attacks and disagreements should not be allowed and it was to resolve this that I took those steps. It's not our policy to harass the press.

**Full interview p10-11**

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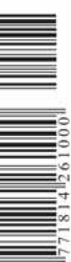
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## ROLE OF LAW

There is an argument that we should all look the other way when the Maoists violate the rule of law because they are a former underground guerrilla force making a transition to democracy.

We have. For the past two-and-half years we have given the Maoists the benefit of the doubt for the sake of the peace process. But not once in that period have the Maoists demonstrated a commitment to abide by the rule of law, never has the word 'democracy' been uttered and let us remember that not once have they formally renounced violence. This is a party that wants to have it both ways and thinks it can fool all the people all the time.

Still, it is our responsibility to keep the party and the process on a peaceful trajectory, remembering that the alternative is a return to full-scale war.

Animosity between the NC and the Maoists is reaching a breaking point. The prime minister thinks the UML is behaving like an opposition party. The MJF appears to be on the verge of a split. This is tragic because the divide between the main constituents in the political process isn't too wide to be bridged.

The Maoists need to understand the NC's compulsions that makes the return of property seized during the conflict such a pivotal demand. The NC cadre bore the brunt of Maoist murders, beatings, confiscations and expulsions during the war.

But the kangresis must also understand that the Maoists have already distributed much of the confiscated property to the landless. The government can't afford to alienate this volatile group just when it has to compete with dozens of rampaging armed groups.

An impartial agency could find a middle ground. After all, resettlement of the landless is a common agenda of all political parties. Wherever appropriated land has been given away to political favourites, there is no alternative to their return to rightful owners. But if beneficiaries are the landless, a compensation scheme from the Peace Fund will have to be developed perhaps with help from the multilaterals.

Army integration is also not as intractable as it appears. The Nepal Army can't agree to mass recruitment of former guerrillas, and Prime Minister Dahal knows this. He has to figure out what to do with those who don't make it.

If it's any consolation, the prospects for peace looked even gloomier in December 2007. We need to revive the broad-based political consensus to get on with the job of writing the constitution in the coming year. We owe it to ourselves and we must prove again that we can do it.

POETIC LICENCE Wayne Amtzis

### YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH IT HERE

let's palanquin the leader  
prize him with peace

let's baton charge the protesters  
knock them off their feet

let's rough up the media  
tell them the news that's fit

it's historically scientific —  
you can get away with it

we can marry off our daughters  
or sell them on the sly

we can rustle up your sons  
and send them off to die

slap down the businessman  
filch their cash with our hands

draw and quarter the landowner  
parcel out what we can

we'll lock down parliament,  
make politics hell

and after army integration,  
merge the police with the YCL!

the people's guardians know no fear  
an anthem for the new Nepal —

you can get away with it here

# 'Promised' land

## Maoists falter in the post-revolutionary phase

The endless bickering among Nepal's political leaders must be because they made promises to each other that they haven't kept.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal must have made secret deals with ex-PM Girija Koirala, and both must have double-crossed each other. So they moan and groan, but never tell us why.



GUEST COLUMN  
Jagdish Ghimire

The Maoist and Tarai party cadres take the law into their own hands. The UML's Youth Force is also keen to establish its identity. All of them are claiming their right over the 'promised land' by violent means.

Revolutions are led by interest groups. Dreams of utopia are promised to organise, galvanise, lead and inspire followers to risk their lives. Revolutionary leaders distribute to their cadres the rosy dream of 'winner takes all', which is why the Maoist and Tarai leaders are now in a fix because they have to deliver on their promises.

The main reason for the current crises is the gap between promises made and the lack of delivery by their leaders. The cadres were promised the world, but have realised they can't take it all.

Revolutionary strategy is all about capture. The Maoists first captured the remotest police outposts, then the district capitals, then the property of anyone deemed counter-revolutionary. This strategy

is now being replicated by Tarai militant groups. They then captured the constituent assembly, their senior leaders captured the most coveted portfolios, the cadre captured the mountains and Tarai districts. But, there are still some institutions like private businesses, the media, civil society organisations including cooperatives, NGOs and hospitals that they haven't yet captured.

It is clear that the current campaign is to capture what was left. The new frontlines are private business, hospitals, media and civil society organisations. And this why every day Maoist leaders have to make embarrassing public apologies for the murder of businessmen, maiming of journalists, closure of media and other violent activities. Such behaviour by musclemen from the prime minister's own party will be completely counter-productive for him and can precipitate a crisis.

The current problems stem from the failure of the Maoist leadership and their ruling allies to manage the post-revolutionary phase. On top of the political stalemate are the multiple crises of food shortage, even starvation in some areas, soaring inflation, an artificial scarcity of essential commodities, fuel shortage and a crippling power crisis. In the absence of the state, there is open extortion, abduction, robbery, violence and murder.

The Maoist leadership is failing to secure the cooperation of their co-revolutionaries. It therefore seems unlikely that they will be able to produce a constitution that will be acceptable to all stakeholders. The NC won't accept what the Maoists propose and vice versa, the UML has its own agenda, nothing less

than a 'One Madhes, One Pradesh' will not be acceptable to the Madhesi parties. And nothing will be acceptable to 101 ethnic groups that want their own state or province and a right to self-determination.

There are intractable disputes over the kind of federalism, over the boundaries of federal units, economic interests, rivers, tourist spots, strategic trading routes, language and dialect, ethnicity and geography. All potential sources of a future constitutional crisis.

We have some lessons from the French Revolution 1789-99. When the post-revolutionary assembly tried to govern, it failed completely. What was left was a bankrupt state, an undisciplined military and "a people debauched by safe and successful riot".

The French Revolution has been described as a "tangle within tangle, plot and counter-plot, ruse and treachery, cross and double cross, true agent, false agent... interwoven so intricately as to be incredible and yet true".

Except for the nearly 17,000 accounted deaths under the guillotine, today's Nepal has all of these elements several times over than what the French had to deal with. Nepal's geo-political vulnerability and domestic emergencies make our transition even more potentially volatile. This stark reality should remind our leaders to be a little more thoughtful and a little less selfish.

Our emperors are naked, but there is no child around to point that out. ●

*Jagdish Ghimire runs a grassroots community development network in Ramechap and is the author of the award-winning book, Antarmam Ko Yatra.*

## LETTERS

### HIMALMEDIA

The attack on Himalmedia and the disruptions at *Kantipur* clearly prove (if proof is still needed) that the ruling Maoists are only paying lip-service to democracy and the free press. This situation is worse than the king's direct rule because at least the king never beat up reporters in the newsrooms. It was after the Himalmedia attack that *Kantipur* and the *Himalayan Times* were targeted—this clearly proves that it was a deliberate and planned attack on the press as per the direction of the central leadership. Maoist leaders admitted to the attacks and threatened more. We all gave the Maoists the benefit of the doubt, the international community took up a wait-and-see approach. Now the mask is off.

Samir Bhattarai, email

● The recent Maoist actions against your publication and others are deplorable and cowardly. We, the people (the silent majority) are watching. Please do not be afraid of anything, we are with you. We are the ultimate judge and the jury. The Maoists think power comes from the barrel of

the gun, we know it comes from the ballot. The greatest fear is fear itself, keep up your work to defend democracy and press freedom. We shall overcome!

SN Singh, email

● Your blank editorial said more than if it was filled with words. Your front page cartoon said a thousand words. The excerpt from the Mao book said it all. Nothing more needs to be said.

D B Rai, email

● We can never agree with the attack on the media, but what I want to ask is: what is new? Traders, farmers, ordinary Nepalis have suffered Maoist atrocities for the past 12 years. Why is it news only when the media is attacked?

JK, email

● When *Himal Khabarpatrika* was launched 10 years ago, I had written that it was a milestone in Nepali journalism. It was: for the past decade, the magazine has stood up for democracy and the free press. This is why the Maoists find the magazine such a threat—because they don't believe in either. I understand there might be issues regarding labour and their

rights. But everything has a procedure. Using violence and threats pushes us back to the dark ages.

Dil Basnet, London

● Another excellent article by Prashant Jha ('They do it again', #431). I agree especially with his last lines where he suggests all different parties should come together and streamline Maoist behaviour. They should be taught a lesson but not in the form of revenge. It is a challenge, because you can't wake someone up when they are pretending to sleep. I still have some hope from Maoists but the continued use of violence and intimidation will soon shatter the hope of Nepalis. One day it may be the Maoists who will find they have run out of options.

Kesh B Malla, Dubai

● It is heartening to see that CK Lal has seen the light and realised that the Maoists were taking him and all intellectuals for a ride. ('Dahal in the dock', #431). While we ordinary mortals could only see the Maoists as murderers and extortionists, Mr Lal with his vastly superior knowledge and insight saw all

the good that murder, mayhem and rampant lawlessness could bring to Nepali society. Better late than never that he now admits he was taken for a ride. *Nepali Times* and Mr Lal should go back and review coverage to let us know how, where and why they were taken for a ride. Is it revolutionary ("harbinger of change") to attack ordinary people and government employees but unrevolutionary and wrong to attack the media? Mr Lal's description of Nepali society as "ossified" is not credible. Nepali society may be many things, but ossified is not an adjective I would choose to describe it. Nepali society would be better described as dynamic, maybe too dynamic for its own good.

Jiri M, Jiri

● Last week's ass ('Sarkar ko sabari', #431) was so good it's not even funny. Slight correction: what PKD was gifted by the police in Jiri was a kalij, which is not a blood pheasant. What is known as a blood pheasant is actually another species. Not that it matters, since killing wildlife is illegal.

Michael David, email



Even after the Soviet flag was lowered for the last time over the Kremlin on the night of 25 December 1991, it was pronounced that history had ended. It was argued that business was not the business of governments.

The Wall Street Crash of 2008 has restored the dignity of the guiding hand. The state is back in business with a bang. Free market fundamentalism continues to be a fad of the fringe just as dogmatic socialism continued to



**STATE OF THE STATE**  
**C K Lal**

fascinate intellectuals long after it had failed to deliver almost everywhere. But for once, propagandists of market forces are on the defensive. It is being accepted that the 'invisible hand' of the market may be invisible simply because it's not there.

The fallout of global financial meltdown will take a while to register in Nepal, but its political reverberations have begun to be felt. Hardliners suddenly have the upper hand in the Maoist power equation. The party still sticks to its 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. The Maoist labour front has suddenly become more active and Baburam Bhattarai has been forced to withdraw into the labyrinthine corridors of Finance Ministry at Singha Darbar.

The year 2008 will be long remembered for the great political transition achieved through election of the constituent assembly, declaration of the republic, acceptance of federalism as fundamental form of governance in future and election of president and vice-president of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. To paraphrase Lenin, it was one of those years when centuries happened after centuries had passed with nothing happening.

In a fitting tribute to the end of a historic year, the 300-year old tradition of recruiting priests at Pashupati from South India were replaced by more erudite Nepali Bahuns. It's a sign of divisive politics holding sway that even as welcome a decision as this was criticised by the main opposition party on procedural grounds.

Economic turmoil and political tumult apart, it was also a year when professional hooligans, Mafia style, made their

# The wages of apathy



KIRAN PANDAY

## 2008, the year when centuries happened after centuries had passed with nothing happening

entry into the social arena. YCL goons grabbed headlines daily and the UML competed with its YF. There are now at least 16 youth groups using militancy all over the country.

The NC's Tarun Dal and Nepal Students' Union also want to deploy their youth, but are hamstrung by their own beliefs. A novice toughie from NC ranks was heard complaining, "After the Himalmedia attack, we too feel like bashing up the miscreants. But how can we do it? We are democrats and must let the law take its own course." Under communist rule, unfortunately, the law is often the handmaiden of the ruler.

Ruffians in the Tarai continued with their terror tactics, as mainstream politicians remained busy in Kathmandu with their parlour games. A Madhesi militant claimed early this week that most minor groups operating in the Tarai enjoyed the backing of senior police officers. Clearly, militancy can't be checked without reforming law enforcement agencies.

There were plenty of triumphs in 2008 but there were also disappointments. Gyanendra Shah may have been forced out of Narayanhiti, but Pushpa Kamal Dahal in Baluwatar is refusing to mend his ways. Maoist leaders have proved to be even more

adept practitioners of nepotism and cronyism. The culture of impunity has become so entrenched that almost anyone can do anything without running the risk of being brought to account. Clannish Girija Prasad Koirala is still nursing a bruised ego.

The OHCHR report on excesses of the ruling class in Bardia exposed racial fissures that lie right below the surface of supposed national unity in Nepal. Effect of calamities—Kosi breach and repeated road accidents—was compounded by collective inactivity of larger society bordering on apathy.

We all whine for a while, criticise our 'leaders', curse our fate and then do nothing and wait for some divine intervention to rescue us from our miseries. Perhaps that's where the trouble lies. If peace-loving people don't take out silent processions against injustice, the field is left open for violent groups to burn tyres, smash windowpanes and bury real issues below layers of populist slogans and diversionary activism.

The year just gone reiterates the eternal message for all years to come: nothing changes without citizen's engagement with all issues of common concern. It's not yet too late to make such a New Year resolution. ●

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# Nepal in 2009

## Let's just hope the chaos is manageable

As the 2008 elections proved, we in the Nepali media are poor at understanding political trends and predicting the future. Yet, there is one thing that can be said with certainty: 2009 will be a tougher year than 2008. The endurance of the Nepali people will be tested again.

A dangerous polarisation is happening. On one side are the Maoists and their affiliated front organisations. The party machinery has firmer control on marginalised segments due to clever policy measures, on sections of the elite with backroom deals, and on the bureaucracy by co-option or coercion. A segment of the UML is complicit in the Maoist project of consolidating its strength by all means.

On the other side, there is the NC displaying a rare coherence in its uniformly anti-Maoist stand. A crucial faction of the UML wants to distance itself from the present regime. This broad front will be backed by a section of the business and media savvy elite, the landed in the districts, and the RPP-RJP types. Other Madhesi parties may come on board.



**PLAIN SPEAKING**  
Prashant Jha

The army top brass is playing both sides, building a better working relationship with the Maoists yet deeply suspicious of them. Top army generals are understood to be

telling the NC leaders to "become stronger" before it is too late, or else they will lose the "natural support" from the military.

The Maoists have also alienated many sections in India, including erstwhile supporters. Delhi is not necessarily orchestrating a new realignment but it has given up any hopes of getting consensus back and will be open to alternative formations.

The polarisation gained legitimacy after the attacks on the media last week, and an anti-Maoist mood is being created systematically. The only reason why this has not come to head right now is because there is no neat Plan B: ousting the government will mean chaos on the streets and an end to the constitution-writing process for now. Plus the contours of any opposition, especially the arithmetic, will remain unclear till the UML takes a call in its convention.

Let us engage in some crystal ball-gazing for 2009. It is unlikely that the government will last in its present form through its tenure. The polarisation will shrink the democratic space. Clashes between parties (NC-Maoist, UML-Maoist, between national and Madhesi parties, among Madhesi outfits along caste lines) may escalate and become more violent locally. Identity politics will become more assertive, especially among Tharus in the west, and perhaps among sections of Muslims besides the Limbuwan agitation.



**DOTTED LINE:** Representatives of armed group TSJP's Prashant, coordinator Gajendra Kumar Mandal 'Anurag' and Pralhad sign a five-point agreement with Minister of Peace and Reconstruction, Janardan Sharma on Wednesday. The government agreed to treat the TSJP as a political party.

The state will fail in delivering on either its security or welfare functions. This will erode its legitimacy, adding to the frustration among people and opening up the space to question this entire process. Impunity will be rampant. Madhesis will continue to be angry and disillusioned and the state-Madhes trust deficit will widen in a largely anarchic set-up. Local vigilantism will increase in the Tarai through armed groups and in the hills through youth wings of parties.

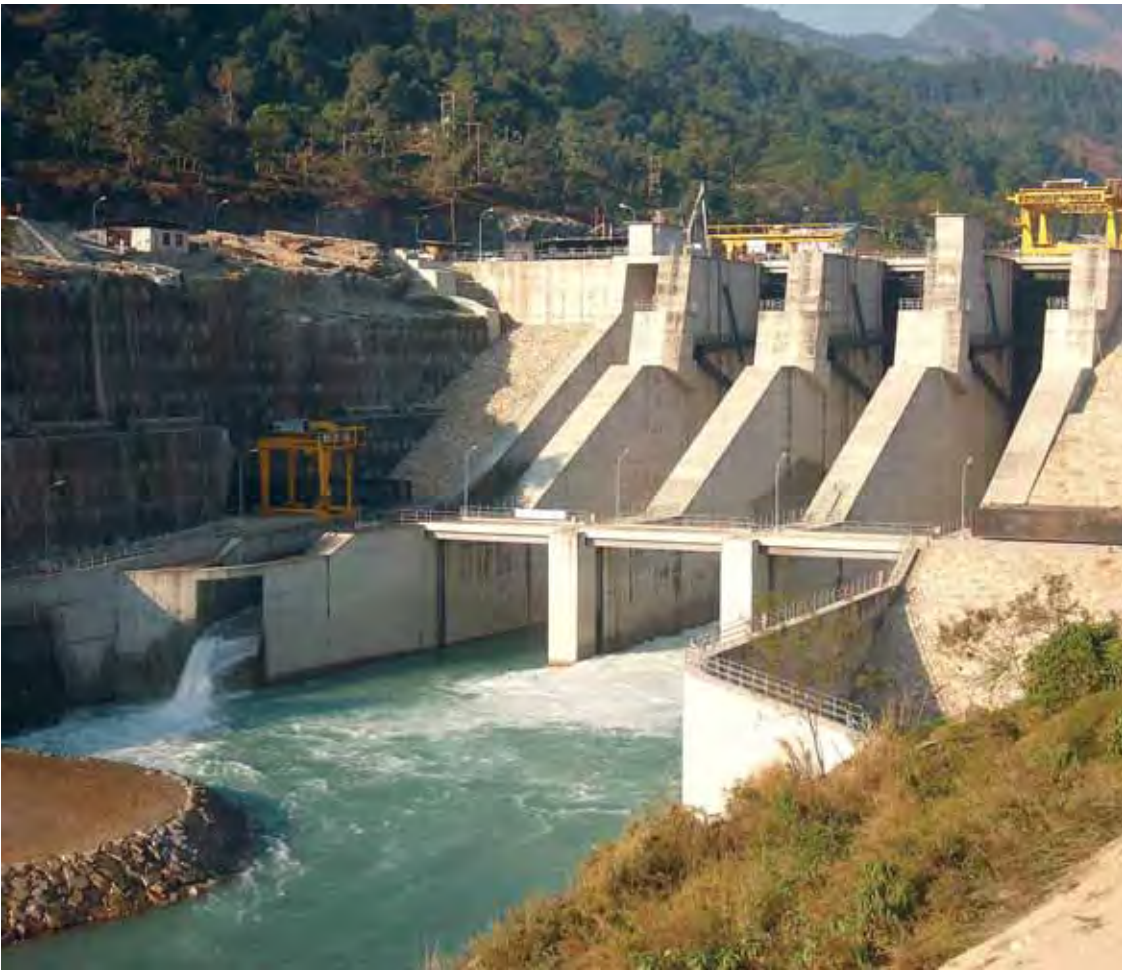
The CA and its committees will miss many of its deadlines. The federalism debate could spill out on the streets and it will be impossible to stitch a deal acceptable to all sides. The peace process may remain dormant, with little movement on integration and justice. The discontent within the Maoists will intensify and the leadership will have a tough time reconciling interests. With a possibly different political formation in Delhi after the April elections, India may not be as soft and supportive of this process.

The army will become stronger, and will remain autonomous of civilian control in key respects. There may be a greater diversity of voices among the top brass but most key political developments will have the involvement of the military, though from behind the scenes.

The economy will face the impact of the global recession, as remittances and aid dip. Unemployment will increase. Key infrastructure and hydroprojects will be blocked because of instability. Conflicts around land issues will increase, even as agriculture will remain stagnant.

Wishing a happy new year in these dark times would be stretching it but Nepal often comes back from the brink. To paraphrase the Indian thinker Ashis Nandy: here is hoping that the chaos is manageable and not unmanageable, the anarchy is humane and not inhumane, and the disorder is tolerable and not intolerable in the Nepal of 2009. ●

# There will be darkness ahead



GOBINDA LUITEL

## DEWAN RAI

There is no greater proof of failure of governance since the restoration of democracy in 1990 than the unprecedented 12-hour power cuts that the country is going through this winter.

And worse is yet to come. If it doesn't rain soon, power cuts will go up to 16 hours a day by mid-February. If nothing is done, these crippling cuts will last at least for

another four winters.

At present Nepal's peak evening power demand has risen to 770MW, but production is only 286MW. Peak power generation from the Kulekhani system is down because the reservoir is nearly empty. All of Nepal's run-of-the-river schemes are generating half capacity because of low flow. The 60MW that used to come from India every winter is cut because the Kosi flood

**MIRAGE:** Prime Minister Dahal hurriedly inaugurated the 70MW Middle Marsyangdi project last month. The project is four years behind schedule because of stoppages by the Maoists, and is the most expensive power plant in Nepal. Even so, it won't be working on full capacity till July 2009.

washed away the transmission line. The Middle Marsyangdi that was inaugurated last month by

# The light at the

**Energy economist Bikash Pandey is the director of Clean Energy Group, Winrock International. He spoke to *Nepali Times* this week during a visit to Nepal about some immediate and long-term steps that can be taken to reduce power cuts.**

***Nepali Times:* Just how serious is this power crisis we are facing?**

**Bikash Pandey:** It is very serious in terms of the economic impact and the loss of productivity. Private industries, civil servants, NGOs, students, everyone is affected over and beyond the inconvenience of having to live in the dark for long hours. On the other hand, the crisis is not so serious that there is no end in sight. If we put our heads together and mobilise modest resources, the problem can be resolved for now and forever into the future.

**What should be the fastest and the cheapest way to reduce power cuts by next winter?**

The fastest and cheapest way is to take up a number of energy efficiency measures. It is also a 'no regrets' option meaning that it is a good thing to do in itself. The most easily implementable energy efficiency measure for Nepal given the dominance of

electric lighting in the load profile is to substitute widely used and inefficient incandescent lamps with Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFL) or other efficient lighting technologies like white LED. Done as a campaign to provide every electrified house at least two CFLs, at low or even zero cost, would reduce demand for power to the point where load shedding would be limited to no more than 2-3 months of the year and even that for a few hours only. Substituting 5 million CFLs would reduce load during peak hours by 200 MW.

This is not a far fetched goal given that countries like Uganda which have much lower rates of electrification (4 per cent compared to 40 per cent in Nepal) have distributed almost a million CFLs in the past two years with dramatic reduction in demand.

Other measures are to upgrade transmission lines to transfer power easily from new power plants like Middle Marsyangdi and private plants to load



And you thought 12 hours a day was bad

Prime Minister Dahal will only generate 25MW, but only from spring. Power demand is rising at 10MW, but no new major capacity has been added to the grid since the 144 Kali Gandaki came on stream in 2003.

The surprising thing about this crisis is that it shouldn't have been a surprise. Planners and experts have been warning about the growing gap between demand and supply for nearly a decade. (See: 'Loadshedding till 2015' (#289). But successive governments did nothing. According to NEA, the 10<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan target was to produce 314MW but only 40 MW was generated over the period.

"This crisis will continue and we have to be prepared for up to 16 hours of daily load shedding," warns Jugal Kishor Shah at the NEA. The prolonged power outage has crippled industry, with an 80 per cent fall in production. Already crippled by militant unionism, most manufacturing, businesses and hotels are on the verge of closure.

After the announcement of national power emergency on 25 December, the government has come up with National Energy Crisis Working Plan. It plans to re-negotiate Power Purchase Agreement rates for private owners that generate up to 25MW. Projects of up to 50MW do not need EIA or the consent of the forest ministry. It plans to distribute Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFL) all over the country for which the

government has allotted Rs 100 million.

The plan also allows a 10-year income tax waiver for hydro projects that are commissioned in the next two years. And, most controversial of all, the cabinet has approved the installation of diesel plants to generate 200MW before next winter and has called for proposals from the private sector.

The government would import 30MW from Tanakpur, India, beginning Thursday. Critics say the government is reacting in knee-jerk fashion, and hasn't pursued more immediate do-able options. Electricity pilferage amounts to 30 per cent of the generated capacity. Reducing that by even half would be the same as adding another Middle Marsyangdi.

If distribution is handed over to local communities, theft goes down as shown by Mugling which reduced pilferage from 36 per cent to 9 per cent after distribution was handed over.

NEA has also never looked into demand side interventions to control energy use through pricing mechanisms such as time-of-day tariffs. And one immediate solution would be to reduce the price of diesel from Rs 59 to Rs 45 so that industries will find it viable to generate power from their captive plants and even sell it to the grid.

However, the water resources ministry is sitting on nearly 3,000MW worth of licences for hydro power projects all over the country.

The government's record of running existing diesel plants are not good. The 39MW Duhabi plant and the 15MW one in Hetauda don't generate even 20MW between them because of shoddy maintenance and high diesel cost. Adding 200MW worth of diesel would push up NEA's losses by another Rs 25 billion a year. ●

Happier new year 2009 is a make or break year for Nepal

We are emerging out of the New Year's eve hangover, but it will take longer to get over the hangover of 2008. We have to try to make 2009 better and sitting in the dark is not the best way to be optimistic about the future.



ECONOMIC SENSE Artha Beed

Last year in this space the Beed wrote 'New Year revolutions' (#380), and he could just reprint the column here—nothing has really changed.

Whatever were the concerns and issues at beginning of 2008 remain the same at the beginning of 2009, but perhaps more pressing. It has only been a few months since we saw queuing at gas stations but discussing real estate prices and talking about hydropower still dominate the cocktail circuit chats. In the past year, house prices haven't fallen down nor has any significant hydropower capacity been added.

Donors, the development community and the private sector can't come up with any major achievements for 2008 in each of their sectors. The political players have changed. This year, from the interim seven party coalition confusion it has moved into coalition confusion. The uncertainties never seem to go away whether the parties are in government or in opposition. They can't figure out whether they are good at making policies and implementing them or just opposing everything that moves.

The political patronage of trade unions, student unions,

teachers unions and militant youth groups continue to dominate the political landscape. The political parties believe they can take on anything in 2009 with brawn power rather than brain power.

The economy can't take any more battering because it is so battered already. When inaugurations of bank ATMs form a greater chunk of news in the business pages one can understand there is something seriously wrong somewhere. The construction of apartments and their sellout in record time demonstrates that from weekend 'marriage' games, the gambling has shifted to the real estate market. A country with blank editorials and stories of worker excesses will keep domestic investors off. Foreign investors are even more skittish and it will be only the really brave who will venture to Nepal.

The way the current government is trying to open up all sectors to inject some social reform there is great uncertainty in the business community about new laws, regulations and institutional frameworks. By taking on the media and the judiciary head on, the Maoists have proven that they have serious intentions of silencing the opposition. A set of people going all out to appease those in power will be creating problems that will take years to solve.

Nepal's future lies in swift economic recovery and creating

foundations for rapid growth. The words 'swift' and 'rapid' have to be taken into consideration in the international context and not in the Nepali context- which will make even two per cent growth look impressive.

We need to create employment and self-employment opportunities and the sooner the government realises that it is better to have enterprises without unions than unions without enterprises the faster Nepal will recover and grow.



Hopefully, the private sector, donors and development organisations also made some new year resolutions but for Nepal in general the key one would be to resolve to have at least three successes to talk about at the end of 2009. This year would be a make or break year for Nepal and let's see if the Beed will have a more optimistic column at the start of 2010. Wishing you all a happier new year. ●

end of a dark tunnel



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

centres as well as to reduce technical losses. Converting street lights to use solar energy is another immediate term option.

And what would be some long term strategies we have to keep in mind?

In addition to energy efficiency, there has to be regular investment in power generation. The present crisis is the result of NEA not signing sufficient project agreements with private developers in the past five years and not making sufficient investments itself. The NEA and the government have announced up front power tariff for projects up to 25MW in the past week. This should be welcomed. If that had been done five years ago, there would be no power shortage now.

Hydropower is the cheapest source of power for Nepal but it looks expensive since private project developers have to repay loans within seven years or so, even though the projects themselves run for 40 years or more. This distortion can be resolved either by paying developers higher prices for their power for the duration of their loan repayment period and then reducing tariffs for the life of the project or by making arrangements for projects to receive loans with repayment periods of 15 years or more.

Should we focus on the export of electricity to augment income or first meet domestic demand? At this time of severe power shortage in the country the priority should certainly be to generate power for domestic use. The first of the smaller projects which can meet

domestic needs can be on line in the next two to three years if they can receive their Power Purchase Agreements and financing in the next few months. I am not against export projects as long as Nepal gets a high royalty and the option to purchase the power it needs from these projects for domestic consumption. Luckily run of river hydropower is a renewable resource and is not exhausted by export. Projects which generate power for export need to have agreements in place to give priority to domestic supply when the demand in Nepal grows.

How about electric public transport? Electricity has multiple uses in Nepal. Of the total commercial energy we use in the country, 85 per cent comes from imported petroleum and coal and only 15 per cent from the country's indigenous hydropower. The sectors that use the most imported fuel are transport, industry, domestic and agriculture sectors. Once we set the price correctly and are able to generate power on a regular basis to meet growing demand, an aggressive campaign should be launched to use electricity in public transport, industrial furnaces and boilers, household cooking and heating and to replace the ubiquitous diesel pumps. We should aim to change the ratio from the current 85:15 to 15:85 by 2020. This demands generation some 6,000MW of power for domestic consumption alone.



# Cheating when losing

Gopal Guragain in *Himal Khabarpatrika*,  
31 December-12 January

In the last week or so the attacks on media by militant unions have dominated the headlines. The Maoists have exhibited their totalitarian nature and used labour issues to disrupt the free media.

Prime Minister Puspha Kamal Dahal's comment "no one died, so what's the fuss" and Maoist union boss Salikram Jammakattel's comment "journalists are lackeys of their feudal owners" did not help the party.

The Nepali media is evolving into a business. But the press can't be like other industries. It has a duty to provide citizens with accurate information and a forum for public debate. It is through the media that tolerances are built and solutions set. But for this the media needs to be independent. It is this role that the Maoists find difficult to digest. They claim to uphold the right of citizens to have a diversity of opinions, but they seem to have a low

tolerance for the multiplicity of ideas.

The attacks on Himalmedia and Kantipur demonstrate that they have now decided that a critical media is their enemy and they have tried to intimidate the most credible and powerful voices in the media today. It is part of a strategy to bend public opinion through threats and intimidation of the free press.

During the insurgency, the Maoists targeted elected VDCs, rural banks and police stations. They succeeded in destroying grassroots infrastructure and the presence of state and occupied their space. Using the same strategy, they won the elections and became the biggest party. Now they are trying to capture the media.

The irony is that although they have used labour as an inroad into media, their own publications guarantee no rights to journalists and workers. By trying to tarnish the credibility of two of Nepal's most respected publishers they have shown their utter disregard for the concepts of democracy and the free press.



RAJESH KC/REPUBLICA

## Anti-media

Nepal, 4 January

नेपाल

Nepal's most credible privately-owned media companies, Kantipur Publications, Himalmedia and APCA, have all been targeted by Maoist unions. In the past 15 years the Nepali media has attained a high level of professionalism. It has built a readership and created a market through the credibility of its content. The advertising industry has been able to ride on this growth and is now worth Rs 3 billion a year. Today, the Nepali media is in a pathetic mess, threatened from the right and left. The country's political transformation is being worked out through a new constitution while most professional journalists and media owners are fighting for their survival. The latest coordinated attacks on the media are against the spirit and norms of a free democracy. One political party has shaken the foundation of professional journalism to its core. A free media is not just the right of journalists but also of the people who have a right to impartial information. The threats on the media are taking place when the new constitution is being written, a process in which the role of the media is crucial.

## Unfree press

Editorial in *Drishhti*,  
30 December

दृष्टि

Ideologically and in practice, the Maoists are opposed to press freedom. It goes against their totalitarian tendency to grab power and hold on to it. During the insurgency, they killed journalists whose articles were not in their favour or whose writings exposed the wrong doings of their cadre. They accused them of spying or opposing them. The war ended but they did not stop killing journalists who held opposing views. Even after being elected to power and taking the office in Singha Darbar, they continue to assault journalists and intimidate the media.

We have seen the continuation of this opposition to freedom of speech with their attacks on *Kantipur*, *Nepal Samacharpatra* and Himalmedia. The threat to the free press will remain as long as the Maoists are in power. But their goal of controlling the press and establishing totalitarian rule will never be possible. The people of Nepal will not accept it. Such attacks will bring about their own self-destruction.

# Suspended action



Annapurna Post, 25 December

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

One year since 24 people were killed in Surkhet when a newly built suspension bridge collapsed, the investigation report has not yet been published. Formed five days after the incident, the three-member committee submitted its report within 80 days. But like many

other reports, the papers are gathering dust in the Home Ministry.

The investigation found that the bridge collapsed due to faulty construction. "We had proof that the bridge collapsed due to a technical weakness," says chairman of the investigative committee Donraj Regmi, "The bulldog grips weren't holding the

poles tight enough. The grips were what gave way. The tower collapsed and the bridge caved into the river."

But the builders deny responsibility. They claim the DDC map was faulty and led to the discrepancy of the height of the towers. The builders say they only found out about this after they had set the grips in and stretched the cords. They added that the DDC had inspected the bridge and endorsed its safety.

While the DDC and builders point fingers at each other, relatives of the dead (pictured) are demanding those responsible be brought to justice. They blame both the DDC officials and engineers. The investigative committee has recommended the government take legal action against the builders, site managers and engineers.



Pushpa Kamal Dahal: "Shut up This is a labour issue."

Glove: Labour union  
Paper: Press freedom

कान्तिपुर Batsayan in *Kantipur*, 28 December

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# One country two armies

Continued sour relations between GP Koirala and Pushpa Kamal Dahal mean that plans, including the 12 point agreement signed three years ago, have not been implemented. This has overshadowed the issue of PLA monitoring, integration and rehabilitation, which is a vital part of the peace process.

The integration of the PLA through dialogue and consensus is urgently needed if this country is to achieve any semblance of political stability. The Maoists are pushing integration whereas the other parties are not willing to accept it so easily.



**COMMENT**  
**Dhrub Kumar**

The opposition NC, as well as coalition partners UML and MJF, are against mass integration of Maoist guerrillas.

The Maoists blame the NC for the stalemate. The NC had refused to join special committee because the terms of reference stated that decisions should be made by majority and not consensus, which it said was against the peace accord.

The other parties argue that mass integration would be detrimental to the integrity of the national army.

The Maoists do little to further the process when they seek out support and consent from other parties for political interest and then bad mouth them publicly.

Prime Minister Prachanda, who labelled the NC as the "enemy," UML as "opportunistic" and Madhesi parties as "foreign lackeys," seemed to have forgotten they are running a coalition government together.

The document in which he stated this also mentioned the final battle was yet to be fought, reflecting that the Maoists' motive to integrate the PLA into the national army is to seize total power. PLA political indoctrination and YCL semi-military structure and its unlawful activities make army integration all the more suspicious.

All political parties agree on the inclusive structure and democratisation of the Nepal Army. An inclusive army means narrowing the existing gap between the

## The peace process and constitution-writing will be in danger as long as we have two armies



KIRAN PANDAY

army and society, in which people, irrespective of caste, creed and ethnicity, would join the army based on their ability alone. But the army is an institution where a person has to rise up the ranks to be commander-in-chief. One can't just plunk someone there as one would do in the civil service or corporations.

When South Africa formed its national army in 1994, the number of recruits was expected to be around 138,000. There were 80,000 national army soldiers, 32,000 ANC combatants, 6,000 Pan African Congress combatants and about 10,000 paramilitary. But only 15,000 of the 38,000 guerilla fighters were integrated. Nelson Mandela made General Meiring the chief of the army, which prevented a mutiny and coup.

Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe was also a revolutionary leader but he showed how not to integrate armies post conflict. The integration of ZANLA, ZIPRA and the then Rhodesian Army was intended to slash the number of soldiers and make it efficient, but it was over-politicised during the integration process.

The Maoists fought an election and

came to power. But when its supreme leader who is leading the government criticises the parliamentary system and fellow leaders, he cannot expect a positive response. The 'people's republic' is the declared policy of the Maoists through which it wants to capture state power. The main obstacle to this design is the Nepal Army, which is why this has become the main target of the Maoists. Smooth PLA integration into the national army is the only legal and bloodless means of doing so.

As long as there are two armies, the peace process and constitution-writing will be in danger. The responsibility lies with

the Maoists and the head of government to convince the coalition partners and the opposition through a negotiation process by first building trust. In the present situation, the Maoists can't do much on their own. They have to work with the other parties and for this they must make the others trust them.

All the Maoists need to do is remember with whom and in what situation it signed the 12-point agreement three years ago. There is a lesson there. ●

*Dhrub Kumar is a political scientist and security analyst.*

## New recruits

It is against the peace agreement to recruit personnel into the Nepal Army and the Maoist force. The Nepal Army has carried out two recruitment drives in the past two years for vacancies for the post of Second Lieutenant. At that time, there was no reaction to this. But two months ago, when the army received Defence Ministry clearance to recruit non-combatants there was a protest from the Maoists and even UNMIN issued a statement. If this was a threat to the peace process, why was there no reaction to the previous recruitment of combatants?

# Constitution-writing formally begins

**DHRUBA SIMKHADA**

**15 December:** 14 drafting committees were formed

**16 December:** Committee meetings start with the committee's eldest member chairing the meeting

**16-26 December:** Four meetings held

**9 January:** Committee chairs to be finalised

The meeting held on 21 December formed a taskforce comprising of Nilambar Acharya, Agni Kharel, Khimlal Debkota, Nilam Barma and Rukmini Chaudhari. It met on 26 December and submitted a report that identified the working areas of the committees, operational procedures, work schedule, internal procedure and identification of experts.



KIRAN PANDAY

The State Rules Delineation Committee (regarding whether it should be a presidential or prime ministerial system) has also started work. The committee has already held extensive discussions regarding the executive body, election system, state and relationship between different levels of government. It

has sought opinions on political systems: parliamentary, prime ministerial, consensus, presidential, mixed or other forms.

Till date, Constitutional Committee, State Rules Delineation Committee, Minorities and Marginalised Communities, Rights Protection

Committee, Public Opinion Collection and Coordination Committee are actively working on the constitution-drafting process. They have made public their decisions and calendar by putting them on the Parliament Secretariat website [www.can.gov.np](http://www.can.gov.np).

The CA plenary has been put off. CA chair Subas Nembang says as long as the committees are active, the CA should be considered to be working. He says, "The CA work has not been disrupted even if the parliament business is obstructed because of the boycott." This has been possible because the CA and legislative parliament have separate Rules of Procedure. The legislative parliament has ruling and opposition benches, whereas the CA technically doesn't have an opposition.

## Have your say

Anyone wishing to send opinions regarding state rules, state structure, election system, structure of executive body at different levels, division of executive power, inter-relation of the government at different levels, formation of government service, functioning procedure and basis of the rules should write to the **State Rules Delineation Committee**.  
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AT HOME: Hartmut Bauder feeds his Alpacas (right), from which he produced a batch of blankets this season at his alpaca farm in Godavari.



PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

# Andes to the Himalaya

ROMA ARYAL

The alpacas roam lazily in the meadows amidst a backdrop of forested hills and snow mountains in the distance.

Visitors would be forgiven for thinking they are in the Andes. But this is the Himalaya and the

Nepal, first introduced five Chilean alpacas to the country 11 years ago with a view to developing the industry for woollen products in the mountains.

Despite hurdles, the couple have persisted with their alpaca start-up. They have bred 10 more

“Baby alpaca wool is as soft as pashmina”

alpacas are roaming around at the Godavari farm of Hartmut and Pramila Bauder.

German-born Hartmut Bauder, a long term resident of

and sent five to acclimatise at higher altitudes in Jiri, where the Bauders ultimately want the alpacas, which resemble llamas, to be farmed.



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“The villagers in the mountains already have the skills to rear them,” says Hartmut, “most already own and know how to shear sheep and yak. Alpacas are little different.” Soon, he plans on handing over some of them to locals in Khumjung, north of Namche Bajar.

After years of experimenting, the couple has finally produced a batch of hand woven alpaca blankets, the first alpaca to be sold in Nepal. Says Hartmut: “We imported the alpacas to show that it can be done. If someone wants to start now, they don’t have to start from scratch.”

Alpacas are easy to raise and they feel at home in the Himalaya. “They are as easy, if not easier to rear than cows,” says Hartmut. Alpaca wool is five times warmer than sheep wool, doesn’t give allergies and baby Alpaca wool is as soft as pashmina.

Besides alpaca wool, Bauder

is also experimenting with an olive plantation in Chitlang (See: ‘Extra virgin in Nepal’, #389). The trees are bearing fruit, and Israeli experts who farmed olives in Rajasthan are coming to upgrade the plantation.

Bauder has overcome bureaucratic and technical hurdles to push agricultural products to boost farmer incomes in Nepal. “With its climatic diversity, Nepal can grow anything,” he told *Nepali Times*, “from Macademia nuts, kiwi to avocado.”





The Bauders currently have 15 blankets ready for sale and enough wool for 15 more, available on order. Alpaca is available in 22 natural colours, while additional dyed colours are also available. One blanket weighs two kilos, which is the total amount of wool produced by one alpaca in a year. Each blanket is currently priced at Rs 20,000.

*info(at)himalya-plantations.com*

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# Keeping the faith

Reasons to be cheerful in 2009

**I**t was a normal Saturday afternoon some weeks ago in Kathmandu. A friend and I took a cab from Pulchok to Exhibition Road rushing to catch a film at a festival. We made it on time, enjoyed the two short films and were eagerly awaiting the Q&A session when there was an announcement that someone in the audience had left their belongings in a cab.

About 10 minutes later, two Nepal Police officers, one of the film festival organisers and another man came and shone a flashlight in my face. They told me gently that I had left stuff in the cab.

I quickly checked my bag and didn't find the camera pouch that had quite a big sum of money my friend had just taken out to give to charity, a digital camera, memory card and a couple of credit cards. We rushed out with the police who asked me to describe our belongings and the amount of cash.



**INTERESTING TIMES**  
Mallika Aryal

Later, talking to the cab driver, we realised that the pouch had fallen out of the bag while we were getting out of the cab. When two men picked it up and started running with it, the cab driver started chasing them. The men ran into Bhirkuti Mandap and because the men outnumbered the cabbie, he ran to the police station and for help. The men dropped the pouch when they realised the police were pursuing them and the cabbie told the police he knew where the rightful owners of the belongings were. That is how they found us.

When the pouch was returned to me I was asked to count the money inside and see if everything was there. Not a rupee missing. The camera, memory card and the two credit cards were all safe. We thanked the cabbie for his kindness, rewarded him for his sincerity. We wanted to do the same with the police but one of the officers looked at me and said, "Madam, why do you want to pay us for doing our job?"

Not only has this incident restored my faith in the police, but it has made me realise that not everyone in Kathmandu is out to rip you off. The city has changed a lot but good things still happen here

every day. The political situation may make us feel helpless about the state of the country, but neighbours, friends and strangers have not stopped helping each other. The cabbie didn't have to put his safety at risk and run after the men. The police could have just shrugged and not come looking for us.

We all agree that building a new Nepal is not easy. More urban Nepali, who were perhaps hopeful after the April 2008 elections, are changing their minds because they think that the leaders haven't done much to prove that they are committed to building a better country. It becomes especially impossible to imagine a new Nepal when businesses are forced to shut down, schools are made to close, and a free press is attacked by goons.

However, when people show a little kindness, display integrity, you realise that a New Nepal is possible. You need more civil servants who are selfless, committed to the system and are out there to serve the people. You need more people like the kind cab driver who helped another without any expectation of reward or compensation. You need a population that takes care of each other, believes in not just their own self-interest but in interest of the society as a whole. You need people who are hopeful and believe in the good of others. ●



## "The way forward

From page p1

**How difficult has it been to lead a coalition government?**

These are not normal times; this is a government in an extremely sensitive transition period. This makes a qualitative difference. There is greater fragility because we are in the midst of the peace process, constitution-making and important change.

**What will happen if the government fails?**

First of all, this government will not fail. It shouldn't fail. I don't want to say what will happen if we actually fail. But one thing is certain—the country will be plunged into crisis. I keep saying: everyone should have the right to criticise but everyone should also help the government to build peace and the constitution. If that isn't done knowingly or unknowingly, the nation's unity and independence will be threatened. You can see I have been involved in deep discussions with the main parties. If there is an agreement the country will move forward, it must.

**How difficult has it been to manage your own party?**

It was normal to have that debate during our national cadre convention. It was a party that emerged from armed struggle into a peace process, came into government through elections—a coalition government in a transitional phase. When you have to work with different parties, there is the difficulty of not fulfilling the people's hopes. And there was the expected debate within the party about the process, which wasn't driven by personality or revenge. Naturally, this debate made people curious about what would happen to the Maoists and whether there was support for the government from within the party. But after the convention, that debate is over, there are no problems within the party. We are now united to make the government successful, take the budget to the local level, to mobilise the people and launch a village development campaign.

**What kind of obstacles are you still facing from within your party?**

We will address the debates within our party with a

## One world, one sky

Celebrating International Year of Astronomy IYA-2009

**I**n 2008, as in every year, the Earth made one complete revolution around the Sun. During that time, we enjoyed spectacular solar and lunar eclipses (February and August), conjunctions of Venus with Jupiter and Mercury, occultation of planets and stars by the Moon



**STARGAZING**  
Kedar S Badu

and numerous meteor showers. Other exciting events during the past year were that astronomers continued to discover numerous extra-solar planets orbiting remote stars in the Milky Way, and as a breakthrough, one such planet was even photographed for the first time.

In 2009, we celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Galileo's first observations of the universe through a telescope. In honor of this event, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and the United Nations have proclaimed 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy to spread awareness of astronomy's contributions to society and culture, stimulate young people's interest in

science, portray astronomy as a global peaceful endeavor and nourish a scientific outlook in society.

Astronomy is truly an international science. Every culture in the world has marveled at the Sun, Moon and the stars. Since the very beginning of the human race, we have looked up at the night sky and wondered at what we saw. Astronomy has fuelled the debate on some of the biggest philosophical questions: who we are, where we come from and where we are going. Today, astronomers and researchers routinely work together to understand the cosmos using facilities scattered around the world, as well as orbiting above it and beyond. The main objective of IYA-2009 is to expose as many as possible of the world's 6.8 billion citizens to the universe's wonders.

[www.astronomy2009.org](http://www.astronomy2009.org)

**January Highlights:**

The **Earth** is at perihelion (its closest point to the Sun) on 4 January. On 7 January midnight, the **Moon** passes directly in front of Pleiades or the Seven Sisters star-cluster and occults it, which will be an exciting moment to see

through a pair of binoculars.

**Mercury** is at its greatest elongation eastwards from the Sun on 4 January, so we have a chance to see this elusive little planet immediately after sunset. By 20 January, **Mercury** is at inferior conjunction—almost directly in front of the Sun.

**Venus** is now a brilliant Evening Star in the south-western sky at dusk. On Friday 30 January, the new crescent Moon will appear directly above Venus. **Mars** is rising less than an hour before sunrise. So we won't be able to see the red planet until summer this year. The giant planet **Jupiter** is behind the Sun on 24 January. We may just get a last glimpse of it at the start of January, low in the south-west immediately after sunset. **Saturn** is rising in the middle of the evening, and it's well up in the southern sky by dawn.

The Quadrantid meteor-shower produces a good display of meteors every year during the first week of January. This year, the peak is expected on 3 January producing one Quadrantid every minute or two. The best numbers will probably be seen in the early hours of that morning. [kedarbadu@gmail.com](mailto:kedarbadu@gmail.com)

**Wood Craft** Manufacture of Custom Designed Furniture

**Wood Craft Show Room**

Map showing location near Jawalakhel, Manbawan, and Lagankhel. Landmarks include Hotel Clarion, United Nursing Home, Peace Land Education Home, TVS Bike Show Room, Big Stone With Bar, and Prasadi Academy.

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Taphalon, Manbawan,  
Purnachandi Marga, Lalitpur  
Contact: 2113264, 9851082732





ALL PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

# is through evolution”

fresh call for a renewed unity, struggle and transformation. Usually communist parties have a slightly conservative wing, an extremist streak and you have the middle-of-the-roaders. These three approaches erode efforts towards a radical transformation, but the struggle goes on. And the transformation takes place within the framework of that struggle; a correct, united, win-win path emerges.

**You recently said royalists had infiltrated your party.**  
I didn't say those exact words. I said the monarchy had formally ended but a monarchical mindset was still prevalent in society and the parties.

**In your party, too?**  
There is a bit of it in every party. Because the parties reflect the debates, ideas and the class struggle within the society. As long as these ideas are not removed we can't say we have ended feudalism.

**Recently you accused foreign powers, your coalition partners and bureaucracy for being obstacles.**

Again, I didn't exactly use that language. I wasn't generalising about foreign powers. There are foreign friends who have assisted us in the process of peace and transformation but there also those who have never wanted the Maoist alliance with the political parties. And I wasn't singling out anyone in the civil service but it is an institution where it takes four months to do something that should take just ten days. There is a need for radical reform of bureaucracy.


**In the coming days will your party be taking the revolutionary path or an evolutionary one?**  
There is a direct relationship between evolution and revolution. There is a bit of revolution in evolution and vice-versa. We are currently in the process of radical transformation of Nepali society, and we want this to happen peacefully. The country's fate and future is linked to this process. The way forward is through evolution.

**The government has been accused of not being serious about the deteriorating law and order situation in the Tarai.**  
We are serious, especially about the situation in the eastern Madhes. The people of the Madhes are suffering from

kidnappings, murders and extortion because of the lack of the rule of law. We are now trying to talk to the political groups and tighten law and order. I told the other parties that there needs to be a popular mobilisation and we should solve the problems of the Madhesi people together. I think we should be seeing results within a few weeks.

**Communal relations are deteriorating. How do you see the future of ethnic, communal and regional relations?**  
So far, Nepal's ethnic harmony is intact and this is a continuation of our proud tradition of tolerance. The current ethnic resurgence will actually make the country stronger. However, the banner of fragmentation and ethnic chauvinism are also being raised in the hills and the plains. These groups trying to provoke communal violence are the ones who used to be the biggest opponents of ethnic resurgence, federalism and autonomy. But I feel that Nepal's diverse groups that have collectively sacrificed so much that it will not let our unity be destroyed. The Nepali people have to be vigilant about protecting our unity and thwarting foreign interference and infiltration that could threaten our territorial integrity and sovereignty.

**Himal Southasian's January 2009 issue just out!**




**Cover Section**  
**Horror: The many faces of terror**  
Sudden and incredible vulnerability by Jayadeva Uyangoda  
Rage and outrage by C K Lal  
Stranger than fiction by Meena Menon  
The collective spectacle by Amit Madheshiya  
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**Date of First Publication: 27 December 2008**

**The United Nations Development Programme in Nepal**  
is looking for a dynamic, results-driven Nepalese citizen for the position of

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Contract Type : **Fixed-term**  
Contract Duration : **initially One year (renewable)**

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Under the guidance and supervision of DRR (Operations), the HR Analyst is responsible for transparent implementation of HR strategies in COs, effective delivery of HR services and management of the CO HR Unit. He/she analyses, interprets and applies HR policies, rules and regulations, establishes internal procedures and provides solutions to a wide spectrum of complex HR issues. The HR Analyst promotes a collaborative, client-oriented, people centered approach and contributes to the maintenance of high staff morale. She/he Leads and co-ordinates the country office learning activities and staff development and promote a learning culture in the workplace.

The HR Analyst supervises and leads the staff of the HR Unit. The HR Analyst works in close collaboration with the operations, programme and project teams in the CO and UNDP HQs staff ensuring successful CO performance in HR management.

**For detailed Job Description of the position, please visit the following UNDP website: <http://www.undp.org.np/vacancy>**

**Qualifications Requirement**

- Master's Degree or equivalent in Human Resources Management, Business Administration, Public Administration or related field.
- Minimum of 6 years of relevant and proven experience at the national or international level in successfully providing HR strategic advisory services and/or managing complex HR department. Experience in the usage of computers and office software packages (MS Word, Excel, etc) and experience in handling of web based management systems.
- Fluency in the UN language and national language of the duty station.

Applications should be submitted no later than 15 January 2009 by e-mail, to [hrrmu1.np@undp.org](mailto:hrrmu1.np@undp.org) or in a sealed envelope to  
**UNDP Operations Department (Ref: HRA/UNDP), UN House, Pulchowk**  
**P.O. Box 107, Kathmandu, Nepal**

**(Only applicants who are short-listed will be contacted for further recruitment processes)**

Applicants must submit the updated standard UN Personal History Form (P.11) available at  
UNDP Website: <http://www.undp.org.np/vacancy>

Work experience and/or academic knowledge in relation to gender and social exclusion will be an added advantage.  
Women, Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis, people with disabilities, and other minorities are especially encouraged to apply.  
UNDP has a policy to have a gender balance in its staff at all levels by 2010.

UNDP, as a matter of practice, does not charge any application, processing or training fee at any stage of the recruitment process. If you have any questions as to vacancy announcements you may have received, please refer to our website.

UNDP is currently aware of fictitious vacancy announcements that are being circulated through the internet, the purpose of which is to get people to register for a training and send in a fee. If you believe that you have received such a notice, please forward it, and any other related information you have received, to [scamalert@undp.org](mailto:scamalert@undp.org). Since logos, emblems, names and addresses can be easily copied or reproduced, you are advised to take particular care in applying for vacancies, including undertaking all appropriate measures to protect against the unauthorized use of any personal information you may have provided as a result of the scam.



# Hamas and the Maoists

Two years before the Maoists' electoral victory in Nepal, another militant group surprised the world by choosing the democratic path, fighting a tough election against established political parties and winning.



**WORLD AT LARGE**  
Elizabeth Sellwood

Like the Maoists, the Palestinian Islamic group Hamas was a US-designated terrorist organisation which for years had shunned mainstream politics in

favour of armed resistance. Hamas' decision to stand in the 2006 Palestinian elections followed lengthy internal debate between party hardliners on the one hand, who believed that violence alone would achieve change, and moderates on the other, who argued that the ballot box could be just as effective. In early 2006, Hamas moderates appeared to have prevailed.

Hamas' electoral success, so soon after it had entered mainstream politics, took Palestinians, Israelis and the international community by surprise. The party's emphasis on

## Can old dogs learn new tricks?

anti-corruption measures, social justice and the rule of law – its offer of 'change and reform' together with the 'right to resist' – appealed to a broad spectrum of Palestinians, who abandoned the traditional nationalist Fatah party in favour of the newcomers.

Nepal's Maoists also surprised both traditional nationalist parties and the international community. The Maoists' election was greeted with cautious optimism. However, Indian and US officials quickly



agreed to meet their leaders and a number of donors boosted aid to Nepal after the elections.

The international response to Hamas' election, two years earlier, had been quite different. The United States and Israel, sceptical of Hamas' promise to control militants, called for an immediate, comprehensive boycott of the new Palestinian government. International aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA) shrank dramatically. Israel withheld revenues that it collects on the PA's behalf, and arrested several Palestinian members of parliament. Palestinian revenues plummeted and the PA became unable to pay for medicine, fuel or civil servants' salaries.

External interventions had a profound impact on the Hamas-led PA's capacity to govern. Deprived of funds and facing collapsing public services, Hamas made a deal with their rivals, Fatah, and formed a National Unity Government. The international boycott was nonetheless maintained, and some international agents secretly supplied arms to militant wings of both Palestinian factions.

In June 2007, the fragile National Unity Government collapsed and violence erupted between the factions. Days of fighting followed in which Palestinians killed Palestinians. The result was the takeover of Gaza by Hamas militants, and the self-appointment of a new government in the West Bank led by technocrats and members of the Fatah 'old guard'. Several leading Hamas moderates resigned.

Over a year after the bloody events in Gaza, these two Palestinian 'governments' are still in place. Gaza is isolated, and this week has come under unprecedented aerial bombardment. Hamas hardliners who advocate violence rather than compromise now appear to dominate the movement.

The Palestinian political situation remains deadlocked. Palestinians are tired of Hamas violence, but they also recognise that the traditional nationalists remain unreformed. And for now, there is no democratic way out: neither the international

community, Israel nor Fatah is pushing for elections when the favoured 'moderate' party might lose again. Meanwhile, the goals that matter most for ordinary Palestinians (peace, stability, the rule of law, a functioning state and economy) remain far out of reach.

Nepal's Maoists, like the Palestinian Hamas, won the popular vote on the basis of promises to establish the rule of law, promote social justice and establish an equitable and meritocratic society. Hamas failed to deliver on these promises, but at least part of this failure was imposed from 'outside'. Hamas never had a chance to show their mettle, or reveal their lack of it, to the people who elected them.

Compared with Hamas, the Maoists have been left relatively free from external interference. They now have an opportunity to demonstrate that they can work with others, overcome extremists within their own ranks, and transform themselves from militants to responsible and democratic leaders.

During the past weeks, the Maoist leaders' capacity to stand up to extreme elements in their party has been severely tested. Intolerant, violent elements may prevail over those who argue for dialogue and compromise in the search for national unity.

Democratic politics look messy in Nepal, but there are still reasons for optimism. First, political leaders are being tested in public. The internal dynamics of the parties are being worked out, their true colours revealed. This is what democracy is all about, and the system is working. Second, external meddling in Nepal's political affairs is relatively limited, so political leaders here will not be able to blame the neighbours or the superpower for failure to establish party discipline or deliver necessary reforms.

Nepali voters are no doubt watching current developments with great interest. In due course, if press freedom survives and this 'least worst' system of government prevails, they will review the record of the parties as revealed during these crucial months, and hold their leaders to account. ●

## Career Opportunity

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SNV, the Netherlands Development Organisation, is a leading development organisation that specialises in capacity development support to government, non-government and private sector organisations. SNV is committed to reduction of poverty that is consistent with nationally defined poverty reduction strategies.

In Nepal, a team of over fifty national and international SNV professionals provide advisory services in two broad areas: to increase access to basic services related with water, sanitation, hygiene and renewable energy; and secondly, to create income and employment opportunities for the poor through three different sectors: tourism, forest products and small holder cash crops.

**CORE VALUES AND ASPIRATIONS:** SNV aspires to think different and catalyse development beyond convention – not because it is easy, but because four decades of experience on-the-ground have shown us that sustainable solutions require integrated and contextualised approaches, tailor-made strategies, and the ability to help our clients evolve. At SNV, we believe in principled leadership driven by passion, inquisitiveness, connection, results-orientation and integrity.

SNV Nepal operates through portfolio offices based in West, Central Terai, Kathmandu and East. We are seeking dynamic Nepali professionals to join our team as:

### Senior Value Chain Advisor: West Vacancy Code 20091

The Senior Value Chain Advisor will lead the development of cash crops and NTFP value chains for the improvement of market access for the poor in the Western Region.

#### Major Responsibilities:

- Build capacity of selected value chains in issues of production management, input supply mechanism including micro-finances, post harvest technologies and marketing networks.
- Support in development and fine-tuning of strategic choices and sector strategy for cash crops and NTFPs.
- Build capacity of government organs and local capacity building organisations to implement strategies that promote agricultural production, enterprise and trade.
- Develop, expand and maintain efficient networks with relevant stakeholders and identify potential clients.
- Contribute to SNV knowledge development through ensuring effective communication of defined efforts and approaches that works.

#### Requirements:

- Masters Degree in Agriculture, Agricultural Economics, Horticulture or related field.
- Seven years of progressive experience in advisory or capacity building services with a minimum of three years exposure in value chain development.
- Exposure to sustainable product and harvesting of commercially viable Cash Crops and NTFPs, specially in the Mid and Far Western region.
- Experience of working with national and regional platforms in agriculture and natural resources sector.
- Proven skills in networking, team-building, community consultations and organisational development.
- Experience on micro-financing for micro-enterprise development.
- Capacity to individually undertake or to coach/guide others in undertaking high quality value chain analysis studies and market analysis.
- Excellent communication and reporting skills with exposure to ensure knowledge management and knowledge brokering.
- Proven ability to integrate gender, social inclusion and governance issues in all areas of advisory services.

The position will be based in Nepalgunj in the Regional Portfolio Office, with extensive visits to Karnali Region.

### Senior Value Chain Advisor: East Vacancy Code 20092

The Senior Value Chain Advisor will develop the market chain of select value chains through providing capacity building services to meso level public, private and civil society organisations in Eastern Nepal.

#### Major Responsibilities:

- Build capacity of select value chains in issues of production management, input supply mechanism including micro-finances, post harvest technologies and marketing networks.
- Support in development and fine-tuning of strategic choices and sector strategy for cash crops and NTFPs.
- Build capacity of government organs and local capacity building organisations to implement strategies that promote agricultural production, enterprise and trade.
- Develop, expand and maintain efficient networks with relevant stakeholders and identify potential clients.
- Establish and strengthen social and professional relationships through sharing and learning within networks and professionals associations.

#### Requirements:

- Masters Degree in Marketing, Agricultural, Horticulture, Agricultural Economics or related field.
- Seven years of progressive experience in advisory or capacity building services.
- Extensive experience in value chain development and market analysis of cash crops and forest products.
- Proven track record of building capacity of cooperatives and federations for value added services.
- Exposure to ensuring access to finance for micro and small enterprises.
- Strong leadership, coaching and facilitation skills.
- Knowledge on contemporary issues and trends in (inter) national cash crop market and in value chain approach.
- Ability to collectively conceptualise and deliver possible practical solutions for organizational sustainability through developing market linkages.
- Proven ability to integrate gender, social inclusion and governance issues in all areas of advisory services
- Technical/ production knowledge of cash crops would be an added advantage.

The position will be based in Dharan in the Regional Portfolio Office, with extensive visits to Mechi and Koshi Region.

Female candidates and candidates from marginalised and ethnic groups are encouraged to apply. SNV Nepal provides exemplary primary and secondary benefits package and ensures investment in capacity building of its entire staff.

You can request a detailed job description and information on our requirements through e-mail. Your applications should include i) application letter mentioning **vacancy code**, and ii) and **detailed C.V.**, preferably sent through e-mail at [nepal@snvworld.org](mailto:nepal@snvworld.org)

Applications will be accepted before 1700 hrs, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2009.

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# Yikes, e-bikes!

LUCIA DE VRIES

When my Hero Honda Splendor bike got stolen last year, I felt a deep sense of loss. The Honda had grown on me like no other bike had before. The bike (re-baptised as 'Heroine Honda') took me to remote destinations inside the Kathmandu Valley, opening my eyes once more to the beauty of this place we live in.

Buying a new Honda did not seem like a good idea. Valley bikes get stolen at the rate of 140 a day. Queuing for petrol for hours no longer appealed to me. So instead I decided to find an e-bike: the Foton TDP33ZWG, fresh from Zhucheng, China. It somehow reminded me of a centaur. The bike's front looked feminine, with a cute white basket and a scooter-like dashboard. It had an extended back part, with a solid battery compartment and tool box under a comfortable seat, and a sturdy back seat. I did not even take a test drive. Just paid and drove off.

After the start up, there was no sound, not even a whisper. In the loud, mad afternoon traffic rush I rode home on a cloud. I was driving a great bike and at the same time was saving the world. There are no gears to worry about, no need for oil, no burned leg after touching the exhaust and less danger of your bike being stolen. E-bikes are not macho and thus, not likely to disappear. The bike can carry loads up to 75kg. My dog Putali is happy to share space in a large plastic basket tied to the backseat with a week's worth of shopping supplies. Weight does not seem to affect the sturdy little thing.

Everyone looks at you and they want to talk. Ticket conductors call for the passengers to look at the kuire bike. Unknown people stop me to ask for the price (Rs 36-38,000), mileage (50km on four charged batteries), charging time (4-5 hours—with 15 hours loadshedding still no problem), pick up (Pulchowk okay, Chobar no-go), you name it.

E-bikes are classified as bicycles by the government so one doesn't need a license or vehicle registration, and no helmet either. But they easily reach 30km/h. And since they are so quiet you need a loud horn.



## New year resolution: buy an electric bike

Opponents argue that e-bikes are unsafe, increase congestion and indirectly pollute the environment through increased powerplant emissions and lead pollution from their heavy batteries.

Then, there are the four lead acid batteries that need to be replaced every five years or so. Each battery represents 30-40 per cent of its lead content emitted to the environment in the production processes, resulting in about 3kg of lead emitted per battery produced. In Nepal, batteries are scavenged for their lead electrodes which are taken to India for recycling. The acid goes into the rivers and groundwater.

Nepal could be a country in which petrol vehicles are banned and replaced by quiet, safe, green ones; where the government waives taxes and even subsidises green vehicles. Political leaders could, instead of driving polluting SUVs, opt for safe solar-powered cars and UN could replace all its monstrous SUVs. Women will enjoy better mobility and flexibility and won't have to worry about slowly killing children with deadly carbon monoxide and greenhouse gases. Motorbikes emit 16 times more pollutants than cars.

Perhaps it's time to invite macho role models to prepare Nepal for a new way of travel. Any candidates to promote the quest for non-polluting, quiet, safe driving in Nepal?

Is my dream unrealistic? If all the people who asked after my new bike over the past weeks actually go out and buy one, then the clean bike revolution has already begun.

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## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **SPARSH: Touching waste with love**, an architectural art exhibition by Raju Khadka at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited from 4-13 January. 4218048

## EVENTS

- ❖ **Photo.Circle's** second birthday, 3 January, 6PM, Bakery Café, Sundhara.
- ❖ **Salsa classes** for beginners on 4 January at Salsa Dance Academy. 9841277893

## MUSIC

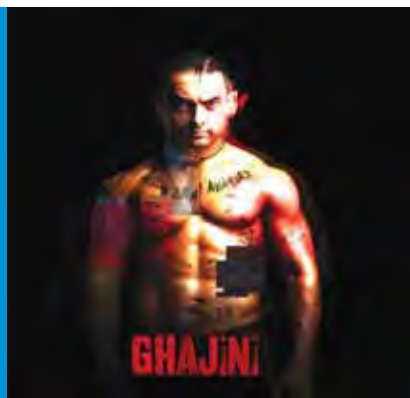
- ❖ **Live music evening** on 2 January, Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- ❖ **Live early evening music** from 6-8 January with Antony Corell and Beppe Napolitana. Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- ❖ **Tuesday Melody** at Jazzabell Café, happy hour 6-8PM. 2114075
- ❖ **74 Twister** playing live every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchowk. 5526212
- ❖ **Robin and the New Revolution** playing live every Tuesday, 7PM onwards at Bamboo Club restaurant, Thamel. 470157
- ❖ **Some like it hot** every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, 7PM onwards, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Happy cocktail hour**, 5-7PM, ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar.
- ❖ **Live Sensation**, live performance by Yankey, every Saturday, 9PM, Hyatt Regency. 4491234.
- ❖ **Dance and Cocktails** at Cube Bar, Kamaladi. 4438017
- ❖ **Fusion and Looza** Band every Friday night, Bhumi Resto Lounge, Lazimpat. 4412193
- ❖ **Rudra night** fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends, every Friday, 7PM at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Sufi music** by Hemanta Rana, every Friday at 7.30 PM at Dhaba Restaurant and Bar, Thapathali.
- ❖ **Fusion and Classical Music** by Anil Shahi every Wednesday, rock with Rashmi Singh every Friday, Sufi and Raga with Hemant Rana every Saturday, 8PM onwards, Absolute Bar. 5521408

## DINING

- ❖ **Christmas festivities** at Kilroy Restaurant, till 9 January, Thamel. 4250440
- ❖ **Nhuchhe goes Thai** at Nhuchhe's Thai Kitchen, Baluwatar. 4429903
- ❖ **Organic Salad Bar and Steak** at Jalan Jalan restaurant every Friday from 6PM, Rs 650
- ❖ **Fusion** of Marcela Regan's new menu and Mannie's new bar at Dhokaima Café. 5522113
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-la, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Pizza and Pasta** every Monday and Tuesday at Rox Restaurant. Hyatt Regency. 448936
- ❖ **Pasta pesto passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Steak special** with free Irish coffee at K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4700043
- ❖ **Continental and café item** with live band every Friday at Vintage Café and Pub, Woodland Complex, Darbar Marg.
- ❖ **Unlimited wine offer** for Rs 990 at La Maison wine and cigar lounge. 9841333628
- ❖ **Homemade pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Strawberry Etagere** at The Lounge from 4.30-6.30 PM, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs** at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- ❖ **Retro Brunch Barbecue** with live acoustic music by Sound Chemistry, every Saturday, 12-3PM at LeMeridien-Kathmandu, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Ily Expression Coffee** at Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat and Mandap Hotel, Thamel
- ❖ **Socially responsible coffee** at Himalayan Java, Thamel

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors(at)nepalitimes.com

## Quest Entertainment



Inspired by director Christopher Nolan's film *Memento*, *Ghajini* is a tale of love and vengeance. In the film, Sanjay Singhania (Aamir Khan) is a rich businessman who owns a cell phone company. Kalpana (Asin), Sanjay's love interest saves a group of young girls from a rowdy bunch of eve-teasing goons in a train ride. A few days later, the same group of eve teasers, led by their notorious head (Pradeep Rawat) come back to take revenge on Kalpana. But Sanjay arrives and fights them. In the scuffle, Kalpana is killed and Sanjay is hit on his head. Sanjay survives the injury but loses his long-term memory. The story moves on as he hunts down his girlfriend's murderers, with help from his diary.

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## WEEKEND WEATHER

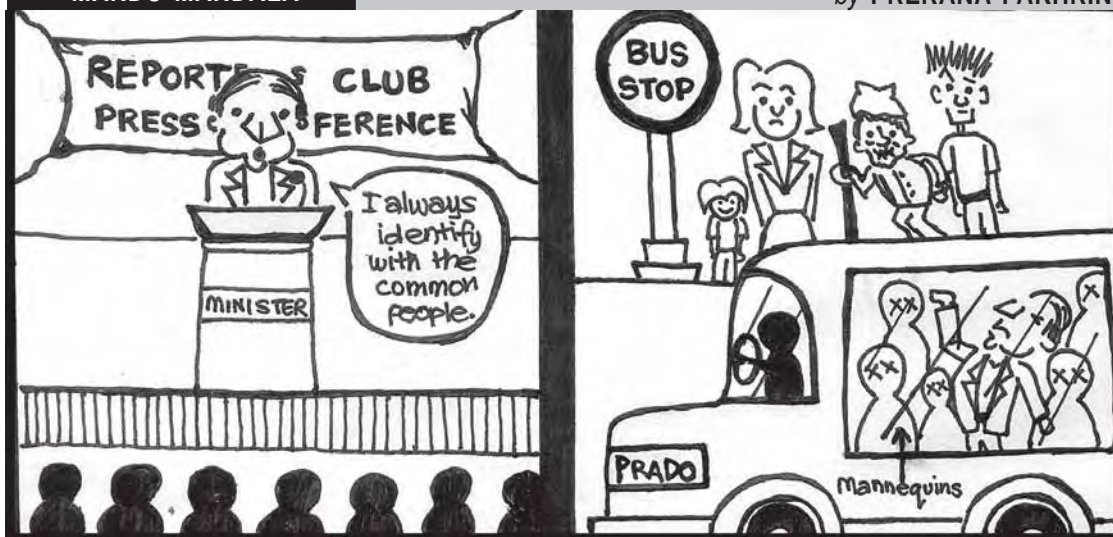
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The partly cloudy afternoons are a result of a low pressure system over the Tibetan plateau that has some moisture clouds spilling over onto the southern slopes of the Himalaya, especially in eastern Nepal, Manang, Rasuwa and northern Gorkha, this past week. However, this hasn't brought any precipitation to the midhills where farmers need it the most. But all is not lost—the winter monsoon can come at any time during January, so fingers crossed. Looking at this satellite radar composite taken on Thursday morning, there isn't any westerly moisture front in sight, although a system is advancing over Iran. What this will do in the coming week is anyone's guess.



## 'MANDU MANDALA

by PRERANA PAKHRIN







KIRAN PANDAY

**TALK NOT WAR:** Nepali group Peace for Nepal calling for an end to the latest bombing of Gaza, in front of the Embassy of Israel, Lazimpat on Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

**WINNER TAKES ALL:** Mohan Mainali, director of *The Wait Continues*, won the third prize in the SAFMA Interactive Documentary Festival. Sharni Jayawardene (*right*) of Sri Lanka got the first prize for her film *Defiant Art* and Nasifa Saba Sahar of Afghanistan (*centre*) got the Special Jury Award.



MATRIDIP RAI

**NEPALI PRIDE:** Nepali residents in Hong Kong march during the Nepal Culture Week on Sunday.

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# Nuclear power to the rescue

Trust us, Nepalis will find a dark cloud behind every silver lining. For those are depressed about the current half-day power outages, the Ass' sage advice is to look at it as at least still having half-day of power.

The other good thing is not to have acted on the proposal in 1996 to build an **electric crematorium** in Teku. Imagine with daily 12 hour load-shedding, there would be bodies piled high, the mortuary freezers wouldn't work and there would be the threat of **dangerous epidemics**.



There is a light at the end of the tunnel, however. And, no, it's not another train coming at us in the opposite direction. It is the government's plan to import diesel plants to generate 200MW by July. Right, that must be what PKD meant when he told the Confederation of Indian Industries in Delhi last year that he was interested in "mega" projects.



Now that our country has decided to go from being a hydropowered nation to a diesel-powered one, it's time to change the name of

the Water Resources Ministry to the Diesel Ministry. Then we can officially **disband** the Nepal Electricity Authoritarians (NEA) and let the NOC take over its functions.

This also neatly takes the UML's hand out of the diesel kickback honeypot because Bishnu Poudel happens to be water minister and has no say over which diesel plants to buy.

The government is discretely eyeing the good-as-new 2,000MW of rental gensets that were brought in for standby power during the Beijing Olympics. Business associates of the ex-royal son-in-law and the First Son are said to be **licking their chops** in anticipation of the windfall. The govt in its infinite wisdom has already declared an energy emergency so there is no need for a messy and lengthy bidding process. The upshot of all this, folks, is that next winter there will be plenty of power. It's just that the electricity will be so expensive no one can afford it.

In the midst of all this, wonder why no one has thought of nuclear power. There are several advantages of Nepal going nuke. First, we get to generate millions of megawatts without increasing our carbon footprint. Second, we can **tharkao** the

Americans that our reactors will be used to make weapons grade plutonium so that they will lift the terrorist tag on the Baddies and we can **blackmail Big Brother** to leave us alone. The Northern Koreans did it and it worked brilliantly, no reason why it shouldn't work here.



With the economy heading south, it is no wonder our rulers are getting more and more **beholden** to the southern neighbour. What Pranab Bhai couldn't do, it looks like Amaresh got done in just one sitting at Baluwater last week. Essentially, it was to read the riot act and warn Pukada to not even think about **flirting** with the Gang of Four under the tutelage of Comrade Baidyanath, Inc.

This was quickly followed by the visit this week of some of Lalu's and Mulayam's henchmen who met fellow crossborder Yadavs including the prez, the farang minister and assorted oppositionists. They twisted the tails of the Maoists, rotated the earlobes of the UML and throttled the kangresis. It looks like everyone got the message, because suddenly there is progress in a slew of pending matters that

had defied agreement in the past: leadership of the special committee on integration, the **band-fand** of the numerous commissions that need to be set up and, most importantly, getting the kangresis to sit down and talk.

But when the NC doublecrossed the baddies and continued their boycott of the assembly, His Awesomeness was overheard telling his nephew: "These guys are even more unreliable than us."



Baddie ministers are still sticking to their decision to boycott the official national day parties of countries that are constitutional monarchies, it seems. They didn't appear at the Japanese National Day function, and stayed away from the Thai bash. Careful there, Dahal Sir, they may pull out of the Koteswor-Bhaktapur **lane highway** project, then what?

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