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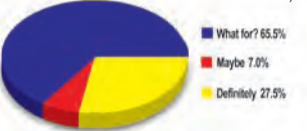
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**Times** nepalnews.com  
Weekly Internet Poll # 458

**Q. Should the Maoists have been included in the new government?**

Total votes: 4,031



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**Q. What is the foremost reason for the spike in crime?**

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## Easy way out

SUBASH DEVKOTA

Two months after the resignation of the Maoist-led coalition, it's not just the new government and parliament that are stuck: the whole country has ground to a halt.

There is a simple way out of this stalemate. The NC and UML just have to agree to a Maoist proposal to have Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal make a speech in parliament containing the following sentence: "The Maoists regard the president's move on the army chief as unconstitutional..."

But the UML and NC have said there is a legal issue with calling the president's move "unconstitutional" because that would make the current coalition also unconstitutional.

"That's all that is holding things up," the prime minister's press adviser, Bishnu Rijal, told *Nepali Times* on Thursday.

The Big Three have been meeting all week trying to find a compromise formula, but have found it difficult to untangle themselves from their rigid positions on the president's reinstatement of the army chief on 4 May, the move that precipitated this crisis.

What has complicated matters is that the Maoists have had to deal not just with the NC and UML, but also with a radical faction that doesn't want any dealings with the other parties. At the Politburo meeting this week, Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal managed to get a compromise declaration to form a 'nationalist, republican and leftist national united government'.

"We agreed that if there is a guarantee that the president's unconstitutional move is addressed in parliament, we are willing to help form a united national government," Maoist Politburo member Devendra Poudel explained. He said his party would stake the claim to lead a future government, but added a decision on that hadn't yet been made.

With a solution so close, most analysts say it is irresponsible for the leaderships of the parties to play politics while the country descends further into lawlessness. The constitution-writing process is behind schedule, the peace process is frozen and at this rate the budget is sure to be delayed.

**EDITORIAL p2**  
**11 month to go**



**THE EYES HAVE IT:** A boy poses with an owl in Tanahu last week. Nepal, already a trans-shipment point for wildlife contraband, has become a major hub for the smuggling of endangered bird species.

Full story p4

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Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Editor: Kunda Dixit  
CEO: Ashutosh Tiwari Design: Kiran Maharjan  
DGM Sales and Marketing: Sambhu Guragain marketing@himalmedia.com  
Marketing Manager: Subhash Kumar Asst. Manager: Arjun Karki  
Circulation: Prakash Raut  
Hatiban, Godavari Road, Lalitpur  
GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu 5250333/845 Fax: 5251013  
Printed at Jagadamba Press 5250017-19



## 11 MONTHS TO GO

D Day for the completion of the new constitution is now only 11 months away. The Constituent Assembly's self-imposed deadline has been pushed back over and over again. The deadline for the committees to complete their drafts have also been postponed.

Maoist chairman Puspha Kamal Dahal said after his Politburo meeting this week that his party will lead a national government. How that will be possible considering the non-Maoist parties are on the other side is difficult to imagine. Maybe the strategy is to split the big parties, but then domestic and international geo-politics are both against them.

Egged on by hardliners, Dahal is finding it difficult not to go along with the Baidya Plan to foment anarchy and ride a wave of chaos to capture state power. What the Maoists couldn't achieve with armed struggle and elections, they will now try to do by mobilising a mass movement on the streets.

Meanwhile, the reason for the delay in constitution-writing is not just because the cabinet is still incomplete after four inductions. It is because the Maoists have put up roadblocks every step of the way in the committees.

They have changed their mind on their proposal to create 11 federal provinces and two sub-provinces, and are now proposing the addition of two ethnic units and to make all languages spoken by more than one per cent of the population 'national' languages. The intention is clear: to use identity politics and stir ethnic passions to bolster their power base. They have changed their mind about an executive president being elected by the people and now want the president to be elected by parliament.

Of the three drafts, the one submitted to the Committee on the National Interest got stuck over the Maoists proposal for compulsory conscription of all 18-year-old Nepali males. The only reason to bring up such a hare-brained scheme at the present time is to stall the whole process.

Similarly, the Committee for Safeguarding the Basis of Cultural and Social Solidarity is deadlocked over semantics and the Maoist insistence on calling their 10-year insurgency a 'people war'.

The UML, NC and other parties say they are against Maoist attempts to impose totalitarianism, but have remained mute spectators to all this. Instead of trying to create a united stance against Maoist moves, they are hopelessly split. They haven't even been able to appoint the head of the Constitutional Committee to replace Madhav Kumar Nepal after he became premier.

Maoist leaders have admitted publicly that the new constitution is an obstacle to total state capture. They have said they will not allow a constitution to be written unless they have a majority voice in the assembly.

This raises the question: is all this just a charade to sabotage the new constitution?



KIRAN PANDAY

# Gendering failure?

## Too early to rejoice about having women head two powerful ministries

There is something odd about the news that Nepal's Defence Minister is releasing a report on child care homes. You would think that in 'post-conflict' Nepal, where the priority should be issues like the integration of Maoist combatants and reform of the security sector, the defense minister would have other more pressing engagements. Even when the government of former Defence Minister Ram



**GUEST COLUMN**  
**Seira Tamang**

Bahadur Thapa was in political paralysis (a situation that exists today but for other reasons) he was not undertaking such activities.

Bidya Devi Bhandari is Nepal's first female defence minister. In the recent years of change, women in Nepal have had an amazing number of firsts. But neither Defence Minister Bidya Bhandari nor Foreign Minister Sujata Koirala can be viewed in the same manner. It has been argued that their appointments tar the

victories of the many women in Nepal who have struggled and actually won elections to take positions in the CA and government.

Given that losing (even twice) does not affect the positions of men, the question might arise as

to why women should be held to a higher standard. And shouldn't we be grateful that finally women are not just relegated to 'soft', 'feminine' posts like the Ministry for Women, Children and Social Welfare but head powerful, 'manly' ministries like defence and foreign affairs?

Furthermore, isn't Nepal finally joining the rest of South Asia in placing importance in kinship ties in propelling women into positions of high political power? In other words, while family relations have historically played a key role for women within Nepali political parties, such ties have not led to their holding of powerful state positions at the same level as Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan), Indira Gandhi (India), Khalida Zia and Sheikh Hasina Wajed (Bangladesh), and Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Chandrika Kumaratunga (Sri Lanka).

But our case is different for the obvious reason that all the above South Asian women actually won elections. They helped institutionalise the practice of multi-party, democratic politics and the legitimacy of people's votes.

Making explicit the contrast in Nepal is the commonly voiced refrain on Nepali streets: "Why did we have an election if politicians who were rejected by the people at the ballot boxes ended up in power anyway?" Why was so much money spent on the elections, from the technical and administrative expenses to the widespread publicising of the importance of Nepali citizens exercising their democratic franchise, if the bypassing of the peoples' will is seen as acceptable "given the exceptional political

circumstances"?

In the past, rights and democracy activists have decried the equation of democracy with only periodic elections. The state of exceptionalism has negated the worth of even this exercise. And the threat of being punished by the people in elections has lost its value.

Putting aside the issue of nepotism, the early selection of the two female ministers behind closed doors of 'consensus' raises other issues, besides unaccountability, at a time when commentators have noted both the increasing willingness of foreign players to intervene directly in internal Nepali politics and the rising political independence of the army.

Firstly, if political malleability and the politics of the beholden are key for this government as a whole, one can guess this would especially apply for these particular ministries. It is hard not to suspect patriarchal calculations, albeit from different angles, of the advantages of having women in these posts to facilitate such dynamics.

Secondly, given Nepal's dominant militarised notion of national security and the concomitant masculinised domain of national security experts, it is unclear what substantive role can be played by a civilian female. We do remember, however, the well known practice of women being given election seats by their male political counterparts in the constituencies that they know will be lost. Nepali women have historically been set up by men to take the downfall. ●

*Seira Tamang is a political scientist and chairperson of the research and policy institute, Martin Chautari, in Kathmandu.*

## LETTERS

### CASTE AWAYS

Is it just me who found Prashant Jha's Plain Speaking column ('Caste aways', #457) this week so shocking? Taking a closer look, there are several things very wrong with the whole affair. One of the first promises the communists make to the people is to create a classless society. It doesn't refer strictly to money, but also to a position of a person in the society. By telling the campus chief he is of a wrong caste to be the chief, they are clearly breaking their own ideology. Do as I say not as I do? And by brutally beating a person and making him sign a resignation under duress clearly makes the resignation invalid. Nothing to discuss there. At the court, the government lawyer gets threatened and 'runs away'? Unthinkable in the democratic world. Who rules the court? There is a near riot breaking out and the CDO wants a 'written request'? Is he out of his mind?

**Luba Srcina, email**

### CIVILIAN PARTIES

You sound like a cranky kid waking up to find your Narnia gone in your editorial ('Civilian Parties', # 456). Worse still you blame someone else for your impossible dream. Let's clear it, once and for all: the Maoists never promised us peace. They never really claimed they'd give up violence and join peaceful, 'mainstream' politics under a parliamentary system. That dream was of your making. By 'you', I refer to the media, 'intelligentsia', civil society, and political parties of Nepal who banded up together to kick out the king and 'safeland' the Maoists. A lay-person can be forgiven foolish

dreams, but those who aspire to political and intellectual leadership of a nation earn their status in society not by advocating fanciful, self-serving dreams but by engaging in serious, clear-headed and impartial thinking that benefits all. Society follows them because we trust them to have done the rigorous thinking expected of them. Instead of whining and pontificating at the Maoists (believe me, they're not listening), use your editorials to tell us what you mean by 'mainstreaming the Maoists' in the first place, and what convinced you it was possible? It is our right to know and your responsibility to answer.

**Satyajeet Nepali, email**

### CRIME WAVE

Your editorial ('Struggle and construction', #457) suggested that kidnapping, murder and instances of violence like the Khyati Shrestha killing are readily employed by political outfits and that such brutality resonates with the current socio-political condition. However, the nature of this particular crime corresponds solely to the fact that the one who murdered Khyati acted to fulfil his greed and had no remorse and no fear of punishment. Crimes of such nature and subsequent impunity have been so rampant, that it will be very hard to get out of this vicious cycle. It can only be concluded that we have no laws that are harsh enough to punish such crimes. Thus, nothing less than capital punishment could be the answer to avert and discourage such murders.

**Amit Pyakurel, Tinkune**



# Four bandas and a wedding

ON THE EAST-WEST HIGHWAY: It's a normal day between Dhalkebar and Lahan, two highway towns in eastern Tarai. By late morning, four different bandas have already been announced.

A family of farmers is enforcing the first one. With a loan from the Agricultural Development Bank, they had bought a buffalo few months ago. It was killed by a hit-and-run truck. With their main source of income gone, the family has blocked the road to demand compensation.

Second, ex-Maoist Matrika Yadav has called for the blockade of the national highway to pressurise the DDC to release funds for a local school. Why the DDC is holding back the money, if they are, no one knows. It could be that the school committee wasn't keeping proper accounts.



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

The third highway hartal is against a search operation conducted by the APF. Since the beginning of the Maoist insurgency, villages along the Kamala-Balan River had been left to their own devices. They were considered too dangerous to patrol. Now, the APF has begun to try to bring this lawless land into the ambit of state control. But the survival of too many villagers here is tied with criminal activities of armed gangs. The banda is so strict, only a wedding procession is allowed to pass. There is no explanation for the fourth impromptu barricade put up near the shade of a tree where a couple of half-naked teenagers are smoking beedis.

## Even the town, where the Madhes movement was born, has lost hope

Welcome to the banda capital of Federal Democratic Republic of New Nepal (FDRNN). By eight in the evening, Lahan is shut down. Eateries that serviced long-distance truckers and passengers wear a deserted look. Under the duel stress of rampant lawlessness and unpredictable load shedding, towns in the Tarai have lost the characteristic commotion of late summer evenings when the local intelligentsia debate national and international politics over lassi and pan.

Pahadis and now also fashionable Madhesi have all migrated to Kathmandu. "We don't stock good quality leather chappals anymore," explains the owner of the boot house in the bazar. "Everyone who could afford them have gone to Kathmandu."

The Rauniyars were the first ones to transform Lahan from a sleepy village to a thriving bazar. The Rauniyar Dharmshala is the most popular community building. The Shardash turned Lahan into a functioning town. Then came the Chaudharys and Yadavs from surrounding villages as the settlement gained prominence. All of them lived happily with Bahun government officials posted here and Chhetri zamindars coming down from Kathmandu once in a while.

The fourth wave brought Pahadi entrepreneurs from the hills that laid the foundation of service industry and enjoyed lucrative government contracts as the town burgeoned. Once the Pahadi community gained a critical mass, government officials began to invest part of their earnings here in land and buildings. Remittance-beneficiaries from the inaccessible interior of the district are the most recent settlers.

Today, Lahan is a town with overflowing drains and an overpowering odour of sewage. At a roadside tea-stall, the debate is over who would be a better bet to put an end to all this anarchy: the military or the Maoists.

Even the town where the Madhes movement was born seems to have lost all hope. That perhaps is the real cause of the spreading lawlessness: an affronted sense of fairness and loss of hope that the system will correct itself. It prompts everyone to take the law in their own hands. The looming anarchy has begun to frighten people into the embrace of the devils they know, and have learnt to live with. ●

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# By hook or crook

Political power has come to mean the ability to loot the state

The last few months have been marked by a display of naked lust for ministerial office.

The delay in forming the cabinet due to the bargaining between and within parties has drawn derision and ridicule. It has reminded people of the worst of the 1990s political culture. Apathy and disillusionment have soared: among the middle class in Kathmandu's restaurants, villagers near the Dhanusha border, rickshaw pullers in Biratnagar. They will all tell you: "All these netas are chor-daaka, thieves and dacoits."

Thirst for power, desire to make money by hook or crook, enhanced status and reputation are the conventional explanations offered for this shameless ambition. All of this is undoubtedly true.

But they offer only a partial picture.

Politicians want to be ministers because they are already eyeing the next elections. A powerful



**PLAIN SPEAKING**  
Prashant Jha

assumption is that they have a higher chance of winning if they have access to the state machinery. This gives them a huge advantage over rivals, makes the local bureaucracy compliant and meek, and provides them with patronage opportunities.

Here is how MPs and MP-aspirants present their side of the story.

Leaders need to cultivate key individuals from each village in their constituency by catering to private needs: jobs, assistance during a police case, recommendation for a promotion. They need musclemen in the smaller bajaran. They have to keep the municipality officials and VDC secretaries in good humour so that they can get work done. They have to take local journalists out for drinks and sekuwa, if not pay them directly, to ensure good press coverage.



They have to engage with the wider constituency: give money for someone's daughter's wedding, attend cremations, give gifts when a constituent's child is born. With rising aspirations, they also have to show they are committed to 'bikas' and get a school or road to his area.

To do all this, this leader needs a good working relationship with government departments and money. And the best way to ensure that is by becoming a minister. To show this works, a favourite example in political circles is that of Bijay Gachhedhar who must rank among the most discredited politicians in Kathmandu.

And he is among the most successful mass politicians. A Biratnagar youth leader told us that when he was caught for a murder case, Gachhedhar helped him get off the hook because he was a loyal follower. A Tharu in Sunsari raves about Bijay's help when he needed money to pay hospital costs. At election time, many like them come out on Bijay's side. They do not care if Gachhedhar is a royalist or NC democrat, Madhesi or Tharu leader, or who he allies with in the capital. All they know is that Bijay will be there when they need money or help.

To understand why politicians are behaving like they are, you have to understand the ground reality. Mahanta Thakur is a reluctant participant, and because his party's financial balance-sheet is totally in the red he has little choice but to join the government.

When an MP was asked why he had joined Gachhedhar's faction of MJF, he replied, "There are only two ways to bring bikas in my constituency: either I have influence in the government and they allot money for a project, or the Indians build a school or hospital in my area. Right now, my party is in power and Delhi is happy with us. This is better than being with Upendra Yadav on the streets."

This premise of needing state power to win polls does not always hold empirically. Many ministers or former ministers lost in last year's CA polls. Leaders who have never been a part of the ruling class won, with Maoists and the MJF the most obvious examples. The benefits of capitalising on the anti-incumbency wave often outweigh the advantages of being in government.

But politicians persist with the messianic belief that they need to be close to the powers ascendant to be successful. The system is designed in a way where political power has come to mean the ability to loot the state and share the spoils so that political power is reinforced.

There is no point in blaming the politicians till this incentive structure is overhauled. And creating this kind of new political structure is what the CA should have ideally been discussing. ●



# Feather fiends

Nepal is emerging as a hub for the trafficking of endangered birds

DEWAN RAI

With over 864 species, Nepal has the world's richest diversity of birdlife on the planet. Traffickers, who were already using Kathmandu airport's lax and corrupt customs for smuggling out contraband, are now turning to birds.

Charismatic mammals like rhinos, tigers and leopards grab all the headlines, but bird smuggling through Nepal is a growing problem, says Diwakar Chapagain, wildlife trade expert at the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). "Owls and parakeets are just not exciting enough," he says.

Ram Bahadur Gurung, a retired policeman was arrested with a eurasian eagle owl (huchil in Nepali) from Shankhamul in May. He claimed that he found the bird on a tree near Chobar, but it was actually trapped and reared at home for sale in the international market.

The Kaski District Forest

Office raided and rescued five owls from three villages of the district in June with the help of the green group, Roots and Shoot Nepal. Villagers said they didn't know capturing the birds was illegal, and said they were planning to rear them as pets.

But Manoj Gautam of Roots and Shoots, who went undercover as a trader, suspects that's not the real story. "We offered to buy the owls and pay more than the other traders, and they quoted Rs 400,000," says Gautam.

Among all the birds trapped in the wild for sale, owls seem to be gaining popularity. Of the 38 owls which had been trapped in Kaski's villages, 31 had been sold already.

The supply of owls is being driven by a surging international demand for the nocturnal birds, which are prized in Europe and sultans' palaces in the Gulf as pets. There is also a growing demand in India, where owls are used in tantrik rituals to exorcise evil spirits and the bones of dead

owls are believed to have medicinal properties. There are reports of night-vision experiments conducted on owls.

The depletion of owl populations can have a devastating impact on the local ecology because owls control the populations of pests like mice and rats.

Villagers can sell an adult huchil to local middlemen for up to Rs 400,000. The bird can fetch up to 10 times more by the time it is sold to a buyer in the Middle East. Chicks, which are easy to capture, cost anywhere between Rs 5,000-Rs 20,000.

"Owls are easy to catch, and they fetch such a high price, that is the reason for the supply," says Raju Acharya of Friends of Nature who has just co-authored a report on the owl trade. Owls are being severely depleted in 20 districts, with Kanchanpur, Mustang and Kaski the worst affected.

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation seems to be in denial. Spokesperson Laxmi Manandhar told us: "I don't think smuggling of birds is possible. Even those who want to keep birds are required to obtain permission from the government."

There is evidence that Nepal is also becoming a trans-shipment point for wildlife smuggling in the region. A cargo of 254 exotic birds coming from Pakistan was found at the Kathmandu airport in April 2007. The consignment contained cockatiels, African grey parrots, macaws worth \$1 million in the international market.

Customs officials assured conservationists that the birds would be sent back to where they came from, but were reportedly all destroyed that night. Now, activists suspect officials sent them on to their destination in East Asia after receiving hefty payoffs.

Gautam and other conservations say the airport is just the tip of the iceberg, the real smuggling routes are on the road links across the northern and southern borders. ●



PICS: MANOJ GAUTAM

# Wake up

When can we cure our myopia?

When visiting professionals and academics ask this Beed why our politicians are corrupt, he has trouble answering. Apart from pointing to their selfishness, there's no other way to explain their behaviour. There is very little to suggest that the politicians are working to defend an ideology. It's laughable that they even pretend to help the people, particularly the poor.

In Nepal, politics is a profession that requires no qualification. While criminals will never be allowed to run a company, there is no law that bars them from running for office. Unfortunately for Nepal, all parties and politicians have taken advantage of this oversight.

Politicians should take guidance from Nandan Nilekani, formerly of Infosys has been offered a cabinet rank and is now running a government program to create an all-purpose ID that will

serve many of their holders' official needs. Of course, we have business people in politics and politicians in business in Nepal, but have we ever thought of getting our professionals to help the government?



**ECONOMIC SENSE**  
Artha Beed



KIRAN PANDAY

Had our politicians been better informed they would know about Khimti Project School, which hydropower developer Himal Power started 14 years ago. Today the school's graduates have all passed with first division honors. This proves that although private-public partnership may take time, they do work. We should try to repeat this success elsewhere.

But politicians are not interested in that. Instead, they will demand that these partnerships dole out freebies that will ultimately double their cost and finally thwart them. If grassroots level politicians don't understand that these freebies inflate the cost of production, our 'intellectual' politicians should explain to them just how unreasonable these demands are.

Perhaps the starting point could be for politicians to get to the basics: to establish a code of conduct that self regulates and applies equally to all. Perhaps they don't understand that the free drinks and meals at the parties are the perks political leeches enjoy? Or how much it costs to drive them around in government vehicles?

Nepal's feudal history has created a patronage-based society where everyone in a position of power thinks that they can do whatever they like. But, we are now a people's republic so we should behave like one. ●

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Tel. 4250871 E-mail : gzk@wlink.com.np

# Helpless state

Editorial in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 28 June

समाचारपत्र

Nepalis have never felt as insecure as they do right now. Kidnapping has become an easy way to make money. Businessmen and school-children are easy prey.

The attempt to abduct Menaka Piya of Sauradeep School in broad daylight and then the abduction and subsequent killing of Khyati Shrestha have left a deep impact on the Nepali psyche. Kathmandu was relatively safe, not anymore. And yet the Home Ministry is doing nothing about punishment and prevention. This encourages impunity.

On Friday, there were three attempts of kidnapping in Thecho, Galkopakha and Thapathali, averted by the vigilance of locals. There are many other cases that go unreported because families are warned not to go to the police.

The police say that the criminals are politically protected. That may be true, but they should not use it to hide their incompetence. If there is pressure from political parties, shouldn't that be made public? Bhim Rawal, the new Home Minister, and his predecessors had all given directions to maintain law and order to the police. Political parties must make a collective commitment to give the police full authority to tackle crime.



RSS

# Vigilante justice

Kiran Bhandari in *Nagarik*, 30 June

नागरिक

Falsely blamed for trying to kidnap children, five Indian tourists were beaten and then imprisoned in Dumre, Pokhara this week. Ashok Kumar Yadav and Ramesh Kumar Shah were stuck in a highway blockade in Tanahu and decided to walk to a nearby village for sight-seeing. Forty-year-old Yadav was taking pictures of a little boy in the village, who he says resembled his son, when he was attacked for being a suspected kidnapper. Their friends who were waiting in the car were assaulted.

The police imprisoned the tourists for two days. "The suspicion was based on rumours, but we had to detain them for their own safety," said police officer Rajendra Bista. Ironically, villagers

demanded compensation for the injuries they suffered when they beat up the tourists. Despite being proven innocent, the tourists were compelled to pay up. The Indian tourists cancelled their visit to Pokhara and flew back.

# Shadow government

Rituraj in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 30 June-15 July

हिमाल

Given the level of involvement foreign ambassadors in Kathmandu have in Nepal's affairs, there should be a shadow government made up of the following cabinet members:

- Prime Minister:** Indian ambassador
- Deputy PM and Home Minister:** American ambassador
- Defence and Health:** British ambassador (knows about Gurkhas and Britain has good health care)
- Finance:** Japanese ambassador (can teach Nepalis about how to do well in a recession)
- Industry-Commerce:** Danish ambassador (thinks he is a South Asia expert and delivers prescriptive speeches about development)

- Culture and Education:** French ambassador (thinks he is an art expert and academic)
- Water Resources and Energy:** Norwegian ambassador (ex-PM had gone to Norway to find a way out of the energy crisis)
- Foreign:** Not necessary
- Peace and Reconstruction:** Swiss envoy (peace talks are usually in Geneva)
- Communication, Science-Technology and Forests:** Finnish charge d'affairs (land of Nokia and shows lots of interests in our forests)
- Sports and Agriculture:** Australian ambassador (cricket champs with rich farmlands)
- Tourism, Civil Aviation:** Canadian envoy (land of the Twin Otter)
- Labour and Employment:** South Korean ambassador



KIRAN PANDAY

# Unelected ministers

Durga Khanal in *Kantipur*, 27 June

कान्तिपुर

Naresh Bhandari, a Maoist CA member representing Jumla, is forlorn. After he won elections to the assembly, he hoped to help his constituents, perhaps as a minister.

But his hopes have been thwarted. Dilli Mahat, whom Bhandari beat in the CA elections, has superseded Bhandari to become Minister of Peace and Reconstruction, an office to which Bhandari must report. "It is sad and humiliating," he says.

Congress CA member Suprabha Ghimire, representing Kathmandu 4, beat UML vice chairman Bidya Bhandari. She became Minister of Defense. "It's a mockery of democracy," says Ghimire.

After TMLP's Ramchandra Kushbaha became Minister of Education, NC member Ajay Kumar Chaurasia, representing Parsa 3, received hundreds of phone calls from disaffected villagers. Chaurasia beat Kushbaha in CA elections by 5,000 votes.

After four sets of inductions, the Council of Ministers now holds 30 people. Yet, 10 of these are not CA members. And among the rest, only 11 were directly elected into the CA. The remaining nine, all of whom hold powerful portfolios, weren't elected either. Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal himself lost CA elections in two localities, although he was finally nominated into the assembly.

All this comes under the auspices of the interim constitution, which doesn't bar non-CA members from becoming ministers. Political analysts urge revisions to the document.

# The King is dead

Nagarik, 27 June

नागरिक

"Politics cannot bring people together, nor can religion. But Michael Jackson brought the world together with his music," said fans the world over after learning of his death. Michael Jackson may be among the few Western singers who have managed to leave a mark in the hearts of many Nepali youngsters. Singer Sanjay Shrestha who is an ardent fan, says: "I owe my high-pitched singing style to Michael Jackson." Singer Nabin Bhattarai could not hold back tears when he heard of Jackson's death. Abhaya Subba of the group Abhaya and the Steam Injuns recalls her teen years when all four walls in her room used to be plastered with the pop idol's posters. She says, "I took his music as a path from which I could create my own style".



"This is exactly what a national government is..."

नागरिक Robin Sayami in *Nagarik*, 2 July



KIRAN PANDAY

# Second-generation revolutionary

## A new constitution also means learning from past mistakes, says Maoist CA member

questions about inequality, discrimination and poverty.

Born in Syangja, Thapa eventually studied at Pokhara's Prithvi Narayan Campus at the time of the 1990 Jana Andolan, when students really started to mobilise and demonstrate. "It was an amazing time, everyone was questioning the kind of society we were living in, everyone was united for a people's democracy," Thapa recalls.

What attracted her to the party was its Maoist ideology. After the 1990 movement she was involved in the Maoist party's Unity Centre as a student leader until the 'people's war' broke out and she had to go underground. She explains, "We believed that an armed rebellion was necessary for the kind of

change people desired, which has proven to be true."

Although living as a fighter was physically taxing, she has found that mainstream politics has not been without its challenges. "There's never a dull day in the parliament."

During the war years she served as central bureau chair for Sunsari, Morang and Kapilabastu, as a central committee in-charge for east Nepal, brigade commissar for Mechi, general secretary of the All Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary), member of the interim parliament and now a CA member and chair of Natural Resources, Economic Rights and Sharing of Revenues committee.

Thapa is well aware of the

disenchantment many Nepalis feel about the constitution not being written on time. "The constitution will be written on time only if we rise above the political wrangling and focus on the writing process," she says.

With a full schedule at the committee and the assembly, Thapa hasn't been able to travel as much as she would like to but she did get a glimpse of rural Nepal while travelling to collect suggestions for the new constitution and was struck by the level of political awareness.

She says: "In village after village people asked us to learn from past mistakes and keep them in mind while writing the new constitution." ●

Mallika Aryal

# Clash of the committees

## The constitution drafting process is stuck

DHURBA SIMKHADA

The CA session resumed on 11 June after a break of two weeks because the assembly had no business to attend to. There were some chores after the Committee for the Support of Cultural and Social Solidarity and the State Structure Committee submitted their drafts. But that business is now done, and the assembly doesn't have anything else planned.

The committees were supposed to submit their proposals by 23 April but this deadline was extended to 22 May. Out of 11 committees, only two kept the deadline and submitted their concept drafts. Another two submitted their drafts a month and a half after the deadline. For the rest of the committees the deadline has again been extended to 9 July.

Says Radheshyam Adhikari of the Judiciary Committee: "All the committees are stuck and have not been able to make the initial draft for the assembly. There is need of a political mechanism composed of senior political leaders." It seems the committees have been unable to reach a consensus because of party instructions. Senior leaders have to intervene to correct this.

The debates within the committees have now embroiled the CA's meetings. Although the issue of language had already been concluded in the committee meeting, it was raised again in the CA where Madhesi members insisted that Hindi should also be used for official

purposes. Others wanted Nepali as the official language for communication between provinces.

In the Committee for Protection of the National Interest there is a deadlock over whether the words 'people's war' should be used to describe the conflict. NC leaders also feel the Maoist recommendation to have compulsory military training for all citizens above 18 should also be removed from their draft.

The Constitutional Committee will not be able to submit its draft by 1 July. It has stopped functioning after its chair, Madhav Kumar Nepal, became Prime Minister. The issue of citizenship is also holding up the meetings as Madhesi CA members argue that foreign women who marry a Nepali should immediately be issued a citizenship. The Judicial Committee is stuck over issues like who will define the constitution and who will have the authority to nominate and terminate the Chief Justice?

The State Reconstruction Committee and Natural Resource, Economic Rights and Revenue Distribution Committees are also stuck. Unless there is a high-level mechanism, this impasse will continue. The State Reconstruction Committee is deadlocked over federalism issues like autonomy, political representation, the number of provinces, boundaries and capitals. Buddha Ratna Manandhar, member of the committee and Maoist CA member says: "We will not give in to the pro-status quo groups." ●



KIRAN PANDAY



## VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

[www.nagarikaawaz.org.np](http://www.nagarikaawaz.org.np)

As a historical transition of the Founder, NA is pleased to invite applications from qualified and capable Nepali women for its leadership position as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

The candidate for this position will be Kathmandu based and is required to:

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- Ensure all programme strategies and goals are set/met according to the larger NA goals and objectives for desired outcomes
- Strategize, assist and supervise the operationalization of the overall NA office management and program
- With the support of the responsible NA staff and the NA Executive Board, ensure and secure funds for the running of NA administration and programmes
- Ensure effective/efficient management of NA office, budget and financial system in compliance with the NA constitution, and government rules and regulations
- Plan and systemize regular monitoring and timely evaluations of all NA programmes
- Represent NA as its official leader

**Minimum qualification required:** At the minimum a masters degree with at least five to seven years work experience in a senior managerial position is essential. Education and experience needs to be in related fields of social sciences or peace and conflict. Computer proficiency, writing and communication skills in Nepali and English are necessary. Candidates less qualified need not apply. Remuneration and benefits will commensurate with the rules and policies of NA.

Please send in your application with an updated CV with a passport size photo to reach us no later than July 31, 2009 to **Vacancy, Nagarik Aawaz, PO Box 9041, Kathmandu**. Only short-listed candidates will be contacted by August 15 2009. Direct phone calls will not be entertained.



# A long, tall glass

There's nothing Nepalis love more than beer, it seems, save maybe dal-bhat.

But things weren't always this way. In the beer-scarce 1980s, when there was only one local brand of beer available (Star) you would be hard-pressed to find a beer that hadn't gone flat.

Fresh beers are now abundantly available. Most restaurants offer as many varieties of beer as dishes. But its prevalence isn't its only plus point. It's also cheaper than wine, a popular alternative. So, unless you win a handsome lottery forget wine and buy beer.

Long gone are the days when parties modestly offered little more than small talk and musical chairs, or perhaps among braver crowds, charades. With booze, people party differently. Or maybe the word is: raucously.

Gorkha Brewery dominates the beer market with its Carlsberg, Tuborg and San Miguel brands, but it is seeing stiff competition now from new entrants like Lowenbrau, Nepal Ice, Everest and Oranjeboom.

Nirvana Chaudhary of Chaudhary Group is upbeat about the increasing consumption of beer, and says there is great domestic growth potential as well as a market for Nepali beers abroad.

"Nepal Ice is the first Nepali beer to reach international markets like UK, Hong Kong and Japan," says Chaudhary.

Within Nepal, Chaudhary's target group are party-going youngsters and young professionals who look forward to coming home to a long, tall glass of chilled beer.

Gaining ground in a market dominated by locally made beer is the German-based Lowenbrau. But it is an uphill task, admits Suranjan De' of Pepsi Nepal, which also markets Lowenbrau in Nepal.

"Lowenbrau is becoming widely accepted in Nepal too, but it is difficult to move in the same velocity as the other companies," De told *Nepali Times*. ●

Sabhyata Timsina



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# Old wine in a new market

From chyang to ela to frothy beer, Nepalis are now increasingly turning to wine. In cafes, restaurants and bars urban Nepalis are switching to wine in droves.

When once a bottle of Barsac would be carelessly stored alongside a packet of alu chips, in many kitchens wine now has a cabinet to itself.

Wine wholesalers in Kathmandu say the bottles are flying off the shelves. Wine importer Akhil K Chapagain of Akhil Trading Concern says wine has caught on in a big way. "Not a single celebration in Kathmandu is complete without wine," says Chapagain.

Amit Agrawal of Greenline Centre agrees. Agrawal and Chapagain both note that wine consumption is going up sharply because women have become enthusiastic tipplers. "Women are our main consumers, along with youngsters," says Agrawal.

Laws banning liquor sales after 9PM haven't caused a dent in wine sales either. However, obstacles for the sale of wine still remain. "Duties are extremely high for wine imports," says Ashish Agrawal, director of Global Trading Concern, adding that while it hasn't caused much difference to posh hotels that can afford tariffs, the sales would be much higher if the price differential with other drinks was not so high.

Industry sources say that with 3,000 wine brands in the market, there is stiff competition in a price-sensitive market. Ashish Bista of Gorkha Brewery which also markets wines, explains: "With so many varieties available the wines compete with each other."

Ashish Agrawal says ignorance about wine quality

means that consumers go for the cheaper brands at first. "Most customers can't tell the difference between a wine costing Rs 450 and a wine costing Rs 4,000," he says.

Wine distributors are trying to change this by organising frequent wine-tasting events in collaboration with embassies of the countries from where the wines originate, like Australia, France and the United States. As more Nepalis return from studies or work abroad, they bring back a cultivated taste for wine and this is also spreading awareness. ● Subeksha Poudel



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**A new trekking route from Myagdi to Rukum follows trails used by the Maoists during the war**

# Guerrilla



ALL PICS: KISHOR RIMAL

**KISHOR RIMAL**  
in DHORPATAN

**W**hen the Maoists attacked Beni in 2004, thousands of guerrillas trekked up and down the rugged mountains of central Nepal from Rukum.

Led by the present Maoist PLA Commander, Nanda Kishore Pun (Pasang), the guerrillas probably were not in the mood to admire the scenery. More than 100 people

were killed in the Battle for Beni as the fighting raged all night in the district capital of Myagdi.

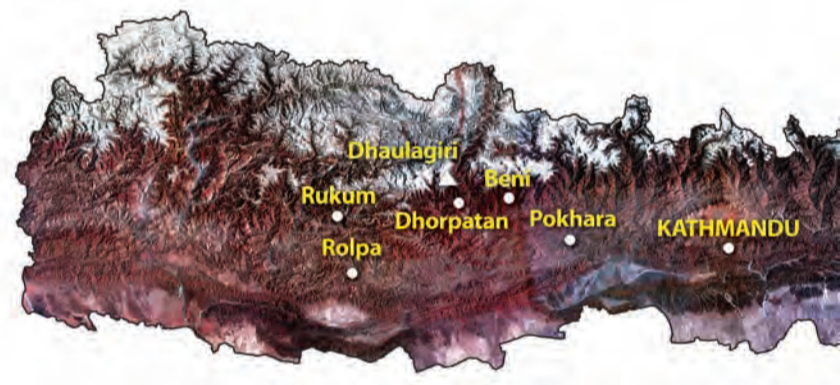
The Maoists carried their wounded and walked back to Rukum and Rolpa, with the army in hot pursuit. They were bombed from the air by helicopters and suffered serious casualties.

Now, trekkers can retrace the footsteps of the guerrillas and imagine what it must have been like to hike and fight in

this kind of terrain. The trail starts in Beni, skirts Baglung, passes the Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve and on to Rukum and Rolpa and take up to 13 days.

All along, there are spectacular views of the Dhaulagiri range from high ridges and large meadows fringed by pine forests.

Says Kuber Bista of the Nepal Tourism Board: "The trail has a historic attraction, but there are also challenges of infrastructure and making locals aware of how



they can benefit from tourism."

NTB is partnering with the National Trust for Nature Conservation and the local

Jaljala Tourism Development Committee to popularise the Rukum trekking route from the coming autumn season. ●



C (above), a 12-year-old, earns Rs 4,000 per month selling plastic bottles he collects from garbage piles in Thamel. It's only 4PM, he has just begun his shift and still has a long working day ahead. As the bars empty of tourists, the streets become dangerous. He works until 2AM but, unlike many other street children, is lucky to have a home. His family migrated here from India a few years ago, searching for a better life. The whole family works selling garbage. When he gets home, C sleeps for a few hours until he wakes up for school, a privilege he has thanks to an INGO that supports him by providing him with books and a mandatory school uniform.

K (right) is 16 and earns Rs 1,200 as a domestic worker. When she was only six her father brought her to the city and placed her hand into a stranger's with the words: "Take her". For the next five years, she worked as an unpaid domestic

## Children of the streets

**A film that reminds us of the lives behind the statistics of child labour in Nepal**

worker, suffering from emotional neglect. Her memories from that period are blurred; she only remembers endless days of crying and one specific memory of being forced to work from sunrise to sunset without food, causing her to faint from hunger. Today, K is in ninth grade and working only a few hours a day. After having suffered as a child labourer, she does not want to marry or to have children. She says, "Those who are poor, they should not have children... there is so much suffering."



J (above) is a micro-bus conductor and earns Rs 3,000 a month. Though he can afford a meal, he goes to sleep hungry many nights a week because he is too homesick to eat. He came to Kathmandu four months ago with a friend. "The day I arrived in the city was the saddest day in my life," says J. All his expectations for a better life were shattered when he could not find a job, but now he works as a conductor and dreams of someday becoming a microbus driver.

These are three of the stories of child workers in Nepal in *The Faces Behind the Numbers*, a video testimonial to be launched this week. Produced by the Israeli INGO,

Tevel Be'Tzedek in partnership with Contemporary Vision, the documentary is a collection of searing testimonies of Kathmandu's street children and child workers.

There are anywhere up to 3 million child workers in Nepal, and despite the work of child rights organisations the number seems to be growing. The film shows that children are not just statistics, they have individual stories of tragedy and hope, struggle and survival. No number can tell the story of the working children of Nepal. These children deserve a better childhood, one without responsibilities and financial duties. But a lot must change in the country in order for this to become a reality.

In the meantime, their rights need to be protected so they do not risk becoming victims of abuse. They must be provided the opportunity to receive an education to ensure better lives for their children. ●

*The Faces Behind the Numbers* will be screened at a seminar on child workers on 9 July at 5PM at the Vajra Hotel. Free entrance.

# treks

**DAY 1: Kathmandu-Beni (8 hours by bus)**



**DAY 2: Beni to Takam (6 hours)**

From the Myagdi district headquarter you follow a gravel road for 24km to Darbang and start walking. Takam is three hour walk away with Gurja Himal towering overhead.



**DAY 3: Takam to Lamsung (6 hours)**

This is where the scenery starts getting even more dramatic. This is what Nepal used to be like before the trekkers got here. Locals are not used to foreigners and have a lot of stories to tell about the war.



**DAY4: Lamsung to Gurjaghat (7 hours)**

Climb through dense pine forests, with musk deer darting in the undergrowth. The meadows on the ridge offer 180 degree views of Dhaulagiri and entire range up to Churen Himal in the west.

**DAY 5: Gurjaghat to Dhorpatan (5 hours)**

You cross over from Myagdi to Baglung and into the former Tibetan refugee camp which was serviced by an airfield built by the Swiss in the 1950s. This is also the entrance to the Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve, where shooting mountain goats and blue sheep is now allowed for fee-paying professional hunters from all over the world.



**DAY 6: Dhorpatan to Nisi Dhor (5 hours)**

This is the paradise for birds. Watch danphes, pheasants, and other migratory species that you have seen only in bird guides. Hard to imagine that people fought a war here. There are cow sheds in the monsoon, but in winter these high pastures are deserted.

**DAY 7: Nisi Dhor to Tallo Sera (7 hours)**

Cross over from Baglung to Rukum into Magar country and enter the former Maoist base area. There are dense forests all the way so it must have been easy to hide here from the helicopter patrols. The villages are picturesque and there is always some kind of Magar festival going on.



**DAY 8: Tallo Sera Rujhikhola (6 hours)**

Walk to Lukum in Rukum, a village populated only by Magars and Dalits. This is about as medieval as it gets in Nepal nowadays. Rujhikhola is where Pasang (now PLA commander) planned the Beni attack.

**DAY 9: Rujhikhola to Thabang (5 hours)**

Thabang is the cradle of the Maoist revolution. It was damaged in army attacks and parts of the town were flattened by 'tora bora' mortars shells dropped from helicopters. There has been some development of infrastructure after the war ended, and the people are eager and friendly.

**DAY 10: Thabang to Jaljale (5 hours)**

The highest point in Jaljala is Dharampani (3,900m) and there is a great view from Api-Saipal in the west to



Dhaulagiri in the east. This is also where the PLA was given weapons training during the war.

**DAY 11: Jaljala to Jelbang (6 hours)**

Now we're moving down from the high mountains and the villages are ethnically mixed.

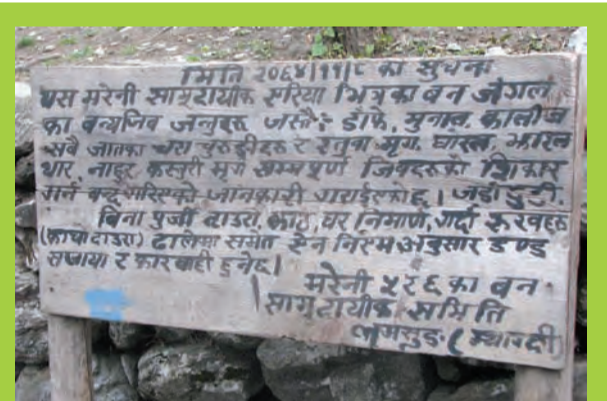


**DAY 12: (Jelbang to Suliochaur (6 hours)**

This is where we finally get to Rolpa and the roadhead. Rolpa was also a rebel base area and for many of the ten years of war under total Maoist control. You can eat at one of many commune restaurants run by Maoist cooperatives, where staff are relatives of those who were killed in the fightings.

**DAY 13: Sulichaur to Kathmandu (13 hours by bus)**

Take a pillow.



## More shooting

Gunfire is once more being heard in the Dhorthpatan Hunting Reserve as professional hunters from all over the world come to this region below Dhaulagiri to bag trophies of blue sheep, mountain goat and other wildlife. Royalty from the hunting is supposed to go to the government, with permits costing anything between \$10,000 to \$25,000. A park ranger is supposed to accompany the hunters, who fly in by helicopter direct from Kathmandu, take the horns and depart. However, there are complaints from the hunting expeditions who say that despite having paid the permit fees to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, they are extorted by locals. VDC committees in Rukum and local Maoists in Baglung charge up to Rs 100,000 from expeditions. In a recent incident, Maoists exploded pipe bombs to scare away animals when they didn't get the amount they had demanded, said a villager. The most coveted trophy is blue sheep, but hunters can also shoot Himalayan tahr and deer. Endangered animals like leopards, black bear, red panda, danphe pheasants, musk deer are out of bounds for the hunters.

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# Darkness after sunrise

## Are you ready for the first and longest solar eclipse of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

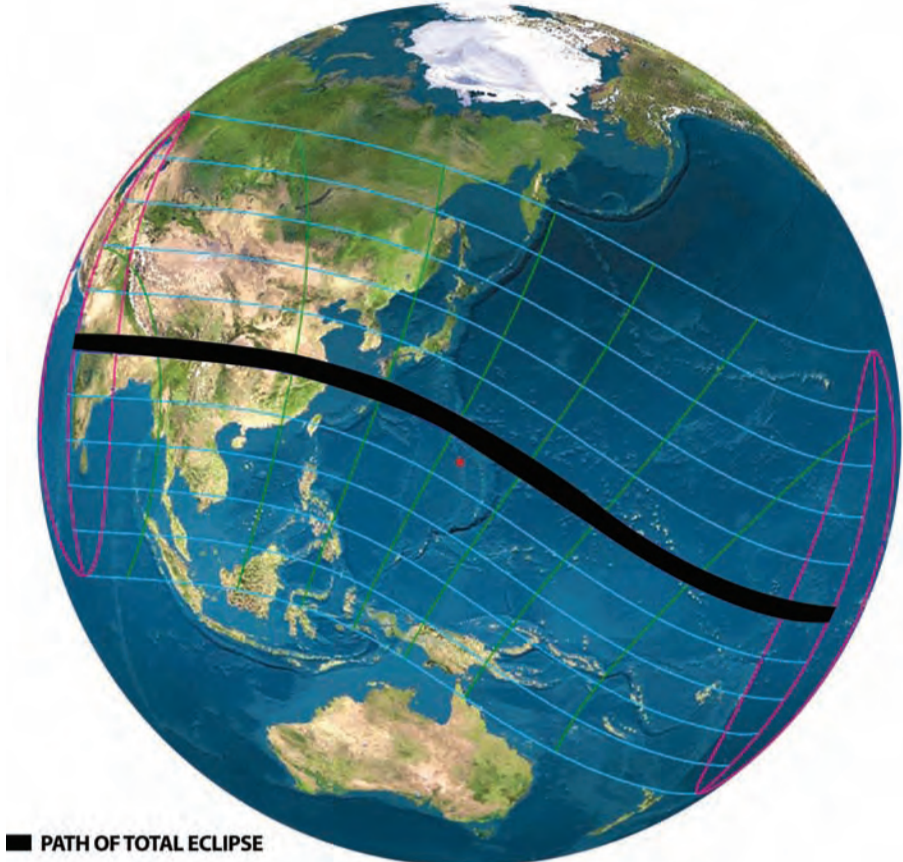
Whatever you are doing on the morning of 22 July, drop it. Get up early. Get ready for the astronomical event of the century: you're not going to see a total solar eclipse that lasts this long again.

The total eclipse, the first since 2006, will traverse a path that begins in India, passes through Nepal, Bhutan, Burma and then to China and the Pacific Ocean.

**STARGAZING**  
Kedar S Badu

Those who see no distinction between astronomical events and astrology, say the timing is ominous. Eclipses are regarded as a bad omen and could portend more political turmoil ahead. Whatever its mythical or political significance, the eclipse will be a spectacular sight. Cross your fingers and hope that the monsoon clouds will part and allow us a good view. But even under the cloud cover, there will be total darkness beneath the umbral shadow for about 3.5 minutes.

In Nepal, we have a ringside view of the total eclipse in the country's south-eastern corner: Ilam, Bhadrapur, Biratnagar, Dharan, Rajbiraj, Dhankuta and Janakpur. Fikkal in Ilam will be one of the best places to view the eclipse as the shadow crosses the south



■ PATH OF TOTAL ECLIPSE

face of Kangchenjunga.

In the rest of Nepal, the eclipse will be partial. The new moon will obscure 96 per cent of the sun's disc as seen from Kathmandu where the eclipse will start at 5.45AM, reaching its climax at 6.42AM and

ending at 7.45AM.

Though perhaps the sight will be unwelcome in a city where people jaded by power cuts and political wrangling have grown bitterly indifferent to the darkness. Hopefully it will be more cheerily

welcomed in Pokhara. Here, the eclipse will first appear at 5.46AM, end at 7.44AM, and reach its maximum extent, obscuring 93 per cent of the sun, at 6.42AM. In Dadeldhura in far-western Nepal, the eclipse will shield only 85 per cent of the sun but should last longer from 4.46-7.42AM.

So, now you have the facts. Turn your eyes away from the tv, disinter your nose from your books, and be a witness to this rare cosmic event. ●

[kedarbadu\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:kedarbadu(at)gmail.com)

### ECLIPSE VIEWING TIPS

- Don't ever view the sun directly, even during a partial eclipse
- Use certified glasses or flters
- Don't use sunglasses, photographic films, slides, x-rays or any other dark lensed device
- Prolonged viewing is dangerous

## Bon Appétit !

Gourmets and gourmands unite ! Unveiling the 'The Himalayan Times Food Guide' - an exclusive and comprehensive catalogue of restaurants and eateries across Kathmandu and Pokhara. Besides this, the guide is replete with information on hotels, bars, cafes and night clubs. As 'eating out' is fast catching up with the people of Nepal, this handy reference conveniently connects place to both pocket and palate. Like hearty appetites, you know we're unstoppable.

The will to excel. The strength to lead. The passion to conquer. Here's to the spirit of who we are.

unstoppable

The Himalayan Times Food Guide is now available at: The Himalayan Times Classified Department, **Departmental Stores:** Kasthamandap Bazar; Grihini Departmental Store, Baluwatar; Namaste Supermarket, Lazimpat & Pulchowk; Saleways Departmental Store, Pulchowk; Bhatbhateni Departmental Store, Bhatbhateni & Maharajgunj; Blue Bird Departmental Store, Lazimpat & Tripureshwor, **Book Stores:** United Books, Tibetan Books, The New Quest, Him Cargo, The Readers Concern, Glori Books, Nepal Book Depot, Pilgrims Book House, Summit Book House, Shangrila, Vajra Publications - **Thamel.** Uttam Store, Manandhar Store, Saraswati Books - **Pulchowk.** Gemini Groceries, Raj Books - **Jawalakhet.** Lazimpat Books, Charming Books- **Lazimpat.** Books Paradise, Jamal; Mandala Book Point, Kantipath; Nirvana Book House, Chhetrapati; Ekta Books, Thapathali & Manbawan; New Baba Books, Baluwatar; Parijat Stationery, Maharajgunj Chowk; Siddhartha Books, Baneshwor Chowk; Pipal Bot (Des Bhakta Chitrakar); Pipal Bot (Raju Chitrakar), New Road; Anil Magazine Center, Pipal Bot

# Excellencies make excellent photographers



With politicians blaming Kathmandu-based ambassadors of interfering in Nepal’s internal affairs, you’d have thought the diplomats wouldn’t have time for anything else.

But it looks like they do spend quite a bit of time not interfering, and instead indulge in their shared passion for photography. India’s ambassador Rakesh Sood, American ambassador Nancy Powell and Danish ambassador Finn Thilsted are getting together for a joint exhibition of their photographs with proceeds going to charity.

When James Giambrone of Indigo Gallery first asked outgoing US ambassador Nancy Powell to exhibit her photography at the Indigo Gallery, she proposed expanding the concept to include Sood and Thilsted as well.

“We put it all together in just a few weeks and I am



delighted that all three were willing and able to give the effort to pull this show together,” says Giambrone.

The exhibition is titled ‘More than ambassadors’ and shows that aside from representing their countries in Nepal, the ambassadors are also keen observers of culture and humanity.

Says US ambassador Powell: “Nepal remains a photographer’s paradise with its beautiful and incredibly tolerant people, its fascinating cultural artifacts and architecture and its amazing landscapes from Chitwan to Mustang. My photos will bring back many pleasant memories of my time in Nepal.”

Danish ambassador Thilsted started taking pictures since he was six, and says he takes his camera in all his travels. “As a diplomat, the camera is a good instrument in getting to know a country,” says Thilsted, “taking



photos gives one the opportunity to concentrate on seeing the details and characteristics of the people and landscape.”

Indian ambassador Sood started taking and developing his own black and white prints when he was a teenager. “Till I came to Nepal, Afghanistan had been my most challenging and also rewarding assignment,” says Sood, who is exhibiting his Afghan images.

*‘More than Ambassadors’ photographs by Nancy J. Powell, Finn Thilsted and Rakesh Sood Indigo Gallery, Naxal 4-19 July, 8AM to 6PM Tel: 4413 580*



# Rallying to a cause

When Rinchen Choegyal crosses the start line in London for a car rally to Ulan Bator on the Mongol Rally on 18 July he won’t just be rallying, he’ll be rallying for a cause.

Choegyal’s car will be among 300 that will be flagged off in London to make their way to Mongolia, crossing deserts, mountains and steppes. All cars will have engines less than one litre.

Choegyal, who grew up in Kathmandu and is now studying economics at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London will be raising money for the Esther Benjamins Trust (EBT), which has been working since 2002 to stop the trafficking of Nepali children and girls to Indian circuses.

The Trust’s founder, Philip Holmes, says all known Nepali trafficking agents who were preying on vulnerable rural families are now in prison. In India, the demand for Nepali children at the circuses has dried up because of the adverse publicity and legal consequences that followed daring rescues by the Trust and its Indian partners.

A court case is currently underway in India against one circus owner who is accused of rape. Another, Siraj Khan, the owner of the Raj Mahal Circus that the Trust raided last June (See: ‘Juggling with young lives’, # 405), has absconded after being charged with employing bonded labour.



**CIRCUS BOYS:** Aman and Bijay show off their medals at the National Games in May. Both were rescued from Indian circuses and are now being supported by the Esther Benjamin Trust, which is raising funds by being a part of the London-Ulan Bator car rally this month.

The Trust is now working to create a legitimate pathway for Nepal’s young people to enter employment inside genuinely reformed Indian circuses by setting up a circus training school in Kathmandu next year. “But for now we most need funds to support the care of children at risk whom we have rescued from the circuses and who live at our refuge in Godavari,” Holmes says.

One boy, Bicky, who was retrieved by the Trust from an Indian circus in January 2004, has just passed SLC in first division. Two other boys who were freed along with Bicky, Aman and Bijay, won gold medals in gymnastics in the National Games in May. Aman scooped no fewer than three gold medals making him one of the top 10 athletes in the Games.

Choegyal aims to raise £3,000 over the month that he is on the road and that will ensure his 10,000 mile journey is uphill all the way. Says Holmes: “Charities are feeling the fundraising chill that comes with the economic recession but every penny raised will help rescued children in Nepal find a future.” ●

*To donate to Rinchen Choegyal’s Mongol Rally see his online sponsorship form at [www.justgiving.com/rinchen](http://www.justgiving.com/rinchen) Esther Benjamin Trust: [www.ebtrust.org.uk](http://www.ebtrust.org.uk)*



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Himal’s Top 14 List

## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Concepts of balance**, an exhibition of artwork by Keepa Maskey at The Art Shop, Darbar Marg til 2 July. 4267063
- ❖ **Journey of Karnali**, a photo exhibition reflecting the Karnali culture at Lecture Hall, Nepal Tourism Board, 2 July 11.30 AM-12.30 PM
- ❖ **Ruposhi Bangala**, photo exhibition of photographers of Bangladesh at Lecture Hall, Nepal Tourism Board, 2 July, 2PM
- ❖ **Inside is outside**, an exhibition of paintings by Saroj Bajracharya at The Art Shop gallery, durbarmarg 3-17 July
- ❖ **In a Different Light** an exhibition of Photography by Zoe Childerley at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, 1-18 July at 5PM. 4267063
- ❖ **More than Ambassadors**, a photographic exhibition by the ambassadors of USA, India and Denmark, Indigo Gallery, Gairidhara 4-19 July at 8AM -6PM. 4413580
- ❖ **Secrets of Shangri-La and Caves of Mustang**, a visual program on discoveries near the Nepal-Tibet border by Brot Coburn at Indigo Gallery, Gairidhara 4 July, 7PM 4413580

## EVENTS

- ❖ **Departures**, a Japanese movie screening at Lazimpat Gallery Café, 5.30 PM. 4428549

## MUSIC

- ❖ **Kathmandu Music For Peace Festival** by the American soprano Lindsay Feldmeth and the Japanese pianist Ayako Watanabe, their last concert, 3 July
- ❖ **Nepal DJ gig**, by DJ Flex at Insomnia near Yak and Yeti, 4 July
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Durbar Marg. 4227288
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz brunch** barbecue and live jazz music at the Terrace, Hyatt Regency from 12-3.30 PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz evening** at Delices de France Restaurant every Wednesday, 11AM-2PM. 4260326
- ❖ **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**, performance by Yankey every Saturday, 9PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234
- ❖ **Live Band Sensation** performance by Aprilrush, every Saturday till late, Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4489362
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz Brunch** by Inner Groove with barbeque, Sunday, 12PM-3.30 PM, The Terrace at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4489362
- ❖ **Nepali Ghajals** and songs at D'Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30 PM onwards. 4468589

## DINING

- ❖ **A cafe's cafe** Dhokaima Cafe, Patan Dhoka. 5522113
- ❖ **Pan Pizza & Risotto**, for pizza cooked in pan with various toppings in wood-fired oven at the Rox Restaurant on Sunday, Monday & Tuesday. 4491234
- ❖ **The Corner Bar**, 3-11PM, 5-7PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu. 4411818
- ❖ **7th Annual Monsoon Wine Festival 2009**, from until 15 September, Kilroy, Thamel. 4250440
- ❖ **Mango Etagere** with hi-tea at The Lounge from 4.30- 6.30 PM. Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **Pizza & Pasta** at the Rox Restaurant every Monday & Tuesday, Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **Mediterranean cuisine** every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle-East at The Café, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Teppanyaki** meat items and garlic rice right at Le Restaurant, Gairidhara. 4436318
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri La, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Himalayan Rainbow Trout** at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg. 4248999



## GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Relax Package** at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu for Rs 5555 plus taxes, for a night on double occupancy with breakfast, complimentary use of spa and, offer valid to Nepalis and local residents only. 4489800
- ❖ **Feel the Hyatt touch**, a 60-minute Ayurvedic massage and access to pool and spa with breakfast or lunch at The Café or hi-tea at The Lounge. 4491234/ 4489359

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

## Quest Entertainment



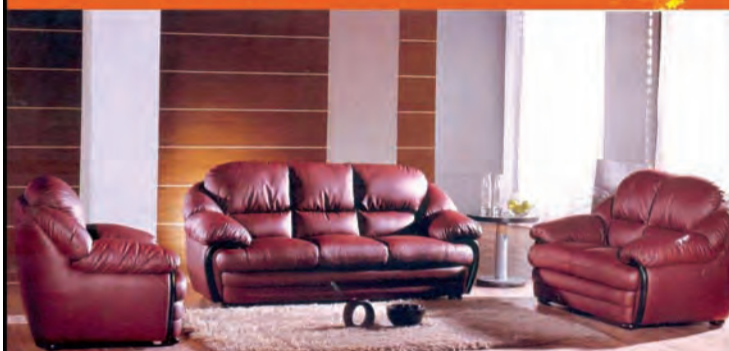
In *Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs*, life begins to change for Manny (Ray Romano) and his friends. Scrut (Chris Wedge) is still on the hunt to hold onto his beloved acorn while Manny and his new mate Ellie (Queen Latifah) are expecting a baby. Diego (Denis Leary) is fed up with being treated like a house-cat and Sid (John Leguizamo) begins to wish for a family of his own, and so steals some dinosaur eggs. This leads him into the underground world where dinosaurs roam free and where his herd must rescue him.

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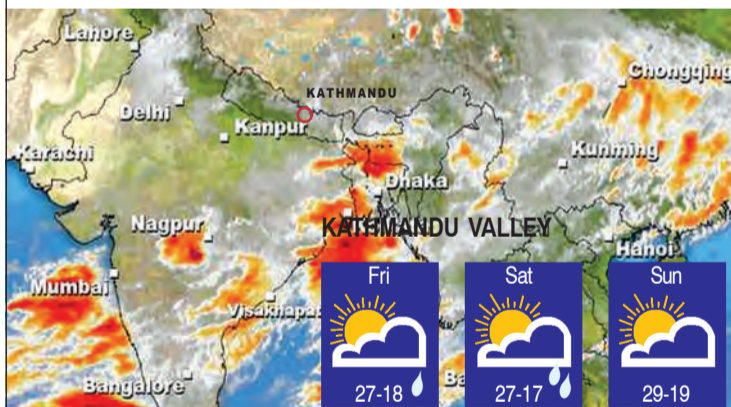


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## WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The monsoons have finally arrived, and they will continue to bring heavy rains to central and eastern Nepal. Those in the west should expect more rain this weekend. This satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows a band of monsoon showers grazing Nepal's southern border, these will slowly drift northwestwards to the central hills. Temperatures will also drop by about four degrees. Light rains this weekend and early next week should bring humid days and cool nights. The showers should persist all week, but real heavy rains are some ways off.



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Bad medicine by Sankarshan Thakur  
The pagoda's repudiation by Larry Jagan  
13th hotly debated Amendment and beyond  
by Jayampathy Wickramaratne

## IN ADDITION

Opium den by Matthew DuPee  
A chapamaar's peace by Kiyoko Ogura  
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**RAIN CATCHER:** Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal inspects Kathmandu Upathyaka Khanepani Limited's projects during a meeting on rainwater harvesting on Sunday.



**FLU AWAY:** An official notice at Tribhuban International Airport directs visitors from listed countries to the health desk to check for symptoms of the H1N1 virus.



**MOBILENATH:** A devotee uses her mobile to take a picture of the Patan Kumari during the Machhendranath chariot procession last week.



**SPLASH OF COLOUR:** Kathmandu locals can finally fan out their umbrellas as they enjoy early monsoon showers after a long dry spell.



**WEED OUT WEED:** An activist sports a 'no ganja' sign on his cheek during the International Drug Day awareness rally last week.

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# Pants without pockets

By joining the Maoists en masse the other day and giving Chairman Awesome the red salute, Kollywood actors showed that they all deserve Oscars in the **Best-Supporting Actor** role. They played their parts so well, we never guessed they were **unreformed mandalays** all along. This is a personal victory for Awe-inspiring, who is on record as saying in interviews even while underground that he liked watching movies. Just like the pot boilers that Nepali actors play in, we can now tell the difference between the good guys and the bad guys. The only question is which will be the next profession to **swear allegiance** to the red flag: Pashupati's priests, Thamel's masseurs or us hacks?



The mass conversion to Maoism has led to speculation that a

semi-autobiographical movie about **Fearsome the Great** (to be called *Prachanda Path*) is in the works with the lead role being played by the man himself. All those years he hung around Noida catching the matinee shows must have rubbed off on Ferocious. On the other hand, if the kangresis could make a movie about Ganeshman Uncle and the UML a feature film on Comrade Madan Bhandari, nothing wrong with a three-hour musical **extolling the heroism** of Comrade Shock and Awe. Guess the only diff is that Ganesh Man and Madan Dai were already dead when the films about them were made.

When things get a bit too stressful, Ferocious has the habit of putting on the **disappearing act**. He went to Sanga last time and made his decision to resign over a bottle of dry white Australian. Last week when both the meteorological and political

heat got too much to bear he sped off to the **cool climes** of Daman where his krantikari union has closed down the only good hotel there. This weekend, the Chairman was **grilled so hard** by fellow-comrades at the Politburo meeting that he scooted off to Narayangad. However much he tried to keep the visit a secret, the word spread and pretty soon the entire Chitwan press corps had descended upon the **Hotel Royal Century**. The irony of the choice of hotel seems to have been lost on the comrades.



As far as the international press is concerned, nothing of importance ever seems to happen in Nepal these days. How many times can the wire services file a story that the rostrum is still being gheraoed in parliament? What's new about yet another highway blockade, or how many

different ways can you write about a kidnapping? Luckily for the world media, there was an item of news to break the monotony this week: the decision by the Ministry of Uncivil Aviation to make baggage handlers at Gauchar wear **trousers without pockets** because they were in the habit of slashing open checked-in luggage to partake of their contents. This will send a very positive message all over the world about our country ahead of the **Visit Nepal Year 2011**, that we are serious about cracking down on crime.



All well and good about putting ants in the pants of baggage handlers, but who is going to tackle the cops at the airport security check? How do you prevent them from going through your wallet and pocketing

suspicious-looking \$20 bills that they deem to be a **national security threat**? Taking the pockets out of their trousers ain't gonna stop the cops from demanding **ghoosh**, or the immigration chaps from stopping Nepalis at random to extort the living daylights out of them. More drastic action is called for, viz: they need to be stripped and made to work in their **birthday suits**. Only if they are stark raving naked can we be sure they haven't stolen anything from us.



The Ass' solution to the political stalemate is simple: let Com Baburam lead a new govt of national unity. Makumay can step aside, since he has served his purpose. As Finance Minister, Laldhoj **pumped in** Rs 30 billion into the national coffers. One thing we can be sure of, at least this man won't **stash cash** in his own trousers, even if it has pockets.

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