



ENTIRE SPECTRUM: A rainbow arcs through monsoon clouds on Monday as the delayed rains finally arrive with a bang.

KIRAN PANDAY

# Rain and shine

When it rains it pours. As if the political crisis wasn't bad enough, Nepal is going through a multi-layered economic and development emergency. But roaming the corridors of power in Singha Darbar, you wouldn't know it. There is a cholera epidemic in western

Nepal, the winter drought that destroyed the wheat crops was followed by a delayed monsoon that decimated maize and rice. This is bound to make inflation of essential food commodities even worse. It is already running between 20-50 per cent, defying all economic

theories, and despite the open border with India where inflation is single digit. Then, we're looking at a looming power crisis this winter. Despite last winter's 18 hour daily power cuts, no new generation capacity has been added. Foreign investment is zero, and so is new job creation. Yet, the macro-economic situation is not so bad, buoyed by a 55 per cent growth in remittances last year. The global recession will affect income, and

we will need the dollars to buy Indian rupees to pay for our imports. But, however dire the situation, Nepal muddles along like it always has. This week's rains revived some hope, and it could be a sign that things will turn around. All we can do is hope. ●


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Timesnepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll # 462

Q. Should the government have given a holiday on the day of the solar eclipse?

Total votes: 2,829



Weekly Internet Poll # 463. To vote go to: [www.nepaltimes.com](http://www.nepaltimes.com)

Q. Should the Vice President retake his oath in Nepali?

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## A VISIBLE HAND

The spiralling prices of basic commodities in Nepal defy economic explanation. The delayed reaction of the global recession is only now being felt as real wages decline and remittances show a downward trend.

Consequently, the demand for goods has declined. However, there has been a visible surge in supply as a number of delivery outlets multiply all over the country as more houses turn into shutter-front shops. This should have resulted in fiercer competition, a better quality of goods and lower prices, but syndication and cartels have distorted the pricing mechanism. In a truly free market, the invisible hand regulates prices. But the invisible hand is so invisible here that hoarders and speculators fix prices of essential commodities. What we need is the visible hand of a regulatory state. The government's hesitant move in intervening in the supply chain was long overdue, but not adequate.

But this is a country where gas stations go on strike when they aren't allowed to adulterate, or taxis protest when the authorities try to punish those who tamper with meters. This impunity exists



because of a weak state. Raids on grain merchants and cooking gas dealers this week were half-hearted. No case has been filed in any court, probably because the government doesn't have anything to prove.

The price rise is completely manipulated by supply cartels. One way to counter that is to revitalise

the public distribution system and ensure supply of goods at fair prices through cooperative outlets. Ensuing competition will force hoarders to bring out their stocks.

The devastating drought and the delayed monsoon have ruined this year's harvest. Subsistence farmers, already teetering at the edge of hunger will be worst hit. Migration to India will surge. For the first time, Tarai districts are going to have a food deficit this year. This is going to put additional responsibility on the state and district authorities to ensure supplies at fair prices by controlling hoarding, price-fixing and cartelling.

Politics, already wobbly, is going to be dangerously destabilised by food shortages in the coming months. The government needs contingency plans right away if it wants to prevent political repercussions and social unrest when the focus should be on the new constitution and protecting the peace process.

Businesses and corrupt government are often found to be hand-in-glove. They need to work hand in hand. A fair market has better chances of remaining free.

# Round and round

To think that the Maoists can be bullied into submission is naïve

If the status quo prevails, we will keep going round and round in circles with the leaders making the rhetorical commitment to bringing the peace process to a 'logical conclusion', without caring two hoots about it.



**PLAIN SPEAKING**  
**Prashant Jha**

No political party is committed to integration, or has a clear roadmap about it. It is tactical and dependent on how it affects their strength and larger balance of power.

No one quite knows where the Maoists stand on it, whether they want it, when they want it, and what their bottom line is. What we know is that they will push for it only if they sense that it will help tilt the army's orientation towards them, or if the rising discontent in the cantonments is becoming unmanageable, and in a manner that will bolster the party.

Till that point, they will keep playing the victim, pretend to be the picture of reasonableness, talk up their internal difficulties, and try to bargain for financial incentives in return for any progress on the issue.

The discharge of underage inmates was a façade. The visiting team found the disqualified insisting on integration in the army, which was, one suspects, what they had been instructed to do by their divisional commanders. Some suggest that the Maoists have maintained a veil of secrecy internally, and all those disqualified do not even

know they are out.

While one recognises the necessity of working out a rehabilitation package for all these men and women who are trained and indoctrinated, Maoist duplicity on the issue must be taken into account. First, they fill in people who were never fighters in cantonments, including children, while sending many of the real fighters out. Then they grudgingly accept the disqualification of some and promise the world they will discharge them. The state is supposed to take care of them, and even then, they drag the process on.

But why are the Maoists behaving in this manner, and how are they getting away with it? The Maoists are insecure. They genuinely feel the right-wing wants to marginalise them completely, and reverse the achievements of the last few years. Those arguing that the PLA must be kept intact to fight a 'counter-revolution' cite developments of the last few months as proof, and have gained the upper hand. And voices that no integration till constitution is written have asserted themselves.

The most realistic possibility of progress, albeit gradual, was when the Maoists were in power. To think they can be bullied, and will co-operate when the power alignment is stacked up against them is naïve.

But the real blame for the state of affairs must go to the other parties, for their lack of clarity and myopia. When they should have pushed for integration, they got paranoid about Maoist control of army and

said no. Now they understand the dangers of having PLA around, but have no clue how to deal with it.

Instead, they rely on vague formulations like 'PLA will evaporate', 'cadre will get disillusioned and leave', and at best, 'a few can be taken in'. Kathmandu parties seem to care little about prospects of lower level armed groups, which may splinter off from PLA, and add to the disorder.

But to assume that NC and UML have a mind of their own is being over-generous. It will boil down to what India decides. Just see how Rakesh Sood says PLA must be integrated in society in a newspaper interview, and GPK follows suit a month later. And Delhi is either unclear itself, with some pushing for token integration in the army and others opposing it outright, or waiting and watching.

Any deal on integration will finally depend on rapprochement between Maoists and India because neither the army nor the parties will take a step without that. Only RAW, MEA and the Indian Army have the collective leverage to engineer a compromise.

In the debate over integration, security sector reform is all but forgotten. How to democratise and downsize the army, make it inclusive, and push accountability as part of the peace process.

As writer Manjushree Thapa has perceptively noted, 'Army integration in the absence of security sector reform and justice would be disastrous. (Imagine a one lakh plus, part-feudal, part-Maoist army that believes it can act with impunity).' ●

# The VP's vow row

Ethnocentrism is an extremely risky proposition for a country as diverse as Nepal

The fire over our 'national' language has been stoked once again. In their wisdom, two learned judges of the Supreme Court decided that the verbal oath of Vice President Parmananda Jha in Hindi didn't conform to the 'spirit' of the constitution.

The fact that Jha had signed the Nepali version of the official vow was considered irrelevant. Since judges are the highest interpreters of the supreme law of the land, it would be difficult to question the legal



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

bases of assessing the "spirit" of a fairly explicit document. Jha refused to comply with the order of the court alleging that it was biased.

Attorney General Bharat Bahadur Karki jumped into the debate and contradicted the position of his government. Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has promised to find a "middle path" acceptable to all. His chief legal counsel believes that the VP must take a fresh oath.

Meanwhile, there has been no midnight missive from President Ram Baran Yadav so far to nip the inflammatory issue in the

bud. It's passion rather than reason that has overtaken a debate that should have been discussed in the Constituent Assembly and the result enshrined in the new constitution.

The verdict of the court was technical but the debate that it has sparked is purely emotional. Almost all Pahadi parties contend that the VP should either re-take his oath or resign. Practical implications of these options are conveniently ignored. No matter whether a fresh swearing-in ceremony is held or he resigns, everything that Jha has done for over a year as VP will stand nullified. According to the "spirit" of the legal tradition, he would then be required to return every paisa to the exchequer that he has drawn by the way of pay and perks. Jha has judged too many legal cases not to recognise the legal trap. He is extremely unlikely to commit political hara-kiri.

The Madhesi parties have rallied around the VP in the belief that they may get a fresh lease of life in the Tarai where Maoists have begun to nibble away at their support base. By sharing power with the UML (a party seen to be stridently anti-Madhesi) the TMDP, Sadbhavana (Mahato) and the Gachhedar faction of MJF have begun to lose ground in the plains. They have to be louder than Upendra Yadav in

supporting Jha even if just to save their faces.

The Maoists adopted the sensible way of promoting Abadhi, Bhojpuri and Maithili as languages of Madhesi identity. With Matrika Yadav raising the banner of Hindi, midlevel Maoist leaders in the Tarai suddenly find themselves on the defensive. It's difficult for them to divert the debate towards local languages when the judgment over legality of VP's oath is widely being interpreted as a Pahadi attack on Madhesi 'asmita'- a concept with inflammatory connotations of self-esteem, honour, and dignity all rolled into one. It seems we are once more on the slippery slope of ethnic cleavage.

Ironically, the hatred of Hindi is rarely caused by one's reverence for Nepali. Hindi films, teleserials, songs and magazines are as popular among Pahadis as among Madhesis. More Pahadis have nephews and cousins in the organised sector of India (Army, police, private security agencies, business houses and influential families), where knowledge of Hindi is sine qua non, than Madhesis.

Logically, Pahadis should have been at the forefront of Hindi movement in Nepal: their privileges would be more secure by associating with the regional hegemon. But

then language is more about emotion than reason. Private adoration and public distaste for Hindi is but a mere reflection of grudging admiration and resulting resentment that Nepal's petty bourgeois harbour for anything 'Indian'. It's born out of a deep sense of inferiority and helplessness about Big Brother.

Jaswant Singh won the Indian election in Darjeeling on the strength of his dhaka topi and Sharad Singh Bhandari wouldn't dare wear one in his Mahottari constituency in Nepal. But the assumption that a Nepali has to be somehow visibly different from an Indian has such a large following that its likely impact on the Madhesi population is often ignored even by as seasoned a politician as Jhala Nath Khanal.

Ethnocentrism is an extremely risky proposition for a country as diverse as Nepal. Fortunately, the two petitioners suing VP Jha for contempt have given the apex court an opportunity to review the case and offer a face saving formula for Jha: he has already agreed to re-take oath of office if 'Nepalis so desire'. This row needs to be resolved amicably to save the dignity of the VP's post and the reputation of the Supreme Court justices. Jingoism is a dangerous game to play in these ethnically charged times. ●



## LETTERS

## THE GREAT GAME

You say Nepal's foreign policy should begin with an appeal to India and China to lay off and let us be. (Editorial, 'The Great Game', #461), but such a move would be useless and, worse, costly when there is a lot to be gained by inviting either country to help us. India and China are both 'paranoid', as your editorial says, about the other's influence in Nepal. It would seem that unless Nepal credibly pledged to be neutral, neither country would stop interfering. But neither country would believe the pledge. Nepal played the two countries off one another for too long already. It would take only a shadow of a suspicion that Nepal is leaning the other way for either country to continue meddling again. So, we're in a pickle and there is no way out, certainly not by making vain appeals for non-interference. What we should do, instead, is to remind both countries that political instability in Nepal is bad for them, so that they wield their influence in Nepal more responsibly.

*Name withheld, email*

- Thank you for a bold editorial outlining why it is counterproductive for China and India to wage a proxy war in Nepal. And as you say, the fault lies not in Beijing or in Delhi but in our own political leadership which has historically preferred to use outside powers to put down domestic opposition. We thought the Maoists would be different, but they proved themselves to be of the same formula. China and India should work together to foster stability in Nepal, because that is where the interest of both parties converge.

*Jit Rana, Kathmandu*

- How naive of you to wish away the Great Game. The geo-strategic interests of the West vs China are going to be played out in Tibet and we are a frontline state. But you are absolutely right to hit the tendency of the US and the Europeans to use Nepal as a staging ground for their pro-Tibetan independence activities. They are doubly hypocritical because they have shown no concern for us Bhutani refugees and our desire to return to Bhutan.

*Kumar Adhikari, Jhapa*



## NO DIGNITY

It broke my heart to read CK Lal's piece on Nepali Workers Abroad ('No dignity in death', #461). Other countries export raw materials, finished goods, expertise, while we export young boys and girls to the Gulf and Malaysia. NWAs have kept the country afloat during the trying times of war and transition. They are treated like animals in these foreign countries and have nowhere to

go for help or if they are in trouble. We may not be able to control what happens in foreign soil, but they are not treated right even in their home country. From the time they leave their native homes they are cheated and made to feel like they are not human by the manpower agencies, immigration officers and Nepali stewards and stewardesses in the airplanes they board. If we are exporting our manpower in such large numbers, isn't it the responsibility of the state to ensure that they are safe? It is clear that no one in leadership has even thought about NWAs. This is not going to change anytime soon. Isn't there something citizen groups can do to ensure that they are respected at least when they are dead?

*Prerana Sthapit, email*

- CK Lal's piece on migrant labourers is very timely. My suggestion: translate this column and send it to the PM and CA members to read. Maybe then they'll realise how messed up their priorities are.

*Jeevan Giri, email*

## ROLLBACK VIOLENCE

Kul Chandra Gautam writes 'Not allowing ordinary people to live in peace is a violation of civilian supremacy' ('Rollback Violence', #460). He seems to argue here that any curtailment of civil rights is a violation of civil supremacy. If a group unaffiliated with a political party called a banda then, Gautam seems to say, it violates civil supremacy. Or if I (and I don't have political ties) stole candy from a baby then I too would have violated civil supremacy. He's confused civil supremacy with the more general constitutional principle that civil rights are sovereign, which commands respect for human rights. Civil supremacy forbids only military rule, which violates the right to representation, but is indifferent to every other right violation. An unaffiliated group that calls a banda may well have done something illegal, but certainly not because it violated civil supremacy.

*Mohan Pyakurel, email*

## ASS

Having received my *Nepali Times* in Damauli this time a little later than usual I may be late for my suggestion for multiple choice questions, not for driving tests, but for the constitution. Wouldn't it be great? All Nepalis can choose under which constitution they want to do their daily business and even kingji has a chance to have his own little constitution together with his friends. Everyone is happy and can shift to the constituency of their choice to live.

*Nadine Henri, Damauli*

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# Homes, sweet homes

Ichhya Tamang shows how business can have a public service function



**B**uying a house used to be difficult in Nepal. Even 10 years ago, getting a loan of Rs 200,000 from a bank was next to impossible for most Nepalis.

The man who made it easier to buy houses using credit facilities, and opened the flood gates for housing loans is Ichhya Tamang, the founder of Civil Group, one of Nepal's largest and most-rapidly growing business conglomerates that owns Civil Homes.

Born in Okhaldhunga and raised in Hong Kong and Singapore, where his father was in the British Army, Tamang returned to Nepal to pass his SLC. As a hydropower engineer in Russia, Tamang witnessed both the collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic hardships that followed in 1989.

When the ruble's value plummeted, Tamang found it hard to cope. "Even as a student, I had no choice but to get into business to survive," he recalls. Nepali students in Russia sold Chinese goods to the Russians. Some Nepalis bought and sold computers and built trading businesses.

After returning to Nepal,

Tamang worked as an engineer but the war made his job difficult. Convinced that business would be the only means of getting through the crisis, he got together with 12 other engineers and started Civil Group in 2001, a conglomerate company that encompasses 10 firms including Civil Cooperatives.

The group, which was chosen as the Company of the Month by *Nepali Times* for July 2009 has grown to encompass real estate, housing, finance, trading and soon a commercial bank.

Civil Homes was first in Nepal to commercialise the idea of owning a well-serviced house within a gated community. Its success was quickly copied by others. Banks were initially wary about lending money to Tamang and his friends. But once they saw the demand for organised housing, they changed their minds. As the housing sector boomed, so did banking.

Tamang recalls the beginnings of Civil Homes in Bhaisepati when he bought 23 ropanis of land but did not have money to build and sell houses. The group made a computer-animated ad for a Rs 2.3 million house and broadcasted it on tv channels. The results were astounding, and Tamang hasn't looked back.

Buoyed by his first housing success, Tamang's group then bought 95 ropanis of land in Kalanki where more Civil Homes were built. That too was a success, and the group went on to build a satellite town in



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Sunakothi, with its own mall, health posts and a cinema hall. Currently, the group is working on its fourth phase at Dhapakhel on 200 ropanis of land.

Tamang sees the demand for housing going up because of urbanization and an economy buoyed by remittances.

"Kathmandu valley is growing annually at the rate of 6,500 new houses, there are more than 30 housing companies but they don't create more than 2,000 houses a year," says Tamang.

Tamang is currently working on a real estate act to regulate the industry. He sees good potential for those interested in real estate investments, as more people move to cities, and the size of the middle-class grows. Last week, Tamang unveiled his newest project: Civil Luxury Residences of upscale apartments in Sundhara next to an international-quality shopping mall.

"Some find that the situation in Nepal is getting worse," says Tamang, "but Russia taught me how to survive. If you work hard enough, you can succeed no matter what the situation is around you."

Tamang is aware that too many housing companies can lead to a drain on natural resources. As an engineer he is researching new technologies and cost-effective design. He wants future residences to be solar-powered and harvest rain. He says: "Now that we are past the survival stage, we can afford to think broadly about our societal obligations." ●

## Vacancy Announcement

### Resource Management Analyst

#### The World Bank Office, Kathmandu



The South Asia Resource Management Team (SARRM) of the World Bank invites applications for the position of a Resource Management Analyst which will be based in **Kathmandu, Nepal**. The position will initially be a local two-year term appointment with a possibility for renewal.

The Resource Management Unit (RM) of the World Bank Kathmandu Office provides a broad range of accounting, control and administrative services to units within the World Bank Group. Its functions range from being the primary unit for posting transactions to the Bank's SAP system to performing compliance reviews and periodic reporting to central control units. The RM unit plays a key role in the administration and dissemination of Administrative policies of the Bank.

The Resource Management Analyst will be an important member of the Resource Management team and is expected to deliver high quality work by striking the right balance between technical excellence and country knowledge/client focus.

The successful candidate will have the following qualifications:

**Minimum Education:** BA (a relevant BA degree, e.g., Finance, Accounting, Business, Economics) Masters level degree in Accounting, Finance, Administration or Professional Accountancy qualifications (CA, CIMA, CPA, ACCA, etc) will be preferred.

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## Tarai tigers

World Wildlife Fund stressed the need to renew tiger conservation efforts in response to the government's announcement of an estimated 121 breeding tigers in four protected areas in the Tarai Arc Landscape of Nepal.

Chitwan National Park is still a stronghold for tigers, with an estimated population of 91, Parsa Wildlife Reserve has an estimated four tigers, Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve is likely to have eight tigers and Bardia National Park has 18 according to Nepal's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation.

The results are the culmination of a nine-month research project that surveyed tiger abundance and distribution in all of the protected areas concurrently for the first time.

"What we have today is a snapshot of tiger populations in one corner of the Eastern Himalayas, one of the last bastions of this endangered species," said Shubash Lohani of the Eastern Himalayas Program of WWF. "In the bigger picture, the numbers from this survey are not strong enough to withstand an ever increasing demand for tiger parts and derivatives."

## Yeti CSR

Welfare organisations - Sewa Kendra Leprosy Relief, Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre and Women for Human Rights were each handed over a cheque of Rs 2,84,442 by Yeti Airlines. As a part of Yeti's corporate social responsibility program the airline has been collecting four rupees from each flight ticket.



## Exchange



AVCO Auto Shoppe, an outlet that allows buying, selling as well as exchange of pre-owned cars was launched last week. On purchase of any of their vehicles the outlet provides limited warranty and free servicing.

## Holiday discounts

Travel luggage brand, American Tourister, has come out with a special 'Great Value Offer for the upcoming holiday season. American Tourister offers up to 15 per cent discount on its products that are available at all the company stores in Kathmandu.



### NEW PRODUCTS

KTM-HK: Dragon Air announced its new flights to and from Kathmandu to Hong Kong. Starting from 1 October, three flights per week in A330 aircrafts will all operate via Dhaka.



OUTLET: Nokia has launched two Nokia Stores in City Center, Kamal Pokhari and in Tamrakar House, New Road. As part of their limited introductory offer, consumers can win

Nokia Merchandise with purchases in any of the new stores.

# Retail therapy

## Transformation is the name of the game

For 30 years, Bishal Bazar Supermarket has exposed Nepalis to an international shopping experience. NLIC City Center has updated that experience. Global brands will be happy to replicate foreign styles here, as will high-end Nepali shoppers who have had to make



**ECONOMIC SENSE**  
**Artha Beed**

occasional trips to Bangkok and Gurgaon to meet their shopping needs. The shopping mall will surely become a must-visit attraction for domestic tourists as well as city-dwellers.

The Nepali retail scene has been promising compared to that in many other South Asian cities of comparable size. Even Nepalis with little disposable income spend more on apparel and consumables compared to their brethren in the region. The success of brands like John Players and Springwood, the exponential growth of Bhatbhateni or the new retail outlets mushrooming in Kumariapati and Sherpa Mall all show that Nepalis like brands and organised retail.

Retail business is one of the most lucrative globally, with Walmart having grown into a company with an annual turnover equal to the GDP of the fifteenth largest economy. The future growth of India and China will also see many global retail giants expanding and new chains starting operations in emerging markets. Nepal won't see large retail stores until laws that prohibit foreign investment in the retail sector are changed. And they must be changed soon.

The growth of retail means Nepali companies can learn how global brands keep store shelves stocked. For instance, the popular pickle brand Navaras is hardly available in store shelves. It makes one wonder whether they realise how much revenue



ANUP PRAKASH

they are losing.

But even as the global brands have made inroads into the local market, Nepalis have much to learn. People who have been to the City Center would notice how poorly trained store staff are when compared to their counterparts in Gurgaon or Bangkok. Instead of uselessly whiling away their time, they should understand that they're introducing Nepalis to a new experience. It would help to introduce performance-based payments to give them extra incentive. We killed performance based incentive to staff in our hospitality industry by levying a fixed service charge irrespective of service. We shouldn't let the same happen with retail. We have seen a big deterioration in the quality of services in the

service industry and we should not loose the ubiquitous Nepali smile which has been the hallmark of that industry.

We need to consider the impact these malls will have on energy demand in the country. The Beed has long said that energy demand is definitely higher even than the 2500MW it would be if the supply of energy were limitless.

Nepali consumers pay a lot to middlemen between wholesale and retail. Walmart in the US and Big Bazaar in India have cut out the middlemen, so their goods are cheap. In Nepal, people continue to profit from artificially raising margins, whether legal or not. The recent hoarding is a case-in-point. Perhaps this is where we'll learn our biggest lesson. ●  
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# Medicines, not guns



KALENDRA SEJUWAL

Editorial in *Janadisha*,  
26 July

जिनिदिशा

The government has failed to stop the cholera epidemic in the far west. If those leading the government had any shame, they would have resigned by now. The government would rather prepare for a civil war than provide relief. In fact, Defense Minister Bidya Devi Bhandari is currently begging for arms and weapons in New Delhi. This is against the 2006

Comprehensive Peace Accord. The CPA clearly states that neither Nepal Army nor the Maoist army can buy new weapons, recruit more soldiers or even transport weapons. The government is now busy buying old and worn-out weapons India once used in the Kargil war. Is it worth buying weapons worth millions of rupees when the government can't even send medicine worth five rupees? Even the PM's office doesn't see the spread of cholera as an epidemic and the government seems especially reluctant to send medicines in Maoist strongholds.



KIRAN PANDAY

# Katawalspeak

Editorial in *Naya Patrika*, 26 July

नयाँ पत्रिका

Just like the time of the monarchy, COAS Rookmangud Katawal is now framing his apothegms in the army headquarters. Whether it is his yearning to be the 'new king' or his hunger to be in news via controversies, Katawal needs to understand that no wall in a republic nation shall put up his quotes. Katawal's position has been a political issue lately, more so because of the opposing political parties than the General himself. However, the Maoists' constant accusations and Katawal's comments on politics has put the peace process in jeopardy. And equally misleading is the fact that the government is not doing anything to put a stop to this row. The question is who shapes the army's ideology: the democratic government or the army chief?

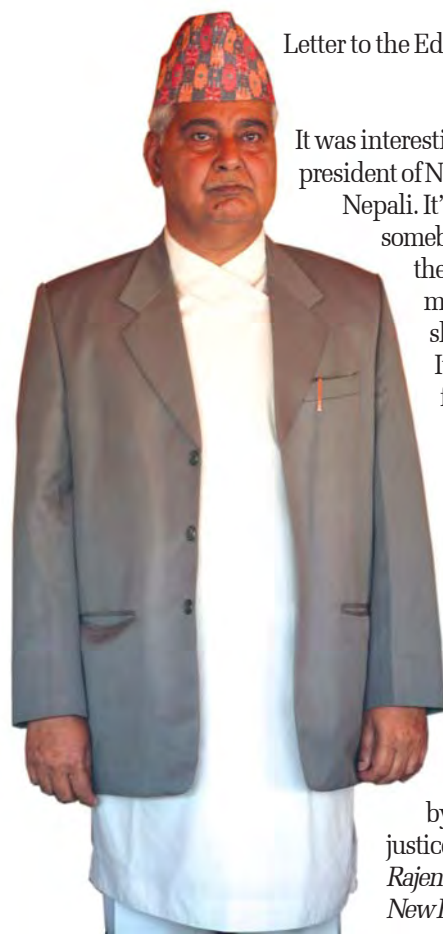
# Shame

Letter to the Editor in *Kantipur*, 26 July

कान्तिपुर

It was interesting to read that the vice president of Nepal says he can't speak Nepali. It's also shameful for somebody that has worked under the Nepali justice system for so many years. Sonia Gandhi should be an inspiration. Italian born, she learnt Hindi from scratch so she could address the people of India in their own language. Obama had to start over with his oath because he missed out a few words in between. But Parmananda Jha insists that he take the oath in Hindi even after angry protests from the Nepali people. What exactly is the vice president trying to prove by going against the Nepali justice system?

*Rajendra Gurubacharya,  
New Baneswor*



KIRAN PANDAY

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KIRAN PANDAY

# Nine months to go

'To look at everything with doubt is a misuse of the eyes'

The euphoria after the elections last year has evaporated, but the hope has not died. It is said optimism is more powerful than a thousand guns.

There was optimism when the country was declared a democratic republic by the first CA session abolishing the 240-year old monarchy. But things did not move as expected after that. The



**COMMENT**  
**Rabindra Adhikari**

political parties could not reach the necessary consensus that would pave the way for the writing of a new constitution. We were divided into ruling and opposition parties in forming the government, and even the president was not elected unanimously.

We avoided the provision of opposition in the CA regulations to make it different from a parliament, and banned the disruption of its sessions. But the constitution writing process is affected by political squabbles over power.

Even so, the thematic committees are active in drafting the new constitution and the CA sessions have been going on. Some issues on their agenda have not been properly thrashed out,

and parties have made it a prestige issue. Discussions have got stuck over whether or not the phrase 'people's war' and 'People's Liberation Army' should be used.

There is a culture of 'I am right you are wrong', and 'I have all the answers'. The constitution is ultimately a document of compromise. The political parties sometimes forget this. We established a democratic republic, but no culture of democracy yet.

Looking from outside, the CA members do not seem to have worked at all. They are getting allowances from the state just to bicker, it is said. There is a saying: 'to look at everything with doubt is a misuse of the eyes'. It is natural to have curiosity about what the representatives are up to, but if we are so cynical that we write them off it doesn't help strengthen the institution of democracy. We should understand that if parliament is weakened, the people are weakened.

The thematic committees have worked hard. They prepared questionnaires and collected public opinion. The discussions with experts, studies of collected suggestions and regular meetings are significant tasks in the process of writing the

constitution. The CA members studied the suggestions and now are preparing the conceptual drafts of the constitution.

Four thematic committees already submitted their drafts to the CA. There have been changes in the previous schedule of the CA but things are happening as scheduled these days. No matter how active the CA is, the first condition for constitution writing is political consensus, without which the constitution will not be written.

Some people believe that there can only be political consensus, not anational consensus as Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious country. Our nation's multiple identities should be seen as an advantage, not a curse.

We got mandate for two years to draft the constitution, there are now nine months to go. As the deadline draws near, there are doubts that the constitution will not be written on time. It is unfortunate that the political parties are engaged in making and breaking the government instead of drafting the constitution.

It has become a cliché to say it, but we must work towards a consensus and move ahead. ●

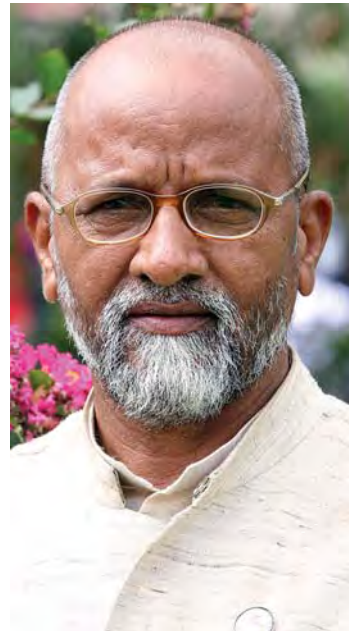
*Rabindra Adhikari is a CA member of UML.*

## "Disagreement is the main problem"

Allauddin Ansari, RPP CA member, Nawalparasi

**How did you spend the last year in the CA?**

The constitution-writing process is in motion. I'm a member of the State Restructuring Committee. Some committees are stuck as they're being reconstituted. Others are held back due to the lack of trust between politicians. That's why I'm beginning to doubt whether the constitution will be written on time. But the committees are still working. In a couple of days, we'll submit a preliminary draft that outlines the administration for the centre, local and provincial levels.



**Will the constitution be written on time?**

There's no need to rush. The constitution must be good, even if it is late. I can't say for sure whether it will be written on time. With regard to committee rules and regulations, although the party whips haven't interfered, they're still divided. The process is getting delayed. Basically, they are all saying the same things and yet the parties are divided. So, how could the constitution possibly be written on time? Everybody needs to put aside their differences. It'll be difficult to write the constitution while the Maoists aren't in government.

**What's delaying the constitution?**

The main reason is that the big party leaders can't agree with one another. As soon as they do, the constitution-writing process will get back on track.

**Don't the small parties have a role?**

Only if the big parties stop bickering and get together. The big party leaders don't even attend the meetings, they just mill around and chat.

## "Leadership must untie the knots of problems"

Lal Babu Pandit, UML CA member, Morang



**How did you spend the last year in the CA?**

We haven't done what we should have achieved by now. If the party heads sit down and really try to solve our problems, the disagreements won't last. The people want the constitution to be written on time. We're working very hard, but it's up to the leadership to untie the knots.

**Will the people get their wish that the constitution will be written on time?**

Whether early or late, the people haven't gotten their wish, because they've brought the parties to this stage, telling them to write the constitution or die trying.

**What's delaying the constitution?**

The stubbornness of party heads is to blame. The main problem is that they're confused. They don't realise that the country's cause is bigger than theirs. If they don't stop soon, we'll have to rush things.

**Is the CA's work satisfactory?**

The constitution will definitely be written. But only 60 per cent of the CA's work has been properly completed.

**Was there conflict between parties when the committee you lead, Protection of Rights of Minorities and Marginalised Communities, was writing its preliminary draft?**

In the beginning, the decisions were taken unanimously. But after some time, the Maoists refused to sign the draft. They wanted the draft to be written under their leadership.





Ashish wakes up in Tridev Marg while his brother Sunil lies sprawled to his right, lights a cigarette and observes friends still high from the night before.



Anil, Ram, Hari, Kale, Bikash, Hari and Prakash having dal bhat offered by volunteers in Thamel. Volunteers bring free meals twice a week.

# Damned



Bishal waits for cars to stop so he can beg their passengers for change.

## Street kids make the most of a life they didn't choose



Brothers Sunil and Ashish swimming in a pond in front of the Narayanhiti Palace Museum to escape the heat.

TEXT and PICTURES by GIORGIO TARASCHI

In Thamel, Jamal and many other areas of Kathmandu, you'll see groups of children begging, running recklessly through traffic, smoking and fighting, all under the influence of the industrial glue they sniff habitually. Children as young as five and six wake up in the mornings in filthy beds still high from the night before. Sometimes they're too high to collect free meals and hand-outs from volunteers. Security guards beat them if they stray too close to walled-compounds and pedestrians insult them and call them freaks. But they don't realise that the children sniff glue because they're lonely and unhappy, having fled abusive families only to fall into the street's perilous world.



"It's very cheap and you can buy it just in Ason but trust me, once you try, you can't stop because with every breath you take you see God"



Twelve-year-old Sagar wakes up next to a dog after a glue-induced sleep. He and his friends protect street dogs from abuses by other street children, who sometimes fill their ears with glue.



TEXT and PICTURES by  
MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Sixteen-year-old Sonam Tamang's earliest memory of Kathmandu is of a city his mother abandoned him to eight years ago. "Ama poilo gayi?" whimpered Sonam, remembering his mother who eloped with another man. The charity SathSath has taken up the cause of street children like Sonam, sheltered them, and now sponsored an exhibition of 15,000 photos they've taken called, 'My life, My vision', the culmination of three-years' effort by the group's Ben Gough. The pictures describe resilience and ambition.

And 17-year-old Saroj Gole, whose pictures are featured in the exhibition, lacks neither. Once a street kid, he now studies in grade 10, thanks to SathSath. His life's aim is to be a teacher for street children and a musician. His story is painfully familiar – his parents died amid crippling poverty.

Fifteen-year-old Manish Raj Dhamala also studies in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. His parents died from drug use. He has been with SathSath for two and a half years. Like Gole he has artistic ambitions. He wants to be a theatre actor so he can show that "life is full of joy and sorrow".

Sonam Tamang, now a fifth grader at Madhyamik Vidhyalaya, Bhimsengola after four years with SathSath, also vies to be a stage actor. And soon she, Manish and Saroj, will get a chance to test their theatrical mettle. With SathSath's support, they performed a drama called *Dabiyako Awazharu* in Dhading last week. The play will be performed at public dabalees in Kathamndu after which it will travel to Bhaktapur, Sindhupalchok all the way to Dolakha and then to Chitwan and Kaski. ●



# The art of escape

## An exhibition of pictures by former street children shows off their talents and hopes





# Risky business

Uncertainty is the main factor inhibiting growth and reform in developing economies: uncertainty about the outcome of investment decisions, of the durability of institutions, of the enforcement of contracts, about the accumulation and opportunities given to human capital, and so on.

When risks are measured, they are called uncertainties. It's helpful to divide the kinds of risks to three categories:

- market place or economic risk
- social risk
- political risk.

Political risks arise in the absence of a regulatory regime that enforces rules effectively. Irregular behaviour can happen in both democratic and autocratic countries. During the first Bhutto regime in Pakistan, for example, the government made it hard for firms to

obtain licenses without providing shares in their enterprises to the head of state. Needless to say, this discouraged private investment in the country.



COMMENT  
Hilton L Root

Insecure property rights and contract enforcement are two principal source of economic risk. The risks of confiscation, for example, reduce people's incentives to think in the long term.

But reform can't be undertaken by fixing political and economic risks alone. Social risks must be addressed too. Peru's president, for instance, hoped that by distributing land titles he would pull informally held land into the formal sector where they could then support entrepreneurial activity. But, rich oligarchs were able to accumulate great swathes of the newly titled land, which then caused popular resistance to market-based reform in Latin America. This happened because there weren't social institutions in place that could protect these rights.

## Countries can't develop without addressing the political, economic and social risks that endanger economic policy

When inequalities are high the social risks to reform are great because the government can't rely on a steady majority to push through reforms. In many Latin American countries, inequalities are stark so the rich and poor have very different expectations of economic policy. As a result, even many democratic countries in Latin America that enacted economic reforms didn't see full terms because of popular, anti-market uprisings against their reforms. So, investors anticipating this, don't make long term investments unless someone else bears the risk, namely the government, or if the profit opportunities are so short term that they can recoup their investment. Of course, these kinds of opportunities don't lead to long-term development. And this causes a bias against the private sector.

East Asian countries have successfully addressed economic and social risks together. They've put an emphasis on shared growth and social development. In the East Asian experience, as countries became wealthier, income inequality has diminished. They invested heavily in primary education, universal health care, and established rural development banks that not only made loans but trained budding rural entrepreneurs to make wise business decisions.

Regimes that are able to undertake successful social transformation and engage the confidence of their people are exactly the same regimes that are able to undertake ambitious economic reform. By winning the confidence of the people, East Asian countries could create an effective and credible economic bureaucracy that could interact with a private sector that had faith in it.

So, how can we learn from East Asia when we aspire to develop Nepal's economy in a democratic way? My answer is simple - that a credible economic bureaucracy that can maintain a dialogue with the private sector and enable greater entrepreneurial activity is a necessary and decisive condition for growth.

Without such a bureaucracy the government will not be able to play a leading role in bringing about economic development. It is true that a credible bureaucracy isn't a substitute for a fundamental framework that protects private property, contract law and so forth, but it is a crucial complement. Indeed, to have such a framework, one needs the actual apparatus of government in place. ●

*Hilton L Root is a public policy specialist at George Mason University. This comment is excerpted from a talk delivered on 17 July at a seminar on 'Stimulating Economic Growth: the Role of the Private Sector and the Government' organised jointly by USAID, Laxmi Bank and Himalmedia.*

SUVAYU DEV PANT

Nepal's macro-economic situation is being buoyed by remittances, but monetary authorities seem unable to control galloping inflation.

All they can do is for Indian prices to drop, but an abnormal monsoon means food prices will remain high. The real reason for the inflation is cartelling, hoarding and general lawlessness in the country, and these are not likely to be resolved soon.

And the aftereffects of the global recession on remittances and tourism means even the traditional safety valves will not be able to rescue the ailing economy.

Price movements in Nepal and India tend to correspond because of import dependence and the fixed exchange rate. But Nepal's inflation is declining far more slowly than Indian inflation. This suggests that Nepali firms have colluded to keep prices up, which has aggravated the impact of transport bandas and political disruption.

"There isn't enough

# Waiting



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

# Too little



KIRAN PANDAY

## Millions may starve even though the monsoons have finally set in

DEWAN RAI

This week's monsoon squalls may have salvaged some rice planting, but it is more a case of 'too little too late' than 'better late than never'.

The long winter drought this year was followed by monsoon rains that were delayed by nearly two months, devastated winter wheat and maize across Nepal and is expected to decimate rice harvests.

"We must consider ourselves lucky if we salvage even 50 per cent of rice production this year," says Harikrishna Upreti at the Nepal Agriculture Research Centre (NARC).

Rice accounts for half the total cereal production in Nepal, and with only 30 per cent of the

paddy fields irrigated most farmers depend on the monsoon for their crop. Rice is also a water-intensive crop, and the delayed monsoon killed all paddy seeds that were being readied for transplanting.

"We are more than three weeks late for transplanting seedlings," Upreti says.

The report of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC) shows that only 63 per cent of rice farms in the Himal, 60



# game

## Nepal's monetary authority is helpless against soaring inflation



competition and too much cartelling in Nepal,” is the conclusion of the IMF’s man in Nepal, Alexander Pitt.

Recent police raids have revealed rife hoarding, but this doesn’t explain inflation since hoarding causes discrete jumps in price and not the continuous rise Nepalis have witnessed.

Inflation occurs when the public spends too much or the money supply is too high. Monetary authorities can check inflation by selling bonds to the public, which takes money out of the economy, or buying bonds, which infuses money into it. When the money supply falls the interest rate rises, which in turn makes loans more expensive so reduces expenditure.

However, the peg to the Indian rupee means that NRB must surrender control over domestic inflation to its Indian counterpart. The NRB maintains the peg by manipulating the interest rate so can’t change the money supply to control inflation as that would alter the interest rate and disturb the peg. This means that Nepal’s monetary policy must broadly track India’s.

But the dependence on India isn’t a bad thing since NRB isn’t well enough equipped to run an

independent monetary policy and the peg has served to calm economic instability here. Plus, Nepal’s close economic ties with India is a good reason to keep the peg.

When the NRB has tried to rein in inflation by increasing the interest rate and Cash Reserve Ratio, which requires banks to withhold money from the public, the results have been discouraging. Generally, monetary policy in Nepal hasn’t effectively controlled inflation.

One reason is that Nepalis don’t save money in banks or take out loans, so neither the CRR nor bank rate affects them directly. In technical parlance Nepal’s economy is not “monetised”.

NRB also can’t control the Indian currency that circulates widely in Nepal. So there is little the central bank can do except to wait for Indian inflation to abate.

“Yet, the Rastra Bank behaves as if they can control all inflation,” says monetary economist Radesh Dhoj Pant. Other bodies could step in to control cartelling by establishing a competition board and lower prices.

Reports of a liquidity crunch, which would curb inflation by

throttling the money supply, have been wildly exaggerated, says Pant.

Nepal needs foreign exchange reserves to buy and sell currency so NRB can maintain the peg and let Indian prices drag Nepali prices down.

Remittances, which contribute 18 per cent to Nepal’s economy, have ensured that Nepal has sufficient reserves. But some are worried that reserves will dry up as foreign economies reel under the current global crisis.

Nepali workers abroad send back foreign-denominated earnings, which pack extra purchasing power now that the Nepali rupee is weak, and this has caused remittance flows to register a 55 per cent spike this year. But this is likely to drop.

Any fall in remittance will be counterbalanced to some extent by a fall in the imports they finance, so experts think reserves will stay stable.

But a drop in remittance could hurt the financial and real estate sectors. Since land is often used as collateral, if land prices drop when remittance dips then banks wouldn’t be able to recoup their investments, which could trigger a US-style liquidity crisis.

While inflation can be controlled if reserves stay up and cartelling is curtailed, some believe the government’s target of reducing inflation to 7 per cent for the next fiscal year is too ambitious.

Says Pant: “It is a wish from never-never land.” ●

# too late?



**BOUNTYLESS:** A rice planter irrigates his field in Naikap with water pumped out of a well after rains failed.

Dahal, joint secretary at the MoAC. He says about 95 per cent of the land in the Tarai and about 70 per cent in the mid-hills will be cultivated after this rain. “This makes us hopeful because three-fourths of rice production is in the Tarai, and it’s still not too late,” Dahal adds.

Nepal cultivates rice in 1.558 million hectares but only 654,360 hectares (42 per cent) land had been cultivated till the end of June. At NARC, agronomists are predicting a sharp drop in rice production and a severe food shortage this winter.

“The late transplanting has increased the cost of cultivation, and the seedlings are too old to yield a good harvest,” he explains.

At the UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) country director Richard Ragan says it is still too early to say how the monsoon rains will affect crop production. It is not just when the monsoon starts, but where and how much rain Nepal receives during the period that affects crop production, he says.

“Regardless of what happens to the monsoon crops, millions of people in Nepal are still facing

severe food insecurity and need ongoing food assistance,” Ragan told *Nepali Times*.

Meteorologists at the Weather Forecast Division predict the current monsoon pulse is robust and will continue into the weekend throughout the country. “The long spell of drought is over now,” says Mani Ratna Sakya at the meteorology office.

Even without the delayed monsoon, Nepal was already reeling from an annual 133,000 ton food deficit from the winter drought. The country needs 5 million tons of grain a year of which half is for rice. About 90 per cent is met through domestic production. The combination of high food prices and drought over the last two years has doubled the number of food insecure people in Nepal. A joint assessment by the WFP, MoAC and the Food and Agricultural Organisation released in May states the winter drought reduced the production of wheat and barley by 14 and 17 per cent respectively.

“In the most-affected areas, one in two families is already skipping meals. If summer crops were to fail as they did in the winter, it would create a significant humanitarian crisis in Nepal,” Ragan warns. ●

per cent in the mid-hills and 36 per cent land in Tarai had been transplanted by end-July.

“The good news is that the plantation can be done till mid-August in Tarai and this week’s rain has been helpful,” says Hari

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# Mutt tour



KIRAN PANDAY

Less than two per cent of Asians adopt homeless and destitute mutts from shelters. In response, one-time street dog Oscar and his South African owner Joanne Lefson are on a World Woof Tour to encourage people to adopt the 475 million homeless mutts in the world.

Starting the journey on 2 May this year from Cape Town, he has already seen the ancient Egyptian pyramids, climbed up the Eiffel

Tower and eaten rice and curry at the Taj Mahal. Nepal is the 20<sup>th</sup> country Oscar is visiting.

He plans to visit over 65 dog welfare centers in five continents around the globe. Oscar's team is filming the entire adventure as part of a global documentary and a to-be published book. While being the 'most travelled dog' is just another attraction of Oscar's documentary, the film's purpose is to give the long deserved recognition, necessary funding and inspiration to dog shelters

around the world.

Despite high expenses and extensive journeys, the duo is touring to save mutt lives. 'Thankfully Oscar hasn't had any problems in the journey yet,' Joanne told *Nepali Times*. She added that his travels would be halted right away if Oscar got sick, since Oscar is the lynchpin of the tour.

Lefson initially had to sell her house to get a head start on the mission but some help has come from sponsors Pedigree, ROGZ, United Parcel Service and local lodges along the way.

Thanks to the undying efforts of Kathmandu Animal Treatment centre in Budanilkantha Nepal has been included in Oscar's list of countries to visit. KAT has already sterilised more than 2500 dogs within ring road and is constantly promoting the adoption of healthy community dogs instead of branded but weak pups.

To help the cause, Nani, a black dog sheltered in KAT, was awarded the 'Oscar's Oscar'. Along with a chubby Oscar toy, the person with a golden heart who adopts this year-and-a-half-old beauty shall get a free ROGZ collar and lead.

Subeksha Poudel

See also: 'K9-friendly, # 460

# August sky

## After the eclipse, get ready for the summer meteor shower

July was quite something, wasn't it, with the 40th anniversary of the first moon landing and the most spectacular total solar eclipse of the century.

The highlights of August are the summer meteor shower and the grand-standing of Jupiter opposite to the sun throughout the night sky.

In the evening hours, you will see the 'Square of Pegasus' in the eastern horizon and the 'Great Summer Triangle' high in the east along the Milkyway band. The western sky will be kind of dull, but dominated by the Big Dipper (Saptarshi).



**STARGAZING**  
Kedar S Badu

August brings the well-known Perseid meteor-shower: intense streaks of light across the night sky

caused by small bits of interplanetary rock and debris called meteoroids as they crash and burn high in Earth's upper atmosphere. When a meteor appears, it seems to 'shoot' quickly across the sky with intense brightness that might make you think it is a falling star. Travelling at thousands of km an hour, meteoroids quickly ignite in searing friction of the atmosphere, 100 km above the ground. Almost all are destroyed in this process, the rare few that survive and hit the ground are known as meteorites.



Perseids seem to radiate from a point in the constellation of Perseus, which rises around mid-night and is high in the east by dawn. These meteors may be seen any time from late July to late August, but the peak this year is expected on the night of 12 August. However, there should be good numbers of meteors on the previous night (11 August), increasing in theory to one shooting star every two or three minutes towards dawn. Unfortunately, the gibbous Moon will be only 35 degrees to the right of the radiant point, and its light will tend to drown out all but the brightest meteors. To minimise the effect, try looking to the left of the radiant, at 90 degrees to the Moon.

Treat meteor watching like you observe the fireworks of the New Year. Select a dark location away from city lights. Binoculars are not necessary, your eyes will do just fine to enjoy the meteor mania.

### Planets:

Mercury is at its greatest elongation east of the Sun on 24 August, but it sets only minutes after the Sun and we're unlikely to see this elusive little planet this month. Venus, in Gemini, could be seen as the brilliant "morning star" rising about three hours before the Sun. Although it is low in the twilight sky, Venus is so bright that it can be picked out easily.

Mars, located at the 'horns' of Taurus the Bull, is rising in the north-east around midnight and by dawn it's high in the east - well to the upper right of Venus, but much less bright.

Jupiter is at opposition (to the Sun) on 14 August, which means it rises as the sun sets and sets at sunrise, making it well positioned for observing throughout the night. The opposition will also bring Jupiter closer to us than during the rest of the year, due to which, even smaller telescopes (4-inch) could also reveal its colourful equatorial bands. But you would have needed a much bigger telescope to see the scare of a suspected comet collision last week.

At the start of August, it may still be possible to get a glimpse of Saturn very low in the western sky after sunset, but it sets earlier every night, and by the end of the month we will have lost sight of the Ringed Planet. It passes behind the Sun in the middle of September.

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# The Obama bug

JIM LOBE

WASHINGTON-Favourability ratings for the United States have risen globally compared to a year ago when Bush was still president according to the Pew Global Attitudes Project (GAP).

They gained modestly in the Islamic world where people are still suspicious of Washington.

The survey was based on interviews with more than 26,000 respondents in 24 nations and the Palestinian Territories last month.

Andrew Kohut, who has directed all eight surveys GAP has published since 2000, attributed the improvement in Washington's standing primarily to Obama's popularity.

Israel was the only country where people didn't express significantly more confidence that Obama "will do the right thing in world affairs" than they had said about Bush one year ago when GAP published its last survey.

The difference was particularly pronounced in Western Europe where nine of 10 French and German respondent said they believed Obama will do the right thing, compared to only 13 or 14 per cent who thought similarly about Bush in 2008.

Strong pluralities or solid and even overwhelming majorities in each country (except the US itself) agreed with his decision to close the Guantanamo detention facility and to withdraw US troops from Iraq by December 2011.

At the same time, strong pluralities and majorities in all but a handful of countries - Israel, India, Kenya, and Nigeria - opposed



## The new president has restored Washington's global image to levels it enjoyed before Bush

his decision to send more US troops to Afghanistan.

Nonetheless, US anti-terrorism efforts are now seen more positively abroad than they were during the last years of the Bush administration. While majorities in only five countries said they favoured US-led efforts against terrorism in 2007, majorities in 15 said they favoured them in 2009.

More respondents also see US policy

as less unilateral under Obama, such as Germany, where the number of respondents who said they believed that Washington considers their country's interest in its foreign policy jumped from 27 per cent in 2007 to 54 per cent in 2009, and Russia where the number rose from 19 to 31 per cent.

In several key countries - Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, India, Argentina,

Nigeria, and Turkey - significantly more respondents considered the US a "partner" rather than an "enemy"

For all that, scepticism about US policy, even under Obama, remains high.

With the notable exceptions of Germany, China, India, Israel, Brazil, Kenya, and Nigeria, firm majorities ranging as high as 84 per cent (Jordan) believe Washington is not currently adhering to multilateral policies.

In all but five countries - France, India, South Korea, Kenya and Nigeria - more respondents said they see the US as exercising a more negative than positive influence on their countries than the reverse.

Despite some modest improvements, Washington's status remains particularly problematic in the Arab, the Middle East and the larger Islamic world, according to the survey.

Majorities in all seven predominantly Muslim countries with the exception of Jordan (48 per cent), said they were concerned that the US could become a military threat to their country, although that impression has diminished in four countries, especially in Turkey, Jordan, and Egypt, compared to a year ago. At the same time, it increased in Pakistan from 72 per cent to 79 per cent.

Skepticism was also especially strong on the question of whether Obama would be fair in dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While pluralities or majorities in every country answered in the affirmative, all of the predominantly Muslim countries - except Indonesia - and Russia disagreed.

Overall, the percentage of respondents in every predominantly Muslim country who expressed favourable views of the US rose - albeit relatively modestly - compared to a year ago. The only exception was Pakistan, where positive assessments fell from 17 per cent to 15 per cent. ● (IPS)



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## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ Nepal Rendezvous, an Exhibition of paintings from Nagarkot workshop by Nepali and Bangladeshi artists at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, til 10 August. 4218048

## EVENTS

- ❖ **Flea market**, buy and sell new or old items, program organised by Sangati Extended Care Centre at Papillion Restaurant premises, 1 August, 3PM.
- ❖ **Himalaya**, movie screening at Lazimpat Gallery Café, 1 August, 5.30 PM. 4428549

## MUSIC

- ❖ **Baja gaja**, every Tuesday at Moksh, 7.30 PM onwards, Pulchok. 5526212
- ❖ **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

## DINING

- ❖ **Asparagus mania**, enjoy all flavours at the Rox Restaurant, all through August. 4491234
- ❖ **BBQ Obsession**, on Fridays and Saturdays at Splash Bar & Grill, Radisson Hotel 10-31 July, 6PM. 4411818
- ❖ **Wine Festival**, until 15 September, Kilroy's Thamel. 4250440
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Mango Etagere** with hi-tea at The Lounge from 4.30- 6.30 PM. Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **Weekend Brunch** by the Poolside every Saturday and Sunday, Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu, 11AM-3PM. 4273999
- ❖ **Pizza & Pasta** at the Rox Restaurant every Monday & Tuesday, Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **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

- ❖ **Spa Package**, a 60-minute Ayurvedic massage and access to the pool and spa with either breakfast or lunch at The Cafe or hi-tea at the Lounge for Rs 3000 at Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Dhulikhel Lodge Resort**, offers an overnight stay for Rs 1600, from 24 July-30 September. 4222389
- ❖ **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



Love Aaj Kal is a romantic comedy where Veer does not understand how Jai can treat matters of the heart like it were a financial transaction and Jai does not understand how Veer Singh could have been so naïve and silly about Harleen in the days of his youth. But as both stories, one set in the 1960s and the other in the new millennium, unfold we realize that the process of relationship might be different in each era, but the experience of being in love remains the same

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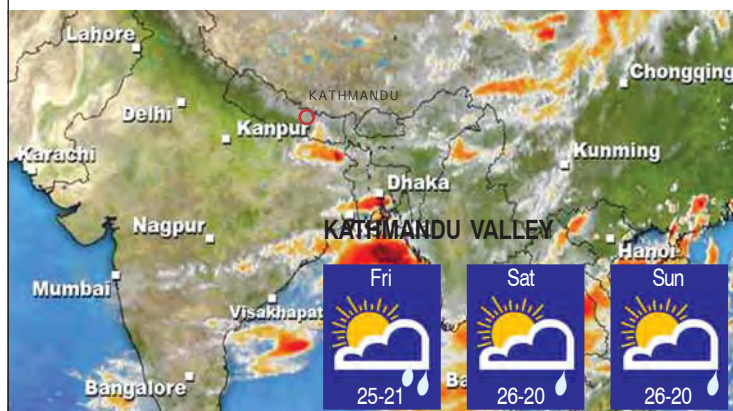
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## WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The rains are finally here after the monsoon's eastern arm belatedly dumped huge amounts of rainfall across the country. Kathmandu Valley had got only 160 mm of rain in the first three weeks of the normal monthly average of 33 mm, but this week alone there was 180 mm of precipitation nearly making up for the shortfall. The massive monsoon stretches right across Nepal to the Bay of Bengal, so expect this moisture to keep falling as rain through the weekend into next week. The rains have brought down the day temperatures and the day-night differential has been narrowed by another 4 degrees. More rain is in store for the weekend, which will be heaviest during the nights.



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## RECIPES

## Pork Saltimbocca

(Serves 4)

This Italian entrée is usually served with the ham, cheese and sage rolled up into the meat and then pan-fried. It's authentic recipe usually calls for veal but due to the inconsistent availability of veal one can use pork or chicken which has become more common in recent years.

- |                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 500g                     | pork fillet or steak |
| 8 slices                 | Parma or dried ham   |
| ¼ cup                    | dry white wine       |
| 1 cup                    | grated mozzarella    |
| 12-16                    | whole sage leaves    |
| 2 tablespoons            | olive oil            |
| 4 tablespoons            | butter               |
| juice of 1 lemon         |                      |
| salt and pepper to taste |                      |

Cut the pork into 4 equal pieces. Between two sheets of plastic flatten each piece of pork to about 5mm thick using a meat mallet or a rolling pin. Season the pork generously with salt and pepper. In a large frying pan heat the olive oil on a medium heat and lightly brown the pork on one side only in the pan for 1-2 minutes. Turn the pork over and add the sage leaves and the white wine. Reduce the heat before adding butter and lemon juice. Place 2 slices of dried ham on each piece of pork. Top with the grated mozzarella and start spooning the butter sauce over the mozzarella until it has melted. Serve with steamed rice, risotto or mashed potatoes and vegetables.

This recipe is available for lunch and dinner at The Summit Hotel for the whole of this week.

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SCHOOL'S OUT: Government school teachers affiliated to Republican Teacher's Union stage a protest outside the Ministry of Education on Thursday demanding the same benefits that private school teachers receive.



LOVELY LUMLEY: British actress and rights activist Joanna Lumley, who campaigned for equal treatment of former Gurkha soldiers, being honoured by Nepal Ex-Servicemen's Association at Shankar Hotel on Tuesday.



WHAT'S COOKING: NC students protest inflation on the streets by pretending to cook food in front of Bhrikuti Mandap on Friday.




FEELING BLUE: Members of Nationwide Youth Pressure Campaign for Constitution Making take a rally out on Saturday to urge CA members to finish writing the constitution on time.




VENICE OF THE EAST: Flooded Kantipath after a torrential downpour on Monday.


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# Backward society

The low self-esteem of us Nepalis comes from the way we talk about ourselves. Someone, somewhere 60 years ago started calling Nepal a “tiny Himalayan kingdom”, and to this day there isn’t a week that passes by without a national leader delivering a speech in which he doesn’t call Nepal “*hamro jasto garib ra sano desh*”.

Our rulers haven’t even bothered to keep track of our population, which will soon cross 30 million, making us the 40<sup>th</sup> most-populous country in the world. And we have been calling ourselves “poor” so often that it has become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Some of our downtrodden groups should also adopt a higher calling and stop referring to themselves as ‘Backward Society’ and ‘Other Backward Classes’ just because down south the marginalised call themselves that. The Indian diaspora gave itself the acronym of **NRI** but realizing its folly has quickly graduated to People of Indian Origin (PIO). But our overseas Nepalis are still defining themselves by who they are not: **NRN**.



It’s surprising that after unilaterally turning into the National Secular Democratic Federal Former Kingdom of Nepal and abandoning any historical figure that even remotely played a role in the formation of what is now Nepal and demolishing all their statues, and trying to change our unique national flag, yet no one has thought of changing the name of the country. Nepal has a politically-incorrect feudal connotation so, like a new national anthem, we need a new name for the country.

The Ass has already received several suggestions,: Bandadesh, Republic of Yam, **Federal Democratic Republic of Nipple**, Penpal, Baksheeshstan, Hullai Hullu Ko Desh, Vassal State of Euthanasia. (More suggestions are welcome on [ass\(at\)nepalitimes.com](mailto:ass(at)nepalitimes.com), and the lucky winner will get to meet the Donkey in person.)



Have to hand it to this country’s Bahuns. There are no greater schemers in the political firmament than the triumvirate of Bajays who rule over us. Look at them: they’re all upper caste and they can’t stand each others’ guts. **GPK** installed **MKN** as PM and he is now miffed that Makunay isn’t giving him enough respect, and sensing this **PKD** is making his move to tempt GPK to be prime minister. Needless to say, Girjau is sorely tempted. Also goes to show that within the Maoists, the leaders are all high-caste comrades and as far as scheming goes, they take the cake and eat it too. It comes naturally to PKD that he is willing to kiss ass to try to mellow Makunay while simultaneously trying to split the eh-malaise by putting delusions of grandeur into **JNK**’s head. If only all this superior brain power was employed for national development, this country would have been out of the woods long ago and we would have doubled our GDP per capita.



If you thought the wheeling-dealing between the parties was complicated, take a look at what is happening within the Baddies. Let me simplify it for you. As you know the CentCom is still going on and horizontal and vertical fissures have emerged in the party hierarchy. Well (take a deep breath here) the party is drifting from one person one post leadership to one party multiple leadership mode. PKD is miffed cuz this means the centralised power structure that he dominates will be eroded, and BRB can barely suppress his glee. Which brings him closer to the hardcoreliners led by CP and Dr Baidya (despite the name the Doc is a true blue Brahmin). This has thrown cadre who were followers of the hard and less-hard liners into a bit of a tizzy. But the lads are regrouping around Comrade B Plop, Mumaram, and Cloudy. And this is where the plot thickens: into this volatile mix is the power struggle for the deputy leader, gen sec, head of foreign affairs, etc. The issue now is how to accommodate two **Johnny-come-latelys**: Amik Uncle and Kazi Naryan Kamred. Amik has threatened to quit if the Kazi is placed above him in the hierarchy and Awesome for some unfathomable reason is still angling to get his protégé a position in the party.



The great thing about all this, of course, is that it doesn’t matter at all who gets what. Wake me up when the fireworks start.



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