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**Times** nepalnews.com  
Weekly Internet Poll # 408

Q. If it was up to you, who do you want for president?

Total votes: 9,034

Sharma Pradhan: 15%	Madhab Nepati: 8.1%	Grija Koirala: 26.6%	Ram Raja Singh: 9.6%	None of the above: 40.7%
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Weekly Internet Poll # 409. To vote go to: www.nepalintimes.com  
Q. Who should chair the Constituent Assembly?

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KIRAN PANDAY

## Budget travel

**COMPANY OF THE MONTH**  
Chaudhary Group p4

**ECONOMIC SENSE**  
Dahal Economy 1.0 p5

The political deadlock has delayed the budget, but a standby Appropriations Bill will be passed next week. The formation of a Maoist-led government will take at least another two weeks, and no one knows what its priorities are. The budget is usually passed by 16 July, usually after debate on policies and programs. The bill will allow for one-

third of the current budget of Rs 163 billion to be released so that the state can function until a government is formed. However, the bill has no targets for revenue and no new tax decisions. The Maoists have not taken part in the budget planning exercise, but have bluntly warned officials not to make decisions without their nod. The NC and the UML also haven't consulted

with the Maoists on the bill. "This is a shame for the country that they can't work together," says economist Bishwambhar Pyakurel. The Maoists are waiting to push through populist spending like pensions for women and debt-forgiveness to farmers. "They are being over-optimistic on the revenue side,"

said one official, "it's hard to see how all this is going to be paid for." The Maoists also want development expenditure disbursed through the YCL and government-run fair price shops. These ideas are not popular with Nepal's donors who have warned of aid cuts. ● Kiran Nepal

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# Left over

Delhi will now have even less time to think about the deadlock in Nepal

## SEEING THE FOREST AND TREES

As it happens, every time there is a messy political transition in this country it is Nepal's hard-fought achievements in forest conservation that suffers a serious setback.

The run-up to the Panchayat referendum of 1980 witnessed a massive decimation of Tarai forests. There was a spurt in encroachment and poaching after 1990. The war years, ironically, protected the forests because it scared off timber smugglers and poachers. But it was after April 2006 that there was accelerated clearing of Tarai forests.

Three months after elections, the party that won the most seats in the assembly hasn't yet been able to form the government. The current anarchy is caused by the prolonged political deadlock in Kathmandu. This state of statelessness is having a devastating impact on our national parks and the plunder of forests that communities have invested decades to protect.

One of the things we in Nepal can be justifiably proud of is the success of our community forests. Nurtured by local communities, they have not just protected the environment but also lifted many hundreds of villages in the midhills from poverty. In the Tarai, community forestry was less successful mainly because the hardwood forests of the plains have always been seen as an unlimited resource and are the first to be cut when there is lax security and loose governance during periods of political instability as we have now. Encroachment and poaching of wildlife in national parks has sharply reduced the numbers of rhinos and tigers (see p10-11).

Less well-known is the tragic loss of our northern montane forests, which are being hauled across into China in the yakloads by impoverished villagers to barter for rice. These high altitude coniferous trees take much longer to grow back, and make the mountains more fragile.

Nepal's nature is being destroyed by poor villagers and politically-backed timber poachers who are smuggling logs to India and China. This is not what was meant by Nepal's trade benefiting from its location between the two Asian giants.

Besides hotspots in the western plains, Sindhuli and Udaypur in the eastern inner Tarai are losing sal stands at an alarming rate. These trees hold together the fragile hills of the Chure, and with the forests gone the plains downstream are prone to siltation and flashfloods.

By ensuring a peaceful political transition in the past two years, Nepal has been a model for the rest of the world. That achievement should not be tarnished by the short-sighted bickering we have witnessed in Kathmandu these past three months. Similarly, let's not allow governance failure to wreck our community-based forest conservation success story.

NEW DELHI—It has been a week of dramatic political changes here in the Indian capital. The technocrat economist prime minister Manmohan Singh has shown he has the politician in him. He is on the verge of finalising the nuclear deal with the US as well as saving his government.



**TARAI EYE**  
Prashant Jha

This has come at the cost of key Left Front allies withdrawing their support from the UPA government. But after winning over other partners like the UP-based Samajwadi Party (SP), the PM appears confident of having the numbers in the parliament. Singh believes the deal will

end India's nuclear isolation, put it right up there in the club of great powers, ensure fuel for India's reactors, and help address the country's burgeoning energy needs. For him, the deal represents a deepening of the India-US strategic partnership. It is for precisely the same reason that the left opposes it. It sees it as an attack on India's independent foreign policy.

For a year, the deal has been in limbo because of this stalemate. But the PM has now shown his trump card. After getting the full support of Sonia Gandhi and his own party, he has managed to wean away the SP, which has been allies of the left on several issues, with its 39 members in the Lok Sabha.

It is all a gamble for the Congress. There are countries in the Nuclear Suppliers Group, especially China and other non-nuclear states, who for different reasons, do not want India to be treated as an exception. The US Congress will go into a long recess after September. Domestically, the UPA government may have isolated the left but it is going to be an extremely close battle to muster up the numbers as it faces a trust vote in parliament in the next few weeks.

For the first time, a foreign policy issue has drastically affected domestic politics in India. The Left talked itself into a corner by being so rigid in its opposition. The third front has split. The government will now have to deal with unreliable political fixers like Amar Singh of SP who are guided by corporate interests. The BJP is beaming at the disarray and realignments in

the 'secular' camp.

What this means for Nepal is that Delhi will have even less time to think about the political impasse in Kathmandu. In Nepal we see India behind every bush, but here there is a complete lack of political interest or even bureaucratic inclination on Nepal issues.

Sitaram Yechury did play a part leading up to the 12-point agreement and the April 2006 movement. But his influence has been exaggerated, partly because he himself has tried to keep up a public image of having been the peace-maker in Nepal for political and financial reasons.

The Indian establishment used the Indian left when it needed to reassure the Maoists but took firm control of Nepal policy soon after. The Left did play a role in balancing the hardliners, but given that the government here is itself keen on warming up to the Maoists, this role is diminished.

South Block is worried about the prolonged political vacuum in Kathmandu. "We want a government we can do business with," said a top official. Trade talks scheduled for early this month got cancelled because the Nepali side said it did not have the mandate.

GP Koirala did lobby hard for Indian support to become the president but Pranab Mukherjee decided it would be best to have a hands-off policy. Indian sources say they do not want the politics of consensus to break because it would complicate the constitution writing process. ●



# Home thoughts from transit

BAHRAIN—Few hours at Gulf Air's transit here gives you an inkling of the dislocation that first-time migrant workers from Nepal to West Asia feel. There is a girl from Dhading headed for Lebanon. Barely out of her teens, she is functionally illiterate. Let alone English, she can't hold a conversation with fellow Nepalis even in Nepali.



**STATE OF THE STATE**  
C K Lal

Another girl from Sindhupalchok valiantly tries interpreting her Tamang into Nepali, comprehensible to a boy from Sunsari who assures both newcomers that they are not stranded and will be leaving for their destination in about four hours

A group of skinny boys from Dhanusha in plastic chappals are on their way to a construction site in Dubai. Their leader appears well fed and inquires confidently in Hindi about onward connections. He is a canteen attendant responsible for cleanliness of cooking utensils.

Ganesh is an eighth-grade dropout of Yadukoha high school, the cradle of rebellious youths in northeast Dhanusha.

He doesn't know it, but a sadhu named Ram Lakhan Das began the revolutionary intervention that made Ganesh what he is today. Ram Lakhan had made it his life's mission to spread the light of education in what was then called Khesraha Praganna.

Ram Lakhan had been a Kayastha boy before his initiation into Vaishnav cult. He

contribute as much as they could for a community school. This is the way he persuaded the landlords to establish almost every school of the region. Schools still bear the name of their main donors, but there are no statues of the Sadhu who dreamt up the educational revolution in the first place.

## How the failure of education fuels the manpower market

knew the importance of education in transformation of a society but had no resources to fund dozens of school that he wanted opened. He first approached Pahadi zamindars who had large landholdings, but found most possessed very small hearts. Then he tried to appeal to the vanity of Madhesi traders and farmers and managed to establish over 15 schools in less than a decade.

The modus operandi of the sadhu was disarmingly simple. He would arrive at the house of a person of means, drive his stake into the ground and declare that he would fast onto death if his devotees didn't

Most of these donors were Sudis, moneylenders who had grown rich by dealing in grain and credit. Since they weren't regarded highly by society despite their wealth, they yielded easily to appeals for charity. The genius of the Sadhu lay in identifying the emotional needs of traders and using it creatively for social good.

Modernity has made the descendants of philanthropists look for salvation in the market economy. So neither is there a sadhu with the mind of Ram Lakhan Das anymore nor are there donors with hearts like Ekai Hathi of Yadukoha, Sitaram Sah of Bafai or Ramnarayan Purbe of Sonigama.

Once famous schools now languish in neglect as voluntary dropouts like Ganesh become dispora canteen assistants. But if they are leaders in whatever they do, part of the credit must go to community schools and their pioneering teachers.

There are no public schools anymore. There are government schools and then there are private boarding schools, both equally ineffective in providing affordable and quality education. Teenagers from middle-class families no longer trust local schools for secondary education.

Transportation costs to and from Kathmandu have gone up and living expenses in the capital have soared. The trend to send teenagers to Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur and Patna is again on the rise. Once they enter the job market, they will not be able to bridge the gap with Tamangs from Dhading and Sindhupalchok or Yadavs from Sunsari or Muslims from Banke.

Foundations of nations are laid in the minds of the young. Nepal needs more sadhus and Sudis to popularise three Rs so that the fourth R of remittances improve in the short term. There is more to wealth creation than just moneymaking. The traders of Kathmandu would do well to go on a pilgrimage to Dhanusha to learn altruism. ●

LETTERS

**SINDHULI HIGHWAY**

I enjoyed reading 'History in the making' (#407) because it gives us an overview of the present and links it with the past. The highway will offer a much-needed shortcut to eastern Nepal, and will save enormous wastage of fuel and time.

*Datta Tray Roy, email*

● Finally there is a piece of news not related to politics, or corruption or any other war. At long last, a constructive item of news. Let's hope Sindhuli will lead to more roads being opened for development.

*Pravesh Saria, email*



RUPA JOSHI

● Thanks to Rupa Joshi for an interesting write-up and brilliant pictures about the Sindhuli Highway. The highway will open up not just the access to the eastern Tarai from the plains, but will also open up the possibility of a parallel East-West Highway in the hills by linking Nepalthok to Dhankuta along the Sun Kosi.

*Dipak Gurung, Cardiff*

**WE BELONG**

That was an emotional and touching editorial ('We belong together', #407). But reading the past few editorials in *Nepali Times* I get the feeling the editor is losing hope. Are you? Please don't,

yours is the only paper that offers us a sliver of hope in this otherwise desolate political landscape.

*John Chhetri, email*

● Just a line to say how much I liked the editorial about Meera Thapa. Having been born in north-eastern India, I know exactly how she feels. But I wonder if what brought tears to her eyes was the Tara Debi song or the shambles she found her mother country in: garbage on the streets, garbage in the politics and garbage in the economy. She was crying for her beloved country and what we have reduced it to.

*Kumar Ghising, Kathmandu*

● I just wonder after reading your editorial whether 'Nepali emotionalism' (as distinct from Nepali 'nationalism' or 'patriotism') is a hill-defined sense of who we are as Nepalis.

*Name Withheld*

**UNITED REGIONS**

USAID is very pleased with the *Nepali Times'* coverage of the USAID-supported program to promote exchanges between Madhesi and Pahadi journalists ('Uniting hills and plains', #406). The objectives of this program were to increase fair representation of Madhesi and Pahadi issues in local media and promote social harmony. The activity also provided internships to Pahadi and Madhesi print journalists at regional newspapers, with Madhesi interns working in Pahadi-owned papers and Pahadi interns working in Madhesi-owned papers. USAID proudly supports similar initiatives because we believe that they promote mutual understanding which can help further peace in Nepal. Once again, I would like to thank you for publicly recognising this important program.

*Beth S Paige, Mission Director, USAID/Nepal*

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# Nepali multinational

## Chaudhary Group spreads its wings beyond Nepal



KIRAN NEPAL

"We now have to let economic agenda take centre stage in Nepal," says Binod Chaudhary, "we are done with politics."

The 53-year-old head of the Chaudhary Group (CG) says this is the reason he agreed to become a UML-nominated member of the Constituent Assembly along with other businessmen.

"This is why my colleagues and I joined the assembly. We now want to make sure that the economy takes centre stage," Chaudhary said in an interview after being selected as the *Nepali Times* Company of the Month for July.

Binod Chaudhary has a lot to be proud of: a third-generation Nepali Marwari business family that has become Nepal's first multinational with over \$500 million in assets and revenues that *Forbes Asia* recently called 'among Nepal's richest non-royals'.

Chaudhary's Cinnovation group with its hotel division has invested in tourism, manufacturing and trade, owning hotels in New York, Malaysia, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The group is still in full expansion mode with partners to set up luxury hotels in Singapore, Thailand and Bali.

But Chaudhary still sees Nepal as his base. "You have to have a certain mindset to be a global player," he says, "but our roots are here and I get the greatest satisfaction from being able to invest and create new jobs in Nepal."

Indeed, ever since taking over from his father Lunkaran Das Chaudhary and starting a department store in New Road in the 1970s, CG is now the biggest



STRIDING AHEAD: Rahul, Nirvana and Varun Chaudhary with Dad Binod (white suit) in Kathmandu on Wednesday.

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

business player in Nepal literally 'Touching Life Everyday', as the company's motto has it. CG's WaiWai instant noodle is a recognised and established brand not just in Nepal but in 20 different countries. CG's trading wing sells LG electronics and Marutis.

"Entrepreneurship only really took off after the Panchayat, but even through the difficult period after 1990 there has been dramatic growth in business in Nepal," says Chaudhary, "in fact, if there were right policies and proper governance, Nepal's economy could really take off."

Chaudhary says Nepal should now concentrate on core areas

like manufacturing, hydropower, financial services and tourism and would like to work to make investment possible in these sectors as a member of the CA.

In fact, CG itself is investing in a 2 million ton annual capacity cement plant. Nepal consumes 2.6 million tons of cement annually, and this is expected to grow at 15 per cent a year.

Chaudhary also sees no other alternative but to invest boldly in hydropower in a big way to reduce Nepal's growing balance of payments gap with India. His group alone is involved in studying

several projects in the 5 MW-600 MW range totaling 1,700 MW. Investment in cement, tourism and hydropower alone could create hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

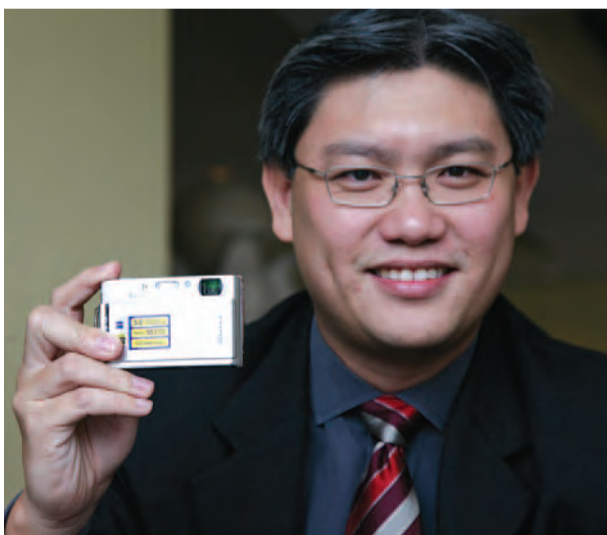
"If there is one job that is really easy in the world, it is to raise capital through mutual funds, venture capital. All you need is a track record and a good idea," he says. Chaudhary is confident that with proper support there is no reason why up to 10 other Nepali businesses can also expand their overseas investments.

Chaudhary is not as pessimistic as others about a new

government led by the Maoists. He says the regime change is an opportunity for Nepal to be more focussed on private sector-led growth, provide an investment-friendly climate for domestic and foreign investors and allow industries to spread their wings in an unfettered way.

Chaudhary has one pet-idea that he says could immediately increase national income: train 50,000 workers waiting to go abroad in English and basic skills to double their monthly income. This, he says, will have an immediate impact on remittances.

Cinnovation Group  
www.cinnovationgroup.com



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Chang Seng Hock, General Manager, Consumer Business Group of SONY in Singapore was in Nepal to launch the latest Cyber-shot 'SMILE Campaign'. He spoke to *Nepali Times* about the growth prospects for consumer electronics here.

## "Be optimistic"

**Nepali Times:** How important is the South Asian market for Sony compared to, say, Southeast Asia?

**Chang Seng Hock:** As penetration of digital still cameras are still low in developing countries, Nepal will be one of the key markets in South Asia for Sony as growth is expected to be healthy. From the leading research company Gfk, Sony's Cyber-shot is Asia's No 1 best selling compact digital camera in China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan and Vietnam. Although there is no independent report for market size and share for digital still cameras, from our market study, Sony is the clear market leader in Nepal.

**Which are the growth areas that you see—is it consumer electronics or the content side of Sony products?**

For Nepal, growth areas are in consumer electronics, like digital still cameras, hi-fi systems, as well as LCD TVs.

**Where exactly does Nepal fit into your future growth strategy in the region?**

Working closely with our distributor, besides expanding the range and product model offerings, we are refitting Sony showrooms so as to allow consumers more hands-on experience and better understanding of our products and value proposition. Currently our distributor is operating a service center at Kantipath Showroom. We are reviewing the service network to reach out to more Nepali consumers.

**What is the reason for your visit to Nepal, and from what you have heard what do you feel about the investment climate here?**

I am happy to be in Nepal and together with our official distributor, Nepa Hima Trade Link, to launch the latest Cyber-shot 'SMILE Campaign'. Dealers say they have seen good growth in sales versus previous years and with the political situation improving, we believe the investment climate will improve as well.

**What advice would you have for businesses here?**

Be optimistic. I believe things will get better once there is political stability in the country.

## Hydropower



BPC (Butwal Power Company) and Ace Development Bank have agreed to develop the 34 Megawatt Marsyangdi III hydropower project. The project, which is based in Lamjung district, will be developed under a subsidiary company of BPC.

## Social effort

International Money Express (IME), granted financial support of Rs 100,000 to Prem Kumari Dhama, widow of Bicchu Lal Dhama, killed in a road accident in Malaysia. This assistance falls under the social efforts initiative of IME.



## Skin care



VLCC recently introduced Cryogenic and face-firming skin treatments to its services, which tighten, restore and improve skin tonicity.

## Toning down

Cathay Pacific has adjusted the maximum weight allowance with connecting flights to North America. For tickets issued on or after 21 July, passengers will be allowed to take a maximum of two bags weighing not more than 23kgs each.



### NEW PRODUCTS

REPEL: Mosquito Repellent Citronella, produced by a Spain-based air freshener company, is soon to be available in major outlets in Kathmandu. The product is herbal and non-toxic, and is available in 750ml bottles at Rs 575.



COLOURS: Nokia recently launched a new range of mobile phones that can be personalised by exchangeable covers in a number of colours, alongside features such as new stylish etching, easy music managing and camera with improved resolution.

# Dahal Capitalism 1.0

Early this week a Nepali-language business weekly broke the story of Bank CEOs being hauled into a room at the Rastra Bank and being politely "asked" to put up a consortium to finance a hospital project.

This was perhaps the first time the Maoist have positively influenced a business decision



**ECONOMIC SENSE**  
Artha Beed

after coming above ground two years ago. It is when regulators start acting as facilitators for powers-to-be then you can be sure new pages are being written in this country's economic history.

The Maoists supposedly have acquired an ailing hospital project to set an example for a low-cost public healthcare service. While it is heartening to see a would-be government trying to emulate the Cuban model of quality healthcare for all, we can only wait and watch to see the gap between showcase schemes and reality.

After using strong-arm tactics in business decisions on tender allotment, natural resource allocation and building roads through UNESCO Cultural Heritage Sites, they have finally struck big. If this is Dahal Capitalism 1.0, then it leaves us wondering what the later versions

will be like.

Your weekly Beed has often given the Maoists the benefit of doubt, especially after they emerged as the leading party in the Constituent Assembly elections. But we have also raised worries about them hijacking the economic agenda. The Maoists do have to show results, granted, but this is not the time for a Gulag or Cultural Revolution-style utopian experiments.

Government or party-operated social service delivery has been tried and tested round the world. It has failed the sustainability

queues are here to stay. The populist temptation to dole out subsidies and freebies will undermine the budget. There are no free lunches, especially for developing countries like ours. And given our governance crisis and disbursement problems donors will not pour water on sand for much longer.

Investors have not been convinced about the sincerity of the Maoists about guarantees to private property. The rise of crime and anarchy is seriously worrying to investors already here.

However, businesses are also

## Version One of capitalism with a Maoist face

test. Even in socialist countries, healthcare and education is left to innovative models of partnerships between communities, private sector and government. Perhaps in Nepal we should learn from models that have failed miserably.

The impending uncertainty over the new government will eclipse the economic agenda for some more time. Despite the budget being around the corner, no one seems to be in any particular hurry to address fiscal issues. The budget seems to be a mere formality.

Spiraling international oil prices have made another price hike inevitable and the serpentine

looking out for opportunities during this state of confusion by embracing the powers-to-be thereby continuing the legacy of business-politics nexus dating back to the Panchayat era. Surely, as this columnist has been often repeating, a few business people will gain when the experiments of new forms of capitalism is on.

If political parties are going to be forcing banks to invest in hospitals, schools and media then surely they can be convinced about getting financiers to rescue Nepal Airlines? The sky is the limit for a party that seems to want to go places. ●

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# JN's force

Yubaraj Ghimire in *Samaya*, 10 July

समय

Jhala Nath Khanal has made two blunders in the two weeks since he took over the UML which have put the party's reputation at risk. First, during the discussions relating to presidency, Khanal betrayed the seven-party alliance, sidelined the NC and piggybacked on the Maoists. There is disagreement within the UML



about this decision. One faction thinks Khanal did the right thing because he is trying to ensure that Madhab Kumar Nepal gets a respectable position. But there are dissidents who think Khanal just wants to save his general secretary position by kicking Nepal upstairs. Khanal's plans have backfired and even Nepal is now accusing him of character assassination. Other leaders of the seven parties think that Khanal is an opportunist and even the Maoists distrust him. In the past, Khanal and the UML have been critical of the Maoist YCL

for taking justice into its own hands. They have criticised YCL for their methods, for perpetuating violence and have demanded that group be disbanded.

But as soon as Khanal took over leadership of the UML the first thing he did was form a 'Youth Force', which has since been spreading terror and violence. Last week they caught two Labour Ministry officers supposedly taking a bribe. They manhandled the officers and took them to the police. The Youth Force is a part of the UML, which is a part of the governing alliance. One wing of the same party is out on the streets taking justice in its own hands.

Needless to say corruption is rampant in the public administration and the justice system is too weak to check corruption. But the Youth Force is following the YCL's example of exacting summary justice. If the Force is serious about curbing corruption, it should start by probing the assets of some UML leaders.

## Debt trap

Editorial in *Naya Patrika*, 7 July

नयाँ पत्रिका

The Maoist's foreign policy, especially pertaining to foreign aid and borrowings, is a subject of much conjecture. It's not only because of the revolution or their Maoist ideology that has raised questions about their stance on foreign aid. Instead, it's about how our social and economic policy should be formulated in a 'new' restructured Nepal. The plans of the Maoist leaders and the Chief of the Foreign Department to phase out support from IMF and the World Bank is causing added interest.

The reality is that our foreign debt overhang takes up a large part of our budget, and it's time we took some solid steps and independent decisions to plan out our economic strategy and areas of investment. The debt we have accumulated over the years are intimidating, and Nepal will require foreign budgetary support and loans to develop infrastructure. At the same time, we should make our own conditions for taking support from donor countries clear. The power to decide what's best for Nepal should not lie in the hands of any third party, it should be our decision. And there is an urgent need to first create national consensus within the country.

## Fly away

Nepal, 13 July

नेपाल

Each day 600 young Nepalis leave the country to work. The government has given 774 manpower agencies permission to send these people abroad. The 2007-2008 statistics show there were 268,033 young people emigrating to find jobs. Here is a breakdown:

2007-2008	Number
April- May	18,135
May-June	21,165
June- July	23,076
July- August	18,179
August-September	19,369
September-October	19,041
October-November	14,564
November-December	20,009
December-January	19,475
January-February	21,155
February-March	20,890
March-April	12,372



Jhala Nath Khanal: Youth Force,

नेपाल Rabintra in *Nepal*, 13 July

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“ We burnt the interim constitution as an act of condemnation because they put us indigenous Tharus under Madhes section when there's no such place as Madhes in Nepal. ”

Rajkumar Lekhi, general-secretary of Tharu Kalkyadkarini Sabha quoted in *himalkhabar.com*



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### DAILY HOROSCOPE

AST<space>the initial three letters of your zodiac sign. i.e.  
AST<space>ARI

### NEWS

NEWS National news  
SPO Sports news  
ENT Entertainment news  
INT International news  
LIVE Breaking news

### JOKES

JOKE JOKE<space>DOC  
JOKE<space>SILLY  
JOKE<space>LAWYER  
JOKE<space>SANTA  
JOKE<space>BLONDE

### THOUGHT

THOUGHT THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

### STOCK

SHG Top 5 gainers of the day  
SHL Top 5 losers of the day  
SHH Stock related help

### FOREX

FOREX<space>BUY  
FOREX<space>BUY  
FOREX<space>CURRENCY ID

### WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

WEEK<space>the initial three letters of your zodiac sign. i.e.  
WEEK<space>ARI

### DICTIONARY

DICT<space>the word you want to know the meaning of. i.e.  
DICT<space>tut

### CALENDER SERVICE

Calnep ddmmYYYY Nepali to English  
Caleng ddmmYYYY English to Nepali

### TOP 5

TOP5<space>Nepsong  
TOP5<space>Engsong  
TOP5<space>Bolsong

### CRICKET UPDATE

cri

### WEATHER

CLI<space>city name i.e.  
CLI<space>dharan

### LOVE METER

LM<space>Your name<space>His/Her name

USE THE LISTED KEYWORDS AND SEND THEM TO 2722



# Dekendra's grave

Janak Nepal in Kantipur, 8 July

कान्तिपुर

We crossed the muddy unpaved road and finally reached the Dailekh capital at 4.30 PM to exhume the body of murdered journalist, Dekendra Raj Thapa. At the request of FNJ, the district administration of Dwari VDC had deployed police to investigate the area where Thapa may have been buried four years ago.

The Maoists, who were responsible for Thapa's torture and death, were infuriated by the investigation. They put pressure on CDO Krishna Shyam Budathoki, badgering him with questions like: "On whose authority did you send the police to that area?", "How can you be sure that the body is located there?"

Eyewitnesses had provided information that Thapa was buried 150m from Dwari Secondary School in a nearby jungle between two rocky outcrops. Journalists themselves had guarded the suspected burial site until the police arrived.

In June 2004, the Maoists had obstructed the water supply to Dailekh's capital. Hoping to mediate, Dekendra Thapa and other journalists arrived at Toli VDC on 23 June. But Thapa was lured away and kidnapped by the Maoists and taken from village to village. During this time, the extent to which he was tortured is still unknown.

However after one month when he was finally taken to Dwari eyewitnesses say he was hung upside down with his feet tied up and tortured till he died on 10 August. The Maoist involved, Bam Bahadur Khadka of Katti, is now a PLA commander in Nepalganj.

Despite repeated requests from the Thapa family and FNJ the Maoists never released the body. However when information was received on the possible location of the body, it was decided that it should be exhumed. Forensic specialists Dr Wasti, police officers and other journalists started digging and in one hour, they found a piece of shirt and then a skull and femur. There was a pair of shorts and a shirt on the body. The left leg and right elbow were broken.

The bones were packed in a plastic bag and taken for DNA examination. Before heading back to Kathmandu, I had to pay one last visit to Dekendra's mother, Gangadevi. She burst into tears on seeing us. "Until the body was found, I still had hope," she told us, "I had never given up hope."



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Fusion, Thapathali

Fusion says it sells “furniture of the future”. The straight-edged and elegant European styles are striking to look at, easy to deliver and assemble. The speciality here is office furniture, mostly made in Nepal from pre-laminated particle board. Home furniture is imported. With a new range of fabulous new pieces sold with lengthy warranties, Fusion claims a 95 per cent repeat order rate.



Akarshan Interiors, Kopundole

With creative, innovative and stylish furniture available, buyers no longer need to travel abroad. The designs here are simple but elegant and artistic. Specialising in wrought ironwork, the shop has diversified into wood, cane and hemp products. Unadorned by the usual painted glossiness, the wrought iron furniture keeps a natural look. Look out for the artistic handiwork on both indoor and outdoor items.



Emporium, Teku

If ever there was a furniture heaven, chances are that this is it. The displays are top-quality, imported brands like Kian from Malaysia. Where doors are meant to slide, they glide smoothly. You won't find warped runners and wobbly wheels. Chair designs are ergonomic, and this is truly an emporium of designs, offering Scandinavian, classic and modern shapes. Owner Siddhartha Gopalan helps his customers by being a ready interior design consultant.

SHRADHA BASNYAT and ROMA ARYAL

**A** bed to sleep on, a dining table and a couple of sofas in any old design at minimum prices, and you think you've got yourself a deal. After all, furniture is all about practicality, right? Think again.

Furniture is about style, design and for some, luxury and an idea of perfection. In the brightly painted new housing colonies springing up on Kathmandu's outskirts, the talk is of interior décor and boutique furniture outlets. As middle-class consumers embrace a lifestyle culture, more people are looking beyond simple function to aesthetics, enduring quality and named brands. With increased purchasing power and more sophisticated tastes, they are willing to invest in a picture-perfect home.

# In furniture heaven

Designers face burgeoning demand from Kathmandu's consumers

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**Bloom, Basundhara**

With its luxurious and elaborately carved designs and classical look, the furniture at Bloom comes straight out of the pages of a Jane Austen novel. Featuring authentic Nepali aankhe jhyal and sofa chairs with personalised carving, Bloom is a trend-setter in the growing demand for the 'antique' look. Bloom is also an interiors contractor, but prefers large projects such as the Soaltee Crowne Plaza Hotel.



**Mac Décor, Kopundole**

A diverse furnishings showroom, the new and revamped Mac Décor provides customers with a wide range of choices, from fun bedroom furnishings for children to elegant carved tables and sofas. The store displays locally designed products as well as high-quality items from Chinese manufacturers. The products remain affordable despite their quality.



**Homemaker, Maitighar**

Homemaker mass produces customised designs. It believes that minimalism is more practical and requires less maintenance. Even so, the designs are attractive and Homemaker has exported furniture to countries like Japan and Germany. Homemaker is also an interiors contractor and sells beautiful accessories like lamps, and paintings. Its emphasis on elegance can be seen in the Scandinavian-style shop design in Thapathali.



**Bira, Lagankhel**

Bira provides its customers with a range of products which are customised at its own factory or imported from China. There are, for example, at least 30 distinct types of sofa to choose from. Complete bedroom furniture sets and dining sets are available, as well as services for wall panelling, laminated flooring and upholstery. Bira also features modular kitchens, which can be mixed and matched according to the customer's needs. With a wide range of prices, Bira caters to a variety of tastes.



**Woodcraft, Kumaripati**

Specialising in meticulously crafted wooden furniture, this shop provides exclusive, original products made of seasoned wood. Offering made-to-measure designs for both home and office, Woodcraft's traditional and authentically styled furniture ranges from medium to high prices.

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# Payback time

DEWAN RAI

Soldiers in the PLA cantonments are surviving on Rs 60 per day while the Finance Ministry continues to hold back their wages, unpaid for the past one year because of claimed Maoist violations of the peace agreement.

Under the 23-point accord negotiated by the seven-party alliance and the Maoists, the PLA troops were supposed to receive a monthly salary of Rs 3,000 to remain in the cantonments. This was paid for the first seven months but stopped in July last year, according to Avanindra Kumar Shrestha in the Office of the Central Coordinator for Cantonment Management.

Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat blamed the delay on the Maoists' not keeping their end of the bargain, including not furnishing proper accounts and failure to return property they confiscated during the war. Part of the agreement stated that the payment of PLA salaries and the return of seized assets would progress simultaneously.

"The accord must be implemented in a package," said Mahat. "If they do not return the property, the ministry will not release the funds."

The total amount of unpaid salaries for the nearly 19,000 qualified PLA soldiers now totals more than Rs 500 million.

The government disbursed Rs 1,771,903,400 through Peace Fund and Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction for cantonment management. An additional Rs 933,138,729 was given for infrastructure, medical expenses and energy through the concerned ministries.

Government records show a total of Rs 525,858,000 was disbursed for six months of salaries for qualified PLA soldiers and disqualified combatants at different dates till April 2007. A consolidated sum of Rs 553,623,200, which includes a monthly salary for the PLA was handed over to Communication Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara in July last year.

The committee has released Rs 692,422,200 for rations of the PLA soldiers at a monthly basis from April 2007 to July 2008. The ministry transfers this money to the local Cantonment Management Office at the concerned districts and the local office hands it over to the PLA commanders. These commanders provide the ministry with the salary receipts to make sure the money is actually received by the individuals of the cantonments.

So for the past one year the soldiers have been sharing out funds intended for 'cantonment management' to obtain basic necessities like food and water, Shrestha said.

Although many ex-guerrillas are finding it hard to make ends meet, the PLA has made little noise about the unpaid salaries, causing suspicion in some quarters that the money meant for the combatants had gone straight into the party coffers for use in electioneering.

## EYEWITNESS



# Going, going gone

RAMESWOR BOHARA  
in BARDIYA

## Nepal's forests are unprotected as politicians protect loggers

Travelling west on the East-West Highway between Bardiya and Sukla Phanta till as recently as ten years ago one passed unbroken hardwood jungle with occasional settlements.

Today, there are a few scraggly patches of forests, and even these have no undergrowth because of over-grazing. The national parks themselves show signs of encroachment.

The most dramatic deforestation has taken place in the two years after April 2006, as political parties, the landless, criminals and illegal loggers have all used the weakness of the state to clear the jungles. And this process went out of control during the April elections.

At the Banke DFO, an official shrugs as he shows permits issued to cut trees: most were given out just before and just after the elections in April. They were issued to community forests in

which user committees and smugglers were in collusion.

"We can say that the local forestry officials facilitated and in some cases abetted the smugglers in logging forests," says Tapta Poudel, president of the Federation of Community Forest User Groups in Banke. Poudel says he saw 30 bullock carts hauling timber in the Bajapur area on election day alone as smugglers used the absence of security personnel to plunder timber.

User groups and villagers in the far western Tarai say community forests were under pressure even during the conflict from Maoists who wanted a cut from the sale of timber. This process turned into open extortion after April 2006 and especially in the runup to elections, they say. "The Maoists used timber to generate funds and at election time they converted the forests into votes by encouraging villagers to cut trees and grab land," says IP



SAM KANG LI

## What happened to the PLA's missing salaries?

"There is a surprising hush-hush even among the Maoists about the unpaid amounts. It is as if they don't want this investigated because it would uncover past money being diverted to election campaigning," one Finance Ministry source told *Nepali Times*.

The guerrillas say they haven't complained because they trust their leadership to resolve the problem. "The party has our interest at heart and is fighting for us," said one.

"Of course we care," said Maoist leader Dinanath Sharma. "Their problem is also our problem." He said that the salaries that were paid were the result of constant pressure from his party.

But the new government is nowhere in sight, everything else is in limbo. Even after UNMIN's term expires on 22 July, however, a smaller team of arms monitors is expected to stay behind in the cantonments. ●

Reporting also by Sheere Ng in Chitwan





PIGS: RAMESWOR BOHARA

**OUTRAGE:** A male rhino with its horn hacked off found in Bardiya National Park in April, and (below) bullock carts full of concealed timber head off into India at the border in Banke.

Kharel of Jana Morcha. The Maoist leader heavily involved in deforestation, Pradip Chaudhari, was nominated by the Maoists to the CA.

Maoist leader Matrika Prasad Yadav has served as the Minister of Forests, and denies reports that his party has been involved in illegal logging, accusing timber smugglers of making the allegations after he stopped them. When approached by *Nepali Times*, Yadav said cryptically: "You find out who is logging and write about them, I'm not going to tell you who is or who is not involved."

Although deforestation has been most dramatic in the west, it has also been intense in Rautahat, Mahottari, Dhanusha, Sindhuli and Siraha, officials say. Keshav Raj Kandel, director general at the Department of Forests, says logging can't be controlled because thieves have political protection. "When you arrest an offender, you get a call from the Prime Minister

instructing to release him, what can you do?" he asks.

There are no statistics about how much of the forest was lost during elections, but the estimate from Kailali alone is 21,000 hectares. Kailali DFO Man Bahadur Khadka says the past two years have been a free-for-all. "Before our eyes, we have seen dense forests turn into dense settlements," he says.

Krishnaraj Subedi, a member of a community forest committee, says 952 hectares of illegally settled forests were recovered, last year but the political parties pressured them to return the land. "Now we don't even bother," he says. Loggers who are caught red-handed have to be released because of political pressure, says a forestry official.

Even the national parks, which are guarded by the Nepal Army are not spared. Large tracts of forests on the eastern edge of Sukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve have been occupied since January by people who say they were never compensated when the nature reserve was expanded 10 years ago.

Says a security source at Sukla Phanta: "We can't do anything about the squatters, they have political protection." ●

## Guns n' rhinos

The most visible casualty of the past two years of political instability has been wildlife.

Well-armed poachers enter the national parks bordering India at will, using the absence of army patrols to kill rhinos, tigers and other wildlife. The worst affected are Bardiya and Sukla Phanta in western Nepal, which were relatively well protected during the war.

The withdrawal of the army from checkpoints within the park during 2001-2007 saw increased poaching. A tiger census in Sukla Phanta between January-April showed that the number of big cats was down to only five from the 23 tigers ten years ago.

There has been a dramatic decline in rhino populations in nearby Bardiya as well, with five killed in the past six months alone. Last October four rhinos were killed in a three-week period. Most of these are among the 83 rhinos translocated from Chitwan in the 1990s.

A census last June showed there were only 31 rhinos left in the park, and another count in February showed the number was down to 22.

Even Chitwan has been affected. Four tigers were poisoned in the past three months, and sacks of tiger skin and bones were confiscated. Nine rhinos were found in Chitwan last year with their horns hacked off.

"If this goes on at the rate it is going, the only tigers and rhinos left will be in the zoo," says Annapurna Nanda Das, of the Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation in Kathmandu.

Poachers are getting more audacious, are better armed and use the international border. In April, rangers in Thakur Dwar in Bardiya found the hornless corpse of a rhino and next to it the body of a soldier killed by poachers armed with assault rifles.

The army says the situation inside the national park is getting more dangerous, but budget is tighter and there is heavy encroachment. "Since we are not allowed to patrol with guns in the buffer zone, poaching has increased in the recent months," admits Col Samir Singh at Bardiya.

Under the comprehensive peace agreement, the army is not allowed to patrol the buffer zone with arms, and conservationists say this is the reason why poaching has increased. (See also: 'Parking the army', #391). The other reason is that the intelligence network among villagers in the buffer zone broke down after the war. ●

*Dewan Rai and Rameswor Bohara in Bardiya*



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# « Democracy is not a unique concept »

**Nepali Times:** As France takes over the presidency of the EU, how do you look at the challenges ahead for Europe especially in light of the Irish "no" vote for the Lisbon Treaty?

**Gilles Henry Garault:** All 27 countries of the EU must ratify the Treaty of Lisbon before it can enter into force.

Twenty of the 27 member states have done so in parliamentary processes. However, on 12 June, the treaty was rejected in a referendum in Ireland. But European institutions must continue to evolve to meet the demands of an enlarged Europe. The treaty still exists.

The French strategy during our presidency will be the same: take time to think the situation. The Irish people have voted, we are sorry they took the decision, but we respect their choice.

**But doesn't the Irish vote and the referendum in Denmark, France and the Netherlands show that Europeans are concerned about the EU growing too fast?**

I don't think so. Europe is not complicated: it is simply under construction. Europeans are well aware of this, since they place ever-greater demands on Europe in terms of the environment, climate, security and defence. Nevertheless, the house of Europe is clearly unfinished. Even if Europeans agree on Europe's main priorities, they still hesitate over its future, and sometimes simply change their minds or have to adapt to new circumstances. They may decide to change the purpose of a room or move around the furniture.

**One of the core values of the EU is democracy, human rights and a free press. Yet, in the periphery of Europe we see these values threatened. What is being done to clean up Europe's own backyard?**

Difficulties and tensions do exist with regards to the situation of human rights in the periphery of Europe. In Caucasian countries, Russia and Central Asia particularly, the respect of fundamental liberties and human rights are problematic. The EU, as part of the human rights component of the Common Security Policy, has developed specific tools to promote its core values in such peripheral countries. It has set up human rights dialogues, has had its seventh meeting with the Russian



France has officially taken over the presidency of the European Union this month. *Nepali Times* asked French Ambassador in Kathmandu, Gilles Henry Garault, about the Irish 'no' vote, concerns about democracy in Europe's periphery and in Nepal.

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Federation on human rights last April. This was not only an opportunity to bring up freedom of speech and belief, freedom of press but also the situation in North Caucasus, including Chechnya.

An EU Central Asia strategy has been approved last year for human rights dialogues with five countries of this region. In Uzbekistan the EU imposed sanctions on arms trade and visas in 2005 and it started a human rights dialogue last year after which the situation has improved to a certain extent. The EU was the co-author of the resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly last year to denounce human rights violations in Belarus.

Yet, we see from examples of Burma and Zimbabwe that there is little the EU can do to help pro-democracy activists in those countries. It is not right to state that the EU is not an active and efficient supporter of pro-democracy activists or can do nothing to improve the situation in the Burma or Zimbabwe. We have issued many statements condemning the violation of human rights in these countries. Besides,

these two countries are subject to EU sanctions.

The EU requested a special session on Burma of the Human Rights Council, which was held in December of 2007 and this event led to the adoption by consensus of a resolution condemning the harsh repression of peaceful Burmese demonstrators. We have also carried many demarches on Zimbabwe, we have clearly stated that the recent presidential elections were not free and fair. The EU is putting pressure on the current governments of these countries and I am sure we will see the results of these actions, at least in the medium and long term.

**There are concerns in Nepal about the erosion of democratic values and press freedom. Do you share these concerns?**

I have heard these fears being voiced, especially after the activities of Maoist trade unions in certain media. But you have to remember that democracy is only 55 years old in Nepal, and there have been many ups and downs. Of those 55 years

there were only 25 years of real democracy. If you consider this history, it could be that democracy is not a unique concept. It may be too soon to speak about a threat to democracy and press freedom, we have to wait and see. But if there are any serious violations of democratic principles and press freedom, you can be sure that we will never hesitate to speak out against it.

**Last month, you issued a statement on behalf of the EU condemning the arrest of Tibetan activists in Kathmandu. The Europeans seem not to want to understand Nepal's geopolitical reality.**

We perfectly understand Nepal's geopolitical reality. But we are not asking something impossible, we simply want Nepal to adhere to international human rights principles and conventions of which it is a signatory in dealing with Tibetan activists. The media in France is full of images of police crackdowns in Kathmandu against protesters and there is strong public opinion against the arrests. France has never supported a Free Tibet, but there are certain norms of free speech and right to protest that have to be respected, whatever the circumstances are.

It is interesting that when tourist buses were vandalised and when the Chief Justice's car was smashed the police stood by and no one was arrested. And yet, the Nepali police are more firm towards the Tibetans.

**France did not accept a Maoist-designated Nepali ambassador last year. What was the reason for that, and would there be any problems for the next ambassador designate?**

We have absolutely no problems accepting a Maoist-designated ambassador. We draw the line at war criminals and people whose hands are covered in blood like the Khmer Rouge. In this particular case the ambassador was named two days before the Maoists left the government, and we took a wait-and-see approach. Then, elections were postponed, this was a bad signal. We waited some more. In December 2007, when the Maoists finally re-entered the government, the ambassador designate was appointed Minister of Women and Child Welfare. No one else was named in her place. We are still waiting. It's not a good thing for Nepal to not have an ambassador in Paris for two years.

## Euroskeptic take

GILES MERRITT  
in BRUSSELS

The EU has no coherent strategy on many issues. It has only sketchy economic policies towards Russia. Ambitions, but no game plan, to become a player in the Middle East. And, despite its original leadership on the Kyoto Protocol, no successor program on climate change. And the biggest question of all: how to engage with China, India, and other giants of the future, has received virtually no attention from EU-level policymakers.

These issues require attention now, and an integral part of the EU's search for new global strategies should be to invite, rather than avoid,

criticism of its activities. If the EU is to lift its gaze from its navel to the horizon, it must reconcile the very different views that exist across Europe of its place in the world and its own best interests.

The counter-pressure, of course, is that EU officialdom feels unloved and unappreciated. There is an almost embattled culture among many senior officials, who fear that fanning the flames of dissent among Europe's voters could one day knock European unity off course.

Euroskepticism represents everything the Eurocrats dislike. They worry that politicians and journalists who oppose their strategies for closer political and economic union could yet tip

the balance of public opinion against the EU. Euroskeptic politicians elected to the European Parliament are often treated with the disdain that true believers reserve for the infidel.

### The EU should lift its gaze from the navel to the horizon

Yet it is ludicrous to think that Euroskeptics represent a silent majority that could rise up and destroy the EU. There are now no EU countries where Euroskeptics are in the majority,

and the widespread impression that citizens in Western and Eastern Europe alike are turning their backs on the EU is wrong. The reality is that even though voters may find the EU remote, most appreciate the need for Europe to unite in a world where China, India, and other fast-developing countries are set to challenge it.

Reassured by this groundswell of support, the Eurocrats should be fostering a much more pluralistic approach to EU policymaking and debate. The Commission should be organising public debates that give equal prominence to dissenting views. Eurocrats must learn that Euroskepticism is fundamentally healthy, because it invites closer examination of the

policy options open to Europe, and thus increases the involvement of ordinary people in the EU's policymaking process.

For half a century, Europe's integrationists have sought unquestioning acceptance of their efforts. That demand must be abandoned. It will probably take several generations before a workable EU-wide political system emerges, but the first step is for the EU to encourage people to have their say, however uncomfortable that may be. ● *Project Syndicate*

*Giles Merritt is secretary-general of the Brussels-based think tank Friends of Europe and Editor of the policy journal Europe's World.*

# Kathmandu's finest

One late morning last month, sub-inspector Premprasad Regmi and head-constable Parbati Upadhya headed off from their station in Lalitpur to investigate a robbery in their precinct.

On the way there, the two passed a group of young men at Kanibahal, who looked like trouble. On seeing the constables, one of them produced a gun, shooting Premprasad on the chest and Parbati on her arm.

Parbati's instinct and training

**Policewoman shows uncommon courage, dedication to service**



DAMBER K SHRESTHA

took over. Seeing that she could handle only one person, she rushed to the one with the gun, wrestled him to the ground and pinned him down until backup arrived. "If I had to die, I would die bringing him down," she recalled thinking.

Parbati's courage got her promoted immediately to assistant sub-inspector. While she's glad about how it turned out, she is happier that she lived up to her duty and hopefully will be an inspiration for other policewomen in the force. Premprasad survived and is recuperating.

What makes Parbati's courage even more remarkable is that she was seven months pregnant in June when, bleeding from a bullet wound, she tackled and brought down the assailant.

With characteristic modesty, Parbati downplays her

achievement. "There are so many other police men and women who've faced challenges like me," she says, "and I am sure anyone else in that situation would have done what I did."

Not sure about that. The smile on Parbati's face fades when she describes the lack of cooperation from onlookers. Even when she begged passersby to call the police station, no one helped. In fact, a shopkeeper rolled down his shutters.

"It's disappointing", she says sadly, "but I haven't lost hope or my sense of duty towards the people."

At 30, Parbati has been in the Nepali Police for the past ten years. She was the second woman from Kapilbastu to join the force and admits she always dreamed of being a policewoman.

"It was the uniform that first attracted me," she smiles, "and I

wanted to serve my country".

Back home, she'd worked shoulder to shoulder with the men. With most of her siblings in India, Parbati took over supporting the family even though she is the youngest. She is an ardent athlete and won the nationals in running.

Parbati says both sides of her family have fully supported her career, and the fact that her husband is also a police officer helps.

"This is a 24-hour job," she says, "you can't say I'm off duty, you have to be where you are needed no matter what the time or situation."

Parbati thinks Nepali women shouldn't doubt their capabilities, and they shouldn't let anyone undermine their self-esteem. She says with confidence: "There is nothing we can't do." ●  
*Roma Aryal*

# Please try again later

SINGAPORE—For a Nepali visitor, the Nokia Connection 2008: Share More, Experience More event held here recently, was like finding oneself in handphone heaven.

Coming from the country with the most primitive cell phone service in Asia where nine out of ten calls end up with "The number you have dialled cannot be reached please try again later", the three days spent amidst state-of-the-art phone gadgetry showed just how far behind we really are. I thought my current 6300 was very functional until I saw all the new stuff engineers at Nokia have come up with it.

It's not just the phones that are now mobile, Nokia with its E71 and E66 is trying to enable you to take your office around with you wherever you go. "It's for people with a mobile lifestyle," Chris



**NEPALI PAN**  
Shitu Rajbhandari

Carr, the vice president, Sales, Southeast Asia and Pacific of Nokia told Nepali Times.

Indeed, the machines come with easy-to-install push mail and real-time access to internet, email, calendars and contacts. The phones give an entirely different meaning to entertainment with a one-touch access to GPS maps of the city you are in, music and media sharing. All in a gadget that is not much bigger than my 6300. It seems the only office items you can't carry around in your mobile these days is the photocopier and the coffee machine. But I wouldn't be surprised if Nokia is working on that too.

We went on a little demo tour around Singapore in Nokia's wi-fi bus and tried to find our way around with the surprisingly accurate GPS. Pretty soon, you may even be able to find the nearest trash can to toss your sandwich wrapper through the GPS on your mobile. This is super spic-and-span Singapore after all.

But throughout all this, one couldn't help wondering when these new services would ever come to Nepal, where just making a simple voice call is a Mahabharat. And the service is deteriorating: automated messages telling you the number you are trying to reach is unavailable even though you dialled the number one minute ago, SMS's that get repeated 20 times, SMS that get to the destination the next day, SMS's that never get to their destination at all. One just wonders how many relationships have been wrecked and business deals cancelled because of bad connectivity.

The person you have dialled hardly exists

Frustrated by the network which seems to suffer from extreme mood swings, I looked for help on the NTC website. Big mistake. The website flaunted services which assured a smooth mobile experience and was filled with propaganda of unfulfilled services. For the past eight years we have heard: "Cell phone services will be normal by next month." The communication gap between Mero and Tero mobiles actually deserves a whole different article on its own.

But despite all of this, there is no doubt that Nokia will find buyers for these phones in Nepal even though its main focus is mainly entry-level phones below \$100. Nepalis are a stylish lot and the new Nokia gadgets are sure to catch a few eyes.

Agreed that not everyone can, or will, use all the functions those phones provide but they will definitely be a status symbol to carry around in the hip holster. So what if our network is third grade, look at the bright side: at least we have one.

Nepalis are also a forgiving and tolerant people. That is why we have endured this shoddy service all these years without chukka jams and tala bandis outside Nepal Telecom. Regardless of hearing that irritating recorded voice saying "the person you have dialled doesn't exist" we will continue to try to reach our friends. ●



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EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Absence of Objects**, exhibition of paintings by Saroj Kushwaha, till 15 July at 5.30 PM, Park Gallery, RN Joshi Centre for Fine Art, Pulchok, Patan Lalitpur, 5522307
- ❖ **Tattva** multimedia and collage exhibition by Chirag Bangdel till 18 July, 5.30 PM at Bakery Café, Pulchok.
- ❖ **Connection**, solo Charity Art exhibition by Juju Kaji Maharjan, till 6 August, 2PM onwards at 1905, Kantipath

EVENTS

- ❖ **Silence of Bardiya**, wildlife conservation play by Aarohan-Gurukul, till 11 July (except Mondays), 5.30 PM at Rimal Theatre, Gurkhu, Purano Baneshwor, 4466956
- ❖ **Oliver**, a musical play by Malpi International School, 11-12 July, 1.30 PM and 5.30 PM, Nepal Academy Hall, Kamaladi, 4240159
- ❖ **Change** fundraiser concert at Rimal Hall Gurkhu, New Baneshwor, on 12 July, Rs 350, 985103477
- ❖ **Lecture Series XXIII** by Yogendra P. Yadava on Linguistic Diversity and Studies in Nepal, 14 July, 5PM at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, 4472807
- ❖ **The Other Boleyn Girl** starring Scarlet Johansson, 15 July, 6.30 PM, Lazimpat Gallery Café, 4428549
- ❖ **Monsoon Madness** at Shangri-la Village Resort, Pokhara. Yeti Airlines special offer also available. 4435741
- ❖ **Tantric Dance of Nepal** by Kalamandapa, every Tuesday 7PM at Hotel Vajra and every Saturday 11AM at Patan Museum.

MUSIC

- ❖ **Twisted 74** along with Poefie and the Fags, Moksh, Pulchowk, 11 July, 8.30 PM, 5526212.
- ❖ **27<sup>th</sup> Yala Maya Classic**, 17 July, 5PM, Rs 100, Baggikhana, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, 5553767
- ❖ **Rudra night** fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends, every Friday, 7PM at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Sufi music** by Hemanta Rana, every Friday at 7.30 PM at Dhaba Restaurant and Bar, Thapathali.
- ❖ **Fusion and Classical Music by Anil Shahi** every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, Sufi and raga with Hemant Rana every Saturday live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 8PM. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **Risotto and gnocchi** at the Rox Restaurant, Hyatt regency, Kathmandu, till 20<sup>th</sup> July from 7-10.30 PM
- ❖ **The Fun Cafe**, discounts available at lunch (12.30-2.30PM) and 6:30 -10:30 PM dinner at Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu, Rs. 800 plus taxes, till 31 July, 4411818
- ❖ **Sixth Annual Wine Festival** until September at Kilroy's, Jyatha. 4250440
- ❖ **Asian Food Special** at Jalan Jalan restaurant, this weekend, Kupondole height, 5544872
- ❖ **Steak special** with free Irish coffee at K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel, 4700043
- ❖ **Continental and cafe item** with Live band every Friday at Vintage Cafe and Pub, Woodland Complex, Durbar marg.
- ❖ **Thakali and local cuisine** at Marpha Thakali Restaurant and Bar, Teku. 4104504
- ❖ **Lajawab** tandoori and kabab festival, 7-10 PM every Friday at the Hotel Himalaya, Rs 550.
- ❖ **Japanese lunch set**, Rs 445 at Shogun, Japanese restaurant, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4263720
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **The Kaiser Café open now** at the Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, open from 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Mango étagère** mango delicacies 4.30-6.30 PM at the Lounge, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Steak escape** at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Bourbon Room Restro-bar** now open for lunch and dinner with over 100 cocktails, Lal Darbar.
- ❖ **Cocktails and grooves** with jazz by Inner Groove at Fusion-the bar at Dwarika's, every Wednesday, at Dwarika's Hotel.
- ❖ **Continental and Chinese** cuisine and complimentary fresh brewed coffee after every meal a Zest Restaurant and Bar, Pulchok.
- ❖ **Illy espresso coffee** at the Galleria cafe, every Friday espresso cocktails.
- ❖ **International buffet** at the Sunrise Café, and Russian specialties at Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Jazz in Patan** with coffee, food, drinks and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawalakhel. 8.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- ❖ **Saturday special** at The Tea House Inn, Windy Hills, Nagarkot every Saturday. 9841250848.
- ❖ **Scrumptious wood fired pizzas**, cocktails and more at Roadhouse, Bhatbateni 4426587, Pulchok 5521755 and Thamel 4260187.
- ❖ **Retro Brunch Barbeque** with live acoustic music by Sound Chemistry, every Saturday, 12-3 PM at LeMeridien-Kathmandu, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Dhamaka** a Nepali style barbeque with at the Splash Bar and Grill, Hotel Radisson, Rs 1399, 7 PM, every Friday. 4411818
- ❖ **Starry night barbeque** at Hotel Shangri-la with Live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs. 666 net per person, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7 PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Lavazza coffee** Italy's favourite coffee at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, Roadhouse Café Pulchok and Thamel. 4700612
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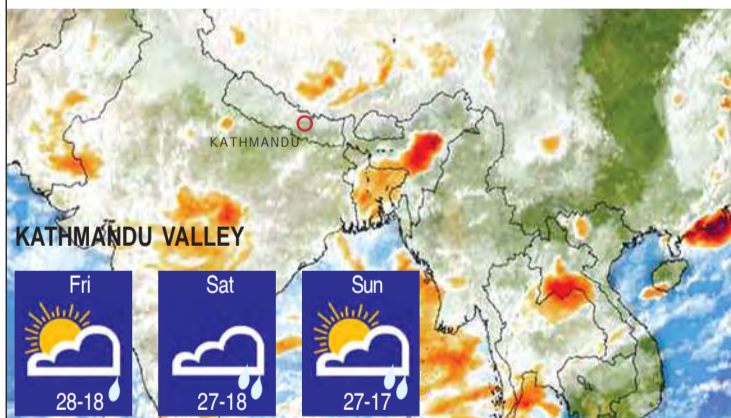
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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The monsoonal trough in northern India turned the wind direction from the west for a period midweek, resulting in the unseasonal sun that made the days hot and sticky. But the winds have righted themselves again, and the squall front is again heading westwards. The first week of July was nearly dry in Kathmandu which also suffered below average precipitation for June. A fresh monsoon pulse is now halfway up to Nepal from the Bay and this should bring us moderate to heavy showers in most of midhill districts and plains. Expect daytime temperature to go down, but the humidity levels will still be high.



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नेपाली आवाज

हालचाल  
ताजा खबर थाहा पाउन  
हालचाल  
विहान: ८:४५-११:४५  
अपराह्न: २:४५-४:४५  
राति: ६:४५ र राती: ९:४५

अंग्रेजी सिक्न सघाउने कार्यक्रम  
Tuning In To Language and Culture  
प्रसार हुने समय : हरेक शुक्रेबार बेलुका (६:१५-६:३५)  
हरेक आइतबार दिउँसो (१:४०-२:००)  
"रेडियो सगरमाथामा नियमित सुनी, अंग्रेजी सुधारी"  
(रेडियो सगरमाथा र अमेरिकी राजदूतावास, अमेरिकी केन्द्रको सहकार्य)

सम्पर्क: ५५२२००९, ५५२२२२५ मोस्ट ब्रस्त: ५५२२८, ईमेल: info@radiosagarmatha.org

हरेक विहान ५:०० देखि राती ११:०० बजे सम्म सूचना शिक्षा र स्वस्थ मनोरञ्जनका लागि भरपर्दो साथी रेडियो सगरमाथा १०२ थोप्लो ४ मेगाहर्ज



KIRAN PANDAY

**BANESWOR NINJA:** Armed police guard the Constituent Assembly from demonstrators entering a restricted area on 5 July.



KIRAN PANDAY

**THARULAND:** Tharu stage a sit-in outside the Constituent Assembly on Thursday demanding a separate province for the Tharu community and opposing the United Madhes of the Tarai parties.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**EMERGENCY STRIKE:** Doctors all over Nepal went on strike and stopped all hospital services, except emergency wards like this one at Bir, on Wednesday and Thursday. They took the action after a doctor was physically assaulted in Kathmandu on Monday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**SMALL WORLD:** Actors, crew and director of the new Quest Entertainment film, *Sano Sansar*, pose for a group snapshot on 3 July at the Shangrila. the film will be released in September.



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Kamaladi, Kathmandu (Above Kasthamandap Bazar)



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# The Bahun Liberation Front

So, the self-appointed traffic czar **Baba-san** is back with a bang. The man is one determined dude. While he was away, all his centerline concrete blocks were pulverised by colliding motorcycles, others have been charred by student groups protesting the fuel price hike, and yet the former Osaka traffic cop doesn't give up on his one-man mission to save Kathmandu's streets from chaos. At the very least, give the man a medal for trying. But the man underestimates the Nepali capacity for anarchy. The only we can instill some discipline at the Jamal intersection is if we make him executive president and commander-in-chief with shoot-at-sight orders.



Seems like in this country we are cursed to live in **never-ending excitement**. You solve one problem and another one pops up, you resolve that and another agitated group starts agitating.

No sooner had the three parties agreed on the fifth amendment after a two-month delay and got ready to push the bill through the assembly, the Madhesi brothers began to gherao the rostrum and paralysed the assembly for two weeks. It seems the kangresis had a hand in **uksaoing** the brothers as a delaying tactic to get the baddies to agree to make Koiralo prez. Some talmel seems to have been done, cos the Madhesis called off their daily charade of treating the aisles of the CA like Ratna Park.

Then it was the turn of the Tharuhats, who want no truck with the Madhesis, and have therefore brought 22 Tarai districts to a grinding halt this week. It may take another couple of months to get that sorted out, but the Muslims are also murmuring about being lumped together with Madhesis. The Sherpas may soon announce a chukka jam at Base Camp unless their autonomy demand is met. The Dalits have stepped up their protests, and so have the Group of 8 ethnic groups still not represented in the CA. The government's negotiation strategy is to grant everyone autonomy automatically, but unless Nepal immediately embarks on a campaign of territorial expansion, we're going to run out of room for all the new federal autonomous regions. And even that won't be the end of it. Chhetris are sure to come up with a demand for a **Chhetri Chhetra**, and the Bahun Liberation Front will have no option but to go underground.



Upendra Yadav speaking in **Hindi** from the assembly pulpit on Wednesday may have thrilled his compatriots down in the plains, but the man should know this is completely counter-productive. Televised live nationwide, that one speech did more to unite all Gurungs,

Tamangs, Bahuns, Newars, Chhetris, Thakuris than anything the Chure Bhabars and Janjatis have ever done with their sit-ins. No one would've minded if it was **Maithili**.



The good news is a government may be formed. Bad news: it may take till next year. That is why **Gyanu** must be looking down from Nagarjun and laughing his head off. The ex-king is taking his commoner status seriously,

it seems. There was a 2 km queue outside the gate to wish him happy birthday on Monday, but he refused to let them in because Nagarjun is government property. But he did take a call from the PM and had a man-to-man chat on the hotline.



The UML ministers resigned nearly three months ago after their party's humiliating defeat in the elections, but they are

still living comfortably at their official quarters and commuting to work in official flag-waving cars. The five Maoist ministers also resigned, but are merrily bhasan garo-ing away at city functions and odao-ing dossalaha and stuff. Gyanu resigned asking and left Narayanhiti and gave up his official **Jaguar** and his **Super Puma**, yet the prime minister resigned two weeks ago and he is still sitting tight in Baluwatar. Need the Ass say more?



The winners of the New Name Contest this week both pertain to garbage. Tied in first place are **Suvekchya** from TC who wants Ratna Park renamed Rotten Park and **Vijay** in UK who has changed Phora Darbar into Phohor Darbar.

New Name Contest entries: ass(at)nepalitimes.com



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