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Times nepalnews.com
 Weekly Internet Poll # 4376

Q. How would you describe PM Dahal's address to the nation?

Total votes: 3,112

Weekly Internet Poll # 438. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Do you agree with the coalition's governance by ordinance?

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NANDA RANA

Despite fears that Nepal's tiger population has been decimated by habitat loss and poaching, an ongoing cat census in Chitwan has found encouraging signs of their numbers bouncing back.

The nationwide tiger census will be completed in March, but with half of Chitwan National Park covered so far, 20 adults and 12 cubs have been counted. The number of breeding tigers is expected to top 60, which was the total number from the previous census in 2000.

"The situation doesn't appear to be as bad as it was thought," says a beaming Narendraman Babu Pradhan, chief warden at Chitwan.

The census is being carried

Burning bright

After being ruthlessly hunted, Nepal's tiger numbers are climbing again

out with 50 sets of digital cameras that are placed along jungle trails and triggered by movement. The images are analysed and individual tigers identified by their distinctive stripes. Forty staff on five elephants are involved.

The camera trapping technique is also being used in two western reserves in Bardiya and Sukla Phanta where tigers were decimated by Indian

poachers in the past eight years. The army was withdrawn from jungle posts during the war, allowing armed poachers free movement.

In Sukla Phanta, tiger numbers dropped from 20 in 2005 to eight last year; however, preliminary results of the census show that the majestic cats are springing back there too.

Says Naresh Subedi of the National Trust for Nature Conservation, which is carrying out the census with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife: "We will have to wait

for the final tally, but so far we are all pleasantly surprised at least in Chitwan that tigers aren't as badly affected as we had feared."

In 2000, there were 123 breeding tigers and about 200 cubs in national parks all over Nepal. A further 100 tigers probably live in wilderness areas that aren't designated national parks. That number has probably gone down, but conservationists expect the total tiger tally in parks to be about the same as in 2000.

Full story p4



Enjoy the moment
 a swing at a time





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Getting away with murder

Reporters are not supposed become news themselves

CITIZEN DAHAL

In his address to the nation as a "common citizen" last week, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal bemoaned that frequent strikes were scaring away investors. He said the tendency of Nepalis to hit the streets at the slightest pretext needed to be stopped once and for all.

That's what Citizen Dahal feels. But what is Prime Minister Dahal going to do about it? He must know it is goons from his own party who are undermining his efforts to woo investors. The head of the Maoist student wing publicly threatened last week to "break the backbones" of anyone daring to oppose his union. Since they have done it before, nobody doubts their ability to carry out the threat.

Union militancy has now become the single biggest worry of the private sector. It continues to create havoc in the Birgunj-Hetauda and Itahari-Duhabi industrial corridors. Many entrepreneurs have bought peace at prices that nobody knows about. Emboldened by the easy success of their technique of intimidation, Maoist labour is now targeting schools and hospitals. It is of no concern to the union mafia that these institutions already pay much higher wages than the minimum fixed by the government.

But then it is not really about wages, is it? It is about control and extortion.

When asked about the violent and brash behaviour of his foot soldiers, Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai actually replied that a planned chaos was necessary to wrest control of the state. That wasn't a slip of the tongue. It is looking more and more like the game plan is to unleash anarchy for forcible state capture.

If that is the case then restoring law and order is not a Maoist priority at all. It is now up to members of the coalition to up the ante and demand that Dahal publicly and credibly renounce violence as a political tool before they do any more deals with him.



KUMAR SHRESTHA/NEPALNEWS.COM

DHANGADI—On the day after Uma Singh was killed, Home Minister Bamdev Gautam came to this far-western Tarai town with the heads of the APF and Nepal Police. He assured everyone he would go after attackers of the media one by one.



GUEST COLUMN
Dirgharaj Upadhyay

Gautam coming to Dhangadi when a journalist was brutally murdered in Janakpur was like sending the fire brigade to the west when the fire is in the east. He said he'd nab the murderers one by one, but journalists are being killed one by one.

Things were never this bad for the Nepali media: not in the conflict years, not even during the royal emergency when journalists were randomly detained, kept in solitary confinement and tortured.

Today, while journalists are being brutally murdered the state is perpetuating impunity by not taking action, and in some cases garlanding the attackers. And when things get really difficult, the government's standard response is to set up a commission, pad it up with its own sympathisers and hope that the problem will just fade away.

When Himalmedia was attacked, Prime Minister Dahal told a public meeting in

Butwal that he didn't understand what the big fuss was about because "no one was killed". He went on to ask why there wasn't similar outrage when Dhangadi journalist JP Joshi was killed two months previously.

Of course there was an outrage. Even though Joshi was a district committee member of the Maoists, and there were suspicions that Maoists themselves were behind the killing, the Federation of Nepali Journalists launched protests nationwide.

It is this sort of insensitivity and such irresponsible comments that has got the government into hot water over subsequent attacks on media. They feed the perception that the Maoist party has never been serious about press freedom, and that it only pays lip service to it. How can you expect answers and justice from a government that seems so oblivious to the threats to the press?

The media fraternity doesn't care what political persuasion a colleague who is harassed or killed belongs to. Journalists want to cover the news, not become the news themselves. When Uma Singh was killed, it hurt journalists in western Nepal. When JP Joshi was killed, reporters in Jhapa were outraged.

Only if the journalists' right to life is protected, does it make any sense to protect their right to free expression. Only if the media is free to fulfill the people's right to know without threats or hindrance will democracy function as it should.

So far, not even a single murderer of a journalist has been



prosecuted. It is this impunity that proves to the enemies of press freedom that they can literally get away with murder. And let's not forget that it's not just the assassins of journalists like Birendra Sah who are scot free, even the killers of Kathmandu businessman Ram Hari Joshi are not just at large but have been installed as members of the Maoist central committee. What kind of a message does this send to the citizenry when criminals are not just let free unprosecuted but are rewarded instead?

The irony of all this, of course, is that during the conflict the media had years gone out of its way to be objective. When the media struggled against the king's dictatorship to safeguard press freedom, it lavished coverage and interviews of underground Maoist leaders.

The media is the medium through which public debate takes place. It is our duty to present dissenting points of view, even if they are views held by the enemies of press freedom. The media doesn't want journalists to be declared martyrs, they don't want any more toothless commissions of inquiry, they just want the perpetrators of murder caught and tried. Is that too much to ask? ●

Dirgharaj Upadhyay is the chairman of the Kailali Chapter of the Federation of Nepali Journalists.

LETTERS

HUMILIATION

In response to Ratan Gazmere's answer to the question on how he evaluates resettlement program ("Thimpu will not get away with expulsion," #436) I would like to add further comment. No doubt the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as an institution does a commendable job, but regrettably a good number of people that have been hired to work for the IOM have the wrong attitude. The escorts must have been hired according to the criteria of IOM rules and regulations, but there have been instances when refugees have been treated in a discourteous manner. IOM also has foreign staff that are stationed at the airport during departures. A number of Bhutani refugees have complained that they have suffered humiliation from them. I second Gazmere's comments when he says that the refugees' sense of dignity is affected. We came out of refugee camps, we were not living in concentration camps. Above all, we never wanted to live like this in a

foreign country. The IOM should hire staff with compassion for a job which entails looking after human beings in need.

P Risal, USA

WAIT AND WATCH

Prashant Jha's Delhi dateline report ('Wait and watch', #436) was insightful. All the more so because the unnamed 'senior official' is quoted as saying: "...But we will not back any effort to topple the government right now." This opens up a number of questions: India is in the habit of toppling governments in Nepal, it could topple this government right now if it wanted, but it won't, it could topple this government any time in future if it so desired. This could have been a Freudian slip, but it has

exposed India's colonial attitude towards Nepal loud and clear.

G RL Rana, email

OXYMORONS

The Young Communist League changed their name to Young Communist Democratic League (Backside, #436) to incorporate the spirit of democracy that these youngsters stand by. Communist and Democratic—is that even possible? It's like being black and white. The YCDL sure displays Anarchy, so their real acronym should be YAM.

Praswas Shakya, email

● While no one can challenge your backside Ass on satire, godssip and metaphysics, his (?) knowledge of nuclear

physics, on the other hand, seems to be a bit rusty. In 'Ass-to-ass talk' (#436) the donkey says Nepal's 'communist parties are splitting faster than neutrons inside an atomic reactor'. You don't have to be Einstein to know that it's not the neutrons that split in a nuclear chain reaction but the nuclei of the Uranium 235 atom. Unless we get this cleared up, Nepal can never start a plutonium enrichment program in order to blackmail Indian expansionists and US imperialists.

Kiran Kulkarni, Mumbai

LETTERS

Nepali Times welcomes feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms can be accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with 'letter to the editor' in the subject line.

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The spring storm

The Maoists want more influence in the Madhes

There must be something in the Vastu of Singha Darbar that makes its principal occupants think and behave like little emperors. Like Louis XV, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal announced last month that any effort to dislodge his government would trigger another revolution and Maoists would eventually capture power.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

His Indian mentors who persuaded him in 2005 to join mainstream politics probably forgot to tell the guerrilla chief that a revolving-door government is an essential feature of the parliamentary system. The day Balkhu Darbar decides that it has no further use for Premier Dahal, he will have to make way for Madhab Nepal. The mood in the legislature is turning distinctly anti-Maoist. Almost all the parties, including the kangresis, would be only too happy to join a UML-led coalition, whatever the unpredictable consequences of such an unlikely formation.

Dahal needs to realise that like everybody else in any democratic set-up, he is neither irreplaceable in his own party nor indispensable to the country. History has an uncanny habit of getting rid of powerful men when they least expect it. In any case, no prime minister since Chandra Shamsher, incidentally the prime minister

who built Singha Darbar, has served what could be called a normal term of office in that jinxed palace.

Since the British days and the rise of the Ranas, Lainchaur has always been a factor in influencing the outcome of court intrigues in Kathmandu. The other influential player was always the army. Popular support, when it mattered at all, came last. The first elected prime minister of the country BP Koirala realised this reality when he found himself behind bars despite two-thirds majority of his party in the parliament. Dahal's party commands the loyalty of only about one-third of members of the legislative assembly.

The Tarai is another factor that can upset the best calculations of power brokers. Despite boasts of some Hindi-speaking Madhesi leaders and allegations of extremists of the left and right alike, the Indians have very few levers of manipulation in the plains of Nepal. Madhesis blame the Americans for funding and abetting King Mahendra's planned transmigration of Pahadis in the Tarai as a part of a Cold War strategy. US-friendly non-governmentals have recently made inroads into the central Tarai, but their impact is still largely peripheral. It is not for nothing that Matrika Yadav decided to explore China before designing a political outfit to face the challenges of the future



KIRAN PANDAY

the northern neighbour has no baggage in the southern plains.

The Maoists realised the importance of the Tarai during elections last year, but they appear to still be confused about the strategy that would help expand their base into the restive region. They have been unwittingly falling for Panchayat-era practice of stoking the fire of fear among Pahadis that Madhesi's aspirations for equal rights somehow constitute a threat to national integrity.

From Mohan Baidya to Krishna Bahadur Mahara, every Maoist leader considers it a part of his nationalist duty to denigrate Madhes-based parties. This

strategy may help them consolidate their base among former royalists but is unlikely to win friends and gain supporters in the Tarai. Perhaps a more sensitive approach is necessary to assuage the fears of Madhesis that they would not be short-changed once again by the new ruling class.

After their much-publicised pow-wow over the Madhes, the Maoists are planning to raise a storm in the spring to gain a foothold in the region. The UML is already there: it has pitted its Tharu front against Madhes-based parties. TMDP is out in the streets agitating for immediate implementation of peace accord signed with the previous government. If push comes to shove, the MJF and the pro-establishment Sadhbhabana will have little hesitation in leaving the government.

A year after Tarai acquiesced to constituent assembly elections on the promise of change, the plains are once again rife with apprehension that the coalition government isn't serious about their concerns. There is a clear trust deficit between the rulers and the ruled and government hasn't helped its case by floating the idea of Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) to be located along the east-west highway.

Before they raise a storm in the Tarai-Madhes, the Maoists would do well to earn the trust of Madhesis. The issue is too important to be left to slogan-mongers unthinkingly raising the bogey of separatism or chauvinism. ●





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Forget Kathmandu

The NC needs to get out of the capital and re-invent itself

Most kangresis don't read. Ask why, and the joke goes there is no need because BP Koirala has read enough for all of them. But members of the Nepali Congress may want to pick up a booklet published recently by the Social Science Baha titled *Views from the Field: Anthropological Perspectives on the CA elections*.

The NC's challenge comes from a Maoist party that wants to ruthlessly consolidate. If anyone was entertaining illusions about hardline-softline divisions, they should look at Baburam Bhattarai's recent article which reiterates that the ultimate goal has not changed.

But this desire to expand and control is common across parties. The NC did it when it was in power, padding the Nepal Police with cadre, ensuring the bureaucrats would be loyalists, using the state apparatus to leverage support on the ground. The UML ensured the last local



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

polls went their way when they had control of key ministries.

The Maoists are doing the same thing. What makes it different this time is that they are aided by a strong ideological belief, a coercive apparatus. And they just happen to be smarter than the rest.

Beneath all the complexity, there is a simple truth: if you don't like what the Maoists are doing, mount a political challenge. Don't do what you did during the war—run away and leave a political vacuum. During the insurgency, the valid reason was fear. There may be instances of intimidation now, but the political space has opened up.

NC leaders are not doing this, and they are now afraid that they will be completely marginalized. It is this insecurity that is driving much of the NC rhetoric on Maoist 'totalitarianism'. It is making the NC top rung suck up to India and the army yet again, hoping they would do the job for them by rallying against the Maoists. The army should be careful and not be employed when NC encourages it to go against the civilian chain of command.

At the root of the NC's problem lies its inability or unwillingness to face the election result head on. Yes, there was coercion but to over-estimate that element is intellectual laziness and politically suicidal. The polls were a lot more complex and until the NC sits down, honestly evaluates each seat and why they lost, there will be no revival.

The Baha has compiled three essays by academics who went back on Election Day last April to villages where they had been working for decades. The key lesson is: all politics is local.

David Holmberg visited Nuwakot to witness an election where for the first time parties had given tickets to local Tamangs. But in the constituency he covered, the Maoists had a Bahun candidate and NC had a Tamang face.

Judith Pettigrew was in Kaski and explores how a young local, Thagu, who despised the Maoists for harassing him in 2004 has suddenly become a party member. It was not force, but constant conversations with the Maoists that impressed Thagu and made him defect from the NC.

Mukta Tamang was in Kabhre where he saw how young voters tilted the balance in favour of the Maoists. The defining mood was a fusion of fear and hope.

In each VDC, there are political contradictions. If the NC wants, it can capitalise on it. But for that they have to be quick, proactive and strategic. Ranting in the capital will get them nowhere.

The Bardia OHCHR report depicts a humanitarian catastrophe where Tharu families were victimised relentlessly during the war. It happened under Sher Bahadur Deuba after he deployed the army.

Suppose Deuba went back to Bardia, reached out to affected Tharu families, explained that it was a dirty war and there were mistakes, and shared the pain. All they are looking for is an acknowledgement. The Maoists won all seats in Bardiya, Deuba's gesture would have opened up local space for the NC to at least build links with the community again.

Nepal's liberal democrats are their own worst enemy. They would rather forget how they needed the left even when fighting for democracy in 1990 and 2006, but not rediscover their socialist roots. They would rather live in the capital, in denial about the elections, but do nothing to overhaul the party structure. And they would rather rehabilitate crooks than look for new faces.

NC can recover, but for that, they have to first forget Kathmandu. ●



NANDA RANA

Smile, you're on candid camera

DEWAN RAI in CHITWAN

It is getting dark in the thick jungle as a hazy sun dips into the horizon, and the forest stirs.

Near a watering hole, technicians alight from elephants to fix the digital cameras on the side of trails frequented by tigers. The elephants are getting nervous and blow noisily through their trunks.

The ongoing nationwide tiger census has so far covered half the Chitwan National Park and 20 tigers and 12 cubs have been identified by their distinctive stripes. The other half of the park in the Chure Hills and the Madi Valley beyond has a significantly larger number of tigers, so the census-takers are optimistic that tiger numbers are rebounding.

However, in Bardiya and Sukla Phanta the tiger numbers were down by 30-50 percent between 2005 and 2008 and are recovering at a slower pace. "It appears that

poaching was much more widespread in western Nepal," says Naresh Subedi of the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC).

This is the first scientific tiger census in Nepal using digital camera trapping technology. It is combined with a count of pug marks and scratches on trees to confirm the number of tigers. "The stripes of individual tigers are as distinct as our finger prints, and the count can be pretty exact," explains Subedi.

Until the 1950s when the forest cover in the Tarai was still intact, tiger ranged from Mechi to Mahakali. Since the eradication of malaria during the 1960s, transmigration of hill people to the Tarai meant that prime habitats for wildlife were cleared for settlement and agriculture. Nowadays, tigers are found only between the Bagmati and Mahakali rivers in the Tarai.

Poaching, habitat loss and the depletion of prey have

contributed to the steady loss of the species. In India, tiger populations are down to 1,100 from 2,000 fifteen years ago. The Sariska reserve in Rajasthan has lost all its tigers to poaching in the past ten years.

In Nepal, national parks were relatively better protected by the army as well as effective buffer zone mobilisation of villagers for conservation and anti-poaching intelligence. "We have put the army back into the abandoned posts, and poaching is now under control," says Laxmi Manandhar at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation in Kathmandu, "and we see the happy result in the Chitwan tiger census."

However, the chief warden of Chitwan National Park, Narendraman Babu Pradhan, says much more could be done if the conservation sector had more resources to mobilize people in buffer zones, increase mobility of rangers and upgrade research. ●



CHONG ZI LIANG

ENUMERATOR

Harkaman Lama (pictured) is a senior wildlife technician at the NTNC and heads one of the two teams on elephant back that is laying the cameras for Nepal's ongoing tiger census.

"We have to always keep our eyes and ears open here," whispers Lama, "we could run into rhinos, bears or tigers."

With 30 years of experience as a naturalist, Lama knows instinctively from the wildlife calls whether there is danger near. He hasn't had any confrontations during this census, but wild elephants have smashed cameras in Bardiya after they flashed at night, and bears sometimes play with them and wreck the aim.

The digital cameras are positioned on both sides of tiger trails, facing each other and at a distance of 1.5 to 2 km for 15 days at a time. They are triggered by wildlife movements, and besides tigers they have also "shot" wild boar, bears, leopards and lots of deer. Lama's team sets 50 cameras every two weeks in a section of the park, gathers all the images for analysis and moves on to the next area.

What makes Lama really happy is when his camera snaps portraits of tigresses with their cubs.

Just rumour

The Malaysian embassy in Nepal has denied rumours that the government of Malaysia banned the intake of Nepali workers to the country. It said that recruitment of foreign workers in the manufacturing and service sectors were only temporarily frozen due to the global economic recession. It added that approvals for Nepalis to work in Malaysia are still being issued at the embassy.

Branching into Boudha

Nepal Investment Bank opened a Boudha branch in January, making it the bank's 25th branch in Nepal and tenth in the valley. It will be linked through the bank's 'Any Branch Banking Services' service to all other 24 branches of the bank. The branch's services include safe deposit lockers and ATM.



Banking buddies

Himalayan Bank, Bank of Kathmandu and Laxmi Bank have agreed to exchange banking services so that a customer of one bank can now deposit, withdraw and transfer services at the other two banks at a minimum charge.

Rainbow trout

The Hyatt Regency in Kathmandu is organising rainbow trout promotion dinners at the Rox till the end of February. Dishes that will be served include roulade of trout and smoked salmon with trout, among others. The Himalayan rainbow trout is a fresh water fish.

Great switch

The sole distributor of Yamaha bikes in Nepal, Morang Auto Wks has opened a new trade-in store at Buddhabari Complex, Teku where customers can exchange old bikes for new ones. Morang Auto Wks currently has 17 outlets in Kathmandu.



On sale

John Deyers is offering customers up to 5 per cent off for all clothing throughout Nepal until Wednesday 11 February.

Fashion store

Yishion, a clothing brand for men and women, has opened its own store at the Kathmandu Mall, Sundhara. The store features casual wear.

NEW PRODUCTS

DOER: Continental Trading has launched Komatsu's new D9EX Dozer. Fitted with hydro transmission static technology, the Dozer has an electronic monitoring system and can be operated with a palm command control system.



Managing to get by

Nepali companies need to adopt and adapt if they want to survive

While teaching a weekly course on corporate governance in an evening program at a management college last year, one requirement I had for students was to visit and study two Nepali companies, and write about those companies'



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

corporate governance practices. That is, explain how those companies were directed and controlled for stronger business results.

Most students wrote about public companies such as banks and manufacturing units, in part because information obtained from them could be verified from other sources.

The two key findings were as follows:

Family on Board: The board composition of most Nepali-owned public companies raised too many red flags. Unqualified relatives and family members of the founders were assigned seats on the company's board to such an extent that even nominally public companies were run like family businesses under the control of a patriarch who brooked no dissent.

With the independence of the Board thus compromised, hiring was mostly about getting relatives, friends and loyal hangars-on into the company.

Often, there was no audit committee to make sure that the company's financial reporting was truthful. And the Board members themselves ran the companies on a day to day basis,

telling the hand-picked management staff what to do and not do. Besides, with no one questioning their actions, such Board members found it easier to repeatedly use the company assets for personal use with little thought to what shareholders might say.

Indeed, if we examine why some Nepali financial institutions went into receivership in the last three years, the inherently faulty composition of their boards—which then led to board members' treating banks as personal piggy-banks—comes up as trigger point that eventually led to their downfall.



Management mistakes: Often, managers at most companies have to perform in such a way that they hardly have time or interest to deepen the necessarily unglamorous tasks of cleaning up their company's innards that lead to long-term stability.

As such, most companies have lofty mission statements, but no code of ethics, no employee manuals and no agreed-upon and written operating procedures. True, not having these documents helps a manager consolidate power, especially when it comes to hiring his chosen people and then fixing pay packages. In practice, however, such control

comes at the cost of enervating office politics that lead to low staff morale and low productivity.

Besides, the absence of such documents reduces the management to making decisions under pressure, and on an ad-hoc basis. When employees always have to guess what the management's decisions might be, that does not help the company to establish a culture of openness, predictability and accountability.

And it's no exaggeration to say that most trade union-related problems in Nepali companies have their start in the management's inability or reluctance to establish and maintain the basic standards of corporate governance.

In all fairness though, most public companies in Nepal do know about the importance of adopting stronger corporate governance practices. But their understanding is comparable to that of a couch potato comprehending the benefits of regular exercise.

My students learnt that the internal control mechanisms at companies they studied were too set to change anytime soon, though some have recorded progress in the presence of professional management and shareholders who ask pointed questions.

Still, the best hope lay in speeding up the magnitude of change in the external context of competition (for customers, managerial talents and resources) in such a way that the companies that want to grow are soon left with only one of two choices: either adopt better corporate practices so that decision rights are clear for stronger business results or exit from the marketplace all together. ●

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One country two armies

Nepal, 8 February

नेपाल

Defence Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa and COAS Rookmangat Katuwal have been at loggerheads on the issues of army recruitment and integration. The row became acrimonious as rumours swirled that Thapa was getting ready to sack Katuwal. The prime minister himself had to deny there was any such plan. Eventually, Thapa accepted that there had been a misunderstanding. But only three weeks later, the controversy has erupted again with Thapa complaining in public that the Army was refusing to take his orders. The NC and the UML have taken the stance that the recruitment process should continue. Now that even the MJF and Sadhabana have joined in, the Maoists are isolated. The Maoists now have three options: appease the army, squeeze its budget, or replace the top brass.



power to change the commander in chief, there is another provision that allows Katuwal to hold his post for the full three-year term. In addition, to change that provision and also to change the army leadership, the Maoists will need the support of the president. That support seems unlikely at the moment.



However, the question arises: why is Thapa raking it all up again? Does Thapa want to create a new position for himself in his party? Or are the Maoists planning to take over the army?

"Both of them are egoistical," says an army official. The personality clash

between Thapa and Katuwal seems to be at the root of the controversy.

It is only natural for the Maoists and the Nepal Army to have differences because they were killing each other till not too long ago. The government is facing the sensitive issue of army integration and the army is adapting to a democratic civilian chain of command. Ex-general of the Nepal Army and also a CA member, Gopal Singh Bohara says: "This debate has to be solved through negotiations, it can't be prolonged."

Peace village

Kantipur, 2 February

कान्तिपुर

The Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction is designating seven villages in seven districts as 'peace villages'. The move is part of an effort to bolster the peace process in areas where the wounds from the conflict are still fresh. "We wanted to rehabilitate areas that faced the most violence during the war," says Minister of Peace and Reconstruction Janardan Sharma. Khara in Sukum, Guranse in Salyan, Jolbang in Rolpa, Pipe in Jajarkot, Palata in Kalikot, Shibapur in Kapilbastu and Anekot in Kabhre have been chosen. More than 100 security personnel, Maoist combatants and civilians died during the conflict in these areas. Last year, the National Planning Commission drew up a plan for the villages. However, the allocated budget is not adequate to start construction this year. Senior engineer at the ministry, Dhurba Poudel, said that local participation will be high in the re-construction of the villages. According to him, an estimated Rs 500,000 will have to be invested in each village, where schools, drinking water facilities, roads, sanitation and libraries will be made. The commission is also planning to construct a Rs 7 million Martyr's park in Gokarna, a model city in Khalanga for Rs 1.1 million and a village for those affected by the conflict in Kanchanpur.

Work hazard

Nepal Samacharpatra, 3 February


संवेद्यारण

Following radio journalist Uma Singh's murder, families in Bake, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur are pressurising women journalists to change profession, according to a Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) report. Most female journalists interviewed said they were under strong family pressure. FNJ says that because of the deteriorating security situation the reporters in the area are stressed and feel threatened. The journalists now choose to write soft stories on general subjects to avert risk. They shy away from investigative




reporting and news is now limited to reports on inaugurations, meetings and formal programs. In the absence of professional support and the trend for so many journalists to become political leaders as a side job, press freedom has been undermined.

Criminals are hiding under the cover of the political parties and the environment of impunity has forced the journalists to work in dangerous conditions.



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DFID / GTZ RISK MANAGEMENT OFFICE

The Risk Management Office, (RMO), provides advice to enable DFID and GTZ programmes and projects in Nepal to work safely and effectively. The RMO is looking for 5 highly motivated people to fill the following roles:

REGIONAL RISK MANAGEMENT OFFICERS

These are new and challenging regional positions that require pro-active people with strong analytical skills and the maturity to build relationships with programme staff and the communities where they work. As promoters of the RMOs Safe and Effective Development, (SED), approach they will provide training and advice on SED and risk analysis to programmes in the districts and contribute to the DFID and GTZs understanding of the conditions for development in Nepal.

Qualifications/Experience

- I. A Bachelors degree or equivalent level of academic and professional experience in any of the social or political sciences.
- II. At least 7 years experience of working in community development, risk management, political analysis or development project management.
- III. Prior knowledge of risk management and SED approaches would be helpful but not mandatory.

Competencies

- I. Fluent written / oral communications in Nepali, and English. Regional languages would be an advantage.
- II. Candidates must be able to demonstrate competence in a) analysis and use of information, b) communicating with others, c) influencing, d) planning and delivery of work.

The successful candidates will report from the regions to the DFID / GTZ Risk Management Office in Kathmandu - a small team which places a high premium on initiative, resourcefulness and field presence. New team members will receive induction training in risk analysis, SED approaches and training methods.

There will be an attractive and competitive local salary and benefits package

Please send email to recruitment-nepal@dfid.gov.uk for application form, diversity questionnaire and job description and send the completed forms to recruitment-nepal@dfid.gov.uk Only completed applications made on the prescribed application form and diversity questionnaire will be considered. Telephone enquiries after the deadline of the application will not be entertained. The closing date for applications is February 16, 2009.

Mine death



Janadisha, 4 February

जनदिशा

Landmines laid by the army during the war has claimed another victim: Kameri Ghartimagar of Khumel in Rolpa who died in an explosion while she was cutting grass. The incident happened in the Satdobato Jungle where the army's New Gorakh Battalion had set up a camp and laid mines around its defensive perimeter. Another young girl, Chameli Rokamagar, was seriously wounded. District Police in Rolpa confirmed that the two were caught in an explosion at 3PM while cutting grass in the base perimeter. Kameri's body is still in the forest because it is in a minefield, police said. Despite the peace process, the army has still not cleared mines in Libang and its other bases.

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There have been disappointingly few proposals from the public to the constitutional committees

DHRUBA SIMKHADA

The lack of worthwhile proposals received from the public regarding the new constitution has been attributed to people's confusion rather than inertia.

The State Restructuring and State Rules Delineation Committee secretary Thakur Prasad Baral believes the public is confused by 11 committees asking for suggestions at the same time. "This work should have just been given to the Civil Relationship Committee for better management," he says.

The CA committees are actively engaged in collecting suggestions and outlining the frame of the new constitution. The committee members have started collating experts' opinions on constitution principles, the merits and demerits of federalism and state structure. In the next phase they will go out to the people to garner their thoughts and opinions.

However, despite advertising the process across the media only about 500 suggestions have been received and most of them are not practicable. Baral says the committee is engaged in internal discussions—studying various publications and articles, looking into international practices, collecting parties' manifestoes and consulting with experts.

The CA secretariat has been facing problems paying for advertisements that were distributed in the media without careful planning. Kumar Adhikari, under secretary at the secretariat says newspapers and television channels are coming to the



SANTA GAHA MAGAR

secretariat demanding payment but there is no money allotted. He said one tv broadcaster produced a bill for Rs 3 million. The committees have discontinued ads on seven tv channels, all FM radio and daily papers for now.

Suggestions vary wildly and many are sloppy and wish-washy. The Civil Relationship Committee received a proposal for mediation in quarrels between husbands and wives. Other proposals

include demands for fertilisers or are simply full of abuses for the CA and its members. The Natural Resource, Economic Rights and Revenue Allocation Committee received 13 letters, of which three were requests for advertisements.

But experts have also sent suggestions, these include conflict expert Bishnu Raj Upreti. The secretariat has placed two suggestion boxes in Singha Darbar and one in the International Convention Centre in



Baneswor. However, most of the suggestions have been received via email, fax and toll free telephone. The Constitutional Committee received a total of 35 written, phone or emailed ideas while the State Restructuring and State Rules Delineation Committee received just one fax that wasn't even related. Most suggestions have come from outside Kathmandu and abroad.

Legislative Organs Delineation Committee received a proposal for one representative for every 100,000 people, a unitary state system with 100-105 representatives in a two-tier legislative, and a maximum of 12 ministries.

Fundamental Rights and Directive Principle Committee received three institutional and two individual suggestions of which one was sent by a labour union. National Interests Protection Committee, which is responsible for looking after national security policy, the Nepal Army, foreign affairs and natural resources received 20 suggestions including two experts' opinions.

By the end of January, 328 suggestions had been received but the processing and study of them has not yet begun.

Comparatively, South Africa received 2 million ideas from the people during its constitution-drafting process. ●

Including the Madhes

CHANDRA KISHOR

The democratic movement in Nepal has considered the CA and the constitution writing process one of its key objectives. But for marginalised communities, the constitution writing represents not just a map for the state but an opportunity to gain respect. This is because the new constitution will legitimise the voices of the marginalised and give meaning to their relationship with the state.

This is where it becomes crucial for the Madhesi community who had participated in great numbers in the CA elections. The belief was that the new constitution would include the legitimate wishes of the Madhesi people.

If the transformation of Nepal can take place peacefully through the CA then it will certainly strengthen democracy and national unity. But there are still some dissatisfied factions in the Tarai that are not yet present in the CA and it is important that their voices are also included in the new constitution through dialogue. The more the constitution writing process can address and incorporate the sentiments of the Madhesi community, the more the country will gain political stability. Therefore the constitution writing

Madhesi people still don't trust Kathmandu is ready to address their grievances

process should not be viewed as a purely technical process but a sensitive political one.

The demands of the Tarai people are not very different from those of other regions. They too wish for the country's transformation into a federal democratic republic which is inclusive, and want long-term peace. The Madhesi movement

and Madhesi leaders do not believe that the state and its leaders hold a positive view of the Madhesi community. Despite the CA elections the ambiance of distrust still continues.

For a few years the Madhesi political, social, economic and cultural wishes and requirements have been aired through various media. These aspirations have

been incorporated in the state reconstruction process, which is a sensitive and long-term issue and has been the subject of discussion and controversy. We have to carefully consider the Madhesi expectations as well as that of the whole country.

The Madhes itself has multiple cultures, religions, languages and ethnic groups. To establish a clear vision for the Tarai, the Madhesi parties first need to take certain initiatives. The constitution writing process can progress smoothly if the parties can develop a common understanding that is acceptable

to the major parties as well. If the constitution is based on understanding rather than mathematical foundation we can hope for long lasting peace and an end to conflict. Among the 25 parties that have been elected in the CA, most seem to agree on the establishment of an inclusive, secular and federal republic state. Taking this agreement positively and completing the constitution is the national requirement today.

If the new constitution involves popular participation of the Madhesi and establishes autonomy in the region, it will not only address their needs but also bring in acceptance and a sense of common ownership. We also need to consider the concerns of people from other regions towards the Tarai.

To implement the agreements signed between the Nepal government and the United Democratic Madhesi Morcha, there should be an understanding between the Maoists, NC and the UML. It is also necessary to have similar understanding among the Madhesi parties to address the Madhesi issues in the constitution. Civil society, in turn, should help develop cultural tolerance through discussion and assist the parties in this process. ●



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA



SNOWLESS: A prolonged winter drought and receding glaciers notwithstanding, the mountains are still awe inspiring.



W wonder



Winter erland



TEXT by KATY ELLIOTT and PICTURES by HELEN ARTHY in GOKYO

Temperatures plummeting to 20 degrees Celsius outside and 12 inside at night. Having to walk knee-deep in snow. Being stuck in Lukla till spring. The inability to find lodges open out of season. Anxiety about being isolated. Such fears may explain why no more than 300 or so trekkers visited the Sagarmatha National Park in the first three weeks of January compared with a record of over 9,000 last October.

But there are many reasons to opt for low season over high. In October 2008 trekkers rarely saw the major peaks through the cloud, there were queues of walkers, porters had to race ahead to bank a bed for clients in the lodges where they often camped on dining room floors, people had to wait up to three hours for a meal. If planes were cancelled, a backlog of trekkers quickly accumulated.

This January, the skies are clear right through two weeks on a return trek from Lukla to Gokyo. Although drinking water freezes in our rooms, we can't boast of having had to endure freezing temperatures. And throughout the entire ascent we encounter only 12 other trekkers. Once above Namche, and out of phone range, the feeling of isolation intensifies. In Dole, Macchermo and Gokyo the womenfolk have deserted the lodges to winter in Kathmandu, leaving their men to look after the odd passing traveller.

Every day of the trek is quite distinct from another. In the fertile villages leading up to Namche people are still harvesting pak choi and winter saag while bridges crisscross pristine rivers tumbling over huge boulders. Higher still, sheltered from the sun by the rhododendron, camellia and deciduous trees draped in moss, the waterfalls are frozen solid. Then from Dole it opens out, becoming quite wild and affording magnificent views.

Finally the weary, perhaps breathless, but

elated trekker is rewarded with the glorious sight of the turquoise lakes. It comes as a surprise to be confronted by wildlife at 5000m, a relaxed mouse sunning himself, Ruddy Shelducks on the iceless lake, snow pigeons, redstarts and finches.

The second turquoise lake in Gokyo itself is frozen though thawed at the edges. The sound it emits as the wind blows over its surface is quite eerie: a deep groaning followed by cracking. Those with the stamina to climb 500m up Gokyo Ri in the afternoon will be rewarded with the breathtaking sight of the sun setting on Everest as well as views of Makalu, Lhotse and Cho Oyu. The trek to the fifth lake is similarly exhilarating, with magnificent views of Chomolungma, better than those at Kala Pattar (base camp).

But for those, and there are many, who choose to go without a guide and cross the passes the weather can catch them out. There is no sign of the 33-year-old British trekker, last seen in Gokyo around 22 December, heading towards Everest base camp via Cho La pass.

Another downside is that clear skies, warmth and lack of snow are reminders of how the weather patterns are changing. Grazing for yak and nak herds is at a minimum and the ground is in desperate need of fertiliser, but manure is burnt as fuel to lessen reliance on scarce firewood.

Then there's the reminder of how tough life is up there. Supplies are often transported by humans as well as by yak, so it is not uncommon to pass an exhausted porter weighed down by four wooden planks weighing around 110kg that he is shifting to Gokyo for Rs 1,200 per plank. He complains there is little left for him once he has paid for accommodation and food.

But for those who dare, and you don't need to be that daring, this is the time to visit the Khumbu. Before the crowds get here. ●

There are many advantages of trekking the Khumbu in the low season



CHONG ZI LIANG

It's an emergency

Dial 101 for fire...and pray

PAAVAN MATHEMA

Four fire engines, no water, a team of 35 under-equipped men, only less than half of whom are trained firefighters—that is how prepared this city of 2.5 million is for a major fire.

Less reassuring still is that the most modern engine is 25 years old, and there are vintages from the Rana era. Most of the fire trucks are grounded due to poor maintenance, there is not enough water, and there aren't enough

water tankers when there is a fire.

Bijay Singh Lama of Juddha Fire Brigade says, "The fire-fighting system is far from what it should be to effectively address the needs of the city." It is a gross understatement. Lama says the lack of preparedness is worrying and there is just no awareness at the policy-level to be prepared for fire disasters.

Juddha Fire Brigade was established in 1935 with one fire engine and 15 firemen trained by the British after the devastating 1934 earthquake.

Kathmandu's fire brigade currently has two 1976 model German Moritas with a capacity of 4,000 litres and a ladder truck. The fire brigade in Patan and Bhaktapur have a 1976 model German Magirus Deutz each with a 2,400 litre capacity. The entire city of Bhaktapur just has one Magirus Deutz. Most of these were added after Singha Darbar was destroyed in a fire in 1973, there have been no upgrades since.

The government provides a mere Rs 200,000 for fuel and

maintenance of the gas-guzzling vehicles that struggle to even start. "The amount is hardly enough to repair the huge age-worn engines of the fire-trucks," says Kewal Chapagain of the Firefighters Volunteer Association of Nepal, which is pushing for an urgent upgrade. "It's a miracle these engines are running at all."

But the fire engines' condition is not the only the problem. No new firefighters have been recruited in the last 15 years. When manpower went down to

MOTLEY CREW: The Kathmandu fire brigade team now includes men from the APF (left).

FIRE ALARM: Fire fighters try to control a fire outbreak at a house in Ason. Fire engines make their way through a single lane road. The Lalitpur Fire Brigade truck gets a much needed inspection (top-bottom).

just eight firefighters in the Kathmandu Fire Brigade last August, additional strength was called in from the Armed Police Force (APF).

"The training given to the initial batch of firemen was the first and the last ever conducted," says Lama. The firemen now get 'on-the-job' training—meaning they train when there is a real fire.

The Ministry gets training offers from foreign countries, but these have turned into free vacations for ministry officials. Little attention has been given to the safety of the firemen, who risk their lives every time someone dials 101.

"There is no insurance, no fire-proof clothing, no equipment" says Basudeb Hengarju, Kathmandu's Chief Fire Commander. The firefighters use hand-me-down helmets and gear from a US fire brigade. The jackets don't fit, the boots are too big, but it is better than nothing. Recently, one of the APFs had a narrow escape when he received an electric shock that knocked him unconscious while fighting a fire.

Then there is the shortage of water. The brigade's 10,000-litre water storage tank has been empty for years, so Mahankal, up Chabahil, has become the new supply station. "There are times when we have to rush to Mahankal to get water and then rush to the site of the fire, wasting valuable time," says Hengarju. The yellow fire hydrants on the road are useless,

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PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

the Water Supply Corporation has long cut its supply.

And when, against all these odds, the fire engines make it to the road, they are often unable to provide timely service because of traffic jams and narrow roads that are not built to pass an eight-foot wide vehicle.

"A fire brigade is necessary not just in case of fire but also for rescue processes in case of disasters like earthquake," says Ghulam M Sherani, the program

manager of the UN's Disaster Management Program. "We have to develop a standard fire brigade system that is highly equipped to respond to such hazards, especially because of the unplanned urbanisation in Kathmandu"

The fire brigade is in serious need of new fire engines, ambulances, staff training and equipment as well as smaller fire trucks to negotiate Kathmandu's narrow alleys. ●

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The global Obama

PRAMOD MISHRA

Like Barack, Nepalis will transcend the limitations of their birth only with education

Barack Hussein Obama has become the darling of the world, and we will do well to ponder the making of Obama at a time of our own ambition to fashion a new multicultural Nepal for Nepalis.

Obama overcame many hurdles to become such a transformational figure, not the least of which was a middle name that was terrifying to many white American ears. So, what was the most crucial component in the making of Barack Obama? What is the one ingredient that contributed to developing and bringing all the other elements in his personality such a potent and persuasive mixture? It is his education. It was the quality of American education that helped Obama transcend the limitations of his birth and the circumstances of his upbringing.

In his autobiography, *Dreams from My Father*, Obama recounts how his mother woke him up at four-thirty in the morning and gave him English lessons once both found themselves in Indonesia where she could not afford to send him to the International School where the wealthy and the expatriates sent their children. When he complained about the early hour and sleep deprivation, his mother, who worked full-time,

said, "Well, this is no picnic for me either, buster!"

She sent him back to Hawaii at age ten to be with his maternal grandparents so he could have a better education. He had access to public libraries found in every city, no matter how poor and deprived, and every county, no matter how rural and remote. Schools cultivated the spirit of intellectual adventure, critical thinking and creativity rather than rote learning and hero worship.

In the absence of a father whose African blood still carried the notorious "one-drop rule" Obama found himself racially alone and confused about his identity. He was perceived as black but his mother and his grandparents were white midwesterners from Kansas. Obama indulged in drugs, avoided speaking to the only other black girl in his class, but eventually sought out the company of authors like W E B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X. By the time he reached high school at the exclusive Punahou Academy in Honolulu on a scholarship, Obama was ready to identify with and explore black America through his readings. In Occidental College



near Los Angeles, where he spent two years, he was more than ready to speak in public against South Africa's Apartheid regime. In New York at Columbia, Obama became reclusive, focused, and devoted as an undergraduate. His roommate Hassan advised him to lighten up but Obama was relentless in his single-minded pursuit of knowledge.

Academics combined with interest in public service led him to Chicago as a community organiser and on to Harvard Law,

where his book-black identity and white upbringing helped him avoid the bitterness of many blacks and enabled him to cultivate diverse friendships. His academic achievements, his mixed racial ancestry and public service made Obama one of a kind-flexible in his identity, able to draw on the entirety of American heritage in his expression. He was willing to focus on race as an issue and a problem but determined to go beyond to find a wider horizon. So, what made Barack Obama, what

made him find his place in history? He didn't just drop from the sky. When Obama speaks about his story only being possible in America, he is talking about his unique American education. American education transformed the black, Muslim-named son of a single mother into an all-encompassing, all-embracing American—indeed a global Obama.

Here in Nepal we are at a crossroads to build a multicultural Nepal. In order to achieve this goal, we must focus on building a culture of quality education with schools, libraries and motivated teachers. They must provide equal opportunity to all Nepalis to widen their horizons, and a culture of social service, unleashing their full potential. Only open access to knowledge available to all everywhere will enable us to fashion a new breed of Nepal-flexible in their identities, committed to the common good, and intelligent and compassionate enough to navigate and lead through the fast-drive future that is in store for Nepal. ●

Pramod Mishra is on research leave from Augustana College in the United States.

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Books for all



ROMA ARYAL

Almost everyone who left Sajha Prakashan's book fair at the Rastriya Sabha Griha in Kathmandu took home a bundle of books that were cheaply priced to start with, and then discounted.

"Each year, we have a massive increase in both the number of people who come and the sales," says Rudra Neupane, head of the marketing department at Sajha. The book fair has been held for the past 25 years and takes place simultaneously at 28 other locations in Nepal, besides Kathmandu.

This year, discount rates ranged from 25 to 80 per cent on some especially old but valuable issues of Sajha's

magazine *Garima*.

However, Sajha Prakashan has been struggling to pull funds together for the past few years. After the government gave private publishers permission to print and sell books in 32 districts in the Eastern and Western development regions, Sajha has lost its monopoly in cities where it was able to maintain a profit margin that was able to subsidise expenses for sales to remote districts. In places like Jumla where books have to be transported by helicopter, human or mule-back, Sajha allows a suicidal 86 per cent discount on its books.

While the private sector is apathetic towards remote regions of Nepal, as a public utility controlled by the government, Sajha meets government pressure to distribute. Although the

government does not provide financial support to Sajha, government officials oversee and coordinate activities. "We have been asking for subsidies, but demands have not been met so far," Victor Pradhan, general manager of Sajha Prakashan told *Nepali Times*. Discussion about making Sajha an independent institution has also been going on, but nothing is certain yet.

Sajha is not publishing prolifically—printing a mere 40 new titles per year. However, it works together with 19 other private publishers who are also being represented at the fair. Of the 5,000 titles on display in Kathmandu, everything from children's, classics, spiritual, self-help and academic books are available.

However, Sajha continues to make plans to expand its reach in terms of the book fair. This year, the bulk of books on display were in Nepali while a few were in Newari. Sajha is planning to publish course-books, literature and teach-yourself-books in a number of different languages including Maithili and Bhojपुरi. Moreover, they want to decentralise from Kathmandu to Dang and Biratnagar, where sales soared this year.

Despite difficulties, Victor is optimistic. He says: "We feel that our greatest achievement has been to encourage a reading culture among Nepalis." ●
Roma Aryal

The book fair will go on till 13 February, every day from 9AM-6PM.

February sky

In February, we have two brilliant planets to entertain us in the evening skies and a surprise celestial visitor (comet Lulin) swinging in the pre-dawn skies.

As the evenings are getting warmer, February is a great time for the amateur astronomer. Granted, the western sky is kind of dull. **Fomalhaut**, the brightest star near the southwest horizon, sets about an hour after the Sun. Most of the Great Summer Triangle has already set with the Sun but **Deneb** gives a bit of a show before dipping below the horizon.



STARGAZING
Kedar S Badu

However, there are many bright stars in the east and they will be visible until dawn. In the evening, at about 8.30 PM, you can see the **Orion** with three stars in its belt. Around Orion, you can easily identify the six brightest stars that belong to the so called 'Winter Hexagon'. The bright star to the south east of Orion the Hunter is the Dog star **Sirius**, the brightest star in our night sky. In fact this star is 25 times brighter than our Sun.

Upon closer observation, you will see that the hunter and his dogs seem to be chasing the Bull, Taurus, which is just to the west of them. The Bull's right eye contains the bright red-orange star **Aldebaran**, another member of the Winter-Hexagon. Notice that the three stars in Orion's belt point northwest to Aldebaran. The Bull's face and horns form a distinctive 'V' shaped pattern.

Comet Lulin in the predawn sky

Comet Lulin, discovered in July 2007, should be the highlight of this season. It's predicted to reach about fifth magnitude in late February, so it should be easily seen through binoculars. It may even become detectable with the unaided eye in a dark, moonless sky. Both professional and amateur astronomers have been tracking this unusual comet. Its most interesting characteristic is that it is actually moving in the opposite direction to the planets. As it moves to its closest approach to Earth on 24 February, Lulin is expected to brighten to be visible to the naked eye and will be observable low in the sky in an east-southeast direction before dawn.

Mercury is at its greatest separation west from the Sun on 13 February. But it rises only just over an hour before sunrise making the planet almost invisible this month. **Venus** is still a brilliant 'Evening Star' in the south-western sky at dusk. On the evening of 27 February, the narrow crescent Moon will appear directly below Venus, both fitting nicely into the same field of view through binoculars.

Mars is rising only a few minutes before sunrise and we won't be getting good views of the Red Planet until after the summer. **Jupiter**, like Mars, rises less than an hour before the Sun this month. This giant planet won't be easily observable until after the summer. **Saturn** is rising in the middle of the evening, and it's well up in the southern sky by dawn. Many of Saturn's moons can also be seen in the telescope including the largest and brightest saturnian moon **Titan**. On the evening of 11 February, the gibbous Moon will appear directly below Saturn, just a few degrees away.

As the international year of astronomy (IYA 2009) is being celebrated throughout the world, don't miss participating in some of its corner-stone projects, especially the global star party <http://www.100hoursofastronomy.org/>

Wishing you clear skies and great stargazing in February! ●

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Love in the Air**, art by Ragini Upadhyay-Grela at 5.30 PM till 8 March, Siddhartha Gallery. 4218048
- ❖ **Rakshya Nepal Mela** on 14 February from 10AM to 5PM at The New Era, Battispatali
- ❖ **A Search for Serenity**, artwork by Chirag Bangdel till 15 February, Gallery 32, Kamaladi
- ❖ **Lunch-hour doodles**, illustrations by Preena Shrestha till 15 February, The Bakery Cafe, Pulchok

EVENTS

- ❖ **Second DOS Workshop '09**, 16-28 February at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka. 9851108338
- ❖ **Call for entries** for Film South Asia, documentaries made in and after January 2007 qualified. For deadlines, visit filmsouthasia.org. 5552141
- ❖ **Valentine special** at Buy & Sell Flea Market, first Saturday of every month, Sangati Museum Road, Chhauni. 9841203646

MUSIC

- ❖ **Yala Maya Classic** featuring Tarabir Singh Tuladhar and Jeevan Rai on 13 February at 5PM at Yalamaya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, Rs 100. 5553767
- ❖ **Sarangi Ethnic Project** Poiesie and the Fags, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhumsikhel. 5013554
- ❖ **Rock with Rashmi** every Friday and Sufi and Raga every Saturday 8 PM onwards, Absolute Lounge Bar, Pulchowk.
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Strings Band** live every Tuesday at G's Terrace Restaurant and Bar, Thamel.
- ❖ **Wednesday Melody** at Jazzabell Café, Happy hour 6-8PM and TGIF party with live band Epic every Friday at 8PM. 2114075
- ❖ **Some like it hot** every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, 7PM onwards, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Happy cocktail hour**, 5-7PM, ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar.
- ❖ **Live Sensation**, live performance by Yankey, every Saturday, 9PM, the Hyatt Regency. 4491234.
- ❖ **Fusion and Looza** Band every Friday night, Bhumi Resto Lounge, Lazimpat. 4412193
- ❖ **Fusion and Classical Music** by Anil Shahi every Wednesday, rock with Rashmi Singh every Friday, Sufi & Raga with Hemant Rana every Saturday, 8PM onwards, Absolute Bar. 5521408
- ❖ **Ladies night** with free cocktail and unplugged music, every Wednesday, happy hour everyday 5-7PM, buy one get one free, Jatra R&B.

DINING

- ❖ **Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4263070
- ❖ **Fresh Himalayan rainbow trout** at Rox Restaurant all February 7PM onwards, Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **Mediterranean cuisine** every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle-East at The Café, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Strawberry Etagerie** at The Lounge from 4.30 PM- 6.30 PM. Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Nhuchhe goes Thai** at Nhuchhe's Thai Kitchen, Baluwatar. 4429903
- ❖ **Fusion** of Marcela Ragan's new menu and Mannie's new bar at Dhokaima Café. 5522113
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-la, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Pasta pesto passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs** at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999

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



Quest Entertainment



In *Luck by Chance*, Sona (Konkona Sen Sharma), a wide-eyed yet ambitious girl comes to Bombay with big dreams of becoming a film star. She is willing to do whatever it takes to make it. Living in the city, she makes friends with those whose lives are interconnected to Bollywood and are all in search of their own grandiose dreams of making it big. When Vikram (Farhan Akhtar), who came to Bombay leaving his posh life in Delhi, and Sona start spending time together, they soon form a romantic relationship. Meanwhile, Rolly (Rishi Kapoor) is making a potential blockbuster. But when there's trouble on the sets of Rolly's new film, fate hands Vikram a chance at his dreams when he is called in for an audition.

Call 4442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal
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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

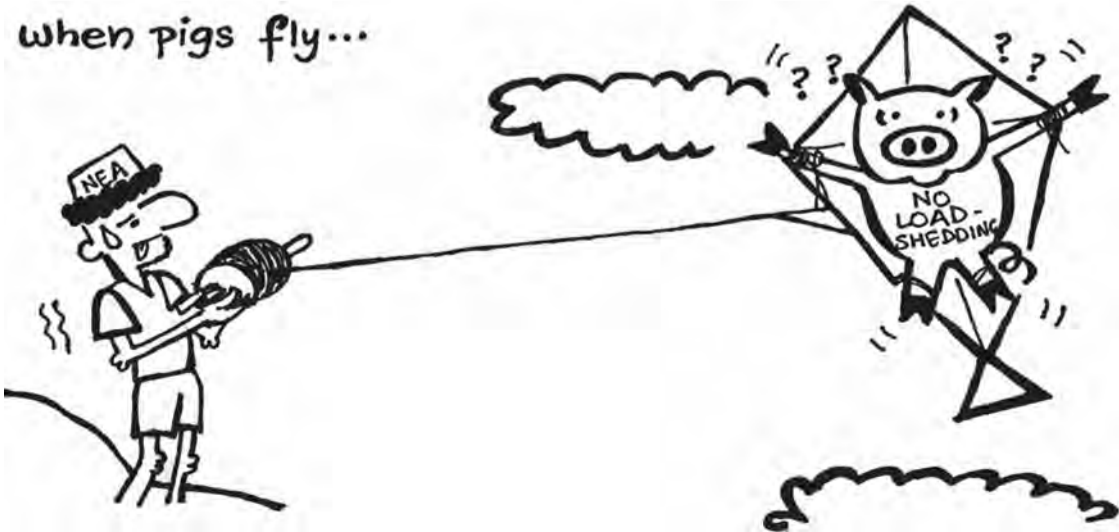
This year's winter drought is about to enter into five months this week, already second driest of a decade. As a consequence of cloud sunny days, mercury levels are about 5 degrees higher than the expected maximum of this month. For example, Valley recorded 26 degrees on Wednesday while average maximum temperature of the month is 18 degrees. Satellite pictures of Wednesday evening show no westerly fronts and associated clouds around us to break the persistent drought. This means no change in existing weather pattern—foggy morning and sunny afternoon in the mountain and hills. Most of the Tarai will remain under suspended mist layer.



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KIRAN PANDAY

LISTEN TO ME: NC president Girija Prasad Koirala, UML's Madhab Kumar Nepal and Ratriya Janashakti Party's Surya Bahadur Thapa at a discussion about the constitution at Everest Hotel on Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

AU REVOIR: Outgoing UNMIN Chief and Special representative of UN Secretary General Ian Martin and his newly appointed successor Karin Landgren at a farewell lunch at Hotel Shangri La on Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

20/20: National eye sight program conducts a mobile eye camp in Adarsha Kanya Niketan School in Lagankhel on Tuesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

WALK THE LINE: Newari women participate in the annual Baha Puja in their traditional costumes and visit Buddhist bahas in Patan on Tuesday.



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Doors open at 5:30pm, Feb 14, 2009. Free parking.

Prado and Rado

Every time the political trinity has a summit and buries the hatchet, you can be sure some mantri or other goes and shoots his mouth off, triggering another avalanche of accusations and counter accusations that reverberates for a week.

No sooner had PKD and GPK smoked the peace pipe, and the prime minister assured his ex of house rental, secretariat expenses, health care benefits, and sundry perks, than Cultural Revolution Minister Kirati suggests every Nepali should bear

arms to fight southern expansionism. And BRB writes that since anarchy would hasten the day when the Maoists could stage state capture, the current chaos is good for Nepal. Then Maoist union leader Comrade Lekhnath threatens to "dislocate the spine of anyone who dares stand in our way" (exact quote).

☞

But why did Girja Bau have to be so greedy and accept PKD's offer to use tax payers' money to pay for his retirement benefits? In his own devious way, he probably thought he'd pulled a fast one on His Fierceness because while he (Awesome) would think GPK would return the favour and not try to topple his government out of sheer gratitude, he would actually double cross the PM and intensify efforts to oust the Maoists by wooing away the eh-maleys. No wonder the prime minister has a grudging admiration for the Old Fox because Sanu Buwa is actually even more unreliable than he is.

The reason Dahal wanted Koirala to accept the perks was to set a precedence so that when he is out of a job, he'd also be eligible. Smart. We hear that while ex-interior minister Sitaula was the middle-man in the PKD-GPK deal and strongly urged his boss to accept it, while Sushil Da was dead against saying the Maoists would demand a pound of flesh. And there is also talk of GP striking a secret sweetheart deal for Sujata under which the First Dotter gets Sunsari in a platter in the by-elections.

☞

See, no matter who comes to power they always try to get their relatives jobs.

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Could it be because both words 'Nepal' and 'nepotism' start with the prefix 'nep'? The saga of Comrade Yummy's sis continues as she flits about from KUKL to NPC, and has now been installed at the Lok Sewa. The only fellow in the Yummy household who hasn't yet got a govt job is the family canine, but the Ass hears the mutt too is being groomed to be a sniffer in the Bomb Squad with the rank of Staff Sergeant. In all this, hubby Rambabu has been squeaky clean, going out of his way not to help anyone who is a blood relation, only folks from his Gorkha neighbourhood.

☞

One wonders where COAS Cutwall gets his confidence from despite the blistering onslaught from Cloudy and the Comrades on everything from new recruitment to army integration. The general's handshake is extra-firm these days and he seems to have the prime minister in his vice-like grip.

Fearsome and The Chief have apparently already agreed mota-moti on a

numerical compromise formula, but the PM is waiting till after the PLA anniversary show of strength to break the news in the cantonments.

☞

Once again, at a secret Unified Maobaddies meeting this week the cadre poured derision at their comrade leaders going soft and adopting the "Prado and Rado" culture. And the hardcore seems to be trying to sabotage the leadership's overtures to India by deliberately targeting Indian JVs, the latest being the medical college in Pokhara. At the ex-royal Golf Club even the caddies have become baddies. The YCL's energy could be deployed much more constructively if they all got on stationary exercise bicycles installed with dynamos and generated electricity to feed into the grid.

☞

There was a time when Nepalis pretending to be Bhutan refugees started arriving at European airports without travel documents to seek political asylum. How the tables have turned. It seems young Bhutani women are in high demand in Jhapa and surrounding districts because local Nepali guys aspire to be accompanying spouses in third country resettlement.

☞

Tailpiece: Biratnagar industrialists this week protested frequent chukka jams by (guess what?) staging a chukka jam.

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