

Blizzards claim 24 lives; dozens go missing

HT 16-10-14

Ramji Rana/Rupnarayan Dhakal
Lamjung/Pokhara, October 15

At least 24 persons were killed in blizzards triggered by off-season snowfall in Manang and Mustang districts, while dozens have gone missing.

Of the deceased, 12 are foreign trekkers. Sixteen bodies were recovered from Thorang La Pass area that borders Manang and Mustang while eight were found in Kanglapas area of Manang.

Mustang CDO Baburam Bhandari said 16 bodies were found between Dumcamp and Thorang La Pass area on the Annapurna Circuit. Nine of the killed are Nepalese and seven are foreigners — three Israelis, three Polish and one Vietnamese.

Nineteen trekkers trapped in an avalanche were rescued from the area. They have been taken to Jomsom while three, who were not injured have been kept at Muktinath. According to Bhandari, of the 500 trekking to Mustang via Thorang La Pass from Manang, around 250 have come into contact while as many have not.

A Nepali Army team with a helicopter has launched rescue operation, while a police team is helping with rescue operation on land.

Mahendra Acharya of Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal said 85 foreign trekkers were missing on the Annapurna Circuit alone. "The number of Nepali trekkers is yet to be established," Acharya added.

Manang CDO Devendra



Photo Courtesy: DPR, Nepali Army

Nepali Army personnel rescuing trekkers trapped in the snow at Thorang La Pass area in the Annapurna circuit, in Manang, on Wednesday.

Lamichhane said eight people were killed in snowfall. Three bodies were recovered at Naar VDC while five were found at Fu VDC. Four Canadians and one Indian national were found at Fu. Three Canadians and one Nepali were rescued from Fu area. The trekkers were killed while trying to cross Thorang La area.

SSP Balam Sharma at Zonal Police Office, Gandaki, said that most of the killed and the missing are foreign trekkers. Police have halted trekking at Annapurna Circuit.

The identities of those killed in the blizzards are yet to be ascertained.

Two Slovaks, three Nepalis lost

MYAGDI: Five persons including two Slovaks have gone missing in an avalanche at Dhaulagiri Base camp at Mudi VDC. Inspector Bimal Kumar Upadhyay said the missing have been identified as Slovaks John Matik and Vladimir Swansar and Nepalese Bhoj Kumar Rai of Okhaldhunga, Dorje Sherpa and Gopal Rai of Solukhumbhu. "The chance of rescuing them alive is slim," Inspector Upadhyay

said. Air Manang and Shree Airlines' helicopters rescued eight persons trapped in the avalanche. The team that had gone for trekking to Dhaulagiri region through Adventure Travel had split at two places. Guide Rukaji Magar said that nine days after the team reached the base camp, the avalanche hit them suddenly. DSP Jannardan GC said the search operation had halted due to snowfall. "We shall resume it tomorrow morning." —HNS

Man gives life to save many backpackers

Injured trekkers recount experience of deadly snowstorm in the Annapurna circuit

H/T 17-10-14

Rajan Pokhrel
Kathmandu, October 16

Maya Ora, Linor Kajan and Yakov Megreli and other Israeli trekkers, undergoing treatment at Nepali Army hospital in Kathmandu after being rescued from a blizzard near Thorang La Pass in the Annapurna circuit on Tuesday, have Pasang Tamang to thank for saving them from the year's second deadliest mountain disaster that killed 32 people.

"I can't imagine what could have happened to us if he was not there," Maya said, sharing the heroic tale of the saviour. "Our porter rescued more than 20 people. We all got a second lease of life," she recounted.

"It was around 10:00 am on Tuesday when the snowstorm hit hikers near Thorang La Pass at 5000 metres," Linor said. According to her, they spent the night at a local teahouse without food and water and trekked for five hours before a rescue chopper airlifted them the next day. "It was a miracle."

Maya and others have no information about what happened to the 46-year-old father of two. But, their saviour couldn't save his own life. Tamang's body is now at TU Teaching Hospital for post-mortem.

Tamang, a resident of Gambodanda in Rasuwa district, was assigned as a porter to Maya and Rotem Shir. Being an experienced support staff, he saved the lives of many stranded hikers who were hit hard by the snowstorm, Amrit Thapa Magar who saw half of Tamang's body buried in the snow told this daily.

"I saw many hikers crying out for Pasang's help. They also



Pasang Tamang

tres away from Pasang said. Laxman Ghimire, managing director at Swissa Rafting and Trekking Expedition, which managed the trek for more than 150 Israeli tourists in the Annapurna circuit said Rs 25,000 and US\$100 were recovered from Tamang's body. It was found that the sum was offered by hikers as he saved them, he said.

According to him, Pasang's wife, along with her son and daughter, were informed about the incident in the afternoon. Of the 12 Israelis rescued by NA yesterday, Eitan Eidan who suffered severe compression injury on his back is now undergoing treatment at ITCU ward, while thirteen others including a Hong Kong couple suffered frostbite, said Dr Manish Thapa, adding that most of them will be discharged in the next two days as they are out of danger.

Hospital administration chief Colonel Bhaj Krishna Khatri said four bodies — two Polish and one Nepali and one Israeli — which were airlifted to Kathmandu were sent to TU Teaching Hospital for post-



Israeli trekkers Maya Ora (right) along with Yakov Megreli (centre) and Linor Kajan, who were rescued by the Nepali Army from an avalanche, speaking to the media at Army Hospital, where they are undergoing treatment, in Chhauani, Kathmandu, on Thursday.

Yaron Mayer visited the Army hospital to meet the trekkers. Swissa said 12 Israelis, struck in the snowstorm are still unaccounted for. "The bodies of Novad, Tamar, Agam, Roy, Michael and Inna have been found so far." A few of them were trekking after celebrating

Blizzard death toll reaches 32, more than 118 rescued

Rupnarayan Dhakal/Ramiji Rana
Pokhara/Lamjung, October 16

The death toll due to blizzards and avalanches in Myagdi, Manang and Mustang has climbed to 32. More than 118 persons who had been trapped have been rescued from various areas.

Apart from 16 bodies found in Mustang yesterday, the body of Bishnu Bahadur Budha, 37, of Baglung, a government employee serving in Mustang, was dug out from under a thick blanket of snow in Ghami VDC today, pushing the death toll in the district to 17.

Slovakians John Matik, Vladimir Swansar,

were missing in an avalanche on the base camp of Mt. Dhaulagiri of Myagdi were found dead today. Likewise, two more bodies were found from somewhere between Manang's Fu and Kanglang villages today.

DSP Rajendrababu Regimi said the total casualty in the district has risen to 10. So far, 118 persons trapped in the troubled areas have been rescued. "They were rescued from different places of Manang and Mustang," said Keshav Pande, coordinator of a rescue committee formed by Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal. Pande added that 100 more people could be missing. Ten choppers were used by

Man gives life to save many

Injured trekkers recount experience of deadly snowstorm in the Annapurna circuit

HT 17-10-4

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Tamang, a resident of Gam-bodanda in Rasuwa district, was assigned as a porter to Maya and Rotem Shir. Being an experienced support staff, he saved the lives of many stranded hikers who were hit hard by the snowstorm, Amrit Thapa Magar who saw half of Tamang's body buried in the snow told this daily.

"I saw many hikers crying out for Pasang's help. They also offered him financial reward," Magar, who stood just 300 me-



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Israeli ambassador to Nepal



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gone missing in an avalanche on the base camp of Mt Dhaulagiri of Myagdi were found dead today. Likewise, two more bodies were found from somewhere between Manang's, Fu and Kanglang villages today.

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Israeli trekkers Maya Ora (right) along with Yakov Megreli (centre) and Linor Kajan, who were rescued by the Nepali Army from an avalanche, speaking to the media at Army Hospital, where they are undergoing treatment, in Chhauni, Kathmandu, on Thursday.

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Swissa said 12 Israelis struck in the snowstorm are still unaccounted for. "The bodies of Novad, Tamar, Agam, Roy, Michael and Inna have been found so far." A few of them were trekking after celebrating the Israeli festival Sukkot in Manang, Swissa said.

Snowstorm sweeps West

Kills at least 21 people, including 12 foreigners, in Manang, Mustang and Myagdi districts

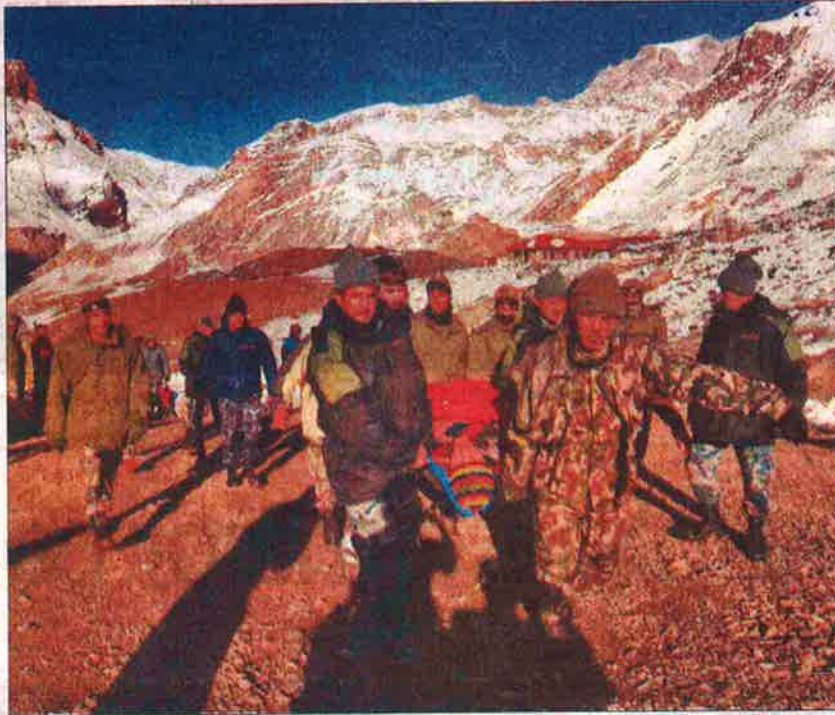
PRASATI SHAM
KATHMANDU, OCT 15

Unusual rains accompanied by snowstorm which swept through western Nepal, have reportedly killed at least 21 people, including 12 foreigners, and left scores missing. Eighteen have been rescued from different incident sites in Manang and Mustang districts on Wednesday.

The Home Ministry has, however, put the number of deaths at 11.

Three persons, believed to be local yak herders were found dead in Nar-4 village in Manang on Tuesday. With this, the snow blizzard toll reaches 24 in the past two days.

A team of security personnel recovered 16 bodies, including that of seven foreigners, from Dump Camp located at an altitude of around 5,000 metres along the famous Annapurna Circuit, after passing Thorong La (5,416 metres above sea level) and Muktinath in Mustang district on Wednesday afternoon. According to Chief District Officer of Mustang, Baburam Bhandari, the trekkers are believed to have been trapped under the heavy rains accompanied by snowstorm that lashed the region since Monday evening. Among the 16 bodies recovered from Mustang, three are of Polish nationals, three Israelis and one Vietnamese but their identities are yet to be ascertained. The remaining bodies belong to Nepali citizens. "The snow blizzard is likely to have happened on Tuesday morning."



■ Nepal Army personnel rescue an injured person on a himalayan foothill on Wednesday after blizzards and avalanches triggered by the tail of cyclone Hudhud hit three western districts.

POST COURTESY: NEPAL ARMY

Bhandari said, adding that the district authority along with the security forces was only informed late on Tuesday.

In another incident, the bodies of five foreign trekkers—four Canadians and an Indian—were recovered from Mamlang in Nar Phu village on Wednesday. The trekkers had gone missing since Tuesday, according to DSP Rajendra Babu Regmi.

The period between October and November is considered the peak tourist

season in Manang and Mustang. "We are issuing entry permit for 280-300 people daily these days," said Junu Kumari Gurung, a staff based at Dharapani in Manang, under the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACAP) that administers the tourist flow in the region.

On Sunday, a total of 356 people including trekkers and their associates had reached Manang on their way to Muktinath in Mustang after passing the Thorong La.

However, only 244 people have made it to Muktinath so far, said Bidur Kuinkel, chief at Mustang section of ACAP.

Five people, including two Slovakian trekkers, have been missing in Dhaulagiri region in Myagdi district since Tuesday. Eight other Slovaks of the same expedition team were rescued from the site on Wednesday.

Several places in Nepal started witnessing sudden change in weather patterns due to the influence of cyclone Hudhud that made

landfall in India's Andhra Pradesh on Sunday afternoon. The western and central districts in Nepal experienced the severity of Hudhud effect with some places along the Tarai plains experiencing heavy rains and snowfall in the high-altitude areas, crippling the normal life.

Weathermen and experts had forecast the direction of cyclone to be north-west that would have impacted some places including high-altitude regions in the far-west in Nepal. "But the cyclonic movement unexpectedly turned the earlier predicted direction on Monday night towards the north-east, which ultimately hit the central part intensely," said Suman Regmi, chief at the Meteorological Forecasting Division. The core of the heaviest rain of the cyclone Hudhud hit the central region, affecting the Annapurna region, the famous trekking routes in the country.

"The trekkers were informed about possible impact of Hudhud in the Far-west so they set off for the trek in the Annapurna region. However, suddenly the cyclone changed its direction and affected the area," Regmi said.

The weather condition is gradually improving from Wednesday morning in many parts of the country, including the Annapurna region. "We expect improved weather throughout the country from Thursday," Regmi said.

(With inputs from Prem Nepal in Pokhara and Ghanashyam Khadka in Myagdi)

KP 17-10-19

19 more bodies found; 211 saved from blizzard

**PREM NEPALI, GHANASHYAM
KHADKA & PRAGATI SHAHI**
KATHMANDU, OCT 16

Nineteen more bodies were recovered in Manang, Mustang and Myagdi districts on Thursday, pushing the death toll of unseasonal blizzards and avalanches in the Annapurna region to 29. Eleven bodies were those of foreign nationals, the authorities said. The search teams also rescued 211 people from the region.

According to Govind Prasad Pathak, chief of police in Mustang, nine bodies, including those of three Nepalis, two Israelis and one Polish, were recovered near Thorong La pass at an altitude of 5,400 metres above the sea level. The identities of the victims are yet to be ascertained.

In Manang district, five bodies—of three Nepalis and two Indians—were found in Kangla Fu pass. Deputy Superintendent of Police Rajendra Babu Regmi said they could not bring the remains to Chame because of bad weather.

Five helicopters were used to rescue the trekkers and their associates trapped in the Annapurna region since early Tuesday morning. Chief District Officer of Manang Devendra Lamichhane said all rescue efforts had to be halted on Thursday evening because of poor visibility. He said the weather was clear from 6am until 5pm.

In Myagdi, bodies of five people—three Nepalis and two Slovaks—were pulled out the snow. They had been reported missing in an avalanche on Tuesday. Two



■ Rescuers carry a victim of an avalanche before they airlift the body from Thorong La pass area on Thursday. PHOTO COURTESY: NEPAL ARMY

Indian trekkers were rescued from the area.

The disaster is the second deadliest tragedy to hit the mountains in Nepal this year after the massive avalanche in Everest region that killed 16 Sherpa guides in April.

Meanwhile, the government has formed a high-level team under Tourism Minister Deepak Chandra Amatya to assist in the ongoing search and rescue mission. A meeting of the team members was held at the Tourism Ministry on Thursday to discuss the ways to make the search and rescue mission more effective. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sushil Koirala has extended condolence to the families of those killed in blizzards and avalanches. Koirala urged the Army, police, local administrations, tourism entrepre-

neurs, and trekking and mountaineering agencies operating in the area for prompt search and rescue of the people missing in the incident. Koirala added that the government was ready to collaborate with non-government organisations and development partners to improve the weather forecast system along the trekking routes.

100 missing in Upper Dolpa

Around 100 people, including 60 foreign trekkers, have been reported missing in remote Upper Dolpa. Hem Thapa of CG Trekking Store said that of the 10 tourist teams who were trekking around the region, only one comprising 17 members came in contact on Thursday afternoon. The status of other teams remained unknown as of the evening.

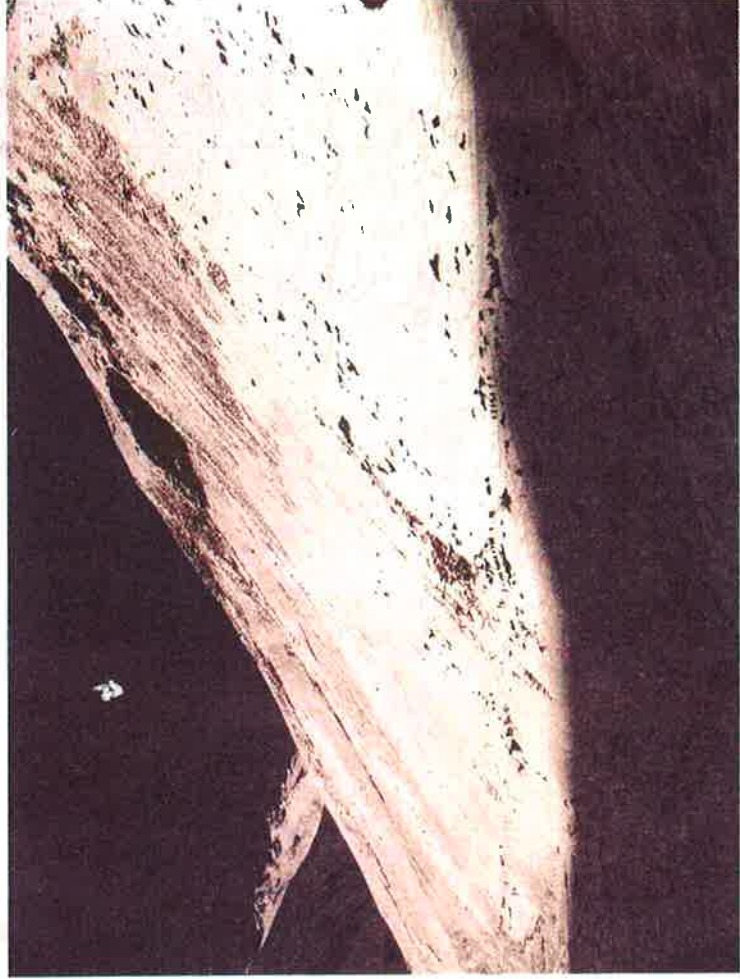
AFTER THE STORM

This week's blizzard in the central Himalaya was a wakeup call to install effective early warning weather systems

KUNDA DIXIT



NEPAL ARMY



SURAJ SHAKYA

DISASTROUS AUTUMN: The storm came in October, when locals and trekkers least expected it. Nepal Army helicopters arrived on the morning after to ferry out the survivors of the blizzards and avalanche in Manang. (left). Hundreds of trekkers are still stranded in the Manaslu Circuit (right) where hikers on the trail look like ants amidst the snow cover in a picture taken on Wednesday morning.



5 (1650)

▲ Dhaulagiri 8167m

17 DEAD

Mustang

Manaslu

mm

Nepal



The devastating death toll from this week's blizzard and avalanches in the Annapurnas has once more highlighted the urgent need for weather early warning for trekkers in the Himalaya.

Till press time on Thursday, 32 people were confirmed dead in Manang and Mustang, with 85 still unaccounted for. There is still no word on dozens of trekkers who were planning to cross Larkya La in the Manaslu circuit on Tuesday.

This is not the first time blizzards and avalanches have hit the high Himalaya in recent years. Post-monsoon typhoons from the Bay of Bengal have been particularly disastrous. In November 1995, 13 Japanese trekkers and 11 Nepali guides were killed as they slept during a blizzard on the Gokyo trail. In October 2005, 18 Nepali and French climbers were killed in an avalanche on Kang Guru in Maname.

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"Given that there is mobile and internet access along the Annapurna circuit, you cannot blame weather alone," says climate analyst Ngamindra Dahal. "This wasn't a surprise storm. The real question is why weren't the warnings heeded?"

Indeed, Indian and Nepal meteorological offices had been warning about heavy precipitation from the remnants of Cyclone Hudhud as it veered north towards Nepal ever since it made landfall on 12 October. International tv channels warned of heavy rain in western and central Nepal. Two days before the storm arrived, Nepali media had warned farmers to protect their harvests.

The information was there.

cried wolf so often that many people ignore the warnings. Also, for a country that is so dependent on trekking and mountaineering, there isn't a formal channel to provide official and dependable early warning to people in the mountains. Since climate change is making weather more unpredictable globally, there is all the more reason to have multi-disaster preparedness systems in place.

While trekkers in Chame and Manang watched weather reports on tv or on mobile internet, up the valley lodges do not have electricity and there is no phone signal. Trekkers at Thorung Phedi or Kangshar would essentially have been incommunicado unless they had satellite phones.

The Annapurnas had seen a spell of brilliantly clear and crisp autumn weather till Sunday, which suddenly turned overnight. By the time the blizzards hit on Tuesday 14 October, many trekkers and their guides were



WE WERE WARNED: Weather forecast maps like this one by meteorologist Eric Leister predicted two days before the storm hit Nepal: 'the core of the heaviest rain into the middle of the new week will likely sweep to the northeast toward the India-Nepal border'.

passes requiring long commitment at high altitude, and allowing plenty of time for the weather to change rapidly for the worse.

"If it looks bad, it probably is going to be bad," says Cowan, and advises, "stay put in your tent or shelter, wait for one day or two. To hell with the flight home. No one should have ventured out to cross Thorung La with the weather as threatening as it was, nor should their trekking guides have allowed it."

The other aspect is proper disaster planning with preparation and proactive dissemination of early warning of weather. In 1999 when a cyclone hit the coast of Odisha in India, 10,000 people were killed, but with new satellite-based early warning, communications and mandatory evacuation of coastal areas there were minimal casualties during cyclones

weather satellite imagery, they need to communicate this quickly and effectively to people and visitors on the mountains. In Nepal, this could be done through the media, networks like the Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN), Nepal Mountaineering Association, Himalayan Rescue Association, or even telecom companies which can send warnings through mass texting to selected parts of the country.

In the high mountains of Nepal there are telecommunication blind spots, which means trekkers may not receive warnings. To get around this, it could be made mandatory for huts at Thorung Phedi or below Larkya to have CDMA phones. Trekking groups on passes above 5,000m could be required to carry satellite phones.

Says Cowan: "Sadly, it is all so obvious but people think that because it is trekking, they can take chances. You can never do that in the high mountains



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The casualties among trekkers in blizzards and floods tend to be higher in the peak autumn season, since heavy rains are not expected. However, weather experts say October is when trekkers and mountaineers

have to most careful because it is the cyclone season in the Bay of Bengal.

"Given that there is mobile and internet access along the Annapurna circuit, you cannot blame weather alone," says climate analyst Ngamintra Dahal, "this wasn't a surprise storm. The real question is why weren't the warnings heeded?"

Indeed, Indian and Nepal meteorological offices had been warning about heavy precipitation from the remnants of Cyclone Hudhud as it veered north towards Nepal ever since it made landfall on 12 October. International tv channels warned of heavy rain in western and central Nepal. Two days before the storm arrived, Nepali media had warned farmers to protect their harvests.

The information was there, but it doesn't seem to have got to the trekkers high up behind the Annapurnas. The question is why.

One reason could be that weather forecasts are usually unreliable and Met offices have

cried wolf so often that many people ignore the warnings. Also, for a country that is so dependent on trekking and mountaineering, there isn't a formal channel to provide official and dependable early warning to people in the mountains. Since climate change is making weather more unpredictable globally, there is all the more reason to have multi-disaster preparedness systems in place.

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It is not enough for the authorities to know about approaching weather through



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Narrow escape

The first trekkers from Israel, Hong Kong, and Germany rescued from the Mustang side of Thorung La were brought to Kathmandu on Wednesday and are undergoing treatment for severe sunburn and frostbite at the Army Hospital in Kathmandu. After a night of heavy snowfall and high winds, some of them had decided to walk down because the sun was out.

"Our plan was to stay in the tea shop to ride out the storm, but when we saw that it was all clear and bright the next morning we decided to walk down," said Yakov Megreli (*pic. below*) at a press meet. But the snow was chest-deep and they got lost on their way down. After eight hours, they could finally make a call on their mobile.



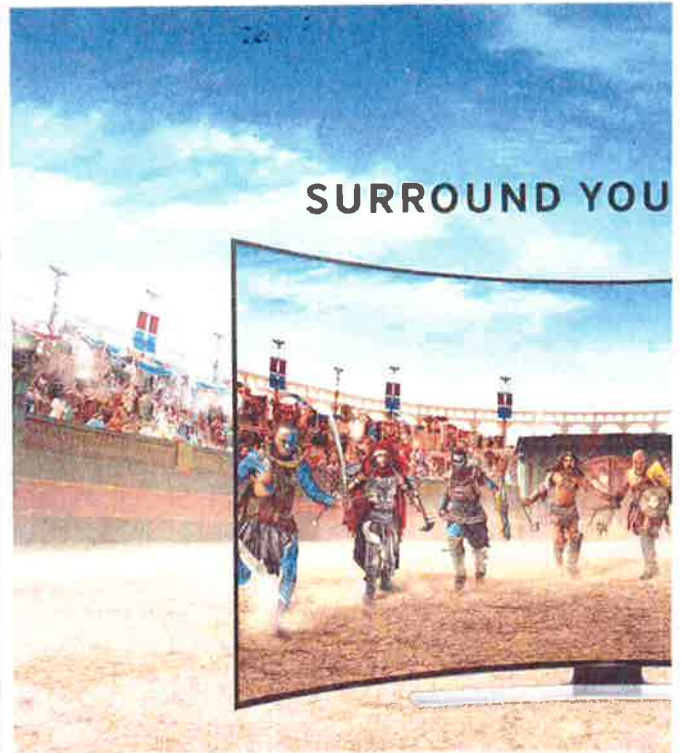
BKRAM/RAI

HAPPY TO BE HERE: Israeli trekkers (l-r) Lior Kajan, Yakov Megreli, and Maya Ora talk to journalists at the Army Hospital on Thursday after being rescued from the Mustang-side of Thorung La on Wednesday. They credited their guide and the army for saving them.

"We called the travel agency and embassy, and asked them to send helicopters. Until then, we were guided through the snow by our porter. They picked us up on the mountain and flew first to Muktinath before bringing us to Kathmandu," says Maya Ora.

The Israelis credited their guides for probably saving their lives by advising them not to move out of the tea shop during the storm. Two other Israelis were not so lucky. They were buried in an avalanche below Thorung La along with two Poles and nine Nepalis. At Phu, four Canadians, three Indians and three Nepalis were killed.

At Dhaulagiri Base Camp, two Slovak climbers and their three guides were rescued. The condition of the other trekkers is still not made



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BKRAM RAI

HAPPY TO BE HERE: Israeli trekkers (l-r) Linor Kajan, Yakov Megreli, and Maya Ora talk to journalists at the Army Hospital on Thursday after being rescued from the Mustang-side of Thorung La on Wednesday. They credited their guide and the army for saving them.

"We called the travel agency and embassy, and asked them to send helicopters. Until then, we were guided through the snow by our porter. They picked us up on the mountain and flew first to Muktinath before bringing us to Kathmandu," says Maya Ora.


The Israelis credited their guides for probably saving their lives by advising them not to move out of the tea shop during the storm. Two other Israelis were not so lucky. They were buried in an avalanche below Thorung La along with two Poles and nine Nepalis. At Phu, four Canadians, three Indians and three Nepalis were killed.

At Dhaulagiri Base Camp, two Slovak climbers and their three Sherpa guides from a 11-member expedition have still not made contact after being caught in an avalanche.

Twenty one people are so far confirmed dead and hundreds are stranded and unaccounted for after Tuesday's storm in the Annapurna, Dhaulagiri and Manaslu areas. Seventy trekkers were rescued from Manang and 47 from Mustang as this paper went to press on Thursday evening.

Manang, through which hundreds of tourists attempt to cross the Thorung La (5416m) into Mustang every day, was worst hit. Eighty-five of the 345 trekkers who registered at the ACAP checkpoint on Monday en route to Yak Kharka and Thorung Phedi haven't made it over to the other side.

Trekkers contacted Germany through a satellite phone and said there was a "large group" of them on the pass waiting for rescue. The message was relayed to the Nepal Army which had three rescue helicopters in the area on Thursday.

The Army had brought out four bodies from the western side of the pass on Wednesday and Thursday. District administration office in Manang said ten trekkers were also buried in snow in the Phu Valley near the China border. 

Sunir Pandey

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Blizzard death toll hits 29

RE-17-10-14

Army rescues 69 Thursday

**SANTOSH POKHAREL,
DILIP PAUDEL AND
HARI KRISHNA GAUTAM**
POKHARA, Oct 16

Death toll from blizzards and avalanche that struck high mountains in western Nepal reached 29 Thursday with recovery of 18 new bodies, said local authorities.

Nepal Army (NA) personnel recovered 10 more dead bodies in Mustang and three more dead bodies in Manang until Thursday. Similarly, five trekkers missing following an avalanche in Myagdi were also found dead on Thursday, according to local authorities.

Earlier, 11 bodies -- four in Mustang and seven in Manang -- were found as of Wednesday.

Of the total 10 new dead bodies found in Mustang, two are of Israelis, one is of Polish and two are of Nepalis. Identities of the remaining six bodies have yet to be confirmed. Similarly, of the total three new dead bodies found in Manang, two are of Indians and one is of a Nepali.

In Myagdi, three of the five people found dead are Nepali while the remaining are Solvaks.

Mustang's Chief District Officer (CDO) Baburam

Delay proved costly: Madan Thapa, survivor

On Monday night, around 450 trekkers and guides; foreigners as well as Nepali, had stayed at High Camp and several other hotels in the area. They were all trekking upward from early Tuesday morning, some ahead of us and some behind.

I was accompanying an Italian on the Annapurna Circuit trek. On Tuesday morning, we left High Camp hotel and began trekking uphill toward Thorang La. As we trudged upward, it started raining and snowing.

Rain and snowfall made it very difficult for us to walk. However, we kept trekking for a couple of hours and reached Thorang La peak (5416 m) at 9 am. Around 200 trekkers had already reached there by that time. They were all dejected and uncertain about whether to move forward or stay there.

I had dealt with such adverse weather

See page 2: Delay...



PHOTO COURTESY: JAVARJAN GC

Rescue underway for trekkers stranded at Dhaulagiri base camp in Myagdi district on Thursday. Nepal Army said 69 trekkers were rescued Thursday in the snowstorm hit areas of western Nepal.

Bhandari told Republica that five of the total 10 new bodies were brought to Muktimath Thursday. However, the remaining bodies were still lying in the bliz-

zard-hit area until Thursday evening. "The area where the remaining dead bodies are still lying is very difficult to reach," said DSP Govinda Pathak, chief of the District

Police Office (DPO) of Mustang. "We will try to bring them on Friday." In Manang, none of the 10 dead bodies -- seven found Wednesday and three

See page 2: Blizzard...

UP TO 12 HOURS

punishments for serious crimes

Civil Code to be replaced after 161 years

SANTOSH GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU Oct 16

If the proposed bill on amending the penal code gets approval of parliament, criminals sentenced to life on serious crimes such as rape and human trafficking will have to serve the term life-long instead of 20-30 years as is required by the existing laws.

The draft bill recently registered at the Parliament Secretariat by the Ministry of Law and Justice states that those convicted in serious crimes will be put behind bars all their life.

Amid a press conference at the ministry, Min-

ister for Law and Justice Narahari Acharya said that the bill is aimed at bringing significant changes in the domestic laws in line with the changed context as well as international practices on human rights.

The bill has proposed that if any Nepali citizen commits crimes in foreign countries, the government can take legal action against them on the basis of Mutual Legal Assistance Act.

"Government will seek cooperation to nab Nepali citizens who flee abroad after committing crimes, on the basis of reciprocity with respective foreign countries," said Secretary Bhes

Raj Sharma. In the bill, the government has proposed to cast cases of enforced disappearance as criminal offense, Sharma said.

The ministry also registered the bill on the Criminal Procedure Code. It has also registered another bill, the Sentencing Bill 2014.

The ministry has registered a separate bill, the Civil Code Bill 2014, with the aim to replace the existing one that was introduced by the then Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana in 1853 after returning from his first visit to the United Kingdom.

"We are excited in the sense that we are working to make changes to the

Civil Code which was introduced some 161 years ago," Minister Acharya said, adding, "Probably, Nepal's Civil Code issued in 1853 was one of the oldest laws in the whole of South Asia."

Joint Secretary at the ministry, Kamal Shali Ghimire informed that the proposed bill on the civil code replaces the Civil Code which was introduced in 1853.

The bill has proposed to increase the legal cut off age for minors to 18 from existing 16. As per the bill if any parents want to transfer their assets to somebody else, they can transfer as per their wish before their death.

For the first time in its history, the government has taken steps to legalize the inter-country adoption process.

According to the bill, the house owners have to sign an agreement with tenant if the rent amount is more than Rs 10,000. Likewise, a landlord can give his/her land in lease for up to 30 years.

"We have registered the aforementioned five bills so that they can be discussed in parliament. Even the proposed names for those acts can be changed and reviewed by the lawmakers," Spokesperson for the ministry Tek Prasad Dhungana said at the press conference.

trekkers and guides also left Thorang peak along with us. On the way to Muktinath, we faced heavy snow storm that reduced visibility significantly. We could not see what lay ahead. A mule was walking just ahead of us. We followed the mule which vanished somewhere along the way. We somehow made it to Eklephant at around 3 pm. I could not see those who were trailing behind us.

Once in Muktinath, I knew that those trekkers and guides whom we left behind lost contact. I felt very sad. They could have made it to a safe place had they left Thorang peak as soon as it started snowing. The delay in leaving Thorang, which I believe is the result of inexperience, proved costly for dozens of trekkers and guides. (As told to Santosh Pokharel)

Blizzard...

"Adverse weather is affecting our efforts to bring back the bodies."

Lamichhane said local authorities and NA personnel are giving priority to rescuing survivors over bringing back the bodies. He said NA personnel rescued 69 people on Thursday. "We have gathered all of them on the ground of Humde airport," said Lamichhane.

There was no one rescued alive in Manang on Wednesday.

In Mustang, just one Israeli national was rescued on Thursday. On the previous day, 22 trekkers were rescued alive and airlifted to Jomsom and Kathmandu.

In Myagdi, a six-member team, originally deployed for search and rescue of five people missing following the avalanche

has coincidentally rescued two Indian nationals from Dhaulagiri base camp area, according to DSP Janardan GC at the Myagdi DPO. The two rescued Indian nationals were stranded as they were unable to see their way ahead following avalanche.

Meanwhile, 49 missing trekkers and guides have come into contact with the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP). According to Bidur Kuinkel, the Mustang office chief of the ACAP, 85 trekkers were yet to come into their contact until Wednesday. "But, we are yet to know how many of 49 trekkers who contacted us today (Thursday) are among those 85 missing," said Kuinkel. "It is difficult to keep track record of trekkers and guides as they do not go on Annapurna circuit trek through just one single checkpoint."

RISK OF GETTING LOST

Wandering off the trail, while trekking from the foothill of Thorang La to the peak leading to Muktinath temple, has always been risky for travelers.

Had there been notice boards with accurate information about directions, tourists would have never faced the risk of getting lost. But, there are just a few hoarding boards; and most of them have weathered beyond recognition.

"Every year, thousands of tourists travel through this area and we still lack proper management system to guide travelers. Forget about the installation of technology that can easily forecast weather, we don't even have boards with maps and direction," said Dipesh Babu Subedi, a trekking guide.

"There are iron pillars

every 300 meters but it will not give proper direction," added Subedi.

Travelers are on their own when they reach Yak Kharka area as there is no telephone facility available. "Only if we had technology that would help us stay in contact with other trekkers and warn them of any upcoming disasters, many lives would have been saved," said Subedi.

Although tourists have been made to pay an extra charge for Travelers Information Management System (TIMS), the area has yet to receive even basic development of offering the travelers the proper guide of directions and information.

Tourists travelling to the Annapurna area on their own have to pay US\$ 20 per person. But if they travel with Nepali guides, they have to pay just US\$ 10 per person.

Police...

In Dhulikhel, Kavre district and three at the residences of the VIPs. Bilateral talks will take place at the retreat center and the VIPs will be airlifted there in view of the security sensitivities, according to police.

DSP Pramod Raj Bhatta at CPDTS said, "As per the directions from Police Headquarters, we are prepared for the sniffer dog deployment and more than 20 dog handlers will be in position during the summit period." The dog service will be availed round the clock at the international airport to help discourage and control suspicious activities, DSP Bhatta added.

Bomb dogs are used to check and minimize losses to humans and public properties by identifying any arms and explosives

that could be used by undesirable elements.

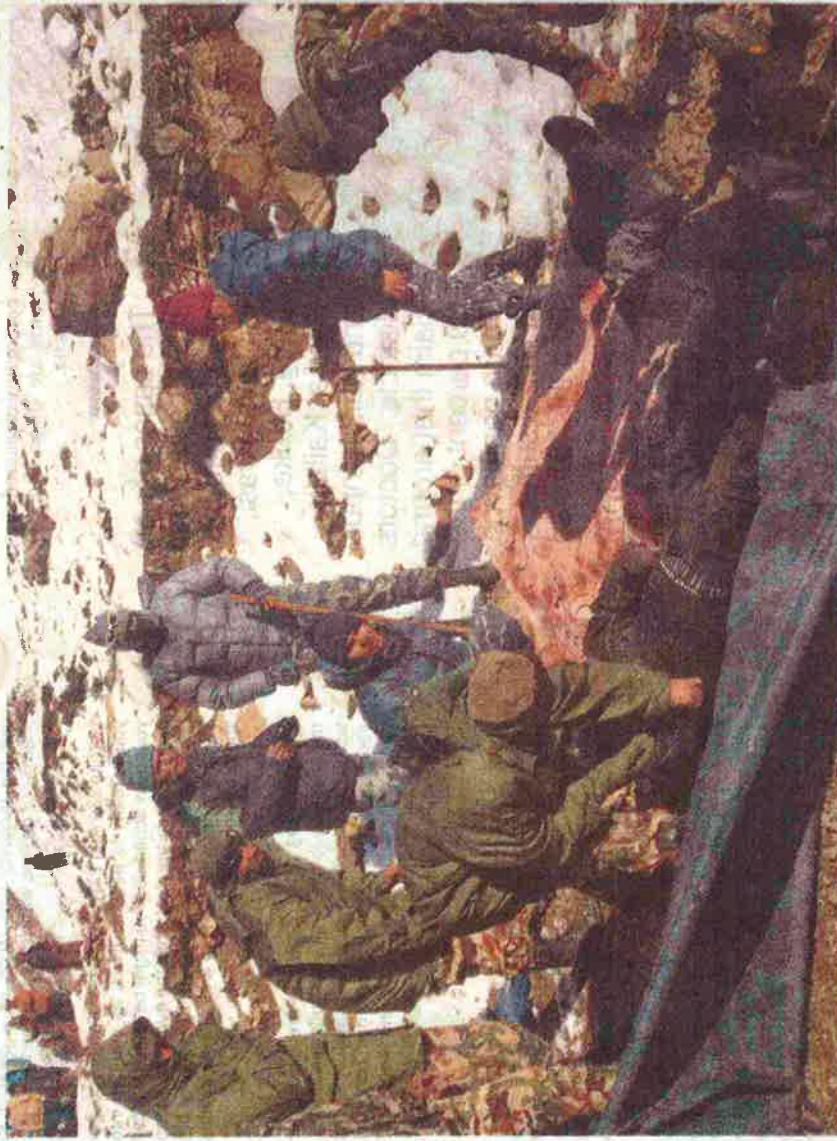
About 14,000 kinds of explosives are made from components such as nitrogen, nitrate, nitramine and acid salts. Of late, improvised chemical explosives (ICE) have been used by some extremists and terrorist groups abroad, but the dogs here are not used to such explosives, DSP Bhatta said. ICE is formed with certain ratios of chemicals that are not contraband.

Dog handlers have sought equipment and disposal units for higher success rates with the dogs. The success rate is only 32 percent for manual explosive detection, 50-60 percent with the use of detectors and 70-80 percent with the use of dogs. If a joint squad is used the success rate is assumed to be around 95 percent, according to experts.

11 die, nearly 100 missing in blizzards, avalanche

Dozens of tourists yet to come into contact

RE 16-10-14



Nepal Army and Nepal Police rescuers recover bodies of trekkers killed in an avalanche on Mount Dhaulagiri (8,167 meters) in Manang district, about 160 kilometers northwest of the capital, on Wednesday. Weather forecasters said the avalanche was caused by a cyclone that hit neighboring India a few days ago.

SANTOSH POKHAREL POKHARA, Oct 15

At least 11 people have been killed and many more are missing in blizzards that struck high mountains in western Nepal, authorities said on Wednesday.

Nepal Army (NA) personnel

sonnel recovered seven bodies from high mountains in Manang and four bodies in Mustang. The identities of the blizzard victims, both in Manang and Mustang, are yet to be ascertained.

In Miyagdi, five people are presumed dead after

they were buried in a massive avalanche.

Bidur Kuinkel, Mustang office chief of Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), said 85 tourists are yet to come into contact as of Wednesday. According to Kuinkel, 346 tourists had left Thorang La, the highest

point along the Annapurna Circuit in Manang and Mustang, last Sunday. "Until Wednesday morning, 244 tourists came into contact, 14 were rescued alive and three were found dead," he said.

According to Police Inspector Bimal Kumar



Upadhyaya, two missing Slovakian citizens as well as three Nepalis have been identified. The missing are Jan Matiak and Vladimir Suancar, and Bhoj Kumar Rai of Mauling VDC-5, Okhaldhunga; Dorje Sherpa of Juling VDC-2; and Gopal Rai of Gudini VDC-8, Solukhumbu district.

In Manang, the bodies of six trekkers -- four Canadian and one Indian -- were recovered on Wednesday. Similarly, two out of three local youths who went missing after being trapped by heavy snowfall on Tuesday, were found dead in Naar village of Manang, Wednesday.

In Mustang, the bodies of four trekkers -- two Polish, one Israeli and one Nepali -- were recovered by NA personnel, Wednesday. The identities of the blizzard victims are yet to be confirmed.

While blizzards triggered by cyclone Hudhud struck trekkers passing through Thorang La, those missing in the Myagdi avalanche were on their way to climb Dhaulagiri peak.

of trekkers, Nepalis and foreigners, are still missing. Baburam Bhandari, chief district officer (CDO) of Mustang, informed that trekkers were trapped in snowfall at an altitude of 5,000 meters while heading toward Muktinath after passing through Thorang La.

According to Bhandari, the NA has rescued 22 trekkers trapped in snowfall in Mustang. While 14 of them have been airlifted to Kathmandu, eight are still at district headquarters Jomsom. The physical condition of the rescued is said to be normal.

Similarly, Air Manang and Shree Airlines rescued eight Slovakian tourists trapped by avalanche at the base camp of Mt Dhaulagiri.

"The death toll could rise as scores are still missing. See page 4: 11 die..."

11 die...

ing," said Bhandari.

Devendra Lamichhane, chief district officer of Manang, said, "All the dead bodies found between Kangla and Fu villages were recovered from under a thick blanket of snow."

Meanwhile, security personnel have halted rescue work due to adverse weather. "We will resume the search and rescue tomorrow," said DSP Janardan GC at District Police Office (DPO), Myagdi. Myagdi DPO had deployed a team of six security personnel under Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Mahendra Shrestha in the avalanche-hit area.

*(DILIP POUDEL
from Baglung and HARI
KRISHNA GAUTAM from
Myagdi contributed to
this reporting)*

Heavy snowfalls leave at least 24 dead in Manang and Mustang

More than 175 people missing in Annapurna Region

RN 16-10-14

By Chandreshwar Bastakoti

Jomsom, Mustang, Oct. 15

At least 24 people were buried to death in snow after two days of continuous snowfall in high Himalayan regions in Manang and Mustang districts.

Heavy snowfall occurred in high Himalaya region due to the effects of Hudhud cyclone which entered Nepal from Indian region from early Monday morning.

Of the total deaths, 16 died in Mustang and eight in Manang district, said Chief District

Officer of Mustang Baburam Bhandari.

Nine Nepalese and seven foreigners were killed when snowfall covered them in Mustang region, confirmed CDO Bhandari.

According to Bhandari, 19 others were airlifted by Nepalese Army helicopter and brought to Jomsom.

According to Mahendra Acharya of Trekking Agency Association of Nepal (TAAN), 85 foreigners are missing in and around the Annapurna circuit. However, the number of missing Nepalese has not been confirmed yet but there might be 85 to 90 Nepalese missing in Annapurna circuit

alone.

In Manang, three died at Nar VDC and five others at Fu VDC of the district, said CDO Devendra Lamichhane.

Four Canadian and an Indian citizen were buried to death following heavy snowfall at Fu and Kamlang area of Manang district, while three other Canadians and a Nepali were rescued.

In Mustang, CDO Baburam Bhandari said that 17 recovered dead bodies were brought to Mustang District Hospital.

Hudhud cyclone effects

Bhandari said that only on Wednesday morning, five bodies including two Nepalese were found but by afternoon time, rescue team recovered 12 more bodies from different places. As rescue operation is going on, the identification of most of the deceased is yet to be ascertained, said Bhandari.

The deceased include two citizens of Poland and one from Israel, while they were descending towards Muktinath after crossing Throng-La Pass along Annapurna circuit trekking route, said Bhandari.

CDO Bhandari said that out of 567 foreigners who were coming to Muktinath, only 244 had so far arrived at

Muktinath area from Throng La Pass route.

Similarly, three other locals who went to graze their animals were missing after heavy snowfall. Search and rescue operation is going on in the area.

Five other grazers had been successful to come out alive from the snowfall. According to survivors, there were eight grazers in the area and three had gone missing.

The missing persons include Ghalyanchowk Lama, 30, of Nar village-2, 47-year old

Phurba Lama of Nar village-4, while another missing person's identification is yet to be confirmed. The incident site in the northern belt of Mustang district can be reached after 11 hours' walk.

Meanwhile, police administration has stopped the adventurous Annapurna trekking route for the time being in the wake of heavy snowfall.

Likewise, five other people were missing in Dhaulagiri trekking route in Myagdi district. Two foreigners and three Nepalese are missing in the trekking route. They came for the Round Dhaulagiri trek from Sherpa Adventure Travels.