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Wednesday was the easy part

THE PUBLIC'S REPUBLIC

If anyone wanted a glimpse of the New Nepal, it could be seen inside the Sagarmatha Hall of the convention centre this week on the fresh and diverse faces of assembly members. They represent our transition parliament and the drafters of a new constitution over the next two years.

That we have come this far to formally declare Nepal a federal democratic republic through elections and not bloodshed will go into the annals of world history as a model of conflict transformation and political evolution. Despite the delays and mismanagement, the old guard have brought us to this point and they deserve thanks. Now, its time to pass on the baton to a younger generation of elected representatives, the women and members of minority communities.

The road ahead is not easy. Declaring Nepal a republic will not make our woes go away overnight. The first task for the assembly is to institutionalise the gains of the past 70 years of democratic struggle. This will require procedures for the conduct of assembly sessions to be of international standards. Work of expert committees apart, the right of every member to be heard should be honoured and the party whip should be limited to voting.

Once the chair and deputy are named, the formation of committees and their composition will be critical to the success of the constitution drafting process. It's encouraging that the assembly reflects Nepal's diversity, but it must maintain cohesion to deliver results. Committees to draft laws related to fundamental freedoms, the system of governance, civilian control over the army and bases of provincial autonomy will have to be led by competent lawmakers with deep understanding of Nepali realities, not populists playing to the galleries.

As a legislature, the assembly will have to immediately start work on the budget when the new finance minister takes charge. The new government will crash head-on into a food-fuel crisis as soon as it comes to power. With the republican dream realised, the people will want more from their elected leaders than slogans. They will need to feel tangible improvement in their lives. Assembly members will have to help sustain and support the weakened instruments of the executive so that development delivery catches up with lost time.

Unlike the restless populace of volatile new democracies, Nepali voters showed their fortitude last month. But our politicians have the habit of cutting the tree on which they sit. They will now have to show accountability and patience as the constitution drafting process drags on through two years.

Our raucous civil society and edgy media will do well not to be too harsh on the assembly members, most of whom are new to the ways of electoral politics. For the sake of the Nepali people, the new government should also be given a chance to deliver.

With their knack for making the simple complicated, Baluwatar politicians should turn into Bollywood script-writers. Nothing but a nail-biting climax with the audience gripped by fearful anticipation, will do for our netas.

The South Asian knack for leaving critical issues for the last minute is ingrained in all of us, but Nepal's political class



TARAI EYE
Prashant Jha

gambled with history on Wednesday night. A constitutional impasse seemed a possibility. Fortunately, contentious issues were pushed for later and the country was declared a republic 12 hours behind schedule.

There was a jarring note in the otherwise sober session: the unnecessary rendition of Indian speaker Somnath Chatterjee's letter. Yes India is a special neighbour, yes they supported our peace process. But why was there any need to read out a note from an Indian functionary on a historic Nepali occasion? Who took that decision, and why?

Wednesday's brinkmanship may have appeared dangerous, but the gradualist abolition of the monarchy over the past two years

has been wise. In our "lazy revolution" the monarchy continued its twilight existence two years after the People's Movement, and this step-by-step clipping of the king's wings gave the Nepali people time to cope with the demise of an institution that was integral to the country. The official republic is stronger because we have been trained to live under an ad-hoc republic since 2006.

Whether we liked it or not, the monarchy was in a weak, narrow, hill-centric way, a marker of national unity for many. The institution manufactured an association with Hinduism. And the Hindu king, in some ways, provided a fragile bond between the Pahad and the Tarai. This explains the ambivalent and relatively sympathetic relationship of the Madhes with the monarchy.

Of course, the monarchy had become a symbol of divisiveness rather than unity in recent years. As political consciousness grew, people realised Narayanhiti was the fountain of several levels of discrimination and oppression. And Gyanendra turned out to be the biggest republican. Nepal obviously did not need the king for national unity.

But Wednesday's move has made the nation-building process more urgent. The constituent assembly has to create a common sense of citizenship, based on inclusive political principles, rights and civic duties. It was not only the monarchy that ended on 28 May, the idea of subjecthood and ethnicity-centred citizenship collapsed as well. Over the next two years, a more territorial, political and inclusive idea of who a Nepali is has to be consolidated.

The representatives of the Madhes voted along with the rest

of the political class against the monarchy. Hridayesh Tripathi's intervention on the absence of federalism in one of the points of the resolution had the danger of veering the debate in another direction. But he made his point and sat down.

The MJF went with the republic. Upendra Yadav has active royalist ties, which he has tapped for political support and funding. But the election results, MJF's publicly republican stance, and the CA vote show that Upendra used the king and dumped him instead of allowing the king to use him.

The possibility of a conservative backlash by active royalists is remote. What is more likely is that Hindutva forces will stoke religious emotions, particularly in the Tarai. There is a fear in the plains that a secular republic, with no Hindu king to take care of Hindu interests, will mean rampant cow slaughter. Nepal's politicians have not reached out to allay misconceptions and clarify that a republic will not be anti-Hindu. Hindu groups will play on this fear.

Fortunately, these groups have barely any organisational strength, no strong leaders, and negligible mass support. But if there is rising discontent against the Maoist-led government, and if the tension in Madhes continues with added inter-religious and inter-caste conflicts, the Hindu right will capitalise on it. They held a meeting in Balrampur in UP last month and are trying to reorganise and re-strategise.

Given the political consensus across parties and across regions, the republic is here to stay. Wednesday was the easy part. The real challenge of constitution writing begins now. ●



SAM KANG LI

More interesting times

Looks like we are cursed not to live through dull days

When Prime Minister Girija Koirala finally arrived at the Constituent Assembly on Wednesday, night had fallen. He ignored the Nepal Army's guard of honour that had waited around all day in New Baneswor.

Koirala must have been sore at the way negotiations had drifted at Baluwatar all day. With his own cabinet colleagues and senior party functionaries dealing directly



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

with the army brass, the premier had very little elbow room to persuade the Maoists to accept a compromise on presidential powers.

In the end, he had to present a deadlock as a settlement to save face and end the first session with an obligatory declaration of a republic. Such a perfunctory pronouncement could have easily been done had the meeting begun on schedule in

the morning. It would have saved the newly-elected members unnecessary fatigue and the embarrassment of the diplomatic corps ridiculing "the Nepali way of doing things at the last hour" in the visitor's balcony.

Early on Wednesday morning, Maoist negotiators were the only ones to arrive at Baluwatar fully prepared. With an eye on the post of an executive president, the Maoists insisted that the change in interim constitution must accept their party manifesto and follow the French Model. Nudged by the army, the NC and UML insisted that the supreme commander-in-chief and the head of government should not be the same person.

In the end, Bhadrakali prevailed over Baluwatar and Koirala now probably fears that the generals have someone other than him in mind for the first president. Hence Koirala's snub to the military band. In the next seven days of CA recess, the real bargaining will be between the Maoists and the Nepal Army over who will be president.

Gyanendra is taking all the flak for

bringing the 240-year old Shah dynasty to an abrupt and ignoble end. Much of it is well deserved. However, it was probably the misadventures of the then Royal Nepal Army that ultimately helped bring down the monarchy.

Even from the sidelines, it was clear from day one of Gyanendra's reign that the army would hold sway over all affairs of state. The moves of consolidation of power that began to unfold within a month of his accession to the throne in June 2001 had all the hallmarks of a CIA Counter-insurgency Manual.

If the debacle at Holeri hadn't happened on 12 July 2001 to discredit and dishonour Koirala forcing him to resign, it would have been necessary to invent something like it. The army needs an unfettered right to create a reign of terror for creating a security state.

Had the high-security Dang Barracks not been overrun by the Maoists in November 2001, something else like that would have been necessary to impose an emergency. From then onwards, 21 February, 22 May, 4

October in 2002 and finally 1 February 2005 were milestones in the slide of the Shah dynasty into political oblivion. Gyanendra signed the death warrant of the monarchy the day he acquiesced to the army's request to fracture and sideline the NC.

The army's strategists see the NC as the biggest obstacle in finishing the job of the militarisation of governance in Nepal. If it's necessary to prop up Maoists to achieve that aim in the short term, so be it. Those were probably the details that were discussed between powerful emissaries of the defence establishment and the Maoist leadership during their helicopter-borne Rasuwa rendezvous last week.

Prolonged interesting times seem to be the destiny of this nation. The all-important constituent assembly has turned out to be a side-show. But planners meticulously executing their moves may have forgotten to factor the rest of us: common Nepalis who will never again accept any dictatorship, be it Maoist totalitarianism or military authoritarianism. ●

LETTERS

MAOIST MATTERS

In last week's guest column ('Sore losers', #401), Tapan Bose has stated the facts but does not pay heed to the consequences. The Maoists do have a convincing majority, but we still have to consider how democratic they really are. If Prachanda has his way he will effectively control two armies and two police forces (the Nepal Police and the YCL). That does not strike me as a secure situation for democracy in Nepal. It's true we need new faces in politics, but I don't want Nepal to slip into a dictatorship again. I was already beaten once campaigning for democracy and I don't want to lose it now.

Santosh Dhungana, email

- At first the Maoists denied their involvement in the murder of Ram Hari Shrestha, but under public pressure they admitted it and made a public apology. This has become a very common procedure for them: commit a crime and say sorry afterwards. Mere apology is not enough to make up for these crimes, and there should be legal action against those who were involved in the killing. The Maoists should remember that if they are seen to be tyrants eventually the people will rise up against them as they rose up against king Gyanendra.

Praveen Kumar Yadav, Birgunj

- I don't understand why Prakash Mahatara thinks that communes are incompatible with a market economy ('Experimenting with commune-ism', #401). They are incompatible with private property, but they are not opposed to the possibility of selling produce on the market. The means of production are shared, but the product can be sold as it can anywhere, provided there is a surplus. I'm also just wondering: can the communes really be as good as they sound from his description?

Deepak Aryal, email

- In light of the ongoing fuel crisis in Nepal, my recommendation to the incoming Maoist government is to institutionalise Nepal bandas at least three days a week so they can save fuel. This way every political party, as well as families who want to bring everything to a standstill by calling strikes, will have one allotted day in the week. The Maoists can have Mondays, the NC and UML Tuesdays (alternate weeks) and Wednesdays can go to anyone with an axe to grind. This would make our strikes much more orderly. So you think the Fierce One will agree?

Roshan Paudel, Minneapolis

CHANGING GUARD

Mallika Aryal's statement that the election was an "overwhelming win for republicanism" ('Changing of the guard', #401) is one-sided and biased. The seven parties filled the campaign with anti-monarchy propaganda, using all channels including the media, and any voices to

the contrary were, and are still, shouted down. Also, the resolution passed by the unelected interim parliament has no jurisdiction over such an important issue as the future of the monarchy.

Niranjan, email

- I have read that Madan Puraskar is concerned about the fate of a lot of important and valuable documents in the palace after the king leaves (see 'Changing of the guard', #401). I also think this matter is important and am surprised that the government has not said anything about it up till now. Both the government and the king should work hard to ensure that documents and artefacts of national importance are not lost, and the items should be put under the charge of the national archaeological department.

Pankaj Joshi, Atlanta, USA



STATE AFFAIRS

Regarding Upendra Yadav's comments about a single Madhes province ("Koirala must resign", #401), no doubt the best solution would be to just divide up the whole country, giving everyone their own little pieces of land that they can govern. Whatever is left behind, the dogs can fight over until one of them wins. Equal representation is one thing to ask for, but a separate province is another. I am a Nepali, and even though I have been away from home for years, it does hurt to see my country being divided.

Pradipta Rana, email

- The 'Banco del sur' ('Banco sel sur', #381) is an excellent idea. It would be really great if Nepal's finance minister, whether he/she turns out to be a Maoist, NC or UML, understands the importance of moving out of a dependency syndrome, relying on the World Bank/IMF, the rich donor nations and our big brothers India and China. This would be one really important way to help development in Nepal – for our own benefit rather than at the say of our bigger partners.

Alok Dixit, email

CK LAL

Bravo, CK Lal. Over the past eight years, you have done an amazing job of writing in-depth analysis on socio-political issues, roads and roadblocks ahead. Of course, with punditry comes a responsibility towards integrity and professionalism. I wish you many more years of success.

Dino Shrestha, email

LETTERS

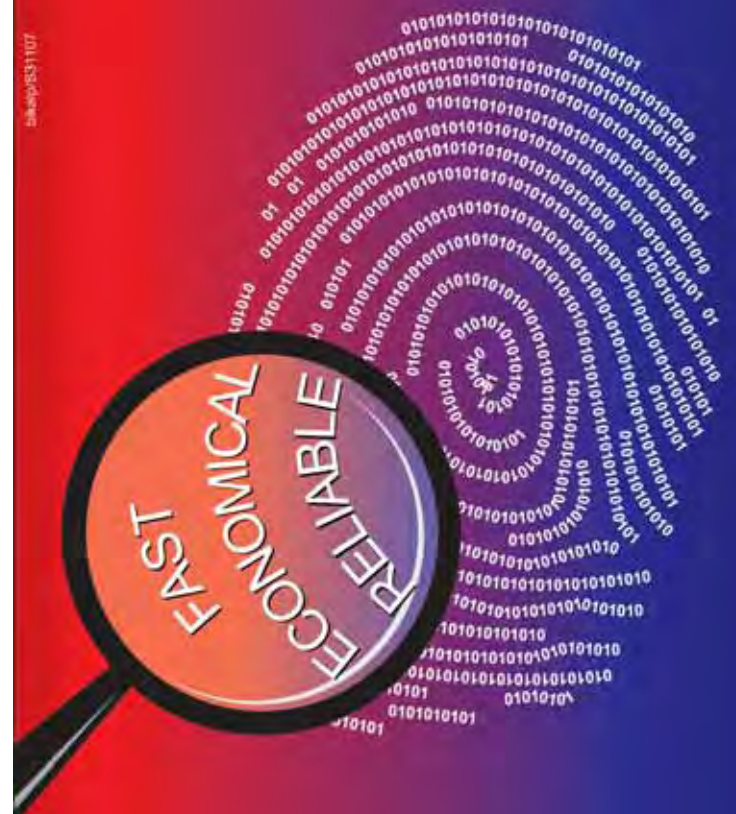
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The Nimbus factory at Birgunj now produces 50,000 tonnes a year.

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Feeding the masses

GITA DHUNGANA in BIRGUNJ

Dressed in a plain shirt and jeans, Anand Bagaria quietly listens to a group of journalists who are grilling farm brokers in Birgunj about the profits they make in their role as middlemen between farmers and consumers. The next day, he joins the same group of journalists on a field visit to poultry farms and a hatchery in Chitwan. Again, he listens attentively to the conversation between journalists and the farmers.

Bagaria, director of Nimbus, which runs a livestock pellet feed factory in Birgunj, is using the opportunity to hear about new developments and trends in the agricultural and livestock business directly from the mouths of traders and local farmers.

"We keep abreast of technical and commercial developments worldwide, and invest a large portion of our earnings in technical updates every year," says Bagaria, who plans to expand his feed-producing unit into a fully integrated animal health and livestock company, listed and traded in the local stock exchange, in the next five years.

Nimbus, which came into existence more than a decade ago as a distributor for Nepal-made consumer products, ventured into the animal nutrition business in 2000 and began exporting poultry feed supplements to India. "We kept our eyes open on the domestic market as well, selling feed ingredients, supplements, medicines and vaccines. In 2003, we set up the first ever pellet feed mill in Nepal," says Bagaria.

The factory, with a fixed investment of Rs 150 million, now produces 50,000 tonnes of livestock feed annually and provides direct employment to 250 people.



Livestock feed is a growing business in Nepal

The company's move into the livestock business was not exactly planned, but happened more by accident, recalls Bagaria. Years ago, he bought five tonnes of poultry feed supplement from a European firm, after being convinced by a dealer that the product had a good market in India.

But he didn't expect that the market would be good enough to allow his family-run business to grow into one of the leading agro-companies in Nepal, with an annual turnover of Rs 1 billion.

As he travelled around livestock farms looking for customers for the feed he had bought, he got a deeper understanding of the domestic livestock market and the opportunities it afforded. Bagaria decided to become a permanent supplier, and four years ago the firm began producing, distributing and selling poultry and livestock pellet feed under the brand name Shakti.

But the development was not always a smooth ride. "In the first year, it was really challenging to market our product," says Jagadish Prasad Agarwal, Bagaria's father. For the first few months they were only able to sell 300 tonnes of feed a month, while they were producing 4,500.

"The unorganised approach of participants in this industry—too much credit, poor quality, barter, syndication and cartelling, and a lack of technical know-how and focus on the cost of production—was our biggest problem," says Bagaria, who takes care of marketing and distribution, while his father looks after the factory in Birgunj.

"To overcome this we identified a few conscious and receptive farmers across the country, and took it on ourselves to improve their cost of production and management skills. Then we got a multiplier effects and these successful farmers became our brands ambassadors."

The livestock industry, same as any other agricultural business in the country, lacks modernisation and proper management. A restructuring of the industry would help bring more employment opportunities for rural communities around Birgunj and in other parts of Nepal.

But in an industry which is so large and unwieldy (roughly Rs 15 billion turnover yearly), it will take a lot of energy and vision all round to achieve this. "We really need a professional approach, both technical and commercial," says Bagaria. "The biggest challenge for farmers is still finding a market and decent prices for their produce. We should try and develop some kind of structured and transparent system in conjunction with farmers and market buyers."



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SAMSUNG

Prismark06

Yishion is here

YISHION

UFO has introduced Yishion, the fashion brand of Hongkong to Nepal as its official franchised store in Nepal. The brand which has been around since 1997 will now be available at UFO stores in Kumaripati, Kathmandu Mall, and New Baneshwor.

New yeti addition



Yeti Airlines has acquired a new 30 seater Jetstream 41 which is manufactured by British Aerospace. The new aircraft is expected to enhance its domestic network reliability and will particularly benefit passengers of mountain flights and business destinations. Currently Yeti has scheduled 7 flights to Pokhara, 6 flights to Biratnagar, 2 flights each to Bhadrapur, Bhairahawa and Nepalgunj daily.

NIC in Surkhet



NIC Bank has opened its 14th branch in Surkhet. The new branch at Surkhet will provide a full range of products and services of the Bank, and is connected to all other branches through a V-Sat network enabling real-time on-line connectivity.

Shangri-la offer



Customers can now open an account for Rs. 100 at the Shangri-la Development Bank under general saving account, Shangri-la special account, women's future account and business saving account. The bank has also made provisions for remittance customers to open an account for Rs. 50.

Upgraded NMB



Nepal Merchant and Finance has been upgraded to grade "A" and now will run as NMB bank.

Exclusive Indian terrain

Indian terrain has opened an exclusive showroom for men's wear in Kamaladi. Indian Terrain is focusing on the "University Collection" this season. The collection shirts range from Rs.999 to Rs.1799 while the university collection inspired by college life range from Rs. 1999 and Rs. 3599.



Time for real change

Just doing away with the king is not enough

The political parties who love their bandas so much did their usual, officially shutting the country down for three days this week. This is not surprising, for as we have noted before, avoiding work is Nepal's national hallmark (see 'Another Dasain', #394). The country renaming itself as a republic is all well and good, but people need to



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

understand that just getting rid of the king is not going to solve all our problems. In fact, we need similarly radical transformation in almost all aspects of our daily life.

Nepal has lived for 238 years under a monarchy which would declare holidays on such special occasions as the king taking an hour-long flight to Delhi, or coming-of-age ceremonies of distant, minor members of the royal family. If the king is now to be a commoner and all are to be equal in Nepal, we need to get royal subjects out of our mentality, and stop agreeing to public holidays for every rhyme and reason.

In the middle ages serfs were grateful when their feudal lord granted them a day or two's holiday, because their labour was not their own. Now we live in a world of 24/7 business

operations. Time literally is money, and no one making their living from the modern economy, whether employer or employee, benefits from this ridiculous amount of holidays, which paralyse our productivity and growth.

Our joy at yet more holidays granted only reflects our 'servant of the master' mentality, in which we ourselves are the real losers. Business loses thousands of valuable working hours, and international investors are pushed away from the idea of putting their money in such a country.

And if we are really moving from a Hindu kingdom to a secular republic, we need to consider the hold that religion has on so many of our systems. Nepal can no longer completely shut down for 10 days for a Hindu festival if it claims to be secular and inclusive of all beliefs. Government forms should no longer ask people's religion, as it is a private matter. Apart from the fact that the person filling it in might be an atheist – which is, by the way, one of our rights now. The state will also have to end the preferential privilege of Hindu organisations, religious sites and institutions. Either they will have to support all religions equally, or none at all. This is what secularism means, though I wonder if our politicians advocating it have realised that.

Above all, we need to move away from a society that patronises and fawns on certain individuals and institutions. Vacuous 'congratulations on the occasion of' adverts have increased over recent years. The layout and protocol of our conferences have been set up to allow a royal to grace the occasion (judged to be the mark of success or failure), who would usually come and go without uttering a word. Why are they still set up in this way?

Even the way leaders interact with the public has not changed – it is as if the new democratic leaders think they are the new kings. The Beed only hopes that the icons of the king and royal family which used to hang in all public buildings are not just replaced with the new political elite, to be venerated with the same unquestioning deference as the one-time kings. If we really need to have an aesthetic focal point, can't it be something like Mount Everest?

This historic transformation of the country must be more than just symbolic gestures like the eviction of the king from Narayanhiti. We have to understand that there is no more any ruler and ruled, and that only implementing egalitarianism in our laws will secure a better future. ●

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Up against the wall

The NOC must either put up petrol prices or go deeper into debt



SAM KANG LI

BACK IN LINE:
As petrol supplies dwindle, the queues have started again.

DEWAN RAI

After the NOC warned of an acute fuel shortage this week, the government promised a loan of Rs 1 billion to help it import fuel. Officials say this will ease the situation for about 15 days.

The NOC has to have at least Rs 85 million cash in hand per day to purchase enough petrol to meet Nepal's demand, which has been increasing at a rate of ten percent every year.

The corporation has already borrowed Rs 7.30 billion from the government. It has also taken loans worth Rs 2.15 billion from

commercial banks, and Rs 2.54 billion from the Citizen Investment Trust and Employees Provident Fund. It currently owes Rs 2.45 billion to the Indian Oil Corporation, its sole supplier, and has cumulative dues of Rs 14.44 billion.

Nepal's current fuel prices were set when the international price of oil was US\$ 83 per barrel. But over recent months oil prices have rocketed, reaching a record high of \$135 per barrel this week.

The NOC has not increased oil prices in Nepal in accordance with this rise, and is currently losing Rs 1.78 billion per month supplying subsidised petrol. This adds up

to Rs 20 billion a year at the current rate of loss. Given that the annual education budget is Rs 28 billion and health Rs 12 billion, it is extremely unlikely that the government can cover the shortfall.

The subsidised fuel prices are a crowd pleaser, but if continued they will most likely direct public expenditure away from other uses, reduce revenues from domestic production, and contribute to unsustainable budget deficits.

"Oil importers control the prices of petroleum products to protect lower-income citizens," says Digambar Jha, managing director of the NOC.

But evidence suggests that much of the benefit from fuel subsidies goes to relatively well-off people, who consume many times more petrol, diesel and liquid petroleum gas per capita than poorer citizens, and twice as much kerosene.

Removing the subsidy on fuel would both directly affect the price of petroleum products, and have a knock-on effect on the prices of other goods and services that use petroleum products as inputs, including transport.

According to Jha, the NOC has an action plan to resolve the current fuel crisis. He has proposed dual price for diesel and LPG, and kerosene subsidies for the poor and students. "We are also open to the coming

of private suppliers, which will be an opportunity for us to prove our competence," he says.

The NOC has also proposed increasing the price of kerosene to that of diesel to avoid adulteration. Officials admit that diesel is adulterated with kerosene, which is tax-free and subsidised. "Kerosene mixed with up to 40 percent diesel is not easily detectable," said an official.

Mukunda Prasad Dhungel, joint secretary at the corporation, says they have proposed an automatic mechanism for price adjustments. "It will depoliticise decision making," he says, as currently political parties do not want to increase prices for fear of protests.

Dhungel says price adjustment would reduce offences like black market sales, cross border smuggling, fuel adulteration and corruption, and bring a smoother supply of fuel products. "Removing fuel subsidies will not generate extra revenue but at least it will reduce NOC losses," he says.

To protect the poor and avoid large protests, the removal of subsidies will have to be accompanied by well-targeted social assistance measures. And maybe by an information campaign to make people understand that Nepal is no more immune to rising petrol prices than the rest of the world. ●

End of an epoch

Editorial in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 29 May-12 June

King Gyanendra dug his own grave when he said, "the Nepali people want a king that can be seen and heard". Gyanendra's ambition has led monarchy to its very end. The loss of internal support and international recognition marks an end of an epoch.

From 1989 to 2005, the political parties tried to take monarchy and democracy together. Even the Maoists talked to the king's representatives while communist parties known for their support for republicanism joined hands. When Manmohan Adhikari accepted ceremonial monarchy, he became the first elected communist prime minister. Even Madan Bhandari, the then general secretary of CPN-ML, who had once said "we won't let the monarchy justify its existence as long as the sun and moon remain in the sky", was eventually in favour of weakening and providing a ceremonial role to the monarchy, rather than a complete transformation to a republic. The NC and UML pledged their support for a ceremonial monarchy and multi-party democracy but their patience was broken on 1 February, 2005. The monarchy that hadn't been a problem for any party became unacceptable to everyone because of Gyanendra's own deeds.

Gyanendra's lack of foresight and selfish aspirations made him the last king of Nepal. But the end of monarchy in the process of development is not a new thing. Almost six decades ago, when the then king Farukh I of Egypt left the throne he said, "now including Great Britain and four other cards there are only five kings." But Gyanendra failed to realise that the Nepali

monarchy could only continue to exist in a form similar to the British monarchy. As a result, even our neighbour which formerly gave strong support to Nepal's monarchy, accepted republicanism easily.

The sovereign people who believe in multi-party democracy are the pillars, and the political parties who have taken responsibility for the management of this new republic are the drivers of this new era.



Looking ahead

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 29 May

कान्तिपुर

People will only feel we have truly entered a new era if the CA looks to the people's participation, and the state functions in a transparent and responsible way. The representatives of the people must be able to work freely if Nepalis are to be proud of them.

The decision on the monarchy is the first step in creating a republic. The election of a president is the primary responsibility of the new government, and the CA should start procedures for the presidential election.

Although the CA has amended the interim constitution at its first meeting, it still needs to make a new constitution within two years. The republic is a start in providing the people with a new constitution, but we still need to decide on the reconstitution of the state through federalism. To introduce Nepal into the competitive modern world in a short span of two years, the CA has to handle its duties with responsibility and skill.

There should be an agreement on the distribution of power between the head of state, prime minister and chairman of the parliament. Regardless of the differences in principles and opinions, all political parties need to participate in discussions to deliver their responsibility towards the people. After many ups and downs on the road to republicanism at the end of the peace process, the parties need to continue this understanding to finalise the constitution and pave the way for eventual general elections.

Although the first CA meeting passed the proposal for a republic with an overwhelming majority, some CA members have raised eyebrows at the parties' hasty and secret agreements, and are worried about religious tolerance, national unity and nationality. It is right that such questions should be raised within the assembly, and important that these questions are answered.

As the head of the state will be constitutional, the assembly now needs to choose a respected and knowledgeable national personality. The presidency may make use of Narayanhiti, which has now been declared a museum.





MIN RATNA BAJRACHARA

Editorial in *Samaya*, 30 May २००८

The Ram Hari Shrestha murder is the biggest violation so far of the peace agreement signed two years ago. This incident brings up the issue of how to punish the Maoist PLA, who intentionally

killed a man, and also marks an increase in the level of public mistrust of the Maoists.

The government still has not taken adequate steps to try and understand the Shrestha family's pain and anger. After the murder came to light, that anger turned to

Responsible

fire and spilled out into the streets. There is still a delay in forming an investigation committee, there has been no prosecution for those PLA involved and implicated in the murder. All the blame has been put on one low-level commander. There have been no discussions with those concerned, or even with Shaktikhor commander Bibidh.

But this time, what should be actually investigated is the role of UNMIN in this atrocity. Twenty-four hour monitoring and surveillance of the 28 cantonments is UNMIN's

responsibility. Shrestha was ferried to and from the cantonment twice in a month. Besides being brutally murdered, his body was disposed of around the area, and UNMIN didn't catch on. This incident is bigger and more extreme than the Maina Sunuwar killing and the Bhairabnath tortures(sic), and the murderers are signatories to the peace agreement and the largest party in the new government. Prachanda's role, as supreme commander of the PLA, should not be disregarded. UNMIN are equally at fault with the Maoists. What remains to be seen is how

UNMIN chief Ian Martin tries to save face and defend his responsibility and duty. UNMIN cannot escape this time just by blaming the Maoists for violating the agreement.

Because of the delay in investigation, UNMIN and the government's depression and the Maoists' audacity, whatever evidence of the torture remained inside the Shaktikhor cantonment has now been destroyed. In this case, let the investigation not be just a farce. If it is, then the public will have to prepare itself for yet another conflict.



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WFP-JAMES GIAMBRONE

A Himalayan spr

It has been a record-breaking climbing season

BILLI BIERLING

After a lot of uncertainty and delay due to China's quest to take the Olympic Torch to the summit of Chomolungma, it was a grand season on the world's highest mountain.

The flame reached the top on 8 May and normal life resumed on the south side of the mountain after that. By 22 May a record-breaking 86 mountaineers were on the 8,848m-high summit in one day and several other records were set.

On 25 May, 77-year-old **Min Bahadur Sherchan** topped in perfect climbing conditions and became the oldest man on Chomolungma beating the previous record of 71-year-old Japanese teacher **Katsusuke Yanagisawa**, who was able to hold onto his laurels only for one year. Sherchan said he

wanted to inspire fellow Nepali senior citizens.

Next up in the line of climbing oldies was **Yuichiro Miura** from Japan, who at age 75 became the second oldest man a day later.

Apa Sherpa once again broke his own record by summiting for the 18th time. **Chuwang Nima** also climbed for the 15th time, **Mingma Tshering** for 13th time, and **Chuldim Ang Dorje** for 12th time.

This season also saw the first Saudi Arabian man reach the top of the world, with **Farouq Saad Hamad Al-Zuman** summiting on 21 May. The Nepali media also had reason to celebrate as **Shailee Basnet** of *Himal Khabarpatrika* became the first Nepali female journalist to reach the top on 24 May (see box).

But there was also tragedy. Swiss veteran mountaineer **Uwe Gianni Goltz** died on his way down from his summit attempt on

21 May. Goltz is said to have collapsed shortly before Camp 4 at 7,900m, probably due to exhaustion after an attempt to summit Everest without oxygen.

Even though the south side of Chomolungma was teeming this year, it didn't exceed last year's record of 628 people on top partly because of the closure of the north side of the mountain.

Other mountains

The Himalayan spring saw other feats besides Chomolungma. On 1 May **Ivan Vallejo** from Ecuador became the 14th person to climb all the world's 14 8,000m peaks, closely followed by Swiss mountain guide **Norbert Joos**, who is on his way to bag number 14 on 29 May.

German mountaineer, **Ralf Dujmovits**, also successfully climbed Makalu and attempted Lhotse together with his wife, Austrian mountaineer **Gerlinde**

Kaltenbrunner. However, the couple had to turn back about 400m short of the summit due to extreme cold and Dujmovits having a chest infection. The retreat leaves Dujmovits with one eight thousander to go and Kaltenbrunner, who bagged Dhaulagiri I earlier this month, with three. Together with Italian climber **Nives Meroi**, who has reached 10 summits, Kaltenbrunner is on the path of becoming the first woman to climb all 14 eight thousanders. Neither of the women uses supplementary oxygen.

Another eight thousand meter man is **Andrew Lock** from Australia, who climbed Makalu on 21 May making Makalu his 13th 8,000m peak. Makalu also saw the death of 37-year-old **Nil Prasad Gurung** who died of high altitude cerebral oedema at Camp Four whilst climbing with a French team.

Tragedy and heroism on Annapurna

Top Spanish climber **Iñaki Ochoa de Olza** died at 7,400m on Annapurna I on 25 May. Ochoa de Olza was on his quest to finish his 13th eight thousander, and together with his climbing mate, **Horia Colibasanu** from Romania, got to about 100m below the summit of the 10th highest mountain in the world.

The pair had to turn around due to problems with Ochoa de Olza's hands and lack of ropes to fix some difficult sections. Reports say that upon his arrival at Camp 4 the Spaniard collapsed with either a stroke or cerebral oedema. Four days of agony and an amazing coordination of rescue efforts ensued. Clibanasu stayed with de Olza until Swiss climbers, **Ueli Steck** and **Simon Anthamatten**, who were intending to open a new route on the treacherous South face of



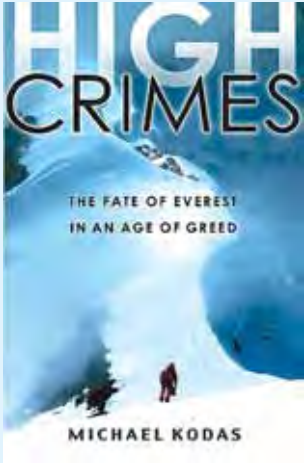
UPHILL TRAFFIC:
A stream of climbers on the
Khumbu Icefall last week.

ring

Annapurna, arrived at Camp 4 on 22 May.
However, all efforts were in vain and Ochoa de Olza, who would have turned 41 a few days ago, succumbed to pulmonary oedema on 23 May at 12.30 PM. His death sent a shock through the Himalayan climbing community as he had made many good friends over the past 18 years of mountaineering in Nepal.
The rescue effort was truly impressive and it showed, once again, that comradeship has not at all died in the Himalaya. Mountaineers in Kathmandu changed their flights, flew back to Pokhara and tried everything humanly possible to save Ochoa de Olza, who was involved in helping mountaineers in trouble numerous times and loved Nepal. The rescue efforts say a lot about comradeship and he will be deeply missed. ●

On Everest, everything is for sale

When American journalist, Michael Kodas, his wife and six others joins a commercial expedition to climb Chomolungma in 2004 he expected hardships. But nothing prepared him for the greed, corruption, ruthless ambition and cruelty on the slopes of the world's highest mountain.
In *High Crimes*, Kodas portrays the dark side of modern Himalayan mountaineering in which crooks lead commercial expeditions, extortionist guides demand payment before rescue, oxygen and equipment caches are ransacked by bounty hunters, base camp prostitution is rife and there are even murderers loose.
Jon Krakauer's 1996 epic, *Into Thin Air*, looked at the lethal effect of over-commercialisation of expeditions so that over-crowding on the summit delayed descent and lead to the death in storms of dozens of climbers. Pulitzer-prize winner journalist Kodas digs deeper into the criminal world of mountain climbing where the clueless climbers and unscrupulous commercial guides prey on expeditions.
Kodas documents the commercialism on the Chinese side of the mountain where corruption, crime and prostitution are rampant. Kodas' own Romanian guide and his Sherpa wife fall out



High Crimes
The Fate of Everest in an
Age of Greed
By Michael Kodas
Hyperion, New York 2008
pp 368, \$24.95 (hardback)

on the mountain and his expedition disintegrates in a mess of recrimination, theft, lies and violence. Oxygen bottles are stolen, high camps ransacked, guides extort money before agreeing to rescue, counterfeit oxygen tanks are sold, climbers see no problem leaving others to die in their hurry to get to the top and win fame and glory.
Misdeeds that would be minor at sea level are deadly at 8,000m on the summit ridge of Everest. But the difference between good and bad, right and wrong are even more stark up there. Morality doesn't get thinner as one goes higher.
High Crimes doesn't pretend to give us the whole picture, and its grim account is openly negative about mountaineering expeditions. It is obvious that is not the whole story, one can't extrapolate from a few bad experiences. For every case of abandonment at high altitude there are ten instances where mountaineers have forsaken their chance to summit to rescue a fellow-climber in distress. For every guide who asks for advance payment before rescuing climbers in trouble, there are many others who will help without asking.
But Kodas warns us that corruption and crime can follow the over-commercialisation of mountain climbing and can result in much ugliness. ●

Women on top

The Himalmedia flag flew high atop Chomolungma on 25 May. *Himal Khabarpatrika* reporter Shailee Basnet managed to scale the world's highest peak together with the nine other women of the First Inclusive Women's Sagarmatha Expedition. FIWSE, started out as the brainchild of team leader Sushmita Maskey, and included women from various regions, from the lowland Tarais to the high mountains, various ethnicities including Newar, Chettri, Bahun, Danuwar, Gurung and Sherpas, and backgrounds from a model to journalist.
Before the attempt, the closest Shailee had come to mountains was writing about them, but after meeting Sushmita Maskey on a reporting assignment, Shailee knew that she had to join the women on their quest for the highest peak.
A reporter on youth culture, mountaineering and city living, Shailee is now the first female Nepali reporter to scale

Chomolungma in a season mired by controversy over the government's closure of the peak under pressure from China.
According to her parents, Shailee hadn't even told them about the attempt, instead saying that she was accompanying the group on a reporting assignment. It was only after all the publicity that Shailee actually sat them down and told them the truth. "Come back the same way you went up," was all they told her. Putting her budding reporter's career on hold, Shailee joined the expedition and underwent a gruelling 10 months training program, including a training ascent of Yala peak, to prepare herself for the climb.
All ten member s of FIWSE have managed to scale Chomolungma. The other nine are Sushmita Maskey, Usha Bista, Ashakumari Singh Chaudhari, Nimdolma Sherpa, Maya Gurung, Pemadikki Sherpa, Pujan Acharya, Nawang Phutti Sherpa and Chunnu Shrestha. ●



SUNDAR SHRESTHA



WFP-JAMES GIAMBRONE

Never too late

25 May was a great day for another Chomolungma summiteer. Min Bahadur Sherchan, at 76-going-on-77, became the oldest person to successfully scale the peak, breaking the previous record held by Japanese teacher, Katsusuke Yanagisawa, who scaled the peak last year at the age of 71. Also vying for the record this year was 75-year old Japanese Yuichiro Miura, who reached the summit a day later. Sherchan, a former soldier, hails from Bhurung Tatopani in Myagdi and claims that his reason for climbing Chomolungma is to galvanise all senior citizens into doing something adventurous even in their old age. He had also added that climbing the peak had been a childhood dream. Now that he's achieved what he set out to do, Sherchan wants to open up a senior citizens' home. ●

"It doesn't make any difference to me if there is a raja in Kathmandu or not"

DIGAMBAR RAI in KHOTANG

Although there were celebrations in Kathmandu and low-key processions in some district headquarters across the country, most Nepalis don't seem to care much that the country has become a republic.

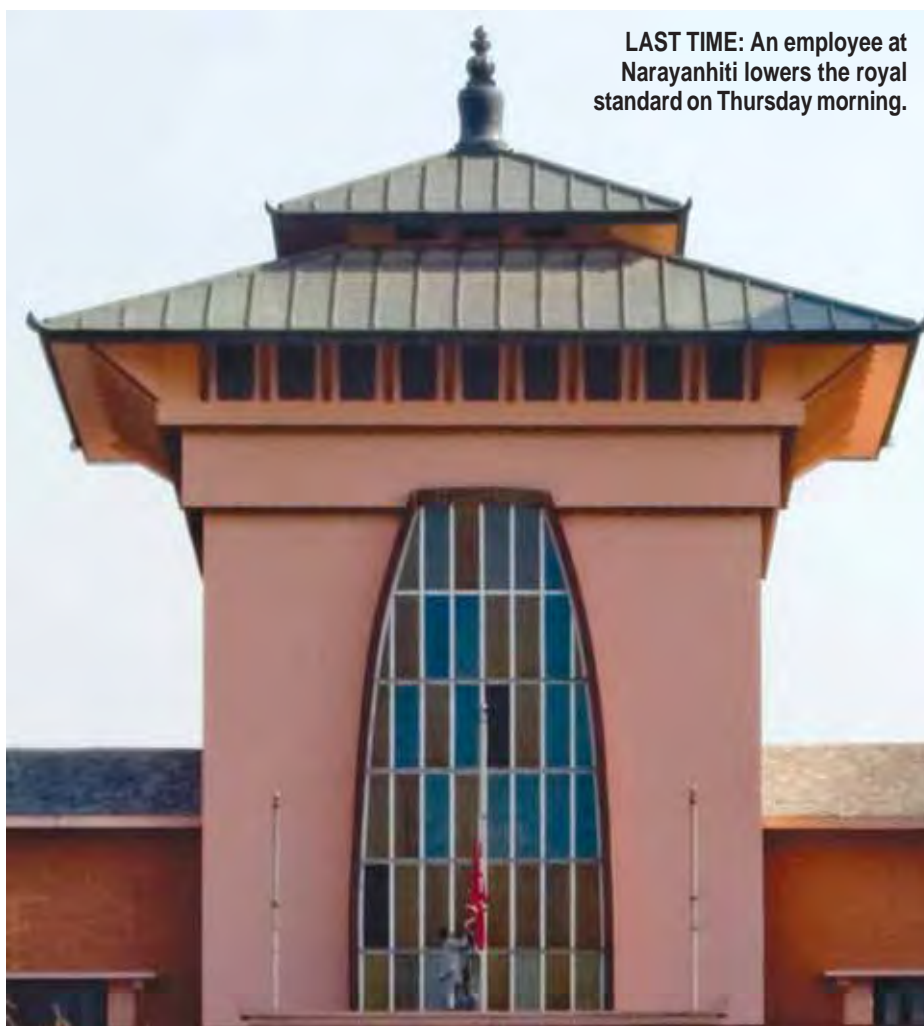
Rita Maya Baniya is a subsistence farmer who has been forced to work as a day labourer at a construction site for a new prison in Diktel in eastern Nepal. On Thursday morning she looked up from a load of bricks she was carrying on her back and said she didn't know Nepal was a now a republic.

In fact, this was the first time she had heard the word 'republic'. She voted Maoist in the election, and couldn't believe that the leader of her party overthrew the king. "Really, is that so?" she asked.

Laxmi Khatri was also shoveling sand, and paused to ask: "I wonder who will rule the country now?"

At the Champawati Secondary School here in this eastern district, teacher Bhakta Shrestha was happy to hear the news from Kathmandu. He had to move away from his village during the war, and he hopes the Maoists will return his confiscated property.

At the other end of Nepal, Bal Bahadur BK is planting corn seeds in a narrow terrace field. He hasn't heard the news and says it won't make much of a difference to him who rules in



LAST TIME: An employee at Narayanhiti lowers the royal standard on Thursday morning.

PALLAV PANT

Kathmandu. "I don't know about monarchy or republic, all I am worried about is if it will rain, and whether I can feed my family," says BK, who lives off the land with his wife and four small children.

Farmers in the Dang valley were often caught in the crossfire between the army and the insurgents during the war, and there is a sense of relief here that now that the Maoists form the new government, and

there won't be a return to conflict. Other than that, villagers don't really have a preference about what kind of government there is in Kathmandu.

"My uncle was killed by the guerrillas during a big battle on the highway to Lamahi," says Biswo Chaudhary, "but we voted for the Maoists because we wanted peace. Now there will be peace, I am convinced about that."

In Nepalganj, there was a victory rally for a republic by professional organisations that went through the main bazar on Thursday morning, but without much fanfare and no overt outpouring of joy.

"I think people are still not quite sure whether we are really a republic yet because the 26 nominated members still haven't voted," said a shopkeeper.

Watching it all was Lalaji Mahut, 42, a rickshaw puller from Hirimaniya near the Indian border. He has worked the streets for the past 18 years and earns Rs 150 a day of which he has to pay Rs 40 to the rickshaw owners.

"I just want to be able to buy two square meals for myself and my family every day," he told *Nepali Times*, "it doesn't make any difference whether there is a raja in Kathmandu or a republic, I need to find enough work to survive." ●

Reporting also by Raju Rijal in Dang, and Rameswor Bohara in Banke

War wounds

Many in Nepal still bears scars of the war

SRISHTI ADHIKARI

For Til Bahadur Gurung, the morning of 22 November 1998 started like any other. But it was not to be an ordinary day, as at 7AM, a group of three Maoists came to his shop to buy handkerchiefs and somehow ended up firing bullets at him.

From that day on, Gurung's life has been anything but the same. Although he ran for his life, a bullet pierced his spine and left his lower body paralysed.

Today, Til Bahadur lives with his family in a rented room in Samakhusi. The native of Gorkha is a good-looking middle-aged man, but the paralysis has broken

his spirit. Between cries of pain he says, "I am a living corpse. Sometimes I think it would have been easier on my family if I had died then. Now I constantly need someone to take care of me and I can do nothing but sit and cry in this room."

The government did foot his medical expenses for the first

two-three years but his treatment is far from over. His old wounds resurface and he needs to go to the hospital at least twice every month. Although 10 years have passed since the incident, his troubles are ongoing. With no income of his own, he relies entirely on his son's earnings to take care of his family.

The government has been the major provider of relief for those wounded in the war. "The wounded are the liability of the government. The government has provisions to cover the first time treatment of all those wounded. It has also worked on a relief package for those disabled due to the conflict," joint secretary of the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, Shyam Sundar Sharma told *Nepali Times*.

At the Relief and Rehabilitation Unit, hordes of affected people, including the war wounded, come everyday in hope of some assistance. Lal Bahadur Rokka, 75, has come all the way from Okhaldhunga for the third time to find out whether he will receive the money that he spent on his treatment from his own pocket three years ago.

When the Maoists beat him up after a case was filed against

him in the Maoists' people's court, his urinary bladder burst open. "Then I did not ask for any help because people said that the Maoists would take away half of any financial aid. Instead I sold a plot of land and took a loan for my treatment," says Rokka. "I submitted an application for reimbursement of Rs 41,700 ten months ago so that I can repay my loan, but coming here to try and get the money has cost me another Rs 9,000."

Rokka is not the only one who is still waiting. His fellow villager Shyam Babu Poudel who had his jaw broken by the Maoists is still in the village. The Relief and Rehabilitation Unit took over the treatment package for the wounded last year but this guideline was withdrawn only a month later. According to a new guideline, which has been sent to the cabinet for revision, the treatment of the wounded will now come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health and Population.

For the last nine months the Relief and Rehabilitation Unit has just been collecting applications from those who need relief. Although some have been afforded some help, most of them have had to return home empty-handed. Until the cabinet approves the new guideline their situation remains unclear, and even after that it is likely to be a long time until the wounded can get the provision they need. ●

BEDRIDDEN: A bullet wound from ten years ago has left Til Bahadur Gurung paralysed from the waist down.



SAM KANG LI



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

PORTRAIT

WAYNE AMTZIS

South across the Vishnumati,
behind the walls of an enclosed courtyard,
in a small three room house

there hangs on the wall, beneath neon
on only at noon, when the electricity is strongest,
a portrait of a king. He wears

a velour and golden cloak,
and stands like a well-tended tree
His gold crown is crafted

with diamonds. And emeralds
dangle like bangs across his brow
A bejeweled tassel tops it off

Not unlike a fountain
one poses in front of in a studio
in Darjeeling. Nowadays,

uncertain neon dapples his thighs,
as though the king cannot
decide to conceal (or lean more

heavily on) his ruler's
sword. His face, darkest, at midday;
his intentions, well-known

A curious water-stain, blood-soot
seeping from within.
bares it self to a closer look

As if an invisible hand
were finally knitting the eyes
and lips shut.

Kathmandu, 12/1980

June Sky 2008

A beginner's guide to the midsummer sky

Stargazers! This has been an historic week for astronomers and observers of the firmament across the whole world.

A NASA craft has landed further north on Mars than ever before, and has already sent back amazing pictures of the Martian polar region. The mission will try to discover if there really is ice under the surface of Mars, and if the planet could have sustained life in the past.



STARGAZING
Kedar S Badu

As we learn more and more about our cosmos, this month we also have a solstice, and Venus and Mercury will switch sides in the sky. So there is much to be excited about.

The summer months, weather permitting, are a great time to learn to identify interesting stars and constellations. Let me show you around some of them, and urge you to get outside and find them for yourself.

There are so many stars in the night sky we can easily get confused. But it's actually not that difficult if you put in some effort to learn which is which. Soon after sunset, you can easily spot the Big Dipper (Saptarshi) in the northern skies. Use the handle of the Big Dipper to point out Arcturus, the brightest star in the constellation of Boötes the Herdsman. Once you have found Arcturus, continue on that line to Spica. It's a white star in the zodiac constellation of Virgo the Virgin.

Immediately to the west of Virgo is the constellation of Leo the Lion. Its brightest star, Regulus is at the base of a curve of stars that seem to form a question mark. The planet Saturn is very close to this star and Mars a little to the west of it, and they will appear especially close at the end of June. Immediately west of Leo is Cancer the Crab, though this is such a small and dim constellation that it is easy to miss.

There are some nice stars to the east of Spica but it is blood-red Antares that really catches the eye. This beautiful star is in the heart of Scorpio the Scorpion, another member of the zodiac. And about midway between Antares and Spica is the dim constellation of Libra the Scales.

Another interesting constellation is Hercules, which is located to the east of Boötes. Do you see four faint stars arranged in a lopsided quadrangle? That asterism is known as The Keystone of Hercules. Binoculars will help you see many more fascinating parts of this constellation.

It takes more than one night to identify the myriad of stars which carpet the heavens in midsummer. But learning the above stars and constellations is a noble beginning.

June Highlights:
21 June is the Summer Solstice (the longest day), when the Sun will reach its most northerly point at 5:44AM. Mercury will be at inferior conjunction (in front of the Sun) on 7 June, and Venus will reach superior conjunction



(passing behind the Sun) on 9 June. After these events Mercury will move from being visible in the evening to the morning, and Venus will migrate from the morning to the evening sky. In this way the planets will be crossing over, though it will be hard to make either of them out for several days as they will be dazzled in the glare of the Sun. Mars is still visible in the western sky after sunset, and sets in the west around midnight. Jupiter comes up in the south-east around midnight, and is high in the south at dawn, in the constellation of Sagittarius. Saturn is in the western sky after sunset and sets around midnight.

Wishing you clear skies and great stargazing!

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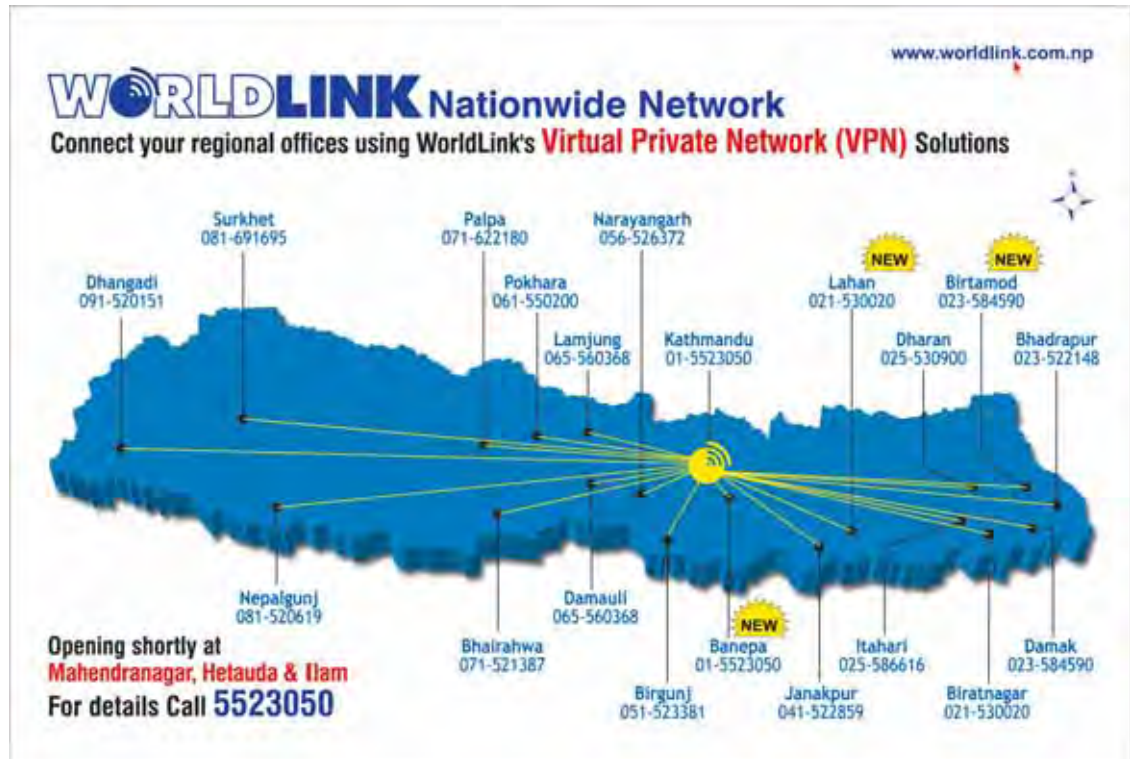
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Come cheer on your Nepali pros

Surya Nepal Masters starts on 3 June

Nepal's largest golf event is just around the corner and the finest pros and amateurs from the whole region will soon be on your doorstep. The four day professional event, the Surya Nepal Masters starts on Tuesday and climaxes in the final round on Saturday 7 June. All this is happening at the 18-hole Gokarna Golf Course at Le Meridien Kathmandu.

The event will begin with the much awaited Standard Chartered Pro-Am, where amateurs get the chance to play a competitive round with the best golfers in the region.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



This event started in 1993 and from this year will be the main event of the Surya Nepal Golf Tour, which is sanctioned by Nepal Professional Golfers Association. Last year was a

big success for Nepali golf as Deepak Thapa Magar became the first Nepali to win this event. This year, sharpened by practice on the Surya Nepal Golf Tour and more competing opportunities, the hosts have an equally good if not better chance of clinching the title.

Past winners Gurbazz Mann, Mukesh Kumar, Vijay Kumar and Feroz Ali have signed in for the tournament. Others include winner of the Asian tour Harmeet Kahlon, India's Asian Games silver medallist Joseph Chakola, and Sri Lanka's Anura Rohana with a strong field of other contenders from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

This year the total purse of the event will be Rs 2 million. The winner gets a cheque for 17 percent of the total prize money. The Gokarna Golf Course has been spruced up into top shape for the tournament. The big boys from the tour will arrive by Monday as most of the top players will be playing the corporate Pro-Am event with local amateur players on Tuesday 3 June.

Whether or not you play golf, I urge you to come down to the golf course and get a feel of a large scale international sporting event where you as a spectator can enjoy not only the sport, but also a walk in the sunshine within the beautiful ambience of Gokarna Forest.

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and golf director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.
 prodeepak(at)hotmail(dot)com

SURYA NEPAL GOLF
 SURYA NEPAL GOLF TOUR 2008

Surya Nepal Masters 2008
 Le Meridien Kathmandu Gokarna Forest Golf & Spa • June 2-7, 2008

Roasted in Nepal

Kathmandu is waking up to good coffee

"Nescafe is the enemy here," firmly declares Peter Graif, a partner and main coffee roaster for the smart new Café Society located next to the European Bakery, near the RBB bank building in Baluwatar.

The tiny storefront currently offers eight different varieties of imported single-origin beverages from some of the finest coffee-producing areas in the world—Bali, Guatemala, Yemen, Ethiopia and more. Sales are by the bag or by the hand-pressed cup of cappuccino, espresso, or straight coffee. Prices are comparable to the other high-end coffee outfits in town.



The stated goal of Café Society is to introduce Kathmandu and Nepal to the international standard and taste of fine coffee, and to produce a perfect cup for every customer. All of the beans are sourced from the farmers themselves and shipped, unroasted, to Nepal.

Graif and his partner in the venture, Surendra Shrestha, have built a custom roaster—a jumbled contraption of fans, wires, and clay that allows them to roast all the beans themselves, to exacting standards. Once roasted, every cup of coffee is

prepared from freshly hand-ground beans and pressed through a hand-operated espresso press. The result is a painstakingly perfect shot of jet-black espresso topped by nearly a centimeter of golden crema. The attention to detail is astounding—even the cups are washed in mineral water to keep the flavour pure.

And pure it is. The coffees have a depth of flavour and aroma that rival a very expensive wine.

They demand to be sipped slowly, to be savoured, their flavours floating along the back of the tongue. Some varieties of beans are described as having 'brightness' in the taste, others as producing 'a dark brooding cup.'

Making a handmade cup of coffee does take time. Be prepared to spend a few minutes waiting for your fix, especially if there are people ahead of you in line. It's definitely worth it.

Conspicuously missing from

the menu is coffee grown in Nepal. When pressed about this, Graif replies, "there is a lot of potential for coffee in Nepal, but it'll take some time for us. Most Nepali coffee is sold on a commodity scale, and I'm still looking for the right Nepali coffee." It becomes obvious, talking to the Café Society folks, that they see this as a long-term project. By showing how good coffee can really be, they hope to bring the production here up to that level.

"We want to change people's palates and expose Nepal to the best the world has to offer. For coffee production to succeed here, there needs to be a culture of coffee, and that culture needs to come from international exchange," says Graif.

Some of the menu descriptions are a touch on the lyrical side. Tasting the Yemen/Ethiopia blend did not feel 'like eating a bar of bittersweet chocolate in a field of wildflowers.' But it felt like I was drinking really fantastic coffee early in the morning, as Kathmandu was beginning to wake up. The flavours were wrapped around the plying taxis, the temple bells, the lokgit quiet on the radio. That was good enough. ●

Ben Ayers

Update: Another branch of Café Society with more extensive seating is opening this week directly above Nhuchhe's Organic Bistro between Bhatbateni and Baluwatar.

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SURYA NEPAL GOLF

SURYA NEPAL GOLF TOUR 2008

Aim for the summit

Surya Nepal Golf tour 2008 tees off. Brought to you by the Surya Nepal Khelparyatan initiative, this is the first professional golf tour of Nepal. So get ready for some serious golfing!

Surya Nepal Masters

Le Meridien Kathmandu Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, 2nd-7th June 2008

Surya Nepal Central Open

Le Meridien Kathmandu Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, 13th-16th May 2008

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EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Silhouettes in Time** paintings by Erina Tamrakar, 13-30 May at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4218048
- ❖ **MaterialScapes** 6th solo collage painting exhibition by Gaurav Shrestha, 30 May-30 June 10AM-6PM at Gallery 32@ Dent Inn. Heritage Plaza Kamaladi. 4241942.
- ❖ **Splashes** paintings by Milan Rai, 1-7June, 11AM-5PM at Park Gallery, Lazimpat. 4419353

EVENTS

- ❖ **CSGN monthly lecture** A Porter's Burden-The Untold Story of Nepali Mountain Porters by Ben Ayers 30 May 9.30 Am at Hotel Shanker.
- ❖ **Traveling Film South Asia** showcasing 13 documentaries from South Asia at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, 30 May-1 June. Tickets available at Dhokaima Café. 5547279
- ❖ **Book Fair and Brunch** 31 May, 11AM at Alliance Francaise, Tripureshwor.
- ❖ **Tantric Dance of Nepal** presented by Kalamandapa, every Tuesday 7PM at Hotel Vajra and every Saturday 11AM at Patan Museum.

MUSIC

- ❖ **Paleti** with Kumar Subba on 30 May, 5.30 PM at nepalaya 'r' sala, Kalikasthan. Rs. 565. 4412469
- ❖ **Root Ground** jazz with Jigme Sherpa 30 May, 8.30 PM onwards at Moksh, Pulchok. 5526212
- ❖ **HyJazz Club** jazz music along with drinks at the new HyJazz Club, Hyatt Regency every Friday 7PM onwards. 4489800
- ❖ **Live karaoke** with special thai cuisine, every Wednesday at Holiday Karaoke Restaurant and Bar, Lazimpat. 4445731
- ❖ **Rudra night fusion** and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends, every Friday, 7PM at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Sufi music** by Hemanta Rana, every Friday at 7.30 PM at Dhaba Restaurant and Bar, Thapathali.
- ❖ **Yankey and friends** live acoustic music every Friday at the Bourbon room Restro-bar, Lal Darbar.
- ❖ **Anil Shahi** every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 8PM. 5521408



DINING

- ❖ **Mongolian BBQ** with a wide variety of meat, fish and fresh vegetables stir fried along with music of Inner Groove and an Australian Band Rs.650 at Summit Hotel, 30 May.
- ❖ **Margaritas and Martinis**, enjoy refreshing margaritas and an assortment of martins at the Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency, until 20 June 7-10.30 PM. 4489361
- ❖ **Handmade Pasta** experience handmade pasta at the Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency until 20 June, 7-10.30 PM. 4489361
- ❖ **Hot summer spicy food** at the Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Kupondole Heights. 5544872
- ❖ **The Kaiser Café open now** at the Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, open from 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Lajawab** tandoori and kabab festival, 7-10 PM every Friday at the Hotel Himalaya, Rs 550.
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks available for lunch and dinner at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Bourbon Room Restro-bar** now open for lunch and dinner with over a 100 cocktails, Lal Darbar.
- ❖ **Cocktails and grooves** with jazz by Inner Groove at Fusion-the bar at Dwarika's, every Wednesday, at Dwarika's Hotel.
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails** and liqueurs at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- ❖ **Continental and Chinese cuisine** and complimentary fresh brewed coffee after every meal a Zest Restaurant and Bar, Pulchok.
- ❖ **Illy espresso coffee** at the Galleria cafe, every Friday espresso cocktails.
- ❖ **International buffet** at the Sunrise Café, and Russian specialties at Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **BBQ Dinner** every Friday and Saturday at the Chinese terrace, Everest Hotel, 7 PM. 4780100
- ❖ **Jazz in Patan** with coffee, food, drinks and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawalakhel. 8.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- ❖ **Saturday special barbeque**, sekuwa, momos, dal-bhat at The Tea House Inn, Windy Hills, Nagarkot every Saturday. 9841250848.
- ❖ **Scrumptious wood fired pizzas**, cocktails and more at Roadhouse, Bhatbateni 4426587, Pulchok 5521755 and Thamel 4260187.
- ❖ **Retro Brunch Barbeque** with live acoustic music by Sound Chemistry, every Saturday, 12-3PM at LeMeridien-Kathmandu, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Dhamaka** a Nepali style barbeque with a pan-Indian fusion at the Splash Bar and Grill, Hotel Radisson, Rs. 1399 with 60ml Royal Stag or a complimentary a bottle of coke, 7PM, every Friday. 4411818
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with Live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs. 666.00 nett. per person, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Lavazza coffee** Italy's favourite coffee at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, Roadhouse Café Pulchok and Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519

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

Quest Entertainment



In Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull, Professor Jones (Harrison Ford) goes after the mysterious crystal skull from South American mythology. But Mr. Jones isn't the only one after the skull. The Soviet Union has an interest in getting the skull in order to exploit its mystical powers in their quest for world domination. The story revolves around how Jones races the Soviets-led by the cold, villainous, no-nonsense Irina Spalko (Cate Blanchett)-to a lost city called Akakor in the Peruvian forest, in pursuit of the mystical crystal skull.

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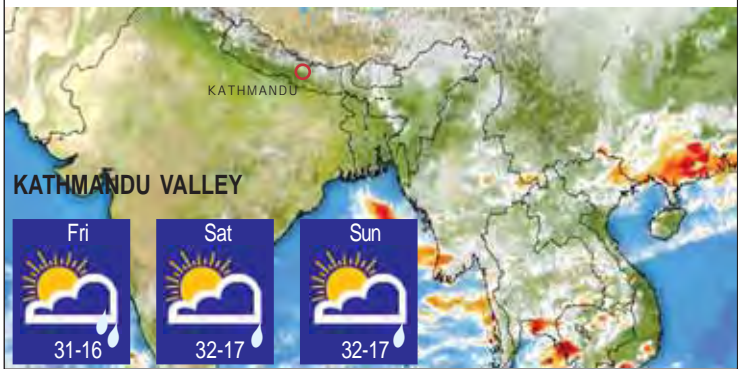
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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

There was a silent but pivotal change in our weather pattern early this week. The oncoming monsoon has finally overwhelmed the dominant westerly front, although it has not fully taken hold yet. Satellite pictures at midday on Thursday show an active cyclone over the Bay of Bengal, ready to move inland towards the Himalaya, while the previously active westerly front is now diffusing over the Tibetan Plateau. This is good news for farmers, as these developments mean that the monsoon is likely to arrive on time this year. It may still take a couple of weeks to arrive in its full force, but we can rest assured that soon the sticky summer heat will be soothed by the cooling rains. This weekend the weather is likely to remain sultry: high temperatures and overcast skies.



Federal Gun-tantra of Nepal

After waiting nine hours for the historic second session of the constituent assembly to begin on Wednesday to declare Nepal a republic, many of the **dehydrated and famished** honourable members must have wondered what they had got themselves into. Not that things were any better over at Baluwatar where the leaders of the seven parties spent the whole day **haggling** about the powers of the president over just tea and biscuits.

Those talks were deadlocked over whether or not the ceremonial president should also officiate as the head of army. Never mind that division of powers between president and prime minister is debated over years in other countries, and we were trying to figure it all out in the course of an afternoon. But given Chief Katuwal's absolute rejection of anyone but a non-Maoist president being the titular commander-in-chief, there was never any doubt which way this would ultimately go.



There is nothing like live television to bring out the best traits of Nepalis. The cameras were rolling all day at the Great Hall of the People where a whole row of elected constituent assembly members had got so sick of waiting they had drifted into coma. A female member from Baglung was **spread-eagled** as if in a dentist's chair and was snoring away. The honourable member from Sarlahi-3 was busy snapping pictures on his camera phone of colleagues dressed in full ethnic regalia. Others got tired of sitting in the uncomfortable chairs, and squatted cross-legged on the carpet in the aisle to chew the fat. Memo to CA Secretariat: Get a faster photocopier.



Far be it for the Ass to poke fun at the personal hygiene habits of peers, but on full display on the floor of the assembly were various **nose grooming** techniques of the 575 members. The variety in the modus operandi for nose-picking among us Nepalis, it seems, is matched only by our ethnic, caste, religious and linguistic diversity. While some on the leftwing of the august assembly indulged in dreamy, circular **forefinger manoeuvres**, backbenchers used the overgrown nails in their pinkies for deep excavation work. Snooty centre right assemblymen achieved even greater success by quarrying large nuggets from deep inside their nasal cavities by deploying their big fingers like pneumatic drills, unaware that it was all on candid camera and their every movement was being beamed live nationwide.



It's not even been a day since we have been formally declared a republic, but we already know what it feels like to live in a "gone tantra".

Everything is gone: there is no water in the taps, no oil in the pumps, no planes in the national airline, no banknotes in the Central Bank, no king in the palace, no food in the food corporation, no constitution in the country and no government. And while there are no text books in schools, the Ministry of Education is already promising one laptop per child.



Looks like Kingji is now going to get a two week reprieve to vacate the palace. Fair enough, the movers will need to start packing and carting off a whole load of stuff. G swung it by playing double-crossed victim pretty well and deftly **leveraged** the written promise he'd **extracted** from the parties in April 2006 not to scrap the monarchy to extract personal concessions.



Governments may come and **governments may go** but there will always be survivors. Some royal ministers are quite smoothly making the transition to being Maoist sympathisers. Tycoons who prospered under the Royal Son-in-Law and later enjoyed the patronage of the First Daughter are now helicoptering around with Awesomeji promising to help him achieve his annual 25 percent economic growth rate. While the NC and UML were scrambling to find people to fill their quota of the 26 nominated members of the CA, Lotus Flower put forth the name of Sitaula Baje. It was as we suspected all along, after all.



Anything for a day off. After enjoying three days off last week, the Home Ministry had decided to take back the three-day republican holiday it has announced for this week. But better sense prevailed and the holidays were re-instated. It seems the Supplies Minister convinced the cabinet that this was the only way to reduce demand for diesel and petrol while at the same time getting over our **republican hangover**.



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Yishion (衣ashion), the celebrated international fashion brand of Hongkong is now ready to make its presence felt in Nepal. Yishion started operations in 1997, bringing fashion + quality + value through an integrated system of design sourcing, manufacturing and sales to customers. Today Yishion has over 20,000 employees and 3,000 franchised stores in China and other parts of the world.

Yishion enjoys a wide following in Asia, from Hongkong to Jordan and Malaysia to Saudi Arabia, because of the credibility it derives from its integrated system of design, sourcing and manufacturing. More recently, Yishion was awarded with some prestigious titles including "Famous Brand" and "Well-Known Trademark" in China.

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Now the Nepali youth can also indulge in the chic designs of this illustrious clothing brand as the leading clothing store UFO is bringing Yishion to Nepal as its official franchised store for Nepal. It is available in the leading UFO stores at Kathmandu Mall, Kumaripati and Baneshwor.

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Getting down to business

While Kathmandu celebrated the abolition of the monarchy and the declaration of a republic on Wednesday, in remote parts of Nepal life went on as usual. For the 80 percent of Nepalis who live off the land, the real question was: will a republic make any difference to our lives? (See: p 10-11)

An anachronistic monarchy kept the country backward for 50 years. But the political parties tried to deflect criticism of their own failings by keeping the spotlight on the monarchy. For example, how was the monarchy to blame for the governance failures after the restoration of democracy in 1990? And for two years after the king was sidelined in 2006, the ruling alliance utterly failed to restore services and use the peace dividend to lift living standards. Today, the country is reeling under shortages of everything, and survival is a struggle for millions of Nepalis.

The people will not judge the new government by its republican credentials and political slogans anymore, but by sound policies efficiently implemented. Only discernible development will give our new rulers political legitimacy.

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HIMAL

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Food, oil and the future of Western dependence

•The failed harvest of food policy
by Aseem Shrivastava

•Shifting balance of global trade
by Pritam Singh

•Glocalising growth and accepting the corporation
by Sujeev Shakya

HIMAL SOUTHASIAN'S JUNE ISSUE IS OUT!

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