Weekly Internet Poll #402

Q. Are you proud to be a Nepali?

Weekly Internet Poll #402

Q. How confident are you that a republic will be declared on 28 May?

Total votes: 6,360

- Yes: 4,630
- No: 1,730
- Don’t know: 1,000

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA
If anyone wanted a glimpse of the New Nepal, it could be seen inside the Sagamartha Hall of the convention centre this week on the fresh and diverse faces of assembly members. They represent our 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 republic is neither dangerous nor will it bleed the nation. With his own cabinet colleagues and their negotiation had drifted at Baluwatar all fall. He ignored the Nepal Army's guard given a chance to deliver. The government should also be committed to the Nepali people, the new Assembly members, most of whom are new to the ways of electoral politics. The representatives of the fresh and diverse faces of assembly members. They represent our parliament and the drafters of a new constitution over the next two years.

The representatives of the Madhes along with the rest of the political class against the monarchy. Hindutva Tripathi's intervention on the absence of federalism in the Maoist insurgency Manual. This movement and this step-by-step clipping of the king's wings gave the Nepali people a chance to defend their monarchy. The king didn't have to do anything. The new constitution drafting process drags on through two years. 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 Nepal realities, not populists playing to the galleries.

As a legislature, the assembly will have to immediately start working 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 support and sustain the government's effort so that development delivery catches up with time. Unlike the restless populace of volatile new democracies, New Nepal 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 patriotism in the constitution drafting process drags on through two years. The representatives of the Madhes along with the rest of the political class against the monarchy. Hindutva Tripathi's intervention on the absence of federalism in the Maoist insurgency Manual. This movement and this step-by-step clipping of the king's wings gave the Nepali people a chance to defend their monarchy. The king didn't have to do anything. The new constitution drafting process drags on through two years. 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 Nepal realities, not populists playing to the galleries.

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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 minority, 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 the allotted day in the week. The Maoists can have 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 the allotted day in the week. The Maoists can have Mondays, the NC and UML Tuesdays (alternate weeks) and Wednesdays can go to anyone with

Pradipra 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

O’WING GUARD

Malika 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 for democracy, as they sound from his description?

Gyanendra.

Pradeep Aryal, Minneapolis

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OKLAL

Bravo, OK 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

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

Email: letter@nepaltimes.com
Fax: 977-1-5521013
Mail: Letters, Nepal Times,
GPO Box 7257, Kathmandu, Nepal.
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.

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 effect and these successful farmers became our brand 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.”
The NOC has not increased oil prices in Nepal in accordance with this rise, and it is currently losing Rs 1.78 billion per month. Nepal has lived for 238 years under a monarchy which would mean that the government will 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 constitute an unsustainable budget deficit. Oil importers control the prices of petroleum products to protect lower-income consumers, says Dhungel, managing director of the NOC. Even the way leaders interact with the public has not changed. This is as if the new democratic leadership think they are the new kings. The Beed only hopes that the concept 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, Mount Everest is something better.
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 had 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 republican joined hands. When Manmohan Adhikari accepted ceremonial monarchy, he became the first elected communist prime minister. Even Manoj 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 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.

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.

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Looking ahead

Editorial in Kantipur, 29 May

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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 Narayanthi, which has now been declared a museum.

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"TOGETHER LET'S HELP BUILD A NEW NEPAL"

Surya Nepal congratulates all citizens on the historic occasion of the formation of The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal
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 fire and spilled out into the streets. 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 torture(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.

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA
fter 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 summing for the 18th time. Chhiring Nima also did it for the 15th time, Mingma Tshering for 13th time, and Chhulimo 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 summing 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 the 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 briefing 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 13 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 an Italian 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 Spanish and colapsed with either a stroke or cerebral oedema. Four days of agony and an amazing coordination of rescue efforts ensued. Colibasanu 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
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 highest mountain.

In High Crimes, Kodas portrays the dark side of modern Himalayan mountaineering in which cooks lead commercial expeditions, extortionists demand payment before rescues, 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 overcrowding on the summit delayed descent and lead to the death in storms of dozens of climbers. Pulitzer-prize winning 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 partner fell out on the mountain and his expedition disintegrates in a blaze 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.’

This book, which is not about the whole story, can’t extra data from a few bad experiences. For every case of abandonment at high altitude there are a few instances where mountaineers have for some reason climbed up to rescue 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 Himalayan is a fly high atop Chomolungma on 25 May. 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 low and Tarai 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, Shailee had to join the group on a reporting assignment. Shailee had to sit 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 flight if a peak, to prepare herself for the peak.

All ten members of FIWSE have managed to scale Chomolungma. The other nine are Sushmita Maskey, Usha Bista, Ashakumar Singh Chauhuri, Nimdrolma Sherpa, Maya Gurung, Pemaluki Sherpa, Pujan Acharya, Nawang Prutti Sherpa and Chunnu Shrestha.

Never too late

25 May was a great day for another Chomolungma summiteer. Min Bahadur Sherchan, at 76, who became the oldest person to successfully scale the peak, broke the previous record held by Japanese guide, Tatsuya Yagi, who scaled the peak last year at the age of 71. A few years for the record, this year was 75-year old Japanese Yuichiro Miura, who reached the summit a day late. Sherchan, a former soldier, hailed from Bhurung Tatopani in Myagdi and claims that his reason for climbing Chomolungma is to give意义 to senior citizens into doing something adventurous even in their old age. He had also added that the climbing the peak had been his childhood dream. Now that he achieved what he set out to do, Sherchan wants to open up senior citizens’ homes.

Women on top: A stream of climbers on the Khumbu Icefall last week.

Women on top: A stream of climbers on the Khumbu Icefall last week.
**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 of Nepal isn’t too bothered about the crucial day of election.

Rita Maya Baniya is a subsistence farmer who has been forced to work as a day-labourer at construction sites 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 if Nepal was 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 her party leader had overthrown the King. “Really? Is that so?” she shrieked.

Laxmi Khatri was also shocked, and paused to ask: “I wonder who will rule the country now?”

At the Champawati Secondary School 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 Rokka, 75, has come all the way from his Anamgati village in Bajura to stand in the queue at Narayanhiti Palace.

From that day on, Gurung’s life has been anything but the same. Although he ran for his life, a bullet in his spine and left his family in a rented room in Gokarneshwor, he has been entirely on his son’s earnings to take care of his family.

When the Maoists beat him with their handkerchiefs and somehow managed to escape, Gurung’s spirit was crushed. Sometimes he would think it was easier for him if he had died then. Now he constantly needs someone to take care of him and he can do nothing but sit and cry in this room.”

The government footed his medical expenses for the first three years but his treatment is far from over. His old wounds resurface and he needs to go to the hospital at least twice a month. Although 10 years have passed since the incident, his old wounds have resurfaced and he needs to go to the hospital at least twice a month.

According to a new guideline, the Health and Population Ministry has withdrawn only a month later. According to the new guidelines, which have 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 guidelines, their situation remains unclear, and even after that it is likely to be a long time until the wounded can get the provision on their need.

**War wounds**

SRISHTI ADHIKARI

For Til Bahadur Gurung, the morning of 22 November 1998 started like any other.

It was not to be an ordinary day, as at 7 AM, a group of three Maoists came to his shop to buy handkerchiefs and somehow managed to escape. Gurung, who lives off the land with his wife and four small children, attempted to stop them but was fired upon by them. Gurung was shot in both legs and the bullet entered his body from the waist down.

The government did foot his medical expenses for the first three years but his treatment is far from over. His old wounds resurface and he needs to go to the hospital at least twice a month. Although 10 years have passed since the incident, his old wounds have resurfaced and he needs to go to the hospital at least twice a month.

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**War wounds**

Many in Nepal still bears scars of the war

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

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**Bedridden:** A bullet wound from ten years ago has left Til Bahadur Gurung paralyzed from the waist down.

**Last time:** An employee at Narayanhiti lowers the royal standard on Thursday morning.

**Reporting assistant Raja Rijal in Dang and Karan Basu in Banke**
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.

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.

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

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!

kedarbadu@gmail.com

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 velvet and golden cloak, and stands like a well-tended tree, His gold crown is crafted with diamonds. And emeralds dangle like bells 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, although the king cannot decide to conceal (or learn 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. bars it self to a closer look.

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

Kathmandu, 12/1980
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.

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 ambiance of Gokarna Forest.

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

Come cheer on your Nepali pros

Surya Nepal Masters starts on 3 June

Deepak Acharya

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

Surya Nepal Masters 2008

La Meridien Kathmandu Gokarna Forest Golf & Spa w June 2-7, 2009
“Nescafe is the enemy here,” firmly declares Peter Graif, a partner and main coffee roaster for the snazzy 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 Nepal 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 dog 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.
EXHIBITIONS

- Silhouettes in Time paintings by Erina Tamrakar, 13-30 May at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal- Revisited. 4216048
- Material Scapes 6th solo collage painting by Gaurav Shrestha, 30 May-30 June 10AM-6PM at Gallery 32& Dent Inn. Heritage Plaza, Kamadoshi. 4243494
- Splashes paintings by Milan Rai, 1-7 June, 11AM-5PM at Park Gallery, Lalitpur. 4193553

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 Durga, 30 May-3 June. Tickets available at Dhokaih Cafe. 5547279
- Book Fair and Brunch 31 May, 11AM at Alliance Francaise, Tripureswor.
- Tantric Dance of Nepal presented by Kalamandapa, every Tuesday 7PM at Hotel Vaja and every Saturday 11AM at Patan Museum.

MUSIC

- Palewi with Kumar Subba on 30 May, 5.30 PM at nepalaya ’r sala, Kalkasthan. Rs. 655, 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, Hyat Regency every Friday 7PM onwards. 4498800
- Live karaoke with special thai cuisine, every Wednesday at Holiday Karaoke Restaurant and Bar, Lalitpur. 4465747
- Rudra night fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends, every Friday, 7PM at Le Meridien, Gakami. 4451212
- Suli music by Hemanta Rana, every Friday at 7.30 PM at Dhaba Restaurant and Bar, Thapathali.
- Yanke and friends live acoustic music every Friday at the Bourbon room Resto-bar, Lal Darbar.
- Anil Shahi every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayan Complex, 8PM. 5512148

DINING

- Mongolian BBQ with a wide variety of meat, fish and fresh vegetables stir fried along with music of Inner Grove and an Australian Band Rs.600 at Summit Hotel, 30 May.
- Margaritas and Martinis, enjoy refreshing margaritas and an assortment of martinis at the Rox Bar, Hyat Regency, every 20 June 7-10.30 PM. 4498961
- Handmade Pasta experience handmade pasta at the Rox Restaurant, Hyat Regency until 20 June, 7-10.30 PM. 4498961
- Hot summer spicy food at the Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Kupondole Heights. 5544872
- The Kasa Café open now at the Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika’s Group of Hotels, open from 9AM-10PM. 4425441
- Lajawab tandori and kabab festival, 7-10 PM every Friday at the Holiday Karaoke Restaurant and Bar, Lalitpur. 4465747
- Steak escape with Kathmandu’s premier steaks available for lunch and dinner at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- Bourbon Room Resto-bar now open for lunch and dinner with over a 100 cocktails, Lal Darbar.
- Cocktails and grooves with jazz by Inner Grove 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 Cafe, and Russian specialties at Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4249699
- 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.
- Sculpturium wood fired pizzas, cocktails and more at Roadhouse, Bhodibati 4426587, Pulchok 5521755 and Thamel 4200187
- Retro Brunch Barbeque with live acoustic music by Sound Quest Entertainment, every Saturday, 12-3PM at Le Meridien-Kathmandu, Gakami. 4412145
- Dhamaka a Nepali style barbeque with a pan-Indian fusion at the Splash Bar and Grill, Hotel Radisson, Rs. 1309 with 60ml Royal Bride or a complimentary a bottle of coke. 7PM, every Friday. 4411818
- Staright 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 Cafe Pulchok and Thamel. 4700612
- Pizza from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519

IN THE NEWS

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.

Call 4442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal www.jainepal.com

WEATHER

There was a silent but pivotal change in our weather pattern early this week. The ongoing 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 along 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 soothingly replaced by cooling rains. This weekend the weather is likely to remain sultry: high temperatures and overcast skies.

WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGMINDRA DHARAL

CITY

In the last few days, the weather has been quite erratic, with sudden downpours followed by clear skies. It is advisable to carry an umbrella when stepping outside. The temperature is expected to remain warm, with a high of around 32 degrees Celsius and a low of 17 degrees Celsius. The humidity levels are expected to be high, at around 70%.

ABOUT TOWN

The Weekend Times

30 MAY - 5 JUNE 2008 #402

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@jainepalines.com

Times
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 banks 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 textbooks in schools, the Ministry of Education is already promising one laptop per child.

It 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 all the royal loot. 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 heli-copter-ing around with Awesomeji promising to help him make his annual 25 percent economic growth rate. While the NC and UML, were scrambling to find people to fill their quotas 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 that was announced for this week. But better sense prevails and the holidays were reinstated. It seems the Supplies Minister convinced the cabinet that this was the only way to reduce demand for diesel and petrol, while the last meeting of getting over our republican hangover.

Philippe de Guigné, the very much alive 19th century French adventurer who was known as the "King of Nepal" for his exploits there, is said to have written his last testament in Nepal. "Nepal.was overwhelmed with some pleasant and kind words including "thank you" and "keep on"." He left his "Treasure of the World" behind in the Himalayan kingdom. Let’s hope he wasn’t surprised when he was awarded the title of "The Great Modern-day National Hero" in Nepal. It is available in the leading UFO stories at Amazon India, Kathmandu Mall, and elsewhere.

The issue of control from YEDEN truly gives you freedom to make any comments you choose to.
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.