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Weekly Internet Poll # 404

Q. What should be the priority for politicians now?

Total votes: 4,516

Weekly Internet Poll # 405. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. How do you think the government handled the king's departure from Narayanhiti?

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BILASH RAI/KIRAN PANDAY

# Same to same

KUNDA DIXIT

**K**ing Gyanendra may have been a divisive force ever since he became king in 2001, but he was a unifying factor in keeping the parties and Maoists together. With the monarchy gone, who will the parties now blame when things go wrong?

Two weeks after the declaration of the republic, the debate over who should be the first president is deadlocked. Two months after the elections, the Maoists have still not been able to form a government. On Thursday they resigned from the government to put further pressure on Prime

Minister Koirala.

The Maoists had shown flexibility this week by agreeing to a non-political president and a simple majority to form and sack governments, but negotiations got stuck once more on the issue of army integration and on who the president should be. Both sticking points have to do with the military: the army doesn't want to induct ex-guerrillas and it doesn't want a Maoist commander-in-chief.

"It was just a tactic to show they were flexible. Actually the Maoists are as rigid as ever on all points," says Gagan Thapa, an NC assembly member.

The NC and UML see the

president's post as not just ceremonial but a way to balance Maoist dominance of the government.

After the three-party task force failed to reach a deal, Prime Minister Koirala and Chairman Dahal met Thursday at Baluwatar to give it another try. But by the afternoon, all seven Maoist ministers had handed their resignations to Dahal.

"The new government needs to be formed so that it reflects the people's mandate, which is why we have resigned from our ministerial positions," said Minister for Forests and Soil Conservation Matrika Yadav.

The UML and NC insist that

integration of Maoist guerrillas into the army should be on the basis of qualification as agreed in the peace accord. The Maoists want all their guerrillas to be integrated into the national army.

A compromise can be reached under which some PLA are taken into the army, while the remainder are recruited into other security apparatus. "If it was only up to us, we could reach an agreement, but there are outside stakeholders exerting pressure," senior Maoist Ram Karki told *Nepali Times*. • Subhas Devkota

**EDITORIAL**  
Level the playing field p2

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editors@nepalitimes.com  
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Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd. Editor: Kunda Dixit  
CEO: Ashutosh Tiwari Design: Kiran Maharjan  
Director Sales and Marketing: Sunaina Shah marketing@himalmedia.com  
Marketing Manager: Sambhu Guragain  
Asst Managers: Deepak Sangraula, Subhash Kumar, Tanka Sitaula  
Subscriptions: Nawaraj Guragain Tel: 5542535/5542525  
Hatiban, Godavari Road, Lalitpur  
GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu 5250333/845, Fax: 5251013  
Printed at Jagadamba Press, Hatiban: 5250017-19



## LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD

The king has been sent packing in a uniquely Nepali way. Unlike the revolutions in Tehran, Addis Ababa or Bucharest, the Narayanhi Palace was also mobbed—but by journalists. In the end, the king drove off quietly. Now the real work begins to make democracy deliver development.

History repeats itself as farce. We have voted to power a utopian ideology that the rest of the world paid for with the death of tens of millions. One could never accuse Nepali politicians of being ahead of the times, but we had never realised till now just what a bunch of dinosaurs they are.

There were socio-political reasons for the Maoist victory, of course. Perhaps contributing to it also was our collective blind spot for history and the deliberate airbrushing of atrocities in the past century.

But live with it we must as Pushpa Kamal Dahal becomes prime minister, and as the largest party forms the government in the coming week. That is as it should be. But there is a nagging worry that he is going to Singha Darbar without completely giving up his guerrilla ways, without disbanding his private army, without reining in the men in YCL tracksuits, and while keeping his options open for a violent takeover.

Recent opinions in Maoist mouthpieces and the speeches of their leaders haven't helped allay concerns. These are unreformed revolutionaries, in fact the very word 'reform' is a bad word in their lexicon. Words that the world thought had been consigned to the dustbins of history are now staple fare in the Maoist-controlled state media. At times the statements contradict each other, but there is a consistent message: the end goal of a totalitarian people's republic hasn't changed.

Our Maoists justify the Khmer Rouge genocide, saying it was "western propaganda". Every Maoist mass meeting has, among the portraits of international communists, the picture of Stalin, the man responsible for millions of deaths in the gulags. Political indoctrination of Nepal's Maoists includes the glorification of the Cultural Revolution, forgetting that tens of millions of Chinese died in Red Guard purges and from starvation.

The international community should know that unrepentant revolutionaries who refuse to learn from history are bound to repeat it, but there isn't much they can do if Nepal does turn totalitarian. Regimes like North Korea and Burma survive and continue to oppress their people in this day and age, despite international sanctions and the appointment of UN Special Envoys.

India, too, is not going to stick its neck out for the protection of democracy when energy imports or hydropower are at stake. It is eager to do business with the Myanmar military and Bhutan's ethnic cleansers.

The protection of our democracy, pluralism and the defence of civil space rests with us Nepalis alone. In this, we have no option but to support entities that espouse these values even though they may have not fared well in the polls.

The political parties must have a level playing field: one can't be a closet militant group that idolises Stalin while the others are emasculated by their belief in non-violence.

# We ain't seen nothing yet

## That was just the trailer; let the show commence

The debate over the presidency has stretched on for so long because the NC and UML think of it not merely as a ceremonial post, but one that can balance the Maoists. However, it is the way in which



TARAI EYE  
Prashant Jha

the new government is formed and portfolios allocated which will have even more significance and long-lasting consequences on the ground.

Yes, the two processes are interlinked and it will all be a



part of a packaged deal. Who becomes the head of state is inextricably linked with who joins the government in what capacity.

If the NC gives up the presidency, it will drive a hard bargain later for plum portfolios. If the Maoists let Koirala stay on, they will extract the maximum concessions claiming to be the biggest party, as well as for having been flexible on other fronts.

After being perceived as an establishment party despite rarely having had a decisive say in state affairs, the UML is reluctant to join the government. But it remains to be seen whether they can resist the temptation and pressure when the chorus of a national government picks up.

The MJF is divided on the issue. Upendra Yadav has sent out feelers for the deputy prime-ministership, but he will have to convince other central committee members that joining the government—and collaborating with Maoists—will not mean losing their base in the Tarai. He may therefore demand the incorporation of a few Madhes-related clauses in an agreement or as a part of an amendment. The TMLP will wait for Indian instructions.

But there is one lesson all the other parties must learn from the Maoists. During the past year, Maoist ministers used their departments to consolidate as well as contribute to their party's electoral success. The party was supreme and the ministries provided the means to make the party stronger. It is obviously not the right thing to do, because one is a minister for the country and not for one's party.

Krishna Bahadur Mahara's control of the state media through the information ministry gave the Maoists a free and influential propaganda machine. Hisila Yami's control of infrastructure allowed the

party to reach out selectively on the ground and project itself as sincere in facilitating basic amenities. Indeed, this week she took a group of journalists around town to show them improvements. Pampha Bhushal at the ministry of women, children and social welfare was in a position to provide handouts as well as influence INGOs through control of the Social Welfare Council. Matrika Yadav may rant against corruption in his ministry, but the forest department helped generate campaign funds.

But it was through Deb Gurung's handling of the Ministry of Local Development that the party benefited the most. The real battle for the new Nepal is being fought at the VDC level. Before the ceasefire, the Maoists had hegemony over most of these areas anyway. Now through legitimate control of the state apparatus, ably assisted by a violence-prone cadre, the party has only become stronger on the ground.

In contrast, Sher Bahadur Deuba was happy to get his crony the lucrative ministry of water resources. The only achievement of the UML-controlled education ministry was the appointment of vice-chancellors in the universities. Sahana Pradhan did little to professionalise the foreign service. Madhesi ministers were thrilled with their monopoly on industries and supplies and used it to dole out licenses.

There is a danger that the debate over ministries will get stuck around home, finance, defence and foreign. The home ministry is especially important, given the state of lawlessness in the country. But the other parties should realise that they can change things on the ground, and enhance their credibility, through other departments as well. Learn from the Maoists if you want to beat them. ●

# The priest and the warrior

## Finding a president in an age of political correctness

Those who don't learn from history are bound to repeat it. Never has that been more true than now.

The wish of Pushpa Kamal Dahal that the first president of the Democratic Republic of Nepal be a non-political person is reminiscent of ex-king Gyanendra's call in May 2004 for clean and competent individuals to apply for the post of prime minister.



STATE OF THE STATE  
C K Lal

Gyan's invitation triggered a rush to the palace gates by all manner of colourful personalities, and Dahal's offer has similarly attracted bewildering proposals. Bulk email requests from the UK in favour of a law professor in London are doing the rounds. The name of a retired UN officer is being circulated on electronic bulletin boards. A couple of socialites want the Burmese-Nepali Bahuni widow of a respected Newar communist leader.

There seems to be no shortage of claimants who seem to think they are qualified for the top job. Civil society stalwarts sitting cross-legged at Maitighar Mandala or New Baneswor junction all seem to nurse a secret ambition to be head of state.

Just as king G had no moral authority left to call for applications for the post of prime minister in 2004, Dahal too lacks the political standing to have a decisive say about a post to which he has been a claimant.

In June 2004, Taranath Rana Bhat was the frontrunner in the race to Baluwatar. Madhab Nepal and Daman Nath Dhungana were also favourites, although they hotly denied it. In the end, Sher Bahadur Deuba, fired for 'incompetence' two years previously, was brought back.

Dahal possibly floated the name of Ram Raja Prasad Singh to pre-empt the possibility of serving as premier under President Girija. For now, Singh clearly is the frontrunner with MJF and TMLD closing ranks to support a Madhesi for the top job. But the contest between the two

octogenarians is far from settled.

There is more to the race between Koirala and Singh than a simplistic and possibly populist Pahadi vs Madhesi confrontation.

Philosophically, a ballot-versus-bullet contest of beliefs is involved. Ideologically, it's a face-off between principles of parliamentary democracy and the theory of presidential supremacy. In operational terms, the Maoist strategy to downsize Koirala is evident. At the level of personalities however, these two old warhorses of the democratic struggle are alike despite all their differences—both Girija Prasad and Ram Raja Prasad are destiny's children.

Koirala epitomises the character of an edgy radical thrown into the excruciatingly slow process of peaceful change through patient negotiation. Singh is a quintessential aristocrat who would have loved to argue his case till the cows came home, but was forced by circumstances to unsheath his sword.

Dahal was declared an avatar of

Parsuram by the Marwari Brahman community of Kathmandu in a public function last month. In Hindu mythology, the axe-wielding Brahman is reputed to have cleansed the earth of all blood-letting Kshatriyas. But a time comes when even Parsuram has to be tamed to make the world safe for the downtrodden.

Koirala renounced violence in the mid-seventies. Singh claimed responsibility for the series of bombs on 20 June 1985 in Kathmandu—an act of pure terror that killed at least three people. He has yet to admit his historic blunder. Dahal's politics are responsible for the untimely and tragic deaths of more than 15,000 Nepalis.

Once Dahal comes out of his reverie, we will know whether he has learnt anything from history. Meanwhile, here is one more presidential candidate for the chattering classes to chatter about: Kashi Devi Jha, widow of martyr Durga Nanda Jha. A proletarian, a Madhesi, a Brahman, a character from history and a courageous woman. You can't be more politically correct than that. ●



## LETTERS

### WANNABE MAO

I was proud of the fact that I stayed on in Nepal even after all my friends migrated. Now, reading, watching the news everyday, I wonder whether I want to continue living in this country, and more importantly, do I want my children to grow up here? My family comes first, I'll think about my country later. Are you listening, Chairman Wannabe Mao? Here I am filling out an online application for an Australian PR visa, listening to a 1968 Beatles song that's still relevant in 2008 Nepal, and it brings tears to my eyes:

You say you want a revolution / Well, you know we all want to change the world / You tell me that it's evolution / Well, you know we all want to change the world / But when you talk about destruction don't you know that you can count me out / Don't you know / You say you got a real solution / Well, you know we'd all love to see the plan / You ask me for a contribution / Well, you know we're all doing what we can / But when you want money for people with minds that hate / All I can tell is brother you have to wait / You say you'll change the constitution / Well, you know we all want to change your head / You tell me it's the institution / Well, you know you better free your mind instead / But if you go carrying pictures of chairman Mao / You ain't going to make it with anyone anyhow. (Lennon, McCartney).

H Nepali, Kathmandu

● Pushpa Kamal Dahal's barbs against Kantipur were highly irresponsible and the criticism that followed (Editorial, 'No half way', #403) rightly deserved. The nation is still reeling from the murder of Ram Hari Shrestha by his cadres and here he is, touting his inviolable status. Perhaps this man and his party are inherently incapable of following democratic norms. Perhaps they belong in the jungles. Such irresponsible remarks will ultimately cause the downfall of the Maoists. What Dahal needs is a history lesson on the story of a divine king who locked up party leaders and clamped down on press freedom. The rest is history, but it is my duty to remind him what happened: the king was demoted from being the country's most powerful man to a tax-paying civilian in a mere two years, by people power. Grow up and open your eyes, Supreme Commander.

Name withheld, email

● I really appreciate your editorial ('No half way', #403). That is exactly what the politicians should be doing: focus on economic development. Politicians should be ashamed at all their bickering and for stalling the development. The people at the top should see the bigger picture of a successful federal democratic republic, not only the power to their own personal success. Don't let the future generation curse you for your selfishness.

Jyoti, Manila

● The past cannot be rewritten. For 240 years we have celebrated the unification of our nation by King Prithibi Narayan Shah, that is our history and heritage, let us not forget it because we are a republic. Let us be proud that a once scattered land became a united country. Let's ensure our heritage is not ruined by political ideology. Rather, let's face the future and take the same united approach from the Tarai to the Pahad. Former king Gyanendra may not have been the best representative of the Shah Dynasty, but let's not destroy the tree just because there was one bad apple. May the tales of our kings live on and may our children be proud to live in a united Nepal that was once created by the Shah Dynasty.

Abhishek Bhandari, email

● It is ridiculous that political parties that lost the elections like the NC and UML want to hang on to power. It is shameful and a disgrace. Grow up, political leaders.

Ram, United States

● It seems the Maoist leadership can use a little of what they call critical thinking and analysis ('The middle way', #403). Acting on impulse first and thinking later has led to widespread criticism of the Maoists, especially the Maoist leadership. As they have emerged as the biggest winner in the polls it is high time that they think before they speak or act. The Maoists must use their electoral success to make a mark rather than making a mockery of themselves.

Apil Gurung, Australia

### CORRECTION

Due to an editing error in Kishor Rimal's 'Peacetime in a war zone' (#403) Kilo Sierra 2 and Operation Romeo were ascribed to the army. They were actually conducted by the Nepal Police.



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# Let them eat burgers

## Nepali workers chase the American dream, in Malaysia

KISHOR PRADHAN  
in KUALA LUMPUR

**S**uraj Man Sunuwar paid Rs 82,000 to a recruiter in Kathmandu for a job in Malaysia. "You are going to work in an American restaurant with an American salary," is what the agent told him.

When he got to Kuala Lumpur in October, the 26-year-old from Taplejung found that his salary at a McDonalds franchise was almost three times less than the RM 1,700 (Rs 35,000) a month that the recruiter had promised. The Nepali recruiter and his Malaysian partner pocketed the rest of the money.

Sunuwar (pictured) has a

basic room and gets burgers and fries for meals. "I still spend RM 200 a month on food—I can't eat burgers every day," he says.

Nepalis have a good reputation in Malaysia, mainly because of the British Gurkha soldiers who fought the Japanese during World War II and helped quell a Communist rebellion here in the 1960s.

Many families stayed behind after the war and the Nepali settlements here still celebrate Nepali festivals, but third-generation children are assimilating into Malaysian society.

Despite being cheated on his pay, Sunuwar and workers like him are relatively better off than

others who have no jobs when they arrive or are given difficult jobs in oil palm plantations. And although kitchen staff like Sunuwar earn a lot less than Malaysians doing the same jobs despite having a legal work permit, Nepalis without proper papers are exploited more severely.

What partially makes up for all this is that Nepali immigrant workers in Malaysia are respected for their integrity and hard work. A second-generation Indian Malaysian worker, while complaining about discrimination against his own group, told us: "Nepalis are the most honest and disciplined workers

in Malaysia."

Malaysia remains the destination most Nepali migrant workers head for, followed by Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Nepal's Department of Labour says 41,614 Nepalis have left for Malaysia in the past 10 months, compared with 74,019 last year. The number of Nepalis headed for Qatar last year was 62,705.

The place where Nepalis congregate in Kuala Lumpur is the Kotaraya neighbourhood where every other signboard is in Nepali for restaurants, phone call centres, money transfers and even curio shops and businesses. A stroll



through Kotaraya is like walking in New Baneswor. Kiosks sell Nepali magazines and newspapers, and it is clear some Nepalis are doing extremely well.

For somebody like Sunuwar, to find a job in Malaysia and to earn and save enough to send money home is quite an achievement. If there was better regulation and safeguards were in place to prevent exploitation, he could send back even more.

The advent of a republic back home was celebrated by the Nepali immigrant community here. The labour union GEFONT has a chapter in KL to organise Nepali immigrant workers protect their interests and rights. The current Nepali ambassador is a Maoist political appointee, and there are always groups of Nepali workers at the embassy with job problems.

But only the most severely cheated go to the embassy to file a complaint. People like Sunuwar have to take their recruiters' conditions as a given. They know their employers are in a strong position and they don't want to risk being deported. A Nepali worker who took part in a protest rally here last year was sent back to Nepal by the authorities.

There are around 100 Nepalis working at McDonalds outlets in the Kuala Lumpur area, mostly spread out in four to five clusters across Damansara, Ampang Park, KLCC and Petaling Jaya. Sunuwar and his friends hope the new government in Nepal will tighten controls over recruiters so future migrant workers aren't cheated.

"Until that happens, the money you save is just not worth leaving home for," he says with a hint of regret. *With additional reporting by Satish Jung Shah.*

*The complete radio story on Nepali migrant workers in Malaysia is available at:*

[www.panosradiosouthasia.org](http://www.panosradiosouthasia.org)

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## Kagbeni in Shanghai

Quest Entertainment produced, Bhushan Dahal directed *Kagbeni* has been selected for the Asian New Talent Competition Section at the 11<sup>th</sup> Shanghai International Film Festival to be held between 14-22 June. *Kagbeni* will be competing against films from China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Singapore for the Best Director and Best Film Award category. A five-member panel of jury, including Korean film director Kawk Jae-yong, of *My Sassy Girl* fame and Buddhadeb Das Gupta are in the panel.

## Surya Nepal masters

**Surya Nepal Masters 2008** Shamim Khan managed a 11-shot victory to carry home the winner's cheque of Rs 3,24,000 in Surya Nepal Masters 2008. In the International amateur event, Bangladesh emerged victorious by beating the opposition by a huge margin of 26 strokes. The duo of Shekawat Hussain and Shahid aggregated 579 to lead Bangladesh to victory while the duo of Rupak Acharya and Tashi Ghale helped Nepal A finish second.

## Fete de la Musique

Alliance Francaise is organising various events to celebrate the International Music Day. The program will take place during three days on 18, 19 and 21 June. There will be music workshops at various venues on 18 June, round table on the music's situation in Nepal on 19 June and international music day concert on 21 June.

## EURO with Carlsberg

The winning coupon number for the "Give the Man of the Match Award at Euro 2008, Switzerland" promotion launched by Carlsberg was announced recently. The winner will get to watch the quarterfinal match on 21 June live at Basel, Switzerland and give away the man of the match award. All the expenses will be covered by the company.



## Info Trade 2008

Venus event management has organised Info Trade 2008 that will be held at Bhrikuti Mandap until 17 June. The exhibition, sponsored by Brother Company, will showcase computers, printers, UPS and inverters, education advising centers and organisations, ADSL, mobile phones and various other communication technologies.

### NEW PRODUCTS

**NOODLES:** Wai Wai has introduced cup noodles that can be ready to eat in two minutes. The noodles, which are packed in a microwave safe pack and come with a fork inside, is priced at Rs. 20.



# Those energy blues

## It's more than just another fuel price hike

In a change from the past, when the government announced the new fuel prices on Tuesday the protests were sporadic, more a half-hearted formality to go through to give people time to digest the 25 per cent increase. Yet this was perhaps one of the most significant hikes we've had.



**ECONOMIC SENSE**  
**Artha Beed**

The truth is people are tired of spending a quarter of their lives in queues, they have seen the high price of the booming grey market, and they understand the long-term impact of businesses having to close down.

Also, the government sugared the bitter pill by saying the sector would be opened up to private investment. But, like most government pronouncements made in haste, the details remain unknown. With strong government-level contracts between IOC and NOC, and with the Indian government granting IOC a monopoly to supply petroleum products from India, one is left to wonder how private sector players will be able to participate.

For the moment, it's the transport operators who will benefit most from the price rises. As in the past, there is no correlation between the fuel price

increase and the hike in bus and taxi fares. The transport companies — who function like state enterprises in socialist countries — are already making unilateral pricing decisions.

The sector remains one of the most unregulated, and has got away with shoddy practices time and again in the past. For every rupee increase in the fuel price, how much should transport fares and freight charges rise? There should be a way to control this. Now is the time for bus and taxi customers to question every extra rupee they are charged.

And at this price, the consumer should be getting a quality product. It is time the petroleum dealers stopped the shabby practice of adulteration and showed themselves to be purveyors of high quality products.

It is not just about quality, but also quantity. Government regulations concerning both fuel quality and the calibration of fuel pumps have always been weak, for obvious reasons which this Beed need not dwell on.

Globally, oil prices will continue to rise as investment in real estate has taken a hit with the subprime crash. Hedge funds and private equity funds are under constant pressure to deliver the high returns they have promised investors, so speculation has now shifted to commodities including oil.

Oil cost \$24 a barrel in 2001 and the price has risen nearly sixfold in the past seven years. Those analysts who predicted the \$200 barrel may yet be proven right. Nepal has no influence on global oil prices: our GDP is lower than the marketing budgets of some oil firms. But while Nepal cannot do much about the price or supply, it can surely do something on the demand side.

A water-rich, electricity-poor country like ours should be looking at hydropower development more seriously than ever, perhaps even allowing merchant plants to be built without a Power Purchase Agreement in place. The cost of hydropower is low compared with the cost of petroleum products, and the time will come when hydropower pricing can be aligned to oil pricing. Product substitution will eventually take place: people will use electricity for domestic cooking and heating, and will buy hybrid or electric vehicles.

It is also time to explore energy from waste, wind and sun, which can all be developed for less than the cost of oil at \$200 a barrel. Energy and water management in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are going to be just as important as the management of state boundaries was in the the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Failure will bring disaster. Any takers? ● [www.arthabeed.com](http://www.arthabeed.com)

“I am quite hopeful that the new government will work for the welfare and development of the people because it is the people’s own government”

Dr K C Chakrabarty, Chairman and Managing Director of India’s Punjab National Bank, talks to *Nepali Times* about his bank’s investment in Everest Bank and how he sees the future for banking in the New Nepal.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**Nepali Times: What has been Punjab National Bank’s experience in Nepal so far?**  
**KC Chakrabarty:** Our experience has been through Everest Bank. When we came into this particular arrangement – we invested and also provided management and technical support—Everest Bank’s performance started improving and its share price went up. Its visibility has improved and, more than that, we are happy to be able to provide a large number of product services and banking technology to our customers at Everest Bank.

**Where do you see the opportunities for growth for banks in Nepal?**  
There is a lot of room for improvement in infrastructure, and in agriculture a lot of things can be done. There are many Nepalis outside Nepal, so we can develop remittance products and also meet their requirements—especially small credit requirements—and what we call ‘landholding’ operations when people go abroad. For example, we now give educational loans to a large number of students who are going abroad to study. When there is economic growth, the scope is much greater.

**How confident are you about the country’s political stability?**  
All countries pass through these ups and downs. But I must congratulate the Nepali people for the way they have changed the system. It was a very peaceful transformation

of power. I am quite hopeful that the new government will work for the welfare and development of the people because it is the people’s own government.

**You said there are opportunities in agriculture. What sort of opportunities are you talking about?**  
That is what local people in Everest Bank and policymakers have to decide. They should find out how banks, development agencies and farmers can work together and bring technology into farming. In Punjab we have done this in a big way. We create farming training centres and work with government departments to improve the cropping patterns to enhance farmers’ productivity. But the basic thing is that your credit delivery system must suit the farmers.

**How serious is the problem of non-performing loans in Nepal?**  
I think for Everest Bank we have no problem. Non-performing loans are due to a non-performing administration. All banks should know how to manage non-performing assets because that comes with the business. And we have given sufficient advice to Everest Bank on how to manage them.

**The subprime mortgage crisis in the US recently rattled the banking sector there. Do you see any risk of a similar crisis happening here in Nepal?**

I don't think so. That type of thing is not going to happen today in this part of the world because our economy is not that developed.

**Where do you see Nepal’s banking sector going in the next few years?**  
I would say the future of the world is in the East. China is developing, India is growing, and trade relations between them are improving. And Nepal is in between the two of them, so I think Nepal will also benefit.

**A lot of young people have emigrated from Nepal. How is that an advantage?**  
It will give them a better education and improve their skills. It will not happen if they are going there just to do manual jobs, but if you can educate them they can get three times more salary.

**You said Punjab National Bank has been working with farmers to enhance agricultural productivity. How can local banks do that here?**  
Agricultural development cannot happen just through the work of banks. A development administration has to provide some support for irrigation facilities, good quality seed, good quality fertilizers, the land development effort. Small farmers cannot do it all on their own. If the government is not ready to do that then it must involve the private sector if the need be.



# Goodbye Mr Shah

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 12 June

कान्तिपुर

By accepting the decision of an elected assembly to declare Nepal a republic and by vacating the palace in the stipulated time, ex-king Gyanendra's moves have been proper, correct and satisfactory. This has allowed the formality to be completed for the transition from monarchy to republic.

The king put on a brave, smiling face at the chaotic press conference at the palace on Wednesday. He addressed his remarks to "Nepali brothers and sisters", not to his "subjects" anymore. His statement was polite, dignified and hopeful. He dwelled on the royal massacre, his assets and his record over the past seven years as king. He tried to justify his actions, saying it was to "restore peace in the then Hindu nation" and that it was unsuccessful for "various reasons". He didn't elaborate on those reasons, and that was the big gap in his remarks. He did not dwell on his inability to understand the public mood, he turned the country's politics upside down in seven years, he violated civic rights, and he sidelined the political parties.

Even so, by accepting the implementation of a republic he has shown considerable understanding. He can now devote his life in whatever profession, business or service he chooses as a citizen to help the country. But if he tries to rally together the political losers in any way, he will not get the same goodwill and respect with which he has been treated.

Editorial in *Naya Patrika*, 12 June

नया पत्रिका

As former King Gyanendra read a 17-minute speech and left the room thanking the press for coming, it was a new chapter in political history, not only of Nepal but in the world. In history, apart from a few exceptions, a republic was introduced only after the king had either been killed or forced to leave the country. But our former king read his written speech to the press and tv channels broadcasted it live. With his acceptance of the republic, any doubt about the implementation of the republic became clear. The republic has now been approved. In his

statement he spent much time justifying his past deeds, but he also accepted the people's verdict. Nepal has presented to the world the exemplary exit of a king and the institutionalisation of a republic. It shows the political maturity of the people, political parties and to some extent the former king. A conventional political force has formally vanished from the Nepali political scene. Now the onus is on the elected political parties to end the political dispute and decide the way ahead. Political parties in the past used to team up sometimes with the palace, sometimes with foreigners, to achieve their interests. But now a new environment has been created for the political parties where they can prioritise national issues for themselves and work to achieve them. This has bolstered nationalism and reduced the risk of foreign interference in Nepali politics. As a citizen, this is also the victory of Gyanendra Shah and his family.

Pitamber Sigdel and Rupesh Acharya in *Annapurna Post*, 12 June

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

At 5.30 PM on Wednesday, Kaski Baithak in Narayanhiti Palace was packed with journalists. The former king looked his composed self and looked no different from any political figure in a press conference.

Standing amongst such a large crowd of journalists, Gyanendra joined his hands in a Namaste until he sat down. Seeing the room, previously used for the prime minister's oath taking, teeming with journalists he was perplexed for a while.

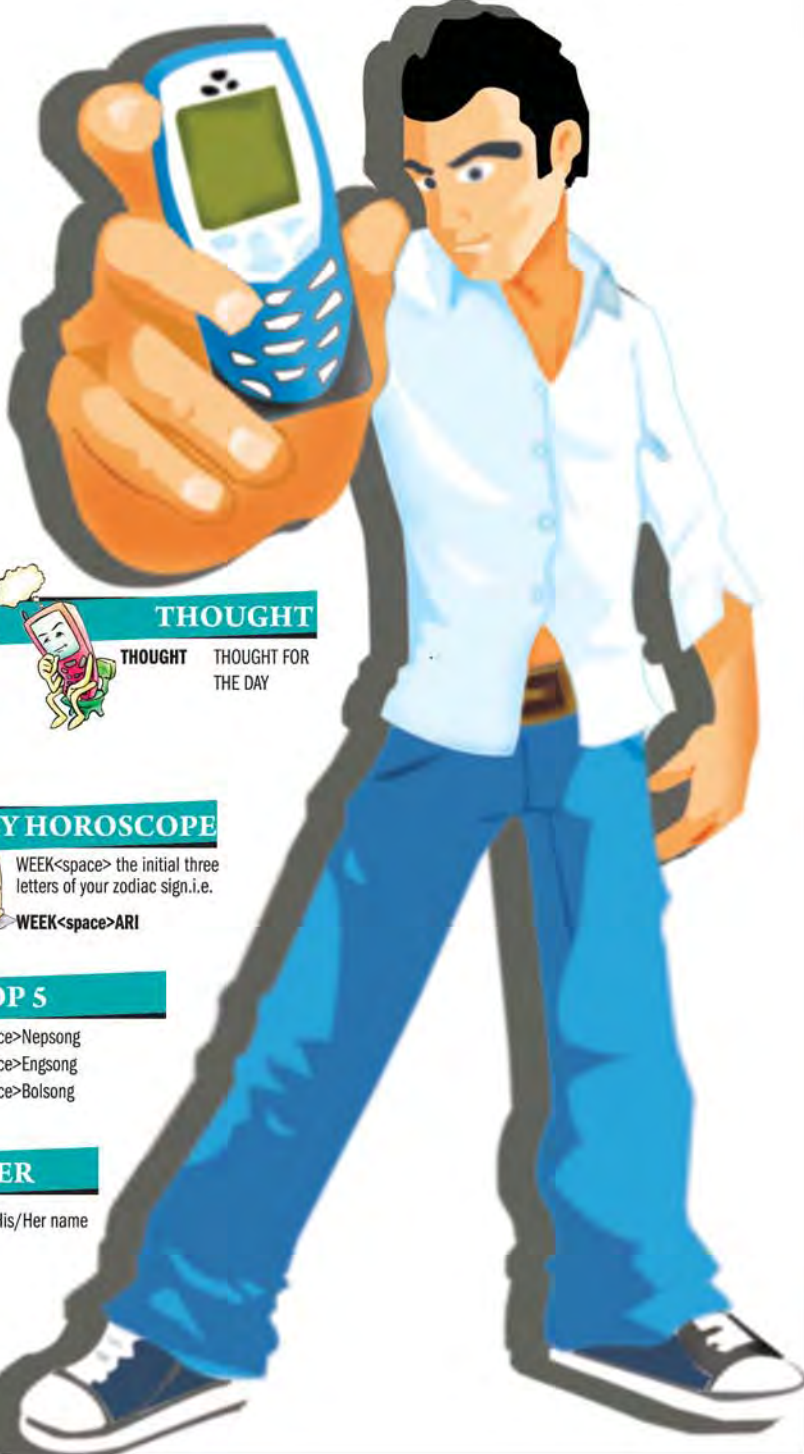
For the first five minutes he could not speak due to the shuttering of the cameras. Even after he had asked them to stop clicking pictures and put his red framed glasses on the table, the crowd did not stop.

It was only after he raised both his hands and asked for silence that the crowd quietened. A calm Gyanendra looked very sentimental when he talked about the royal massacre and the charges against his family. There was no anger, hostility and sadness in his speech.

During the 15-minute speech, his gaze hovered around the journalists although it was primarily centred on the paper on the table. When the journalists asked him questions, he smiled and said: "No questions, thank you for coming!"



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

JOKES



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

THOUGHT



THOUGHT  
THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

STOCK



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

FOREX




FOREX<space>BUY  
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WEEKLY HOROSCOPE



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

DICTIONARY



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

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TOP 5

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## New budget

Dinesh Karki in *Deshantar*, 8 June

देशान्तर-साप्ताहिक

Although the parties have still not decided on a new government, the Ministry of Finance has started working on the first budget for the new republic. The ministry has received the necessary papers from all other ministries and is currently in discussion with the respective parties.

According to a source in the Ministry: “Even if the government is late in getting the budget approved in the parliament, the budget will be out by 10 July.” 90 percent of the programs in the budget will be according to the old projects and as directed by the interim plan while 10 percent of the programs will be decided by the party that leads the government.

According to the source, the total budget is yet to be decided but is expected to be around Rs 187 billion. The budget makers are busy trimming down the expenses for development and administration. However, the ministry is facing difficulties in deciding on policies that the government does not need to invest in due to the absence of a new government.

After the announcement of a republic, the income received by the king and the royal family has been completely cut back. In the last fiscal year, of the Rs 130 million allocated for the royal family, Rs 25 million was spent. However, the budget will allocate money for the employees of the palace, and for the repair and protection of the palace.

The source said the ministries led by the Maoists have asked for enormous amounts of money despite the obvious lack of any new programs. For example, the Ministry for Local Development led by Dev Gurung has asked for Rs 16 billion but the officers of the Ministry have concluded that Rs 12 billion will be sufficient. The Ministry for Planning and Works has also asked for a huge amount but the Ministry of Finance is expected to increase the amount so as to finance the extension of roads.

There is widespread anticipation about who will lead the Ministry of Finance.

Although the Maoists have claimed that they will head the ministry, they have not been able to put forward a single capable candidate for such a sensitive job. While Baburam Bhattarai might be the next finance minister, it will look like a compromise for the Maoist second-in-command who has his eyes set on the presidency or the post of prime minister. In such a situation Ram Sharan Mahat, who has led the ministry before, might turn out to be the best option.

## Land lies fallow

Deepak Gyawali in *Samaya*, 6-12 June

समय

BUTWAL—Lack of fuel for tractors and water pumps has put farmers in the west in a bind. At a time when they should be planting seeds, farms lie fallow and barren. Just when the world is heading towards a food crisis, it seems Nepal too will not be far behind.

Bhimlal Neupane, a farmer from Murgiya in Rupandehi District, describes this as the worst crisis yet. “There are no oxen to plough the fields and there is no fuel to put into our tractors.”

In recent years, farmers in the Tarai have started using tractors, instead of animals, to plough their fields. Fuel is required not just for the tractors but also for the water pumps that feed water into the fields. Says farmer Prem Thapa: “There is no fuel to run the water pumps and even if we wanted to work by rainfall, there is no fuel for the tractors. Now what do we do?”

According to the agriculture office, 75 percent of the fields were ploughed by tractors in the past years. One hectare of land requires at least one and a half litres of diesel. According to Rupandehi’s agriculture office, out of the 85,122 hectares of arable land in the district, around 11,000 hectares are fed by water from tube wells and pumps. Some places use electric tube wells but the majority run on diesel. Even those which run on electricity are at the mercy of loadshedding.

The lack of fuel has put a halt to all agricultural activities. “There is no kerosene to cook food. Where do we get fuel to plough and irrigate?” says Bhujauli’s Prabhu Prasad Chaudhari.

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# The word from the top of the world

SHAILEE BASNET

“Will I ever climb Mt Everest?” I had asked a palm reader two years ago, unsure what the future held for me. But I hadn’t waited around for an answer.

As a reporter for *Himal Khabarpatrika*, I was interviewing Susmita Maskey in July 2007 when she told me about the first Inclusive Women’s Sagarmatha Expedition organised by the Climbers Club for the following spring. I didn’t think twice about joining.

In the months that followed, the fundraising was more difficult than the training. But we finally flew out to Lukla on 17 April and I couldn’t help thinking what our return down the same trail would be like. The closer one gets to Chomolungma, the less one sees of the mountain which is blocked by Nuptse and later Lho La, but we were really impatient to catch a view of the southeast route.

From Base Camp we stared at the chaotic jumble of the Khumbu Icefall. Negotiating it, we had to ford numerous bottomless blue-green crevasses on aluminium ladders. “If you fall into one of these, you get to New York and you don’t even need a visa,” our guide joked on the way up.

From Camp I to Camp II it’s flat and a nice walk, but the route up to Camp III it is on near-vertical blue ice. Before going on the expedition, I had heard a lot about this section. Susmita Maskey had told us the problem was that crampons couldn’t grip properly on the hard ice.

The higher we went, the more difficult minor tasks became. We started using bottled oxygen at

Camp III and pushed higher to IV. We crossed the crumbling limestone of the Yellow Band, after which I had expected things to get easier. But to my disappointment it was the sheer rock of the Geneva Spur after that and it seemed like we’d never get to the South Col.

At the saddle we were nearly at 8,000m. This is where people turn back, where accidents occur, where there is a thin line and thin air between life and death. I was feeling uneasy about something, but I couldn’t figure out what it was.

We slept for a few hours and then, at 10PM, everyone in our team left for the summit. My climbing guide Pasang and I were late to start out. It must have been one in the morning when a falling rock grazed Pasang, tearing his summit suit. We had to turn back.

Along the ridge, we came across a climber trying to revive a fallen team-member. As we got close, I heard someone saying into the walkie-talkie: “He’s dead.” The Swiss climber was in a fetal position, he had summited without oxygen but died of edema on the way down. We sat with him for more than an hour, and headed down to camp. Witnessing a death made me wonder whether the mountain is a demon or divine. I still had to go for the summit, so forced myself to think it was a god.

It was a cold, unpleasant night at the South Col. I was wondering if this was the end of the climb for me. The next morning I heard that five of my friends—Nawang Phuti Sherpa, Nimdoma Sherpa, Susmita Maskey, Pujan Acharya and Maya Gurung—had made it to the top. That filled me with immense joy and confidence. Now I knew I could do it.

We set off again. Climbing in the dark, I kept wondering when I’d ever reach the famous Balcony. When we finally got there, Nima Kanchha Dai changed my oxygen cylinder. We caught up with Usha, Phurba, Diki and Da Kipa and climbed together.

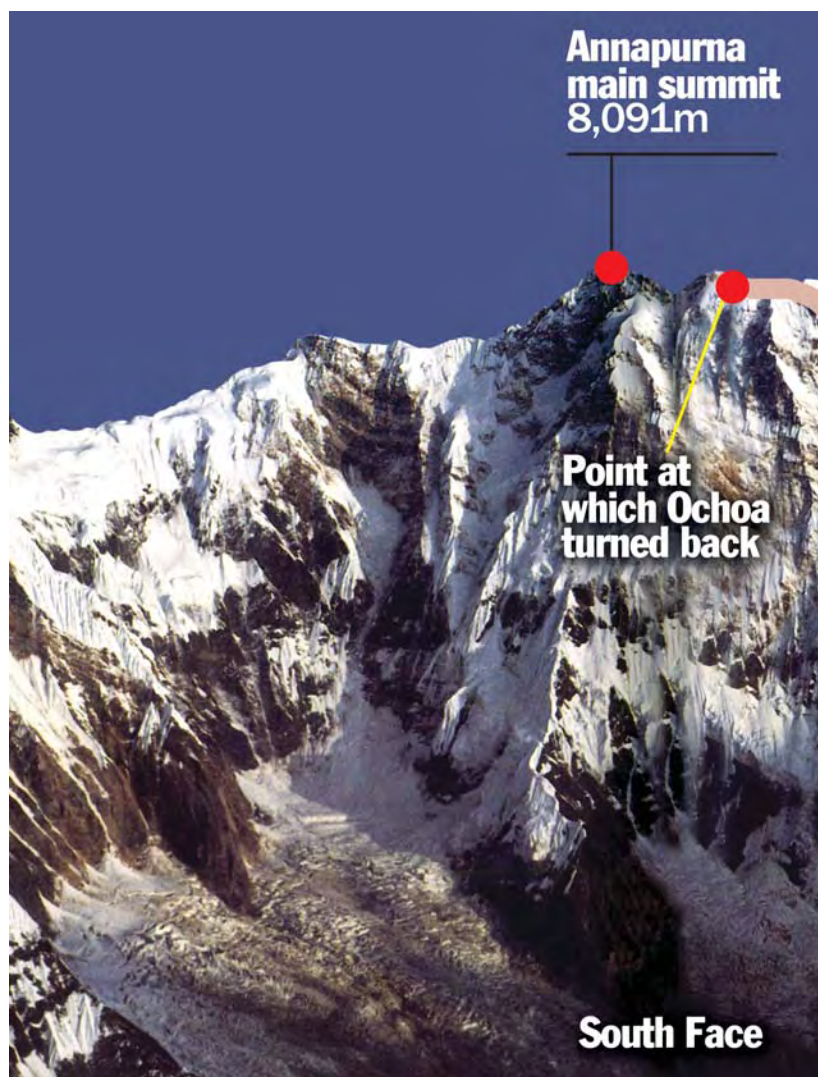
There was a queue of people on the summit ridge. This was the famous Everest traffic jam. We moved up slowly in the dark, Makalu emerged as a silhouette against the eastern sky. The moon and stars were dazzling above, but the horizon was tinged light blue as dawn broke. The sun was up by the time we got to the South Summit.

Then came the notorious Hillary Step. Without our climbing guides it would have taken forever. After that, I could see the summit and started racing up to it. It was a gentle top with a cornice on the edge, and I was so excited I didn’t even look at the view for some time. Then I got out the Himalmedia lion flag and removed my oxygen mask for a picture.

This was the most fulfilling moment of my life. I sang a song and danced with Asha, and looked out across the rest of the world. Soon it was time to head down. It was tiring, but the sense of achievement kept us going. Back at Lukla, I thought: “100 per cent success, best possible result.” ●



KAJI SHERPA



## Into the

Mingma Sherpa ran through the narrow winding streets of Kathmandu engaged in a desperate search. He was employed by a Spanish mountain rescue team had been looking for help all night. It was not until 5AM, shortly before dawn in the Himalayan capital, that he found the man he was looking for and began banging on his door.

Inside his hotel room, the Kazakh climber Denis Urubko was sleeping off the effects of a gruelling expedition to climb Makalu without oxygen. For the mountaineer, his conquest of the

around him was an unprecedented international rescue operation conducted by some of the world’s elite mountain climbers. Three teams were eventually mobilised on Annapurna last month, drawn from nearly a dozen nationalities. All were co-operating with the single aim of bringing back one of their own from a height so great that helicopters are unable to fly there and from which few, if any, casualties ever return alive.

Ochoa’s expedition ran into trouble the day before Urubko’s early morning call. Heavily frost-bitten and having deemed himself ill-prepared for the final push

## Some of the world’s best climbers try to reach a dying mountaineer on Annapurna

8,463m peak just a few days earlier was the 15<sup>th</sup> time he had ventured higher than the 8,000m mark. Yet, despite his state of near exhaustion, he was unable to refuse the Sherpa’s urgent pleas. He got up, packed and immediately left for the airport prepared, without hesitation, to go straight back into that most lethal of places.

As Urubko and the Russian Serguey Bogomolov, himself recovering from severe frostbite after an 8,000m climb just two weeks earlier, boarded the first helicopter out of Kathmandu armed with bottles of oxygen and a medical kit, about 160km to the west high up on Annapurna, the Spanish climber Iñaki Ochoa de Olza (pictured, right) lay motionless in his tent.

Unfurling on the mountains

towards the peak, the Spaniard had turned back. “We had run out of rope to fix and there was still a delicate section on the way to the summit,” he told his support team over a faltering satellite phone, perilously low on batteries. “I didn’t want to take risks with my hands in such a poor state.”

Ochoa’s decision to go back was a calculated response fitting for a climber who, at the age of 40, already enjoyed a towering reputation in the highly competitive world of high-altitude adventure. The Navarran-born mountaineer, a veteran of 30 previous Himalayan expeditions, was tantalisingly close to completing his ambition of climbing all 14 of the world’s 8,000m-plus peaks. Annapurna, at 8,091m, was to be his 13<sup>th</sup>.

Half an hour after he and his





# death zone

climbing companion, the Romanian Horia Colibasanu, took the decision to descend to a lower camp on the mountain's treacherous south face, Ochoa suffered a catastrophic stroke. The Spaniard began coughing and vomiting before slipping into a state of semi-consciousness. To make matters worse, the team's third member, the Russian Alexey Bolotov, was missing and the weather conditions were beginning to deteriorate.

Colibasanu, himself a highly experienced climber who had partnered Ochoa on many perilous expeditions in the past, did what he could. He made an emergency call to base camp where the leading Swiss climber Ueli Steck was about to embark on his own expedition.

Under darkening skies, Steck, who a few months earlier had set a new speed record for climbing the north face of the Eiger, set off with his climbing partner and fellow Swiss Simon Anthamatten.

The helicopter carrying Urubko and Bogomolov from Kathmandu had touched down briefly in Pokhara, picking up Don Bowie. The Canadian-born adventurer had volunteered to join the rescue effort despite quitting the ill-fated climbing team after a bitter row with the Spaniard.

But the weather was conspiring against them. Heavy cloud forced the chopper to land at Chomrong, a seven-hour hike from base camp. As the Canadian and Kazakh set off on foot, Bogomolov waited for the third back-up team now on its way from Kathmandu.

After two agonising days alone, Steck eventually reached

the tent sheltering the two climbers. Ochoa was by now seriously ill and Colibasanu, too, was suffering the severe effects of several days at high altitude. The Romanian was ordered to descend while the Swiss took over the job of nursing the dying man. But moving him would prove impossible.

Last Friday, after five days stricken on the mountain, the Spaniard suffered further pulmonary complications and died. By that time, the mountain, first conquered in 1950 and which until recently had claimed the lives of four out of every 10 climbers that summited, was crawling with rescuers.

Both back-up rescue teams were in place despite the return of heavy snow and declining visibility. The first, containing Bolotov, who had been previously unaccounted for, had climbed back up to the second camp laden with oxygen cylinders. Bowie and Urubko were just a few hundred metres from their friend.

A total of 14 climbers tried to reach Ochoa and now they themselves faced heavy snow, fog and avalanches as they attempted to descend Annapurna's treacherous south face. It was two days before everyone was safely down.

This week, the Spaniard's mother, father and three brothers issued an emotional thank you to the climbing world: "The loss of someone as healthy and strong, so bright and joyful as Inaki has awakened a movement of solidarity among those in tune with his way of life and love of mountains, far above our expectations. By noticing the help you all wanted to bring him,

risking death, you allow us to believe and feel there are reasons not to forget his joy, and to hope his example will help others to build their own love of freedom."

Ochoa's body will remain on Annapurna, in line with his family's wishes, a fitting monument to the solidarity of purpose that should always bind the spirit of those who enter the Death Zone. ●

Jonathan Brown in The Independent



JAMIE MCGUINNESS/PROJECT HIMALAYA

## The gods have won

BILLI BIERLING

"I am in Thamel now and I couldn't be feeling better!" Iñaki Ochoa de Olza emailed on arriving in Kathmandu for his expedition this spring. The Basque climber (*pictured below*) had been coming to Nepal since 1990 and adored the country and its people.

He started out 18 years ago as a mountain guide for a Polish-Basque expedition on Kangchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world. The expedition was unsuccessful due to bad weather and friction between the Poles and the Basques. In spite of being very young and inexperienced, Iñaki reached the highest point in the doomed expedition but was forced back by bad weather at an altitude of 7,800m.

He went back to Kangchenjunga in 1997 but the expedition was once again unsuccessful. For Iñaki Kangchenjunga remained the magic mountain, which, had he lived, would have been the last of the 14 eight-thousanders he wanted to climb. "Kangch has fascinated me since I first set foot on it 18 years ago and that is why I want to keep it for the end," he once said.

By the time Annapurna took his life on 23 May (*see adjoining piece*) Iñaki had climbed 12 of the world's 8,000m peaks. However, the Pamplonan, who kept his 'Seventies look' with long hair and rows of earrings until the very end, was much more than a climber: he was a philosopher, a bull-runner and a poet. His website ([www.navarra8000.com](http://www.navarra8000.com)) is not only a chronicle of his mountaineering feats, but a collection of poetry and messages from friends and family.

A message dedicated to Anatoli Boukreev, the strong Ukrainian climber who died in an avalanche on Annapurna on Christmas Day in 1997, is titled 'A song for Anatoli' and reads: 'Even though he trained like an animal he was a very modest and sensitive person, who was very entertaining and a good friend to his friends.' This could have been a description of himself.

Friendship meant much more to him than climbing. During an interview with the internet portal ExplorersWeb he said: "Friendship is much more meaningful than mountains, and each peak must be climbed in a worthy way, not as a mere part of a collection." During his 28 years of Himalayan climbing Iñaki had made many friends and was very much liked and respected. When the news broke that he had succumbed to high altitude sickness, the mountaineering world was shocked. His friends couldn't believe Iñaki didn't make it, he just seemed so strong and invincible.

Hotel Thamel, the small, friendly lodge where the Spaniard used to stay, put up a huge poster of the climber in tribute. "It

was always good to see Iñaki. He was always friendly and no matter how busy he was, he always had time for a chat," recalls Anis at the hotel.

Iñaki did not only love Nepal for its mountains, he was also fond of its people and he even spoke some Nepali. "Languages are important to me and I can connect to the Nepalis a lot better when I speak their language," he once said. He also had a lot of respect for the Sherpas, who to him were more like friends than expedition employees.

In his last dispatch on his website he showed his interest and respect for Buddhism. He mentions the Tibetan nomads, who cry at the wind each time they reach a summit or cross a mountain pass: "Lho Gyelo". It means: the Gods have won. ●

Billi Bierling is a mountaineering journalist based in Kathmandu and works with the Himalayan archivist, Elizabeth Hawley. She also leads mountaineering expeditions to smaller Himalayan peaks.



# Irrelevant republic

In Lele, it makes little difference whether Nepal has a king or not



KIRAN PANDAY

MALLIKA ARYAL in LELE

“Monarchy, democracy, republic—it’s all the same for poor people like us. I don’t have time to talk politics,” says Dhruba Kumar Sunar, a 41-year-old jeweller in Lele, 30km from Kathmandu.

Two weeks after Nepal became a republic, Sunar is more concerned about meeting a work deadline for a pendant he is crafting. “This is what buys our

meals,” he explains.

In Lele, unlike Kathmandu, there were no boisterous celebrations when Nepal finally ditched its monarch. The town is part of the Lalitpur-1 constituency, where Maoist leader Barsha Man Pun Magar defeated Nepali Congress politico Uday Shamsher Rana by more than 1,000 votes in the recent election.

“Not many in these villages know that Nepal is now a republic, and even those who do

know don’t really understand what it means,” says Sunar. He used to be a staunch supporter of UML but joined the Maoist party a few years ago and is now the Lele secretary of the Maoist Dalit Liberation Front.

“There was a time during the war when we were all scared of the Maoists. I joined because the party had done a lot to end discrimination against Dalits and other suppressed groups in the village.”

Sunar remembers the days when his family were forbidden from sitting with high-caste people in local cafes and he would have to wash his glass after drinking tea.

His wife Laxmi says it is too early to tell if living in a democratic republic will be any different. “It is not enough that the king is gone,” she says, choosing her words carefully. “The political parties have to prove to the people that they are better than him.”

Ram Prasad Ghimire, a 65-year-old priest at Lele’s Hindu temple, receives worshippers from the city. Ghimire knows the former king Gyanendra has packed his bags and vacated the palace. “Political parties made mistakes, but the poor king was blamed for it,” Ghimire says.

He is disappointed with the way the king has been made to leave, but understands the people’s desire for a republic. “Does living in a republic mean we let go of our culture and a 240-year-old tradition?” he asks.

Bal Krishna Silwal is home on leave from the Nepal Army where he has been serving for the past 18 years. He took part in military operations against the Maoists in the west of Nepal during the war and is relieved it is over. “We are ready to serve whoever is our supreme commander-in-chief,” he says.

But he believes the political

parties decided the king’s fate too hastily. “The king would have lost, but the right way to go about removing him would have been to hold a referendum,” Silwal says.

Like most people in his village, he says it’ll make little difference to the poor whether or not Nepal is a monarchy. “People want food, water, employment, roads, development, education—they don’t care who rules the country.”

It is lunchtime and a local café is full of people from Lele and nearby villages. Banu Bahadur Lama, from Sanghumar, a few kilometres away, has tears in his eyes. His son Mim Lama, 20, served in the Nepal Army and died in crossfire in Kailali three years ago. Lama voted for the Nepali Congress while the rest of the village backed the Maoists. “My son was killed by the Maoists,” he says. “How could I vote for them?”

Since his son’s death, Lama has struggled to make ends meet, with a wife and three small children to feed and clothe. The government gave him a small compensation payment for his son’s death but he no longer trusts those in positions of power. “I don’t care whether Nepal is a republic, or whether the king has left the palace,” he says. “My son is gone, my life is over and all I worry about is whether I have earned enough today to feed my family.” ●

## Murder most foul

Millionaire’s death to benefit local charity

DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Standing up on stage to deliver a speech is nothing new to Shekhar Golcha, head of the Golcha Organisation. But taking to the stage in a murder mystery—where he ends up dead—was something he had never tried before.

So when members of the Elite Ladies Circle-2 asked him to take part in a play to raise funds for charity, he jumped at the chance. “I have always wanted to act but never really had the opportunity,” Golcha said. “This time everything fell neatly into place. Although I have never acted before, it has been a good experience.”

Playing a character named Claude Faithwell, a ruthless 50-year-old millionaire who has just ditched his pregnant secretary after a three-year affair, Golcha quickly finds he’s a deeply unpopular man. His former airhostess wife (Prerna Golcha) knows of his affair but doesn’t care because she’s having one of her own with a hunky blackmailing masseur (Amit Begani).

His alcoholic, heavily indebted stepbrother (Sunil Mehta) hates him because their father left all his wealth to Claude. And his secretary’s husband (Sanjay Golcha), a former pilot, wants to kill him because he too has found out



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

about the affair.

Confused? With a plot like that, it’s perhaps not surprising that Claude is soon dead—murdered at his own house-warming party.

If you want to find out what happened next, you’ll have to go to the Hotel Soaltee

Crowne Plaza next week, where Golcha and his friends Sabita Bagaria, Anand Bagaria, Anil Jagnani, Anit Begani, Rashmi and Sashi Todi will reveal all. All proceeds from the play will go to the Self-Help Group for Cerebral Palsy Nepal.

Professional actor Asha Magarati, who has appeared in *Kagbeni* and other dramas, took responsibility for turning Golcha’s amateur cast into a seasoned team.

“For first-time actors, it is a bit difficult,” she said. “But everyone is putting in a lot of effort.” She was impressed with Shekhar Golcha’s dedication to the role: “He has tried to get into the character and acted really well. It doesn’t really look like he is acting for the first time.” ●

*Murder at Faithwell Manor will take place at Hotel Soaltee Crowne Plaza on 20 June at 7PM. Tickets Rs 1,500.*



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# Cartoon communication

SRISHTI ADHIKARI

Eager hands shoot up as the instructor calls for someone to illustrate how an angry man would look in a drawing. A student in the front row walks up to the whiteboard and places a simple zigzag line on the side of the man's head. It is only when the students raise their hands and shake them to applaud their friend's efforts that you realise they are all deaf.

"The deaf world is a visual world," says Sarah Giri, who led a recent cartooning workshop for the deaf at the National Campus in Balkumari. "Everything is picture, action and no sound. The deaf look at the world as a cartoon book."

With the help of cartoonist Yogesh Khapangi, the workshop aimed to provide the deaf with a skill that might lead to employment, or at least personal enjoyment. Most of the 27 participants were students from the school for the deaf in Naxal. Their deft hands, which guided the markers with such ease and confidence, showed no sign of them being new to drawing cartoons as they displayed an uncanny knack for expressing action and sensation visually.

Giri, who calls herself culturally deaf and has been working with the deaf for eight years, has introduced deaf culture and sign language on the National Campus in an attempt to raise people's awareness.

For Khapangi it was a totally new experience. "When Sarah first put forth this idea, I didn't think I could do it because I don't know sign language," he said. "But when she offered to act as the translator I agreed to do it."

He was delighted with the outcome. "They showed more interest than the hearing people do. They learned almost six months' worth of course work in the span of one week. During classes there was obviously no noise and their concentration was commendable. I have discovered about eight or ten students who can survive in the professional world."

Sunil Ale Magar, 23, who is studying for a Bachelor of Education degree, described the workshop as an experience of a lifetime. Another trainee, 25-year-old Rashmi Amatya, was offered a job on the spot after the editor of *Chunamuna* children's magazine saw her cartoons.

"Learning cartooning was so much fun that I wouldn't mind becoming a cartoonist myself, but I want to be a good teacher," said Rashmi, who is an artist and has made books for children before. "Some day, I would like to go to different parts of the world and meet different artists."

Kul Prasad Bhattarai, 23, inspired by the workshop, said he would like one day to become a deaf teacher and teach children what he had just learnt.

As Sarah Giri pointed out, the deaf in Nepal are not looking for charity. They want acceptance, recognition and an opportunity to work with the hearing. They want to be regarded as contributing members of the society. ●

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# Steroid-fuelled dreams

In the corner of the world where I grew up, my childhood was bombarded with images of masculinity of a particular American type: the muscle-bound Herculean, patriotic and fair-minded. He was the shirt-ripping Hulk Hogan, the relentless Rambo, Arnold in various incarnations, even He-Man, from the animated cartoon whose bookish alter-ego is a cause for derision.

My cousins, siblings and I would play with the He-Man action figures, imitating the wrestling moves and postures of WWF: body slams, clotheslines and flips. We would fully embroil our minds with those violent fantasies that are particularly masculine and



**CRITICAL CINEMA**  
A Angelo D'Silva

concurrently childish. In these ways we had a very similar childhood to the Bell brothers who feature in Christopher Bell's debut documentary—with the significant exception of the obsessive body-building and steroid use. *Bigger Stronger Faster\** is an entertaining and revealing documentary about steroid use and its intersection with one family.

In delving into the culture and discourse of steroid use, Bell's argument is not complete. Instead it is episodic, digressive and not entirely persuasive in its puerile defence of steroid use: *What's the harm? Everyone does it.*

Yet nary a minute goes by without some interesting insight that sometimes explosively confirms our suspicions and at other times completely upends how we generally think about things. One minute he is exposing the unregulated health supplement industry, revealing the sham before-and-after picture on the labels. The next he is embarrassing a senator who spearheaded the legal attacks on steroid use. It's all delivered with that faux-innocence that Michael Moore first mastered, and hits with the same humor, relying on the rich source material available for plunder.



## A muscle industry exposé that leaves you reeling

The documentary triggers the now familiar discomfort that accompanies intimate revelations in personal narrative. That the two Bell brothers are users makes for compelling movie-making and an insightful thread in the narrative. But it also trips into thorny terrain. Smelly, the younger Bell, coaches in a high school where he outwardly extols the virtues of fair play and rebuffs the use of performance-enhancing drugs. There are even clips of his students declaring that he's clean and natural. Likewise, he promises to stop using to his worried wife so to assuage any complication with his fertility. But then he admits to camera he will probably resume soon after.

These revelations must certainly have had reverberations after the film was made. But the hurt and fear in the faces of his family as they speak about the steroid in their lives is an intentionally subversive counterpoint.

The film succeeds superbly in examining the masculine anxieties of an American psyche fed by a society that esteems those values even as it ostensibly bans steroids. Its thesis is concisely stated in its subtitle—The Side Effects of Being American. But of course, this isn't an exclusively American phenomenon. Tied tightly to many nations' self-image is that muscular avatar embodied by an athletic ideal.

And as the documentary points out, the use of steroids began with Olympian athletes of the opposing Cold War superpowers. One has to wonder if the expressed Olympian ideals about fraternity and sportsmanship hide the more base reality (as Bell's informants claim) of countries engaging in a national-level pissing-contest of male egos.

Now, with the Cold War over, the US still earns the lion's share of medals but China is closing fast and would dearly love to top the medals table at this year's Olympics. It is discomforting to think that the urge to be bigger, faster and stronger is not simply a side-effect of being an American, but of a human of any nationality. ●

*BIGGER, STRONGER, FASTER\**  
Director: Christopher Bell  
2008. PG-13. 1hr 45min.



Up on the small stage, Trouble Clef are giving a Charlie Parker number the full treatment, their audience slowly drowning in the liquid sound that flows across the room from Mariano Abello's saxophone.

The drums thread out an easy rhythm, occasionally accelerating into something else completely, while the bass holds it all together with a steady beat.

This is the Hyjazz Club, where the sounds of Miles Davis and Ella Fitzgerald mingle with the more extroverted rhythms of flamenco jazz in a cocoon of thick pile carpets, soft seating and restrained lighting. The Hyjazz has all the makings of a classy, upscale club where the drinks are great and the music better, but all at a price.

Tucked away from the city's prying eyes beneath the main lobby of the Hyatt Regency at Boudha, the club opened a month ago to a performance of Spanish maestro Jorge Pardo's Vientos flamencos. Open every Friday, the club now caters to just about everyone with a taste for smooth jazz.

"We wanted to set up a place where you can just relax and listen to some great music," says Satyajit Pradhan of the Hyatt Regency. "We chose jazz because there is no other music like it—it's classy and it's approachable."

Jazz maybe an acquired taste, but the club's management believes there are enough aficionados in Kathmandu to make it work. Annual festivals in the Kathmandu valley like Jazzmandu and the Nepal Jazz Jatra have been successful in introducing the public to international jazz while also providing support and publicity for local musicians. The clientele is small at the



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## An attractive new venue deserves to pull in the live-music punters

moment—usually just guests at the hotel—but the number is growing. Says Pradhan: "Our targets are weary entrepreneurs who want to relax and unwind after a long week at work."

Trouble Clef are the only regular performers at the moment, but Pradhan says the Hyatt is searching for other

talented bands to provide an alternative to the raucous rock that reverberates out from Thamel's live music venues.

Abello, who is also director of the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, leads Trouble Clef but often changes the lineup to bring in new musicians. His signature style of saxophone jazz has

become symbolic of the Hyatt Regency, as Trouble Clef often perform at the hotel's events.

It's not just the music and the atmosphere at Hyjazz that offer a world of difference from Thamel. The range of drinks is excellent, with the rice wine Margarita highly recommended. And the nearby restaurant Rox will be providing a special menu of handmade pasta throughout July. This is a place that deserves to succeed. ●

Pranaya SJB Rana

# Dancing those blues away

## Born with two left feet and no sense of rhythm? No more excuses

PRANAYA SJB RANA

The two dancers whirl round each other like ecstatic dervishes, bringing a frantic energy to their salsa steps as they cajole and entice each other with a confident familiarity. As the music whips up, so do their moves, their hands and feet blurring in graceful unison.

Binayek Das Shrestha and Katia Verreault have done more than anyone to bring the salsa dance craze to Kathmandu, with their Salsa Dance Academy at Bhat Bhateni offering students the hope of one day turning heads in admiration just as these dance masters do.

Such is the energy of salsa that young and old alike have signed up to learn the moves, and later this month the academy will run a dance workshop, Salsa and More, to introduce participants to a wide range of other dance styles.

There is a growing demand for dance classes in Kathmandu, as people want to move beyond the grotesque body-shaking you do at your cousin's wedding after a few shots of tequila. They want to learn the right moves and proper steps for a specific beat, to produce a graceful movement that is attractive to watch.

With Hindi dance remixes



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

increasingly popular, the Bollywood dance—so evident in movies—is what most urban youth are interested in. Clubs echo with Bollywood bass lines as boys and girls alike gyrate to Dard-e-disco. But there is a dance style to suit every taste.

"While dancing, the mind and body are in tune," says Subima Shrestha, kathak instructor for the academy's workshop. Kathak, the classical traditional dance of Northern India, varies from fiery to

submissive, combines intricate footwork with graceful hand movements, and teaches perfect balance.

Caribbean dance forms studied at the academy include the cha cha, bachata, merengue and rueda, all of them full of energy, vibrant and alive with foot-tapping music and breathtaking movements.

These are what Verreault calls "social dances", so the instructors encourage participants to interact with each other and with

different teachers to adopt varied styles. "It's important for salsa students to be exposed to a variety of instructors," she says. "Everyone has their own style, and exposure is the only way to learn different styles."

Verreault believes dance is something everyone can do. The academy has special sessions for those over 50, for those who don't want to dance with a partner, or those who just want to dance to stay fit. Late-night classes are available for those people who

prefer to work all evening.

The Salsa and More workshop, as its name suggests, will give participants a grounding in salsa, merengue, cha cha, bachata, rueda de casino, line dancing, kathak, Latin ballroom and Bollywood freestyle. The international team of instructors include Verreault and Binayek Des Shrestha for salsa; Lourd Vijay from Bangalore to teach salsa, merengue, bachata and rueda de casino; Vik Malignat from the Philippines for Latin ballroom, Subima Shrestha for kathak and Rohit Saud for Bollywood freestyle. Students will be able to continue with each style at the academy once the workshop is over.

Verreault says more than 400 students have passed through their academy, which used to be at the Latin Quarter. Now located at Bhat Bhateni, above Roadhouse Cafe, the studio has a welcoming and vibrant feel. So whether you're a salsa maestro or a kathak beginner, shake off those shackles and get ready to move your body. ●

*Salsa and More dance workshop at the Salsa Dance Academy, 23-28 June. Rs 1,500. For more information on timings and schedules, visit [www.salsanepal.com](http://www.salsanepal.com) or call 4420564.*

*Salsa and More dance evening, 7PM on 27 June at the Darbar Hall, Hotel Yak and Yeti. Rs 600 per person including one complimentary drink, Rs 300 for workshop participants.*



## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **South Asian Fresh Graduate Artists' Residency**, exhibition of art works by South Asian fresh graduates until 15 June, 11AM-6PM at Nepal Art Council, Babermahal. 9841275914
- ❖ **MaterialScapes** 6th solo collage painting exhibition by Gaurav Shrestha, until 30 June 10AM-6PM at Gallery 32 at Dent Inn, Heritage Plaza, Kamaladi. 4241942
- ❖ **Tattva** multimedia and collage exhibition by Chirag Bangdel until 18 July, 5.30 PM at Bakery Café, Pulchok.

## EVENTS

- ❖ **Baran** afgan film by Majid Majidi, 17 June 6.30 PM at Lazimpat Gallery Cafe. 4428549
- ❖ **Fete de la musica** music workshops, round-table and concerts presented by Alliance Francaise. 18, 19 and 21 June. [www.alliancefrancaise.org.np](http://www.alliancefrancaise.org.np)
- ❖ **6th Annual Wine Festival** until September at Kilroy's, Jyatha. 4250440 Tantric Dance of Nepal presented by Kalamandapa, every Tuesday 7PM at Hotel Vajra and every Saturday 11AM at Patan Museum.

## MUSIC

- ❖ **26th Yala Maya Classic** with Chandi Prasad Kafle and Homnath Upadhyaya on 16 June, 5PM at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka. 5553767
- ❖ **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

- ❖ **Handmade Pasta** experience handmade pasta at the Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency until 20 June, 7-10.30 PM. 4489361
- ❖ **Lajawab** tandoori and kabab festival, 7-10 PM every Friday at the Hotel Himalaya, Rs 550.
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ 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
- ❖ **30/30 Enhanced Buffet** 30% discount on entire bill for a group of four or more for the month of June at The Fun Café, Radisson Hotel. 12.30-2.30 PM and 6.30-10.30 PM, Rs. 800. 4411818
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **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.
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- ❖ **Dhamaka** a Nepali style barbeque with a pan-Indian fusion at the Splash Bar and Grill, Hotel Radisson, 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
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## 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 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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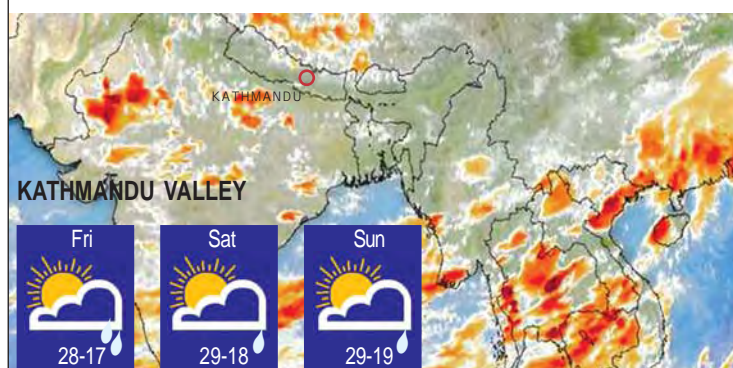

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## WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The monsoon is already here but still in its nascent stage. The rains have brought some welcome relief to anxious farmers and cleared the dusty sky over the Kathmandu valley. Satellite images show powerful circulations over the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal, powering up the two arms of the monsoon as they pump moisture to the Himalayas. The amount of monsoon rain depends largely on the strength of the low pressure system that develops over northwestern India. In the first week, rain gauges in the southern part of the country recorded average rainfall while those in the hills saw below-average amounts. The pressure chart indicates moderate rainfall in the early part of the monsoon. For the weekend, expect sunny intervals with light showers usually at night.





**रेडियो सगरमाथा**  
एफएम १०२ थोप्लो ४ मेगाहर्ज

**नेपाली रेडियो**  
**नेपाली आवाज**

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

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प्रसार हुने समय : हरेक शुक्रबार बेलुका (६:१५-६:३५)  
हरेक आइतबार दिउँसो (१:४०-२:००)  
"रेडियो सगरमाथामा नियमित सुनी, अंग्रेजी सुधारी"  
(रेडियो सगरमाथा र अमेरिकी राजदुतावास, अमेरिकी केन्द्रको सहकार्य)

सम्पर्क: ५५२८००९, ५५४२२४५ मोस्ट बस्ने: ५५२८०, ईमेल: [info@radiosagarmatha.org](mailto:info@radiosagarmatha.org)

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

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KIRAN PANDAY

MEDIA DARLING: Journalists throng the Kaski Baithak during the former king's press conference before he left the palace for Nagarjun.



KIRAN PANDAY

GOING, GOING.: King Gyanendra and Queen Komal leave the palace for the last time at 8.30 PM on Wednesday amidst crowds of journalists, supporters and opponents of the monarchy and curious onlookers.



KIRAN PANDAY

LAST GOODBYE: A monarchist breaks down in tears outside the palace as crowds gather to see off the king.



KIRAN PANDAY

SNOOP DOG: A policeman and sniffer dog search beneath a grandstand before Nepali Congress's 'victory rally' at Khula Manch on Sunday.

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# Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>

Kingji was reportedly waiting for the auspicious time when all the planets were aligned properly to leave Naryanhiti for Nagarjun, and the **royal soothsayer** had calculated that on Friday evening Saturn, Jupiter, Mars and Venus were all in conjunction with the constellations. But Mr G reportedly over-ruled the zodiac man because, as luck would have it, this would have been Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>. Hence, the priests were asked to come up with the second most auspicious time which was Wednesday 2030 hrs.

Ex-kingji takes the planets seriously. Remember the time in 2005 when the royal astrologer told him that since the planets were all lined up on the eastern horizon at sunrise, he should go off to the western hemisphere? But no western government would agree to a visit, so Kingji took the royal 757 and went off on a two-week trip to Tunisia, Rwanda and Botswana until the planets settled back to their normal positions.



The king's carefully crafted farewell speech on Wednesday

was delivered under such **chaotic** conditions that it was a miracle journo's weren't killed in a stampede outside the Kaski Hall. Now that would have stolen the headlines.

As a sign of things to come under the Maoist government, Nepal Television decided that Gyan's presser wasn't newsworthy enough and refused to beam it live. The Baddie chief of NTV, Rishi Raj Baral, said, and I quote: "We won't cover anti-people press conferences." With this kind of news sense, expect NTV to lose what ratings it has and an exodus of the remaining advertisers.



Yes, a Nepali royal crown was sold at auction at Bonhams in

London recently for 90,000 quid, but it ain't the Sri Punch crown, probably one belonging to a lesser Rana that was already in the collection of a European art dealer. Which means the king's **sripech** must be worth a fortune, unless of course the real diamonds and emeralds have been replaced.

But it will be difficult to trade this crown without breaking the CITES law since it has wildlife contraband stuck to it: the protected Bird of Paradise plume. Anyway, it was good to see the two stuffed tigers still snarling from the bottom of the stairs of Kaski Hall on Wednesday, although the snow leopard pelt on which kingji used to stand to receive ambassadors seemed to be missing.

Wonder if the tigers and leopards will also serve as museum pieces along with Ratna, Sarala and the crown, throne and sceptre. If they can arrest Ian's gardener for possession of horns, skins and pelts, they should detain our entire ex-nobility for the possession of illegal wildlife trophies.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch the race for the presidency is heating up, and no one expects a breakthrough for another week. What is surprising is that everyone, including the comrades, are suddenly warming up to the idea of making Girjau president. The real tussle is about vice-presidency, and the Ass can guess why: despite appearing on stage to give a speech in pouring rain at Tundikhel on Friday, the 84-year-old PM is in poor health and everyone knows that it will be much more important who his deputy is. After all, the

Veep is only a **heartbeat** away from being prez.



King Dahal the Fierce is preparing to move from the Rs 45,000-a-month Pistachio Palace to Baluwatar lock, stock and barrel with his three daughters and their husbands in tow. Son Prakash who is now head of Dad's personal security unit is going as well. Also moving is the entire PLA security contingent. Baluwatar is going to be Nepal in microcosm with two armies.

The closer they get to power, the greater the tussles within the party. Baidya and Badal are sulking, and there is resistance to Narayan Kaji proposing himself as **GenSec** of a united party that he wants to call simply Nepal Communist Party (no Maoist anymore) and to formally abandon Prachanda Path.

ass(at)nepalitimes.com

