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Weekly Internet Poll # 337

Q. How much do you know about the federalism debate?

Total votes: 2,516

At least 14.8%

A moderate amount 14.1%

A little 19.5%

Nothing at all 46.8%

Don't know/can't say 4.8%

Weekly Internet Poll # 338. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What do you think about an ethnic federalist structure for the Nepali state?

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KIRAN PANDAY

What's a constituent assembly? Who can we trust to run Nepal?

Big questions

ANAGHA NEELAKANTAN

A nationwide opinion poll conducted last month by the research group Interdisciplinary Analysts shows that Nepalis still don't have much faith in politicians. Respondents were also found to be surprisingly ill-informed about the constituent assembly elections.

As in previous polls, the largest proportion of those polled were undecided about which political party they would vote for if elections were held. This time, many also didn't want to say who they'd vote for. Among those who had made up their minds, Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal is marginally more trusted than other leaders. Even

so, support for the Maoists has eroded in the last six months.

As in a previous poll in October 2006, Nepalis are still divided on whether or not to keep the monarchy. Most of those who favour the monarchy want a ceremonial one but don't like Gyanendra as king.

Close to two-thirds of the respondents want to be identified as Nepali and not by their ethnic group, and almost the same number say Nepali should be the only national language.

Nepalis care most about the rights to equality, property,

freedom of expression and the right to information. Republicanism, federalism, and secularism may be the most-heard slogans from political groupings but they are lower down on the agenda. The fate of the monarchy is rated as the least pressing constitutional issue. Affirmative action for women and dalits, and autonomy are deemed more important.

Editorial p2
The undecided

Go to p8-9



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Dignity for all

Today's ferment may not be nice but it is necessary

THE UNDECIDED

The most believable reason for delaying the constituent assembly polls is not that the election commission hasn't been able to complete preparations. Nor is it because of fears that it will not be free and fair. It's because most Nepalis don't know what a constituent assembly is.

All recent opinion surveys have shown Nepalis to be overwhelmingly in favour of constituent assembly elections because for them it is subliminally synonymous with peace. But voters electing an assembly to draft a new constitution must know why they are voting and what the parties and candidates stand for.

This should be the job of the political parties, but they just haven't gone out to educate voters. The latest IDA poll summarised in this issue also proves just how far removed the parties and their leaders are from the people's aspirations. Most Nepalis don't really care about what happens to the monarchy, they want their lives to improve. The leaders flog republicanism, secularism or ethnic federalism, but people care more about jobs, health, and education.

Most Nepalis are undecided about who they'll vote for in a future election. This should be a dire warning to the seven-plus-one alliance to shape up. As far as the voters are concerned, the parties are preoccupied with petty turf battles. Last year, the people's foremost desire was peace. This year it is development, but they see self-absorbed rulers squabbling endlessly over a division of the spoils.

The survey shows this disillusionment runs deep. The people are fed up with politicians hell-bent on taking to the streets and punishing the people with strikes, blockades and shutdowns. The gas lines, load-shedding and shortages have stretched the public's tolerance to breaking point. We may have sidelined the king, but we haven't got rid of this culture of cynically feeding on the people's misery to make a political point.

The tarai is allowed to simmer so the parties can sit back and enjoy watching the Maoists roast in a fire they started. For their part, the comrades are so desperate to shift attention away from the madhes debacle they are working themselves into a frenzy demolishing royal statues. Simulated outrage, they should know, can work both ways.

Rhetoric about a New Nepal aside, this is the one real chance the state has to get the future of the country on track. A botched election, one that few people believe is free and fair, and in which fewer still know what they are really voting for, can lead to violent ethnic politics. Better to take time to educate voters, ensure it is free from intimidation than stage a hurried and fatally flawed poll.

The recent weeks have thrown up an interesting phenomenon. No sooner do the madhesis, janajatis, dalits, women, and others begin demanding their fair share in a future Nepal, than the predictable laments over an old Nepal



EYES WIDE SHUT
Sheetal Kumar

emerge. A Nepal where things were peaceful, everyone lived in harmony, and there were hardly any bandas or shortages.

Take my mother who, in all her innocence, lamented that the madhesis were being violent. And why were there khukuri marches in Kathmandu? "We've just ended one conflict, and another one rises. Why can't all these groups live in peace, as we have for centuries?" she asked.

You can't change a mindset

shaped by 70 years of prejudiced living, or I could have told her about things as I see them: that there was no peace over the centuries, only silent acceptance of one's fate. That today's fight is about rights and about refusing to accept an undignified existence, against subservience to a haughty elite that refuses to see how bad things were for the masses that make up this mosaic of a country.

Everywhere you turn to these days—in the newspapers, on the airwaves, at every corner tea and barbershop—you hear and see the predictable longing for peace. These longings are mostly expressed by a section of society which benefited from the status quo.

Longing for peace and harmony is well and good, and we should all pray that Nepal becomes a peaceful and

harmonious place where all groups can live in dignity. But such a Nepal cannot be attained if multitudes feel left out of the mainstream.

What is happening today may not be nice, but it is necessary. This country has to go through this foment before it can emerge as a strong nation. None of this debate would be happening today had it been allowed in 1950 or, indeed, even in 1990. But the political parties and the civil society beholden to them did not listen. And so we have this debate all over again. When voices are suppressed time and again, either through military force or through prejudice and wilful negligence, they tend to get louder and more violent. Nepal is at that stage.

Let us not forget that the constituent assembly, which we all believe will help end the Maoist conflict permanently, can also be a source of other conflicts. And that's what the debate today is about—participation and representation in the formation of a new state where no one is penalised because of age-old prejudices.

Madhesis, janajatis, dalits, women, and other marginalised groups are protesting because they see that the constituent assembly election is rigged against them. They know that without participation in sufficient numbers, the 'New Nepal' that emerges out of the assembly deliberations will not be much different from the 'Old Nepal.'

Listen to them. Failing to do so now will mean that we'll continue to long for peace and harmony for decades to come. ●



KUMAR SHRESTHA

The ties that bind

Proof, if it were needed, that there is a common Nepali identity

We are living in paranoid times. Madhesis think that their future isn't safe in the hands of pahadis. The pahadi leadership of the janajatis isn't too sure of its place in a democratic Nepal. Tharus don't trust the pahadis but fear even more the domination of upper caste madhesis. Dalits continue to be the most underrepresented community in every sphere of the state, but they have no



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

enclave of their own with which to threaten secession. Muslims are even worse off than most dalits, but they are making their claims in a more dignified manner than their better-placed counterparts on the margins.

Amidst all this, the Bahun-Chhetri-Newar ruling elite is the most sanguine. It knows that the people on the periphery have less in common with each other than

they do with the centre.

So what does hold us together? When ethnic autonomy is discussed, it is in Nepali, a language that evolved during the Gorkhalis' military campaigns and was later standardised by the Ranas to serve as the court language. Upendra Yadav of the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum, speaks a more refined Nepali than does his bete noire, Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula. Each time the Mahanta Thakur committee sits to negotiate with madhesis, janajatis, dalits, Muslims, karnalibasis, and women, the lingua franca will be Nepali.

Occasional muttered complaints apart, nobody really objects to our red double-triangle either. It continues to flutter atop even those government buildings on whose signboards 'Nepal' has been replaced with 'madhes' in Rautahat, Bara, and Parsa. That the Nepali flag resembles the banner of Hanuman helps in a predominantly Hindu country, but also doesn't seem to offend Muslim Nepalis. Radical monarchists who wave the flag to denounce democracy are

almost always dismissed as losers too scared to openly carry the standard of the royal family.

Wherever you go in Nepal and whenever, through the Himalayan winter, midhill monsoon, and tarai summer, the food of choice for those who can afford it is dal-bhat. Perhaps we should have learnt through those Mahendramala books in school that this is our national cuisine. In fact, if the cow can be retained as the national animal in the interim statute, there's no reason a national food can't be named in the forthcoming constitutional amendment.

It probably isn't pc to say so in a secular Nepal, but Pashupatinath continues to be the national deity even for many who don't take his omnipresence too seriously. Siddhartha was born in Lumbini and attained enlightenment in Bodhgaya, but that's a technicality best ignored. For most Nepalis, the Buddha's birthplace is marked by the Ashoka pillar near Bhairahawa and we all are extremely proud of it.

We also ignore the inconvenient fact that Everest is on the border and that its northern face lies in foreign territory and claim that the highest point on earth lies in Nepal. Sagarmatha will soon replace the king on Nepali currency. There was a time, not too long ago, when the mohar rupaiya was frowned upon in Biratnagar, Birganj, or Nepalganj. These days, it's legal tender across the border in India in the bajars of Jogbani, Raxaul, and Rupaidiha.

The model of integration adopted by BP Koirala in 1950s and communalised by King Mahendra in the 1960s has its irritants. But the process of national unity set in motion by the people's struggle of 1950s has had significant successes alongside its important failures. Its accomplishments need to be institutionalised and its disappointments addressed sincerely. The fears of fragmentation aren't all unfounded, but there are enough commonalities among us to build a better and more tolerant society. ●

LETTERS

NOTHING FOR US

I write not as a political analyst, but as a frustrated Nepali who, day after day, sees blaming and finger-pointing, but no concrete action. So many fundamental issues need to be addressed to take our country out of political instability and poverty, yet the political parties have the same old answers: we weren't consulted on this, people are doing whatever they please. There is banda after banda. And where is 'democracy' when parties deem it necessary to "take action" against anyone who blames them in part for the country's woes. The eight parties have become this all-knowing, righteous body which terms anything it does not like unconstitutional. But even amongst them are people who have faced the same charges they're pressing against others now, such as corruption and misuse of power.

I know we are in a transitional phase, and that we citizens bear as much responsibility to make things work as the politicians do. But they give us nothing to work with or debate upon. What is their vision for a new Nepal? What do we do about education, unemployment, the economy, victims of the war, poverty? We want vision, strategies, maturity, and honesty. Merely erasing the word 'royal' from every phrase that ever existed won't take care of our problems.

Sujala Pant, Thimphu

INCLUSION

It was amazing to see Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula take moral responsibility for the death of 29 people in tarai, but utter no word on the issue of his resignation. The minister also acknowledged the deceased as martyrs, though the government has still not declared them as such. What irony: the man instrumental in the loss of so many precious lives proclaims those very people "sahid". And refuses to step down. Had he resigned, things wouldn't have boiled over. On whom will the onus fall if the same agitating forces were to go back to confrontation and more people were to die?

PB Rana, email

● Every year we get to commemorate 7 Falgun as Democracy Day, and you usually write a cautious editorial on safeguarding the freedom of the people. I don't see much progress this year on the democratic front, despite Jana Andolans I and II. Everyone seems to dwell on our past glory and do nothing about the future. How does one translate the rhetoric into a workable democratic order where there is rule of law and civic tolerance, and a free media that can caution the leaders and public alike on the pitfalls common to

Third World democratic and revolutionary movements? A New Nepal has kicked off with a bad start. Look at the endless petrol lines, the jaundiced cabinet, a well-meaning prime minister's commitment to BP Koirala's vision and democratic ideals sabotaged by some of his closest advisers, and a foreign aid community that is confused about which among Nepal's thousands of 'rights-based, inclusive democracy-practicing' I/NGOs to support. The eight parties ought to pay attention to the mandate of Jana Andolan II mandate and start delivering on what currently sound like empty promises.

Surya B Prasai, email



● JB Pun Magar's article ('The janajatis are trying to replicate the tarai uprising', #336) caught my attention. I have long felt the need for a janajati party and have written about it at www.madhesi.net. The janajatis need to stop asking for favours from pahadi bahuns in the big parties, and organise to prove their weight through the ballot box. The party should have a neutral name and a social justice agenda, but the founding leadership should be clearly janajati-dominated and reflect the diversity within janajati communities. The manifesto should be written with all of Nepal in mind, but for now a clear commitment to a federal republic and a clear map for a proposed federal model will be enough. Developing the party and its organisation will do more for janajati empowerment than organising chakka jams.

B Paramendra, email

BAN BANDAS

Thank you for your Quote of the Week from Pasang Sherpa, chairman of the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (From the Nepali Press, #336), in which he threatened violence if the government did not address janajati demands. It made me ponder thus: since the Uprising in April 2006, observers of the political situation in Nepal have shifted between optimism, frustration, and disappointment. Many still see this as a time of necessary transition.

Such a multitude of inequalities needs to be addressed that each group sees now as the time to stand up for its rights and summon others to support its cause. Hence bandas: to make a political statement, assert rights, gain recognition, and whip up support.

The fact that it is an undemocratic method of political activity is never openly acknowledged. Others have, it is felt, made gains small and large by using undemocratic forces and methods. And so no one blinks when a banda is called. Yet it is a form of terror—observe the banda or else. No leader questions the right of any group to call a banda. It is not the Nepali way. It may be that, at some point in the future, a Truth and Reconciliation Committee will encourage us all to accept responsibility for accepting the culture of 'banda'. There is a saying, 'evil does not prosper because men do evil, but because good men do nothing'. I look forward to the day when good men (and women) speak up against bandas and assert the rights of political parties to be heard without the threat of violence and terror. Until such time, true democracy will not be entrenched in the Nepali way of life and its politics.

Patrick Leahy, Kupondole

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Aruna Uprety ('It's expensive being poor in Nepal', #336) raises an issue that is extremely important, given the poor health of our children and low economic indicators. One correction: Ramesh Kanta Adhikari is a professor in the Department of Child Health at the Institute of Medicine as well as a practicing paediatrician.

Ganesh Chaudhary, MD, email

UNAMUSED

Re: 'UN-amused' (Eyes Wide Shut, #336)—Sheetal Kumar writes well and brings into focus the reality that the UN sometimes evades. If only they'd listen to his suggestions, the world would be a better place. I also enjoyed Ashutosh Tiwari's column ('Guru of business', Strictly Business, #336). The punchline is classic, and I feel like the Nepali *janata* is having the last laugh, at least in theory, perhaps in reality, years down the line.

Name withheld, email

BOLLYWOOD

Re: Ashutosh Tiwari's 'Guru of business'. I used to watch Bollywood movies when I was young and they made me feel stupid, and depressed me for days. I'd ask myself why I even watched such nonsense, wasting valuable time. In this so-called New Nepal, I do not see much hope if inspiration is to come from such well-established stupidity.

S Ray, email

● Thanks to Ashutosh Tiwari and his line: 'Pushpa Kamal Dahal should go watch a film or two'. The writer appeals to Nepal's political forces (not only the Maoists) to see how the path to prosperity looks today. I urge those in responsible positions to promote the entrepreneurial spirit based on the self-interest of hardworking individuals.

Thank you for analysing the force behind business and economic success.

Anjan Panday, email

HEPATITIS VACCINE

Staff from Kathmandu Poly Clinic in Old Baneshwor have been going door-to-door with a loudspeaker for the last few days getting residents of Dhobighat to sign up for a hepatitis B vaccination program. They visited our house and handed out a leaflet outlining the dangers of the disease and nine possible modes of transmission, including kissing, eating contaminated food, or by coming into contact with infected phlegm or breath. I thought the illness could only be transmitted through blood or infected bodily fluids, and not by touching, eating with, or kissing carriers. The Hepatitis B Foundation clearly states that the disease "is NOT transmitted casually. It cannot be spread through sneezing, coughing, hugging or eating food prepared by someone who is infected with hepatitis B".

Is the Kathmandu Poly Clinic acting in good faith when it makes people up for a course of three shots at Rs 175 each, or making money by inflating the risk? What does the World Health Organisation recommend, as their seal of approval is on the leaflet? Kathmandu's residents need to be able to make informed decisions and vaccinate themselves and their families for the right reasons.

Mark Turin, Dhobighat

KEEPING SECRETS

Anonymous columnists are annoying, to say the least. But I can see why Foreign Hand and the Auntie would want to keep their identities secret. After all, one skewers the bad things about this country with a razor edge last displayed by a foreigner in 1970, and the other calls things like she sees them. She's hilarious, but cuts too close to home sometimes. Certain women, single largely by choice (especially those above a certain age) don't want our annoyances, deals with the devil, or insecurities bandied about.

GG, email

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Apophis now

It's best to be prepared for the things that we do know will happen

Something else we need to worry about came up this week at a meeting of the world's top scientists in San Francisco. Apparently there is an asteroid named Apophis, a big chunk of space rock the size of a couple of soccer pitches, hurtling towards us at breakneck speed. Right now it's way out there in space, but there's a chance that it might hit us. Scientists even know the date—13 April, 2036. That's not BS, so we have time to get all lathered up with worry, to waste reams of time wondering what to do, and perhaps start spending public money on fending off Apophis. Already there's talk of a space mission to divert or destroy our cosmic invader.

Now I don't take any of this seriously for a moment. The chances of Apophis smashing into us are pretty remote. We'll get hit by a big space rock at some point, but it could be another thousand years or so. Or it could be tomorrow, one we didn't see coming.

That got me thinking, always a dangerous thing. What throws our well made plans into mayhem, mocks our penchant to prepare? The unexpected, that's what. Just when you think you've come up



HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak

with a cure for all the horrible diseases that plague developing countries, a new, mutated strain of, say, the common cold wreaks havoc. A consensus on climate change

that leads to real reductions in greenhouse gases could be rendered insignificant by a big volcanic eruption somewhere. Or indeed, a celestial object smashing into Earth and blacking out the sun with plumes of dust.

Here in Nepal, everyone puts their energies into peace, driven along by international donors who seemed to believe that peace was an end, rather than a means. And what happens? All these pesky demands for inclusion, and the formerly warring parties laying down their arms and emerging waving into public space only to be greeted by outstretched palms and a long list of what's lacking. That's a recipe for political paralysis.

But Nepal needs to be wary about more than the current peace process. The unexpected lurks. To paraphrase the departed and barely-missed Donald Rumsfeld, there are unknowns we know about, and unknowns we don't know about.

The former category includes almost any political grievance that hasn't yet popped up and isn't obvious. Say the people of Mustang get uppity and want independence, or something like that. It also covers earthquakes which should be a constant topic of discussion and debate in Nepal but isn't. A big series of tremors hitting the country sometime in the next century or so is far more likely than a visit from our space friend Apophis.

And then there are the unknowns we don't know. Epidemic disease, water shortages, a massive world wide computer failure that throws everything into a tizzy. Nepal is more global than its blinkered elite believe. Anything that causes catastrophe on a grand scale will hit hard in the Himalayas and tarai alike. There are plenty of possibilities.

There's not much we can actually do about any of those things. What we can do is prepare to survive disasters like earthquakes. We can agitate for better public health systems. We can conserve water and cut down on greenhouse gases but we should be doing all these things already. Let's start with them and move on to our unknown unknowns later. ●



PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

DON'T DRINK THE WATER: Baluwatar's water tanks get ready for a much-needed cleaning, but it comes too late for the politicians who have already contracted hepatitis.



Going viral

Until a vaccine is available, the only prevention against hepatitis E is safe drinking water

BUDDHA BASNYAT

In most parts of the world, hepatitis E afflicts the poor, those who don't have access to safe drinking water.

But in Nepal, the virus attacks everyone: from prime minister to slum-dweller. Girija Prasad Koirala is showing symptoms of jaundice, and it is likely to be a hepatitis E infection caused by contaminated water. Five members of the cabinet have it, and the foreign minister was hospitalised for over a month. A senior Kathmandu-based foreign diplomat also recently came down with hepatitis E.

Hepatitis E is a neglected, viral illness spread primarily when drinking water is contaminated with faeces. Kathmandu's leaky mains are susceptible to contamination and the water supply here is endemic for hepatitis E outbreaks. Initial symptoms may be nausea, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, tiredness, itching, and some fever. When the eyes turn yellow, the person actually begins to feel better and the fever subsides. The illness may last from about a week to a month and the jaundice usually completely clears in two to six months.

The other common hepatitis in Nepal, hepatitis A, is also transmitted faeco-orally and has the same symptoms as hepatitis E. But person-to-person transmission of hepatitis E is only up to two percent, compared to over 50 percent with hepatitis A. This suggests that a larger dose ('inoculum' in medical parlance) may be necessary for the transmission of hepatitis E, in comparison to the A virus. To get the E virus, you may have to drink an entire glass of

Bishnumati water—which may prove that in case of the present outbreak the Baluwatar mains have massive sewage contamination.

The large inoculum theory is supported by the fact that tourists who are here for a short time and are very careful regarding drinking water usually suffer significantly less from hepatitis E than A, although this may also be changing as tourists obtain hepatitis A vaccine. There is no need to isolate the patient, washing hands with soap and water after going to the bathroom is adequate. The infection is not transmitted sexually or through blood, unlike viral hepatitis B, C, and D.

Hepatitis E seems to be more common in the urban than rural areas, probably due to worse water contamination in cities. Almost everyone over the age of 10 who grew up in Nepal has had at least a full blown or subclinical infection with hepatitis A, thanks to our poor public health safeguards. But the good news is this initial infection guarantees lifelong immunity with protective antibodies. Unfortunately prior infection with hepatitis E doesn't

prevent us from being reinfected with the E virus. Although the infection is debilitating, it doesn't usually kill most patients. It is, however, dangerous for pregnant women—hepatitis E kills up to 30 percent of pregnant women afflicted with the disease.

Clean drinking water is essential for prevention of this illness. Water just needs to be brought to a rolling boil, and if this is not possible, treated with chlorine tablets or liquid iodine. Clearly, the water pipes from the Bir Shumsher era that run under the streets of Kathmandu need to be replaced to avoid contamination from the sewers running alongside. Eating only food that is steaming and avoiding salads in restaurants and marriage parties help prevent not just hepatitis A and E but also typhoid. However, evidence so far seems to implicate water (more than food) in the spread of hepatitis E.

The treatment for this disease is symptomatic, that is, nothing in particular. There is no need for strict bed-rest. The appetite is usually so poor that more restrictions on food are not advisable. Alcohol is best avoided while the liver recovers.

Evidence suggests that the reservoir for the virus may be domestic swine or people with subclinical infection. The single most important preventive measure is clean drinking water. The good news is, a hepatitis E vaccine may soon be available, which may especially be important for women before pregnancy. ●

Buddha Basnyat, MD, is with the Nepal Health Research Council and is a consultant at Patan Hospital.

Hepatitis E: Prevention better than cure

- Drink only boiled water
- Eat hot foods, avoid salads when eating out

Symptoms:

Nausea
Loss of appetite
Abdominal pain
Tiredness
Itching
Fever



The same Old Nepal

This is no time for unreconstructed 'nationalist capitalism'

New Delhi - The Indian newspapers are now relegating the political news to the inside pages, and headlining business developments instead. In the last month, Tata took over Corrus, Indian-born Arun Sarin's Vodafone's now owns Hutch, and Aditya Birla Group's Hindalco bought up Canadian firm Novelis for over \$6 billion plus.

 **ECONOMIC SENSE**
Artha Beed

More and more Indian firms are on the lookout for global acquisitions, and in the last year, investment by Indian firms outside India has surpassed Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India. And this is the same country which, during its 'license raj' days of the 70s and 80s made access to foreign capital so difficult that Indians flocked to Nepal in order to convert their currency. India is reaping the benefits of opening up its economy. More jobs have been created in the past decade than ever before, and people are better compensated. Workers aren't

jostling to join unions, but to get their finances together for a car or an apartment. Political forces are realising that rather than promoting rent-seeking in the private sector, they ought to leave it to build up the capacity to compete on the global front. Sure, there are still some politically-motivated or opportunistic moves, such as the Tata land acquisition in Singur, West Bengal, but these are far fewer than before. The need to build globally-marketable competencies is forcing firms to abandon dual bookkeeping to evade taxes. Meanwhile, the government's leveraging of technology is making it easier to pay taxes. India will need to develop more CEOs to run businesses, more managers, and more employees to fill new, global positions.

In Nepal, Pushpa Kamal Dahal continues to spew his 'nationalist capitalist' theory, perhaps in the hope that the 'voluntary' contributions from the private sector continue, and can be repaid with favours when the Maoists are finally in ministerial positions. Global companies, of course, shy away



from donations, and for the Maoists keeping FDI at arm's length for the next decade or so is a way to protect their base of 'loyal supporters' in business (whose 'support' was forced at

gunpoint). Nepal's intelligentsia and other political parties too have taken to criticising and opposing private investment in infrastructure as a way of demonstrating their love for the

country's sovereignty.

Our first round of reform in the 1990s is bearing fruit now. But it's time for Nepal to open things up further, to allow more private capital to come in, and to build the confidence of local investors. Let Nepali companies invest outside Nepal. After all, scores already have businesses outside Nepal. If the government can't regulate them, can't it at least legitimise it? It's a simple equation: the more Nepali companies there are outside, the more chances Nepalis have to refine their management and entrepreneurial skills. This is what builds real capacity among educated Nepalis, not writing reports for the government or NGOs.

Economic history shows that the prosperity of a country depends on the growth of its private capital formation and its leveraging of investment opportunities. The USSR and the East Bloc took decades to realise that equality of wealth and opportunity is a mirage. No need for us to do the same; there are more worthy models much closer home. ●

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Under the 'NIC Pure Gold' offer, Nepal Industrial and Commercial Bank has started, for the first time in Nepal, the sale of 100g gold bars of 99.9 percent purity. The gold bars are available from the bank's Kamladi and New Road branches, and the bank also offers loans for their purchase and custodial services for safekeeping.



Wai Wai in Saudi Arabia

Wai Wai has become the first Nepali product to be sold in Saudi Arabia. The Chaudhary Group recently signed a deal with the Riyadh-based Savana Corporation to export the instant noodles. Wai Wai is also sold in a number of countries including the Emirates, UK, and Canada.



Going digital

Eastman Kodak held a conference last week called Go Digital with participants from ten countries including Nepal. In attendance was Warren Wisniewski, the firm's vice president. Kodak opens new digital labs this week at Digiplus and Photo Concern. The new lab includes Bluetooth support. Kodak has over 22,000 retail chains in Asia, of which 128 are in Nepal.



Extended banking

Machhapuchchhre Bank has launched an extension counter at Baluwater to serve Nepal Rastra Bank employees in particular. The counter offers deposit, collection, and payment services. The bank has 12 branches and will soon launch one more in Itahari, Sunsari. It also plans to open another extension counter at Thapathali.



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Bad intentions

Balram Baniya in Kantipur, 22 February

कान्तिपुर

The king's Democracy Day address has created waves—the eight parties consider it unreasonable and there are protests on the streets. The king is not satisfied with the recent political developments and used the address to convey that to the people. The interim constitution has given all his powers to the council of ministers and also removed him as the head of state.



KIRAN PANDAY

The speech is against the constitution, spirit, and sentiments of Jana Andolan II. The address mocked the developments since last April and tried to defend his 1 February 2005 takeover, saying that it was what the Nepali people wanted at that time.

After 11 years of war, Nepalis finally feel like they are making their own constitution and have a say about their country's future. The future of the monarchy is to be decided through the constituent assembly elections. It is clear that the Nepali people's decision will not be in favour of the king. The address is proof that the king is looking for a way to safeguard his future. The Home Ministry

knows all about the king's recent meetings with former panchas. The king's palace and his extravagant lifestyle are paid for by the Nepali people and yet the king is conspiring against those very people. Why is the government keeping quiet?

There are a handful of people in the Nepali media and some more in the Nepali Congress who want to jump onto the monarchy bandwagon. These NC leaders are trying to convince their party's leader about the Maoists' so-called extremism and push them to be faithful to the palace. The prime minister needs to let Nepali people know that the government did not approve the address [in advance]. The government also needs to realise that because it has not been able to take action against those charged by the Rayamajhi Commission, the king and the royalists are getting emboldened.

In the streets, in parliament, and in party meetings, people are saying that action must be taken against the king immediately. Parliament has declared the address unconstitutional, illegitimate, and authoritarian, and also said it is an attempt to hinder the peace process. This is a bold declaration. While the Maoists say that Nepal needs to be declared a democratic republic, leaders like Nilambar Acharya suggest that the king be removed from Naryanhiti palace, that his title be taken away, and that restrictions be put on him so he does not go about making unapproved public speeches. The interim constitution has a provision, which states the future of the monarchy will be decided by the first meeting of the constituent assembly. Since the ultimate future of the king lies with the people, the government must think of an alternative way to take action against him in the interim.

Paranoid

Tarun, 19 February

तरुण

It's the story of communist leaders all over the world—they just don't trust people. There are numerous fighters in the Maoist army who have undergone rigorous training, yet Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal recently chose his son, Prakash Dahal, as his security commander, responsible for coordinating his personal security. It is understood that Prakash has not gone through the war training necessary for such a position. Dahal has more than half-a-dozen PLA fighters as bodyguards and they carry modern weapons like M16s, Colt Commandos, etc. These fighters accompany Dahal to public meetings and informal gatherings. Maoist second-in-command Baburam Bhattarai has no intention of appearing to be less important than Dahal, and has three guards armed with M16s standing beside him, and another one watching his back.

This kind of security is unnecessary, and we have to ask Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula when this drama is going to end. Don't the Maoists say that they are the leaders of the people and that the people protect their leaders? So was all the security drama and paraphernalia in Tundikhel last week during Dahal's allegedly first public appearance in 25 years necessary? There were PLA fighters and

volunteers all over Tundikhel and throughout his speech Dahal had Prakash on his left and another bodyguard to his right. Is the chairman paranoid or does he really believe he is that unsafe?

Army 'Maoists'

Dhruba Adhikari in Janadesh, 13 February

जनादेश

On the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the 'People's War', former royal army generals have come out and said that had it not been for the people's war, we would not have had democracy.

Retired General and nominated Maoist MP Kumar Fudung asks, "If peaceful protests were effective, then why did real change not come after the 1951, 1980 and 1990 movements?" He said that the state needed a real challenge in order to change, and the Maoists provided just that by taking up arms.

Retired General Khagendra Pant said, "The people's war taught Nepalis that nothing would happen if we kept quiet, which is why Nepalis were willing to lay down their lives."

Military expert Indrajit Rai agrees, "The Maoists established their base through the armed conflict, and they were the first to raise and address issues relating to women, dalit, and janajatis." Asked what he thought about integrating the People's Liberation Army into the Nepal Army, Rai replied: "The 237-year

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एक दलको सरकार... कि मिलिजुली सरकार ?

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

आजको नेपाल

म विनोद भट्टराईका साथ

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IMAGE CHANNEL हेर्न नमल्नुहोला

old army structure needs to be changed to make the army better.” He added that the ‘old’ army is loyal to one person alone, which is why its future should be in the hands of those who believe in democracy. “This has to be taken into consideration during army recruitment, training, enlisting, and promotion,” Rai said.

Former SSP Chuda Bahadur Shrestha said that back in 1996 he was one of the very few people who said that the insurgency was not a law and order problem, but a necessary revolution.

Party gossip

Jana Aastha, 21 February

Chief of Army Staff Rukmangat Katuwal recently sent out a circular directing all army barracks, divisional headquarters, battalion, brigades, and companies to organise parties to celebrate Army Day on Shivaratri. Although the Rs 60 per diem was not increased this year, the circular said that all personnel should be fed on Army Day. Army officers in Kathmandu said the circular made it easier to enjoy the big party that was organised at the army HQ after the events were over in Tundikhel. Many army officers were seen merrily drinking away—in uniform, which is against army rules.

Only a few royalists were at the party this year. Our source in the Nepal Army told us that the royal secretaries were not invited. Jana Aastha asked royal secretary Phaniraj Pathak why he was not present at the party. “The army does not invite us anymore,” he told us. But palace army secretary Tika Dhamala and ADCs were seen partying till late with the army officers. Rukmangat Katuwal also invited UNMIN head Ian Martin, Biswo Kanta Mainali of the Nepal Bar Association, and journalist Madhab Rimal. A heated discussion broke out between these three when Rimal said to Martin, “We are not satisfied with your work, because not all Maoist weapons have been locked down.” In response to this Martin reportedly said, “You are close to the prime minister, why don’t you go and tell him exactly that?” When it looked like the discussion was getting nasty,

Katuwal tried to leave, but was pulled back in again by Rimal.

Gajurel-speak

Nepal Samacharpatra, 17 February

We asked CP Gajurel, the Maoists’ chief of ‘foreign command’ about a recent statement he made in New Delhi about capturing polling booths to win the election. Gajurel said his statement was misinterpreted. “I said that the Nepali people are now very aware of the political situation, which is why there is no need to capture polling booths anymore,” says Gajurel. “To those who are threatening booth capture, I want to say that if they capture one, the Maoists are prepared and have enough power to capture five—but that situation will not arise in Nepal anymore.”

Gajurel said Maoist foreign policy has changed since they entered mainstream politics, due to the imperative to develop cordial relations with neighbouring countries. Apart from the US, which the Maoists have ignored as imperialist and against the revolution, the party has good relations with all other countries. “[The Americans] don’t



even like the UML, why would they like us? They are capitalists, so it is only normal they feel that way.” He added that American support for the monarchy was genuine, because it helps keep Nepal a puppet state and a good place from which to keep an eye on China and India.

Gajurel said that the Maoists recently arrested in Kashmir were not Nepali. “Just because they are Maoists does not mean they are our people,” he said. Garjurel will meet Chinese foreign affairs officers during his time in New Delhi and will make a diplomatic visit to China very soon.



Madhes movement
Left: First address
Right: Second address

नेपाल, 18 February

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



At first they accused us of collaborating with the palace, then with Hindu fundamentalists, and now with a group within the Nepali Congress. They just don’t give up.

Upendra Yadav in an interview with Jana Bhawana, 19 February.

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VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), an independent humanitarian organization whose mandate is to provide protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and internal disturbances has vacancies in Kathmandu for:

PROTECTION ASSISTANT

Main Duties:

- Contributes to the implementation and running of specific projects/programs, mainly independently
- Maintains regular contacts with NGOs and authorities at various levels
- Undertakes written reporting/minutes of meetings, mainly independently
- Performs internal and external follow-up of individual cases
- Ensures follow-up and updates of files/databases
- Participates in establishing and implementing procedures
- Performs various data processing on computer independently
- Translates all kind of documents with high accuracy from national language to English and vice versa
- Channels all relevant information related to the context and advise the expatriates in various fields such as culture, politics, economy, security etc
- Contributes to various reporting and establishment of statistics
- Analyses general situation and other matters relating to the ICRC’s mandate
- Drafts letters and messages for other offices

Minimum Requirements:

- University degree in any discipline
- 6 years work experience in a similar field
- Excellent written and spoken English, Nepali and Hindi, Written and spoken French an asset
- Very good computer skills (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) including typing skills in Nepali language
- Very good analytical skills
- Ability to be at ease in front of a large public
- Interest for humanitarian questions
- Good knowledge of geographically assigned environment

SECURITY OFFICER

Main Duties:

- Knows and briefs the security guidelines to be followed in ICRC premises
- Channels all relevant information related to the security in ICRC premises and advises on constant improvement regarding security measures in ICRC premises
- Conducts security survey of the ICRC premises to minimise possible risks and implements improvements
- Advises ICRC staff on security related matters and develops policies and procedures for security operations
- Maintains continuing awareness of prevailing local security conditions, identifying probable threats and recommend appropriate preventive steps
- Determines need for and provides training and advices to the ICRC staff and their family members on security measures
- Supervises Security companies
- Purposes an earthquake preparedness plan
- Implements and follows up earthquake preparedness measures in ICRC premises
- Prepares earthquake drills
- Keeps staff and families of expatriate informed about earthquake safety measures
- Insures and monitors a proper security network

Qualifications:

- University degree in any discipline, preferably in civil engineering or architecture engineering
- 6 years experience in a similar field
- Excellent written and spoken English
- Very good computer skills
- Good leadership skills
- Very good negotiation skills
- Ability to deal with different people
- Ability to work effectively in stressful situations

Personal Qualities:

The successful applicants should be self-starters with sense of responsibility, organizational skills and ability to take initiative. Ability to deal with different people, ability to cope with stressful situations, interpersonal and communication skills, patience, perseverance, adaptability and self-confidence. Readiness to travel and spend extended periods in different parts of Nepal.

Interested candidates may apply for the positions with a complete CV, including covering letter along with copies of certificates, a recent photograph and contact telephone number to the following addresses not later than 2 March 2007.

Only short-listed candidates meeting the above criteria will be contacted for selection process.

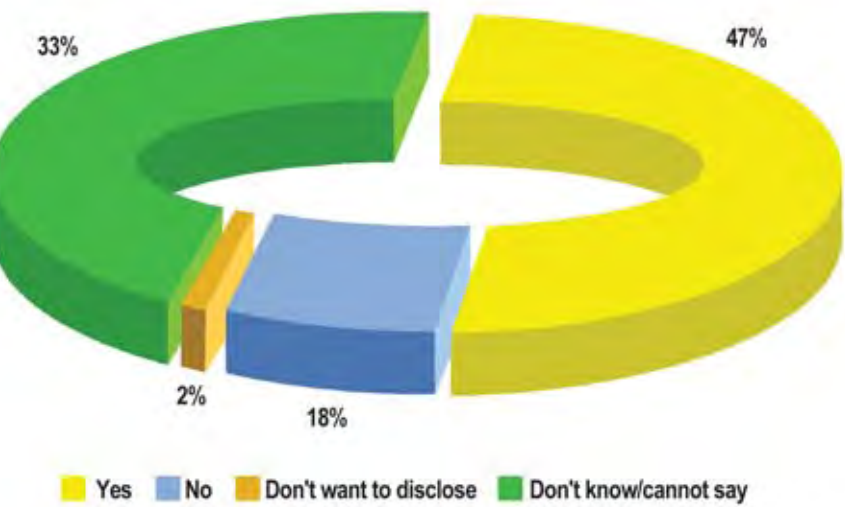
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As the euphoria of the April Up the same things they always have

Given the current political situation, do you think the CA elections can be held by June 2007?



The Kathmandu-based research group Interdisciplinary Analysts (IDA) has conducted four public opinion surveys since December 2004. This one was conducted between 22 December-13 January among 2,011 respondents in 21 districts. The composition of the respondents is weighted to reflect national figures for caste, ethnicity, and geography.

More people have now heard of the constituent assembly elections (70 percent) than in earlier polls, but of those who have, only a third claim that they know what it means. When tested, only a quarter of these had a correct understanding of what the polls are for. Broken down, this means that just over five percent of respondents knew accurately what a constituent assembly is.

In addition, over 42 percent of respondents are uncertain about whether the elections can be free and fair, and one in five is convinced it is not possible. Close to half of those surveyed say the electoral

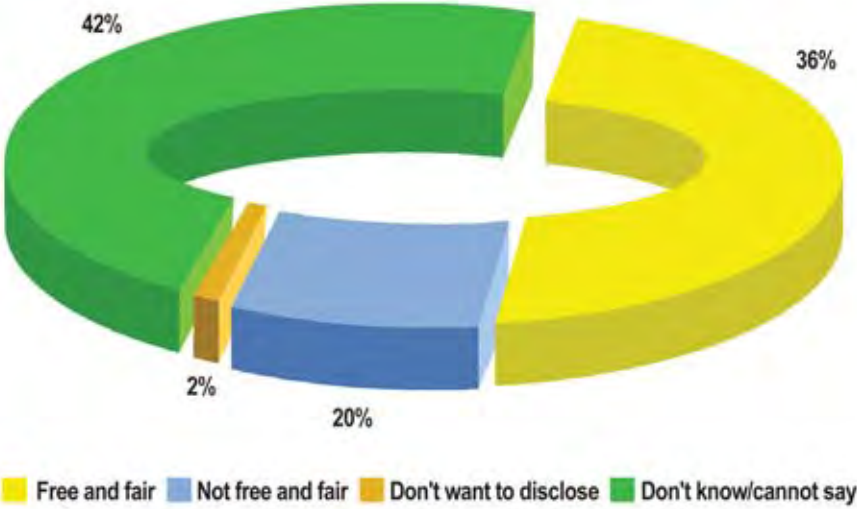
process should be proportional.

Despite misgivings, over half of the respondents believe elections to the constituent assembly are essential as it is the only way to ensure 'lasting peace'. Only 22 percent of those see it as a necessity for formulating a new constitution, and 30 percent of all respondents believe the assembly should determine the fate of the monarchy.

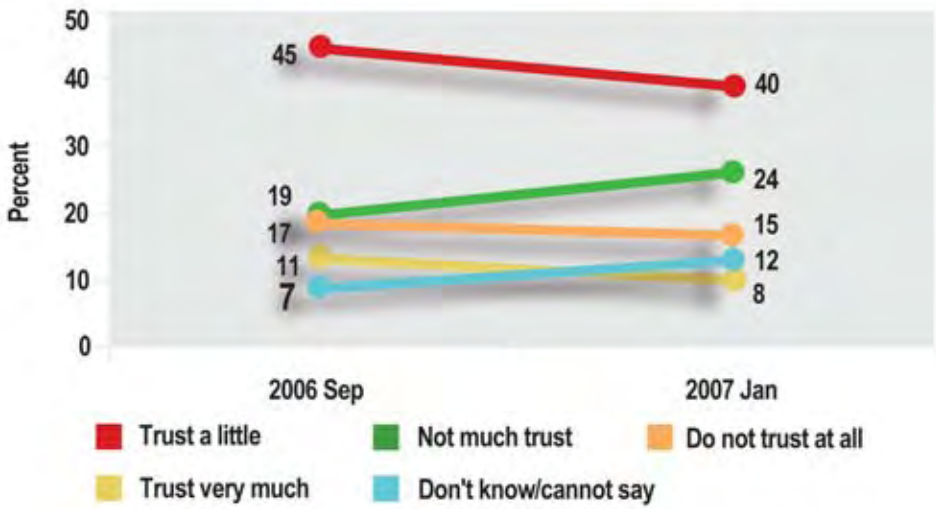
Some political trends identified in Himalmedia, IDA, and NDI polls in recent years are intensified in this one. The August 2006 NDI poll showed 18 percent of those surveyed were not sure for whom they would vote. That figure in IDA's latest poll is up to 27 percent, with an additional 24 percent not wanting to tell. About the same low double-digit percentages say they would vote for the Maoists, the NC, and the UML as was reported in IDA's last poll in September 2006.

Nepali voters seem to trust the Maoists as much, or as little as, the other parties. But

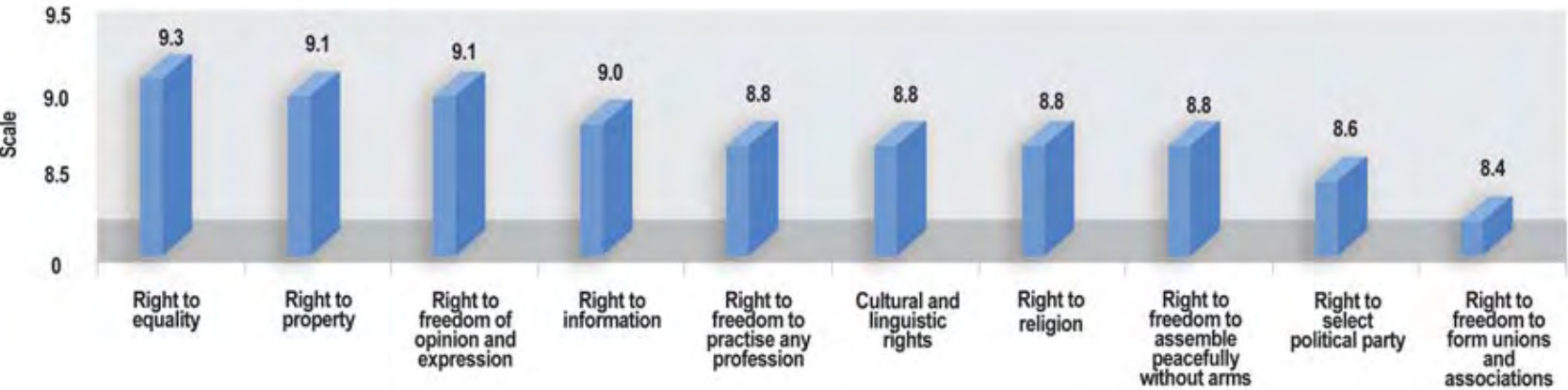
Do you think the constituent assembly elections will be free and fair?



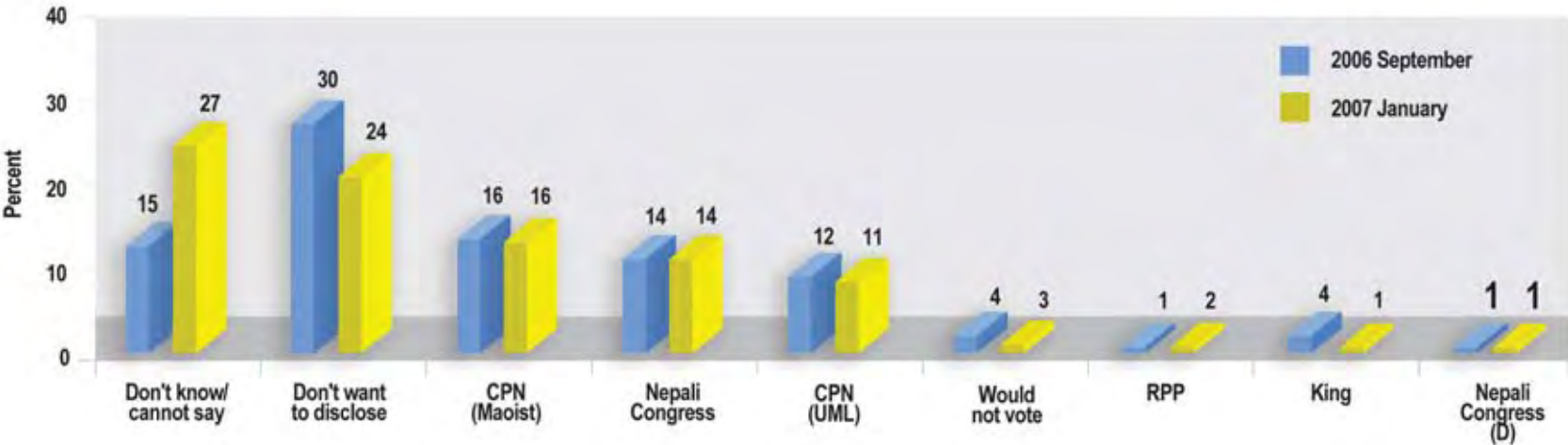
Level of trust towards the political parties



Rate your feelings towards these fundamental rights, 10 being very important, 1 not important, and 5 not particularly important or unimportant.



If elections to a constituent assembly were held today, who would you vote for?



Monarchy dies down, Nepalis want e: peace, development, livelihood

the popularity of all the parties has fallen since September, as the euphoria over People Power II evaporates and the promised changes recede. Nepalis want the 7+1 parties to deliver on three main issues: peace, development, and livelihood.

The future of the monarchy continues to be contentious, with Nepalis divided 50-50 about retaining or dismantling it. A *Annapurna Post* / Image Channel poll last week corroborates this polarisation.

Two in five respondents believe a referendum is the best way to determine the fate of the monarchy. Forty-one percent in support of a monarchy want it to be constitutional, just under half that would want a ceremonial monarchy and just under a quarter want an active king.

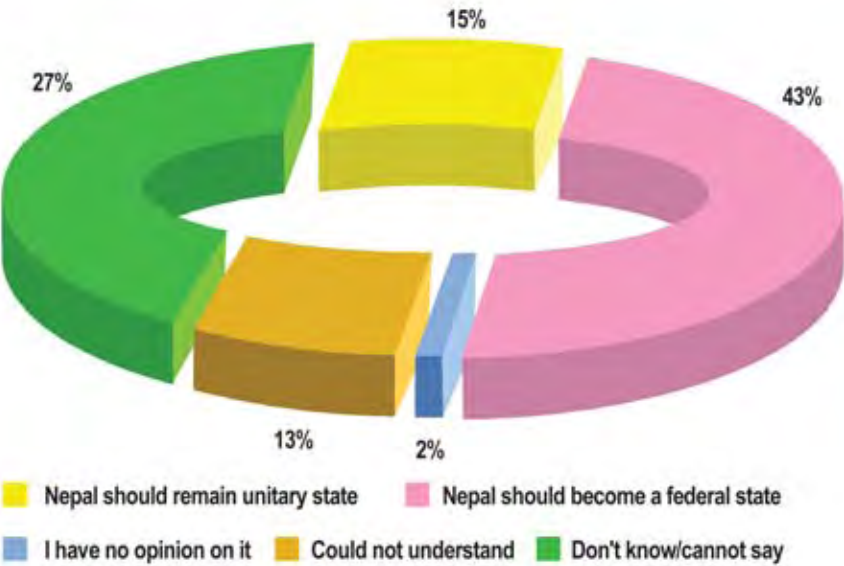
Surprisingly, the 1 February 2005 takeover is less of a reason for the erosion of the respect for monarchy than the royal massacre of June 2001, or the disposition

of the current king. Those who believe Nepal should remain a kingdom and those who want a Hindu state (at 52 percent, three times the number who believe in secularism), cite 'tradition' as the main reason. Two-fifths of those who believe the monarchy has no role cite its 'feudal exploitative' nature, and a quarter say it did not develop the country.

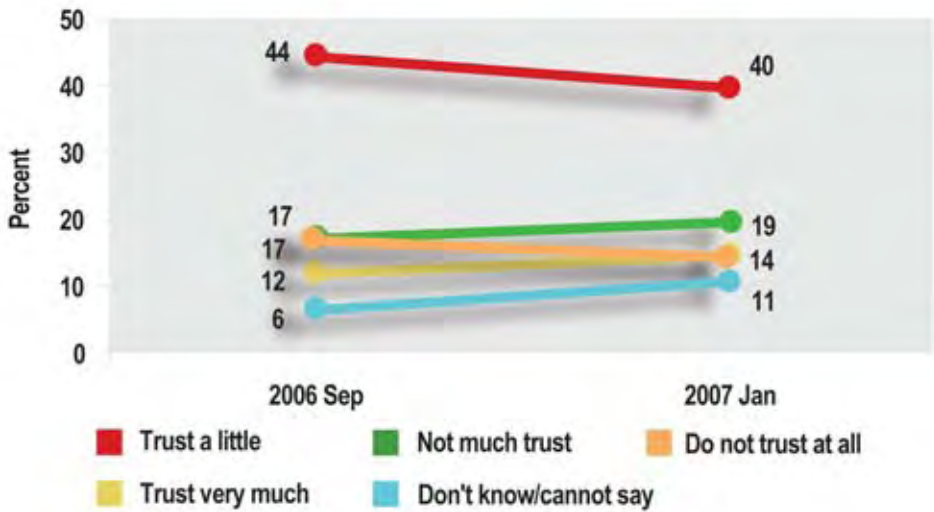
Because the interviews were done in December, the results of the poll perhaps do not reflect recent developments in the madhesi and pan-janajati movement. In response to one question, 43 percent say Nepal should be a federal rather than a unitary state. But this must be read in light of another finding that two-thirds of the respondents have never heard about the federal system.

For more details contact Interdisciplinary Analysts in Patan Dhoka at 5528111.

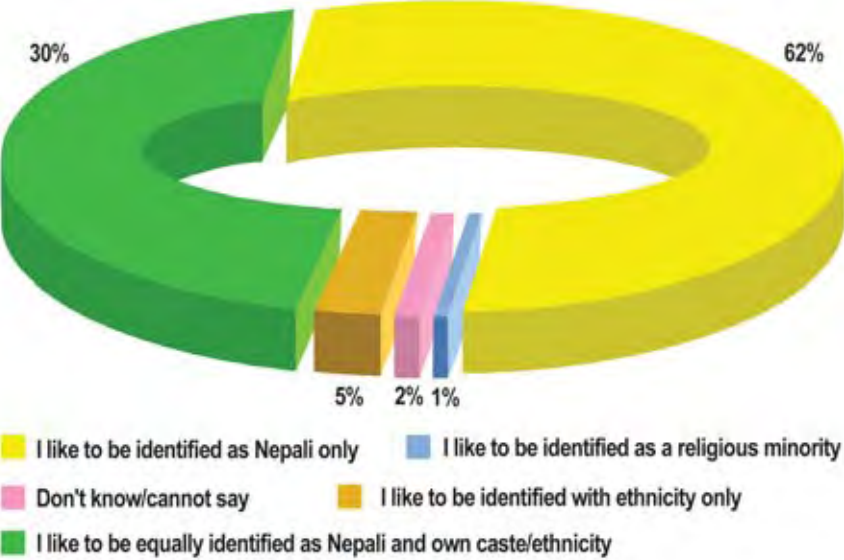
Should Nepal should remain a unitary state or should it become federal state?



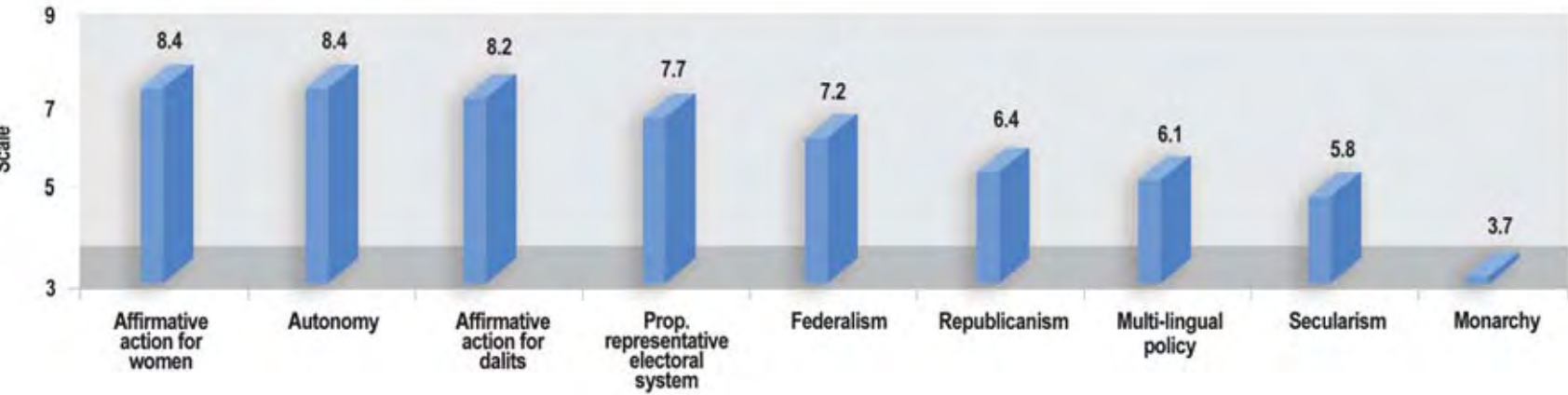
Level of trust towards the CPN (Maoist)



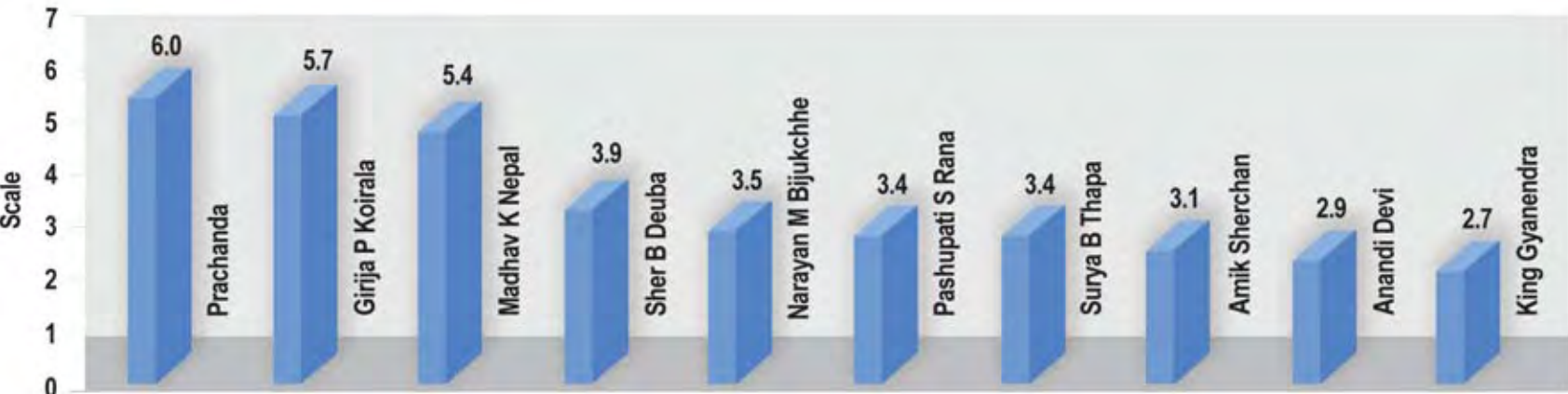
How do you like to identify yourself?



How important are these constitutional issues to you, 10 being very important, 1 not important, and 5 not particularly important or unimportant?



Rate your feelings toward some leaders, 10 being very important, 1 not important, and 5 not particularly important or unimportant.





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Nepal in New York

Rumours, arguments, and sly suggestions at a diaspora Democracy Day

NEW YORK - A diverse group of Nepalis gathered to mark 'democracy day' on 19 February. Madhu Raman Acharya, Nepal's ambassador to the US and permanent representative at Nepal's mission to the United Nations in New York, and his wife Geeta hosted the event at the popular Yak Restaurant in Jackson Heights, Queens.

"Quite the statement, wasn't it?" he says, ushering us in. The ambassador maintains a neutral reputation here in New York, but some still view him sceptically as he was appointed to this office just days before the king's planned attendance at the UN General Assembly in 2005. He is presumably well liked by his bosses back home too—he once said that he "does what [he is] told to do."

Although many had complained at another Nepali gathering last year that 7 Falgun can't be considered 'democracy day', the variety and number of people who accepted Acharya's invitation was remarkable. The frail looking man wearing old sneakers, pajamas and a long sweater is Shail Upadhyaya, who is as close as a Nepali has come to being a celebrity in New York. The retired UN official has long been a resident of New York and is famous here for his colourful and eccentric fashion designing. At New York Fashion Week earlier this month, he was at ease, always in the front row, mingling with top designers and models, and speaking to journalists curious about his polka dot suits.



NEPALI PAN
Kashish D Shrestha

Here, though, he's just an elderly retired Nepali diplomat. "I want to listen to what these guys are saying, I heard them mention Girija Prasad Koirala," he says, pointing towards a heated debate between political activist Paramendra and another pro-democracy Nepali. (The prime minister is one of Shail ji's less favourite uncles.)

Paramendra, the full-time blogger behind the DFN site, is no longer lauded for his pro-democracy work, but taken to task for his recent radical posts on the madhesi issue. "I rang him the very next morning and told him to take those words back. Who the hell is he to say that and divide the country?", fumes devoted NC cadre Anand Bista of the Nepalese Democratic Youth Council in the US. I find out later that the conversation has taken a nasty turn, with Paramendra being told that had the discussion taken place in Nepal rather than New York, his teeth would not be so firmly in his mouth any more.

No conversation gets very far here. Kamal Pande, another long-time resident, interrupts to ask us whether we didn't think that a recent program to make Nepal a Hindu country again had been excellent. "The Indian guest speakers were great," he adds, "they really want to help us." A man dressed like a minister latches right on and says he'd give up his life for the cause. Knowing how comfortable Sher Gadtaula is, it seems unlikely.

The owner of Yak Restaurant, Sonam Lama, will tell anyone who will listen that, contrary to reports on fursad.com, he is not a drug smuggler or a trafficker of people or involved in the Mongolian Heart illegal immigration controversy. Meanwhile, a young man from Queens whose face bears a startling resemblance to those of his uncles, King Gyanendra and the late King Birendra, looks out of place and strained. On the other hand, the two Maoists who apparently have shown up seem perfectly comfortable.

The end of the gathering is rather more predictable than the conversations earlier, no teeth broken and no slogans chanted. Everyone agrees on some things: that the chicken chilli, choila, alu dum, momo achar were overly spicy. And that we all deserve more than three momos apiece. ●

Nepal and climate change

DHAKA - While rich governments make slow progress on climate change, poor people in the countries most at risk are providing rare good-news stories by taking charge of their destinies and preparing for the impacts ahead.

Their experiences will be shared on 24-28 February in Bangladesh at an international meeting where policymakers will be urged to do more to support communities' efforts to adapt to climate change. The meeting includes presentations about Nepal, including working with flood-prone communities, a Nepali case study on how a local community has adapted to climate change, and increased disaster risk from climate variability.

About 100 experts from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN's FAO and WHO, and participants from Africa and Asia will attend the event.

"Communities in developing countries are already feeling the effects of climate change and are taking steps in response, based in part on their traditional knowledge of the environment," says Saleemul Huq, head of the climate change group at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). "They are in a race against time to understand their vulnerabilities to climate change and to adapt to its impacts."

The meeting in Dhaka will also include presentations on communities adapting to heat waves in mountainous areas of India, floods in Bangladesh and Nepal, drought in Kenya, soil salinity in Sri Lanka.

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Tv or not tv

Finnish media trainers remember the early days of television in Nepal



KUNDA DIXIT

When Erkki and Leena Vihtonen first came to Nepal in 1985, Kathmandu was still unpolluted and one could bicycle around everywhere.

Nepal didn't have television so people weren't yet exposed to the global consumerist culture. Homes in Kathmandu could receive Indian tv channels through special antennas, but most just watched videos at home.

The Vihtonens were sent to Nepal by the Worldview International Foundation (WIF) to help start regular television transmissions in Nepal. When they came here in November 1985, they were told they had to get NTV on the air on King Birendra's birthday in December 1986.

But the royal astrologers decided 1986 was inauspicious so the tv project was brought forward by a year, which meant Erkki and Leena had just a month to do it. "It was a very tight deadline, but we decided to do it anyhow," says Leena, who is in Kathmandu with her husband for the 21st anniversary of their stint.

Their first training course started immediately, and Nepali producers and journalists went on air a month later on 29 December, 1985, the birthday of the late king. At that time there was no professional infrastructure available, all the video editing was done from one VHS deck to another.

"Despite the primitive equipment, what encouraged us most was the talent and motivation of our Nepali trainees," recalls Erkki, "without that the whole effort would have collapsed."

In fact, an evaluation team from the Asian Broadcasting

Union advised the Vihtonens to abandon the training because television for Nepal was unrealistic. After the initial broadcasts, the operations moved to a new studio on the top floor of Singha Darbar in February 1986, and part of the operations still remain there.

The Vihtonens tried from the beginning to make NTV into a true public service broadcaster with credible and independent news and a mix of development information, education, and entertainment. But these were the years of the Panchayat, so news and current affairs soon became the propaganda tool of the government. Ironically, the restoration of democracy didn't change things much, because elected governments did the same thing.

"Technically, nothing prevented NTV from being the best television news in Asia," says Erkki, "but the journalists were always under pressure to do ministerial appearances." The



Vihtonens' students couldn't really use their journalism training, as they were assigned news depending on what the government of the day felt it was important to highlight. Reporters were never encouraged to think, research, or show initiative.

We asked Leena if, looking back now, she thinks their plans were optimistic or naïve. "Optimistic, yes, in the sense that there really was a possibility to do it in a different way," she replied.

Despite the frustration, the husband and wife from Finland keep coming back to Nepal. They have good friends here among the 200 tv professionals and journalists they have trained. Among them are people who are now leaders in Nepali broadcasting: Prakash Jung Karki of NTV2, Kiran Chitrakar in NTV, Robin Sharma at Radio Nepal, Rama Singh NTV News, freelance documentary maker Dhruba Basnet, Laxman Upreti with the Japanese channel NHK, noted video editor Rabindra Pandey and many others (*see pic*).

"We were 15 of us and they really motivated us and excited us about the medium," recalls Robin Sharma, who is now deputy executive director of Radio Nepal, "Erkki and Leena said I had a great future in television but I landed up in radio instead."

The Vihtonens are also responsible for the familiarity many Nepalis have with the cult Finnish cartoon series, the Moomins. Initially, when the couple convinced Nepal Television to dub and run the show, many were sceptical that baloony cartoon characters from a northern European country would have relevance to Nepal, but the series has been a hit.

"It think the reason is that the Moomins are a close-knit but extended family: mother, father, children, relatives and many kinds of friends, and there are mountains in the neighbourhood," explains Leena. The family are green (in principle, not colour) and kind—there's no shooting anyone—and there is always a gripping plot.

Looking at the development in media in the last 21 years, what suggestions do the Vihtonens have for the new interim government in Nepal? "Politicians would understand that the public media prospers best under democratic control," says Erkki with conviction, "NTV and Radio Nepal should be under parliament, not under the government."

The need is the same as it was back in 1985, say the Finnish trainers: a multi-partisan parliamentary council should govern broadcasting, but never meddle in its day-to-day affairs. ●

Baby rhinos in danger

De-horning may be the only way to save rhinos

TIRTHA BAHADUR SHRESTHA

The sun was about to set on a recent evening at the Trisen Community Forest in the buffer zone outside Chitwan National Park as the pregnant rhino wallowed lazily in the mud at a watering hole.

Suddenly, a shot rang out. The bullet pierced the rhino's armoured skin. She writhed in the reddening mud and even though she was mortally wounded, went into labour. The calf was half out (*see pic*) as the mother died.

Villagers, soldiers, and national park employees arrived three hours later. There was nothing they could do, only add another rhino to the grim count of the number of these magnificent endangered beasts that have been killed.

After being hunted nearly into extinction in the first half of the last century, the number of rhinos in Chitwan in a census seven years ago had risen from less than 100 to 612. But since then 150 rhinos have been killed by poachers in Chitwan alone. Another 72 have been killed for their horns in Bardia National Park.



JANAK ARYAL

A few weeks after the Trisen incident, another rhino with a bullet wound was spotted at the Panchakanya Community Forest in Chitwan. It was obviously in great pain as it splashed across rivulets and into fields, trying to flee a rescue team from the park. Having lost much blood, and too tired to run anymore, the animal lay down on its side and died. Five days previously, a village in Nawalparasi was overwhelmed by the foul smell from the rotting carcass of a rhino electrocuted to death. Fourteen rhinos have died in Chitwan between July and December, most of which are believed to have been killed by poachers.

The Maoist insurgency and scaling back of army protection in the tarai national parks have contributed to an increase in poaching in the last six years, though most rhinos have been killed in the buffer zone, which is not patrolled by the military.

The ceasefire and restoration of democracy have actually been worse for the animals. When an elderly hunter died after arrest last year, several members of a local anti-poaching unit were accused of killing him and imprisoned, which affected the morale of national park staff. Then, the Home Ministry under the new seven-party government released 15 people detained for poaching, among them experienced hunters. The number of rhino killings suddenly shot up. The ministry released 50 more accused of poaching late last year. The media headlined these events, sparking uproar in the restored parliament, which then formed a House committee in December to probe the matter.

Despite this, the newly-appointed warden of the Chitwan National Park used his discretionary authority to recently deliver an unusually lenient verdict on poaching kingpin Pemba 'Yakche' Lama and 16 of his accomplices. This group is likely to be released soon. Since the restoration of democracy, park staff who helped to put Yakche behind bars are themselves behind bars while this ringleader of rhino horn smugglers is about to walk free.

Rising affluence in the Gulf region, where rhino horns are used for dagger hilts, and in East Asia, where powdered rhino horn is believed to have aphrodisiac properties are the pull factors for smugglers. Poverty, corruption, and lax security in Nepal are additional factors. These can only be resolved in the long-term—by which time all our rhinos will have disappeared. What can we do right now?

Sawing off the horns of rhinos—removing the motivation for killing them—has been successfully tried in Namibia and Zimbabwe. De-horning Nepali rhinos maybe the only way to save them. ●

Tirtha Bahadur Shrestha, PhD, is a noted Nepali naturalist.



Name: Beauty
Age: Five to six years
This fluffy little mongrel was rescued from in front of the Veterinary Hospital at Teku. Due to a long-running skin problem, Beauty had to stay on at the centre for a long time—almost ten months. She is now all well and her skin is almost back to normal, but she has a bit of a throat problem that makes her bark sound more like a whine. Beauty is old and not very energetic, but she loves life and gets along very well with everyone. Frolicking with younger dogs is one of her favourite pastimes, and she is great friends with the centre’s only resident kitten.

Clever little dog seeks loving owner

Some of the cutest dogs in Kathmandu are in a shelter



Name: Sita
Age: Three to four years
Sita is quiet, content to laze about in the sun and nap during the day. However, she becomes increasingly vigilant as the evening turns to night and acts as a perfect guard dog. Although originally brought in for sterilisation, Sita she was kept at the centre for treatment of a gangrenous tail. It was a difficult process—she needed two operations and took three months to heal. Sita, who has been at the centre for three years, is very friendly, but she does notice the arrival of strangers and lets out a warning bark. Sita is a beautiful mixed Lab.

PRANAYA SJB RANA

The true owners of Kathmandu’s streets are not the motorcyclists or suvs. It’s our dogs. There are approximately 30,000 strays in Kathmandu, and this number is rapidly increasing. Street dogs are usually abandoned mongrels, often ill and abused. They are afflicted with rabies, open wounds festering with maggots, skin problems, and infectious diseases. These dogs roam the streets, foraging for food among garbage heaps, and often congregating near butcher shops, only to be kicked or cut by the owners.

The Kathmandu Animal Treatment (KAT) Centre, a non-profit organisation, sterilises street dogs in an effort to reduce their numbers. It also treats the dogs for illnesses before releasing them back. Sometimes, though, the dogs have more serious problems such as severe mange, and the centre keeps them on for more than the standard couple of weeks. If they stay for long enough, these dogs often get habituated to living with people and can no longer be released back onto the streets. That’s when KAT puts them up for adoption.

Khageshwaar Sharma, the manager of the centre, tells us a recent story about Charlie, who was being treated for severe mange. Charlie was adopted by a taxi-driver from

Budanilkantha who took a great fancy to him, and the former stray is today a healthy, happy little dog.

If you’re looking for a dog, adoption from the centre is a great alternative to the usual high-maintenance, snooty, pure-bred options. Our featured dogs may not be purebreeds, but they can stand up to a lot. And they’re a lot cuter too.

All the dogs listed here live at the KAT centre in Budanilkantha. You’re rewarded for being an adoptive dog-owner—KAT will provide free medical care for a year. Prospective owners should note that all dogs are sterilised, have been immunised against rabies, and are female.



Name: Seti
Age: One to one-and-a-half years
Seti is a cross between a Japanese Spitz and a mongrel, and one of the most adorable dogs at the centre. KAT staff say that Seti seems to have been abandoned by her owners. When she first came in five months ago, she was suffering terribly from mange and eczema, and barely had any fur. Today, she’s fully recovered and looks startlingly like a snowball. Just as energetic as Nova, Seti loves other dogs and likes nothing more than to play with them. Seti is often seen teasing the older dogs and nipping at their ankles in an effort to make them chase after her.



Name: Nova
Age: Five months
Nova, a little dynamo, has been at the centre for a month-and-a-half. Currently the only puppy at the centre, Nova is an energetic little dog, always up for a tussle with a newcomer, whether human or canine. Despite her energy, she willingly obeys simple commands, is well-behaved, and friendly. Her former master, an Australian, wanted her to go to a foreign family, but the centre will give her to anyone who can take good, proper care of her. Nova has yet to be spayed, and will only be up for adoption in a week or so, after she has been sterilised.



Name: Blackie
Age: Two to two-and-a-half years
Blackie is an enigma. With a scar down her side that will never grow fur, Blackie looks like a battle-weary streetfighter. BC Jha, a veterinarian at KAT, speculates that the scar could be the result of Blackie having been attacked with boiling water. When she was rescued from Thamel, Blackie had no fur at all, and it took almost a year-and-a-half for her to recover completely at the centre. Blackie is an active dog, and very alert and watchful, though sometimes temperamental.

KAT CENTRE ALL PICS: SWORUP RANJIT

New city, old joys

A new book of walks around the Valley is the perfect antidote to Kathmandu ennui

He stands alone, seemingly neglected at first glance, if you notice him at all. The traffic and people bustle past, the small shops conduct their business as usual. A small, crude, tiled concrete arch gives him some protection from the elements and human encroachment. The knee-high

BOOK REVIEW
Jerry Meyer

Buddha has stood there for 2,000 years. ‘There’ is now the Bangemudha Square, just in from the lively Asan Tol. Who quarried the stone, who carved him, who put him there, what has he witnessed? These are not questions we normally stop to consider as we rush about our daily lives. But it is exactly the kind of pause John Child encourages in his new book, *Streets of Silver, Streets of Gold: Ten Easy Walks among the Gods, Legends and Bazaars of Kathmandu*, published by Himal Books.

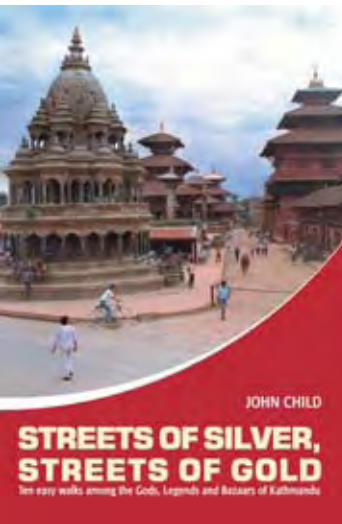
The book’s title might more appropriately have been ‘of Kathmandu Valley’, since the author takes you on walks that range from Swoyambhunath to Bhaktapur, in addition to the bylanes of Kathmandu itself. This excellent guide is written by a person who clearly loves the Valley and knows a lot about its history, its people, and its places. His passion is infectious.

The walks are not long gruelling treks, but strolls through the past alive in the present, through the spiritual manifest in the everyday. Child alternates between the minutiae in front of you and more thorough informational digressions. It is a good balance. He does not overburden the reader with information, but does a commendable job of giving the average person an initial taste, or perhaps a reminder, of the political and cultural history of the Valley and of the different but intertwined religious practices.

But the walks are not just tours of the curious and the notable, though there is plenty of that—an exquisite Shiva and Parvati in the sensual Uma

Maheshwar posture is next to Newa Chen. The largest lingam in the country is on the banks of the Bagmati. The first house in the Valley other than the palaces to have glass windows is near Kel Tol, and there is a 6th century stele granting tax relief to local villagers behind the Jaisidewal temple.

After a few outings, you begin to get a sense of the larger mosaic that is the Valley. The contours of the previous eras emerge through the concrete, asphalt, and exhaust. It is not an endless sweep of houses and shops in front of you, but open land. You can imagine the space that actually existed between places that now seem to differ only in name. The author untangles the layers of history from modern sprawl and brings your attention to the faint outlines of the old Rana estates, the original settlements, or the



Streets of Silver, Streets of Gold
by John Child
Himal Books, 2006, pp. xiv+284
Rs 690
ISBN 99933 43 76 5

intermediate kingdoms. This history puts the present political and social turbulence in a different perspective—intrigue, greed, and ego are not new among the leaders of Nepal.

Child flips your view so it is not the traffic-choked street you notice, but the calm quiet of the courtyard bahals that lie just out of sight through narrow passages. You look through the utility wires at not just another stupa, but a reminder of the circularity of time. Your vision does not glaze over an

anonymous idol, but focuses on the Bodhisattva of compassion, worn smooth by millions of hands of worshippers. Kathmandu and its environs can be overwhelming, especially to a visitor, but this guide teases meaning out of the apparent chaos. It gives you points of reference, both physical and intellectual.

I did some of these walks alone, some with local Newari friends, and some with tourists on a short stay. For me the content added texture and detail to a place I have known intermittently over the years—there is always something more to learn here. My local friends here delighted in walking lanes they would not normally use. While much of the religion and culture was innate to them, they now looked at details they had never considered, like the scars of Shams-ud-din Ilyas’s invasion or the sadness of a forgotten hiti, its water choked. For the tourists, the walks help give a little clarity to what can appear like confusion to the western mind.

There aren’t many weaknesses in the book, though it would have been nice to have a glossary and an index. Directions are sometimes a bit difficult to follow, but this is largely due to a landmark, like a sign or a business, having changed. There are a few minor errors; for instance, it is the delightful Café Mitra in the old house in Thamel. But these are insignificant when considered in the context of the great effort on John Child’s part. Is there a ‘best walk’? Well, Bhaktapur is a gem and not somewhere most of us routinely visit, which adds to its charm. If you are a tourist with limited time, definitely do Pashupatinath and a walk in each of the three cities so you get a sense of the real differences in their characters. If you are a resident, do them all. Start close to home, somewhere that has faded into the background of your everyday routine. You will be surprised with what you did not know, or have forgotten, about the space around you. ●

Jerry Meyer is a former American diplomat who served in Kathmandu in the 1980's. He is currently working on a book.



Girls of even worse character

The Chelis are back with a new Declaration

CHARITRAHEEN CHELIS

We, a hardline faction of the underground group, Charitraheen Chelis (Girls of Bad Character), have broken off and declared Nepali women autonomous.

Our breakaway faction, Jhan Charitraheen Cheli (Girls of Even Worse Character), roundly denounces the members of the original Charitraheen Cheli (See #171, #240.)

“The chelis of our mau-samuha (mother-group) did not behave badly enough,” says one member of the Jhan Charitraheen Cheli. “Most are happily married, with well brought-up children. Two chelis have a steady boyfriend—meaning, one each, not one in common. And the others don’t like men, or even women,” she complains. “For example, after the 2005 coup they called for a sex boycott till the reinstatement of democracy—but they forgot to call off the boycott after April 2006! We take this as a grave conspiracy,” she adds, explaining, “that is why we had to break away and start our own underground group.”

The first meeting of the Jhan Charitraheen Cheli took place mid-February in a seedy bar in Kathmandu. Our first agenda was to revisit the 40-points declaration made by our mau-samuha on 4 March, 2005, through their official mouthpieces, *Nepali Times* and *Kantipur*, both edited by dishy men. We discovered that the 40 points are pretty damn good, especially Point No. 1, which asserts our right to take up agendas solely on the basis of our wishes and needs.

After re-passing our mau-samuha’s 40 points’ declaration, we progressed on to other, more timely matters. Our twelve-point declaration is as follows:

1. Make love, not regression! We declare that the sex boycott is comprehensively over retroactive to April 2006, but only for those of the loktantrik persuasion.
2. Vision 50/50: No penises in parliament! We demand that until 50 percent of seats in parliament are reserved for women of diverse backgrounds, women of diverse backgrounds should occupy all 100 percent of parliamentary seats.
3. Naturalise foreign jwais! One of our brave chelis has volunteered to sacrifice her independence (temporarily) to marry a foreign man, only to seek full naturalisation and citizenship rights for bideshi jwais (foreign sons-in-law). Qualified candidates, please apply with CV, photo, and statistics.
4. 40 is better than 33! We applaud the CPN-M for filling 40 percent of their parliamentary seats with women. But why not 50 percent?
5. And what’s with the grey coats? We’ve noticed Maoist women open their mouths only to repeat the same carefully rehearsed party-approved lines. Ladies, we invite you to speak your minds freely. Unleash yourself from all uniformity. Start by getting rid of those awful coats.
6. Whipping is for brutes! Women of all political parties, defy all whips placed by your party denying women’s rights.
7. New leadership for the New Nepal! We nominate Ram Kumari Jhankri as the first President of Nepal.
8. Turn the National Women’s Commission into a constitutional body! But first, fill 50 percent of the positions in the Constitutional Council (which forms all constitutional bodies) with women. If not, fill all 100 percent of the positions with women.
9. Don’t forget what makes the world go around! We unanimously declare the sexiest man in Nepal to be Sunil Babu Pant of the Blue Diamond Society.
10. Donors, back off! All your projects and networks and alliances and seminars are keeping our best women too busy to lead the women’s movement. Their country needs them more than your country reports do.
11. Give it up! We demand that all our demands be met by 8 March, International Women’s Day, or else we will declare a nationwide chulo-ra-cholo banda. That’s right, boys: no food, and no sex for you. Nada. Zip.
12. Following the example of other successful rebel groups before us, we are fully prepared to come aboveground to take part in negotiations, should the government invite us for talks.

Jaya Nari!
The Jhan Charitraheen Chelis



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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Public art show** by BFA students from Lalitkala Campus, Ratnapark to Ason area, 22 February from 10AM-5PM. 9851050299
- ❖ **In Search of Zhang-Zhung** a presentation of images by Thomas Kelly and Carroll Dunham, 23 February, 6.30 PM at the Indigo Gallery, Rs 500 for entrance.
- ❖ **Sound of Love** an exhibition of paintings by Ragini Upadhaya-Grela at The Art Shop, Durbarmarg, every weekend until 25 February, 11AM-6PM. 9841444848
- ❖ **Ek Raat** an exhibition of paintings based on BP Koirala's short story, at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, 24 February-11 Marc, 11AM-6PM. 4218048

EVENTS

- ❖ **Ek Raat** a play based on BP Koirala's short story, performed by Sarwanam, 23 February at 5.30 PM at the Birendra International Convention Centre.
- ❖ **Yuva Chalfal Shrinkhala** on the action plan for constituent assembly and youth participation, 23 February from 3-5PM at Martin Chautari. 4107599
- ❖ **Vipassana** talk program and interaction, 24 February, 1PM at Mind Body Library, Tripureswor 4279712
- ❖ **Salsa try-out classes** at the Salsa Dance Academy, Bhat Bhateni, on 24 February, beginner classes start on 25 February. 4422019
- ❖ **Spirited Away** a film by Hayao Miyazaki presented by the Kathmandu Film Society, 25 February at 5.30 PM at the Nepal Tourism Board.
- ❖ **New methods to learn a foreign language** talk program and interaction, 26 February at 1PM at Mind Body Library, Tripureswor. 4279712
- ❖ **Mangalbare Discussion Series** on the development of the internet at Martin Chautari, 27 February at 5PM. 4238050
- ❖ **Film@Chautari** show and discussion of Rakesh Sharma's *Final Solution* at Martin Chautari, 1 March at 3PM. 4240243
- ❖ **Building a Bridge over the Cultural Gap** CSGN monthly lecture on 2 March, 9.30 AM at the Shanker Hotel.
- ❖ **Civic Concerns** an effort to assess youth concerns and share views and ideas, 10 March, 10.30 AM-5.30 PM at PIC, Heritage Plaza, Rs 100 for registration. 4107599
- ❖ **Toastmasters** communication and leadership program, every Wednesday 6PM at the Institute of Environmental Management, Tripureswor.



MUSIC

- ❖ **Fusion and classical Nepali music** by Rudra live at the Courtyard, Le Meridien, Gokarna every Friday, 7PM onwards, Rs 800. 4451212
- ❖ **Open Mic Night** at ViaVia Café, Thamel every Friday, 8PM
- ❖ **Gaine (Gandarphas)** perform at every lunch and dinner, Club Himalaya Nagarkot. 6680080

DINING

- ❖ **Walk and lunch** every Saturday until 31 March at the Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9841371927
- ❖ **Light nouvelle snacks** and elaborate cordon bleu meals at La'Soon, Pulchok, behind the Egyptian embassy. 5537166
- ❖ **Continental cuisine** and wine by the fire place at Kilroy's, Thamel. 4250440.
- ❖ **Shop Talk** Drink and dine at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Radisson Hotel.
- ❖ **Café Bahal** at Kathmandu Guest House. 4700632.
- ❖ **Smorgasbord** lunch at Park Village Resort, every Saturday. 4375280
- ❖ **Gyakok** lunch and dinner at the Shambala Garden Café, Hotel Shangri-La, minimum of four guests at Rs 450 per person, two hours order in advance.
- ❖ **Retro brunch barbecue** with the Crossfire Band at The Poolside, Le Meridien, Gokarna from 12 noon-4PM, Rs 1,000 inclusive of swimming and complimentary drink. 4451212
- ❖ **International Brunch** weekends 11AM-3PM for Rs 499 per person (Rs 299 for children) at Hotel Himalaya. 5523900
- ❖ **Te** Tibetan delicacies at Nepal's first noodle bar, Bluebird Mall Food Court.
- ❖ **Calcutta's rolls, biryani, kebabs** Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735
- ❖ **Japanese Food** at the Coffee Shop at Hotel Shangri-la, 12-3PM, Rs 499 per person. 4412999
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519
- ❖ **Some Like It Hot** live music from Side B every Friday at Fusion—the bar at Dwarika's. Rs 799 includes BBQ dinner. 4479488
- ❖ **Soul Warmers** Inner Groove live at Fusion—the bar at Dwarika's, Rs 599 includes a Fusion platter and cocktail. 4479488
- ❖ **Woodfired Pizzas** at Roadhouse Cafe, Thamel, 4262768, Bhatbhateni 4426587 and Pulchok. 5521755
- ❖ **AKA Pizza** at Moksh, delivery available. 5526212
- ❖ **Momo and Sekuwa Revolution** Saturdays at the Tea House Inn, Nagarkot. 6680048
- ❖ **Cocktails and Mocktails** Daily happy hour, 4-7PM at Kathmandu Revolving Restaurant, Ratna Plaza, New Road

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Weekend package** at Le Meridien Kathmandu Gokarna Forest Golf Resort and Spa, two nights three days at Rs 8,888 and one night two days at Rs 4,444. 4451212
- ❖ **Sun and Fun** Three days and two nights package at Shangri-La Village Resort, Pokhara, Rs 7,499. 4412999

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YAK YETI YAK

by MIKU

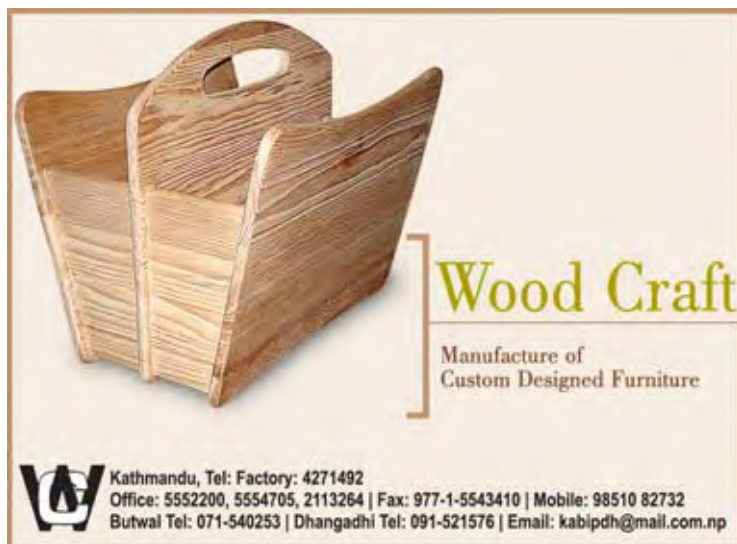


Quest Entertainment



Bridge to Terabithia tells the magical story of fifth grader Jesse Aarons whose hopes of becoming the fastest runner in his class are dashed when new girl Leslie Burke outruns everybody, including him. However, Jesse and Leslie soon begin a friendship, and create a magical kingdom in the forest, that can only be accessed by swinging over a stream. Here, the two of them reign together as king and queen.

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NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



Last week's historic snowfall and showers broke several records of winter precipitation. In an aerial survey over the middle hills of central and eastern Nepal, we saw people celebrating the first snowfall in their lives. The Valley received 69 mm of rains this month, which is more than four times its usual quota for February. Thursday morning's satellite picture shows the high Himalaya blocking clouds from a northwesterly front that comes from persistent low pressure over the Tibetan plateau. Due to the consequent layers of fragmented clouds, the midhills will see intervals of sunny weather over the next few days. Light snowfall is possible in the western Himalaya as a fresh westerly front pushes clouds into the jet stream. Spillover across the Himalaya will mean clouds over Kathmandu Valley. Temperatures won't rise much, and the mornings will be cold due to local clouds. Expect windy afternoons and some drizzles with sunny intervals over the weekend.

KATHMANDU VALLEY



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व्यक्ति र समाज अन्ततोगत्वा
पतन भएर जान्छन् ।
त्यसैले राष्ट्रिय जीवनका
हरेक आयामहरूमा उदाहर
णीय अनुशासन र नैतिकता
कायम गर्नुपर्छ ।
र त्यसको सुरुआत
आफैवाट गरौं ।

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KIRAN PANDAY

NO STINKING WAY: Protestors walk past the rubbish heap in Bhrikuti Mandap, raising slogans against King Gyanendra after his Democracy Day address on Monday.



KIRAN PANDAY

NEITHER HERE NOR THERE: Fifty urban refugees from seven countries including Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan sit-in in front of Singha Darbar demanding exit permits so they can leave Nepal for a third country. Some have been here for as long as three years.



KIRAN PANDAY

GAOLI: Supporters of the Mahendra Police Club cheer on Wednesday as their team equalises with Manang Marsyangdi in a Shahid Smarak San Miguel A Division League match that ended in a 2-2 draw.


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WEATHER

WEATHER

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Politics of garbage

Pretty soon this is going to be known as the land of shortages: gas, diesel, water, electricity, and brains. The only thing we have an abundance of seems to be filth.

The garbage piling up on the streets is just the outward manifestation of the rot within. The Ministry of Local Development gives Okharpauwa Rs 8 million for letting their idyllic village be Kathmandu's dumping ground. Trouble is that Nuwakote Maoists aren't in the committee that controls the money and they want a part of the action. So they forced the closure of the landfill site. Typical ass-first thinking, if I may say so myself. Extrapolate this to the national level for a **preview** of things to come once the comrades are in the interim government.



The mother of all tussles has begun over the new government. The madhesis and Maoists are snarling at each other like hyenas over the juicy ministries that are up for grabs. The Ass has learnt from reliable moles that the Maoists are gunning (as it were) for one of the deputy prime ministerships but Girija Koirala is **dead** (pardon the pun) against it since this would put the Maoists a heartbeat away from the most powerful position that Nepal has ever known. Although with Amik and Sitaula doing their every bidding, and getting UNMIN's wink at not storing 2,000 assault rifles in containers, why would the comrades want more portfolios anyway?

Koirala is under pressure to hand over the deputy prime ministership to a madhesi to placate the tarai. If that happens, the Maoists are sure to want either home or defence. They are also insisting that Comrade Parbati get education to push her version of reading, riting and rithmetic: 'A is for ambush, B is for bomb' and 'three grenades plus two grenades is equal to five grenades' plus a detailed curriculum vitae of the Great Awe-inspiring Leader.



Just goes to show that the leaders of the eight parties are now behaving like the Dictator they replaced. With loadshedding at six hours a day they decreed that government buildings throughout the country illuminate themselves for three straight nights on the occasion of Loktantra Day. Wonder which hapless districts had to spend three nights in darkness so that Kathmandu's edifices could celebrate the anniversary of the day we overthrew the **Rana yoke**.



Then Comrade Prachanda Pratapi Bhupati autographs a flag that is being taken to the top of Mt Everest by Nepali climbers. Nothing wrong with that, right? Wrong. The flag wasn't the national flag but the CPN-M banner and the Sherpas are climbing from the Maoist side of the mountain. Greetings from the land where Mao is alive and kicking to the land where Mao rests in a **mausoleum**.



So Sujata tried to get an appointment with Badamaharani Sonia in New Delhi to press home her point that the Reds are taking over Nepal and to get blessings for giving Sitaula the boot. Unfortunately Sonia was too busy showing around Romano Prodi from her **maiti** and couldn't squeeze her in. So the First Daughter had to fall back on Plan B and meet Sheila Dixit instead. Meanwhile Kingji has sent the Kamakshya Baba from Gauhati as his latest emissary to Delhi, knowing that the godman is also guru of several cabinet ministers there.



The Ass took a few puffs from the chillums of the Bhole Babas at Pashupati on Friday and was still badly **hung over** the next morning which is why he did a double take when he saw the headline in the papers: 'King Gyanendra Gets Stoned On Shivaratri'. Wot?



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