

## King Gyanendra defends Nepal monarchy

by UPI

KATHMANDU, Nepal -- Nepalese King Gyanendra, facing an end to the 238-year-old monarchy in two months, said the decision should've been left to the people of the Himalayan nation. Speaking to a group of Japanese journalists at his palace in Kathmandu, the descendant of the Shah dynasty, who has seen virtually all of his royal powers stripped away in recent months, said the decision to end the monarchy was taken not by the people but by lawmakers in the interim government. "(The decision) doesn't reflect the majority view of the people. This isn't democracy," Gyanendra was quoted as saying in the interview published Thursday by the Daily Yomiuri Shimbun. After months of public unrest in 2006 and a decade-long rebellion by Maoists against the autocratic rule of Gyanendra, the seven-party interim government in December decided to abolish the monarchy following the April 10 elections to pick a constituent assembly. Gyanendra, who hasn't been seen in public much in recent months, said it is only the people who have the right to choose the fate of the monarchy. "A majority of the people find great meaning in the institution of the monarchy. In all clouds, there is a silver lining. Let us hope," he said. Gyanendra ascended the throne in 2001 after his older brother, King Birendra, and eight other royal family members were gunned down by Birendra's son and heir.

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