Fluid situation

The limbo will last a little longer and create more complications

ANALYSIS by SHIVA GAUNLE

Everywhere you look, there is uncertainty. There is no consensus on any major political issue. The will to find political solutions to problems seems to be at an all-time low. The follow-up to Girija Prasad Koirala’s visit to Biratnagar was lackadaisical. Yesterday the prime minister met with UML leaderMadhav Kumar Nepal, and the two are said to have agreed tentatively on dates for the election to the constituent assembly. What those dates are is not yet certain. The longer a decision on dates for the election is delayed, the more difficult the November scenario looks.

In any case, agreement on poll dates must come after consultation with the other six parties too, and there is no sign of the much-discussed eight-party meeting either. The coming week could see the interim parliament sitting again, and an all-party government meeting, but issues such as minority representation, ensuring a reliable petrol supply, and reopening closed schools appear to be on the back burner.

The vacuum in decision-making is exacerbating the already fragile law and order situation. The YCL continues its intimidation, ransacking district administration offices. The violence between the Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha’s Goit and Jwala Singh factions claimed its fourth life this week yesterday. In the cantonments, the Maoist fighters are getting restless, while the verification process remains stalled. Madhesi, janajati, adibasi, and tharu groups across the country are stepping up demands for representation. New groups, some of them militant, are mushrooming, further destabilising the state.

The fuel crisis will not go away until the subsidy-supported price differential is removed. Until then, the erratic supplies could prove a flashpoint for more street action. The murder of a World Bank engineer yesterday by the JTMM (Goit) is a serious setback to the energetic resumption of development projects. Schools remain closed because the government could not implement an agreement its immediate predecessor signed with protesting teachers.

The bargaining between and within parties looks set to continue, as does the inability to find political, rather than bureaucratic or law and order solutions to the myriad issues being thrown up. The longer the country remains in limbo, the more political, ethnic, social, and economic problems rear their heads. The process to get back on track is becoming even more difficult and complicated.

Editorial

Same old Nepal

Nation

Talk shop to political party

 RUNNING DRY: Many Kathmandu residents are already facing a crippling water shortage.
Biratnagar’s bookkeepers

This mercantile town is a hotbed of nation-defining politics

Biratnagar, settled in a glade less than 75 years ago, is still beautiful to look. Unlike old tarai towns such as Janakpur, Birganj, or Nepalganj, which grew organically from a settlement here is predictable.

Neat little plots by roads running at right angles to each other, odd-shaped, bungalows, orderly street corners, no children playing football in the street, not even on a Saturday evening. There are no abrupt lifts, no blind alleys, and no pots booming water for taking a leisure stroll. The dullness of the cityscape, however, is made up for by the rumour-mongering around Traffic Chowk.

Local jornalists eagerly await every homcoming of Girija Prasad Koirala. These are their chances to scoop on political headlines, and Koirala often obilges with pithy soundbites on issues of national importence.

In this town, speculation was that Koirala would deliver the final blow to the monarch and effectively steal the Maoists’ thunder.

Instead, he delivered a damp squib, saying that it was not as easy to overthrow a government as many of the lessor politicians believe in the coalition that he heads. Nobody knows the standing of the monarchy better than the man who has been fighting it for over six decades.

He knows that for a declaration of a republic to be significant, the conditions that support the king have to change. The April Uprising has severely weakened the five M’s that have always supported the monarchy—the military, the monks, the merchants, the mendicants, and the mediators. Some of these traditional forces now support some form of democracy for tactical reasons, but it will take a lot more for them to turn republican.

The merchants continue to be the most committed supporters of monarchy in whatever form. Nepal’s merchants have been cozy with the rulers since Jung Bahadur. Chandra Shumsher reified that relationship, which benefited many who were travelling to Nepal. The CPN-M is still on its list of terrorist organisations. And that’s the legal basis for Washington to funnel money to the king’s allies again.

I advocated against US aid to the pahadi-military and otherwise—because it was encouraged by the Nepali people’s determination to shape their own future. Now again, there are serious issues to address. The Nepali people must come up with a plan B: make the monarchy weaker still.

There have never been about their‘commitment’ to the people as much as now. In the countryside, they have replaced the semi-feudal system with yet another system of fear and control, but this time, they should at least be loyal to their own supporters, and stop using the inhuman conditions in the camps as a bargaining chip.

Daniela Ponce

Got Plan B? Theonus is on all Nepal's to steer the country back on track

For three years, since first visiting Nepal in 2003, I worked to stop US aid to Morocco. With the Nepali diaspora, we campaigned in Washington DC on human rights, started a website, lobbied the US Congress, organised seminars, worked with the media, and...
LETTERS

ROCKY ROAD
Who would have thought it would come to this: that one of the most respected papers in the country would call Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'a moderate', and that we'd not split our sides or hurt ('Peace train', #348). As distasteful as it is to admit this, you are right. I might extend that assessment to add that he's a middle-of-the-road because he's as greedy as the rest of them. The fellow-passengers analogy is a good one; after all, not all communists in states that were left-unfriendly identified themselves as fellow travellers. In this case, we are all journeying together all right, on what appears to be a road to nowhere.

Sanjeev, email

I was impressed by CK Lal's well-researched 'Rocky road to republic' (State of the state, #348). The article comes at a time when Girija Prasad Koirala has presented us with a stark choice between two dictatorships—one under the rule of his own Nepal Congress, with the eight parties in low, and the other, reverting back to the previous model, which was shunned by the eight parties for being exclusionary.

Do the Nepali people really have no choice other than this chronic republicanism? Most of us really just want to chug along the middle democratic path. Lambasting the king alone won't help GPK this time, although my sympathies are with him, since the UML's Bharat Mohan Adhikari is threatening to pull out from the interim parliament—a screwup that the government, if things do not start taking shape as conceived during Jana Andolan II.

The honeymoon phase is now over, party-wafflings. The people want to see the democratic baby kicking and well, and bawling out a new mantra for political nirvana. And this is not as simple as the rebel's republican nuke which won't succeed in any case, given our geopolitical limitations and pressure from the international community, which wants to see a peaceful democratic dispensation in Nepal, ceremonial monarchy and all.

Surya B Prasai, email

Right now, the Nepali people blame the prime minister for protecting the king. After all, so many lives were lost with the goal of removing the king from power and from the country. But as it turns out, the true hindrance to peace is not kingji or Girija babu. It is ethnic violence, and the YCL, which is run by morally and ethically corrupt people with mental issues. Prachanda is not at all in control of his quasi-political military party and seems more intent on taking over the country, rather than following party guidelines. And so, for his own safety, he's keeping the world to the fools below him. But we should all know one thing: republic or no, poor and rich people will continue as they are now. Living in a third world country means having to deal with huge trade-offs between limited choices. But the Maoists, while they still have the support of many people, continue to promise us heaven so we feel that it's all the other parties who are responsible for the recent setbacks. Sure, take legal matters into their personal discretion. Then who will tame them?

Nubina Shrestha, Lancaster

The YCL makes me sick. My spouse is from mainland China and I've heard enough stories from my in-laws (who were 'bourgeois', i.e., educated professionals) to know how these things spiral into insanity of the kind propagated by the Red Guard. Nima T, Shanghai

PAST LESSONS
History cannot be rewritten or destroyed, which is why I am so concerned about the demolition of so many historical monuments and statues, no matter of what religious group or king. We need to preserve them at least to reflect the workmanship of the artists. Yes, we are deeply angry at the monarchy, but why waste energy on illusory objects? The monarchy will be gone one day, and it will be good to have its relics in a museum, so future generations can know about the elites who treated their own countrymen like animals.

Gaurav Nepali, email

OLD BIASES
Fukuyama fundamentally fails to define 'democracy' or 'liberalisation' ('The history at the end of history', opinion, #347). Bush and his cronies also fail to do so, and we've seen the outcomes. He presents a modernist position of liberalism that is a western, protestant economic and socio-political theory that has clearly failed in many places, so future generations can know about the elites who treated their own countrymen like animals. O Spencer-Shrestha, Nepal Society, School of Oriental and African Studies, London

BAD LANGUAGE
Your newspaper's opinion poll 'What is the best option for King Gyanendra?' (#347) is highly flawed, considered from the perspective of how to make a good research question. First, the option 'hang on tight' is understood in many different ways by several readers I spoke with. This struck me when I saw that the largest number of respondents chose 'hang on tight'. After all, this is at a time when the masses are overestimating anti-monarchy views. Most people I asked said that to them the phrase meant that he should be executed—hanged. I also asked which option they would pick and all of them—Republicans included—said 'hang on tight'. Do be careful while using idioms. Or it starts to seem as if you want to garner support for the monarchy in a clandestine manner by fooling the people in favour of the monarchy.

Badi P Bastakoli, email

UPSIDE DOWN
Yes, and verily I say unto thee, the Ass speaks the truth. All the fears of the impending apocalypse in Nepal aside, it really does often feel as if the country has fallen into some bad film about medieval theatre, where the ass is the wise one. You’re spot on about no one taking night buses to conventions any more. Having had the opportunity to observe the slowly changing habits of some of my new neighbours (certain comrades who shall not be named), I can safely say that while power does not necessarily corrupt, it can buy you modest middle class cars, schools for your kids, flashy boots and t-shirts, and mirrored sunglasses. Not so distant a learning as a proletarian revolution as a somewhat tasteless assault of middle class aspiration, complete with hideously upplstered plastic-covered sofas.

Name withheld, email

My family-by-marriage is, I soon found out, very sober indeed. My regular hysterical sprints of laughter on reading Nepali Times’ back page were greeted with an alarmed silence in my first few weeks living with them. Now, six months later, the father-in-law is also a devout reader of the Ass. This is something, given that these good people are otherwise very suspicious of anything that seems like a flippant, good time.

Anusha, email

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

Email: letters@nepalitimes.com
Fax: 977-1-5521013
Mail: Letters, Nepali Times, GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal.
MALLIKA ARYAL

In 1997, a group of madhesi intellectuals and students banded together to discuss their concerns and issues. There was no formal membership in this Birstanagar-based group and participants included leftists and members of other mainstream parties. The common denominator was their disenchantment with the big parties and the sense that their debates were largely ignored. The Madhesi Juntaikhar Forum, which emerged as the most representative, platform for madhesi issues.

In the same year, the Maoists celebrated their first anniversary underground by intensifying their struggle in the mid-west. Nepal had three unstable coalition governments, and the human rights situation deteriorated. Scores were detained by the state.

Ten years later, the Maoists have entered into the peace process, and the MJF has turned relatively violent. Both, however, are now registered as parties with the Election Commission and much of the threat for influence in the madhes is between these two fronts.

Insiders tell us that the Maoist leadership was sympathetic to the Forum at the start, and even instrumental in organizing it. Around 1999 Jiten Prakash Gupta, then a regular member of UML, started coming closer to the Maoists.

In February 2004, Upendra Yadav, the Maoist leader, invited his friend Matrika Yadav, to Delhi. Upendra Yadav was to return after a couple of months, while Matrika Yadav and Mohan Baidiya were arrested in Delhi. Upendra Yadav was let go after a couple of months, while Matrika Yadav and Mohan Baidiya were handed over to Nepali authorities and were released in 2006. Those close to Upendra Yadav say that during the time of his arrest he was already trying to distance himself from the Maoists because of discrimination he felt in the ranks within the Maoist hierarchy and because he did not agree with the Maoist plan to divide madhes into “Madhesh Autonomous Region” and “Tharuwan Autonomous Region”, Vijay Kaur Karna, chairperson of Jagrit Nepal says, “No one was happy in the tani with the Maoists because they called it Madhesh Government but high ranks in their party were given to palpals.”

After the 1 February 2005 royal takeover Upendra Yadav and Jaya Prakash Gupta, former general secretary of the MJF and present Nepali Congress MP, Anvesh Kumar Singh, adding, “If you try to play with all the powers, you forget the cause you were fighting for.” “Like most madhesi leaders who do not actively profess membership in the MJF, Singh too is said to have had a falling out with Yadav.” Jaya Prakash Gupta, who is close to Yadav, says the accusations of alliances with the palace and Indian fundamentalist groups are misguided. “If mainstream political parties meet with big Indian leaders, no one calls that an ‘unholy alliance’... Gupta told us from Birstanagar.

Gupta said that since Gaur, Yadav has not been allowed to move freely or explain “his side of the story.” That Gupta and other moderate madhesi leaders took a careful line on Gaur while mainstream political parties meet with big Indian leaders, no one was surprised. “He can be highly influenced by others,” says Nepal Congress MP Anvesh Kumar Singh, adding “If you try to play with all the powers, you forget the cause you were fighting for.” “Like most madhesi leaders who do not actively profess membership in the MJF, Singh too is said to have had a falling out with Yadav.”

Jaya Prakash Gupta, who is close to Yadav, says the accusations of alliances with the palace and Indian fundamentalist groups are misguided. “If mainstream political parties meet with big Indian leaders, no one calls that an ‘unholy alliance’... Gupta told us from Birstanagar.

In a decade, the MJF has gone from being a talk shop to one of the most powerful forces in national politics. The rise of a party.

TARAI RISING: This mass demonstration in Birganj, one of the many during the Madhes Uprising, was attended by almost 100,000 participants from all over Parsa.
Nanda Kishore Pun (‘Pasang’), Maoist central committee member, PLA deputy commander, and vice-chair of the joint arms management committee spoke with Nepal Times about arms verification and the Maoists’ performance in government.

Nepal Times: Why are the Maoists under attack from all sides?
Nanda Kishore Pun: When we pushed for a republic, national and international powers felt that the Nepali people would lose faith in other political parties. We were expecting these challenges when we gave up the war and joined mainstream politics. That said, it is difficult to oppose an alliance that is conservative, regressive, and highly influenced by foreign forces.

Your proposal that the interim parliament declare Nepal a republic didn’t garner support. We don’t expect anyone to agree with that proposal. If there is consensus, we will go forth with that. Those who want to save the monarchy are worried that the Maoists will lead once Nepal is a republic. They are using this issue to create obstacles.

Is there revolt simmering within the CPN-M?
Our ‘people’s war’ was long and difficult. So many came to it and so many more left. There were many ups and downs, some did really well and reached high up in the party, while others escaped. Laxman Tharu, who escaped from our party, had links with regressive and other power centres. We were discussing whether or not to take action against him when he decided to quit the party.

Why is your relationship with India blown cold now?
India did not like us talking about Nepali nationalism. When we said Nepal is being Sikklised, they fuelled the madhes movement and turned on us. They are trying to turn Nepali into another Bhutan. We don’t want to be enemies with India, but they also have to understand our situation.

Have you brought about any changes since you joined the government?
The roots of the ‘bureaucracy’ were deep in the old Nepal. We have always known that, and realise that we cannot do much unless there is a change in that direction. We joined the government to successfully conduct elections to the constituent assembly and move parliament to declare Nepal a republic. When we know that we cannot do either, we will take a different path ahead.

They say there are thousands of minors in the camps. The media associated with the UN said that there are 9,000 minors in the camps. Even Ian Martin has said that, but that is just a rumour. The UN should understand that it has taken on the role of a guardian and be careful before making blank statements that could hamper the peace process. If they do not respect the tripartite agreement, we can also criticise the UN. We know what kind of people are in the UN, who they are loyal to, whose money is running the organisation, and what kind of force has entered in the name of peace keeping.

Why has the arms verification process stopped?
The government has a new war strategy. It thinks that withholding money and rationing from the fighters will make some of them escape the harsh conditions and others try to revolt. The main obstacles in the arms verification process now are the ministries of Home Affairs, Finance, and Peace and Reconstruction.
I dissent

Laxman Chaudhary ('Roshan') in Nepal, 13 May

When we announced that we were splitting from the CPN-M and organising our own struggle, the Maoists started a systematic smear campaign against us.

Those who question our decision think we will start a new armed movement in the name of ethnicity. Yes, this is a struggle, but we will not take up arms. During arms verification, we were ordered to hide some of our weapons and technical equipment. We did so, but now we still have them. We will not use them, nor will we hand them over to the Maoists. If the government is ready, we are willing to talk to them and hand over the weapons. If we really wanted to spread ethnically motivated terror, we could provoke the Tharus to do so. But that would be unfortunate for the entire country.

We know so much about so many Maoist leaders that we could expose them if we wanted to. But our struggle is not against a person or a leader in the party. We do not trust the party's current policies—they can neither capture power via armed struggle, nor be a part of the government and bring about radical transformation.

The Maoists used ethnic issues during their movement, and are now doing the same with other issues to lure some people and assure others. They want to show their flexibility and so sign all kinds of agreements, but this hurts the party.

There is also no longer the feeling of sacrifice that there is among the Tharus. We do not trust the party's leader. We do not trust the party there is disappointment the party there is weakness. The Tharus have also risen. Yet there are still kamias in the homes of Maoist leaders. Questioning such practices is considered tantamount to being against the struggle. But one must always speak out against inequality, even inside one's own party. The leaders make mistakes too, and it's wrong to say that all their decisions were good. Our struggle is against this culture of unquestioning acceptance of leaders' decisions.

For the Maoists now, both flexibility and rigidity could be suicidal. They can neither break the eight-party unity and return to war, nor accept all the decisions made by the parties and stay in government. Pushpa Kamal Gahal is wrong to say that a continuation of the struggle is possible only if the Maoists stay in the government. Inside the party there is disappointment about this.

Left in disarray

Ghataha Ra Bichar, 16-22 May

While CPN-M chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal has been lobbying to declare Nepal a republic before the constituent assembly elections, there are rumours of a struggle against him within his own party. A highly placed source told us that members of his party are criticising him for not being able to announce election dates. They are also not happy with the arrangement for the fighters in the camps.

They are frustrated about the party's uncertain future, and say Dahal made concessions to India that went against nationalist feeling. Even staunch supporters, such as Mohan Baidya ('Kiran') are becoming critical of him. When Baidya was released from an Indian prison seven months ago, political analysts predicted that this could disrupt the CPN-M's internal politics. At the party's recent central working committee meeting in Kamidanda, Kabhre, Dahal was again criticised. Observers say that an internal struggle against Dahal will have serious consequences.

The CPN-M is under pressure from the other parties to change its stance on the return of the property seized during the conflict, and the activities of the YCL. Baidya maintains that the Maoist movement has not stopped and that seized property will not be returned. Inside the party, his supporters are said to include Ram Bahurth Thapa ('Badal'), Janardan Sharma ('Prabhakar'), and Netha Bahadur Chand ('Bijayab').

A highly placed source told us that Baidya believes more than 10,000 fighters will support him in a campaign against Dahal.

Baidya blames Dahal for not pushing nationalism, the 'third level' of struggle now emerging. He wants to address issues like the Kalapani argument. Many believe that this new phase will also be armed and that the Maoists will use the 5,000 modern weapons they reportedly hid in 13 different places in the first round of the arms/armies verification process. The recently-ousted [sic] Laxman Tharu [sic], who is said to be faithful to the 'third level' struggle group, is said to have over 500 of these. (See 'I dissent'.)

Baidya's biggest strength is Janardan Sharma, who is very popular with the fighters. The fourth division of the 'people's liberation army' is allegedly holding secret meetings to strategise against Dahal.

There is alarm that a potential split in the Maoist ranks would harm the peace process and democracy, by encouraging regressive forces.

20 Door Prizes* to be won!

Round trip ticket to China

Television Set
Computers
Phones
Pen Drives
Attractive Gifts From 7up

The Biggest Education & Career Expo in Nepal. 100+ Exhibitors, Unlimited Career Choices, 1 Venue.

23-27 May, 2007 at Bhrikuti Mandap

Sponsors:

Co-Sponsors:

The Himalayan

Supported by:

The 20 Door Prizes* to be won! Round trip ticket to China

Television Set
Computers
Phones
Pen Drives
Attractive Gifts From 7up

The Biggest Education & Career Expo in Nepal. 100+ Exhibitors, Unlimited Career Choices, 1 Venue.

23-27 May, 2007 at Bhrikuti Mandap

For Details Contact: Asia-Pacific Communication Innovators Nepal (APCI), Kathmandu, Nepal. Phone: 4718090, 4718091, 4718092, 4718093. Fax: 4718094. E-mail: exhibition@apcni.com

For Details Contact: Asia-Pacific Communication Innovators Nepal (APCI), Kathmandu, Nepal. Phone: 4718090, 4718091, 4718092, 4718093. Fax: 4718094. E-mail: exhibition@apcni.com

For Details Contact: Asia-Pacific Communication Innovators Nepal (APCI), Kathmandu, Nepal. Phone: 4718090, 4718091, 4718092, 4718093. Fax: 4718094. E-mail: exhibition@apcni.com

For Details Contact: Asia-Pacific Communication Innovators Nepal (APCI), Kathmandu, Nepal. Phone: 4718090, 4718091, 4718092, 4718093. Fax: 4718094. E-mail: exhibition@apcni.com

For Details Contact: Asia-Pacific Communication Innovators Nepal (APCI), Kathmandu, Nepal. Phone: 4718090, 4718091, 4718092, 4718093. Fax: 4718094. E-mail: exhibition@apcni.com

For Details Contact: Asia-Pacific Communication Innovators Nepal (APCI), Kathmandu, Nepal. Phone: 4718090, 4718091, 4718092, 4718093. Fax: 4718094. E-mail: exhibition@apcni.com

For Details Contact: Asia-Pacific Communication Innovators Nepal (APCI), Kathmandu, Nepal. Phone: 4718090, 4718091, 4718092, 4718093. Fax: 4718094. E-mail: exhibition@apcni.com

For Details Contact: Asia-Pacific Communication Innovators Nepal (APCI), Kathmandu, Nepal. Phone: 4718090, 4718091, 4718092, 4718093. Fax: 4718094. E-mail: exhibition@apcni.com
Poudel vs Yami
Jana Aastha, 16 May
Minister of Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel is telling to anyone who will listen that he had told “Girija babu” not to allow the Maoists to control the Ministry for Physical Planning and Works because they’d make a mess of Melamchi. Poudel also says Girija Prasad Koirala told the Maoists that Poudel’s ministry would take on some of the tasks of the Ministry of Physical Planning to create a rift between the Maoists and Poudel.

Any time Poudel and Minister of Physical Planning and Works Hsula Yami meet, they argue. They recently argued at a meeting to discuss how to spend the money allocated for the camps. The general opinion was that the committees, comprising the chief district officers of the districts where the camps are, PLA cantonment commanders, representatives from Department of Buildings and district accounts officers, should approve spending on the building of permanent structures for the fighters in the camps. Yami said the budget should be coordinated with accounts officers, should approve the budget. He says the construction should start after the next round of verification, when the number of Maoist fighters would drop by over 50 percent.

Meanwhile, it is understood that the engineers who will be involved in the survey will be paid Rs 75,000 plus benefits. The country is paying Rs 3.1 million for the survey alone.

Land grab
Naya Patrika, 16 May
During the first emergency in 2001, the then Royal Nepal Army’s 23rd Brigade encroached on some land around their cantonment in Baglung. During the royal regime they took over two and a half hectares to construct a helipad for the king. “It started during the first emergency, and by now the army has taken over almost a hectare of my land. I got no compensation, and nor do I think they will return it,” says Sahdev Rajbhandari, who is a central committee member of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce. “During the royal regime we were forced to speak. But now, a year after the restoration of democracy, there still isn’t anyone listening to us!” he added.

Land belonging to Baglung’s former mayor Bhash Ram Sharma and deputy mayor Padma Chandra Rajbhandari has also been encroached upon and now lies inside the Nepal Army’s barbed wire-protected cantonment. The soldiers are enjoying their new “privilege,” as they have access to the land which is separated from the cantonment by a river.

School scandal
Editorial in Kantipur, 16 May
The Maoist-affiliated Nepal Education Republican Forum (NERF), which claims to protect party policies, and so on.

NERF is demanding that private educational institutions provide appointment letters and salaries linked to qualifications, and annulment of the Company Act.

The protesting teachers and the ministry signed a six-point agreement in March when UML’s Mangal Siddhir Manandhar was the minister. The government was to implement the agreement by 23 April. But soon after the deal was signed, the interim government was set up and the agreement forgotten. The present Minister of Education, the UML’s Pradeep Nepal, said publicly that he knew nothing about the agreement, which was widely publicised when it was signed. That was an irresponsible remark, and spurred NERF to resume its agitation.

As a result, schools across Nepal are closed indefinitely, while the Ministry does not even bother to talk to the teachers. Nepal should understand that as a minister he is obliged to implement the agreement signed by his predecessor.

It’s been over a week since the Maoist-affiliated ANNSU-R paralysed the accounts sections of private schools demanding a fee ceiling. In higher education, the positions of vice chancellor of various universities have still not been filled. The entire education system has come to a complete standstill due to these agitations, and looks chaotic.

Those agitating should understand the challenges the interim government is facing and that there is only so much that can happen during a period of transition. And while the government’s priority is elections to the constituent assembly, it doesn’t mean they can ignore the agreement made in March. The protesting teachers also need to understand that this is not the time to demand the cancellation of the three-year education plans, education strategy according to party policies, and so on.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Conspiracies are being hatched to send us back to war. But we will not leave Kathmandu. It is now the turn of feudal conservatives to go to the jungle.

Deputy commander of the PLA Barsa Man Pun (‘Ananta’) quoted in Rajasthan, 14 May.
Photojournalism has taken off in a big way in Nepal in recent years. The range of subjects receiving coverage, the quality of the images, and their use in print media for maximum impact have all improved dramatically.

These winning images of the first ever photojournalism contest organised by the National Forum of Photo Journalists (NFPJ) and Photo Concern are some of the excellent photographs taken in the last year. Ninety-one photographers submitted 328 pictures, but there were just 13 winners, three each in the news, feature, sports, and environment categories, and the grand prize winner “press photo of the year”.

Sagar Shrestha’s dramatic Jana Andolan II shot bagged the Rs 50,000 press photo of the year award. Winners of the top three spots in the individual categories were: Rajendra Manandhar, Ravi Manandhar, and Sundar Shrestha for news; Eakal Silwal, Chandra Shekhar Karki, and Sailendra Kharel for features; Sailendra Kharel, Janak Nepal, and Saligram Tiwari for environment; and Udipt Singh Chibetey, Tashi R Ghale, and Prakash Mathema for sports.

The contest was judged by veteran photographers Mani Lama and Nrip Dhoj Khadka, NFPJ president Bikash Rauniyar, Kantipur editor Narayan Wagle, and industrialist Gajananda Vaidya.
year

CAN’T TOUCH ME: There’s fierce competition at the annual horse race in Manang, 2006.

BEARING IT ALL: Women and their children taking home firewood along the banks of the Narayani river in Gaidakot, Nawalparasi, 2006.

Deadly silence

A free media is essential for a free society

Most of us live our lives by years. We mark the passage of time with birthdays, anniversaries, and religious and secular holidays that come up each time the calendar cycles. Weeks follow months, months drift by, and New Year—whether Nepal, New, Nauro, Uran, Julian—it is always a time of celebration. Another trip around the sun for our bruised planet and our stressed selves.

But a friend of mine is currently marking his mental calendar in much smaller increments: day by day, hours, minutes, probably even seconds. His name is Alan Johnston.

On 12 March 2007, Alan was driving home from his job as the BBC correspondent in Gaza City, Palestine. He was almost at the end of a three-year assignment reporting on the violence, politics, and tragedies of that tiny strip of embattled territory. He’d covered Israeli forces coming and going, shelling and bombarding, and Gaza militants firing back. Mostly he’d got to know the Palestinian people and the rest of us knew them through him.

Subhuman scum with guns picked up Alan as he drove toward his apartment that day, and they whisked him off into the darkness of captivity—probably a concrete box of a room in an obscure apartment block somewhere, either underground or with blooded-out windows. Until earlier this month, no public demands had been made by people purporting to be his abductors. Now they say they want militant prisoners released from UK jails.

Reportedly, they also want money and weapons.

Those demands—whether from his actual kidnappers or not—are incomprehensible. What matters is the human plight of Alan Johnston, alone in a dark room, uncertain of his fate, counting off the seconds, minutes, and hours, living day to day, perhaps aware of the momentous occasions that pass by with the march of time.

Thursday, 10 May, was his 60th day in captivity. The week before was World Press Freedom Day and there were rallies by Alan’s colleagues around the world, demanding his safe and immediate release. His 45th birthday was on 17 May and on Thursday, 10 May, was his 60th day in captivity.

Alan’s kidnapping is about the larger issue of press freedom, the rights of media workers everywhere to seek and report the truth. We have ways of dealing with governments who suppress information. In democracies, we take them to task or court and sometimes we win. Authoritarians are vilified in the media and by brave NGOs like Amnesty International and the Committee to Protect Journalists.

What do we do faceless militants misguided enough to think that they achieve even an iota of their twisted agendas by depriving an innocent of his freedom. We hold rallies, we try to make them talk through middlemen, we suffer through our powerlessness.

Nepal has more than its share of nasties who cross the line and harass media workers. We’ve seen it recently in the tarai, in BIRATNAGAR.

Acid attacks

Men are waging chemical warfare on women and getting away with it

Acid attacks are one of the many forms of violence that continue to plague women in Nepal. These attacks are often motivated by dowry demands and are committed by family members or lovers. The women’s rights organizations in Nepal have been documenting the cases of acid attacks for the past three years, but there are many more that are never reported.

According to women’s rights organizations, there have been dozens of cases of acid attacks on women in eastern Nepal in the past three years, but there are many more that are never reported.

Sadia Khanum was attacked with acid by a group of men who accused her of having an affair. Her husband and baby were badly burnt. Her husband was arrested for the very same act. Nonetheless, he was released on bail by the Biratnagar appellate court. “My husband is walking around as if nothing happened,” says 29-year-old Sadia Khanum who now lives with her parents. “I have no money to take care of my daughter. Please help me to get him to compensate me.”

Ritu Dehi Mukut was attacked last year by four men who accused her of having an affair. Her right eye was destroyed and one year later her face is still deeply scarred and wounds on her chest are suppurating. Police still haven’t caught the perpetrators although they are well known locals.

In Sunsari, 18-year-old Indian national Panan Kumari Sabarini was raped by four men who later poured acid on her. Her husband and father-in-law poured acid on her, at a meeting of local residents. The culprits haven’t been arrested.

Palsi Dehi Yadav, 17, was doused with acid by her husband and father-in-law who said she didn’t bring enough dowry. Palsi Dehi’s family complained to police, but her in-laws forced her to withdraw it.

Not all the victims are young. Forty-year-old Janaki Dehi Mehta was attacked with acid by a group of men for simply speaking up at a meeting to resolve a land dispute. Since a doctor at the Naruwa district hospital registered the case as “an accident,” the attackers cannot be tried.

Two local organisations, WOREC and SIKSA, are helping the victims seek justice through the court system but are facing numerous legal hurdles. Since most victims survive acid attacks, the courts do not register the cases as “attempted homicide.” Activists see acid attacks on women as just the outward manifestation of widespread hidden discrimination and cruelty faced by Nepali women.

Says lawyer Dilli Dahal: “There are legal complications, and the fact that police don’t do proper investigation after the incidents means most perpetrators escape prosecution.”
New chapters in the long history of betrayal

Burned again

The signing of the peace treaty spawned two schools of thought, and a pleasant interlude when both theories had credibility and stood equally for our allegiance. The now-bankrupt Idealist hypothesis appealed to optimists who took the Maoists at their word, figured the war was behind us and better times lay ahead. Those afflicted with the logic syndrome also jumped aboard, arguing that the comrades needed a soft landing and would abide by the agreements since the government had obsequiously met their every demand. Surely their historic speeches at the signing meant they’ll behave like all the rest, work within the system, and think only of their next Pajero.

Many of us leapt to this conclusion out of desperation. The traumatic war had dragged on for so long, everyone badly needed a rest. Those who warned that you can’t teach an old tyrant new tricks were dismissed as whiners guessing game I really hated to lose.

We saw all too soon that things weren’t exactly as we hoped. Supremo Pushpa Kamal Dahal not only signed the treaty in a false name, his statement that the Maoists accepted peace only to satisfy the will of the people was shamelessly obscured the fact that few wanted this bloody war to end in stalemate makes no difference; the cadre have been told victory is theirs, they are the government, and that’s enough to change their behaviour for the worse.

The Hand has grown used to unexpected results and being proven wrong. Life in Nepal is fuller of surprises than most places, but this particular guessing game I really hated to lose.

Since reality plays no role in the party’s version of events, their minority status in parliament and the inconvenient fact the war ended in stalemate makes no difference; the cadre have been told victory is theirs, they are the government, and that’s enough to change their behaviour for the worse.

The Hand has grown used to unexpected results and being proven wrong. Life in Nepal is fuller of surprises than most places, but this particular guessing game I really hated to lose.

We saw all too soon that things weren’t exactly as we hoped. Supremo Pushpa Kamal Dahal not only signed the treaty in a false name, his statement that the Maoists accepted peace only to satisfy the will of the people was shamelessly obscured the fact that few wanted this bloody war to end in stalemate makes no difference; the cadre have been told victory is theirs, they are the government, and that’s enough to change their behaviour for the worse.

The Hand has grown used to unexpected results and being proven wrong. Life in Nepal is fuller of surprises than most places, but this particular guessing game I really hated to lose.

Since reality plays no role in the party’s version of events, their minority status in parliament and the inconvenient fact the war ended in stalemate makes no difference; the cadre have been told victory is theirs, they are the government, and that’s enough to change their behaviour for the worse.

The signs are to be the defining theme of post-war Nepal was soon driven home by a nationwide wave of extortion and maltreatment of the people. Minds reeled, especially among the surviving Idealists, as to how such criminal activity could be perpetuated by members of a legal party in government. Even Maoist apologists stopped rationalising the offences, which has been perhaps the only benefit for the public.

The list of broken promises is long and depressing (favourite headline of the week: ‘Maoists seize farm, destroy vegetables’), but most of us only grasped the scope of this betrayal when the UN got so few guns for the comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory. The recent unleashing of the ‘Young Communist League’ to burn government offices and beat up opponents has found employment for the real comrades supposed to be in the camps, and trashed the last vestiges of the Idealist Theory.
The whole sorry Wolfowitz affair looks like it is finally drawing to a close. It is hard to believe that he will stay on much longer at the World Bank, and it is time to start thinking about the future of that institution. From the first, I was critical of the way he was chosen because I have long opposed the ‘old boy’ agreement between the United States and Europe, by which the US always appoints the head of the World Bank, and Europe, of the IMF. This unspoken arrangement dates from the founding of the Bretton Woods institution at a time when colonialism was still alive, and makes no sense in the 21st century.

There are reports that European leaders have told the US that if they get Wolfowitz to step down quickly and quietly, they will be allowed to choose his successor. Such a deal would amount to a wasted opportunity. There is no better way to restore confidence in these two institutions than to finally open up the way their presidents are selected.

One of the lessons of the Wolfowitz debacle is that it does matter how stakeholders and employees feel about the bank’s leadership. The world was prejudiced against him from the start because of his involvement in the Iraq War. But people were willing to give him a chance. Some said he could be another Robert McNamara, the US defense secretary who helped mire America in the Vietnam War, but used his service to the bank as penance.

There was reason for hope: Wolfowitz was forceful in arguing for debt forgiveness and an end to agricultural subsidies. But he also hired old friends and political allies—many of whom did not have experience in development—and sealed himself off from his staff, alienating the very people whose support he needed. As we learned from the case of Larry Summers at Harvard, relationships inside institutions matter, and not just those with donors and funders. In this respect, Wolfowitz, while an intelligent and pleasant person, did not do himself any favours.

Worse, he did not seem to have a grand vision for the bank. Instead of a development strategy, there was simply an expansion of the anti-corruption agenda initiated by his predecessor, James Wolfensohn. As the World Bank's chief economist under Wolfensohn, I argued that failing to deal with corruption risked undermining growth and poverty alleviation. By the time I left the Bank, these ideas were widely accepted, and I was pleased that Wolfowitz planned to continue the bank’s efforts. But the fight against corruption was always only one part of a more comprehensive development agenda. Aid effectiveness can be undermined as much by incompetence as by corruption.

Sadly, the anti-corruption agenda of the Bank also became politicised. There was a push to give money to Iraq—a country rife with corruption—while other countries were accused of corruption without adequate evidence or details. The aims of the campaign were laudable, but it generated hostility and ill-will, undermining its effectiveness.

The World Bank, in its efforts to support democracy and good governance, must insist on the highest standards of due process: charges of corruption should be treated seriously, and the evidence turned over to national authorities for use in open, transparent, independent proceedings. Wolfowitz’s successor needs to bear in mind that for anti-corruption campaigns to be seen as effective, they must be fair and transparent.

The same is true of the selection of the president of the World Bank. A sad and sorry saga could have a happy ending if Wolfowitz’s successor is chosen through an open, transparent process. •

(Stiglitz is a Nobel laureate in economics and author of Making Globalisation Work.)
Newars, new and old

Newars are supposed to be Nepal’s early settlers, according to one theory even lending their name to the country. They form not a caste, but a complex community—in 1854, the Muluki Ain divided Newars into the equivalent of the four castes from Brahmins (Rajopadhyaya and Vajrayātra), to Dalits (Pode and Cyama khalak).

BOOK REVIEW
Tri Ratna Manandhar

There were only scattered references to Newars in the classic accounts of Nepal by Lach, Mackinnon, and Mitter in 1813, Hamilton in 1819, and Hutton and Olfield both in 1860. The first comprehensive piece of research on Newars appeared in 1923, in K.P. Chhattopadhyaya’s An Essay on the History of Newar Antiquity of the Newars of Nepal. Scholars studied traditional communities in Nepal’s south and east, and wrote mainly about historical Newar culture, and, as the publisher’s note states, “will also prove extremely useful to the Newars themselves to help them understand their own society differently, if not better. It will also prove extremely informative to non-Newars in understanding one of the most ancient, complex, and fascinating social groups of Nepal.”

The three papers on the little-known Lalitpur Maharjan village of Pyyangon come from Toffin’s long periods of fieldwork. He makes a detailed study of the Jyanakai, who “adopted a Jyapu lifestyle and became Newarised” in one, and in another provides a picture of intercaste relationships in Newars, particularly between ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ castes, and the position of Swagumi within the Newar caste system. Toffin’s third Pyyangon paper is about the socio-religious structures of the Maharjans, this time as villagers. A detailed comparative study of the Maharjans in city and village would have been welcome.

Two chapters are devoted to the little known Bahami and Pahari communities who live on the periphery. Defined here as “the intermediate space located between Kathmandu Valley and the middle hills of central Nepal and its forested areas”, Toffin convincingly identifies them with Newars, because their caste, kinship, and culinary roles are the same, as is their language.

Three papers focus on specific aspects of Newar society, the guthi system, the Mohani festival, and funeral rites in relation to the Newar castes. Toffin explains how guthis “regulate several aspects of Newar social and religious life, between possessive economic functions and some limited cases”. Similarly, he analyses how Panauti Newars observe the Mohan festival with special devotion to Aata Mutrikha, Nava Durga, Taleju, and Kumari, and how the 14 different Newar caste, from Rajopadhyaya to Pode, of the area perform funeral rites.

The last two chapters deal primarily with the recent changes in rural and urban Newar society. One focuses on the role of modern ethnic associations in constructing the identity of a particular caste or group, the other on the changing status and role of women in Newar society, in the context of recent amendments in the Muluki Ain. All the papers were written at different times as independent articles. Together they sometimes lack coherence, or can get repetitive. What pulls the volume together is Toffin’s 21-page introduction, which successfully synthesises the different themes explored and reflects an up-to-date understanding of Newar society and culture.

There are some omissions and errors. Except in a few cases, the data on population, household, and the like are dated. For example the 2001 census puts Citrakars and Rajopadhyayis at over 5,000 each, while Toffin’s essays says there are 1,200 and 1,500 respectively. The Jyanag Mahatghi and Citrakar Sangh are mentioned, but not the Mananishan Sangh, which was founded in 1954. The discrete index entries for Mananishar and Sayamit, the same caste group, are confusing. History of Nepal was written by BJ Hasrat, and not RL Hasrat. The collection would also have benefited from a glossary of Newari terms.

These minor shortcomings do not, however, lower the standard of the book. Toffin’s work is a significant contribution to the study of Newar society and culture, and, as the publisher’s note states, “will certainly be very useful to the Newars themselves to help them understand their own society differently, if not better. It will also prove extremely informative to non-Newars in understanding one of the most ancient, complex, and fascinating social groups of Nepal.”


Tri Ratna Manandhar is professor of History at Tribhuvan University.
EXHIBITIONS
- Sacred realms mixed media works by Seema Sharma Shah at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babor Mahal Revisited, until 26 May, 11AM-6PM daily. 4281048

EVENTS
- 1st International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Film Festival organised by the Blue Diamond Society, daily screenings at 11:30 AM-6PM, 18 and 20 May at Sundhara Bakery Cafe and 19 May at Martin Chautari. 444350

- Travelers and Magicians a film by Kyhentse Norbu at the Latzinsky Palace Cafe, 4.45 PM on 18 May, seat reservation recommended.

- Yuva Chalai Shrinkhala on ‘environment friendly jute’ - the efforts of a young Nepali girl, 3-5PM, 18 May at Martin Chautari. 4107599

- The Honest Thief performed by Studio 7, performances on 18-20 May, 7:15 PM at the Naga Theater, Hotel Vijaya. 4271545

- Pilgrim’s Book Festival until 20 May, 10AM-8PM at Pilgrims’ Book House, Kopundale. 5521159

- Mangalbare Discussion Series on the plight of women in foreign employment, 5PM, 22 May at Martin Chautari. 4238059

- CSGN monthly lecture ‘A People War’ - Photo Tour of Nepal by Runda Dixit, 9:30 AM, 25 May at the Shankar Hotel.

- Youth Discussion Series on the democratic practices of political parties in Nepal, 3PM, 25 May at Martin Chautari. 4238050

- Pottery course by Santosh Kumar from the Delhi Blue Pottery Trust, at News Art Ceramics in Mysyspur, Thimi, 25 May-24 June. 9841257968

MUSIC
- Moksh Live presents Inner Groove at the Moksh Bar, Pulchok, 18 May, 8.30 PM onwards. 5526212

- Kathmandu Chorale spring concert 19 May, 3.30 PM and 8PM, at The British School, Jamshedpur, Admission free. 5521218

- Palee concert series with Gayak Phatteman followed by release of his solo album, only 70 tickets available, Rs 500 plus tax, 25 May at nepa~laya, Kalakshetra. 4414269

- Soul of Raga live classical and fusion music, every Friday evening at Nuchhie’s Kitchen, The Organic Bistro. 4429903.

- Open mic night at Vie Vie Cafe, every Friday, 8PM onwards.

- Live music at the Red Onion Bar, Wednesdays from 8PM with Yatiki and Zigma Lepcha. 4416071

- DJ Raju and the Cloudwalkers live at the Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency, every Friday and Saturday. 4491234

DINING
- Friday evening BBQ with live music, at the Hotel Himalaya, 7PM, Rs 499 net. 5523900

- Walk and lunch every Saturday at the Shivalpuri Heights Cottage. 8941371027

- Kabebis and curries at the Dhaab, Thapathali. 9841920619

- Krishnarpani Nepali specially restaurant at Dawkara’s Hotel, six to 22 course ceremonial lunch and dinner. 4479488

- Weekend special with cocktails, Stark Bar, Fridays at Ambassador Garden House, Lazimpat, 5.30 PM onwards. 4411706

- Mongolian BBQ Wednesdays and Fridays, 6.30 PM on the Splash Bar and Grill, Radisson Hotel. Rs 1,000 for unlimited barbeque and beer. 4422828

- Flavours of the Middle East every Monday and the taste of Thailand every Wednesday at The Cafe, Hyatt Regency, Boudha. 4491234

- Light nouvelle snacks and elaborate cordon bleu meals at La Soo, Pulchok, behind the Egyptian embassy. 5537166

- Continental cuisine and wine by the fire place at Kileyo’s, Thamel. 4250440.

- Smorgasbord lunch at Park Village Resort, every Saturday. 4372280

- Gyakos at the Shambala Garden Cafe, Hotel Shahriar-La, minimum four diners at Rs 450 per person, two hours’ notice.

- Retro brunch barbecue with Crossfire Band at Le Meridien. Cocktails from 12-PM, Rs 1,600 including swimming. 4451212

- Calculita’s rolls, biryani, kebabs Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000759

- Woodfired pizzas at the Roadhouse Cafe, Thamel. 4262878, Bhabhatheer 4452687 and Pulchok 5521755

- Pizza from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519

- Jazzabell cafe enjoy great food, exotic cocktails and music, Chakpat, Patan. 2114075

- Goodwill Family Restaurant happy price menu Rs 50, everyday, 1-6PM. 5556420

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, 4491212

- Wet and wild package at Godavari Village Resort, every Saturday and Sunday, unlimited lunch with a bottle of beer or a softdrink, Rs 690 net. 5566075

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com
GETTING ON WITH IT: Motorcyclists and bicyclists evade a demonstration to protest the killing of manpower agency owner Rajiv Shrestha by using the footpath instead at the Maitighar Mandala.

ARE WE THERE YET?: Some 400 people march from Bhrikutimandap to Basantapur in a rally organised by the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities on Thursday to pressure the government to announce the dates for elections to the constituent assembly and declare a republic.

DEJÀ VU: In scenes reminiscent of the April Uprising, policemen guard the statue of King Tribhuvan in Tripureswor, after Mahendra’s statue in Kalimati was demolished by the Young Communist League on Tuesday.

PUPPETRY: The Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities and civil society build an elaborate palace—and then a prison cell—for an effigy of King Gyanendra at Basantapur on Thursday.

REALLY WANT A REPUBLIC: Maoist cadres gather at the Maitighar Mandala on Sunday to show off their signature campaign for the declaration of a republic by the interim parliament.

ARE WE THERE YET?: Some 400 people march from Bhrikutimandap to Basantapur in a rally organised by the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities on Thursday to pressure the government to announce the dates for elections to the constituent assembly and declare a republic.

DEJÀ VU: In scenes reminiscent of the April Uprising, policemen guard the statue of King Tribhuvan in Tripureswor, after Mahendra’s statue in Kalimati was demolished by the Young Communist League on Tuesday.

PUPPETRY: The Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities and civil society build an elaborate palace—and then a prison cell—for an effigy of King Gyanendra at Basantapur on Thursday.
From socket bombs to whips

The American State Department has updated its travel advisory for Nepal, and has warned its citizens to desist from all non-essential visits. Congratulations are in order, because of all the embassies located in the ‘Mandu it is only the Yanks who have their priorities right.

The Ass urges Kaiser Mahal to also issue the following advisory for the benefit of the Nepali college students travelling to the United States during this academic year:

“GON remains concerned about the security status of campuses in the United States and continues to urge Nepali students already in the US or contemplating a visit there to obtain updated security information before travel. Despite a manifestation of outward calm in some campuses and universities, individuals continue to engage in acts of violence, assassinations, and massacres. In some states gunmen freely roam the countryside and cities, sometimes openly carrying their weapons. Given the nature, intensity, and unpredictability of disturbances, Nepali students are urged to exercise special caution in the dorms, classrooms, malls, parks, and restaurants, and wear protective bullet-proof gear at all times, avoid road travel, and maintain a low profile.”

You have to hand it to the Baddies. None of us said it was going to be easy, but by George they did it. They have made a smooth transition from socket bombs to whips. The head of the Maoist parliamentary group and its chief whip, Dinanathji, is flogging his fellow-MPs into shape by forcing them to race to lay siege to the speaker’s perch before the madhesis do.

It has become a matter of daily routine that no sooner has the opening gong of parliament sounded than they’re off to gherao the rostrum yet again. Such fun and games. Much less destructive than laying siege to army bases and being needlessly killed.

The Young Kangaroo League is sure keeping itself busy. When it’s not conducting ‘people courts’ or planting trees, it is tearing down statues of various kings throughout the country. They sure are on the right track, because how can we ensure the peace dividend for all Nepalis by reopening schools and health posts, building roads and creating jobs until all the statues of the Shah dynasty have been pulverised right? We have to thank the young comrades for removing these idols, and while they are at it why not have a go at those hideous statues of BP, Pushpa Lal, and Grandfather of the Nation Tribhuvan from various chokes in Nepalganj and replace them with Comrade Awesome doing a smart lal salam? The moral of the story should be don’t unto someone else’s statute what you don’t want them to do to yours.

FG