A young woman looks out uncertainly from the window of a bus. It is not known where she is headed. She could be the Nepali nation itself.

But the uncertainties we all face as we approach the May 28 deadline for the constitution are already a reality for other stakeholders in the peace process. There was much speechifying at the Maoist cantonments once the long-anticipated discharge of disqualified combatants began in January this year. Many others have left the cantonments, through compulsion or choice, in the last couple of years. While government nags UNMIN for actual figures, those who have left are adjusting to life on the outside, with or without Maoist support.

DESTINATION UNKNOWN

Fall story p4-5

CK Lal finds fault with the Patna panegyric

Rabindra Mishra deplores junk journalism

Enjoy the moment a swing at a time
Nearly four years into the ceasefire, Nepal's peace process is stuck. Constitution-writing has ground to a halt. There seems to be a real danger of democratic reversal and backsliding. The political stalemate has brought about a state of national paralysis. Everything is on hold, and we're all waiting to see what happens next. The economy is stagnant, the country is literally in darkness. Lawlessness and crime have got worse. Journalists are self-censoring and corruption doesn't even make the news anymore. The republic is on authoritarian footing.

The government wants to know how many people are present in cantonments, though it has never asked UNMIN officially to count the numbers. Two seconds though not necessarily related aspect is the government's formal request for combatant data (name, gender, date of birth, photograph, and address). Based on the fact that only 2400 out of 4000 disqualified combatants were present during the discharge. Madhu Nepal claims 60 per cent of the verified combatants (around 11,500) remain in the cantonments. Privately, Maoist leaders admit that the numbers have dipped but say it is closer to the 16-17,000 mark. Add to this the widespread belief that a part of the money meant for the former combatants go to the party. The government in its demand is asking who is paying and how much?

Absolutely.

The problems are that they are asking in the wrong places. The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction pays the verified combatants on the basis of identity cards and barcodes. If the government feels everyone is not in the camps, who has it paying all this while? Have 'fake' combatants using 'fake' ids been taking money? If so, what does it say about the bureaucrats responsible?

Even if we were to give credit to the government for waking up to the issue now, the point is the PLA remains under the Maoists. And they must be pressurised to do so.

UNMIN is not responsible for the management of either of the two armies. With 79 arm monitors, it is at best monitoring the management of these armies through regular visits to the NA barracks and PL A cantonments, with an eye on the arms containers. It has been regularly informing the Joint Monitoring Coordination Committee (JIMCC) about its findings and concerns.

UNMIN has not alerted us to a mass exodus from the cantonments-despite knowing about it, then it has to be held accountable. But UNMIN says it doesn’t know how many people are there. In fact, it has continued to ask the Maoists (and the NA) to provide updated figures on troop strength, which is the maximum the Agreement on the Management of the Movement of the Management of Arms and Ammunitions (AMMAA) allows it to do. The perception is that UNMIN should know the numbers. But the reality is that the government or JIMCC or the Special Committee never requested them to do a fresh count, an elaborate exercise requiring time and resources.

On the data, UNMIN’s case is even stronger. Paragraph 2 of the AMMAA says, “The parties will report detailed information about their troops, and this information will be treated as the appropriate confidence by the United Nations.” The government is acting all righteous and pretentious it is an affront to sovereignty that UNMIN is not providing the information it has requested. What is forgotten is that the government is only one part of the peace process. The NC-UML combine should have thought twice before allowing the Maoist army to be given equal status with the NA when they were signing the AMMAA. If the government can ask for data about the Maoist army, the Maoists can ask UNMIN to give them data on the Nepal Army. Surprised? Blame those who signed the AMMAA, not UNMIN for adhering to it.

It is by requesting by the Special Committee or the JIMCC or separate letters by the government and Maoists giving their assent, UNMIN cannot share specific data.

The government wants to marginalise, downsize and undermine UNMIN. It wants them to perform maximum responsibilities. UNMIN has barely any role in the peace process, except being a symbolic deterrent against large-scale resumption of violence. They are blamed for all the problems we face. Nothing could be more hypocritical and intellectually dishonest.
Patna panegyrics

The meeting last month between prominent Nepali political and some of their previous or future Indian handlers in the capital city of Patna seems to have gone rather well. Not a day passes without a laudatory mention of the achievement of the Bihari state in the Nepali press. From noted UML prapagandist Pradip Nepal to the Nepali Times columnist Prashant of such hyperreality has to be understood to refuse.

The meeting was probably a publicity stunt, something that media theorists call a pseudo-event, where nothing need happen to make the news. The importance of Nitish Kumar of the achievements of the Bihari state in the Nepali Times columnist Prashant to the Nepali press. From noted UML prapagandist Pradip Nepal to the Nepali Times columnist Prashant of such hyperreality has to be understood to refuse.

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Brave new world

KUMAR LUITEL in DAMAK, JHAPA

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Rajbanshi from Gauradaha-1, Jhapa, was discharged from his PLA cantonment on 28 December. His sudden independence is a far cry from the rigid discipline he endured there. He has a family and must work odd-jobs to make ends meet. “Past is past. I have a family to look after now,” he says. Rajbanshi works as a labourer, earning Rs200 daily, in Gauradaha and Lakhanpur, and helps out on his in-laws’ farm. He says, “After all, you should do what you know. When I was in the cantonments, I would do many different kinds of jobs. But now I cannot.”

As a disqualified combatant, he knows he is entitled to receive free vocational training. But he is reluctant: “I don’t want any kind of training, I’m making a decent living as a daily-wage labourer.” Rajbanshi has lost touch with his former cantonment since being discharged, although he has contacted the local Maoist party office. Rajbanshi would like to go back there, but doesn’t have enough money.

Muna Biswas of Bagundha used to belong to the Pratham Division of the PLA. She returned home after being discharged from the Mahatan cantonment. Her husband Dharma, who is from Taplejung, is still there and is confident he’ll be integrated into the army. After it was confirmed Muna would be discharged, they went to her parents’ home, where they stayed for a few days. “We got married in the cantonment so he never got a chance to visit my parents before,” Muna says.

Muna was in the cantonment for three years and now takes care of her parents and helps with farm work. She has a brother and sister, both of whom are in school. She wasn’t aware that disqualified combatants are entitled to receive free vocational training. “My husband is in the cantonments. I don’t know, he must be happy. If there’s time, I’d still like to go to school.”

SITA MADEMBA in MORAN

“...I was disappointed when they took our weapons and uniforms. I was used to living in a group. I am feeling lonely but I am trying to get used to an ordinary lifestyle,” laments 24-year-old Gabinda Ghimire aka Biswas. He was discharged from Chulachuli camp last month.

Before joining the PLA, Ghimire was a management student at Mahendra Morang Campus. He was involved in the Maoist party’s student wing and went underground in 2004 without completing his studies. He left student politics and joined the PLA in 2005. However, he was disqualified by UNMIN. “I don’t know why I am disqualified,” he says, “I am good at using weapons.”

Ghimire is not currently affiliated with any Maoist organisation and lives with his family. He aspires to resume his studies but the government has only offered support for education up to grade 12. Ghimire says, “The government should give support for education up to a master’s degree. I don’t care about vocational education.”

He thinks the disqualified PLA have been tolerant of the government’s indifference so far, but warns that this may not last. “It is not time for the government to relax. Instead, it should be worried about the possible negative consequences especially after having kicked people out of the PLA. If we are ignored, we might even launch a revolt.”

Ghimire is upset that he has been asked to leave the PLA despite having devoted his youth to its cause. He never thought things would come to this. “I am not even in my wildest dreams,” he says. However, he says he doesn’t bear a grudge against the party.

Ghimire would have graduated by now. He quit his studies, calling it a “bourgeois education”. But without marketable skills, he’s now facing the toughest fight of his life.
Buddha is back

DEWAN RAI

The Youth Communist League has quietly stepped down considerably. Back when the Maoists were in power, they were effectively a paramilitary force, publicly shaming allegedly corrupt officials and intervening in such high visibility arenas as traffic control. When the Maoists left government, the YCL withdrew from the limelight, busing itself behind the scenes in party protests to reinstate civilian supremacy and national independence.

Nine months later, the YCL is back, though thankfully not with a bang. They are launching a "national youth campaign", a peaceful program aimed to draw the attention of concerned stakeholders for the completion of the peace process and the writing of a pro-people constitution by the May 28 deadline.

"The YCL has always been a social campaigner," says YCL coordinator Ganesh Pun. He says they are prepared to do whatever it takes to take the peace process to a logical conclusion.

Is it possible that the characterisation of the YCL as obsessed with violence is unfair? When a YCL cadre died in Surkhet this week, the group kept mum. "YCL ran artillery, assault and logistical units during the insurgency but we also initiated talks," Pun says, "We never were violent."

Pun also claims it was the YCL who lobbied for the National Youth Policy and the Youth Self-employment Program. "We are ready to support any government if they have a program to fight social inequalities and injustice," he says. It plans to invite the youth wings of other parties, with whom they have lingering disagreements, to participate in their campaign.

According to Pun, the YCL has one million general members from across the country. "We don't need to say what we are capable of doing in one whistle," he says. In a public address in March 2008, Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal urged YCL cadre to become like Buddha. No one listened. Now, it seems, Buddha is back.
**ECONOMIC SENSE**

Artha Beed

Good things never seem to last long, especially in Nepal. Just as the Beed was noting how quickly road construction has progressed during a drive to Bhullikel on Sunday, he came by a gang of residents obstructing construction work. It’s another example of might translating into right in Nepal. During the Panchayat era, people advertised their connection to the palace by showing off their electricity and water connections. So what’s the point of having laws governing how construction contractors behave? We have never been tuned to respecting what the law actually says: people do whatever they think the law means.

Law in Nepal is just a suggestion: red lights have become a suggestion to stop and ‘No Parking’ signs are put up to prove that what is written in the driving lesson book is not false. If one watches an altercation between microbus or cab drivers and a cop in the streets, it takes a while to figure out who is trying to book whom. Of late it is becoming more and more difficult to understand who is trying to enforce the law and who is trying to break it.

These issues are starting to affect all sectors. Let’s take the Beed’s Chartered Accountant fraternity. Suddenly, the Institute of Chartered Accountants (ICAN) decided that it would take action against auditors empanelled with Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) without ICAN’s approval. Auditors doing audits of banks and financial institutions have to get the votes of its members, so ultimately, it will not go too hard on them, just as politicians are incapable of making unpopular decisions. Look at how much tax is being paid by the leaders of various apex bodies. Do they represent the firms that actually pay huge amounts of tax? What does the law mean to them?

The way our laws are written is far from ideal, based as it is on the advice of parachute consultants from abroad. Therefore we have a tax law that can never be accurately translated into English or we have a new Banks and Financial Institution Act. Those who failed in government become consultants to bilateral and multilaterals and write laws that are sure to fail during implementation.

Rule of law is as important to getting things going in the country as it is the constitution-building process. Yet implementation and enforcement of the rule of law doesn’t offer as much security as many people that make laws desire. The politics of organisations plays its own role in such shenanigans whereby laws are rewritten or broken. For instance, how many auditors that ICAN has legally taken action against have been disqualified over the past decade? ICAN’s leadership needs a better strategy to protect its members.

**People are making up laws that suit them**

- **ECONOMIC SENSE**

Artha Beed

**ECONOMIC SENSE**

Artha Beed

New phones

The new Nokia X6, the flagship music device from Nok is, available in Nepal for Rs36,350. The set, with a slick 3.2” finger touch interface and a 16:9 widescreen, is capable of playing up to 55 hours of music and storing up to 5,500 tracks. It also offers easy access to social networks like Facebook and Twitter. The entertainment experience is completed by three embedded games, Spider by EA, Asphalt4 and DJ Mix and a 5 megapixel camera.

**Safe deposits**

Ajay Shrestha has been appointed the Chief Executive Officer of the Bank of Kathmandu. He has been associated with the banking industry for more than two decades. Under its campaign ‘Save for Future’, the bank has introduced new deposit products - Laghu Bachat Khata and Laghu Muddati Khata - with the intention of encouraging saving habits. The first scheme requires a minimum Rs1000 balance and provides up to a 7% interest rate, the latter can be opened with a minimum of Rs10,000 with an interest rate of 9.5%. The Bank of Kathmandu has 33 branches, 6 extension counters and 37 ATM terminals.

**Year old**

Laxmi Intercontinental, the official partner of Hyundai Vehicles in Nepal, celebrated its first anniversary on 26th February 2010 at Scoitact Crown Plaza. The anniversary program was attended by around 2000 guests. Laxmi International’s official website www.laxmiinter.com was launched during the event, and its tie-up with the A division football team Manang Marshyangdi Club was announced.

**e-ticketing**

Yeti Airlines and Global Bank have agreed to allow customers of the latter purchase Yeti Airlines tickets online. The airline says the initiative has been launched to make optimum use of technological advancements. Yeti has entered into similar agreements with Nepal Investment Bank and Everest Bank. Members of Yeti Airlines’ Sky Club can also open accounts with Global Bank with a zero balance and obtain discounts of 50 per cent on debit cards, free of cost internet banking services, and discounts on air tickets.

**Play on**

The politics of organisations plays its own role in such shenanigans whereby laws are rewritten or broken. For instance, how many auditors that ICAN has legally taken action against have been disqualified over the past decade? ICAN’s leadership needs a better strategy to protect its members.
A sked by a reporter whether the movie adaptation of his children's book *Where the Wild Things Are* was too scary for children, Maurice Sendak responded, “If they can't handle it, go home. Or wet your pants. Do whatever you like. But it’s not a question that can be answered.” An enticing recommendation for a movie (and just the kind of response anyone might be tempted to fling at doubters and detractors). Of course, venerated authors such as Sendak can afford such barbs. But his response shouldn’t be mistaken as his dismissing children’s taste—rather, it is an unabashed endorsement of Spike Jonze’s adaptation and a dismissal of sentimentalised and sanitised notions of childhood.

Sendak’s endorsement problematises the accusation that Jonze has desecrated what some argue is a straightforward story of the power of imagination. In the swift strokes oft-employed in children’s books, a young unruly Max, banished to his bedroom, whisked himself away to where the ‘Wild Things’ are. The Wild Things, ferocious creatures perhaps much like himself, have outsized appetites and compulsions. Staring into their eyes, Max commands their respect and obedience, and so awed are they with this little creature that they crown him their king. Of course, Max’s first order of business as king is a ‘wild rumpus’, depicted by Sendak’s illustrations in eloquent wordless spreads of bacchanalian raucous exuberance that carries the narrative to its peak. Jonze wisely chooses a tactile aesthetic, drawing out claws and snarls, neatly bracketed by the niceties of social conventions. There’s something not quite human in the unnatural bipedal gait of the foxes that makes one feel they are on the verge of scampering off.

Adult audiences might feel sheepish about enjoying—or even defending—films ostensibly for children. But he playfully reminds us that his protagonists are wild animals in wolfed-down nature, as subsequent shenanigans involving three unsavory farmers prove. If *Wild Things* explores the wilderness of the interior psyche, *Mr. Fox* probes into the stifling civility that boxes in our inner animal. The Wes Anderson signature marks a certain gentility over his characters, as they conduct their business, go home to their families and raise their kids. But he playfully reminds us that his characters are wild animals in wolfed-down meals and disagreements among friends that draw out claws and snarls, neatly bracketed by the niceties of social convention. There’s something not quite human in the unnatural bipedal gait of the foxes that makes one feel they are on the verge of scampering off.

Adult audiences might feel sheepish about enjoying—or even defending—films ostensibly for children. But past the elevated appreciation some might relish, it is your inner animal, not your inner child, whose recommendation for a movie (and just the simply wrought, if clever, original. The most drastic departure from Dahl’s story lies in the protagonist and his community’s delightfully anthropomorphised suburban life. Viewers familiar with Anderson’s work will note that his well-worn themes, humour and aesthetic are revitalised and well-suited to this, his first animation. The opening scene is classic Wes Anderson, introducing as it does Mr. Fox as a suspicious, charming and perhaps restless father figure. Fatherhood and a promise elicited from Mrs. Fox (also recognisable as a Wes Anderson cut-out as the long-suffering wife) has him foregoing his daring life of risk and excitement to settle down, a key ingredient in the protagonist’s growth as an individual. The rage, hostility and loneliness that simmers beneath the mask of a gentleman boxer that carries the narrative forward is successfully transferred to the movie.

Puppets on a far more diminutive scale feature in Wes Anderson’s Fantastic Mr. Fox, a stop-animation that also sources the work of a celebrated children’s author. Anderson’s Mr. Fox, however, makes a far less recognisable transition.Anderson creates a baroque and detailed world where Roald Dahl’s characters are elaborated on and assigned more complex motivations than the simply wretched, if clever, original. The most drastic departure from Dahl’s story lies in the protagonist and his community’s delightfully anthropomorphised suburban life. Viewers familiar with Anderson’s work will note that his well-worn themes, humour and aesthetic are revitalised and well-suited to this, his first animation. The opening scene is classic Wes Anderson, introducing as it does Mr. Fox as a suspicious, charming and perhaps restless father figure. Fatherhood and a promise elicited from Mrs. Fox (also recognisable as a Wes Anderson cut-out as the long-suffering wife) has him foregoing his daring life of risk and excitement to settle down, a key ingredient in the protagonist’s growth as an individual. The rage, hostility and loneliness that simmers beneath the mask of a gentleman boxer that carries the narrative forward is successfully transferred to the movie.

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**Paranormal Activity**

86 minutes | 99 minutes (extended version)

The premise of this low-budget horror film from director Oren Peli is nothing new – a young couple, Micah (Micah Sloat) and Katie (Katie Featherston), move into a suburban house and encounter a supernatural presence intent on disturbing the peace.

What makes the movie work however is the raw homemade footage created (in the vein of The Blair Witch Project) when Micah decides to document every second of their time in the house in hopes of capturing the paranormal occurrences, which increase in frequency and intensity towards the film’s violent denouement.

The increasing strain on the couple’s relationship is also recorded, and it is the performance of the actors here, including their often banal interactions, that grant the film its believability.

Having grossed about US$150 million at the box office, Paranormal Activity looks set to take its place among horror cult classics. Just don’t watch it home alone. 3.5/5

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**The Informant**

The Informant is a true story about a corporate whistle-blower named Mark Whitacre (Matt Damon). He is an executive at a company called ADM that is involved in an international conspiracy to fix the price of Lycine, a corn extract. As an executive member of the firm, Mark is not only privy to all the details but is also a major stakeholder. When the FBI begins snooping around, Whitacre decides to tell all in order to save himself. But it soon comes to light that Whitacre isn’t quite the White Knight he pretends to be.

The filmmakers do a tremendous job dramatising the unmasking of Whitacre, an endearing if quirky family man who seems to have everything. As wry humour gives way to a darker side, Matt Damon pulls off a tight-rope act with finesse. Excellent screenplay. 4.5/5

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**District 9**

Peter Jackson of LOTR fame provides the backing for Neill Blomkamp’s District 9, a documentary-style feature on prawn-like aliens stranded on earth once their mothership runs out of gas above Johannesburg. When Multinational United (MNU) begins to evict the 1.8 million aliens interned in the slums of District 9, ostensibly in response to public demand, newly appointed relocation chief Wikus van de Merwe (Sharlto Copley) finds he’s bitten off rather more than he can chew.

The film’s messages are clear – the eviction of aliens has precedents in apartheid and Jo’burg’s District 6, and MNU provides an easy target as the unscrupulous corporation willing to sacrifice anything in the pursuit of filthy lucre. But even without the moral message, District 9 is an absorbing, refreshing take on the alien genre, and you may be surprised who your sympathies lie with by the time the shooting starts. 4/5

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**Video night**

When the sun goes down, it’s time to boot up that laptop and slip in a DVD. Life Times lights up the dark hours with a few staff picks.

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**The Informant**

**District 9**

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Exhibition of Tibetan Authentic Traditional Thangkas, traditional art created by renowned artists following the true teachings, 9.30am-7pm daily, Pathibara Art Gallery, Thamel, 428004.

Poet’s Corner, send in and vote for your favourite piece of poetry at Lazimpat Gallery Café. Open entry until 21 March. Movie screening of Precious at Lazimpat Gallery Café, 1 March, 6pm.

Timing may change due to load-shedding. 4438549 or lazimpatgallerycafe@gmail.com

Tasasú-Kathamandú Scrolls, Alliance Française presents an exhibition of paintings by Julien Solé, 26 Feb-19 March, Siddhartha Gallery, Babar Mahal.

Himalayan hask hash house harriers, a running club with a drinking problem, meet every Saturday to run a course called Himalayan hash house harriers, Siddhartha Gallery, Babar Mahal.

Ponsart sets off on journeys with nothing but a set of photographic archives in her possession as a guide. One decade in the past.

Rudra, immerse yourself in soothing Nepali music every Tuesday and Sunday, 7-11pm. Comfort Zone (roof top of Bank of Kathmandu), Thamel.

JSC Jazz Quartet, every Saturday 8pm at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lazimpat, 9803160719

Chillout Lounge with DJ Miriam, every Friday at the Bourbon Room, Lal Darbar Marg, 4414703

Saturday African Nite, with African food and music at Jazzabell Café, Jhamsikhel, 2114075

Robin and the New Revolution, every Thursday 7pm at the Bamboo Club, Thamel, 4701547

Live band every Friday and rooftop BBQ everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Darbar Marg, 4227288

Some like it hot, every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, Rs899 at Fusion, Dwarka’s Hotel, 7pm, 4479488

Himalyan Rainbow Trout at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg, 4248999.

Tiger for Breakfast, breakfast everyday at 6:50, Kantipath, 4215286.

Mexican Sojourn, Mexican dishes and tequilas every Friday 7pm, Hotel himalaya, Kupondole, 5282180.

Experience the Gyakok with African food and music from Kenya, for their signature BBQ Dinner at Hotel Shangri-La, Lal Darbar Marg, 600 4412999.

Live music, Filipino fusion band performing live at bathrooms at Tiger Bar of The Everest Hotel, 7-10.30pm daily except Mondays. For reservations, 4780100, ext: 7717811.

Bottles n Chimney, feel the blues on Mondays with Nevkham, 7pm onwards, 2123135.

Fusion and classic music by Anil Shahi, Wednesdays, Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayaní Complex, Pulchowk, 8pm onwards, 5521408.

The Corner Bar, 5-7pm, 3-11pm, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, 4411818.

Lavazze Coffee and Baskin - Robbins, at Blue Note Coffee Shop, Lazimpat, 4491234.

A café’s café, Dhubkaïna Café, Patan Dhoka, 5522113.

Jazzabell Café, TGIF, 10% discount all day, happy hour 6-8pm, Jhamsikhel, 2114075.

Al Fresco, for homemade pasta, steak and freshwater trout, Kakori, for bryngias, curries and kebabs, 7-10.45pm, Soothele Crown Plaza, 4273899.

Teppanyaki meat items and garlic rice at Le Restaurant, Garidhara, 4436318.

Reality Bites, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarka’s Hotel Group of Hotels, 9am-10pm, 4425341.

Dining

Casa Toscania, for all things Italian, from pasta to confectionery delicacies, Pulchowk, 5337775.

Tom & Jerry Pub, happy hour from 5-8pm with free popcorn, Thamel.

Ghangri Café, for their signature open au mait momos and special fried rice, Pulchowk.

Hankock Sarang, to satiate your appetite with delicious Korean food, Thamel.

The Irish are at it again! Lots of balloons, crazy hats and free 2 for 1 deals at the bar at the only Irish Restaurant in Nepal. Kilroy’s of Kathmandu, Thamel, 4250440/41.

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Café, for wood-fired pizza and free wi-fi Internet, 01230861.

Famous stews of the world, enjoy famous stews of the world at the Rox Restaurant, Tuesday, from 6.00PM onwards, Hyatt Regency, 4491234/4489282.

Fall in love with the rich Tharu culture. Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge. Enjoy safari, nature walks, bullock cart rides. Experience the rich Tharu culture.

Tiger Tops, Special Re-opening offer: 3 Nights/4 Days at Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge & Tented Camp, with one night at Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge. Enjoy safari, nature walks, bullock cart rides. Experience the rich Tharu culture.

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Dwarika’s Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort, Dhulikhel, 4479488, Overnight Package and Great Escape Package (locals).

Chiso Chiso Hawa Ma Special Package, Club Himalaya, Nagarkot, 410432/414432, locals and expats.

Godavari Village Resort, 5660675, 5560775, special packages for locals and expats.

Mirabel Resort, Special Package Rates for locals and expats.

Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, food, yoga, massage, meditation, walks and pool, 01 416500, reservations@tigermountain.com, www.tigermountain.com

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NexGEN Adventure Programme, rock climbing, daily departure, 016914541, 8441238385, www.canyoningin nepal.com
MESSENGERS OF PEACE: United Nations Under Secretary General for Political Affairs B Lynn Pascoe arrived in Kathmandu on Wednesday to assess the state of the peace process.

UPRISING: Tibetan activists protest in Kathmandu on Tibetan Uprising Day on Wednesday, marking the day Chinese troops entered Tibet in 1959.

EMPOWERMENT? Majhi women in Taulihawa marked the 100th International Women’s Day on Monday doing what they usually do—fishing.

DANCE, DANCE, DANCE: Bulgarian dancers perform at the fifth International Folk Cultural Festival at Nepal Academy on Saturday.

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DECLARATION

KIRAN PANDAY

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DECLARATION

KIRAN PANDAY
Nepal is ranked 143 out of 180 by Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index 2009. This will come as no surprise to anyone who lives here. We all know how things work (or don’t) in Nepal, at all levels, in all walks of life. Corruption is a many-splendored thing in this country – it could be so pervasive, so integral to the Nepali way that we don’t even notice it anymore… it comes as naturally as drinking water to a fish in the sea.

It’s not entirely true that we have become oblivious to corruption, but perhaps we too often focus on the big fish – most notably those neta who trample on our trust. This may be because the headlines tend to focus on the more spectacular cases, such as those taken down by the failed CIAA and those deployed by donors of late. These seem to be a perception that curbing corruption, like economic growth, can really have a trickle-down effect.

But what of everyday, run of mill corruption? As we count out Ram Chandu Kushwaha for single-handedly threatening a $2.6 billion education sector reform programme through his cackhanded exploitation as a Minister of Education, do we even stop to explore the significance of antexture, source force and glue? Close to everyone in Nepal is implicated in this game. If poorer, less connected Nepalis don’t possess the wherewithal to move events in their favour, it’s not for lack of trying.

The more prosperous are most impacted, clearly. Employment, school admissions, bank loans, administrative fines, you name it, they’ll be low-towing and cowing and straight-up palm-greasing to get what they want. The inefficiencies of the Nepali bureaucracy encourage some forms of corruption – a quick bed to expedite land sales or visa applications, for example. But there are other crimes that directly undermine the creation of a merit-based society, and their consequences are far more significant.

Such behaviour on the part of the Nepali elite quite naturally encourages the have-nots to indulge in the same to the extent to which they are capable. Entire generations of Nepalis grow up with the expectation of benefiting from peer-to-peer relations or patronage networks. At best, we can enrol the realities and benefits of social capital and note that so-called developed countries get along quite fine with networks of old-boy networks. At worst, we have the wrong people in the wrong places, while the brightest cannot be their best. And this plays a key role in resentment on the part of communities who don’t have an in on the system. The results are plain to see.

What can be done to stem the rot? Institutions such as the CIAA may not be the working now, and a whole raft of anti-corruption legislation is yet to be implemented, but they remain essential if we are to address corruption in Nepal. But the first steps must be taken by each one of us, and this is the most difficult thing to do, given how corruption is indeed a matter of expectation. We are embedded in a society largely accepted (and even amusing of the fruits) of corruption.

So dare to allow your children to make their way through life on the basis of merit, and merit alone. This does not of course mean you should not support them emotionally and materially the best you can – but this should not be at the expense of someone more deserving. Be patient and resist the bureaucracy’s demand for a bribe, even in the face of inefficiencies and inconveniences that seem designed to encourage fast-tracking. Face up to the consequences of your actions next time you get stopped for a traffic offense… or something more serious.

This may sound ridiculously laudable, and as a member of the Kathmandu elite, it risk being dubbed a hypocrite. But even if one chooses to keep the focus on the real criminals, it’s worth considering if your actions have a wider moral significance. Just remember that the big fish all started as small fry like you and me. Amal Prithvi Ram Pratap Shalal declares via a notice in Morang district’s Land Revenue Office, “Those who take and give bribes are the great enemies of the nation.”

At school, Nepali always seemed the poor cousin of English. Nepali was not hip. If you did well in Nepali, you were viewed with some suspicion by other students: “he must be a pujari’s son, or a closeted, pure bahun”, as if those categories had a unique claim over the language. Today, though I don’t have the figures to prove it, conversations with batch mates indicate that almost eighty per cent of those who graduated from St. Xavier’s with me reside in the western world. From doctors to engineers, software pros to scientists, STX ‘92 occupies some of the most lucrative positions abroad.

Occasionally, we meet for drinks and pride ourselves on our Xavierian heritage; we riff on Hollywood and hip-hop; our Xavierian heritage; we riff on Hollywood and hip-hop; our Xavierian heritage; we riff on Hollywood and hip-hop; our Xavierian heritage; we riff on Hollywood and hip-hop; our Xavierian heritage; we riff on Hollywood and hip-hop; our Xavierian heritage; we riff on Hollywood and hip-hop; our Xavierian heritage; we riff on Hollywood and hip-hop; our Xavierian heritage; we riff on Hollywood and hip-hop; our Xavierian heritage; we riff on Hollywood and hip-hop. Many foreign-born children, on their part, grow up with little appreciation, or knowledge, of any Nepali language.

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Celebrated commentator CK Lal’s column in the last issue (“Junket journalism”, #492) must have been an interesting read for students of journalism like myself. Lal’s comment that this author “unabashedly promotes causes close to his heart” through the use of media has a wider relevance to the practice of journalism.

I have been arguing lately that the core value of ‘public service’ in journalism needs a radical redefinition. After studying journalism and working as a full-time journalist for nearly 18 years, I have been left wondering whether what I have been doing all these years has actually served the public.

Philanthropy is the cause that I have been “unabashedly” promoting through the use of media and that is what seems to have irked Lal. Through my various articles in the vernacular press, I have explained why I have been doing so.

First, the type of journalism practised around the world, which primarily revolves around politics, conflict and disasters, may not actually be enough to do justice to the fundamental objective of the profession we are in – public service. Day in and day out, we hear about the violence in the Middle East and poverty and conflict in Africa and Asia. Has the coverage changed anything? It seems clear the gap between the rich and the poor has widened, environmental degradation is increasing, public insecurity is high, and the list goes on.

The continuous flow of negative news and commentary seems, rather, to have desensitised society to human misery. I have realised however that many people find positive news refreshing and inspirational amidst the all-pervasive gloom surrounding society. Coincidentally, this weekly has been at the forefront in Nepal in promoting positive news, which has brought about visible change: Bhairab Risal’s ‘Sun light in Humla’ (#243) and Captain Vijay Lama’s ‘Nyaypann campaign’ (‘I’m a Nepali first’, #328) are a couple of examples. I doubt if the scores of columns on political punditry I’ve published in local and international media have had as much impact as those two features on life-changing noble acts. They have directly benefited some of the most vulnerable communities, who struggle to feed themselves every day and can’t even imagine engaging in moral discourses in the national press as I am doing now.

Second, apart from the positive news, I have also concluded that the media’s core value of public service would be served better if it were to be used to promote philanthropic causes. There is a strong complementary relation between the idea of public service in journalism and philanthropy that has remained largely unexplored. The question is, if politicians and many politically biased commentators constantly harp about their political beliefs in the opinion pages of newspapers, television and radio interviews, what is wrong in promoting philanthropy through the use of media? If Lal can support and promote ‘lok tantra’ (democracy) and a highly controversial GP Koirala, why can’t one promote ‘lok kalyan’ (philanthropy) and the likes of Uttam Sanjel and Dr Upendra Mahato? Eighteen thousand poor Nepali children are getting a relatively good education for just 100 rupees a month because of Uttam Sanjel. And through Dr Mahato’s support, at least another 10,000 poor children will also benefit. Who should be “mindful of the principles and personalities” they promote – those who support abstract political views and some of the most loathed politicians in the country, or those who support solidly result-oriented social agendas and real changemakers?

We are so used to politico-centric journalism that one hardly questions it when Lal promotes GP Koirala, Hari Rokka promotes Pancha or Bishram Rijal promotes Madhus Nepale. However many people, like Lal, are uncomfortable with the idea of a philanthropic agenda being promoted through the press. It is ironic that the obsolete and recycled views of the same politicians get so much coverage every day in the press while the uncountable excellent initiatives undertaken by so many people throughout the country are underplayed or entirely ignored.

Until and unless we come out of this pit of politico-centric journalist and try to see the wider world, we will fail to understand the core value of the profession we are in.

rabindra.helpnepal@gmail.com
CLARE HARVEY

The difficulties of caring for a disabled child are compounded in Nepal, but some are making a genuine effort to help

Finding out your baby has a disability is always going to be heart-breaking. But when you live in a culture where many believe that being born disabled is a direct result of misdeeds in a previous life, the outlook can be overwhelmingly depressing. This is the case for parents of children with Cerebral Palsy (CP) in Nepal.

About one in 400 children are affected by CP in the United Kingdom, and this figure may be higher in Nepal, where there is less pre-natal care. CP is caused by brain damage prior to birth. Children with CP have problems with movement and balance, struggle to speak clearly, and may have problems swallowing and difficulties with spatial perception.

Although some children with CP have learning difficulties, many may have average or above average intelligence. And whilst there is no cure for CP, it is not a condition that gets worse over time, so with early intervention (primarily physiotherapy), the outlook can be quite positive.

In Nepal, however, there is a paucity of support for children with CP, partly due to lack of resources as well as the stigma attached to having a child with CP. Outreach workers report that children with the condition are often locked away from the prying eyes of judgmental neighbours, and relatives will deny there is a disabled child in the family. It’s a situation that has been aptly described as Nepal’s ‘hidden catastrophe’ by the Self Help Group for Cerebral Palsy Nepal.

But there are glimmers of hope in the form of determined charities working tirelessly to improve the situation of Nepali children with CP. One of these is A Genuine Effort (AGE) Nepal, based in Kupomodi in Lalitpur. AGE was founded six years ago by three physiotherapists – Jeena Shrestha, Aniti Singh and Bimala Shrestha – with the aim of improving quality of life for children with neurological disabilities.

The day care centre, which employs six full-time staff, a part-time accountant and a volunteer occupational therapist from Switzerland, caters for the needs of 17 children between the ages of 3 and 12. AGE offers multi-disciplinary care, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, play therapy and informal education. The idea is that through sustained stimulation and support these children can enjoy some of the things that ‘normal’ children take for granted, like sitting up, playing with a musical toy, feeding themselves, or learning to read.

The charity also offers support to parents by providing care and counselling. An additional goal is to educate the broader community about neurological disabilities.

“Here, society blames you for having a disabled child, so we want to help the parents and change the way our community views disabled children,” says Bimala.

Jeena, Aniti and Bimala would love to do more, but as AGE Nepal runs entirely on private donations, it is very difficult to expand or plan ahead. “Just a small contribution can make a big difference in the lives of these children,” says Aniti Singh. “Let us join hands to take these children out of their misery and give them a dignified life.”

AGE Nepal: www.agenepal.org
Self Help Group for Cerebral Palsy Nepal: http://cpnepal.org

I have three children. My youngest, Rose (sic), is now four. She has cerebral palsy, diagnosed at the age of two when we realised she wasn’t hitting her developmental markers (she still wasn’t walking at the age of two and a half). As soon as we realised there was a real problem, we were offered physiotherapy, speech therapy, play therapy, and put in touch with a welfare advisor to help us access state support these children can enjoy.

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She felt she had to have a ‘normal’ child just to prove that there was nothing wrong with her.

Babu is an extremely sociable child. He loves the company of his friends and family, and adores his baby brother. He has been coming to AGE for the past five years for physiotherapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy and informal education. His condition is such that physically there will probably be little progress. However, during his time at AGE he has learned to respond, speak a few words, and let his carers know when he needs to use the toilet. Whilst these may not seem like much, they are huge achievements for a child who faces so many physical challenges.
“Winning an election a disadvantage”

Interview with former state minister at the Home Ministry Mohammad Bijwan Ansari in Kantipur, 11 March

Why did you resign?
I’ve wanted to resign as minister of state at the home ministry for four months because of the worsening security situation. I hoped to focus on my work in the CA. However, I was told by the prime minister and party leaders to be patient. But the security situation only got worse. I felt morally obliged to submit a letter of resignation.

Why did the prime minister ask you to resign when the public’s ire was directed at the home minister?
I’m surprised as well. I’ve had my letter of resignation in my pocket for four months. I would’ve submitted it if he hadn’t asked for it. On the other hand, everyone’s been asking the home minister to resign, including the public, party leaders, businessmen, and other officials. In this context, why I was asked to resign now is a mystery to me.

The prime minister didn’t dare ask the state minister who slapped a CDO to resign. Why did he fix on you?
I don’t know. The prime minister has been meaning to ask either the state minister or the home minister to resign for a while since they couldn’t get along. I guess he picked the easier path.

You are the only UML member in government who was elected. Perhaps the elected and unelected have different mindsets?
When the government was formed, there was talk that I would be named the home minister. However, I was worried that I was underqualified, although I won the elections. Could it be that winning an election is politically disadvantageous?

“I’m not a royalist”

Interview with NC leader Khum Bahadur Khadka, Nagarik, 11 March

Did you talk about politics when you met the former king recently?
Not really. I heard the king saying to Kali Baba, “the law and order situation in the country is deteriorating, please bless Nepal so that we can overcome it.”

Do you have close relations with the former King?
I have met him three or four times. I am not a royalist. When I was home minister under Surya Bahadur Thapa, I put a proposal to the central committee to reconsider the role of the king. Later general secretary Basu Risal told me, “We have had a long journey with him. If you talk about dethroning him, you will regret it.”

How could the corruption case against you be biased?
It was a joint effort to charge me on corruption, as designed by the palace.

Why are you lobbying for a Hindu kingdom?
Nepal was declared secular without discussion. Leaders got money to declare it a secular country. You were also there in parliament when it was declared, why didn’t you speak out?

The situation was such you could not oppose anything. Even Girijababu could not.

It is a secret party line to make Nepal a Hindu kingdom?
It is an individual campaign, though many friends have joined me. I am not talking about religious extremism, I am talking about the country’s identity.

Chemonics International Regional Program Manager

Chemonics International seeks qualified candidates for following position. This is a one year, full time position on the USAID-funded Nepal Transition Initiative (NTI) program which seeks to support Nepal’s political transition. This fast, flexible program is designed to bolster the current peace process; strengthen governance mechanisms; and support positive, non-violent community engagement in the country’s political, social and economic future.

Regional Program Manager

This position will be located in Janakpur and requires significant travel in and around the Terai. Local expatriates encouraged to apply.

The Regional Program Manager (RPM) is responsible for overseeing of the field office in Janakpur and all related grants and activities in the eastern and central Terai region, ensuring smooth implementation and adherence to USAID rules and regulations. The RPM will oversee the staff and office in Janakpur and will manage all financial, administrative and programmatic issues. The RPM will oversee the identification of potential grantees and the development and implementation of small grant activities. The RPM will be responsible for ensuring that the program is carried out in the spirit of peace and democracy in Nepal as well as oversee programmatic and implementation monitoring of each grant activity in coordination with other staff members. She/he will advise on the evolution of the local political, legal and economic situation and on how to continuously adapt the regional NTI program to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. The RPM will report directly to the Chief of Party and advise him/her of program and administrative issues related to the field office.

- Strong written and spoken English language ability is required, Nepali or other local language a plus.
- Knowledge of USAID rules and regulations, especially financial.
- Experience conceptualizing, implementing, and monitoring small grant projects.
- Experience overseeing projects and project budgets.
- Minimum of two years experience working in a complex and challenging field operation in unstable developing countries with preferably at least one year in a supervisory capacity.
- Desire and willingness to live in Janakpur.

Please submit CV and cover letter to operations@chemonics-nepal.com and write the position you are applying for in the subject line. The deadline for applications has been extended to Sunday, March 21. Only short listed applicants will be contacted. Position is subject to available funding and USAID approval.

Call for Expressions of Interest

Nepal Program to Promote Good Governance

The World Bank intends to finance the assignment described below under the State and Peace Building Fund (SPF), a trust fund financed from the Bank’s administrative budget and the governments of the Netherlands and Norway.

The assignment requires an eligible Nepali civil society organization (CSO) to serve as a national capacity building institute (NCBI) of the Democratic Forum for Governance (DFEG) in Nepal (PROD). The World Bank will award the contract for one year, renewable annually for up to another 2 years, based on performance. The PROD is a US$3 million World Bank initiative to enable non-state institutions to help improve governance and institutional performance in Nepal, as well as transparency and risk mitigation in World Bank-financed projects via social accountability mechanisms (SA). For the first year of operations, the institution will receive US$145,000 to perform these services.

Tasks to be undertaken will focus on training, mentoring and awareness raising, and include the following: SA capacity assessments of Nepali civil society organizations (CSOs), and other constituencies, e.g. government (GoN) media and Constituency Assembly; Identifying target beneficiaries of training; Identifying international and national training partners and organize their provision of training to target groups; Preparing a detailed one year plan, and a 3 year indicative SA capacity building program, and progress reports; Organizing training in SA techniques through ‘DFEG schools’ and distance learning; on-the-job mentoring and coaching; exchange/interaction visits to other countries; scholarships for formal instruction; customized training for specialized constituencies (e.g. media, government, research institutions); and the training of potential partners; and, Developing a PROD practitioners alumni network.

The successful applicant will have: an established presence in Nepal, and sound professional reputation among development constituencies; proven track record in delivering training programs – to state and non-state actors; capacity to manage different and simultaneous training activities; experience with Government-civil society partnerships; experience in working with national and international partners; capacity to comply with standard fiduciary regulations and accounting systems; a cadre of staff with core competencies in SA; experience in implementing capacity building programs on SA is an advantage.

The World Bank now invites eligible Nepali organizations to indicate their interest in providing the required services, with an operating plan and budget for the first year. Applicants must provide information indicating their qualifications for this assignment that includes: past experience of training of CSOs – notably SA practitioners; CSOs needs assessments; management of training programs; administrative and financial capacity; training on similar conditions to Nepal, organizational chart and core skills of available staff, most recent audited accounts, and testimonials from previous clients. Applicants may associate (in the form of a Joint Venture or intended Joint Venture) to enhance their qualifications. Organizations may collaborate if needed to meet these qualifications.

Applicants will be selected in accordance with Selection Based on Consultant’s Qualification method as per the procedures set out in the current edition of the World Bank’s Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants by Bank Borrowers. Interested organizations may obtain further information at the address below, between 09:30AM and 5:00PM.

Expressions of interest must be delivered to the address below by April 1, 2010.

Tel: (977 1) 4226792 Ext. 148 Fax: (977 1) 4225112; email: snepali@worldbank.org
DEWAN RAI

Amidst growing public conviction that the deadline will be missed, the CA announced its schedule on Tuesday for the tenth time, while reassuring the need for a timely constitution. With just 11 weeks left, the CA took a shortcut by pushing the deadline for the submission of the first draft of the constitution to 16 April, while retaining 28 May as the final deadline.

A political mechanism comprising parliamentary party leaders from all parties will work towards finding common ground on a range of still contentious issues. The Constitutional Committee (CC) has not yet started its task of drafting the preliminary constitution as it has received only 2 of 11 draft reports. There are political issues to be resolved in the remaining 9 draft reports.

The leaders of all political parties attended Tuesday’s meeting of the committee and agreed to resolve differences on genuine issues that have obstructed the constitution-writing process. It is yet to be seen if the promise will be kept. “We have no option but to believe them,” said Kailash Purung, NC CA member, who is also a committee member. “They have committed to completing the task in time. It is too early to predict the fate of the constitution.”

Another committee member and Maoist CA member Hari Raj Limbu says if the political parties keep their commitment, Nepal will get a new constitution on time. “It is time for the political parties to show honesty towards the task assigned to them,” he said. The entire process now depends on how they translate their commitment into action.

If the political parties act on their commitment to resolve contentious issues, Nepal can still have a new constitution on time.

To start drafting the new constitution, there has to be agreement among political parties on fundamental issues such as federalism, state restructuring, forms of governance, and fundamental rights, among others. “The issues are where they were months ago,” said constitution expert Bhimanjay Acharya. “The political parties should resolve their differences and help in drafting the constitution.”

Acharya accused the political parties of knowingly delaying the constitution-writing process. “They have not exhibited the political will required to write the constitution on time,” he said. As the deadline draws nearer, some argue it’s technically impossible to meet the deadline. The latest rescheduling of the CA calendar was an attempt to avoid a constitutional vacuum come May 28. But the CA will now have to skip certain constitutionally mandated steps of the writing process. Of 17, only six steps have been completed till date. Crucial steps that remain include: discussing the first draft in a CA full session, taking the draft to the public, interacting with experts on the draft, distributing it to CA members to study, and discussing each article and passing it by two thirds in the CA.

Acharya noted the thematic committees have already prepared the preliminary drafts and it won’t take much time to compile and prepare a final draft of the constitution. “Political consensus is all we need,” he said.

He also argued that if the parties agree on the fundamental issues, the country can adopt a concise constitution, though this does not mean an incomplete constitution. “We can discuss minor issues later but extending the tenure of the CA is a completely illegitimate move,” he concluded.

If the deadline to submit the first draft of the constitution is missed this time around, this may be an inevitable consequence.

“Six-month extension possible”

Will the constitution be written by 28 May? If the politicians remain stubborn the constitution won’t be written on time.

If not, then what? According to the interim constitution, the deadline can be extended by six months, within which time the constitution must be completed. There’s no alternative to that.

But isn’t that only possible during an emergency period? If the constitution isn’t written by the deadline, then it will be an emergency. That’s why when that situation arises, political understanding and consensus will be necessary. Otherwise we will be in dire straits.

“Tough to meet deadline”

Chasial Vishwakarmi, UML CA member, Rupandehi

If the constitution isn’t written by 28 May, what will happen? Hypothetical questions like that are hard to answer. There’s no alternative to writing the constitution even if it means extending the deadline.

How much extra time would be necessary? That depends on how efficiently the CA works.

Suppose it continues working at its current pace.
Last week’s Cursing Festival in Parsawa has put Nepal on the [expletive deleted] world voodoo map. News that villagers gather around at holi to curse the [%$#@&] living daylights out of each other [foul language] has gone around the globe and made us the [PG18] laughing stock of the world [hee-haw]. All this bodes very well indeed for Visit Nepal Ear 2011.

Any publicity is good publicity, especially if it is free, in our goal of bringing in one million visitors. Also from next year we can start marketing the Cursing Festival as a major tourist attraction for the Tarai, in addition to Lumbini, Janakpur and Chitwan. Slogan: ‘Visit Nepal and Curse All You Want’.

The way it’s done is this. Villagers gather around and start casting serious aspersions about each others’ mothers. They also put spells on their neighbours’ livestock by shouting: “May your buffaloes die of diarrhoea.” To which the neighbours reply: “Your son looks like a donkey.” Ahem, that should be a compliment.

There are other Adults Only curses that can’t be printed in a family periodical like this, and we hear the denizens of Parsawa are already practicing for next year’s festival with some choice hitherto unused epithets like (deleted by moderator). Our advice to the Aguwas of our Civilian Society is to bring the Cursing Festival to Kathmandu and stage a noisy rally in front of Singha Darbar.

Speaking of NTY 2011, congratulations to the Nepal Tourism Board for getting the leaders of all 16 main political parties to sign a pledge not to have strikes and other disruptions in the runup to next year. Now if the parties could only show the same solidarity to write the constitution, we’d be home free. The Baddies were the last to sign because they were apparently haggling over the wording of the draft as if it was a binding international treaty. The comrades wanted to remove all specific references to “strikes, bandas and chukka jams”, then finally relented, but wanted the exit clause:“except in special circumstances” added.

NTB, to its credit, stood its ground and the Prachanda & Prachanda negotiations dragged on into the night with a final agreement on a compromise wording: “principally we will not affect tourism and tourism related activities during the campaign.” That saved the day and Awesome signed the document, shaking hands with his namesake. For such mediation skills, the Ass would like to nominate Prachanda Man Singh the Chief Negotiator to end the current political deadlock as well.

What’s with this gate-fetish of us Nepalis? Awesome goes all the way to Dang to inaugurate a new gate, every VDC and DDC now sets aside enormous amounts of money to build gates, and the Ugliest Gate in Nepal at TIA needs a major demolition job if we are to give a good first impression to visitors. In fact, if we had erected schools and health posts instead of gates, this country would be well on its way to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

Kalibaba organised a nine-day yagya to restore the Hindu kingdom. The former physics teacher of ASCOL said he would self-immolate if Nepal didn’t revert back to a Hindu kingdom. As usual, our current and erstwhile leaders all trooped off to be blessed: KP Bhattarai, Maknay, ex-kingji, but conspicuous in his absence this time was Awesome. Probably because kingG’s supporters were chanting “raja au desh bachau” outside the temple while Khum Budder was offering a garland to His Ex.

The stress of his job is showing on the prime minister. Inaugurating a handicraft fair at the mandap the other day Maknay addressed the defensive minister as education minister, but the Ass can’t figure out why the PM should mistake Bidiya didi for Kusawahahaha. And our Quote of the Week is from MKN himself at the function: “Women are not breeding machines, men should also demand that right.” Could these gaffes have been the result of his speechwriter being on a UK junket?

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