He had enough reasons to fret and fume. Having to tender unqualified apology to an American official and face international community’s protest has not been an easy job for Koirala. He took it upon Maoist Chief Prachanda and his comrade-in-arms Baburam Bhattarai with a warning, “You either tame Young Communist League (YCL), or I will deal with them, like a state should be dealing with criminals.”

Koirala’s anger was triggered off by pressure on him to ban YCL for its various activities detrimental to the peace process. “I had thought that Prachanda had realised the mistake when he stopped repeating the public statement he made earlier about the King hatching a plot to kill some American diplomats. But what YCL is doing is worse.”

Quick to read the meaning behind this anger, YCL, apparently under instruction from Prachanda declared that it would soon get on to ‘cleaning Kathmandu’ and ‘arresting sandalwood smugglers’ campaign to earn a clean image. “But that would not be enough this time. Media is also largely responsible for helping Maoists get a Robin Hood image. Koirala has asked Prachanda to fast bridle YCL as promised and retain his political credibility,” the source quoted Koirala.

From attacking the UN and US diplomats in Jhapa and Congress leaders in Nuwakot, YCL has also been kidnapping businessmen for ransom as per the official reports from western Nepal. “If YCL activities continue in this direction and pace, they would be the biggest obstacle in conducting election to the Constituent Assembly,” said Dr Shekhar Koirala at a public meeting in Jhapa on Saturday in presence of the Prime Minister.

Sources claim that the PM had sent Shekhar at least three times to talk with the Maoist leaders asking for a firm deadline by which they have to curb YCL’s criminal activities or face the government wrath.
Problem, has unsuccessfully been seeking Bhutan. Home Minister K.P. Sitaula expressed refugees for democracy and human rights in support to the political movement of the sort out.

A bilateral issue which Bhutan and Nepal should reconsider its consistent approach that the Bhutanis, simply means that India might said. The promised ‘response or reaction’, for period, “Bhutani Movement Action Committee India would give its response within that fortnight beginning May 29 following assurance march to Thimpu last week.

“We have suspended the march for a fortnight beginning May 29 following assurance from Indian authorities that the government of India would give its response within that period,” Bhutan Movement Action Committee said. The promised ‘response or reaction’, for the Bhutanis, simply means that India might reconsider its consistent approach that the problem related with the refugees is essentially a bilateral issue which Bhutan and Nepal should sort out.

For the first time Nepal extended its moral support to the political movement of the refugees for democracy and human rights in Bhutan. Home Minister K.P. Silwal stated the support in Jhapa on Saturday.

Nepal, ever since the beginning of the problem, has unsuccessfully been seeking Indian mediation for simple facts that the refugees, now around 107,000 in number, came to Nepal through Indian soil without their being given the ‘refugee’ that India had been giving to Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan Tamils, “India stopping them now in the name of border encroachment is wrong,” opined Yadav Kant Silwal, former Secretary General of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Trouble started in Beladangi camp in Jhapa on May 27 when a group of Bhutanese refugees aided and instigated by the Maoists attacked rival group which has been supporting the third party settlement move initiated by the UNHCR and supported by the US, European Union, Australia and Scandinavian countries. Police intervention in Beladangi camp resulted in the loss of lives of two refugees.

The tension took an ugly turn on Monday when Bhutanese refugees on the long march to Thimpu were stopped and fired upon by the Indian authorities across the borderer. “Our struggle is for peace, democracy, human dignity and for our right to settle down in our country as equal citizens. We urge upon India and other countries to extend their moral support in our struggle,” Tek Nath Rizal, Bhutan’s well known pro-democracy and human rights leader told newsfront.

Action committee sources say that if there is no change in India’s attitude and it continues to support the King of Bhutan in his campaign of ‘genocide’, refugees will have no other option other than taking the march to its logical conclusion.

Nepali passport might soon be outdated and ‘unacceptable’ for world outside if it is not changed into a ‘machine readable’- an easy verifiable one. The government is under pressure to switch to the new variety since the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has indicated that it would not allow people to travel with the existing version of passport beyond year 2010.

Yes, we are aware of the ICAO instruction, but the move to have a new set of passport that is machine readable is yet to begin since there is no decision taken at the minister or cabinet level. We cannot start it on our own,” a joint secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told newsfront.

Foreign companies interested in undertaking printing and supplying new type of passport following the ICAO decision have already approached the ministry and even conducted a ‘demonstration’ on May 23. Thomas Delarue, a UK based company, is believed to have offered the government to undertake passport printing and supply for USD 50,000 (35 million Nepali Rupees), but the matter has not received serious attention from the government, official sources said.

There have been complaints from different countries that Nepal passport holders are already facing trouble since immigration authorities at many international airports have sometimes detained Nepalis, or made long queries on whether their passport is a genuine or a fake one. Although the ministry did not have exact number of such cases, it has been confirmed that such incidents are taking place.

Although Shital News decentralised passport distribution system in all the district headquarters authorising the Chief District Officer (CDO) to issue passports, it is done in the name of the Chief Protocol Officer, and there is no representation or involvement of the protocol section while issuing passports outside the capital.

‘Nepali passport containing hand-written particulars of individuals are not even easy to read. It needs to be replaced urgently and immediately,’ said an official in the protocol division.

The cost of replacement would not be high at all, officials claim. Roughly more than 300,000 passports have been distributed already which would need to be replaced. In fact, the passports distributed during the past few years are not uniform in shape, size and appearance; as a result of many previous ministers experimenting with passport system and changing printing press. Replacement of the existing passport would sort out that discrepancy, sources said.

According to the Shital News sources, while the present passport for which each individual needs to pay Rs. 5000 may not actually cost more than one dollar, the electronic machine readable ones might be worth some five Dollars; and it is for the government to review the passport fee if the existing Rs. 5000 is not enough.
A soldier wins again

He won both the times. It was his valour, war-skills, Khukuri and other conventional weapons that made him a winner the first time. The latest victory came after a prolonged exchange of letters that forced the British government to reverse its earlier decision refusing him visa for medical treatment.

For the first victory, he won Victoria Cross, the highest military award that UK offers; and for his second victory, he is in for medical treatment, and perhaps medical expenses for multiple ailments he suffers from in his old age.

Tul Bahadur Pun (84) had been awarded VC for his gallant display of bravery during the Second World War when he fought against Japan and for the British. He hoped that the country he fought for, risking his life would be generous enough to grant him a settlement visa which he had requested mainly on medical grounds. He has been suffering for long from asthma, diabetes, heart problems as well as high blood pressure. But to his disappointment, the response from the UK government earlier was negative.

The stand was that Pun failed to demonstrate that he has strong ties with the UK to qualify for the visa. But to his surprise and happiness, the previous decision was withdrawn and he was granted visa on June 1 as an exceptional case.

The circumstances surrounding Tul Bahadur Pun’s case are clearly exceptional and in light of this, Home Secretary John Reid and I have reviewed the case and made the decision to grant Mr. Pun a settlement visa immediately,” Immigration Minister Liam Byrne said.

No Politics, Mr. IGP

Hobnobbing with politicians, especially in power, is neither new for our policemen nor are the politicians seen to be discouraging it. That PM Koirala gave his piece of mind to Armed Police Force Chief Baudave Oli recently, certainly comes as something new and perhaps surprising as well, as none other than G P Koirala has been accused of politicising the police and the armed police force.

The occasion was the wedding reception of Congress party’s nominated parliamentarian, Amaresh Kumar Singh recently for which the ACP club was the venue. But it was Oli who received and saw off most politicians including PM Koirala, Maoist Chief Prachanda and most others in power who were the Singh couple’s guests. A visibly agitated Koirala bluntly told Oli, “It is not your job to do what you are doing.”

The warning seems to have had a subtle effect. The IGP told few senior officials that it was perhaps time that the policy of giving ACP club for politicians on rent for celebrating social occasions is reviewed. But the overwhelming suggestion was that, the ACP could follow the Army and Police club model where their respective clubs are given on rent for such occasions and all that needs to be ensured is that ACP boxes do not become the master of ceremony themselves, like the one witnessed during the wedding.

Dual approach

The Home Ministry seems to have observed one set of rules for civil and another for security officials while handling them the ‘letter of warning’ on the basis of findings of the Rayamajhi Commission which proved misuse of state power and money to suppress the people’s movement last year. As a result of a ministerial committee headed by then Deputy Prime Minister Khadga Oli, the Home Ministry decided to hand-over the letter to the officials, both from civil and security side. The civilian officials were simply handed over the letter which stated that they should be more concerned and committed towards the human rights in future.

Whereas the letters to civilian officials had no copies forwarded anywhere, the copies of the letters given to security officials have been forwarded to several other officials including the record section. “It must have been done by the Home Ministry on its own. We did not recommend this dual approach,” a member of the ministerial committee told newfront.

Act of deceit

G P Koirala’s understanding of diplomacy seems limited since he appears to think that saying one thing and doing just the opposite will not invite faults for him. He apologised and promised to bring those guilty for attack on Ambassador James Moriarty in Damak on May 29 when he visited the UK to meet Home Secretary John Reid and the British Foreign Secretary for the Bureau of Democracy, Human rights and Labour (DRL), Barry F. Lowenkrantz, and promised to bring those guilty for the attack on Moriarty in Damak on May 30. But his government acted on contrary to the promise made.

By the time, Lowenkrantz came out of the meeting, happy and satisfied with Koirala’s assurance; an order had been sent out for all the four Young Communist League (YCL) activists to be released, thanks to Koirala’s Home Minister K P Sitaula, who could not resist Maoists’ pressure.

The Home Ministry had declared that it would withdraw from the Melamchi drinking water project is in all likelihood going to be asked not to pull out. A formal approach will be made to STI by the cabinet when it meets this week. The government move appears guided more by the interest to save international image and donors’ goodwill rather than for the company, a senior government official told newsfront.

STI had declared that it would withdraw from the project if the Maoist leader and Physical Planning and Housing Minister, Hishila Yami, said publicly that at no cost would she want the “defamed” STI to be part of the project.

As a result, the government failed to sign the award of contract with STI on May 15, the stipulated deadline for the purpose. “We will ask STI to continue with the project, and think about other alternatives only if it reveals that STI is a defaulter,” Dr Ram Shanar Mahat told newsfront.

The Melamchi project, a victim of government apathy and contradiction among various coalition partners in power for so, will be a separate authority with government-private partnership on its completion, as envisaged by the law already passed by the parliament.

Yami relents

Government to ask Severn Trent to continue

Seven Trent International (STI), the controversial British Company that was the lone bidder for managing drinking water supply to Kathmandu for six years as part of the ambitious Melamchi drinking water project is in all likelihood going to be asked not to pull out.

The latest victory came around 4-10 June, 2007. Prime Minister Koirala in his longish discussion with Maoist leaders, Prachanda and Baburam, is believed to have convinced that inviting a ‘defaulter’s image’ for the project at any cost. The Melamchi project, a victim of government apathy and contradiction among various coalition partners in power for so, will be a separate authority with government-private partnership on its completion, as envisaged by the law already passed by the parliament.

Diplomats say our safety is govt. duty

“Targeting or threatening diplomats in Nepal on their country’s official business is unacceptable. The diplomatic corps urges all political groups and activists to respect customary norms and reject violence or intimidation. We also remind the government of Nepal of its role to ensure security and safety for diplomats.”

Those issuing the statement include embassies of the United States of America, France, Germany, India, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Denmark, Israel, Australia, South Korea, Thailand, United Kingdom, Bangladesh and Finland, China, North Korea and Sri Lanka are waiting for the approval of their government to endorse the statement.

The quiet release on June 1 of the four YCL activists, Bishnu Budathoki, Navaraj Subedi, Raj Kumar Dhimal and Renuka Karki who had been arrested within twenty-four hours of the attack on a United Nations vehicle in which UNHCR Country Represenative Abraham Abraham and Moriarty were traveling goes against what the government promised.

Home Minister Sitaula who gave an assurance to Moriarty during a meeting between the two, prior to Lowenkrantz’s visit had also promised that the government would be acting tough on those guilty for the attack on the diplomatic community.
Dance of inner contentment

Mira was born around 16th Century in Chaukari village in Merta, Rajasthan, India. Swami Sivananda said of Mirabai: “It is extremely difficult to find a parallel to this wonderful personality – Mira, a saint, a philosopher, a poet and a sage. She was a versatile genius and a magnanimous soul. Her life has a singular charm, with extraordinary beauty and marvell.”

Precise information about the life of Mirabai is hard to verify. However with the help of her poetry and writings of others; historians have pieced together different elements of her life.

Mirabai’s poetrys:

A great yogi
In my travels I spent time with a great yogi.

I seemed on the verge of entering a world inside so vast
Which circles the lamp and offers its body.
And sit on it.
If you want to offer love
Your body is crushed at the first step.
Strange is the path of love
Do not mention the name of love,
O my simple-minded companion.
Strange is the path
When you offer your love.
Your body is crushed at the first step.
If you want to offer love
Be prepared to cut off your head
And sit on it.
Be like the moth,
Which circles the lamp and offers its body.
Be like the deer, which, on hearing the horn,
Offers its head to the hunter.

When separated from the sea.
Be like the bee,
Entrapped in the closing petals of the lotus.
Mira’s lord is the country Girdharika.
She says, offer your mind
To those lotus feet.

Impenetrable Realm

Go to that impenetrable realm
That death himself trembles to look upon.
There one may adopt a headpiece of gold
There the company of holy men is available,
With swans sporting on its waters.
There plays the fountain of love
That death himself trembles to look upon.

Waking up civil societies

Thank you, Ms. Amatya for highlighting a topical issue in your last column, “Under-developed civil sense.” Your opinion has given me hope that citizens do care about issues that affect society as a whole.

Nepal is at a crossroad but public debates on pressing issues – besides politics – are ignored at our own peril. For instance, Kathmandu is the most polluted city in South Asia but are our leaders worried about this? Kathmandu’s heritage is endangered due to rapid urbanisation while road accidents are a leading cause of death and disability. As a citizen, I am extremely concerned about the existing state neglect and public apathy that will jeopardise our collective future.

We must proactively address these issues ad infinitum until the constituent assembly elections, after a new constitution is formed, after a new government assumes office and after so and so forth!!! We have wasted precious time and the cost will be too high. As part of the civil society, journalists should generate greater public awareness so that actions are taken by the concerned authorities to resolve the problems. Civil societies in other countries are able to influence public opinion on civic issues, and we should be able to do the same here.

Shyamal Shrestha
Economics Officer
Asian Development Bank
Nepal Resident Mission

In our last issue on the front page, "Unsafe diplomats," UNHCR Representative’s name, Abraham Abraham was mistakenly written as Abram Rahman. The error is regretted. – Ed.
mobilisation of military, political problems facing the country, serious problem during the rescue operations, and the need for maintaining secrecy of operations led to serious damage in the civil-military relations. And the relation that developed following the take over of power by the King hit the lowest point in the history of civil-military relations.

There are no universally acceptable criteria for assessing civil-military relations as healthy or unhealthy. Some scholars suggest that good civil-military relations exist when the military stays strictly within its professional realm. However, the definition of what constitutes professional realm could be debatable.

Conventional wisdom suggests that the principle of civilian control over the military should be understood in correct perspective. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic control but essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.

The civil-military relation may undergo turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest Cold War challenges to civilian control of the military. Against strict orders of government, Cold War challenges to civilian control of the Korean War witnessed one of the greatest turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest turbulences in any type of government. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic control but essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.

The civil-military relation may undergo turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest Cold War challenges to civilian control of the military. Against strict orders of government, Cold War challenges to civilian control of the Korean War witnessed one of the greatest turbulences in any type of government. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic control but essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.

The civil-military relation may undergo turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest Cold War challenges to civilian control of the military. Against strict orders of government, Cold War challenges to civilian control of the Korean War witnessed one of the greatest turbulences in any type of government. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic control but essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.

The civil-military relation may undergo turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest Cold War challenges to civilian control of the military. Against strict orders of government, Cold War challenges to civilian control of the Korean War witnessed one of the greatest turbulences in any type of government. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic control but essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.

The civil-military relation may undergo turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest Cold War challenges to civilian control of the military. Against strict orders of government, Cold War challenges to civilian control of the Korean War witnessed one of the greatest turbulences in any type of government. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic control but essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.

The civil-military relation may undergo turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest Cold War challenges to civilian control of the military. Against strict orders of government, Cold War challenges to civilian control of the Korean War witnessed one of the greatest turbulences in any type of government. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic control but essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.

The civil-military relation may undergo turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest Cold War challenges to civilian control of the military. Against strict orders of government, Cold War challenges to civilian control of the Korean War witnessed one of the greatest turbulences in any type of government. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic control but essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.

The civil-military relation may undergo turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest Cold War challenges to civilian control of the military. Against strict orders of government, Cold War challenges to civilian control of the Korean War witnessed one of the greatest turbulences in any type of government. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic control but essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.

The civil-military relation may undergo turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest Cold War challenges to civilian control of the military. Against strict orders of government, Cold War challenges to civilian control of the Korean War witnessed one of the greatest turbulences in any type of government. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic control but essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.

The civil-military relation may undergo turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest Cold War challenges to civilian control of the military. Against strict orders of government, Cold War challenges to civilian control of the Korean War witnessed one of the greatest turbulences in any type of government. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic control but essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.

The civil-military relation may undergo turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest Cold War challenges to civilian control of the military. Against strict orders of government, Cold War challenges to civilian control of the Korean War witnessed one of the greatest turbulences in any type of government. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic control but essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.

The civil-military relation may undergo turbulences in any type of government. The Korean War witnessed one of the greatest Cold War challenges to civilian control of the military. Against strict orders of government, Cold War challenges to civilian control of the Korean War witnessed one of the greatest turbulences in any type of government. The principle of civilian control over the military should be understood to mean no bureaucratic control but essentially ultimate control authority remains with the parliament and the cabinet.
Wonders of divinity

Devaluing culture and nature is turning Kathmandu into a crass, depressed, isolated consumer society.

Ellen Coon is doing research for her book, Newar narratives of feminine divinity.
What brought you to this line of work? I entered the life of Newars who treated me very lovingly, courtesy of a best friend. I then came to know about mediums, mostly women—called Dyamas, who are possessed by different deities and heal people. I was also intrigued about the amazing civilization of knowledge of the traditional Ajimas, the midwives.

In the 1980s, I came back here for three summers doing interviews with traditional midwives and mediums that heal when in trance. Some of these women have extraordinary voices, are so articulate and they give us a glimpse of a subjective inner world of religious life from a female point of view. I am researching for a non-fiction book, informed by all academic reading that I’ve done.

What changes have you observed from the time you first came to Kathmandu and today? Then, all the images that I saw of females were sacred, I was extremely influenced by that as a child. I saw all around me, female goddesses in temples in divine forms which had a positive effect on me. Female qualities were not devalued in anyway, they were not objectified or cheapened but worshipped. This changed the course of my life actually.

Today, I find that hundreds and hundreds of sacred images have been stolen with cooperation of Nepali higher ups and the western greedy elites and art collectors; who have no idea of how shameful their activities that rip away the objects of worship of living cultures are.

Now we see all around us the devalued imagery of the feminine. Females are reduced to body parts just like in the west - breasts, hips, and unselfish. Divine nature and become more and more god like by becoming wiser, more compassionate and unselfish.

Tantric religion allows for ongoing revelations that can occur in dreams, deep meditation and visions. When I watch fresh divine revelations through Dyamas, I am filled with awe and respect.

Ongoing revelation is necessary and desirable and works hand in hand with literate ritual specialists like the Gubajus.

Working with traditional and religious Newars, many of who are very sophisticated and intelligent, I also realise that Newars are rather reluctant people not good at blowing their horns. Due to this they are mostly misunderstood and unnoticed.

Tell us more about Dyamas. With Dyamas, there are many stages of human consciousness that we do not understand. We can’t dismiss them just because we don’t understand how they work. So, possession by deities is ubiquitous in Newar culture and these include people with Ph.Ds. I’ve met around 50 Dyamas in and around Kathmandu. Why mostly women? Maybe we women have quicker access to our intuitive states of consciousness.

The Dyamas that I work with are possessed on a regular schedule by different deities, most often by Harati Mata, a Buddhist goddess with animist roots. While these deities are speaking through Dyamas, they diagnose and cure sufferings of people who come to them. It is a regular healing practice. I’ve seen a lot of healing taking place. I’ve also seen things that can’t be explained from a western point of view.

How do people choose which Dyama to go to? Just as we prefer a doctor over another depending on how it works for us; people seek out different Dyamas depending on how it works for them. Secondly, how does one depict if the deity is spoken to, whether it descended in the human body naturally or it was invoked through Sadhana, through Tantric practices, to seem to matter. People seem to believe more in those Dyamas who are blessed with deity’s presence naturally - most of them simple, literate women.

Third issue is the motivation that drives Dyamas. Is it power, spirituality or material gains that drive them? Though Deumas never ask for money and they tend for as little as one Rupee, how pure their intentions are does make a difference in how people perceive them. Personally, I’ve seen that some Dyamas are one of the purest human beings I’ve come across.

Is there any connection between black magic and Dyamas? No, I have never met any Dyama who does that. Here in Nepal, people do accuse each other of witchcraft and there have been poor, vulnerable old women accuses wrongly. This is something that should end. Dyamas are a wonderful force for caring, serving, getting along with people; it is not for creating harm. At the same time, they do not encourage women to put up with abuse and become victims of injustice. I adore that.

I do not want to paint a romanticised picture of traditional healing but it is a fact that some part of it is guided by the highest Hindu and Buddhist values. About 70 years ago in this country, women who wanted to be literate or who wanted to lead a religious life were called either a prostitute or a witch. Those were the words used to suppress them.

What is special about Kathmandu? Possession by deity and deity worship is ubiquitous across Nepal but you have a unique Tantric culture concentrated in Kathmandu. It was not only an ancient trade route but also a point where realised Tantric practitioners from Tibet and India gathered. This is an incredible jewel of a valley that has no equal anywhere. Agriculture and wealth surplus allowed elaboration of art and religious civilisation to a degree that I don’t think has been matched anywhere except for renaissance Italy.

Newar culture rivals that of renaissance Italy. People don’t know that. It’s in danger of being lost. Scholars have no idea that right under their nose there is something so complex, so beautiful. Instead we are allowing this valley to turn into an ugly polluted city. We have to do something.

What would you do if you could? I would immediately impose strict rules against water, air, soil pollution, pesticides and chemical dumping and save the environment first. There have been instances of thriving societies completely wiped out in a space of century or two; because they abused environment and went beyond a ‘tipping point’. Abuse environment beyond a tipping point and it vanishes very quickly. You see people fighting over ideologies and abusing nature; but when it gets too much, no matter the politics, no matter which ideology is correct, everybody dies.

Nature is divinity. Gods are embodying natural forces on which we depend for our lives. Devaluing culture and nature is turning Kathmandu into a cess, depressed, isolated consumer society. I accept that people need material goods to lead a comfortable life but we have to look at the way we do it.

What are the warning signs regarding preservation of this culture? I see Tantric Newar culture being strangled. I can talk on and on about the sad state of Guthis and how non-Newar government nationalised all land endowments that used to fund temples, religious Jatras (festivals). Now it is run exclusively by non-Newars and handled inadequately to say the least and most of the Guthis are dying out slowly.

Often educated, democratic people seem to get a bad taste in their mouth when they talk about Tantrism because they think about the King going and offering sacrifices at Dakshinkali and doing things to stay in power. They don’t have to need that association. The King is a political person and religion is engaged in publicity by political persons for political ends. We only have to look at our own Presidents having endless prayer breakfasts to realise that. You don’t have to let our view of a beautiful religion be corrupted by political expressions. The essence of spirituality is free of all those trappings.

You plan to go to the US to hold a special event for your father in Newari style? Yes, I plan to perform an adaptation of Newari ‘Buda Janaki’, a passage of rite, for my father who is turning 80. I got these beautiful carvings made in Bungamati for the Palanquin on which my father will be carried by all his children and grandchildren. It is an imagery I love, that of a flying horse. As you are being carried by your physical descendants on this earth, your mind becomes free like a winged horse that roams through the sky. We don’t honour our elders in the west. There is a lot that Newar culture can teach us.
The Prime Minister of Nepal has been reiterating that Constituent Assembly elections would not be possible in the absence of peace and security in the country. He is one hundred percent right. Although significant achievements such as instituting the interim constitution, formation of a new and innovative parliament designed with a view to supporting the last peace, setting up camps for UN monitoring of Maoists combatants and arms have been successfully accomplished, creation of a new government by PM Girijavallabha Koirala, amidst serious reservations from many quarters including the tone super power, is yet to bear fruit.

Nepali political leaders took this bold step of integrating the Maoists in the current government not only because of their demand but they had also hoped that Maoists as parliamentarians and members of cabinet would abide fully by the peace agreement. Even after two months of joining the government, there is still a sense of unease and uncertainty in the workability of the peace agreement. Even in tasks actions do not fully match their promises.

The current report released by the United States government not only maintains its designation of Maoists insurgency in Nepal as a terrorist organisation but it has also noted the disturbing trend of Maoist-splinter group named 'Janaatrankai Terai Mukt Morkha ('JTMK') which aims altogether the secession of Terai from Nepal. Mostly the report cites the continuing killings, abductions, extortion, and violence carried out by the Maoists. American Ambassador to Nepal, who has remained the major voice against Maoists induction in the cabinet prior to their denouncing violence, and continued progress of armament process by the UN, has expressed serious concern over the unbridled atrocities by the Maoists across the country. He put the blame on Maoists for the delay in the start of second phase of PLA verification.

International Crisis Group has come up with a report stating that the Maoists could stillerville to protest or physical confrontation should the peace process stagnate. The report comes with reservation on the success of the peace process as the power struggle between the battling parties and pushing for a second phase of PLA verification.

The report goes on to add that the 'decision to join mainstream politics steered by an analysis of the Maoists' own strategic weaknesses' of masses, in their military victory, acknowledgement of likelihood of international opposition and lessons from failures causing collapse of many communist regimes in the twentieth century.

The forthcoming visit of the co-founders of the Carter Center could not have come at a more opportune moment. The Carter Center, which has stepped up teams of election observers in all five development regions, but it has also done a great favor to the Nepalis by assigning the head of the center to discuss the peace process now with the major stakeholders in Nepal.

Although some progress is being achieved, albeit slowly, in all fronts, skepticism and doubts on the state of peace and security by national as well as international agencies place Nepal in a very precarious situation today. Apart from the continuing skepticism of the American Ambassador to Nepal, the recent announce-ments of the World Bank of its likelihood of defunding the center in November 2006.

The axing of Constitutional Monarchy from the party statute, the UML and the Maoists before January of this year, set up teams of election observers in all five development regions, but it has also done a great favor to the Nepalis by assigning the head of the center to discuss the peace process now with the major stakeholders in Nepal.

The forthcoming visit of the co-founders of the Carter Center could not have come at a more opportune moment. The Carter Center, which has stepped up teams of election observers in all five development regions, but it has also done a great favor to the Nepalis by assigning the head of the center to discuss the peace process now with the major stakeholders in Nepal.

The forthcoming visit of the co-founders of the Carter Center could not have come at a more opportune moment. The Carter Center, which has stepped up teams of election observers in all five development regions, but it has also done a great favor to the Nepalis by assigning the head of the center to discuss the peace process now with the major stakeholders in Nepal.

The forthcoming visit of the co-founders of the Carter Center could not have come at a more opportune moment. The Carter Center, which has stepped up teams of election observers in all five development regions, but it has also done a great favor to the Nepalis by assigning the head of the center to discuss the peace process now with the major stakeholders in Nepal.

The forthcoming visit of the co-founders of the Carter Center could not have come at a more opportune moment. The Carter Center, which has stepped up teams of election observers in all five development regions, but it has also done a great favor to the Nepalis by assigning the head of the center to discuss the peace process now with the major stakeholders in Nepal.
More clashes in volatile Rajasthan

Several trains between Delhi and Jaipur have also been cancelled.

"I have been stranded here for the last two days, there is no way I can go from here as the road is blocked. I do not know when I will be able to go from here to Delhi," Naresh Sharma, a resident of Delhi who had come on a pilgrimage to the religious town of Mehndi, told IANS. About 9,000 trucks have been stranded at various points along the national highways passing through the state. According to estimates of the Federation of Rajasthan Trade and Industry (FORTI), the loss of revenue per day for the government is estimated to be nearly Rs 50 million.

Meanwhile, the problem for Rajee government seems to be compounding. The Meena community, which is presently alone in Scheduled Tribe category in Rajasthan has opposed any move to grant Gujjars the ST tribal status. Meenas' are a dominant community in Rajasthan and have been classified as tribals since 1963. "We would oppose this tooth and nail," a statement by the community, which doesn't want to share the quota pie, said. "There have been reports that some members of the Meena community have burnt and damaged a few private vehicles in Dausa and nearby areas in protest. The Gujars constitute four to seven percent of the state's 66 million population. They are presently classified as other backward classes (OBC)."

34 Taliban killed in gun battles
60 Afghans die in boat capsize

An estimated 60 people, including several Taliban militants, died when a boat sank while crossing a river in Afghanistan's dangerous Helmand province, while 34 others suspected Taliban extremists were killed during a military operation in the same southern region on Saturday, the Afghan Defence Ministry said in a statement. The boat sank while crossing the Helmand River, which snakes through the province's world-leading opium-poppy-producing region and site of the fiercest battles in Afghanistan during the last several months. Hundreds of Taliban insurgents are believed to be hiding in Helmand.

The Afghan army is currently investigating the matter to determine how many of the dead were Taliban and many were civilians, the ministry said. The brief statement did not clarify the cause for the boat's capsizing. Defence Ministry spokesman General Zahir Azimi said that Afghan troops saw the boat sink from an Afghan military helicopter, which suggests that those on the boat may have been involved in a battle with Afghan forces, reported the Associated Press. Azim also said that he was unaware of how many people on the boat may have been Taliban fighters.

Meanwhile, an Interior Ministry statement said that 34 suspected Taliban were killed during several gun battles over the last two days in Helmand province's Kapisi district, near where a US helicopter went down on Thursday, killing five American, one Canadian and on British soldier.

The statement said four Taliban group commanders were among the 34 killed although it did not mention how the ministry had counted the number of dead or if retreating militants had left the bodies behind. The Defence Ministry said two Afghan soldiers were killed and two others wounded in the operations.

Separately, suspected Taliban militants attacked a local police commander's home early on Saturday morning, killing five of his family members and initiating a gun battle with local police that left 10 insurgents dead, an official said. The attack, which occurred in the south eastern province of Ghazni resulted in the deaths of the commander's wife, his two sons and his two nephews, said Interior Ministry spokesman Zemari Bashary. He said the commander was part of Afghanistan's auxiliary police, a system of backup officials who supplement the country's regular police force during times of crisis. Other auxiliary police called to the scene fought the insurgents and killed 10 of them, Bashary added. (Daily Times)

60 Afghans die in boat capsize

"The boat sank while crossing the Helmand River, which snakes through the province's world-leading opium-poppy-producing region and site of the fiercest battles in Afghanistan during the last several months. Hundreds of Taliban insurgents are believed to be hiding in Helmand.

The Afghan army is currently investigating the matter to determine how many of the dead were Taliban and many were civilians, the ministry said. The brief statement did not clarify the cause for the boat's capsizing. Defence Ministry spokesman General Zahir Azimi said that Afghan troops saw the boat sink from an Afghan military helicopter, which suggests that those on the boat may have been involved in a battle with Afghan forces, reported the Associated Press. Azim also said that he was unaware of how many people on the boat may have been Taliban fighters.

Meanwhile, an Interior Ministry statement said that 34 suspected Taliban were killed during several gun battles over the last two days in Helmand province's Kapisi district, near where a US helicopter went down on Thursday, killing five American, one Canadian and on British soldier.

The statement said four Taliban group commanders were among the 34 killed although it did not mention how the ministry had counted the number of dead or if retreating militants had left the bodies behind. The Defence Ministry said two Afghan soldiers were killed and two others wounded in the operations.

Separately, suspected Taliban militants attacked a local police commander's home early on Saturday morning, killing five of his family members and initiating a gun battle with local police that left 10 insurgents dead, an official said. The attack, which occurred in the south eastern province of Ghazni resulted in the deaths of the commander's wife, his two sons and his two nephews, said Interior Ministry spokesman Zemari Bashary. He said the commander was part of Afghanistan's auxiliary police, a system of backup officials who supplement the country's regular police force during times of crisis. Other auxiliary police called to the scene fought the insurgents and killed 10 of them, Bashary added. (Daily Times)
Hinduistic Tantra is based on the experience of an eternally existing, unchanging entity called the true self or true Atman, whereas the entire Buddhist Tantra is based on the experience that from the very beginning there is no eternally existing, unchanging self. Both experiences are a non-dual experience.

In the Hindu system one merges non-dually with the eternal, unchanging self and that is the non-dual experience. In Buddhist Tantra one sees through that there is no eternal, unchanging self as opposed to the changing world. So there is no two, I.e. Advaya. Many scholars have been confused by similar words like Advaita/Advaya and many others used in both the systems and believe that they are two versions of the same thing. Nothing could be further away from the truth.

There are also many differences in the path; but that would require detailed technical details which is not the purpose of this article. All forms of Mahayana Buddhism within which Vajrayana lies, uses Sanskrit as its lingua franca. Since Hinduism and Hindu Tantra also uses Sanskrit, and because Buddhism and Hinduism developed first and foremost within the cultural milieu of the Indian subcontinent, it is not surprising that similar words are used in both system.

For example, words like Mantra, Dhyana, Samadhi are common to both but do not necessarily mean exactly the same thing and one must not be fooled by the use of such common words to conclude that Buddhism and Hinduism are the same. One famous Nepalese Brahmin scholar saw that the word Bhairava is used in the Mantra of Bignantak and used that as a proof that the Buddhist worship Bhairava and thus they are the same.

In the Buddhist context the word only means wrathful and not any particular deity as is the case in Hinduism. The two Tantric systems of the Indian subcontinent are as different from each other as Theravada is from Vaisnavism. Only the name Tantra is the same but even the exact definition of Tantra in each system is drastically different. So these are some of the myths about Buddhism rampant amongst non-Buddhists of Nepal.

These rampant confusions exist amongst the non-Buddhists of the Indian subcontinent because it has been over nine centuries since Buddhism was erased from the memory of the Indian subcontinent. It is commonplace for absurd rumors to spread like wild fire in the absence of authentic information.

The people of the Indian subcontinent came to believe that Buddhism had died out completely and did not exist at all; so each was free to interpret it according to one’s own predilections. But in reality Buddhism continued to survive full fledged in other lands where it was taken by the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent themselves.

Buddhism is still alive and dynamic in Central Asia, Mongolia, Tibet, China, Korea, Bhutan, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, the Cis – Himalayan regions of Nepal and India, and in Kathmandu Valley. But remarkably enough blinded by their own cultural preconceptions, biases and prejudices even the non-Buddhists of Kathmandu Valley who could not but rub shoulders with it constantly, were completely oblivious about its reality and continued to subscribe to the rumors made up by their Indian Gurus. In Nepal where Buddhism never died, the non – Buddhist populace virtually know nil about authentic Buddhism.

Huge are the complexities, contradictions and interplay of the present peace process. The SPA and the Maoists seem to be more concerned about power-sharing arrangements, less about consolidating peace. Otherwise, they would not have spent much of their time and energy on just two political issues: the dissolution of reinstated parliament and the formation of an interim government and an interim parliament.

On the surface, the SPA and the Maoist harbor many dissimilar and often conflicting visions about the nature of the state, the status of monarchy, modality of elections, economy, nationalism, foreign policy and power-sharing arrangements. These continue to pose as barriers to cooperative action.

Pro-king forces are questioning the legitimacy of the eight party establishments and dubbing its actions dictatorial. New polarisations between the left and the democratic forces, republican and monar- chist forces and between nationalistic and subsidiary identities are certain to make the transition to democratic peace difficult. The peace process has so far delivered an oligarchy of party leaders rather than a popular democracy.

Party leaders have shown little appetite for pluralism. The interim legislature has no official opposition, and consensus decisions leave most power in the hands of party leaders. Ad hoc pre-negotiation of important issues threatens to undermine the constitutional process. Mainstream parties have devoted scant consideration to the difficult questions of procedure involved in constitutional reform. Few have embarked on internal changes to tackle their own problems of corruption, patronage and exclusion that have fuelled support for the Maoists.

The principal challenges facing the peace process include issues such as too much focus on political issues ignoring totally the economic and socio-cultural issues which are the root causes of the conflict. The interim legislature has no official opposition, and consensus decisions leave most power in the hands of party leaders. Ad hoc pre-negotiation of important issues threatens to undermine the constitutional process. Mainstream parties have devoted scant consideration to the difficult questions of procedure involved in constitutional reform. Few have embarked on internal changes to tackle their own problems of corruption, patronage and exclusion that have fuelled support for the Maoists.

The prize of sustained peace is clear - allowing Nepal to build a genuine democracy with full human rights, and to start a real process of development and move away from present malaises. The foundation of change is unity in diversity supported by inclusive democratic system with accommodating democratic leadership. This can strengthen internal unity and external distinctiveness to protect the sovereignty and security of Nepal.

Sustainable resolution of conflicts requires wider participation of all the parties - those that are left out, potential and actual stakeholders, and their interest mediation, rather than just those of conflicting parties. Peace cannot be created, if the outcome of negotiation creates its own enemies. Emanuel Kant, one of the world’s greatest thinkers, in his treatise “Perpetual Peace” asserted, “No treaty of peace shall be held valid in which there is tacitly reserved matter for a future war.”

Accordingly, unless the root causes of the conflict and emerging challenges are addressed and the Maoists democratised, long-term sustainable peace in Nepal cannot be achieved and conflict may very well reignite. Peace is not just the absence of war, but also epiphanies of economic prosper- ity, social harmony, unity and brotherhood among the multi-ethnic Nepali people.

The present peace process of Nepal also renews many of the relative lapse of armed conflict after peace agreement in conflict-torn states such as Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Liberia, and Angola to name a few. Thus, in order to continue this peace process, parties on all sides should keep their nerve and their commitment to peace and genuine democracy.

(Pr Rizal teaches management at Tribhuvan University)
**The Himalayan ancient mariner**

Only today, I understand the significance of having been in the company of a poet like Siddhicharan.

One of his Newari poems mentions the word, 'ক্রান্তি/kranti'. When the 1950 upsurge upstaged Rana regime, Siddhicharan was released after a few years and in the post-Rana rule emerged as a major poet. I was fortunate to meet this poet about two decades ago. It was at Nepal poet Bimal Niblak's bookstoke at New Road that I first met Siddhicharan. As Bimal introduced him as one of Nepal's historic figures, I wondered how this unassuming bony old man in Daura Surwal could have caused an uproar in the corridors of history.

Another event met the first thing he asked me to do was to take out blank paper and write down one of his poems about the sun and planets. Without a question, I obeyed and started to scribble the poem like a dutiful disciple, even if I did not quite understand what he was saying. I did not have courage to annoy or refuse orders of this elderly bard that I had luckily met.

Only later did I learn the significance of having been in the company of a poet like Siddhicharan. He had this in him, this knack of making disciples. I learnt later that one of the national martyrs, named Ganagatul was Siddhicharan's disciple. It is after reading this venerated poet, young Ganagatul was inspired to speed up the downfall of the autocratic Rana rulers.

On his 97th birth anniversary when we sat in the gardens of Dharahara tower, a procession passed by, mildly disturbing the recitals of one of my friends at the venue. Someone on stage was discussing Siddhicharan's character, Mahagaman, the one who even after the 1950 revolution finds no solace and is ignored by corrupt party leaders. At that moment, I remembered meeting the poet at his deshabid about a decade ago. Much to my surprise, he asked me, "Will you translate my Mahagaman into English? You are the one who can do justice to it. Let the world know my Mahagaman."

Guilt overwhelmed me. I caught myself in the vicious circle of my past life. I had forgotten my struggles, I had forgot making disciples. I learnt later that one of the national martyrs, named Ganagatul was Siddhicharan's disciple. It is after reading this venerated poet, young Ganagatul was inspired to speed up the downfall of the autocratic Rana rulers.

Coming back to Kathmandu after a six-month gap, I find myself in the heat of the nation's most excruciating history. The fire line seems to snake through the corridors of nation's polity endlessly, consuming in its flames the proud pagodas of nation's reputation. The struggle for the right form of government and system and wakening vision of forthcoming elections mark the crucial question that the nation seems to confront at the moment. Words like democracy and republic have been scribbled on the national horizon. I was invited to the 97th birth anniversary of a legendary poet, Siddhi Charan Shrestha. They asked me to read a poem on Siddhicharan who had his life polished the precious word called 'revolution'.

Rupesh Rana regime sentenced this Nepali poet to life imprisonment for introducing the word 'revolution' in the history of Nepalese literature. He had this in him, this knack of making disciples. I learnt later that one of the national martyrs, named Ganagatul was Siddhicharan's disciple. It is after reading this venerated poet, young Ganagatul was inspired to speed up the downfall of the autocratic Rana rulers.

Coming back to Kathmandu after a six-month gap, I find myself in the heat of the nation's most excruciating history. The fire line seems to snake through the corridors of nation's polity endlessly, consuming in its flames the proud pagodas of nation's reputation. The struggle for the right form of government and system and wakening vision of forthcoming elections mark the crucial question that the nation seems to confront at the moment. Words like democracy and republic have been scribbled on the national horizon. I was invited to the 97th birth anniversary of a legendary poet, Siddhi Charan Shrestha. They asked me to read a poem on Siddhicharan who had his life polished the precious word called 'revolution'.

Rupesh Rana regime sentenced this Nepali poet to life imprisonment for introducing the word 'revolution' in the history of Nepalese literature. He had this in him, this knack of making disciples. I learnt later that one of the national martyrs, named Ganagatul was Siddhicharan's disciple. It is after reading this venerated poet, young Ganagatul was inspired to speed up the downfall of the autocratic Rana rulers.

Coming back to Kathmandu after a six-month gap, I find myself in the heat of the nation's most excruciating history. The fire line seems to snake through the corridors of nation's polity endlessly, consuming in its flames the proud pagodas of nation's reputation. The struggle for the right form of government and system and wakening vision of forthcoming elections mark the crucial question that the nation seems to confront at the moment. Words like democracy and republic have been scribbled on the national horizon. I was invited to the 97th birth anniversary of a legendary poet, Siddhi Charan Shrestha. They asked me to read a poem on Siddhicharan who had his life polished the precious word called 'revolution'.

Rupesh Rana regime sentenced this Nepali poet to life imprisonment for introducing the word 'revolution' in the history of Nepalese literature. He had this in him, this knack of making disciples. I learnt later that one of the national martyrs, named Ganagatul was Siddhicharan's disciple. It is after reading this venerated poet, young Ganagatul was inspired to speed up the downfall of the autocratic Rana rulers.
Athletes participating in the 5th edition of Tenjing Hilary Everest Marathon started running from Everest Base Camp, 5364 meters to Namche Bazar, 3440 meters on 29th May. It is the world’s highest elevated marathon. The event was to mark the 54th anniversary of the ascent to Mt. Everest by Hillary and Tenzing.

Mark Pollock, a blind person from France participating in the marathon. His coach is assisting him to run.