

## **SWING VOTES**

To the three-festival season of Dasain, Tihar, and Chhat, add elections in November. The campaign period falls smack in the middle of the festivals and the political parties will be using them for public relations mileage. The party that throws the best party will have an advantage. The THE PULSE OF THE PEOPLE HIMAIMedia Weekly Balan Polls carried out by this paper Himalmedia Weekly Bazar PAGE 2 shows a stirring of interest in **EDITORIAL** elections, now that they seem inevtiatable. The number of 'don't know/won't say' respondents is going down and the popularity ratings of top leaders is creeping up correspondingly. The November election is still up for grabs.

#### DASAIN'S UNDERBELLY

In Kathmandu's slums, thousands of riverside residents have little time for politics. But they are putting up a traditional Dasain bamboo swing (above)





#### PHOTO ESSAY by JAN MØLLER HANSEN



Special with 24 pages. Himalmedia wishes readers and partners peace and happiness this holiday season. Nepali Times is taking its annual Dasain break and will not come out on Friday, 18 October. The next hardcopy edition will be on 25 October, but you can follow us for news updates without interruption on:

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## THE PULSE OF THE PEOPLE

**F** or some mysterious reason, Nepal's election code of conduct doesn't allow public opinion surveys before polls. This stems for a lack of confidence of the maturity of our own democracy, some of it probably justified. But it also has to do with elections still not really being an exercise in adult franchise and an expression of the sovereignty of the people.

2 EDITORIA

The November poll is looking more and more like an election for the sake of elections. Admittedly, the country had been adrift for far too long and the political uncertainty was costing our economy and development dearly. An election would have set that right if it allowed the people a choice. But this one doesn't: in fact it is rigged before the campaign even starts because the top leaders have made sure, by standing in multiple constituencies and fielding weak candidates in each other's voting regions, that they will not lose. The second CA is therefore going to be the same size, made up of more or less the same faces,

and being seized by the same issues as the last CA. The only tangible difference we can foresee is that it will be even more fragmented and demand a spirit of maturity and compromise from the political leadership that they haven't exhibited so far.

Himalmedia, the publisher of this paper and *Himal Khabarpatrika* weekly, conducts an annual nationwide public opinion survey. The 2013 survey in March showed a large majority of the nearly 4,500 respondents were apathetic. Combining all those who replied 'don't know', 'won't say', 'none of the above' totalled an astonishing 56.2 per cent, with the top leaders all trailing in a long tail of single digits.

Since then, as elections become more certain, Himalmedia Weekly Bazar Polls indicate that there is a



#### If the November polls are truly free and independent, most of the disgraced leaders of the past should be voted out

stirring of interest in the elections. This weekly poll is supported by The Asia Foundation and is conducted every Monday afternoon in 12 urban centres around the country in which about 400 respondents are asked a few quick questions on politics, the economy, society, and social behaviour.

Interestingly, to the question 'Among the current crop of leaders in national politics, who do you trust the most?' the number of respondents in the Bazar Poll who replied 'don't know/won't say' has been decreasing steadily from 33% in April to 23% in August and 17% in September. Correspondingly, the popularity ratings of the political leadership has also crept up into the low teens. Sushil Koirala still maintains a surprising lead with 15.2% in September compared to 13.5% a month earlier. Baburam Bhattarai is up from 8.6% to 11.9%, and Pushpa Kamal Dahal has also gone up from 8.8% to 13.5%.

On federalism, to the question 'Should future federal units be demarcated along ethnic lines', Himalmedia Nationalwide Public Opinion Surveys in 2011, 2012, and 2013 consistently showed more than 70% of respondents who supported federalism saying 'no'. The Bazar Poll conducted on 15 September showed that even though nearly half the respondents in urban areas supported federalism, only 8% of them said the provinces should be based on ethnicity. More than half the respondents preferred federal boundaries be based on geography, or current development zones.

The Himalmedia poll results are more or less corroborated by results of recent surveys by IDEA and IDA. The conclusion is that the November elections is still up for grabs. Many people will be voting for candidates from their communities, some along party lines and left to their own devices most will vote for candidates and parties that are most likely to restore stability, economic development, and equality.

Although the four party cartel has tried to ensure that it perpetuates itself, there is some leeway for voters to express their preference for the candidates that they most believe can perform. If this was a truly fair and independent election and if the surveys are the true pulse of the people, most of the disgraced leaders of the past eight years should be voted out.

#### HYDROPOWER AND MANPOWER

It's heart-wrenching and so disturbing to see Nepalis being treated and exploited like virtual slaves in the Middle East ('Hydropower and manpower', Editorial, #676). We just can't afford to stay apathetic anymore. Apart from vocational and technical training for young Nepalis and job creation within the country, school students and potential migrant workers should be taught about and made aware of the actual reality of working in the Gulf. Of course, the state must ensure better treatment of our labourers by appointing able and smart diplomats who can communicate and deal with foreign intermediaries in a confident and effective way.

• Only by exempting those Nepali professionals - who want to start new businesses in the country from astronomical duties on foreign machineries and tools, Nepal would generate billions of rupees and thousands of new jobs on its own soil. It's high time the concerned authorities start charting out such policies to facilitate Nepali people to work in their own country.

#### 'To be entrepreneur'

• We can fix everything except ourselves. I mean the real self, the real core values which start with empathy, kindness, and compassion for our fellow citizens. Not holding my breath on that one.

in our next life, until then safe journey wherever it leads him to.

ON THE WEB

#### Stx89

• Very sad indeed. Stephen was a visionary and lived his vision and in the process broke the myth that one has to go to Kathmandu to touch the sky. You will be missed Stephen.

#### Gajendra

• The Annapurna range has lost its best friend. RIP Stephen.

• This is tragic. How can an experienced pilot like Stephan be 'persuaded' by passengers to fly if his gut instinct told him conditions weren't

efficient public transportation - a mix of dirt cheap and not-so-cheap to cater to poor and rich - backed by appropriate legislation, we will never be able to stop people, most of whom laid their hands on their prized possessions only recently, from bringing their two and four-wheelers out on the widened roads. Perhaps our government should ask the Chinese to gift us an efficient trolley-bus system. Until then, Sajha Yatayat should put more buses on the streets and the state should ban the use of private vehicles at certain peak hours. I know this is against democracy, but it is the only way to control traffic and eventually clean Kathmandu's air. The other option is for the government to install a huge

and also hybrid cars on Kathmandu's roads. But for this, the government will need to provide customers with incentives by slashing vehicle taxes. Plant more trees around the valley. Develop Banepa or Dhulikhel as a satellite capital city.

#### Raj Kumar

• I don't mean to sound so pessimistic, but I don't think the air quality in Kathmandu is going to improve in our lifetime. Here is to 10 years off our lives.

#### GVR

#### CORRECTION

In 'Mexico City's lessons for Kathmandu' by Arnico Panday (#676) the area of Mexico City should have been 1,120 sq km and the area of Kathmandu 280 sq km. We have the correct figure in our online copy: www.nepalitimes.com

R Rai

• The Gulf states need our workforce as much as Nepalis need the work. So this is not an aid or loan from the World Bank or ADB where we have to accept their set of conditions. We should lay down some basic rules on wages and safe working environment. If not we can send the workers to other competing countries that are willing to meet our guidelines. We give them cheap labour and they give our men and women better pay than in Nepal. Otherwise why go work in 50 degree heat in the first place? Raj Kumar Pakhrin This is an old story repeated millions of times. I doubt anything will change even if elections are held in November.
For true change we need a shake up at the top political level. But the old guard is not giving opportunities to young candidates in order to groom future teleaders. So the ripple effect is vast from the labour market, to immigration, to the context of the context of

leaders. So the ripple effect is vast from the labour market, to immigration, to the mistreatment of our migrant workers in foreign countries, to four coffins arriving daily.

Prashant

#### **EMPTY SKY**

My heartfelt condolence to Stephen Shrestha's family ('Empty sky', Kunda Dixit, #676). Stephen was a Xaverian and an avid aviator. We will miss him. If not in this life, we will be flying again good for flying? Pilots in Nepal are known to cave into such death wishes from passengers. When will we ever learn to say no?

Sailee Cyrus

#### **MEXICO CITY**

So long as there is no effective mass transit system that urban dwellers believe in, the air quality in Kathmandu cannot improve ('Mexico City's lessons for Kathmandu', Arnico Panday, #676). More vehicles, even if electric, will just create problems in another front. We would be doing wonders only if there was no gap between spelt out 'policies' and 'enforcement' measures which, as we all know, is at its widest in each and every sector one can imagine.

Armugam

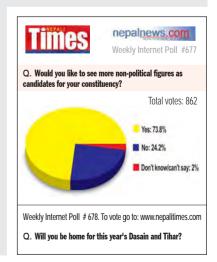
• Unless Kathmandu has a fast and

dust and smoke.

Jwahar Talchabhadell

• When I returned to Mexico City after 20 years, the air had become fresh and blue. But for this the government had to put many new rules in place. For example after the state imposed high taxes on cars older than four years, the use of old vehicles came to a halt within the city. Old cars were sold to rural provinces instead. Also for a day every week, private vehicle owners were not allowed to use their cars and had to commute on metrobus which is less polluting. *Marjolaine Hohberger* 

 If the Mexicans can do it, the Nepalis can surely try. Get more electric vehicles like Mahindra Revas





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#### **Comparing apples** and ginger

he government's High Value Agriculture Project (HVAP) was set up three years ago with support from the Rome-based International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and targets hill and mountain areas of the midwestern region. The idea is to guarantee a fair price for cash crops to reduce poverty.

What the project is trying to do with ginger in Surkhet now was successfully carried out with apples in Jumla. Until recently, the district's orchards used to be forced to let their apples rot because there was no access to markets. Only about 10 per cent of apples made it out, but today the luscious apples are sold all over Nepal



HVAP with support from the Dutch group SNV Nepal simply connected apple farmers with the

national market by creating links between interested buyers and producers. Training and orientation on organic farming were also provided to the farmers and the brand Jumla Organic was successfully created.

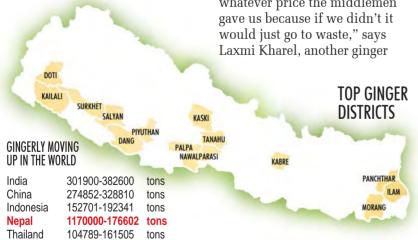
With this certification, Jumla's apples now have a huge demand in the domestic market. In the last fiscal year, 3,500 tonnes of organic apples were produced in Jumla and much of it was sent out. More than 10,000 households in the district now have apple orchards and the project has raised the living standards in this once destitute region.

# Ayo A-du-wah Already #4 producer of ginger in the world, Nepal can lift farmers out of poverty with this cash crop

**TSERING DOLKER GURUNG** in SURKHET

t age 70, farmer Kabi Ram Thapa Magar (*pic, righ*t) did something he had never done before in his long life. He stopped growing maize and switched to ginger.

Thapa Magar was reluctant at first and full of doubt: what if the crop failed or he couldn't get the right price? He would have neither food, nor money. But with neighbouring farmers in Lekhpharsa of



Surkhet district, he took the plunge.

He hasn't regretted the decision. He says: "I found that the value of a year's production of ginger is equal to that of 10 year's production of maize."

The increase in demand for the spice cash crop has encouraged farmers here to triple the area under ginger cultivation. Farmers had been reluctant to switch to ginger because they didn't have a cushion against a collapse in market prices.

"We didn't have any other option than to sell our ginger at whatever price the middlemen

farmer here.

With an increase in demand for ginger in the international market, Nepal's total production grew three-fold to Rs 1.31 billion in the past year. Nepal is now the world's third largest ginger producer after India and China. More than 60 per cent of Nepali ginger is exported to India because there are no processing plants here.

"Our fresh ginger is exported to a processing country which exports it for a much higher value," says Rajendra Bhari, project managaer of High Value Agriculture Project (HVAP). "If we establish ginger collection and processing centres within the country, export volume will increase and so will the value of our products."

Which is exactly what the government's HVAP is trying to do with support from the Dutch group SNV in partnership with Organic Mountain Flavour, a private company that has been involved in organic ginger production for over three years. Together the project aims to give 320 families direct access



to markets for their ginger and repeat its success story with Jumla's apples (see box).

"We have a committed and assured market through a strategic partnership with various buyers in Europe and Japan," says Samir Newa, managing director of Organic Mountain Flavour which is also building a processing plant in Surkhet to manufacture high quality dried ginger powder and candy for the domestic market and export.

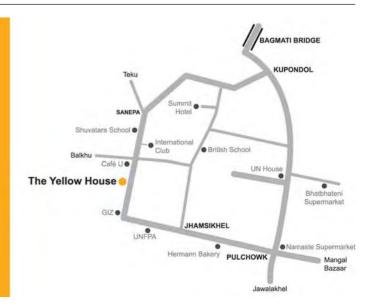
around Surkhet will supply Organic Mountain Flavour with a set amount of ginger at a fixed negotiated price and farmers can earn up to 15 per cent more if the ginger is certified to be organic. Newa hopes to be able to double this year's 300 tons of processed ginger production by 2015.

Ginger is the main cash crop in the midhills of Nepal and the soil and climate of Surkhet Valley is primarily suited to it. Illam in eastern Nepal is the biggest ginger producing district. This spice crop is used to make a wide range of products including curry powder, jam, jelly, candy, and sauce and also has medicinal uses. Ayurvedic facilities in India and Nepal are also increasingly using ginger in

Farmer groups in village

their products.

Surkhet's ginger farmers like Kharel are happy they are not vulnerable anymore to the vagaries of the market. She says: "It is great relief that we don't have to carry our ginger to the town to sell, we have a secure market." 🔽



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## **BUSINESS 5**

## Taking farmers to market



Nepali Times: You have recently visited SNV projects in western Nepal, what were your impressions? Allert van den Ham: I have been impressed by the results so far. In sanitation, we have developed an approach to introduce hardware and influence the behavioural attitude. Statistics show the intervention areas have a high score of coverage when compared to national average. Much progress has been made and much needs be done, but I am confident that local actors will finish the job and for SNV it is important to focus on new areas and new issues.

### What is the main reason why SNV has prioritised energy, sanitation, and agriculture in Nepal?

We think these are the areas where we can make the biggest contribution in terms of value added. It does not mean that other sectors like tourism are not important, but you can spend your rupee only once and from a global perspective, these are our special areas of attention.

### You spoke to ginger farmers in Surkhet, what were their main concerns?

Under the current conditions farmers have only one option and that is to produce and sell only when a buyer comes to procure their produce. We hope to help create more options in terms of improving their technical capacities, opening up new and more diverse markets, fixing longer term agreements with farmers, and facilitating processing of ginger before it is exported. It is up to the farmers to choose what is most helpful to them.

#### But you have also tried to rope in the private sector in your projects in Nepal. Why is that?

You know, in spite of all the talk, I don't think the private sector is going to solve the poverty problem. The poverty problem will also not be solved without the private sector. Entrepreneurs know the markets, they have access to capital, and can organise supply chains. Farmers know how to produce, if we can connect the two it is a powerful alliance for change. Of course the farmers are usually fragmented and they often have a weak negotiation Allert van den Ham, CEO of the Dutch development organisation SNV recently visited Nepal to assess the impact of SNV's work at the grassroots. *Nepali Times* met with Ham (*pic*, *centre*) to discuss the role of SNV and its projects.

position so we have to unite them and help them in developing into a more equal partner that have a strong bargaining position and can negotiate fair prices and conditions.

## As the global head of SNV are you concerned about the shrinking ODA budget?

To a certain extent, yes. It's being easily said that private sector can solve the issue, but let's face it, the private sector has its own interests so the government will always have an important role to play in developing public utilities etc. I don't see the private sector massively investing in infrastructure, quality education or sanitation. Decreasing ODA may restrict the current speed of development and that is a cause for worry.

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#### **Babu lifts**

Ballantine's Babu Sherpa accumulated 42 points to win the Ballantine's Open Golf Tournament at Gokarna Golf Club this week. Playing with 13 handicaps, Babu scored 23 points on the front nine and 19 on the second half. He received a trophy, a Callaway Golf Watch, and a 17-year-old Ballantine's Whiskey. Country head of Ballantine, Pernod Ricard, Ravinder Saini, President of Gokarna Golf Club Suhrid Ghimire, and Vice President of Gokarna Forest Resort Dorjee Sherpa gave away the prizes.

#### New Yamaha showroom

MAW Enterprises, dealers of Yamaha motorcycles, inaugurated a new showroom in Maharajganj with state-of-the-art 3S facility: Sales, Services,



n state-of-the-art 3S facility: Sales, Services, and Spares. It also offers valuation for old bikes, easy financing facilities, and on-thespot exchange. Customers also get a special opening offer and a chance to win silver.

Yamaha gift as new showroom opening offer and a chance to win silver equivalent to their weight under the Yamaha Wahjandar festival scheme.

#### **Blender's Pride**

Seagram's Blender's Pride is now being sold in Nepal and its launch coincides with the Dasain-Tihar festivities. The whiskey is available in 750ml, 375ml, and 180ml with tamper-proof carton closure on all packs.



#### Dasain free shuttle

Himalayan Bank Limited Himalayan Bank is once more providing its Shuttle Service with 18 luxury buses

that will take passengers to more than 100 different locations across Nepal. The buses will depart from Kathmandu on 7, 8, and 9 October. This is an initiative of Himal Remit.

#### Hyundai trains

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## 6 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRLD CHILD

## Let's talk about girls

Nepal has laws that prohibit child marriages, but not the enforcement mechanisms

#### ALEKSANDRA PERCYNSKA

axmi is now 25. She was lured into marriage at age 15. Women in her village west of Kathmandu rarely marry after 20.

And despite the proximity of the capital, her village is dirt poor. Of the 60 households, only five have toilets. Most of the young women never went to school and if they did, they dropped out after getting married. Most of their husbands are unskilled workers and are away in the city or abroad.

Laxmi sits on the mud floor of her kitchen chopping chicken and preparing rice for her husband's family dinner. "My parents were also happy to marry me off and it still happens," she says, "a 14-yearold girl just got married off in our village."

Despite a legal minimum age of marriage at 20, or 18 with parental consent, more than half of Nepali women are marrying before they are 18. Ceremonies where one or both sides are below 18 are child marriages and are considered a form of gender based violence and violations of human rights as well as national and international laws.

The reasons behind child marriage vary locally, but usually it is due to strong patriarchal social norms and traditions, practices like dowry, and the preference for sons over daughters. Another reason parents marry their daughters off early is the misplaced belief that the girls will be safer. Considering that child wives are twice more likely to experience domestic and sexual violence, this perceived protection from harm is illusionary. Child marriage is also strongly correlated with poverty and lack of schooling and education is considered the best prevention. Girls who are married early

Girls who are married early drop out of school, which



### YOUNG BRIDES

Women who marry before 18:

means they are often illiterate, have less job opportunities, and less access to resources. Their children are also less educated and so the vicious circle of perpetuating poverty continues across generations. Early pregnancy and childbirth, which many child wives experience, pose serious health



risks. Pregnancy complications are the leading causes of death for teenage girls in developing countries.

If the mother survives, she is more likely to develop conditions such as uterine prolapse or obstetric fistula the younger she is. Her children are more likely to die in infancy or grow up malnourished. Very young mothers are not ready, physically or mentally, to bear children, when they are still children themselves.

On top of the human cost of child marriage, there is also evidence that the practice cripples the country's economy and development. An analysis by the Council on Foreign Relations shows that one extra year of education for a girl increases her wages on average by 10–20 per cent and the number grows to 25 per cent in case of secondary education. Only one per cent more women with secondary education increases annual per capita income growth by 0.3 percentage points. Educated

ALEKSANDRA PERCYNSK

women have more skills that improve their employability which means a better workforce and a larger consumer base for businesses. Educated women are also more active as citizens, participate more in political processes, and foster democracy.

The good news is that Nepal already has a law that stipulates minimum age at marriage, but experts say what is missing are the mechanisms to enforce it, government accountability, and the political will to prioritise the issue at the national level. At the moment, elections and the constitution take priority over social issues like child marriage, but studies have shown that a lack of women's education paralyses the economy and development.

After she finishes feeding her family, Laxmi crouches on the kitchen floor, sips tea, and remembers her first childbirth at 17. She gave birth at home after three days of labour and was lucky both she and the baby survived. When she got married, Laxmi had no idea about her reproductive rights, contraception or abortion.

"I regret getting married so early," she says quietly, "I have forgotten my childhood."

By youth, for youth

Nepal has made dramatic progress in attaining almost all of the Millennium Development Goals achieving universal primary education and reducing child mortality. However investments made in the first decade of children's lives may fail to reap benefits when issues relating to young adults are not addressed. Nepal's 6.4 million adolescents (10-19 years) account for about a quarter of the population and yet there is no clear strategy to address their needs and the challenges they face.

To fill this gap, the National Planning Commission launched a national plan action (NPA) targeting young adults during a program in Kathmandu last week to celebrate the second International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC). Keeping with IDGC's theme of 'Innovating for Girls' Education' for this year, more than 2,000 adolescents participated in a round table dialogue with policy makers and gave their input on how to improve learning in schools through innovative teaching methods. An inter-ministerial task team under the leadership of the National Planning Commission also supported the process along with UNICEF, UNFPA, CWIN, Save the Children, Plan Nepal, ILO, Consortium of Organisations Working for Child Participation and others.

On the same occasion Urmila Chaudhary (*pic, right*) of Freed Kamlari Struggle Committee received the Global Education's Youth Courage Award for Education by the United Nations.





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The government, in its wisdom, has proclaimed that the monsoon is over. Tell us something we don't know. The autumnal westerlies are now in full swing, the humidity levels are falling fast and the clear breezy afternoons are here to stay. However, with the cooler temperature we also see the morning inversion layer trapping particulate smog over the valley floor. This will get thicker as we head into winter. Also/ don't discount low pressure systems moving in from the Bay and bringing unseasonal blizzards because 'tis the season for cyclones.

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## **Moving words**

Acclaimed Korean author Shin Kyung-sook visits Jumla and it reminds her of post-war Korea

#### **TSERING DOLKER GURUNG**

When author Shin Kyung-sook visited Jumla last week, she was immediately transported back to her own childhood in Korea after the war. Jumla reminded her of Jeolla province where she spent the first 16 years of her life. Shin is now a celebrated author in Korea and her fame has spread far-and-wide, as her books are translated into many languages.

"The problems of poverty and unemployment that the people of Jumla face are things I had seen and experienced in my village," says Shin after her visit to western Nepal last week as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador.

In Jumla, Shin was particularly impressed by the work of a watch group against gender-based violence and a 24-hour birthing centre. Shin also visited Nepalganj where she met with members of a child club. "This whole trip has been an enriching experience," said the 51year-old through an interpreter. "On one the day and attended school at night. "When you are a girl, the responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, and doing the household chores naturally fall on your shoulders," she says. Her dream of becoming a writer kept her going and at 22, that dream came true when she published her first novel.

While Shin was already a respected literary name in Korea, her popularity catapulted globally in March last year when she won the Man Asia Prize for her novel *Please Look After Mom*, ahead of other authors including Amitav Ghosh and Banana Yoshimoto and became the first woman to do so. The book, a story about an illiterate rural mother who goes missing during a trip to Seoul, has now been translated into 32 languages. In her acceptance speech she brought to attention the plight rights issue than a political one.

"I try to represent marginalised voices in my writings. It is something I



hand I was happy to see that the people had preserved their traditions beautifully, on the other, sad that they didn't even have the most basic of facilities." Shin says she didn't have any difficulty coping with the lack of facilities. "My life's experiences have taught me to handle any kind of situation," she said. When she turned 16, Shin moved to Seoul to live with her two brothers because her parents were unable to send her to high school. Once there, she worked at an electrical plant during have always been careful to do," she admits. The things that she saw and heard during her visit to Nepal, she says, will influence her future writings.



Shin will also be speaking about her Nepal experience in a popular Korean TV program, Healing Camp, a new thing for the reserved author, who has shied away from TV interviews until now. She adds: "I always believed that an author should connect to a reader through her writing, but now I want more people to know about this country."





## **EVENTS**



JEWELS OF NEWAR ART EXHIBITION, showcasing the best of Newar artistry, with copper statues and traditional Paubha paintings Runs till 19 October, 5 to 9 pm, Chaitya Court, Hyatt Regency, www.kathmandu.regency.hyatt.com

#### **DASAIN AAYO**

**11 October,** Phulpati, seventh day of Dasain when jamara (malt saplings) is brought from Gorkha to Hanuman Dhoka accompanied by an army band and gun salutes.

**12 October**, Maha astami, the day of Kaalratri puja, a demonic avatar of Goddess Durga.

**13 October**, Maha nawami, on the last day of Durga puja the Taleju temple in Basantapur is open to the public. **14 October**, Dasami, people go to their elders for tika and blessings on the occasion of Durga's victory over the demon Mahisasur.

**18 October**, Purnima, Dasain finishes on Purnima and, geographical peculiarities aside, tika goes on until this day.



Lhakpa's Chulo, Nepali dal-bhat, Newari khaja, Swiss Rösti, Italian Risotto, and Thai green curry - take your pick. Jhamsikhel, (01)5524733

**Vootoo**, the new home of Newari cuisine, as well as a continental menu for those who don't want a palatial adventure.

Lajimpat, (01)4005222

Krishnarpan, a specialty Nepali restaurant at The Dwarika's Hotel serving 6 to 22 courses of authentic Nepali meal.

The Dwarika's Hotel, Battisputali, (01)4479488



DÉLICES DE FRANCE, a taste of France in the heart of Thamel. Ganesh Man Singh Building, Thamel, (01)4260326

**Cosmopolitan Cafe**, located in the heart of Basantapur, this cozy cafe offers arguably the best chicken sizzler in town. *Basantapur*, (01)4225246

**Pagoda Chinese Restaurant**, head to this jade palace if you're in the mood for Chinese.

Budhanilkantha, (01)4375 280, pvh@wlink.com.np



DHOKAIMA CAFE, exquisite ambience, friendly service, cosy bar, place to see and be seen at. *Krishna Galli*, (01)5522113

Lhasa Bar, enjoy a beer or a splash of cocktail at this springboard for excellent young musicians starting out on the Thamel circuit. *Thamel*, 985101043

**New Tushita Restaurant**, relaxing ambience and good food. Don't miss out on its penne with creamy bacon and mushroom sauce. *Lajimpat*, (01)44432957

Chilly Bar and Restaurant, quality food and wide selection of drinks with great views of Phewa Lake. Lakeside, Hallanchok, Pokhara, (061)463614/463163

Alice restaurant, step in for scrumptious Thakali, Chinese, Continental, and Japanese cuisine. *Gairidhara*, (01)4429207

**Degaa Resto Lounge,** for mouth watering Newari and Indian cuisine. *Kumaripati, (01)5008679* 

### MUSIC

**Comin' east,** pioneering Nepali rock band Cobweb venture across the Kosi. 10 October, Urlabari

Jazzmandu, the Himalayan jazz fiesta is back for the 11th year running, see page 12-13 for details. 24 to 30 October, Kathmadndu

NABE Radio #2: Beats, Rhymes & Life, a collaboration between poets, musicians and video artists, featuring the slam poetry collective Word Warriors, Berklee trained musician Nikesh, and self-taught artist Uzair Sawal from Kuala Lumpur. 10 October, Places Restaurant and Bar, Thamel



SHASTRIYA SANGEET, let the magic of live Hindustani classical music overwhelm you. 30 October, 3pm onwards, Kirateswor, Pasupati; 3 November, 3pm onwards, Ram Mandir, Battisputali



WATERFRONT RESORT, the lakeside hotel invites you for special barbeque dinners on Friday and lunches on Saturday. Sedi Height, Lakeside road, Pokhara, (o61)466303/304, www. waterfronthotelnepal.com

Temple Tree Resort and Spa, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour and sauna, it'll be hard to leave once you get here. *Gaurighat, Lakeside, (61)465819* 

Charikot Panorama Resort, enjoy mountain views and local culture in the historic town of Charikot. Special packages on offer. Charikot, Dolakha, (01)5529463, thapamaag@gmail.com



**BALTHALI VILLAGE RESORT,** a small, cosy retreat with a bird's eye view of green terrace fields dotted with ochre painted houses. *Balthali, Kabhre, 9851075818* 





#### **GOKARNA JAZZ BAZAAR** 26th October, Saturday

2.30pm - 10.00pm | Price : Nrs 990 | Venue : Gokarna Forest Resort



Tickets available at respective venues: Jazz Upstairs: Lazimpat | Nepa Music Outlets: Thamel | Moksh: Jawalakhel | For Bookings Call: 9803516450

Hotel Heritage, enjoy the exquisite architecture and traditional ambience, but make sure to book your rooms online with NepalSutra. Bhaktapur, (01)6611628, info@ nepalsutra.com

Hotel Landmark, made entirely from traditional Nepali brick and woodcraft, this hotel is rich not only in heritage, but also in services and boasts an award winning restaurant, the Hungry Eye.

Pokhara, (61)462908/463096/464897, www.landmarkpokhara.com



MANGO TREE LODGE, culture walks, rafting in Karnali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safari at the Bardia National Park. Bhetani, Bardiya, info@ mangotreelodge.com

Pokhara Grande, a swimming pool to escape from the sweltering heat, a massage parlour and spa to loosen up, and a gym to release stress, all in all a great place to unwind. Lakeside, Pokhara

Fulbari Resort, enjoy the scenic view of Pokhara as you pamper yourself with tennis, golf, drinks, and dinners. Pokhara, (01)4461918/2248

**RANIBAN RETREAT**, situated at the other end of the Phewa lake and nested inside the Raniban forest and

Mahindra

Rise



the World Peace Stupa, this retreat has one of the best views of the Annapurna range. Phewa lake, and Pokhara.

World Peace Pagoda, Pokhara, (61)692136, 9841382053

Glacier Hotel, good value and friendly service for travelers on the lap of Lake Phewa. Gaurighat, Lakeside, Pokhara, (61)-463722, www.glaciernepal.com



**BARAHI JUNGLE LODGE**, the first eco-jungle lodge of Chitwan directly overlooks the Chitwan National Park, spa, boutique quest room, individual and two-in -one private villas, including a suite with a private swimming pool.

Andrauli, West Chitwan, www. barahijunglelodge.com

### Watch out

Major departmental stores will remain closed during Dasain festivities. Stocking up your fridge with at least a week of supplies is a smart idea. Also, don't bother looking for fresh bakery items or dairy products during the festival because bakeries, dairies, and grocery stores will remain shut.

Almost all restaurants will be closed from 12 to 14 October, so calling up your favourite restaurant (or the ones listed on page 8) before heading out is a good idea. The phone order service foodmandu.com will also remain closed from 12 to 16 October. A couple of exceptions are the Red Dingo Restaurant in Jawalakhel and Helena's Restaurant in Thamel, which will remain open throughout the holidays.



## Think ink

fter the success of last year's Atattoo convention, Nepal Inked is back this year for a real mother of a blowout. The special attraction for the occasion is a chance to learn from renowned tattoo artists Paulo Cruzes and Piotr Olejnik and body suspension expert Emilio Gonzales. Roam around with friends for plenty more.

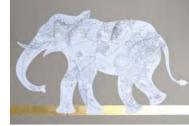
18th October, 11am to 8pm, Rs 100 Workshop: Art workshop Competition: small/medium tattoos in b/w or colour



**Concert**: Bobin a.k.a Himalayan Bob, Manual Transmission, Psychic Tower, Tumbleweed, Albatross, Mukti & Revival 19 October, 9am to 8pm, Rs 200

## Ways of the world

Artist, architect, teacher Tarshito – aka Nicola Strippoli - was born in Bari, Italy in 1952. In 1979, after completing university, he departed on a long trip to



India and found spiritual awakening under Osho. In his art, Tarshito is on a journey of union that he follows regardless of fashion, regardless of the ups and downs of various isms, regardless of the world's interest or indifference.

Creators, creatures, created, is an exhibition of mixed media works, dealing with Tarshito's experiences as a western man fully steeped in the meditative ways associated with the east.

Runs till 13 October, 5.30pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, siddharthaartgallery6@gmail.com, (01)4218048

#### Competition: leg and arm piece tattoos

Concert: Ful' Stop, Bidroha, X-Mantra, Rage Hybrid, Red Rabbit Commando, Underside w/ special appearance by Emilio Gonzalez 20 October, 9am to 8pm, Rs 100 Exhibition: vintage car and bike show; bike, skateboard, and motorbike stunts **Competition**: Full back and front tattoos

Concert: Horny Monks, Newaz, Lakhey, Jindabaad; bike, skateboard and motorbike stunts.

18 to 20 October, Bhrikuti Mandap, Kathmandu, www.nepalinked.com, www.facebook.com/nepalinked. com, www.youtube.com/ watch?v=fi1NOZBl3-U

## WHY THINK **ABOUT PETROL PRICES EVER AGAIN?**



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# Spirit mountain

#### The Manaslu Circuit Trek is fast gaining popularity as the new jewel in the crown of Himalayan trekking

Going on trek at the tail end of monsoon season is a double-edged proposition. On one hand, visitors can be assured of the fecundity that follows the weather: lush greenery, thundering waterfalls, and life at its most pristine. On the other hand, there are the landslides and cloudbursts to contend with. And yes, leeches too.

The Manaslu Circuit Trek, which actually circumnavigates Manaslu

touted to be the new jewel in the crown of Himalayan trekking and for good reason too.

For one, we thoroughly enjoyed the diversity of terrain that we traversed. After a bumpy jeep ride on mud and rock-laden tracks from Dhadingbesi to the start of the trail at Arughat, we hiked valleys with the roaring Budhi Gandaki as a constant companion, through primeval rainforests, before emerging into Annapurna, Ganesh Himal, and Manaslu.

We also had the opportunity to experience different cultures - the Gurung and Hindu inhabitants who populate the lower altitudes and the Tibetans at the upper reaches of the region. One of the highlights of the trek came when we visited the Lho Ribang Monastery which sits on a hill towering over Lho village. Turns out that we were in time to catch the annual puja, which was presided over by a high-ranking Khenpo (monastic

#### scholar) from Taiwan.

As of now, the Manaslu circuit can be done as a tea-house trek, without the need for camping. The state of accommodation, however, runs the gamut from spartan, as is the case with the lodging at Dharmasala just prior to crossing the Larke La, to quaint, colourful cottages at Bhimtang, on the other side of the pass.

Given its clear attraction as a diverse and relatively untouched

the number of visitors and are hedging their bets with a boom in the construction of new lodges and amenities for trekkers. Inevitably, the crowds will follow and intrepid travellers will begin to look elsewhere (the far east, perhaps). For now, it is the Spirit Mountain's turn to have its time in the spotlight and deservedly so. *Foo Chee Chang* 

nepalitimes.com

(8,163m), is fast gaining popularity as an alternative to the beaten trails of Everest and Annapurna. It is the barren sub-alpine terrain on the approach to Larke La (5,135m), while in the shadow of region, the Manaslu Circuit will certainly not remain a secret for long. Locals predict a growth in In the mountain of the soul, #644 Soul mountain, #583 For photo gallery

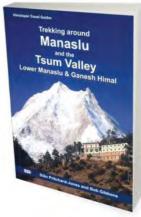
## Walking among giants

wo experienced Kathmandu-based adventurers, Sian Prichard-Jones and Bob Gibbons, released a trekking guide this month with the Himalayan Map House. The guidebook, the first of its kind for the region, explores the Manaslu Mountain Circuit and the Tsum Valley trail. Tucked between Langtang and the Annapurnas, many regions of Ganesh Himal and Manaslu Himal have just been opened to outsiders, including the lush and almost otherworldly Tsum Valley.

For those new to the lower Manaslu, Ganesh Himal, or to Himalayan trekking in general, this guidebook will be a useful resource. The guide starts with basic background information to Nepal, including its cultures, customs, religions, and holidays. If you want to plan your own journey, the book offers a plethora of services to choose from, each vetted by the authors, as well as logistic information for flights, permits, and lodgings. More than a brief overview, the background and logistical information is everything an inexperienced trekker would need.

The 'routes' section of the guide, by far the book's biggest asset, offers a day-by-day, almost hour-by-hour, description of what your experience on the trail will be. As the title suggests, the book gives a day-by-day for both the Manaslu circuit and the Tsum Valley, including several variations. Instead of finding out as she goes along, the trekker will know how many ascents and descents to expect, locations for water and food, and otherwise hidden gems to look out for. Each trek offers its own technical challenges, accommodation difficulties, and majestic splendours and the authors give them each good treatment.

The guide delves into an impressive level of detail when discussing suggested diversions to the trail, culled with the help of locals Sonam Lama and Lopsang Chhiring Lama. Advice such as "the older bridge will lead to an easier ascent," or, "look for Lama Sherap at the Gonhgye monastery, who speaks good English," ensures that you won't have to backtrack or get lost in the pursuit of these necessary 'side-tracks'. The sheer number of them suggests a rich experience for the traveller, even



#### Trekking around Manaslu and the Tsum Valley:

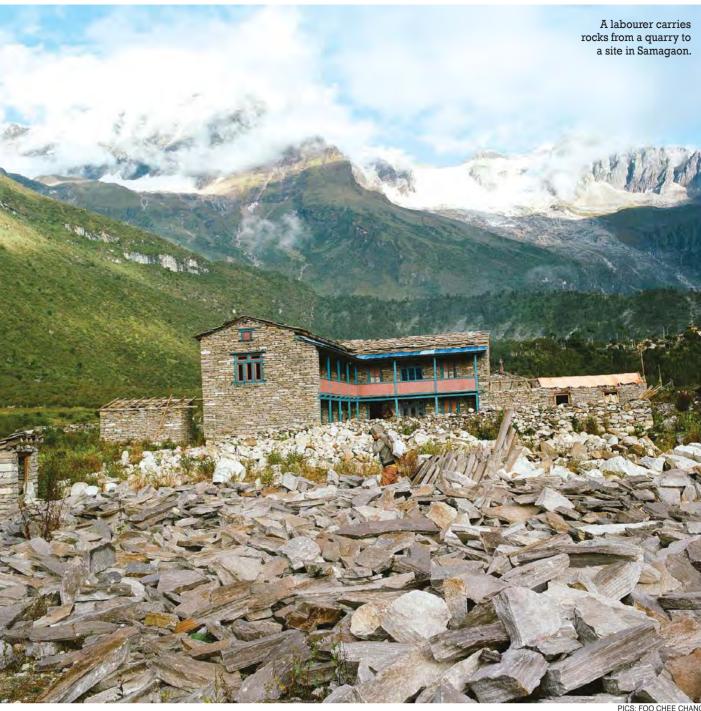
Lower Manaslu and Ganesh Himal by Sian Pritchard-Jones and Bob Gibbons Himalayan Map House, 2013 188pp

#### after several visits.

Funny, though admittedly corny, lines such as, "I saw the lodge on the edge of the cliff; good thing I didn't wake up with a hangover!" add a bit of levity just as one's legs are about to give out. All-in-all, the book's charm doesn't take away from its utility and your trek will surely be complimented by it.

For two routes gaining in popularity and in a region so close to Kathmandu, this guide is a must for any trekker, initiated or uninitiated to the region. *Lawrence Miller* 





# Selling ourselves short

#### **TSERING DOLKER GURUNG**

or years, Nepal's tourism industry has lamented that the country has gone for quantity rather than quality. They point to Bhutan, which has priced itself as a premium destination, as the model Nepal should have followed.

HUMLA

1,500

Well, guess what? Nepal has neither quantity nor quality. Only one in every eight tourist who visits Nepal goes on treks. And because of undercutting between Nepali trekking agencies, the rates they pay are so low that it is hardly worthwhile.

Now. a new breed of young trekking entrepreneurs fed up with bargain-hunting European wholesalers, trekking middlemen, and rapacious local agents have taken the initiative to sell Nepal for its true worth.

"Nepal should be promoted as an exotic destination and not a cheap one," says Raj Tamang (pic, right) of Responsible Adventure. "We have a world class product that adventure tourists from around the world want to visit again and again."

Singaporeans who are on their fourth trek in Nepal. Tourists don't mind paying more if the service is good, the facilities are comfortable, and all the permits and pickups are taken care of, he says.

Currently there are more than 2,000 trekking and travel operators in the country. An easy registration procedure and minimum investments are fuelling the number further resulting in stifling competition between agencies to attract clients.

"The trend of under-cutting each other and the lack of innovation have eroded the value of the trekking industry," says Tamang, who started **Responsible Adventures in 2007** with a completely different business model of 'boutique' tea-house treks in Nepal, India, Tibet, and Bhutan. "Although our prices are almost double that of other companies, our clients don't complain because they get the value of their money," explains Tamang. "Imagine getting a hot bowl of tomato soup with freshly made croutons after a long day of traversing through passes. These are



the little things that we do to ensure we give the best to our customers.

Tamang has just come back from around Manaslu with a group of

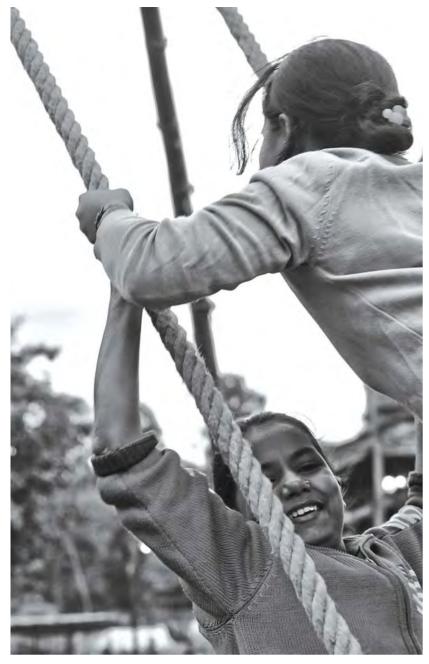
On an average, Responsible Adventures serves up to 50 clients a year with the majority of them coming from North America, Australia, and New Zealand. With years of experience in the industry, Tamang has seen first-hand how tourists can be mistreated and abused by guides and company employees. "Because the aim is to make quick bucks and not aim for repeat customers, people don't focus on service," he adds.

Trekking in Nepal has also been adversely affected by the network of roads snaking up what used to be hiking trails. With the pristine environment spoiled by roads and fumes, trekker numbers have dropped in Annapurna for instance. Roads also allow mass tourism which further degrades the environment if it is not carefully regulated. Says Tamang: "We should

concentrate on quality eco-tourism and not mass tourism." 💟









# THE FIRST DAY OF DASAIN

#### PHOTO ESSAY by JAN MØLLER HANSEN

asain is a time of generosity, sacrifice, puja, and family gatherings. It is also the time when children enjoy swinging on the ping, celebrations take place in homes and around temples. But not everybody might be in a festive mood.

On Ghatasthapana, the first day of Dasain, 12-year-old Prisanta Thapa Magar spent the entire day working on the garbage recycling site by the banks of the Bagmati in Teku. She cannot remember how many Dasains she has spent there. Elsewhere in Kathmandu's underbelly, life goes on amidst the rubbish that the city has thrown away.

Below bridges gridlocked with holiday traffic, children play in the









## **Encounters at the End of the World**

lilm Southasia has just ended and in the spirit of celebrating the documentary form I would like to review one of my favourite Werner Herzog documentaries. Encounters at the End of the World,



which came out in 2007, is an indelible film, once watched it will stick in your mind with its unusual cocktail of eerie beauty and the oddball characters who inhabit McMurdo station in Antarctica.

As always, the documentary is narrated by Herzog himself in his usual, dryly funny, heavily accented English that occasionally allows for some almost absurd bursts of heavy romanticism. For anyone who cannot stand self-indulgence, a Herzog film is not for you. However, though heavily idiosyncratic, it is undeniable that Herzog is some kind of genius in his ability to bring to cinema subjects that a lesser artist may never have the urge (nor the ability) to tackle.

Therefore, we find ourselves at the end of the world, in Antarctica, following the doings of a variety of characters who have chosen to inhabit this desolate but beautiful place that is the South Pole. Among those interviewed are a philosopher/forklift driver, a physicist, an iceberg geologist, a penguin scientist, a linguist/ computer specialist who grows hot house flowers in McMurdo, and a further array of very strange people, all whom share one thing, a love of travelling and a penchant for adventure.

The judges for Film Southasia this year placed a high premium on the cinematic element of the documentaries in competition. While films should and ought

to push the envelope of the cinematic medium, I personally do not agree that documentaries should be rated most highly on their visual quality. That being said, Encounters at the End of the World (along with most of Herzog's other documentaries) manages to somehow incorporate both the slice of life aspect that is so crucial to documentaries side by side with a haunting sense of the visual, somehow marrying the people interviewed in these documentaries to their surroundings, making them artistically inextricable.

This is a mean feat even for someone like Herzog who has over the years developed a very keen visual and oratory style that allows his films to transcend the genre of documentary, the places and characters that he chronicles becoming almost mythical in their depiction.

Meanwhile, as our very own documentary makers strive to bring their films to the world, I can't help but be ever so slightly miffed that films like Kesang Tseten's excellent Who will be a *Gurkha* were ignored in the awards ceremony at Film Southasia due to this slightly unfair standard imposed upon a genre that should primarily be about chronicling, as impartially as possible, the very particular lives of people across the human spectrum. In the case of documentaries. cinema should stand back and give way to cinema verité. 오

nepalitimes.com 🖑 Watch trailer

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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARY

WINNERS: Poet Ratna Shumsher Thapa addresses the audience after receiving the Jagadamba Shree Puraskar 2069 on Sunday. Rajan Mukarung (third from left) won this year's Madan Puraskar for his novel Damini Bhir.



AM I IN ?: Applicants look through the acceptance list for temporary police that was published on Monday near Hanuman Dhoka. The temporary force will be mobilised during the CA elections on 19 November.







DASAIN AYO: Children swinging on a ping at Narayan Chaur, Naxal on Tuesday.



BAL KRISHNA THAPA

HEAVY DUTY: Indian ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae (right) at the monthly talk series organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry on Monday.



Trade your whiskey on the rocks for a taste of Spain and support a good cause money for a good this festive season

epalis are not big wine drinkers. But with Valencian winemaker Vicente Gandía's new line of celebrity-branded wine, they have a reason to swap their customary peg and raise a glass (or two) of vino while feeling happy about donating cause.

Gandía paired up with charity

Whatever It Takes to introduce some fresh wines whose proceeds will go to various causes ranging from poverty alleviation to child empowerment and environmental sustainability. The bottles are adorned by pictures of eight well-known celebrities and their doodlings and many of the recipient

organisations are of their choosing. Charlize Theron is on a Brut-Cava; Coldplay on young rosé; and George Clooney on a robust Cabernet.

The celebrities' faces evoke amusing comparisons with the wine that shares the bottle, a unique way of remembering tasting notes. For example, David Bowie's Shiraz might be aggressive like Suffragette *City* or varied and complex like *Ziggy* Stardust; or Pierce Brosnan's barrel-aged Tempranillo rich with a long after-taste, like a good 007 flick.

For my own tasting, I tried the young white wine marked with the face and art of Penélope Cruz. I loved Cruz in Volver and Vanilla Sky and wanted to see how her performance panned out as the star of this wine. According to Gandía's tasting sheet, the grapes in this wine consisted of 80 per cent Verdejo and 20 per cent Sauvignon Blanc. As this was the only wine variety paired with a celebrity from the wine's country of origin, I thought it appropriate to give it a try. I was not disappointed.

As soon as I opened the bottle, I was hit with the smell of fresh fruits: a bouquet of raspberry, strawberry, and even lychee tantalised my olfactory glands. As I poured

the first glasses, light shone through the straw-yellow colour of the drink. My mouth watered as it swirled in my glass.

The first sip was met with full body, almost thick on the tongue. The fruits remained heavy on the nose, then eased into an almost creamy mellowness, then a slight, pleasant bite of alcohol at the end. With each sip, the wine became more complex and mellow. The taste was only enhanced with a bite of mild cheddar on a water cracker. The alcohol bite at the back subsided a bit and folded into the wine's other flavours. The tasting sheet recommends seafood and rice with it, but the chicken and vegetables did just as well.

Sometimes vou just know a good wine when you taste it and in Vicente Gandía's celebrity-branded wines, you taste it.

In Nepal the wines are distributed by Red Chilli Merchandise and are also available in select restaurants in Kathmandu and Pokhara. 💟 Lawrence Miller

Red Chilli Merchandise Buddhanagar, Kathmandu (01)2204444

(FS

psychedelic Birendra. Angular lines that make climbing the stairs feel like something out of Magical Mystery Tour. A giant gorilla with distractingly rendered breasts and a facial expression

somewhere

between tripping and

SOMEPLACE ELSE

mania. Places - the few-month old enterprise jostling for a share of the vegetarian market - is not your mother's restaurant.

The brash interior, resplendent with a large floor-seating area and just a couple of regular tables, feels very much as if it was designed to give OR2K a run for its money. It's actually more reminiscent of that old-timer's former ambience, back when you'd go and eat worldbeating bruschetta, hummus or pizza, and then wonder why



We baulked at most of the fusion offerings available, while marvelling at the chef's uncanny knack for using beetroot where beetroot does not especially belong - more on that later.

Instead, we browsed the tattered (I'm told temporary) printout menu, which organises its dishes into categories of small, medium, and large and settled on a couple of items from each. There were kati rolls stuffed with goat's cheese and asparagus and drizzled with honey (Rs 160), which oozed indulgently and had us impressed from the outset. Then there was the 'taste platter', which allowed us to sample two of the medium-sized dishes (plus steamed veggies

and salad) without breaking the budget (Rs 275). Taking its design cue from the dreaded sizzler, this arrived as rectangular components lined up on a long plate: the excellent creamy potato tortilla beating the spinach pie, topped



as it was with the same weird, glutinous mushroom gravy we had in Southern Comfort a couple of weeks back. Stop serving that gravy, Kathmandu!

Back to wacky: the pesto momos (Rs 220) were perfectly acceptable, but my companion and I disagreed over whether any hint of pesto's basil, pine nuts or olive oil could actually be detected. This was served with a workaday momo achar (which, if there was pesto involved, would have well and truly silenced it) and slices of watermelon and papaya, for reasons that will likely remain a mystery. Back to beets: the two-layered beetroot cake (Rs 175), was my personal highlight of the evening - moist, light, and as commendable as it was unusual. It beat the (also superb) chocolate soufflé (Rs 230) on price, presentation, and execution, but dessert is clearly something Places has figured out.

All the food was presented beautifully, save for the snack of green olives encased in cheddar cheese (Rs 220), which seemed a tad expensive, and were presented to us unceremoniously on a saucer, without a garnish, dip or neatlycarved carrot rose in sight. The restaurant's service was as friendly as it comes and although the dishes were slow to arrive at first, the kitchen soon hit its stride and took care of us promptly.

Places is new, and is, I think, still finding its feet. But there's plenty of promise here and if the menu stops trying to outdo the artwork in the 'I'm a bit mad, me' stakes, then Kathmandu's vegetarians will have a great new hangout.

Also - whisper it - but Places is, for the time being at least, devoid of the usual billing plus-plus. Grab it while you can. 💟 СС

you were doing it in the dark, surrounded by ultra-violet graffiti and white people dressed as sadhus. Places has - thankfully - opted for the middle ground.

While efforts at wacky have been used to punctuate rather than define the Places look, these dubious principles haven't been entirely annexed from the menu.

How to get there: Hotfoot it through the Thamel crowds to Seven Corners, taking the left-hand turn at Yangling Tibetan restaurant. Swerve right and you'll see places straight ahead and upstairs.



Exclusive Lee Stores: Exclusive Store at Durbarmarg and K.L. Tower

#### **GIZMO by YANTRICK**





# Topping the health charts

n these days of political doom and gloom, there is welcome news about Nepal's health indicators. Although we still have large scope for improvement, the World Bank's health assessment and more recently the glowing assessment by Oxford University's MPI (multidimensional poverty index) give us something to cheer about.



In 1990 Nepal was behind in every development indicator. However, within two decades, we have managed to surpass India's performance in health. This phenomenal improvement appears almost paradoxical, given that Nepal is the poorest amongst neighbouring countries being compared. What could have accounted for this?

Besides government programs and outstanding work carried out by international and national NGOs, the hard-earned money sent home by our migrant workers has had a huge role to play in improving the health of

the country. This remittance may not be factored in the calculation of the abysmal gross national income for Nepal.

Levels of poverty and health indices in general corelate. But in the case of Nepal, health indices have improved out of proportion to the decrease in poverty according to the new MPI measure invented by Sabina Alkire at the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. Although Nepal continues to be the poorest country in South Asia, since 2006 we have seen the largest falls in poverty in the region.

What is fascinating is that by doubling health spending and concentrating on the poorest areas, maternal mortality rates - where Nepal has been a traditional underperformer - have been cut in half between 1998 and 2006. These gains are clearly more than what would be obtained by poverty reduction alone. Similar findings like Nepal from Bangladesh and Vietnam show that the \$ 1.25 a day poverty line, the cut-off upon which is envisioned a poverty free world, may not necessarily be accurate. An

index like the MPI may tell a more comprehensive story.

So cutting poverty may not be just about boosting incomes. Other factors that impact health like the lack of schools. clean water, family planning, vaccination campaigns, and availability of medicines all need to be taken into account. For example, although India is far ahead in terms of economic growth than its South Asian neighbours, it is clearly a 'slacker' in almost all measurable health indices, when it should have been a role model for better health and alleviation of poverty in the region.

But there is much left to be done in our country. Studies have shown that each week at least 40 Nepali women die unnecessarily during childbirth. Doctor Mark Zimmerman, a captivating raconteur and the executive director of the Lalitpur-based Nick Simon's Institute articulates this tragedy vividly,"In her home high in the mountains of western Nepal, a woman goes into labour to deliver her first child. She does it the same way that her mother did and her grandmother before her: on the floor, with only a relative to help." And surely enough, the stage is set for complications.

With newly-trained, more competent, and skilled birth attendants working in rural Nepal today, hopefully the numbers of women dying during childbirth will reduce drastically in the next decade. 💟

## The thrills of frills

Nothing beats accessorising your generic mobile iDevice (iPod, iPhone, and iPad) to something more personalised to suit your need and taste. The following are three essential accessories that Yantrick simply cannot do without:



#### L5 Universal Remote Control Plug in the coin sized L5 to your iDevice connector at the bottom, download the free L5 app from the App Store, and you are good to go. The L5 allows you to search for and download remotes for gadgetsyou own, or program any infrared remote controlled device, along with your personalised design, all without the need for a battery, as the L5 is powered by your iDevice itself. It is a simple, yet extremely convenient and powerful

alternative for replacing multiple remote control devices and at approximately Rs 3,000, the L5 certainly is worth it.

#### Bose SoundLink Mini Bluetooth Speaker

Delivering Bose's legendary audio performance, this ultra-compact speaker is a worthy companion for your iDevice. Connecting to your gadget via a Bluetooth connection and boasting seven hours battery life, this pint sized speaker is the perfect solution for your audio needs during

the long days of load-shedding this upcoming winter. The speaker's Bluetooth connectivity also means that it can be used with your



Bluetooth-equipped Android devices and well as your Bluetoothenabled laptops and notebooks. Weighing a mere 1.5 pounds and at just seven inches wide, this Bose speaker is extremely portable, elegantly designed, and simple to operate. Marked at Rs 25,000, the speaker certainly deserves a look-in.

#### Eurekka Case with bluetooth wireless keyboard for iPad

With an executive-looking faux leather cover and a keyboard attached to its inside, the Eurekka case looks extremely sleek and adds a layer of sophistication wherever you carry around your iPad in it.



The keyboard connects to your iPad via Bluetooth and is equipped with an inbuilt rechargeable lithium battery, a full charge of which should last at least three days of heavy use. The case is great for typing long articles/documents on-thego, for office apps like the Smart Office 2 (free app), and is totally worth the



#### TIMES 11 - 17 OCTOBER 2013 #677

## The party that can throw the best party

The relationship between politics and Dasain is much more intertwined this year than before. The 19 November election for a second Constituent Assembly will colour the campaign with the hues of Dasain and Tihar because the political parties will rev up their home visits to campaign in earnest.



The festival is ideal for campaigning because of the movement of people, the celebratory mood, and gettogethers of families and clans across the country. This time, both the candidates and cadre will be going not just to their family elders, but also their party seniors to seek blessings. But it will be the candidates who will have to use the festival for maximum public relations.

Dasain is probably derived from a pre-Vedic harvest festival, but later got the connotation of the victory of good over evil. Because of the link to victory and political parties will attempt to portray themselves as the winning 'good' side. Political candidates will be trying to emulate the victors of mythological wars in which the evil were vanquished.

Dasain is also a time of blood-letting: hundreds of thousands of goats, buffalos, and chicken will lay down their lives over the 10-days of Dasain and their blood splattered over deities, cars, and even aeroplanes to appease the gods. Indeed, if the shooting of UML candidate Mohammad Alam last week is any indication, there will also be human blood spilt.

In the past, it would be the



#### This festival season coincides with campaigning and will tell us a lot about the culture of Nepali politics

village elders in rural villages in the mountains who would be up-to-date on political gossip and the tactics for elections. But with the spread of FM radios to even the remotest districts almost everyone is a political analyst.

After Dasain comes Tihar and Chhath in the Tarai and together these festivals will fuse with the political festival of election time. And for once, the focus of attention will not be the semi-deserted capital but the 75 district capitals and the hinterland.

Nepali society has been overly politicised with the proxy front organisations of the four main political formations dominating every aspect of life from education, health, transportation to the bureaucracy. Even members of the same family are often divided along political lines.

Such divisions may affect the festivals this season because members of the same family maybe taking their affiliations more seriously. Some elders may be transmitting curses to relatives instead of blessings. Party members denied tickets are already rolling up their sleeves and are standing as independent rebel candidates. Both the UCPN (M) and NC are plagued by this.

The CPN-M has decided not just to stay away from polls, but to disturb campaigning and voting. Their Dasain slogan is 'Boycott Elections' and threats have been issued to candidates and one can expect symbolic violence to scare off contenders. There is a danger of political parties using the excuse of the CPN-M to intimidate candidates from rival parties.

**OPINION 17** 

Political leaders clearly know that Nepali voters do not read election manifestos, so many promises have been broken in the past. The Himalmedia Nationwide Public Opinion Survey in March showed that only four per cent of respondents said they voted based on manifestos. Nearly half said they would vote based on performance. Which is why political parties will be trying to show that they are generous and efficient this Dasain. The vote may go to the party who can throw the best party. 💟

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## **18** REGION

The politics of Rahul Gandhi's motherfixation and India's pre-election politics

## MAMMA MIA



NEW DELHI - Rahul Gandhi should behave in the manner befitting a 43-year-old and stop referring to Congress President Sonia Gandhi as his mother in public remarks. We all know she is his mother, but hell, because India is a democracy, he should refer to her as Congress president, not as his mummy.



This tendency was on display at the time he tried to explain his intemperate criticism of the Manmohan Singh government's decision to promulgate an ordinance to set aside the Supreme Court's verdict disqualifying convicted legislators from contesting elections for two years or more. He barged into a press conference of the Congress spokesperson and called the ordinance "nonsense". Since the ordinance was the Union cabinet's idea, its authority was undermined.

The outcry against Rahul's remark prompted him to say last week: "My mother also told me that I used very strong words and that I could have said the same thing in a nice manner. As an afterthought, I agree it was a mistake to use harsh words, but I have a right to raise my voice." Parse the sentence and we can fathom the politics underlying Rahul's mother-fixation. Despite the outrage against his indecorous criticism of the ordinance, he still did not think he had committed a mistake until his mother also said it was indeed the case. Good mother that she is, Sonia presumably lectured her middle-aged Congress vice-president son on etiquette.

Rahul realised his mistake only after his mum told him, but as the scion of India's premier dynasty, he couldn't possibly tender an unqualified apology. Rahul's acceptance of his mistake, albeit in infantile language, was cleverly crafted to ensure his position in the party wasn't undermined even as he mollified a hurt prime minister. The message: Rahul Gandhi only bows before Sonia Gandhi not because she is the Congress president, but because she happens to be his mother.

Substitute 'Congress president' for 'mother' and it conveys the sense that he had been reprimanded and his assertion of his right to raise his voice as recalcitrance. By contrast, bowing before your mother, in our culture, suggests obedience, not subservience.

This isn't the first occasion Rahul invoked the trope of mother for political purposes. The morning following his appointment as vice-president of the Congress in January last year, he told a gathering of Congressmen in Jaipur: "Last night everyone congratulated me ... but last night my mother came to my room and she was with me and she cried. Why did she cry? She cried because she understands that the power so many seek is actually a poison ... she can see it because she is not attached to it ..."

No doubt, Rahul is extremely fond of his mother, as most humans are. It is also possible the scene he described in the Jaipur speech wasn't the concoction of his speech-writers. Yet contrast his disclosure of the intimate moments with his mother to the entreaties of Congressmen in 2011: then they had rebuffed all inquiries about where precisely Sonia had gone for treatment, claiming the family members wanted their privacy to be respected.

Why then reveal details of mother-to-son conversations? Because it provided Rahul an opportunity to harp on his mother's qualities of selfabnegation. He was also subtly crafting a more benign image of himself and his family as selfless politicians – that despite his mother's insights into the true nature of power, she was letting him participate in politics for the larger good of the people.

He said as much in Jaipur: "We should not chase power for the attributes of power. We should only use it to empower the voiceless." Indeed, Rahul's references to his mother are aimed at reinventing the family in the era of coalition politics in India. Not likely to secure a majority on their own in the foreseeable future and dependent on mercurial coalition partners unwilling to become sycophants to the Gandhis, Sonia and Rahul don't wish to wield executive power only to ensure their stature of unquestionable superiority is not diminished.

Yet, their participation in electoral politics requires justification and the theme of self-abnegation has been invented to ensure that their supremacy, despite not heading the government, isn't eroded.

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## **OPINION 19**

## Silenced by the state

I an embarrassing display of spineless leadership, the Nepal government at the behest of its Sri Lankan counterpart sent a last minute directive to the organisers of Film Southasia this week, prohibiting them from screening films critical of the



Mahinda Rajapaksa regime and the army's excesses during the civil war. *No Fire Zone, Broken,* and *The Story of One* chronicle the three-decade long brutal conflict that claimed the lives of more than 80,000 Sri Lankans on both sides and displaced tens of thousands.

The Sri Lankan government is obviously sensitive that its global image may be tarnished just before the bi-annual Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting set to take place in November. Ever since United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay presented a scathing report on its effort at truth and reconciliation in September, the country has been on the defensive trying to convince its international partners that it did not willingly kill thousands of civilians as the war drew to a close in 2009.

What was surprising though was how meekly the Nepal government complied to its fellow SAARC member. And the same leaders who don't tire of harping on national pride and sovereignty did not bother to defend the Nepali public's constitutionally guaranteed provisions on the freedom of expression and press: definite signs of the weakening of the Nepali state and of democracy.

Since launching an intensive military offensive in 2006 to wipe out LTTE rebels and put an end to the conflict, the Sri Lankan government has gone to great lengths to suppress and censor dissenting voices, with the media its prime target. In January



ALL OUT: Victims await medical assistance after the government fired heavy artillery in the 'no-fire zone' in Pokkanai, Vanni of northern Sri Lanka in 2009.

2009, a few months before the end of the war, editor of *The Sunday Leader* and internationally-known journalist, Lasantha Wickrematunge, was shot dead in Colombo. In a posthumously published editorial, Wickrematunge who had been a fierce critic of both the government and the Tamil Tigers, wrote: "No other profession calls on its practitioners to lay down their lives for their art save the armed forces - and, in Sri Lanka, journalism."

Threats, physical abuses, mental torture, and harassment of journalists are endemic in post-war Sri Lanka. Many are in exile and those living within the country have accepted self-censorship as a way of life. The rhetoric of the victor and vanquished is so pervasive that anyone who speaks up against the atrocities of war is labelled a 'traitor' and 'anti-national' and is a potential target.

Sri Lanka ranks 162 out of 179 on the global Press Freedom Index. As Rajapaksa and his family's grip on everything from daily life to the military and the judiciary (after the controversial impeachment of the chief justice in January) tightens, and the island nation is pushed towards authoritarianism, Sri Lanka will, no doubt, slip further in the rankings.

But every now and again first hand footage and accounts documenting war crimes find their way through in documentaries like *No Fire Zone* and expose the extent of violence meted out on civilians by both the state and LTTE in the final phase of war. Half-way through the blood and gore, with dismembered bodies, charred human remains, and a populace that was hunted down and cornered like wild animals in so called 'no fire zones', one is left to wonder, just what did the Sri Lankan government hope to achieve by the wholesale slaughter and what is it now trying to do Banned documentary is a testimony to the serious war crimes that accompanied the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka

by washing its hands of responsibility?

Roads previously cratered by bombs have given way to neat, black-topped highways, new high-rises dominate the skyline in Colombo, international companies are lining up to invest, and tourists are returning in large numbers. Even the citizens, wary after 25 years of war, appear content not to have to deal with bombs going off on the streets every other day. There isn't public clamour demanding justice for victims and their families. But if it is long-term peace and development that Sri Lanka is seeking, its priorities are seriously misplaced. Postconflict reconstruction and economic boom do not equal peace, they only act to airbrush political cleavages.

Sri Lanka is not just back to square one before the war, it is back to 1956, debating issues like federalism and autonomy, the non-fulfillment of which fed the grievances that led to the war. The discrimination is now more deeply embedded than ever before and this doesn't give hope for lasting peace on the island. The regime led by members of the Rajapaksa family are enforcing an ultra-nationalist identity through social re-engineering of northern zones heavily populated with Tamils and in the south there has been organised attacks on the other minority, the Muslims.

Like in Nepal, although a full-scale armed conflict is not an immediate possibility, the painful memory of war will rankle the children and families of those tortured, raped, murdered, and disappeared by the state and rebels for years to come and could come back to haunt the country.















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## 20 NATION



## **Guess** who's back?

ondering how to spend those dull days between Dasain and Tihar holidays? Fret not, the weeklong Jazzmandu festival is back, so you can party all the way

been home in Kathmandu. Ten vears ago, one would be hard-pressed to find a Nepali capable of pronouncing the word 'jazz', let alone going to see the music. But as artistic director Navin Chettri can attest, a lot has changed in a decade. "People don't ask what jazz is, anymore," says Chettri. Now, Jazzmandu has become something of an institution: "People look forward to it as much as Dasain." This year's festival features a smattering of artists hailing from the USA (The Claudia Quintet), India (4th Element), Switzerland (Eliane Amherd), France (Yaite Ramos Quartet) and the Netherlands (Mike del Ferro). None, save a member from the Yaite Ramos Quartet, have performed at the festival before. They join a collection of Nepali artists, including the Cadenza Collective, Joint Family Internationale, and the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory faculty. With musical roots as disparate as Afro-Cuban, classical Western to soul, the festival is sure to be as much education as it is entertainment. Lawrence Miller



## Yaite Ramos Quartet

Daughter of the Artistic Director of the famous Afro-Cuban group, Buena Vista Social Club, Yaite Ramos was raised in a fantastic musical environment in Cuba. She formally studied music from the age of 6, eventually graduating from the National School of Art in Havana at 18. Having accompanied many artists as 'side-woman', she began her solo recording career with self-produced mini-albums. After making many demos, Ramos is working in the direction of a new disc for this year. She currently leads a French-based band whose style mixes Jazz, Cuban and RnB. Yaite Ramos – Flute/Voice, Bruno Schorp – Bass, Julie Saury – Drums, Daniel Stawinski – Piano www.myspace.com/yaiteramos



## The Claudia Quintet

Claudia has an immediately identifiable live-sound, accumulated from the thousands of air-miles and hundreds of concerts they have performed in the last decade. Over their career, the group has released six CDs to worldwide critical-acclaim, cementing their appeal in traditional jazz circles and beyond. For their latest album, What Is the Beautiful?, The Claudia Quintet brings together Kurt Elling and Theo Bleckmann, who recite and sing the poems of avant-garde, proto-beat and innovative American poet, Kenneth Patchen. The Quintet hails from the United States. Drew Gress – Bass, Matt Moran – Vibraphone, Red Wierenga – Accordion, Chris Speed – Clarinet and Tenor Saxophone, John Hollenbeck – Drums, and Matt Mitchel – Piano www.claudiaquintet.com



### Mike del Ferro

Dutch pianist Mike del Ferro is a highly sought-after composer, pianist and arranger who writes and performs in an impressive array of musical genres. Del Ferro has travelled the world extensively (so far, 106 countries), searching for collaborations with musicians from cultures quite different from his own. He is working on a 10-disc series named "the Journey", which collects recordings from his collaborations with musicians all over the world. The second of these discs was released in August. To date, he has more than 10 albums to his name. www.mikedelferro.com



How do you feel about Jazzmandu? 4th Element: The band is really looking forward to Jazzmandu especially in sharing the stage with other international artists. Yaite Ramos Quartet: It's always interesting to travel with the music and for the music. Our percussionist Julie Saury was here in 2009 and we're very excited to be here as a band. Mike del Ferro: I am thrilled about my first visit to Nepal. I was in touch with the organisers for years and finally everything worked out this time. Elaine Amherd: I am very much looking forward to collaborate with Nepali musicians and to discover Kathmandu.

through to Laxmi puja.

Single-handedly responsible for putting Kathmandu on the world-jazz map, Jazzmandu, scheduled for 24-30 October, continues to bring in some of the biggest names in the genre from around the world and our own back yard. Around the city, world-class musicians perform with Kathmandu as their backdrop.

Jazz is a musical style perfectly suited to the city of Kathmandu. Walking through its streets, one is barraged with the staccato of motorbike horns, diverted by unexpected alleyway turns and constantly surrounded by its sweeping hills. Like jazz, life in Kathmandu is spontaneous, given to punctuations of beauty, sublimity and discord. The Jazzmandu music festival, now in its 11th year, is a perfect expression of this extemporaneous city. But jazz hasn't always

## SWING IT

It's only three weeks until Kathmandu swings to the beats of Jazzmandu. We know you're excited—well, so are the ones performing. Here's what the artists had to say about their experiences and expectations.

### How would you describe and define your music?

**4th Element:** Our music is based on a fusion of funk, jazz, RnB, and soul. **Yaite Ramos Quartet:** When our flautist Yaite arrived in France from Cuba, she infused her musical self with other influences. So, the songs we play create an exciting mix of Afro-Cuban rhythms, jazzy harmonies and powerful singing.

**Mike del Ferro:** When I travel, I look to collaborate with musicians from cultures quite different to my own. The



## **Eliane Amherd**

Described as "a very talented singer," "beautiful, mesmerizing, warm, charming, but unaffected," "a hard working guitarist," and "amazingly versatile," Swiss-born singer, guitarist and songwriter Eliane Amherd's music is creating guite a stir in New York City. Her album, Now and from Now on, has topped the playlists of several US Radio Stations. www.elianeperforms.com



## Cadenza Collective

Cadenza's sound is comprised of elements from a wide array of world-musical styles, such as Nepali Classical and Folk, with a blend of Afrobeat, funk and experimental music. The sound appeals to both the mind and soul, delighting audiences from all walks of life. The Nepali band is somewhat of a fixture at the festival. Navin Chhetri - Vocals/Drums, Rajat Rai- Guitars, Samir Chhetri- Bass www.myspace.com/cadenzakath

## Gandarbha

Gandharbas are the wandering minstrels that traditionally travelled up and down Nepal's mid-hills, carrying along the true essence of Nepali



rural life and folk music. They also served as news-carriers by informing. through their songs, the residents of one village after another of important happenings in the vicinity. Formed in the year 2000, the Gandharba group performing for Jazzmandu includes instruments like Sarangi, Madal and Kartal.



## **Dhime Girls**

As the first female group playing Newari traditional instruments, the Dhimey Girls (Dattatreya Cultural Group) performs at festivals and events with their dhimes. sichyays, and thuchyays to the delight of a variety of crowds.

Dhime Girls: Indira Lacchimasyu, Julum Lachhimasyu, Krija Manandhar, Leena Manandhar, Mira Manandhar, Kabita Manandhar, Bina Manandhar and Manju Manandhar.



## 4th Element

Based in Shillong, 4th Element is the only band in Northeast India that bends and blends the four styles of funk, jazz, RnB and soul in its quest for creative expression. 4th Element plays music with spirit, soul and spunk and is constantly fashioning its own distinctive voice. The band is currently recording its first album, which will showcase 4th Element's unique fusion of four elements-jazz, funk, RnB and soul.

Ribor Mb - Keyboards, Sara Lee - Vocals, Amit Mullick - Guitar, Sam Shullai - Drums, Jeffrey Laloo - Bass www.myspace.com/4thelementindia

# All that

Party with the musicians at the 11th Jazzmandu Festival.

#### Jazz for the next generation music competition One outstanding band will perform at Jazz Bazaar, plus interact and engage in a private workshop with Jazzmandu musicians. 24 October, 2.30pm to 4.30pm. Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel

Groovin at Upstairs Cadenza and friends kick off the fest with a jam at the heart of Jazz in Nepal. Rs 350, 24 October, 6pm onwards, Jazz Upstairs, Lajimpat

Valley jams Venues in Kathmandu will feature performances by various Jazzmandu artists. Claudia Quintet at Jazz Upstairs, Lazimpat; Yatie Ramos Quartet at Moksh, Jawalakhel; Eliane Ahmerd Trio at House of Music, Thamel; 4th Element at Manny's Eatery & Tapas Bar, Ekantakuna /Jawalakhel; Mike del Ferro at Bhumi Restaurant, Lajimpat. Rs 500, 25 October, 6pm onwards

azz bazar Marathon of jazz and traditional Nepalese folk and classical music performed by international and Nepali musicians. *Rs 990, 26 October,* 2.30pm to 10pm, Gokarna Forest Resort

d Hot Latin Jazz A night of Latin Jazz, featuring authentic Afro-Cuban sounds of the Caribbean. *Rs* 1,099, 27 October, 7 to 9pm, Hotel Summit, Kupondole

Jazzmandu master class, an opportunity for music students & jazz enthusiasts to interact with visiting musicians, share their experience and stories and learn different instrumental tips and techniques. 29 October, 1.30 to 3.30pm, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel

Jazz at Patan, an evening of Nepali classical music fused with Jazz in a rich and soulful ambience. Rs 1,299, 29 October, 6pm onwards, Dhokaima Cafe, Patan

Jazzmandu Finale Musicians from different bands play their sets and later jam together, creating a high-energy, improvised musical treat. Rs 990, 30 October, 6pm onwards, Alliance Francaise, Tripureswor

www.jazzmandu.com

results, which are eye-opening, have let me build musical bridges between cultures. So, I combine these with the revered canons of Western music and drive it with the audacity of jazz

be invited to play in an international festival.

#### Who are your favorite jazz musicians/vocalists?



#### improvisation.

Eliane Amherd: My songs are mostly witty anecdotes of my experiences. For example, As if, which I wrote in Rio, goes: "Hi how are you, what's your name, where are you from, how long do you stay, do you like Rio?" That is the pickup line I heard from men about 10 times a day when all I tried to do is sunbathe in peace. And then of course there are happy and sad love songs.

#### How important do you think festivals are in promoting the careers of musicians?

Mike del Ferro: Extremely important, because festivals are the best opportunities to be heard and meet a lot of people which can be very useful for your network and career. Elaine Amherd: Festivals are an incredible opportunity to play for a big audience and to experience the cultures and people of a foreign country. Which again becomes an inspiration for new creations, songs etc. You meet also artists from other countries, so it means something to

4th Element: Randy Crawford, Lalah Hathaway, George Benson, Phillip Bailey, etc. Too many to name. Mike del Ferro: There are many, but to name a few: Keith Jarrett, Herbie Hancock, John Coltrane. Elaine Amherd: I listened to a wide variety of music when I was young, going through phases and all. Later, I became fond of anything with a lot of rhythm like Latin and Brazilian music. Elis Regina is one of my all time favorites and if anyone ever wants to emerse themselves in Jazz singing, Ella Fitzgerald is a must.

#### Do you also teach music/singing?

Elaine Amherd: I teach guitar and vocal lessons if people ask me for private lessons. And I teach workshops. Mike del Ferro: I mainly do masterclasses when I travel. Yaite Ramos Quartet: Daniel Stawinski, our piano player, is a specialist of Latin music and he teaches at a Latin music school in Paris. Our bass player, Bruno Schorp, also gives lessons.

## International family

Joint Family Internationale's single Neta ji went viral on Facebook and Twitter after its release last April. The group's song, which mocks the failed political leaders of Nepal, struck the right cord with the audience not just for its entertaining lyrics, but also the foot-tapping composition. The single went on to win three awards at Hits FM Music Awards last month, including best new artist, best performance by a group and best pop composition.

The reggae group from Kathmandu, which was virtually unknown among mainstream music listeners, has now garnered a strong fan base and will be performing at this year's Jazzmandu. Joint Family Internationale (JFI) released their debut album 'One Good Thing' in August ,which is now available on iTunes, Amazon and all major digital music stores globally.

"We are grateful to the organisers for giving us the opportunity to perform alongside such talented musicians from all over the world," says Sanjay Shrestha, guitarist of the band.

JFI was formed in 2008, but lapsed shortly after, only to re-form in 2010. They have since been pulling crowds with their fun performances. They draw influence from artists like Bob Marley and the Wailers, Katchafire, Cat Empire, Groundation and Afro Dizzi Act. The band has an eclectic mix of Nepali and international musicians that add an extra spunk in all their songs and performances.

Says Sanjay Shrestha: "We hope our music brings people together for fun, peace, love and happiness." Sanjay – Guitar/backing vocals, Zimba – Vocals, Inap - Saxophone, Kismat - Drums, Bijent - Bass, Basant - Trumpet, Mahesh - Guitar, and Gemma - Trumpet www.facebook.com/jfinepal

## Whither compromise?

BBC Nepali Service, 5 October

#### **BBC** नेपाली

Interview with Narahari Acharya of the NC and Kamal Thapa of RPP Nepal.

### BBC Nepal: All the bigger parties and a majority of Nepalis are in favour of a secular, federal, republic state. Why are you against it?

Kamal Thapa: All these ideologies were imposed on us by foreign powers. Looking at Nepal's geopolitical



compulsions we decided to follow a different path because communal and religious harmony cannot exist in the country if we become a secular, federal republic.

Some people think that the parties made a mistake during the 2006 Janandolan. What is your view? Narahari Acharya: It's understandable that people are becoming increasingly vocal about the protracted transition period. But it is immature to label all the changes that have come about, such as the downfall of the monarchy in 2006, as the doing of foreigner.

#### Can the parties still claim to have 2006's mandate seven years later?

**NA:** No, that's why we're holding elections. The failure to draft the constitution the first time round was our weakness. But we also made a major achievement by transforming Nepal into a republic.

**KT:** I can provide you proof that the Maoists wanted to work with the king by sidelining the parties, but the king refused. That's why they entered the mainstream with the help of India. We can and must review the mistakes we made in the past, but that is no excuse for parties to do as they please.

#### What are the challenges to institutionalise the achievements of the 2006 uprising?

**NA:** We rehabilitated former Maoist rebels and integrated some of them into the national army and we deposed the

monarchy through non-violent means. All that remains to do is to complete the constitution.

**KT:** I'd like to remind everyone that the monarchy was not driven away by popular vote or a revolution but through the conspiracy of major parties.

#### But parties like yours which supported the king won very few seats during the last CA elections.

**KT:** It is meaningless to analyse the 2008 elections in the context of federalism, secularism, and republicanism. But we will see the peoples' wishes reflected this time round.

#### Is that why you didn't file for candidacy for first past the poll?

**KT:** We are a party that wants to establish our ideologies, so personal ambitions and victories during elections are meaningless to us. I admit that we are not in the position to claim a two-thirds majority, but I am confident that we will get enough votes to correct the mistakes made by the political actors of this country so far. If federalism fulfills all the demands of Nepalis, we might consider giving up our insistence on having a king. But since our polity is so unstable, I feel that we need the monarchy as the last custodian. NA: Why should the public believe that the same monarchy which showed very little respect for peoples' sentiments and democratic values, will now act as an able custodian. But if Nepalis still have faith in the king, it will show in the poll results.

#### Do you see any point of compromise between your respective parties?

**KT:** I think the next CA will in no way resemble the first one, because the people will not let the same people with the same policies conjure up the same reasons to make the CA fail. Keeping the country's interests in mind, we have come up with a

model of democracy where there is a ceremonial monarch and a prime minister elected directly by the voters. **NA:** I wrote the same thing 16 years ago and would have had no problem agreeing with Kamal Thapa if not for the events of the last decade. As an example, the monarchy no longer exists.

#### So there is no possibility of compromise?

E

**19 NOVEMBER** 

2013

**NA:** We can only agree on monarchy after a parliament amends the constitution according to Mr Thapa's belief. As far as ethnic federalism is concerned, I'm not in favour of it and neither is our party. I think that Nepal needs to become a republic, but we could initiate a debate on that. I have been in favour of directly electing a prime minister for a long time, so there is definitely ground for compromise.

### Dear Bill,

An open letter by Sudarshan Subedi to Bill O'Reilly of Fox News, *Facebook*, 5 October facebook

I don't have any regrets about not speaking fluent English. But so many Nepalis living in different parts of the world, seemed offended by my supposed inability o speak the language. So I flipped through an old photo album to console myself.

I looked through pictures of people from my community. I was eight when I developed a limp and since then I have lived with polio and have been helping others with the disease. My work for the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal has taken me to places where people speak Tharu, Newari, Bhojpuri, Lepcha, Raute, and other local tongues. So being fluent in English has never really mattered. When I attended college, it was to give exams and pay admission fees because I was so immersed in social work.



The disabled and poor Nepalis who I have served so far have never judged me on my ability to speak English. Neither have those who gave me various human rights and social work awards and fellowships.

I feel I have plenty to learn and do for this country, so I don't really care about not knowing English. To speak a language is to communicate and one can do that in many different ways. I want to spend what time I have by helping improve the living and working conditions of disabled people throughout the country.

I have nothing else to say about this episode except that *Fox News* anchor Jesse Watters foxed me. Are journalists supposed to conduct interviews by thrusting a pedestrian in front of their cameras and harassing him? Is this how journalism is done in America? I spent only four days in New York and I am none the wiser.

> Sincerely, Sudarshan Subedi



#### Bipendra Karki

खुम् बहादुर अवश्य पनि भष्टचारी हुन् तर प्रचन्ड,

हिसिला, महरा जत्तिको भष्टाचार त उलले पनि गन सकेका थिएनन् ।

Khum Bahadur is definitely corrupt, but even he couldn't match the corruption levels of Prachanda, Hisila, and Mahara.



काठमाण्डु पुगियो।3Gको तिवना र अघिसम्म एउटै पोष्टकानिम्ति घन्टौ लगाउनुपर्ने अवस्थावाटै तुलना हुन्छ यो अभागी देशमा राजधानी र मांफसलको अन्तर

The difference in 3G speeds in Kathmandu and elsewhere is a testimony to the wide gap between the capital city and other districts.

baburam bhattarai

म वर्षमा दुइ तिन पटक घर जान्छुर र त घरको यादर्ल सताउँछ भले यहा वर्षा देखि घर लगएका र आफ्नो थलोवाट विरूथापितको पिडा के होला?कल्पला गर्न सक्दैल

I miss home badly despite going there a few times a year. I can't imagine the plight of those who've been displaced from their homes.

Sarojraj Fottow.

मासु लखाऊ भलेर अली दिलेमध्ये अधिकांश रोगले च्यापेपछि शाकाहारी भएका हुल् । मल लाग्लेलाई खाल दिऊ, ललाग्लेले लखाऊ ।

Most people turn vegetarian because of their health, so please stop advising people to change their food habits. Let people decide what they want to eat.

🛸 आजको म

फेसबुकमा डेन्जी दसैं लागेछ यार,,, सलमान खाललाई टिका लार ली जमरा घुसारिसकेचल ढाका टोपीमा

Dasain fever has gripped Facebook. People are putting tika and jamara on Salman Khan.



जसरि आज एक वथाल भेडाहरु खुमवहादुरको स्वागतमा गए त्यसरीलै झुण्डका झुण्ड भेडाहरु मतदाल केल्द्रमा जाले छन् अलि फोरे लया खुमवहादुरहरु चुल्ले छन्

The people who went to welcome Khum Bahadur are the same ones who will go to election booths to choose new Khum Bahadurs.



यो निर्वाचनको जतपत्रको छपाइ किन यत्ति महेगो? धेरैं रङ्ग र राज्ञे कागजजा दशैंको शुभकामना कार्ड छाप्नै रु ५ भन्दा बढि लाग्दैन । कल्ले खान्छ हे?

If colourful Dasain cards are printed for Rs 5, why does printing election ballot paper cost so much? Where does all the money go?



लेपालका सबै कम्पुलिस्टलाइं उत्तर कोरिया र क्युवा लगेर घुमाउनु पर्ने, अनि त्यहाँ न ट्विटर र फेसवुक चलाउनलाई नेट छ न खानलाई अल्ल.)

All Nepali communists should be sent to North Korea and Cuba where there is no internet to use Facebook and Twitter and not a morsel to eat.





### 11 - 17 OCTOBER 2013 **#677**

Sellew

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#### EMERGENCY: UML candidate Alam being airlifted to Kathmandu from Birganj for treatment on Friday.

nation's future.

All for elections

#### Editorial, Nepal Samacharpatra, 6 October

The attack on Mohammad Alam, the CPN-UML election candidate for Bara-4 raises serious concerns. It is clear that Alam was attacked purely to terrorise people and drive them away from polling booths. But people shouldn't let the attack dampen the election spirit.

Immediate action should be taken against those involved in the attack to discourage others from committing such crimes. There is no point disrupting an election that will pave the path for a new constitution. Those who disapprove polls have put their personal interests before the The 10-year conflict has shown that the country has gained nothing from violence except for the loss of lives and property. If Nepalis could peacefully overthrow the monarchy, there is no reason why we have to resort to violence to bring about change. Such actions will only push the country further back.

The government needs to have a comprehensive security plan to ensure that elections are conducted in a free and fair manner. Sign: Party Office

"Don't close the door brother, we'll go elsewhere if they don't give us a ticket here."

#### कान्तिपुर

Batsyayan in *Kantipur Koseli,* 5 October

#### QUOTE OF THE WEEK



You don't have to worry about security. The Youth Force will protect candidates, voters, and election centres.

UML leader KP Oli, Naya Patrika, 7 October

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## Hot shopping items this Dasain

There was a time in elections of yore when Kangresi leaders promised to transform Nepal into Singapore if they got the vote. The Maobaddies went a step further and said if they won they would turn Nepal into Switzerland. They won, got into government, but all they did was stash their cash in Zurich. Now, the Chairman of our Elect-shun Govt has gone and declared at the UN Generals Assembly that Nepal will become a Swaziland

by 2022. What a crappy idea. What's wrong with remaining what we are: a Least Developed Country? Methinks we should leave

no stone overturned to ensure that Nepal remains an LDC so that we can keep being the leader of the world's beggars. No one is going to pay for our junkets anymore if we rise to the 'Developing Country' category, no?

#### ନ୍ଧେତ୍ୟ

Heard on tv this week: "One faction of one

party shuts down the country" and after last minute midnight negotiations failed, the political leaders were accused of "caring more about their own parties than they do about the country". We all thought this was about

Nepal until we found out that we were actually watching C-SPAN and they were talking about the US Congress. The shutdown of the US federal gubberment is

an important lesson for the 33 Parties in Nepal about how to make their 10-day bund in November really successful. And in the spirit of reciprocity the Nepal Embassy in DC can



now also deny Nepali visas to Tea Party folks for declaring a bund. **50 ce** Before they got

their tickets, candidates were all trooping off to temples and sacrificing black goats. Now they have tickets, they are all trooping off to astrologers for tips on do's and don'ts during the campaign. For instance, Brave Lion has been told to wear coral rings to ward off rebel candidates, Madhesi leaders have been given exact date and time of the auspicious alignments of the planets to declare their manifestos and even Marxist-Leninist candidates have been spotted surreptitiously tuning in to the horoscope program on tv. Meanwhile Nepal's asstrologer-inchief has declared that Chairman Awesome's zodiac is not so great so

the Strongman has been poring over his kundali to find that the sign rising on the Eastern horizon at birth and the longitudinal difference between

the tropical and sidereal constellations and co-mingling of planetary energies when in the sign of its exultation need to be propiated. Don't be surprised if there is another worship of a revolutionary water buffalo over Dasain.

#### ମେର

The week that Nepal was declared the fifth worst country to have a passport of, comes news that Nepalis have found ever more ingenious ways to

smuggle themselves out of the country and acquire visas. Earlier, an entire volleyball team which had gone to Japan for an international sports meet decided to stay back. We have lost track



of the number of wushu and karate contestants who have never returned. Then the formerlyroyal Nepal

Academy sent a 12-member dance troupe to the US, and only one came back. Now comes word of just how adept Nepalis are in getting a visa to the 165 countries that we need visas for. Of the 26 who went to Belgium to commemorate 50 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Nepal and participate in an international trade fair in Ghent last month, 15 disappeared soon after landing in Brussels. It appears that they paid Rs 18 lacks to the

concerned authorities for a formal visa recommendation letter. Thank god Finance Minister Shanker Koirala came back.





#### न त scratch Card को कांकट न त lucky Draw को tension

यसपालिको दशै तथा तिहारमा अब Panasonic का TV तथा Refrigerator मा Sure Shot उपहारहरु पाउनुहोस् तथा घरमा खुशियाली मित्र्यानुहोस्।

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