Five years after the election of the first Constituent Assembly and 18 months after its unceremonious demise, the country will give it another try in three weeks. Despite general cynicism about repeating an exercise that failed to live up to its expectations, people are hopeful that the next CA will build on the work done so far to deliver a new constitution. But more than anything else, that hope hinges on the conduction of free, fair, and fear-free polls. But politicians no longer fear the people, have no shame, no scruples, no principles. Except for the UML, the other parties have packed their proportional representation lists with wives and relatives. Most of the same candidates are up for re-election in Round 2 of the direct ballot. Given the limitations of our democracy, the only difference people can make now is to vote for all new faces.

Numbers in the wild are increasing thanks to decades of conservation.
November will change anything for the better. Discredited in Nepal right now are still not sure the polls on 19 November will be even less inclusive than before.

The only difference is that it headlong to elect a similar assembly with the same number of identical figures. The war was a needless killfest and the ideals that drove the 2006 People's Movement have been forgotten and abandoned. The mantras of secularism and federal republicanism have become meaningless buzzwords. The war was a needless killfest and the past five years have been wasted in endless political bickering.

Since all other options were exhausted, the powers that be decreed that there be elections again to cobble together another Constituent Assembly and let the chips fall where they may. Why is there a need to run up against the same problems that led to the death of the previous CA? And whether or not we are able to draft a new constitution within the given deadlines will never again rely on the bargaining powers of the top three-four parties. Long live democracy in Nepal.

The leaders of our parties profess equality, fraternity, and Liberty but they want to make exceptions for themselves. Contesting elections in multiple constituencies not only shows a lack of confidence but also robs young party members of opportunities. And who will pay the extra cost of by-elections? The whole practice is against the spirit of democracy and must be abolished.

Grimal

The state is true that privileged Sri Lankans in general do not want to dig up the wounds of war ('Silenced by the state', Trisha Rana, #677). I have middle-class Tamil and Sinhalese friends from college and whenever there are discussions about the conflict, they are quick to point out the unprecedented economic growth that their country has made since 1979. They seem willing to give the Rajapaksa regime along with former LTTE combatants (some of whom are now in government) a clean chit as long as there is double digit progress.

Unfortunately, like many in Nepal they fail to realise that war-time ghosts cannot be so easily expunged.
Free, fair, and fear-free

High political stakes and polarised sentiment threaten to undermine electoral integrity and security

This week, all major parties including the Nepali Congress, UCPN-Maoist, CPN-UML, MJF-Nepal, and other Madhes-based parties unveiled their election manifestos. No surprise that each party has blamed the other for the CA’s failure. UML dedicated only four pages in its manifesto to explaining its vision on the new constitution, which tells a lot about what the party has (or doesn’t have) to offer. The UML is in favour of a directly-elected prime minister and a constitutional president, but is tight lipped on state restructuring.

The NC has gone a step further, from its earlier position that ‘failed’ to live up to its expectations, people are hopeful that hope hinges on conducting free, fair, and fear-free polls.

Despite general cynicism about repeating an exercise that ‘failed’ to live up to its expectations, people are hopeful that hope hinges on conducting free, fair, and fear-free polls.

Five years after the election of the first Constituent Assembly and 18 months after its unceremonious demise, the country will give it another try in three weeks. The last CA was dissolved on 4 October. The parties are in favour of a new constitution. But more than anything else, that hope hinges on conducting free, fair, and fear-free polls.

BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

This week, all major parties including the Nepali Congress, UCPN-Maoist, CPN-UML, MJF-Nepal, and other Madhes-based parties unveiled their election manifestos. No surprise that each party has blamed the other for the CA’s failure. UML dedicated only four pages in its manifesto to explaining its vision on the new constitution, which tells a lot about what the party has (or doesn’t have) to offer. The UML is in favour of a directly-elected prime minister and a constitutional president, but is tight lipped on state restructuring.

The NC has gone a step ahead, but proposed a dubious 7-13 model, stating that it is ‘flexible’ on both. On governance, the party is in favour of retaining the existing parliamentary model. Both the NC and UML fear Janajati and Madhesi backlash because of which their manifestos only mention multiple-identity, national-unity, and harmony without going into any specifics for restructuring.

The Maoists are in favour of a directly-elected executive president cohabiting with a parliament-elected prime minister to run day-to-day governance. On state restructuring, the Maoists have proposed the same model that was recommended by Madan Purwar led State Restructuring Commission with addition of Kochila Pradesh in the East. Most Madhes-based parties are in favour of two states in Madhes except for the Upendra Yadav led MJF-Nepal, which is still harping about ‘one-Madhesh’, possibly to appease Madhesi voters as well as armed groups who have been targeting party leaders.

The last CA was dissolved due to dubious and rigid positions of the parties on issues like state structure and form of governance. Unless there is a dramatic shift in that behaviour, the next CA will fare no better. However, it is interesting to note that the parties seem to be getting more flexible to accommodate the identity aspirations of various communities.

Being a communist party, the Maoists would ideally prefer a centralised state and governance, however, along with the Madhesi parties, they seem to be the biggest advocates of federalism, which favours an empowered local government besides directly elected strong central leadership. At its best, this model could strengthen grassroots democracy as well as bring much needed political stability in the country. But unless there are strong checks and balances, it may also lead to totalitarianism.

Similarly, by acknowledging historical wrongs and calling for a change, the NC has taken a fresh departure from its earlier position that parliamentary democracy was thriving until one party decided to wage war against it. But its insistence on the present model of parliamentary democracy is at odds with this understanding. Unlike the UML, Maoists, and the Madhesi parties, the NC opposes a directly elected executive at the centre and this hinges on a fear of one party, or one man, capturing state power.

A peaceful CA election could pave the way for closure of this long drawn peace process with a constitution. However, given the high political stakes and polarised sentiments, we had warned that there is imminent danger of an upsurge in violence in the weeks ahead.

There have been violent clashes among and between campaigning parties and agitating ones in several districts with the CPN-Maoists burning campaign material and vandalising vehicles. Dozens have been injured and many candidates don’t feel safe campaigning. A UML candidate was shot dead in Bara on 4 October. The parties are also openly violating electoral codes of conduct during campaigning and the use of unregistered Indian vehicles in border district has become commonplace.

The Election Commission has promised stronger monitoring and the mobilisation of Nepal Army is supposed to improve electoral security. But punitive measures are deterrents and do not inspire ethical behaviour in parties and candidates who are reducing a democratic exercise into a rat race where winner takes all.

The candidates and the parties seem to require the EC’s education program more than the voters.
People-centric toilets

Kamal Kar pioneered the concept of Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) in India under which all members in a community take charge of their sanitation needs. Kar was in Kathmandu this week to attend the Fifth South Asian Ministerial Conference on Sanitation, where he spoke to Ashutosh Tiwari. Excerpts:

Ashutosh Tiwari: How does CLTS differ from other approaches to sanitation?
Kamal Kar: Other approaches push the toilet as the solution for sanitation problems. They can thus become toilet-centric. CLTS says it’s the people who are and have the solution to their sanitation needs. CLTS is thus people-centric. Other approaches are led by external institutions such as government departments, donors, and development agencies and they impose their own way of working. CLTS is led and participated by community members themselves. All that an external agency does for CLTS is trigger the people’s interest in not having shit anywhere in an open space in their community. It does so by changing the collective attitude toward hygiene. It was CLTS that gave the birth to the phrase ‘open defecation free’ and this practice of declaring one’s community ODF has become widespread.

What are the remaining challenges for scaling up CLTS?
There are three challenges. The first is at the community level. When there is no time taken to help trigger people’s attitudes toward open defecation for reasons of hygiene, CLTS’ approach does not do well. The second challenge concerns a lack of an enabling environment. Isolated examples of success are not enough when there are no clear national sanitation policies that prescribe clear governance and operational mechanisms, as Nepal’s Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan of 2011 has done. The third challenge concerns donors and government departments. They fund sanitation differently. Some provide subsidies for toilets, some count only the number of toilets and users acquired through their funds, and some think that the delivery of toilets is enough. Some even impose operational conditionalities. These are all means of control. Missing is an understanding that it’s the people’s attitudes toward sanitation that need to be changed first. If that’s not changed, supplying and counting toilets will not help.

Why are you against subsidy for sanitation?
CLTS is not about acquiring a toilet. On its own, a community may not immediately feel the need for toilets. Once the interest in having a toilet for everybody is triggered, that interest becomes a communal one and results in social solidarity. This solidarity gets the momentum for sanitation going. Everyone in the community, no matter what their position is, gets involved. Subsidies brought from the outside tend to divide up people into groups, harm social solidarity, and create their own distortions. I am aware that not every poor family can afford to build its own toilet. Let the local people decide what they want to do to do the help the poorest not defecate openly. Their decisions are likely to be more workable than an agency’s unilateral decision to provide subsidy because it wants to meet some criteria to help the poor.

In Nepal, we’ve seen cases where families without toilets are denied services by their VDCs, students with toilets are given extra marks in exams. Has the enthusiasm for total sanitation gone a bit too far?
Hearing about these practices makes me sad. With folded hands, I request that these practices be stopped immediately. These are not CLTS practices. Community members don’t beat one another up for sanitation or reward one another with additional marks on school exams. These are compromises made at the expense of the community members.

You’ve tried to extend CLTS approaches to urban settings and post-emergency relief situations. How have these experiences worked out?
In the town of Kalyani in Kolkata, we worked with the municipal authorities to trigger slum dwellers’ interest in total sanitation. Though it was slow going, the pilot program has been a success and 52 slums around the town adopted CLTS principles to eliminate open defecation practices. Unlike in rural areas, in urban settings, the poor are mobile, invisible, and on the fringes. Only a central authority such as the mayor’s office or other such institutions can resolve issues of land tenure, land ownership, and tenancy rights. In post-emergency relief situations, everything depends on the context, whether there’s been an earthquake, a flood or a civil war. However, if there are people living semi-permanently in camps as internally displaced people, a sense of social solidarity can be ignited to put them in charge of their total sanitation needs.

You’ve tried to extend CLTS approaches to urban settings and post-emergency relief situations. How have these experiences worked out?
In the town of Kalyani in Kolkata, we worked with the municipal authorities to trigger slum dwellers’ interest in total sanitation. Though it was slow going, the pilot program has been a success and 52 slums around the town adopted CLTS principles to eliminate open defecation practices. Unlike in rural areas, in urban settings, the poor are mobile, invisible, and on the fringes. Only a central authority such as the mayor’s office or other such institutions can resolve issues of land tenure, land ownership, and tenancy rights. In post-emergency relief situations, everything depends on the context, whether there’s been an earthquake, a flood or a civil war. However, if there are people living semi-permanently in camps as internally displaced people, a sense of social solidarity can be ignited to put them in charge of their total sanitation needs.
The fast and furious fall

DANI RODRIG

ost of today’s advanced economies became what they are by travelling the well-worn path of industrialisation. A progression of manufacturing industries – textiles, steel, automobiles – emerged from the ashes of the traditional craft and guild systems, transforming agrarian societies into urban ones. Peasants became factory workers, a process that underperformed not only an unprecedented rise in economic productivity, but also a wholesale revolution in social and political organisation. The labour movement led to mass politics and ultimately to political democracy. Over time, manufacturing followed by deindustrialisation. Harvard University’s Robert Lawrence argues that deindustrialisation predates the recent wave of economic globalisation. Only a few developing countries, typically in Asia, have been able to emulate this pattern. Thanks to export markets, South Korea industrialised exceptionally rapidly, undergoing in three decades a transformation that took a century or longer in the early industrialisers, such as Britain and France.

But the developing world’s pattern of industrialisation has been different. Not only has the process been slow, but deindustrialisation has begun to set in much sooner. Consider Brazil and India, two emerging economies that have made it difficult for countries like Brazil and India to compete with East Asia’s manufacturing superstars. But even East Asian countries are subject to early-onset deindustrialisation. Consider China. In view of its economy, it is clear that early deindustrialisation impedes growth and delays convergence with the advanced economies. Manufacturing is an ‘escator industry’: labour productivity in manufacturing has a tendency to converge to the frontier, even in economies where policies, institutions, and geography conspire to retard progress in other sectors of the economy. That is why rapid growth historically has always been associated with industrialisation. Less room for industrialisation will almost certainly mean fewer growth miracles in the future.

The social and political consequences are less fathomable, but could be equally momentous. Some of the building blocks of durable democracy have been byproducts of sustained industrialisation: an organised labour movement, disciplined political parties, and political competition organised around a right-left axis. Given premature deindustrialisation, today’s developing countries will have to travel different, as yet unknown, and possibly bumpier path to democracy and good governance.

Dane Rodrig is Professor of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton.

How’s that

Soaltee Crowne Plaza is back with its popular annual corporate cricket tournament – the Super Sixes. The 15th edition of the game will be played between 25 corporate giants from 24-29 October at Tribhuvan University ground.

Old for new

Mongoose Auto Works, the authorised dealer of Yamaha two-wheelers in Nepal, is hosting the Yamaha Scooter Exchange Mahamela at Bhirkulamandap on 24-26 October. If you want to exchange your old motorbike or scooter with a Yamaha Ray scooter then don’t miss out on this mela.

NMB BANK

NMB Bank has extended its ATM services in the Valley with the operation of a new booth in the District Court premises at Babar Mahal. With the addition, the number of ATM outlets of the bank has now reached 27.

Winning numbers

Pushpauli Paints announced the winners of its 2nd lucky draw under the ‘Win a Home’ contest. Under this contest, all customers who buy Pushpauli Paints products worth Rs 20,000 will receive a scratch card with a unique lucky number.

Book your ticket

To celebrate its 10th anniversary, Ethad Airways is offering special prices on travel to 10 European and American destinations. Hurry up as the sale closes on 31 October.

New players

Allied Trade Link has released two new Karbonn smart phones in the market. Karbonn A5 and A26 boast of a myriad of new attractive smart features and are priced at Rs 9,990 and Rs 13,917 respectively.

Ferrying away

Himalayan Bank successfully ran a free Dasain shuttle service for clients of Himal Ramit. The bank, which started this service last year, provided 18 buses which took hundreds of customers to different parts of the country for the holidays.

Lucky winners

Syakar has announced the winners of its Philips festive bonanza. Binod Ratna Tuladhar, Pratibha Syakar has announced the winners of its Philips festive bonanza. Binod Ratna Tuladhar, Pratibha

smart paani

“Conserve every drop”

smart paani Pvt. Ltd., GPO Box 13997, Campground, Chirang. +977-1-4321301, 5290056.

For further information, please call: 01 4220105 or 4252841

Mark Davidson

Wine Family wishes you all very Happy Shraw Deepawali 2070

For more information, please call: 01 443105 or 4252841

Consistent, Strong & Dependable

Rooted in the grassroots

Communities take the lead in a more locally driven model of development

EVELYN HARTZ

Many, if not all, development agencies operating out of Kathmandu claim to value local participation and inclusion. Yet, donor priorities often prevent organisations from acting on community needs. But as residents of remote villages of Khotang and Solukhumbu districts are finding out for themselves, a bottom up approach to development is possible.

Working across seven VDCs, the dZi foundation collaborates with villagers to create community-defined projects that run the gamut from organic agriculture to toilet construction to establishing Parent Teacher Associations. Work begins only after locals send a formal invitation to the organisation.

“dZi didn’t just show up at our village and tell us what to do. They came here at our request and realising that we needed a formal means for local leadership, they started assisting us,” recalls Suka Ram Rai, president of Nayayug Ekata Bikas Samiti (NEBS), a local NGO in Cheskam VDC of Solukhumbu set up to serve as a dZi partner in implementing projects.

Projects are designed keeping in mind the existing infrastructure and strengths of the community. The foundation then steps in by providing financial, technical, and training assistance. No one project can benefit an individual member or interest group exclusively.

With the 2015 deadline for Millennium Development Goals approaching, community-based models like the one practiced by dZi offer an alternative to the typical top-down approach. “We are 100 per cent committed to never letting donor demands trump community needs and have worked very hard and deliberately to build this model over time,” says country director Ben Ayers.

Nir Kumari Gautam, a teacher at a dZi supported school in Sotang, Solukhumbu says prior to the introduction of a PTA, her school like many other government schools rural in Nepal suffered from poor teacher performance, absenteeism, and disengaged parents. “Now the parents are involved and there has been a big change in how we run our classes,” admits Gautam.

As partners and stakeholders, villagers contribute 20-75 per cent of funds or labour for any given project. In 2012, locals donated the equivalent of over $175,000 in material and labour, which was more than half of the foundation’s total project budget. “This fact challenges the notion of community members being ‘poor’. In fact, they are our single largest donor,” explains Ayers.

So as the final step in the ‘development process’, dZi trains youth in agricultural practices and teaches them to run small firms so they can become local leaders and provide employment to others in the community.

Says Chatur Kulung, a student from Cheskam who was trained by dZi in social mobilisation: “To change any community, the change has to come from oneself. I think the people of my village will become independent in the future.”

www.dzifoundation.org

BY THE PEOPLE: Suka Ram Rai (pic, left), president of Nayayug Ekata Bikas Samiti, a local NGO in Cheskam, Solukhumbu presents a handmade map detailing how his village envisions its growth in the next 10 years. Chatur Kulung (pic, above) also from Cheskam works as a social mobiliser in his community.
After the incessant rainfall last week, temperatures have been dropping by three to four degrees Celsius to bring the day time average to 22-25 degrees. The low pressure system moving in from the Bay of Bengal will bring in some heavy shower in Kathmandu over the weekend. November marks the start of winter and the mercury is likely to drop a few degrees in the next week.

KATHMANDU
BILLI BIERLING

Tribute to the white water rafting expert and tourism entrepreneur

It has been exactly six months since David Allardice (pic, right), one of the pioneers of river exploration and bungy jumping in Nepal, sadly passed away at 55 after battling cancer for years. With his work, enthusiasm, and never-seizing faith in creating the impossible, he left a lasting impact on Nepal’s tourism and the people he worked with.

“There are only a few people in Nepal who have touched as many lives as David has. And I am certainly one of them,” says close friend and filmmaker Dinesh Deokota, who worked with David as a freelancer.

Having been introduced to river rafting the hard way – he was literally thrown into the deep end by some hardcore kayakers in his native New Zealand in the early 90s – David was taken by Nepal’s raging rivers when he first set foot into the Himalayan country. After attempting some of the high-volume rivers in monsoon, he found the perfect technical steep white water in the Bhote Kosi and set up Ultimate Descents, which eventually led him to building a resort at its banks. Looking for a new challenge, David soon came up with an unprecedented project for Nepal. In 1997, he got together with business partner and friend Bishnu Neupane to set up Nepal’s first bungy in Tatopani, Sindhupalchok district.

“David told me he saw a deep gorge when he kayaked the Bhote Kosi and his gut feeling told him that this was the perfect place for a bungy,” recalls Neupane. “I trusted him completely and felt whatever he envisioned, would work.”

After a couple of years of building a suspension bridge across the 166m wide gorge - which at 160m became the second highest bungy in the world - sorting out paperwork, constructing cabins and tents, and creating a whole new economy in the surrounding villages, The Last Resort finally opened its doors in 1999. But, of course, not before David dared to do the first test jump off the bridge, which would become the second jump in his life.

Trying to quench his thirst for new adventures, David ventured out to other Asian countries such as Thailand, Myanmar, and India. However, none of these opportunities could match his experience in Nepal. During that busy period, David had also become a husband and father and juggling adventure in Nepal and family life in New Zealand became increasingly difficult. With the unrelenting assistance of his wife Louise, David was able to support his three business partners in managing The Last Resort while setting up a blackcurrant farm back home. Today his projects Nepal employ and support hundreds of families.

“Nepal always had a special place in his heart. I guess it was because it was here where he started his business,” says friend and business partner Patrick O’Keeffe.

David was enthusiastic, positive, gung-ho, and had a charisma that attracted people around him and encouraged them to get out of their comfort zones. Even when he was suffering from cancer, he never seemed to lose his energy or determination to scout new rivers across the globe. The man who had defied death on multiple occasions as he made his way through treacherous currents, however, lost his fight with cancer on April this year. “David seemed invincible and capable of coping with anything and was probably convinced that he would also overcome this challenge. The news of his death came as a complete shock,” says Deokota.

David may not have been as big a name as fellow New Zealander Edmund Hillary, who first set foot atop of Mount Everest together with Tenzing Norgay, but he was close. “I always compared David to Hillary. He wanted to establish his name and make a first record as a Kiwi,” says Neupane. “Had he lived for another 20 years, I’m sure he would have reached the same status.”

Billi Bierling

ORDINARY IS OUT. AMAZING IS IN.
The amazing new Honda Amaze is here

HONDA

AMAZE

HONDA

ORDINARY IS OUT. AMAZING IS IN.
The amazing new Honda Amaze is here

HONDA

ORDINARY IS OUT. AMAZING IS IN.
The amazing new Honda Amaze is here

HONDA

ORDINARY IS OUT. AMAZING IS IN.
The amazing new Honda Amaze is here
**EVENTS**

Nepal literature festival, attend the third edition of Nepal’s literary festival and meet your favourite Nepali writers, and hear what international authors have to say about writing back home. 25-28 October, Nepal Academy Hall, Kamaladi

**TIHARAI AAYO**

Nepal celebrates the festival of lights next week.

1 November, Kag Tihar, Dipawali kicks off with a puja for the bird of good tidings.

2 November, Gai Tihar, the Newari calendar turns a new leaf. Yama, the harbringer of death. Return to nature on the spot water colour painting and exhibition. 29 October, 4.30pm, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, parkgallery22@gmail.com, (01)5232607

Nhdauya Bhintuna, the Newari calendar turns a new leaf. Fashion photography workshop, interact with fashion designers, art directors, and makeup artists to learn the A to Z of fashion photography, only 10 seats. Rs 5,000, 28 October to 2 November, 9841830748

Expansion, an exhibition of paintings by Jaya Shankar Son Shrestha. 29 October to 20 November, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Basantapur, (01)4256655, www.siddharthaartgallery.com

La.lit 2, the literary magazine releases its second issue. 29 October, 1 to 1.30pm, Nepal Academy, Kathmandu

Critical mass, join hundreds of enthusiasts to spread awareness about the importance of cycling in a cramped city like Kathmandu. 25 October, 5.30pm, Tuduikel

Halloween, the haunted house, don’t dread the day of the dead, party instead. 28 October, 4pm onwards, International Club, Sanepa

**RETURN TO NATURE**, on the spot water colour painting and exhibition. 29 October, 4.30pm, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, parkgallery22@gmail.com, (01)5232607

**SHANGRILA KITCHEN**, try the majestic Gyoza and a wide variety of cocktails. 9 am to 10.30 pm, Hotel Tibet International, Boudha

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Cafe, bide your time with free wi-fi as you enjoy wood-fired pizzas, home-made pastas, and the Tibetan gyakok. Boudha, 014248583

Tass and Tawa, savour a wide variety of Nepali meat dishes and reserve your palate for the heavenly Chusta. Pulchowk, Kathmandu

**KOTETSU**, authentic Japanese dishes that cater to your needs and taste buds. Lajimpat, 014005222

Japanese Crepe Station, try the unique Nepali khuwa crepe for a quick fix. Kipsawohan, 014126655


Yak Restaurant, serves authentic Chinese food, try the mala tofu, chicken with fungus, and spicy pork spare ribs. Boudha, Kathmandu

Dechenling, the place to head for Bhutanese and Tibetan cuisine, its pleasant and spacious garden is ideal for big gatherings. Thamel

Public Cave, while its pizzas, sizzlers, and spring rolls are a hit among customers, the main attraction is karaoke. Dikhotapan, Pashkha, 9869252958

**UPSTAIRS IDEAS PRESENTS**

Surya Nepal Jazzmandu 2013

Gokarna Jazz Bazaar

26th October, Saturday

2.30pm – 10.00pm | Price: Rs 990 | Venue: Gokarna Forest Resort

Jazzmandu, the Himalayan jazz fest is back for the 12th year running. 24 to 30 October, Kathmandu

Live at Cafe 32, live music and delicious food every Friday. 6pm onwards

**DIARY**

Kancha ko bhancha, the best of Nepali cuisine at this newly opened eatery. Kupandol

Dhokaima Cafe, exquisite ambience, friendly service, cozy bar, place to see and be seen at. Patan Dhoka, 012552222

Vootoo, the new home of Newari cuisine, as well as a continental menu for those who don’t want a palatial adventure. Lajimpat, 014005222

Nhudaya Bhintuna, the Newari calendar turns a new leaf. Fashion photography workshop, interact with fashion designers, art directors, and makeup artists to learn the A to Z of fashion photography, only 10 seats. Rs 5,000, 28 October to 2 November, 9841830748

Expansion, an exhibition of paintings by Jaya Shankar Son Shrestha. 29 October to 20 November, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Basantapur, (01)4256655, www.siddharthaartgallery.com

La.lit 2, the literary magazine releases its second issue. 29 October, 1 to 1.30pm, Nepal Academy, Kathmandu

Critical mass, join hundreds of enthusiasts to spread awareness about the importance of cycling in a cramped city like Kathmandu. 25 October, 5.30pm, Tuduikel

Halloween, the haunted house, don’t dread the day of the dead, party instead. 28 October, 4pm onwards, International Club, Sanepa

**RETURN TO NATURE**, on the spot water colour painting and exhibition. 29 October, 4.30pm, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, parkgallery22@gmail.com, (01)5232607

**SHANGRILA KITCHEN**, try the majestic Gyoza and a wide variety of cocktails. 9 am to 10.30 pm, Hotel Tibet International, Boudha

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Cafe, bide your time with free wi-fi as you enjoy wood-fired pizzas, home-made pastas, and the Tibetan gyakok. Boudha, 014248583

Tass and Tawa, savour a wide variety of Nepali meat dishes and reserve your palate for the heavenly Chusta. Pulchowk, Kathmandu

**KOTETSU**, authentic Japanese dishes that cater to your needs and taste buds. Lajimpat, 014005222

Japanese Crepe Station, try the unique Nepali khuwa crepe for a quick fix. Kipsawohan, 014126655


Yak Restaurant, serves authentic Chinese food, try the mala tofu, chicken with fungus, and spicy pork spare ribs. Boudha, Kathmandu

Dechenling, the place to head for Bhutanese and Tibetan cuisine, its pleasant and spacious garden is ideal for big gatherings. Thamel

Public Cave, while its pizzas, sizzlers, and spring rolls are a hit among customers, the main attraction is karaoke. Dikhotapan, Pashkha, 9869252958

**SHANGRILA KITCHEN**, try the majestic Gyoza and a wide variety of cocktails. 9 am to 10.30 pm, Hotel Tibet International, Boudha

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Cafe, bide your time with free wi-fi as you enjoy wood-fired pizzas, home-made pastas, and the Tibetan gyakok. Boudha, 014248583

Tass and Tawa, savour a wide variety of Nepali meat dishes and reserve your palate for the heavenly Chusta. Pulchowk, Kathmandu

**KOTETSU**, authentic Japanese dishes that cater to your needs and taste buds. Lajimpat, 014005222

Japanese Crepe Station, try the unique Nepali khuwa crepe for a quick fix. Kipsawohan, 014126655


Yak Restaurant, serves authentic Chinese food, try the mala tofu, chicken with fungus, and spicy pork spare ribs. Boudha, Kathmandu

Dechenling, the place to head for Bhutanese and Tibetan cuisine, its pleasant and spacious garden is ideal for big gatherings. Thamel

Public Cave, while its pizzas, sizzlers, and spring rolls are a hit among customers, the main attraction is karaoke. Dikhotapan, Pashkha, 9869252958

**SHASTRIY SANGEET**, let the magic of live Hindustani classical music overwhelm you.

30 October, 9pm onwards, Kiranower, Pasupati, 3 November, 9pm onwards, Ram Mandir, Battisputali

Jazzmandu, the Himalayan jazz fest is back for the 12th year running. 24 to 30 October, Kathmandu

Live at Cafe 32, live music and delicious food every Friday. 6pm onwards

**MUSIC**

Kripa Unplugged, young Nepali musicians give an acoustic rendition of their favourite songs. http://www.youtube.com/user/KripaUnplugged

Shastriy Sangeet, the magic of live Hindustani classical music overwhelm you.

30 October, 9pm onwards, Kiranower, Pasupati, 3 November, 9pm onwards, Ram Mandir, Battisputali

Jazzmandu, the Himalayan jazz fest is back for the 12th year running. 24 to 30 October, Kathmandu

Live at Cafe 32, live music and delicious food every Friday. 6pm onwards
GETAWAYS

Charikot Panorama Resort, enjoy mountain views and local culture in the historic town of Charikot. Special packages on offer. Charikot, Gulahazi; (01)5578143, thapamorg@gmail.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, (061)465819, info@landmarkpokhara.com

Mangotreelodge.com
Bhetani, Bardiya, info@Bardia National Park.

Andrauli, West Chitwan, www.barahijunglelodge.com

JUNGLE LODGE

WATERFRONT RESORT, the lakeside hotel invites you for special barbeque dinners on Friday and Saturday, and jungle safari at the Bardia National Park.

Pokhara, (061)462908/463096/464897, www.waterfronthotelnepal.com

Charikot, Dolakha, packages on offer. Temple Tree Resort and Spa, situated at the historic town of Charikot. Special mountain views and local culture in heritage, but also in services and boasts an award winning restaurant, the Hungry Eye. Charikot, Dolakha, (01)5529463, 9841382053

Pokhara, (061)465819, info@landmarkpokhara.com

Pokhara, (061)464897, www.landmarkpokhara.com

JAZZ UP YOUR EVENINGS

Party with musicians Yake Ramos Quartet (Brazil), Claudia Quintet (USA), Mike del Ferro (Netherlands), Nick Aggs (Australia), Élaine Amherd (Switzerland), Cadenza Collective (Nepal), and 4th Element (India) at the 11th Jazzmandu Festival.

Groovin at Upstairs, Cadenza and friends kick off the fest with a jam at the heart of Jazz in Nepal.

25 October, 6pm onwards, Jazz Upstairs, Lajimpat

Valley jams, venues in Kathmandu will feature performances by various Jazzmandu artists. Claudia Quintet at Jazz Upstairs, Lajimpat, Yake Ramos Quartet at Mozik, Jawalakhael, Élaine Amherd Trio at House of Music, Thamel, 4th Element at Man’s Eatery & Tapas Bar, Ekantakuna (Jawalakhael), Mike del Ferro at Bhumi Restaurant, Lajimpat.

15 October, 6pm onwards

Jazz mandu 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,

Jazzmandu Finale, musicians from different bands play their sets and later jam together, creating a high-energy, improvised musical fest.

29 October, 6pm onwards, Alliance Francaise, Dhokaima Bar, Ekantakuna /Jawalakhel; Mike del Ferro at Bhumi Restaurant, Lajimpat; Eliane Ahmerd & Friends kick off the fest; Yatie Ramos Quartet at Moksh, Jawalakhael; Claudia Quintet at Jazz Upstairs, Lajimpat; Jazzmandu artists.

25 October, 9.30am, Shankar Hotel, Lajimpat

Entry free for members, Rs 400 for non-members, half for students with IDs, tea/coffee included.

WHR now has a membership of 300,000 single women in 1550 VDCs in 73 districts of Nepal.

Jazzmandu artist, Thapa has won cases at the Supreme Court to change many discriminatory laws against widows, including the rights of property and inheritance.

Jazz at Patan, an evening of Nepali classical music fused with Jazz in a rich and soulful ambiance.

24 October, 7 to 9pm, Hotel Summit, Kathmandu;

Jazzmandu Finale, an evening of Nepali music performed by international and Nepali musicians. Rs 500, 26 October, 2.30pm to 10pm, Sokoma Forest Resort

Jazzmandu at Patan, an evening of Nepali classical music fused with Jazz in a rich and soulful ambiance. Rs 1,099, 24 October, 7 to 9pm, Hotel Summit, Kathmandu;

Valley jams, venues in Kathmandu will feature performances by various Jazzmandu artists.

Groovin at Upstairs, Cadenza and friends kick off the fest with a jam at the heart of Jazz in Nepal.

25 October, 6pm onwards, Jazz Upstairs, Lajimpat

Jazzmandu Finale, musicians from different bands play their sets and later jam together, creating a high-energy, improvised musical fest.

29 October, 6pm onwards, Alliance Francaise, Dhokaima Cafe, Patan

Entry free for members, Rs 400 for non-members, half for students with ID, tea/coffee included.

cagnepal@yahoo.com, www.facebook.com/CulturalStudiesGroupofNepal

WHR now has a membership of 300,000 single women in 1550 VDCs in 73 districts of Nepal.

Jazz at Patan, an evening of Nepali classical music fused with Jazz in a rich and soulful ambiance.

24 October, 7 to 9pm, Hotel Summit, Kathmandu;

Jazzmandu Finale, an evening of Nepali music performed by international and Nepali musicians. Rs 500, 26 October, 2.30pm to 10pm, Sokoma Forest Resort

Jazzmandu at Patan, an evening of Nepali classical music fused with Jazz in a rich and soulful ambiance. Rs 1,099, 24 October, 7 to 9pm, Hotel Summit, Kathmandu;

Valley jams, venues in Kathmandu will feature performances by various Jazzmandu artists.

Groovin at Upstairs, Cadenza and friends kick off the fest with a jam at the heart of Jazz in Nepal.

25 October, 6pm onwards, Jazz Upstairs, Lajimpat

Jazzmandu Finale, musicians from different bands play their sets and later jam together, creating a high-energy, improvised musical fest.

29 October, 6pm onwards, Alliance Francaise, Dhokaima Cafe, Patan

Entry free for members, Rs 400 for non-members, half for students with IDs, tea/coffee included.

cagnepal@yahoo.com, www.facebook.com/CulturalStudiesGroupofNepal

WHR now has a membership of 300,000 single women in 1550 VDCs in 73 districts of Nepal.

Jazz at Patan, an evening of Nepali classical music fused with Jazz in a rich and soulful ambiance.

24 October, 7 to 9pm, Hotel Summit, Kathmandu;

Jazzmandu Finale, an evening of Nepali music performed by international and Nepali musicians. Rs 500, 26 October, 2.30pm to 10pm, Sokoma Forest Resort

Jazzmandu at Patan, an evening of Nepali classical music fused with Jazz in a rich and soulful ambiance. Rs 1,099, 24 October, 7 to 9pm, Hotel Summit, Kathmandu;

Valley jams, venues in Kathmandu will feature performances by various Jazzmandu artists.

Groovin at Upstairs, Cadenza and friends kick off the fest with a jam at the heart of Jazz in Nepal.

25 October, 6pm onwards, Jazz Upstairs, Lajimpat

Jazzmandu Finale, musicians from different bands play their sets and later jam together, creating a high-energy, improvised musical fest.

29 October, 6pm onwards, Alliance Francaise, Dhokaima Cafe, Patan

Entry free for members, Rs 400 for non-members, half for students with IDs, tea/coffee included.

cagnepal@yahoo.com, www.facebook.com/CulturalStudiesGroupofNepal

WHR now has a membership of 300,000 single women in 1550 VDCs in 73 districts of Nepal.
Twelve mountain nations of Asia have convened in the Kyrgyz capital this week to protect the snow leopard, one of the most elusive and endangered of the big cats in the world.

The presence of snow leopards is considered an indicator of overall health of the eco-system in its high-altitude habitat of the Himalaya, Hindu Kush, Pamirs, the Tibetan Plateau, and the Mongolian steppe. The snow leopard faces many dangers: poaching and retaliation by farmers whose livestock is preyed by the cats and more recently the threat of habitat destruction due to climate change. Since the snow leopard’s range does not respect national boundaries, it is clear that conservation efforts have to be cross-border. Nepal, for its part, has reported success in its snow leopard conservation efforts. After a fall in population in the 1960s and 70s, the number of snow leopards has risen to as high as 500 in the wild, one-tenth of the world population. In fact, Nepal’s experience in snow leopard conservation, in DNA analysis, radio collaring, and community-based conservation is seen as a case study for other countries in the region.

Nepal has the highest density of snow leopards compared to other range countries and most are concentrated in Mugu, Humla, and Dolpo. Snow leopard expert Rodney Jackson and Karan Shah first radio-collared snow leopards in 1985 in Dolpo to study their behaviour. It was this information that became critical in further conservation work.

“Now, the Kangchenjunga region offers the best possibility for successful conservation and study in Nepal because of its altitude and the chance to study climate impact,” Ghana Shyam Gurung of WWF Nepal told Nepal Times in Bishkek.

Snow leopards normally live at altitudes between 1,500-5,000m. In India, the cats have been found at higher altitudes than previously documented and in Pakistan there has been a worrying change in vegetation in prey populations due to climate change.

In Nepal, Stanford University professor Elizabeth Hadley’s team has been studying snow leopard prey and how climate change might be affecting them. “Pikas form a significant part of the snow leopard’s diet, which means that the changing climate and its impact on the little pika may exert an influence on snow leopard survival,” Hadley said.

In the Kyrgyz nature reserve Sarychat-Ertash established to protect the wild cats, it is the argali and ibex populations that ensured the survival and rise of snow leopard numbers. In Nepal, the blue sheep population plays a critical role.

Nepal’s snow leopard conservation plan is estimated to cost $9 million, with the government committing to fund 25 per cent of the amount. Our terrain requires specific and costly logistics. Nepal’s Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation, Tek Bahadur Thapa Gharti told the Bishkek meeting this week that Nepal would use camera trapping, genetic studies, and collaring for snow leopard research.

A WWF Nepal team will be travelling to Kangchenjunga next month to radio collar snow leopards and Bhutanese officials this week expressed interest in coming along to watch the process to gain knowhow for their own conservation work.

Nepal has pioneered livestock insurance in Kangchenjunga, where farmers are compensated for livestock killed by snow leopards. This has reduced retaliatory killings by farmers. Nepal’s community-based conservation program also promotes community scientists who are local villagers trained in setting up camera traps, collecting scat samples, and monitoring the snow leopard’s population and local ecology. Scat samples are used for DNA analysis to identify individual leopards and is an ideal method because the animal is so elusive and the terrain so difficult. “This helps to create...”
It all started at the Lina Bar, over drinks in 2011. As the president, vice president, and others from the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU) reflected over the success of the Global Tiger Initiative, they wondered if a similar campaign could also help save Asia’s endangered snow leopards. With experience and contacts in Central Asia for snow leopard conservation, NABU presented its proposal for a global forum on the mountain cats to the then-Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbayeva.

By 2012, preparatory meetings had taken place in Bishkek, New Delhi, Bangkok, and Moscow. On Wednesday, 23 October those efforts culminated in Bishkek with the 12 snow leopard range countries (Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) signing The Bishkek Declaration on the Conservation of Snow Leopards. Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev signed the declaration which was also signed by Nepal’s Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation, Tek Bahadur Thapa Gharti.

After some initial debate, it was also agreed that the working secretariat to facilitate program development after the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum will be located in Bishkek. The declaration emphasises trans-boundary protection and is supported by other conservation agencies like the Global Environment Facility, Global Tiger Initiative, NABU, Snow Leopard Conservancy, Snow Leopard Trust, UNDP, USAID, the World Bank, and the World Wildlife Fund.

**LEOPARD CENSUS**

**Approximate number of snow leopards in Nepal**

Western Nepal: 320

**Approximate numbers of snow leopards in the world**

- Afghanistan: 100–200
- Bhutan: 100–200
- China: 2,000–2,500
- India: 400–700
- Mongolia: 1000
- Nepal: 300–500
- Pakistan: 200–400

**Estimated world population:** 4,000–6,500

50% of China’s snow leopard habitat is now protected area

Half of Mongolia’s snow leopard habitat remains unexplored
I’ve been a very long time since I thoroughly enjoyed a summer blockbuster. But then again, Pacific Rim is directed by Guillermo Del Toro, the man who brought us the excellent The Devil’s Backbone (1997), Mimic (2001), Hellboy (2004), and my personal favourite Pan’s Labyrinth (2006).

Pacific Rim is just so good because of Del Toro’s trademark attention to character development. So few action oriented directors care about fully rounded characters these days that it is a relief to watch the ensemble cast in this film, all of whom are particularly charming and interesting in their very own ways.

While the film’s premise is preposterous enough, chronicling the onslaught of the Kaijus – monstrous, enormous creatures who have invaded the earth from a crack in the Pacific rim which leads to another galaxy – and the subsequent fight back by us humans who create gigantic Transformer type robots called Jaegers to retaliate, again, it is the characters who hook us so thoroughly to the film.

The obligatory male lead is the very attractive Charlie Hunnam who plays Raleigh Becket, a former Jaeger fighter who lost his brother in an ugly brawl with a Kaiju. Since the Jaegers need to be piloted by two people, Raleigh goes off the grid after his brother’s death, working on massive coastal walls designed to keep out the Kaija.

Five years later he is recruited back into the Jaeger team by his former boss Stacker Pentecost (the always great Idris Elba) to resuscitate and pilot his beloved Jaeger called Gipsy Danger when it becomes apparent that the Kaiju onslaught is in fact far from over.

Back at the Jaeger base in Hong Kong, Raleigh must find a new co-pilot and since the Jaegers are piloted by the two hemisphere’s of two different people’s brains (don’t ask, I can’t explain it either), this task, usually performed by siblings, father-son duo’s or lovers is not an easy one for which to find a partner. Enter Mako Mori (played by Rinko Kikuchi) – Pentecost’s protégée and a highly skilled fighter in her own right. Mako and Stacker have a touching backstory that reveals itself over the course of the film in an incredibly well structured and well written script that avoids all the usual pitfalls of the summer money making machines, including the usually god-awful climactic (anti rather) showdown.

So settle in for a great film, one that doesn’t insult our intelligence and manages to combine affect with humour without sinking to a puerile level. You’ll find yourself avidly watching the film and when it ends immediately wanting to rewind and re-watch some of the really juicy parts (most of them involve Hunnam’s beautiful torso). And just for counterpoint, in case I have waxed a little too poetic about what is after all fairly superficial cinema, perhaps the only real criticism I have for Pacific Rim is that some of the Kaiju are just a little less scary because they happen to be designed as oversized amphibians. That is all.
**KILROY’S OF KATHMANDU**

Kilroy’s of Kathmandu was a rather charming place when it opened in 1998. Thomas Kilroy, an Irish chef whose culinary skills pleased British royalties, the Clintons, and Margaret Thatcher, was equally successful in charming the palates of the Valley’s residents.

Once you negotiate the rather congested lanes of Thamel and enter Kilroy’s, the view from the glass panel of the large, impeccably neat kitchen and the chefs at work is deeply reassuring. The main restaurant on the first floor reaches out to its terraces and the spacious open courtyard at the ground level is decked with green plants and a cascading waterfall. The rustic decor is warm and pleasant and tables spaced at a respectable distance from the other invite congenial conversation. The tandoor baked bread, meat, and dal at the ground floor offer an excellent alternative, but Kilroy’s reputation is built around its steaks, Anglo-European specialties, and a select collection of wines.

When we visited the restaurant last Saturday, the place was brimming with eager diners. But a full house also means orders take a little longer to arrive. So to kill time we ordered a bottle of French Beaujolais rouge 2010, at Rs 2,945 and the pleasant waiter offered a complimentary plate of pakodas. The light red wine gave the three of us good company throughout our meal. The unfortunite fourth had to sacrifice the vino in order to drive us home.

The starter, char-grilled vegetables drizzled with olive oil and wine vinegar (Rs 285) could do with a more liberal ‘drizzle’ to go with the crusty crunch of warm bread that was mantled well with the baked ‘tarte tatin’ of tomato, mozzarella, and coriender pesto (Rs 296). Perhaps on account of the overworked chef, the sautéed prawns with garlic, ginger, and saffron sauce (Rs 600) and Cajun-Blackened Darnar of Norwegian Salmon (Rs 925), made with spicy Creole jus, chili hot potatoes, re-fried onions, eggplant, and capiscum turned out better than they tasted. Unfortunately, the normally delicious Norwegian salmon and accompanying vegetables were doused in an overpowering brown sauce.

The sauced breast of chicken stuffed with naka cheese in mushroom sauce (Rs 395) accompanied by creamy spinach and potato rosti, lived up to its claim of being ‘easily the most popular dish of the house’. But for our table of four the huge bowl of Rainbow Diner (Rs 250) could do with a more robust sauce.

On the other hand, the baked ‘tarte tatin’ of tomato, crusty crunch of warm bread accompanied by creamy spinach and potato rosti, lived up to its claim of being ‘easily the most popular dish of the house’. But for our table of four the huge bowl of Rainbow Diner (Rs 250) could do with a more robust sauce.

The main course, char-grilled vegetables drizzled with olive oil and wine vinegar (Rs 285) could do with a more liberal ‘drizzle’ to go with the crusty crunch of warm bread that was mantled well with the baked ‘tarte tatin’ of tomato, mozzarella, and coriender pesto (Rs 296). Perhaps on account of the overworked chef, the sautéed prawns with garlic, ginger, and saffron sauce (Rs 600) and Cajun-Blackened Darnar of Norwegian Salmon (Rs 925), made with spicy Creole jus, chili hot potatoes, re-fried onions, eggplant, and capiscum turned out better than they tasted. Unfortunately, the normally delicious Norwegian salmon and accompanying vegetables were doused in an overpowering brown sauce.

The sauced breast of chicken stuffed with naka cheese in mushroom sauce (Rs 395) accompanied by creamy spinach and potato rosti, lived up to its claim of being ‘easily the most popular dish of the house’. But for our table of four the huge bowl of Rainbow Diner (Rs 250) could do with a more robust sauce.

On the other hand, the baked ‘tarte tatin’ of tomato, crusty crunch of warm bread accompanied by creamy spinach and potato rosti, lived up to its claim of being ‘easily the most popular dish of the house’. But for our table of four the huge bowl of Rainbow Diner (Rs 250) could do with a more robust sauce.

The main course, char-grilled vegetables drizzled with olive oil and wine vinegar (Rs 285) could do with a more liberal ‘drizzle’ to go with the crusty crunch of warm bread that was mantled well with the baked ‘tarte tatin’ of tomato, mozzarella, and coriender pesto (Rs 296). Perhaps on account of the overworked chef, the sautéed prawns with garlic, ginger, and saffron sauce (Rs 600) and Cajun-Blackened Darnar of Norwegian Salmon (Rs 925), made with spicy Creole jus, chili hot potatoes, re-fried onions, eggplant, and capiscum turned out better than they tasted. Unfortunately, the normally delicious Norwegian salmon and accompanying vegetables were doused in an overpowering brown sauce.

The sauced breast of chicken stuffed with naka cheese in mushroom sauce (Rs 395) accompanied by creamy spinach and potato rosti, lived up to its claim of being ‘easily the most popular dish of the house’. But for our table of four the huge bowl of Rainbow Diner (Rs 250) could do with a more robust sauce.

On the other hand, the baked ‘tarte tatin’ of tomato, crusty crunch of warm bread accompanied by creamy spinach and potato rosti, lived up to its claim of being ‘easily the most popular dish of the house’. But for our table of four the huge bowl of Rainbow Diner (Rs 250) could do with a more robust sauce.

The main course, char-grilled vegetables drizzled with olive oil and wine vinegar (Rs 285) could do with a more liberal ‘drizzle’ to go with the crusty crunch of warm bread that was mantled well with the baked ‘tarte tatin’ of tomato, mozzarella, and coriender pesto (Rs 296). Perhaps on account of the overworked chef, the sautéed prawns with garlic, ginger, and saffron sauce (Rs 600) and Cajun-Blackened Darnar of Norwegian Salmon (Rs 925), made with spicy Creole jus, chili hot potatoes, re-fried onions, eggplant, and capiscum turned out better than they tasted. Unfortunately, the normally delicious Norwegian salmon and accompanying vegetables were doused in an overpowering brown sauce.

The sauced breast of chicken stuffed with naka cheese in mushroom sauce (Rs 395) accompanied by creamy spinach and potato rosti, lived up to its claim of being ‘easily the most popular dish of the house’. But for our table of four the huge bowl of Rainbow Diner (Rs 250) could do with a more robust sauce.

On the other hand, the baked ‘tarte tatin’ of tomato, crusty crunch of warm bread accompanied by creamy spinach and potato rosti, lived up to its claim of being ‘easily the most popular dish of the house’. But for our table of four the huge bowl of Rainbow Diner (Rs 250) could do with a more robust sauce.

The main course, char-grilled vegetables drizzled with olive oil and wine vinegar (Rs 285) could do with a more liberal ‘drizzle’ to go with the crusty crunch of warm bread that was mantled well with the baked ‘tarte tatin’ of tomato, mozzarella, and coriender pesto (Rs 296). Perhaps on account of the overworked chef, the sautéed prawns with garlic, ginger, and saffron sauce (Rs 600) and Cajun-Blackened Darnar of Norwegian Salmon (Rs 925), made with spicy Creole jus, chili hot potatoes, re-fried onions, eggplant, and capiscum turned out better than they tasted. Unfortunately, the normally delicious Norwegian salmon and accompanying vegetables were doused in an overpowering brown sauce.

The sauced breast of chicken stuffed with naka cheese in mushroom sauce (Rs 395) accompanied by creamy spinach and potato rosti, lived up to its claim of being ‘easily the most popular dish of the house’. But for our table of four the huge bowl of Rainbow Diner (Rs 250) could do with a more robust sauce.

On the other hand, the baked ‘tarte tatin’ of tomato, crusty crunch of warm bread accompanied by creamy spinach and potato rosti, lived up to its claim of being ‘easily the most popular dish of the house’. But for our table of four the huge bowl of Rainbow Diner (Rs 250) could do with a more robust sauce.

The main course, char-grilled vegetables drizzled with olive oil and wine vinegar (Rs 285) could do with a more liberal ‘drizzle’ to go with the crusty crunch of warm bread that was mantled well with the baked ‘tarte tatin’ of tomato, mozzarella, and coriender pesto (Rs 296). Perhaps on account of the overworked chef, the sautéed prawns with garlic, ginger, and saffron sauce (Rs 600) and Cajun-Blackened Darnar of Norwegian Salmon (Rs 925), made with spicy Creole jus, chili hot potatoes, re-fried onions, eggplant, and capiscum turned out better than they tasted. Unfortunately, the normally delicious Norwegian salmon and accompanying vegetables were doused in an overpowering brown sauce.

The sauced breast of chicken stuffed with naka cheese in mushroom sauce (Rs 395) accompanied by creamy spinach and potato rosti, lived up to its claim of being ‘easily the most popular dish of the house’. But for our table of four the huge bowl of Rainbow Diner (Rs 250) could do with a more robust sauce.

On the other hand, the baked ‘tarte tatin’ of tomato, crusty crunch of warm bread accompanied by creamy spinach and potato rosti, lived up to its claim of being ‘easily the most popular dish of the house’. But for our table of four the huge bowl of Rainbow Diner (Rs 250) could do with a more robust sauce.
Wheeze, wheeze

Thirty-year-old Suman Rai had an on and off history of cough and wheezing. Her cough got worse during the night and in winter. She occasionally suffered from stuffy nose and watery nasal discharge, but otherwise she was healthy with no other symptoms. She was referred to a pulmonologist who diagnosed her with bronchial asthma. With detailed history of cough and wheezing, the doctor concluded that Rai had bronchial asthma. With a thorough history and physical examination and some simple tests, the doctor concluded that Rai had bronchial asthma. With winter around the corner, it is worthwhile to go over some new developments regarding this common ailment.

Bronchial asthma is basically a narrowing of the airways of the lungs. Bronchoconstriction as it is called, is caused by the tightening of the muscles around the airways. But inflammation of the airways also plays an integral role in causing asthma attacks. The lungs of asthma patients make a whistling sound because the transmission of air through the narrowed passage is bumpy with plenty of ricocheting against the walls of the lumen. If this narrowing continues unabated without proper treatment then the patient runs the risk of acquiring chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). COPD is definitely worse than asthma because it heralds irreversible obstruction and leads to many other complications whereas asthma is a reversible obstruction.

Interestingly, a relatively new finding about disease progression reveals that the overall severity of asthma does not vary significantly within a given patient. That is, individuals who have mild asthma continue to have mild asthma and those with more acute inflammation continue to have them. No one really knows why some people are more susceptible to asthma than others, but many studies suggest a genetic predisposition via family history and genetic screenings. However, as with many other diseases, no single genetic profile has shown a positive predictive value.

The prevalence of asthma has leveled off in the last 30 years with a rate of about 15 per cent in children and 10 per cent in adults. Asthma deaths too have decreased in recent years. In the 1960s, deaths due to asthma in the West were on the rise because of the overuse of certain kinds of medicines called short-acting beta agonists. However, since the introduction of inhaled corticosteroids which counter inflammation, the main culprit in asthma, death rates have declined. For those who are predisposed to asthma, there are many ‘triggers’ that can set off an attack. The common ones are: respiratory infections, cold air, exercise, emotional excitement etc. But people who are on maintenance therapy with steroid inhalers can be well protected from some of these bothersome triggers. Since inhaled steroids have significantly less side effects, they are far safer than ingesting oral steroids. What is far more important, however, is for patients to have the knowledge to inhale the steroids properly and not to swallow them down the digestive tract, where the medicine serves no purpose. Asthma pathology is in the airways of the lungs and the inhaled steroids need to be deposited in the lungs. Proper hand mouth coordination is also vital for drug delivery. Unfortunately, many Nepali patients are prescribed inhalers without being properly taught to use this machine for optimal benefit.

Paradoxically, trekking in the Himalayas seems to inhibit asthma flare ups in many patients. Nonetheless, susceptible trekkers should have adequate asthma medicines on high-altitude treks.

Local elections in India’s capital will be a litmus test for national polls

Readers of this newspaper are presumably English-speaking, middle-class, urban Nepalis. Like their counterparts in India, they too wish the two M’s (muscle and money) will not affect elections. It was in this constituency that the 23-year-old physiotherapist was raped last December, provoking apathetic Delhi-ites to pour out on the streets in protest. It was also here that some of the rapists worked and lived.

When the AAP declared it was fielding Ilmi from RK Puram, she found access to some slum-clusters denied to her team. In those locales where they held a gathering or showed a film on the electricity scam in the city, she said cops would arrive demanding to know whether or not they had taken permission from the authorities. “This was when no such prior permission was required,” Ilmi told me.

To compel her team into submission, a car full of boys would arrive at her public meetings, then another, soon a third, all of them shouting and abusing the AAP activists. The AAP team gamely carried on until some of its members were roughed up.

“We made a complaint to the police, not that we wanted protection, but to ensure nobody was beaten up,” Ilmi said. Perhaps the rivals of AAP wouldn’t have dared to resort to violence against her, as she is a clearly recognisable TV face and RK Puram isn’t outside the arc of media coverage.

Since such tactics didn’t dissuade Ilmi and her team to pull out, the rivals took recourse to intimidating the residents of slums. Those who attended their rallies or helped them were later warned that they wouldn’t be provided cards allowing them access to subsidised government services or gas connections.

“It is as if people in slums are being watched all the time,” Ilmi said. “For a third party, for a new entrant, things are very, very tough.”

In posh colonies, Ilmi has found voters are cynical, argue a lot, and ask questions on water-harvesting and about India’s image abroad. Some of them are even bothered about the quality of her pamphlets. Their worry is not the price of water and electricity, but the belief that the AAP, if voted to power, would reverse the privatisation of utilities and disrupt the regular supply they enjoy, albeit at a high price.

The best response Ilmi elicits is from colonies of bureaucrats, adequately informed of the issues in the election and the positions the contesting parties have taken on them. What distinguishes middle-class voters from the ones in the slum is the degree of desperation. Next to the posh colonies in India’s capital, Ilmi finds people in slums have to spend four hours a day to get water. Those in slums constitute around 35 per cent of the electorate in her constituency. Political parties seek to control their votes because they traditionally turn out in large numbers on polling day – almost 70 per cent. By contrast, posh areas register just 10 to 20 per cent and government colonies anywhere between 30 to 40 per cent.

Nepalis, as also Indians, should know: cynicism doesn’t lead to change. That is why every ballot is valuable. Ilmi’s strategy is clear, she says: “Our challenge is to get the first-time voter, the non-voter, and the cynical voter to come out on polling day.”

ashrafajaz3@gmail.com
A central mandate of modern society is to protect its most vulnerable citizens from preventable and undue suffering. An election is a good time to remind political candidates about this fundamental aspect of democracy.

In the healthcare industry in particular, Nepal often falls short in responsive, patient-centred, and effective services. This is particularly true with government and non-profit sectors. Our own organisation, Nyaya Health (pic. right and below), which manages a government-owned facility in Achham that was recently awarded the ‘Best Hospital in Nepal’ title, struggles with such basics as unacceptable wait times, unclean toilets, stock outs of medications, unreliable electricity, and a lack of specialty services. Despite our every effort, it is rarely sufficient to meet our ambitious mission of providing evidence-based, dignified, effective care to some of Nepal’s most marginalised patients.

Nepal is at a critical and exciting moment in the possibility of making good on the promise of health to the poor. Enshrined in the recent interim constitutional law and policy have been some of the globe’s most progressive, pro-poor ideas. Yet we struggle to implement, to move from paper to patients, from declarations to actual lives saved. Simply put, when we in healthcare deliver substandard medical care, we should pay a price.

Recently, the Ministry of Health has tried to expand public-private partnerships and increase their accountability by tying funding to performance: linking a portion of funding contractually to how a hospital performs on pre-determined health metrics. These contracts have been used with some success in India, Brazil, Rwanda, Cambodia, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom.

Traditionally, hospitals and health institutions have been allotted funding and are evaluated based on inputs or outputs. For example, a hospital may be given money to stock its pharmacy with medicines, to build a new surgical ward, or to buy a new ambulance. Outputs may include number of patients seen, given a certain intervention, provided a certain diagnostic test, and prescribed a certain antibiotic.

Though these volume-based metrics tell us something about the total number of patients an institution sees,
Nepal has managed to halve the number of women dying during childbirth in less than two decades. The number of deaths per 100,000 live births in Nepal dropped from 539 in 1996 to 200 in 2008 making it one of the very few countries on track to meet Millennium Development Goal 5 on maternal health before 2015.

Researchers at the Overseas Development Institute have called this a case of ‘globally remarkable’ progress and have said it was possible because of a virtuous cycle of political commitment, financial resources, and household changes that helped overcome significant challenges posed by its unique terrain.

The reduction in maternal deaths happened despite a protracted insurgency and during a period when for the majority, household incomes did not increase substantially. The authors emphasise the role of high-level political commitment to maternal health, spurred on by a vocal advocacy community. Increased government expenditure and international aid dedicated to health, enabled widespread improvements in access to medical services, particularly in remote Nepal. This in turn contributed to a higher percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel and access to essential medicines such as antibiotics, which can help effectively treat infections that could otherwise prove fatal.

Today, over 50 per cent of expectant mothers seek the recommended four antenatal visits, a fivefold increase in the course of 15 years. For the majority, household incomes did not increase substantially.

New data released on November 26 by the Nepal Health Facility Survey 2012, conducted by the Ministry of Health, shows the growth in the health system. Births attended by skilled health personnel increased by 20 per cent, antenatal visits by 50 per cent, and the number ofirths attended by skilled health personnel and access to essential medicines such as antibiotics, which can help effectively treat infections that could otherwise prove fatal.

In addition to providing a shift in thinking at the facility level, outcome-based metrics serve to change the opinions of healthcare providers as well. Staff such as nurses and healthcare assistants take care of their patients on a case by case basis, but often cannot see how their work factors into a larger picture. By tying together funding with the well-being of a community, performance-based financing will bring together teams of healthcare providers to give the best care for the area they serve.

For instance, while community health workers, doctors, and nurses might not have much in common under the normal system of payment, when there is a common goal to achieve that both groups must strive for, their work will be more integrated. This will improve the quality of care for both individual patients and the community as a whole. The initiative set forth by the government is to be congratulated for its vision of incorporating evidence-based practice into public-private partnership contracting. We believe this vision will help move health services towards higher standards of clinical excellence and accountability.

**PROGRESS REPORT CARD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MATERNAL MORTALITY (PER 100,000 LIVE BIRTHS)</strong></td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POVERTY RATE</strong></td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMALE LITERACY</strong></td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FERTILITY RATE (AVERAGE # CHILDREN PER MOTHER)</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For full report

nepaltimes.com

Crowdfund globally, act locally.
**From the Nepali Press**

**MONEY MATTERS**

**Nagarik, 20 October**

Highlights of the economic agendas of the three major parties from their election manifestos.

**UCPN (M)**

- Make Nepal a middle-income country in 20 years and high-income in 40 years
- Eradicate unemployment, extreme poverty, and trade deficit in 15 years
- Increase per capita income from current $721 to $1,400 by 5 years, $3,300 by 10 years, $10,700 by 20 years, $40,000 by 40 years
- Increase growth rate at an average of 11.1 per cent for the next 40 years
- End load-shedding in three years and produce 10,000MW in 10 years, 25,000MW in 20 years, 45,000MW in 40 years, rural electrification in 10 years, establish a national energy trading company to trade surplus electricity with petroleum
- Construct mid-hill highway, electronic train service along the Mahendra Highway in Taran, connect India and China via Nepal through north-south highways, take upcoming train service from Tibet to Lumbini
- Promote agriculture among the youth, establish farmers’ pension, prohibit owners from keeping their lands untilted, provide land to the landless under the ‘Will keep property’ land-reform policy
- Provide homes for 100,000 homeless in 10 years

**NEPALI CONGRESS**

- Make economic growth inclusive by providing benefits to isolated and marginalized communities and manage growth policy by reducing regional inequalities
- Maintain a growth rate of 8 to 10 per cent by creating conducive environment for investment
- Increase average income to Rs 100,000 in 5 years
- Reduce the country’s dependency on agriculture from the current 68 per cent to 49 per cent and increase the industrial sector’s contribution to GNP to 12 per cent in 5 years
- Guarantee 100 days of employment per year for each Nepali, discourage foreign employment by generating jobs at home, and reduce the number of migrant labourers
- Encourage more investment so that foreign remittance sent by Nepali workers does not go back through the purchase of imported goods
- Construct reliable roads, rail, air, and telecommunication networks to India and China so Nepal can benefit from its neighbours and I think it will be possible for them as they desire
- End unhealthy competition, protect consumer rights as well as the right to start business, provide legal protection to labourers, intervene if market provides benefits to only one class
- Create secure environment for international investors and regulate monetary and government market policies for long-term economic growth

**UML**

- Take Nepal from a least developed to developing nation within 5 years
- Provide 300,000 employment opportunities per year through government investment in agriculture, tourism, cottage industries, construction, and electricity
- Guarantee 100 days of employment per year and make foreign employment safe, dignified, and skill-oriented
- End load-shedding, connect all 75 districts to the national grid, and provide year-round access to black-topped roads within 5 years
- Produce 5,000MW hydroelectricity within 10 years
- Provide access to modern energy to all citizens within 5 years, free installation for the very poor, and free electricity for agricultural use
- Construct international airport in Bara and regional airports in Pokhara and Bharawa
- Irrigate 75 per cent of agricultural land, start fish farming on unused river banks
- Give land to tillers and provide compensation to landowners
- Provide homes to all citizens within 10 years
- Construct north-south road links along at least four river corridors, east-west rail links, and Kathmandu-Tarai access roads under public-private partnership
- Target arrival of two million tourists by 2018 and promote Nepal as a centre for the study of biological and social diversity, natural beauty, climate change, and forestry
- Define grounds for private and foreign investments and reduce trade deficit by encouraging domestic industries and giving special allowances to those who use local raw materials

**VOTE 19 NOVEMBER 2013**

**“No fighting”**

Nepal, 20 October

Interview with CPN-M Secretary Netra Bikram Chand

Nepal: Mohan Baidya said that CPN-M would boycott elections peacefully. Is this the party’s policy?

Netra Bikram Chand: We will be active and strong during our boycott. We have a good plan in place to make our protest a success.

So what will your boycott be like?

It’s not like we are declaring war right now. We just want to make polls unsuccessful, our protest is meant to be reactionary.

What will you do after the polls?

Former Chief Election Commissioner Bhojraj Pokhrel said the only reason to hold elections was to address the grievances from the people’s war and other struggles and uprisings. How can the country write a new constitution or assemble a CA without the Maoists?

What about the UCPN (M)? They are not Maoists, they have abandoned Maoist ideologies.

Nepalis seem eager to vote. By boycotting elections isn’t the CPN-M isolating itself?

How can we be isolated when we are raising the people’s voice? It’s the media that makes it seem that everyone is excited about elections. In rural Nepal, people have already made plans to boycott polls.

Is there any possibility of further talks?

We’re still open for discussions to thrash out an outline of the constitution. But why waste time if the talks are going to end inconclusively without any concrete solution?

What is your view of the army?

We fought a decade long war with the national army, but we don’t want another conflict. We’ve talked to the security forces and recommended that they stay out of election areas.

The army supported us during the overthrow of the monarchy, it took part in the peace process, and I think it will respect the desires of ordinary Nepalis this time too.

What about security personnel who are in charge of the ballot boxes?

The army must follow the government’s directions and we don’t want to fight them. But that doesn’t mean we will remain silent, we will put up a fight against parties who are brokers of foreign powers.

**“Federalism not necessary”**

Speaking at a press conference in Kathmandu on Friday, Chitra Bahadur KC, Chairman of Rastriya Janmarcha Nepal, said that the ethnic federalism model proposed by the UCPN (M) was unacceptable and that federalism is not necessary for Nepal. He added that the model was being forced upon the country by foreigners.

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

“Although our party is against the current constitution, we don’t want to fight them. What about security personnel who are in charge of the ballot boxes? The army must follow the government’s directions and we don’t want to fight them. But that doesn’t mean we will remain silent, we will put up a fight against parties who are brokers of foreign powers.”

Rabin Sayami in Nagarik, 24 October

**Nagarik, 23 October**

*BNSFBEZUPCFIBOHFEJGUIF5SVUIBOE*

**NEPALI CONGRESS**

By providing benefits to isolated and marginalized communities and manage growth policy by reducing regional inequalities.

- Maintain a growth rate of 8 to 10 per cent by creating conducive environment for investment.
- Increase average income to Rs 100,000 in 5 years.
- Reduce the country’s dependency on agriculture from the current 68 per cent to 49 per cent and increase the industrial sector’s contribution to GNP to 12 per cent in 5 years.
- Guarantee 100 days of employment per year for each Nepali, discourage foreign employment by generating jobs at home, and reduce the number of migrant labourers.
- Encourage more investment so that foreign remittance sent by Nepali workers does not go back through the purchase of imported goods.

**VOTE 19 NOVEMBER 2013**

**“No fighting”**

Nepal, 20 October

Interview with CPN-M Secretary Netra Bikram Chand

Nepal: Mohan Baidya said that CPN-M would boycott elections peacefully. Is this the party’s policy?

Netra Bikram Chand: We will be active and strong during our boycott. We have a good plan in place to make our protest a success.

So what will your boycott be like?

It’s not like we are declaring war right now. We just want to make polls unsuccessful, our protest is meant to be reactionary.

What will you do after the polls?

Former Chief Election Commissioner Bhojraj Pokhrel said the only reason to hold elections was to address the grievances from the people’s war and other struggles and uprisings. How can the country write a new constitution or assemble a CA without the Maoists?

What about the UCPN (M)? They are not Maoists, they have abandoned Maoist ideologies.

Nepalis seem eager to vote. By boycotting elections isn’t the CPN-M isolating itself?

How can we be isolated when we are raising the people’s voice? It’s the media that makes it seem that everyone is excited about elections. In rural Nepal, people have already made plans to boycott polls.

Is there any possibility of further talks?

We’re still open for discussions to thrash out an outline of the constitution. But why waste time if the talks are going to end inconclusively without any concrete solution?

What is your view of the army?

We fought a decade long war with the national army, but we don’t want another conflict. We’ve talked to the security forces and recommended that they stay out of election areas.

The army supported us during the overthrow of the monarchy, it took part in the peace process, and I think it will respect the desires of ordinary Nepalis this time too.

What about security personnel who are in charge of the ballot boxes?

The army must follow the government’s directions and we don’t want to fight them. But that doesn’t mean we will remain silent, we will put up a fight against parties who are brokers of foreign powers.

**“Federalism not necessary”**

Speaking at a press conference in Kathmandu on Friday, Chitra Bahadur KC, Chairman of Rastriya Janmarcha Nepal, said that the ethnic federalism model proposed by the UCPN (M) was unacceptable and that federalism is not necessary for Nepal. He added that the model was being forced upon the country by foreigners.

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

“Although our party is against the current constitution, we don’t want to fight them. What about security personnel who are in charge of the ballot boxes? The army must follow the government’s directions and we don’t want to fight them. But that doesn’t mean we will remain silent, we will put up a fight against parties who are brokers of foreign powers.”

Rabin Sayami in Nagarik, 24 October

**Nagarik, 23 October**

*BNSFBEZUPCFIBOHFEJGUIF5SVUIBOE*
The political parties are busy coming up with manifestos that promise to turn Nepal into a land of milk and honey. However, on the vexing question of federalism that caused the failure of the first Constituent Assembly, the manifestos are silent.

The agenda of federalisation suffers from major birth defects. The Maoists employed the slogan of ethnicity-based federalisation as a recruitment tactic among disadvantaged ethnic groups during the conflict. However, after spilling the blood of thousands of these simple folks and ascending to power, they are now confronted by increasingly strident resistance from the people of this densely multi-ethnic country. Both Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai have gone on to opportunistically vacillate between ethnic and non-ethnic federalisation depending on their immediate audience.

Then, there are the NC and UML, the twin champions of multiparty parliamentary democracy in 1990, who had never thought of the need to federalise the country. But after squandering the gains of the People’s Movement and wasting a whole decade in partisan bickering, they have lost the people’s trust. So, the only option for them was to tag on to Maoist coattails of federalisation. BP Koirala must be rolling his eyes in the other world.

The Madhesi parties have a different view of federalism. By demanding the whole of the Tarai to be one province, they are enigmatically trying to tell themselves and the rest of the country that the tea-growers of Jhapa have more in common with rice farmers of Kanchanpur and not with their next door tea-farmers in Ilam, Panchthar, Bhojpur, and Taplejung.

While Nepali politicians dance to the snake charmers in New Delhi, one Madhesi leader at least is on record for recognising the Indian capital as both the Mecca and Medina of Nepali politics and the political capital of Nepal too. Given that India blockaded us for nearly two years in 1989, dumped refugees from Bhutan on our territory, and supported the Maoists in a war that cost 17,000 Nepali lives, the Madhesi parties have some explaining to do. Exploiters of Sahani villagers in Mahottari are their own next door Rajput neighbours, not hill dwellers.

Given the serious implications and deep-seated contradictions of the federalisation project, the frivolity with which the parties in the CA treated it is shocking. For instance, in the then CA’s 43-member Committee on State Restructuring and Distribution of State Power, the two main antagonists, the UCPN (M) and the NC, had agreed in a consensus up to its 126th meeting that two parallel proposals would be submitted to the CA full house. One proposed 14 provinces championed by UCPN (M) and the other for only six by the NC. However, in the 127th meeting chair Dahal, who had 17 members in the committee, bought off the UML’s seven-member panel by replacing four of its 14 provinces with new ones that included a Sherpa and a Mithila province to satisfy two UML members. Dahal was able to humiliate the NC, but in doing so betrayed how lightly and for such short-term partisan gain, he handled such an important issue as the division of the country into autonomous provinces.

The attention of CA members was more focused on forming and felling governments in pursuit of the perks of power than in writing a viable constitution. There were other members who had side businesses of siphoning off funds meant for Maoist combatants, paraking of NGO money for inflaming ethnic tension, crossing the floor, selling red passports, or taking bribes under the assurance of getting things done in the government; just to name a few.

It is a farcical story of politicians who no longer fear the people, have no shame, no scruples, no principles. As 19 November draws near, the crisis for the sovereign people of Nepal is that most of these same faces are up for re-election and the people face the risk of reliving the same sordid history all over again.

Therefore, given the limitations of the architecture of our democracy, the only difference people could make now is that they all vote for new faces. That will give us a ray of hope that maybe the new lot will come with some fresh thinking and fresh commitment to deliver on their promise to the people.

Bihari Krishna Shrestha is an anthropologist and was a senior official in the government.
Dying to go to Nepal

What it is we are doing in tourism, we are doing something right because Nepal tops the charts in just about every CNN survey of the 10 countries that people say they would like to visit before they drop dead. We also top the list of the most corrupt countries in Asia, we are right up there in the Grumpiness Index, and this week came news that Nepal shares the distinction of being among the countries where modern day slavery is most prevalent. These are well-deserved recognitions.

Let’s look at it this way: in this day and age of global tourism, any publicity is good publicity. So when this great nation of ours (where the Buddha, I would like to think, would have liked to be) is single out after DNA analysis as the country of origin of the cholera epidemic in Haiti, it gives us invaluable international publicity and exposure. At last people can locate us on a map and know that we are a sovereign independent nation that was never colonised by any alien power, including invaders from the Planet Voht.

Still, it is this humble scribe’s submission that we haven’t done enough to let the world know about what other nasty surprises we have in store. We have to ask ourselves: has this undertaken government (um, sorry, caretaker government) tapped all the resources at its disposal to proactively generate even more publicity to boost tourist numbers to this country ahead of Why Visit Nepal Year 2014 (Official Motto: ‘Dying To Get There’)?

As a voluntary service to the tourism industry, the Donkey is generously offering unsolicited advice to the Nepal Tourism Board so that we can hit that magic 1 million tourist mark next year.

1. Make the line for tourists at immigration in Kathmandu airport even longer. At the moment, after a one hour fright from Delhi, visitors have to wait for only two hours in the visa-on-arrival line. This just won’t do. We should reduce the number of immigration officers handling the visa forms from two to one so that the queue snakes retroactively to the apron and right back into the plane. This would give tourists the positive impression that Nepal is a popular, much-sought after destination and they should be honoured to be allowed to visit.

2. Now that we are at the top of the Transparency International Corruption Index, it behooves the authorities to ensure that we maintain that coveted position and start fleecing visitors the moment they step out of the plane. Tourists must be able to experience first-hand all the tricks we have up our sleeves to spread the word.

3. Nepal is the only country in the world that charges tourists to enter a city. After Bhaktapur started this in the 1980s, the rival kingdoms of Kathmandu and Patan followed suit. But the fees are still too low since tourists now get to also take pictures of enormous piles of garbage on street corners, be attacked by wild urban dogs hunting in packs in dark alleys, and have near-death experiences of multiple collisions with speeding motorcycles. Every effort has been made to make the Nepal experience as authentic and stimulating as possible, which means we can now charge premium rates.

4. Since Nepal has earned huge well-earned publicity as the world’s top exporter of the cholera bacillus, there is huge potential for gastronomical tourism. Our promotional brochures currently warn visitors not to drink water from the tap, whereas in actual fact we should be encouraging them to do so since that way Nepal’s Gastro-enteritis Weight Loss Program (registered trade mark, patent pending) could be promoted as a gastronomical tourism.

5. Nepalis love to whine and we are always complaining that it is the political instability that is keeping tourists away. What nonsense. We should instead be cashing in on the circus that is our politics and designate mid-November as the peak for an exciting season of jatras.

6. Political parties must immediately revoke their pledge not to declare bundles and reinstate frequent total lockdowns of the country as a great tourism product. We can design attractive new brochures, posters, and DVDs depicting violent street protests so that we can compete with demons and vandals in rival destinations like Istanbul and Athens. We should aim for repeat customers so tourists keep coming back for more. In fact, the Dash Baddies have set a good example by declaring a bonanza 10-day shutdown smash in the middle of the tourist season next month. Nepal’s unique selling point is its political turmoil and bunds, let’s not spoil the fun by actually holding peaceful elections and passing a new constitution.