It was inevitable that this month’s election was going to be a referendum on federalism. After sifting through the manifestos of the main parties in the fray, it is clear that the only issue that really divides them now is the question of how many federal provinces Nepal should be carved into and on what basis. Ironically, this election is going to be less inclusive than the previous one. The NC and UML are fielding fewer women in direct polls and the UCPN (M) has even cut its women candidates by half. Reports from central and western Nepal in this issue show apathy and disillusionment about polls on 19 November.
The Nepali people have always shown that they are wiser and have more common sense than those who want to rule over them. The UCNP (M), for instance, wants 11 provinces named Limbuswan, Kirt, Tamsaling, Newa, Tamuwan, Magrant, Tharwanu, Kochila, two provinces in the trans-Karnali along geographical lines and even one mysterious ‘non-territorial’ province to divide the smaller indigenous groups. It is clear that the UCNP (M) is trying to be everything to everyone and this is just an election stunt. It is not really serious about self-governance for the provinces, whatever they are named.

The FSP led by Ashok Rai wants even more, as many as 14, ethnicity-based provinces that include autonomous regions for Sherpas, Mithila, and Jadan in northwestern Nepal. The MJF-N’s formula is identical to the UCNP (M) for ethnic autonomy and self-determination, but the party has stuck to its slogan of One Madhes. On the other hand, the Nepali Congress, UML, TMLP, and some other smaller parties feel having more than seven provinces would be unviable and says those provinces should not be named after single ethnicities. The RPP-N and RPP-D agree and also want provinces to be demarcated, taking into account economic viability, infrastructure development including hydropower, history, and geography. Tharwa and Jhapa are two provinces with different geographical names. At the fringe of this formation is the Jana Moucha of Chitra Bahadur KC who is garnering considerable support for being vocally against federalism itself.

From all this, it is clear that the result of this election will be keenly watched to gauge public support for ethnicity-based federalism. There are serious misgivings among Nepal’s neighbours and also donors about Nepal’s support for the autonomy of the backward classes. What Nepal really needs is genuine decentralisation and self-governance that also gives the marginalised a voice. You can call it what you want.

Nationwide public opinion surveys carried out over the past four years by Himalmedia (publisher of the Nepali Times) have shown that three-fourths of respondents have consistently said ethnicity-based federalism is a bad idea. Disaggregated data even show that 78 per cent of Madhesis caste groups and 58 per cent of Madhesi ethnic groups were against ethnic federalism. The proportion of respondents from the Newar community who think ethnicity-based federalism is wrong is over 80 per cent.

The Nepali people have always shown that they are wiser and have more common sense than those who want to rule over them and this election (if it is free and independent) once more will be proof of that. 
Unlike the 2008 elections, this month’s second attempt at electing a new Constituent Assembly is a predominantly male affair. ‘Weak’ women candidates are being fielded against top national leaders in the direct ballot and female candidates in the PR lists are mostly there because parties are required to fulfil their quotas. Out of over 6,000 candidates from 130 parties who registered for the First Past the Post (FPTP) race this year about 600 are women. This gender imbalance existed in the 2008 elections too, but what has changed is the commitment of the three major parties in upholding gender parity. All three have cut down on their FPTP tickets for females: 21 and 24 women respectively from the NC and UML, down from 26 and 27 five years ago.

The most glaring change is in the UCPN (M) which had 43 Maoist women candidates running for direct polls in 2008, but has slashed that to 26 this time. Fresh out of the jungles, the Maoists must have felt compelled to maintain their revolutionary zeal, even if symbolically, since one third of their guerrilla force was female. However, during its seven years of mainstream politics, the party has proved that its commitment to equality and fairness is just lip service.

What message does it send to young women across Nepal when a party gives the green signal for its male leader to contest elections from two constituencies and then turns to its female cadre and tells them they cannot have tickets? Theoretically, Nepal should have no problem surpassing the 33 per cent female representation in the CA, stipulated by the interim constitution. Of the country’s 26 million population, more than half are women and there are 6.1 million registered female voters this year compared to 5.9 million male voters. But pushing women onto the assembly floor en masse through proportional representation seats just for the sake of meeting the quota is pure tokenism.

To really gauge how much progress women have made and how ready Nepali society is to see women in positions of high political power, far larger numbers of female candidates need to compete against each other and against men in the FPTP race. They don’t have to be professional politicians, but they also shouldn’t be hand-picked daughters and wives with no other qualification than blood ties to influential male politicians. This encourages nepotism and corruption. In a country where mothers’ groups and female health volunteers have improved development indicators of many rural communities in the absence of the state, there should really be no dearth of potential candidates.

Some of the 600 female contenders in the upcoming November elections will have to face senior UML leader Diwakar Chettri in the Kathmandu 2 and Rautahat 1 constituencies. While these seemingly uneven match-ups pose a challenge, female candidates can still hope to win through strong and strategic campaigning. The playing field also needs to be levelled where resources are concerned. While her male counterparts travel in helicopters and SUVs with large entourages, former CA member and current candidate for UML in Dang 2 Shanta Chaudhary has to go door-to-door on foot asking for rice so that she can finance her campaign.

This is where the Election Commission should step in. While the exhaustive election code of conduct lays down rules on even the colour of pamphlets, why can’t it stipulate that all candidates get equal campaign funding from the mother party regardless of gender or seniority? Even if female candidates end up losing this November, math needs to be used more favourably in the future: if more women contest overall, the representation will eventually balance out. And although the experience of our South Asian neighbours has shown that having women in top political posts does not automatically translate into gender parity, it won’t hurt to give them a chance.
Tell us about your writing habits? Do they change when travelling?

Ned Beauman: I deliberately didn’t bring a laptop on this trip because I felt like if you have a laptop, you’ll spend more time in the hotel room. I’ve been commissioned to do a short story for a newspaper in the UK, so I’m going to do that all by hand. Normally I just write with the laptop at the kitchen table in my apartment in Brooklyn, New York.

I am travelling to the Riau islands in Indonesia soon because I have an idea for a book set there. That’s the first time I’m travelling to a distant place specifically to look around and see what it’s like. To be honest, though, I get a lot more ideas in a library than I do from travelling. Travelling is useful only to the extent that you get plenty of idle time in the backs of cabs or waiting for planes. All of that is good for developing ideas. But in principle, you could replicate those conditions at home.

Your first two novels were praised for their vivid evocations of the past, be they 1930s Los Angeles or Weimar Germany. What is your research process like?

For the first two books, it was just hours and hours in libraries and exploring some locations as well. My third book, which is coming out next year, is set in London in 2010, so I didn’t have to do much research. But with the book I’m working on now, because it’s a historical setting again, I was faced with the prospect of a lot more library time and I couldn’t really face it, so I’m trying to develop a method now where I want to write a book that feels like it’s been meticulously researched, but I haven’t actually had to do anything. I’ve done all that work for the first two books and they have really given me a sense of how an interesting historical footnote or detail is shaped, so now I feel like I can fabricate them plausibly.

Your thoughts on South Asian literature?

Honestly, I haven’t really read any South Asian literature that I can think of. But after attending the festival here and meeting so many writers from the region, I am going to make sure to get my hands on some when I get home. I also want to read the works of Nepali writers. I am taking back a copy of La.Lit, the literary magazine, so I’m looking forward to that.
Fly Miami
Qatar Airways will fly to Miami beginning June next year making the coastal town its sixth destination in the US. The airline announced it will offer non-stop flights from its hub in Doha four times a week.

Ford power
According to the latest Polk global vehicle registration data for the first half of 2013, Ford Focus was the bestselling vehicle nameplate globally. Also, in the same data Ford Fiesta was ranked as the fourth best-selling vehicle overall and the world’s best selling subcompact vehicle.

Branching out
NMB Bank has extended its branchless banking services to food insecure communities in Dodi district. The bank in collaboration with the World Food Program will now provide cash distribution services to beneficiaries in Ladagada and Pokhari VDCs.

Flat magic
Bajuratna Electronics, a subsidiary of Jyoti Group, launched Kobe tv in the market. The affordably priced LED TV is available in two models: Kobe 22KB and 2K13.

Decking up
Standard Chartered Bank Nepal in partnership with Kathmandu Metropolitan City Office conducted a clean-up campaign in Ranipokhari on Saturday. Employees of both institutions worked together to clean the area for the upcoming festival of Tihar.

So good
Sony Mobile Communications introduced its new product Sony Xperia Z1 in the market on Sunday. The premium waterproof camera is packed with a wide range of attractive features.

Easy breezy
According to Doing Business 2014, a World Bank Group report, over the past year Nepal has made it much easier to start a new business. The same report ranks Nepal 105th out of 189 global economies.

Garbage energy
Park Village Resort, a KGH hotel, hosted a lunch for Kathmandu Metropolitan City, US Embassy, Clean Energy Bank, Nepal Chamber of Commerce, and Ministry of Local Development to discuss the possibilities of bringing a waste-to-energy plant from the US to Nepal.

The best of Sony for the best of you
The new Xperia™ Z1 smartphone brings together the best of Sony. Discover the same quality performance as a compact digital camera and experience a Full HD screen with the latest BRAVIA® technologies for mobile. All in a premium, waterproof design. Capture, watch and share your best moments, like never before.

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According to Doing Business 2014, a World Bank Group report, over the past year Nepal has made it much easier to start a new business. The same report ranks Nepal 105th out of 189 global economies.
Chumba Lama looked into the small house and called: “Who is inside?” His mother recognised that voice immediately even though she hadn’t heard it for three decades. Tears rolled down her wizened cheeks as she hugged her son and looked him over from all sides. “I was crying for 30 years, my son,” his mother said in Tibetan. “I couldn’t die without seeing you.”

Chumba had finally come home to his village of Chhekamparo of northern Gorkha district after leaving it when he was seven years old. His mother, Chhang Palmo, had been raped by a Khampa guerrilla in 1971 when she was a teenager. After giving birth, she went to the father but he kicked and chased her out of his house.

Chhang Palmo’s family treated her like an outcast and her neighbours didn’t help. She worked the tsampa and potato fields carrying her newborn on her back. Sometimes, when she was really hungry, she had to steal corn from a neighbour’s field. Chhang Palmo sold liquor and sometimes her own body to take care of her baby. When Chumba was seven, his maternal uncle who was in the Indian Army took him to Kathmandu. Today, 30 years later, Chumba still remembers the aroma of the rare rice meal his mother cooked on his last night in Chhekamparo. She gave him a Rs 10 note the next morning, it was all she had. It took them eight days to walk to Gorkha and the little boy had to run to keep up with his uncle. He was taunted and teased by the lowlanders: “Stinky, dirty Bhote.” But even that was better than being called a “bastard” in his village. Chumba was fascinated by blue Sajha buses and wondered how something as big as a house moved on the road. In Kathmandu, he was agog at the sight of cars and motorcycles and traffic.

Soon after, his uncle died of a heart attack. Chumba became a street child, joining hundreds in Thamel begging from tourists. He competed with stray dogs for leftovers from restaurants, he was bullied and raped by older street children, he sniffed glue, sold marijuana to survive. Every night he slept on the sidewalk under an open sky, using paper boxes as blanket and hugging dogs for warmth. Some tourists gave him pens, which he sold to buy biscuits meant to feed monkeys at Swayambhu.

A Japanese tourist took him to Japan, but he didn’t like it there and returned. He latched on to a Lama guru who sent him to Sri Lanka to be trained in acupressure, where he mastered a four year course in eight months. Later, he met German fashion designer Ute Riedlinger in Delhi and got married.

In Germany, he honed his skills in alternative healing and found his practice and fame spreading far and wide. Today, Chumba travels around the world teaching his own brand of Tibetan breath yoga that he calls Shey Tsum Yoga named after his home valley in Nepal. A German tv channel is making a program on his life and his autobiography is being published soon.

Chumba was so busy he had forgotten his mother. Recently, on one of his trips leading a tour group to Tibet he ran into a friend and found out that his mother was still alive. The reunion was emotional for both mother and son. Chumba saw his mother was coughing from breathing smoke from her stove, so he bought her a smokeless one. When he came back a year later with his German biographer, he noticed that she had given the stove to a neighbour who didn’t have one.

When he asked his mother what she wanted, she told him to share his knowledge with the entire village. So he has helped build two schools in Tsum Valley and paid for teachers. Since water is a problem, Chumba is helping build a village water supply system.

Chumba says he bears no grudges against his father, holds no rancour for the way he was treated in his early life. He tells others to respect their parents: “It is only when you don’t have the love of your parents you realise how important that is.”

Guna Raj Luitel is the editor of Annapurna Post.
A low pressure trough riding the jet stream is racing across the Tibetan plateau, pushing in wind from the southwest which has brought thick Indo-Gangetic inversion haze up to the Himalayan midhills in Nepal, blocking mountain views. There is some moisture riding on the back of this system which may trigger some afternoon showers in the higher altitudes over the weekend, adding to the snow dumped there over Dasain. Tihar will be hazy in Kathmandu Valley, with minima at 11 celsius.

Mamta Thapa was only four when she first held a cricket bat. Two decades on, the vice-captain of the Nepali women’s cricket team, is still as passionate about the game that changed her life.

Twenty-two-year-old Mamta was born in Bihar and spent most of her childhood travelling around India with her father who was in the Indian Army. “Cricket will always be my first love,” she says. “People in India play and watch the sports with such passion that it inspired me to play professionally.”

Mamta, who currently lives in Kohalpur of Banke district with her sister, travels 15km to Nepalganj everyday for practice. She started her career as a specialist batsman, but has since moved on to keeping wickets and considers England’s star batsman Kevin Pietersen and New Zealand’s captain and wicket-keeper Brendon McCullum as her role models.

Standing Up

Vice-captain of the Nepali women’s cricket team wants teammates to stay focused on the larger picture
**EVENTS**

**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, Kukur Tihar, next up is a puja for man’s best friend, woof!

3 November, Gai Tihar, celebrate Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, by paying your respects to the cow.

4 November, Mha Puja, Newars puja themselves in Kathmandu, and elsewhere people pay homage to Gobhardhan, an avatar of Lord Krishna.

5 November, Bhai Tika, sisters puja their brothers to protect them from Yama, the harbringer of death.

6 November, Laxmi Puja, celebrate prosperity, by paying your respects Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and

7 November, Gai Tihar, celebrate Gai Tihar, a puja for the bird of great delight.

8 November, Krishna. To Gobhardhan, an avatar of Lord Krishna.
Elsewhere people pay homage to themselves in Kathmandu.

9 November, Bhandhan, the Newari calendar turns a new leaf.

Rooftop market, bring your old stuff and sell it for quick bucks or give it away as donations; with music, drinks and snacks.

East to west, an inter-nations dance show, feel the energy, passion and heat of three traditional dance forms – Flamenco (Spain), Charya (Nepal) and Bharat Natyam (India), along with a rare fusion of Kathak and Flamenco; proceeds go to Tewa and Sushila Arts Academy.

**DINING**

Mike’s Breakfast, huge breakfasts and an endless supply of coffee amidst a lush garden setting characterise this cafe, popular among tourists and locals alike.

Alice restaurant, step in for scrumptious Thai, Chinese, Continental, and Japanese cuisine.

Ganithana, (01)4422007

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**MUSIC**

He’s back, cellist Frank Bernde plays the works of JS Bach; drinks, snacks and dinner after concert.


Mohit Chauhan live, everyone’s favourite balladeer is coming to town. Rs 4,450 onwards, Dasrath Stadium, Tripureswor, 9813485716.

**KIRPA UNPLUGGED**, young Nepali musicians give an acoustic rendition of their favourite songs. 2 November, 2pm onwards, Sattya Media Collective, Jawalakhel, (01)4263070/4187

**ALFRESCO**, for homemade pastas and other lip-smacking delights.

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Cafe, hide away in the free wi-fi zone as you enjoy wood fired pizzas, home-made pastas and Tibetan gyaloek. Boudha, (01)4424440

Mongolian BBQ, gobble generous quantities of roasted meat and wash it down with a glass of mocktail, with traditional music playing within earshot. Shangri-la village resort, Pokhara, (061)-462222, Rs 2,095, 2pm onwards.

Chilly Bar and Restaurant, quality food and wide selection of drinks with great views of Phewa Lake. Lakeside, Halanchok, Pokhara, (061)-5624456/3

**COMPETITION**

NIHADAYA BHINTUNA, the Newari calendar turns a new leaf.

1 November, Kag Tihar

2 November, 2pm onwards, Satya Media Collective, Jawalakhel, (01)4263070/4187

East to west, an inter-nations dance show, feel the energy, passion and heat of three traditional dance forms – Flamenco (Spain), Charya (Nepal) and Bharat Natyam (India), along with a rare fusion of Kathak and Flamenco; proceeds go to Tewa and Sushila Arts Academy.

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3 November, Gai Tihar

4 November, Mha Puja

5 November, Bhai Tika

6 November, Laxmi Puja

7 November, Gai Tihar

8 November, Krishna.

9 November, Bhandhan

10 November, Mha Puja
**GETAWAYS**

The Last Resort, test your limits with canyoning, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking, bungee jumping.
Bhotekosi, Sindhupalchok, (01)4700525/24/27

Glacier Hotel, good value and friendly service for travelers on the lap of Lake Phewa.

**GENERATION J**

Last Thursday, the 11th edition of Jazzmandu hosted its Jazz for the Next Generation music competition at Moksh in Pulchok. Three acts, each consisting of under-30 artists from Kathmandu ranging in size from a duo to a quintet and style from fusion to funk jazzed it out for the title.

With their dynamic tabla, smooth keyboard, and personable female vocalist, Con-tusion with Axata took home this year’s top prize. Nepali Times caught up with the trio after the competition to get their reaction and their views on the future of jazz music.

Axata Singh (vocals): Jazz is something totally new to me. I’ve sung RB and soul, but I’ve only just recently gotten into jazz. I started learning jazz with my piano lessons, but singing it has opened up a whole new world.

What needs to happen for the jazz scene to grow in Kathmandu?
Axata: The first thing we need is an attentive audience. Most of the time, people don’t care what they’re listening to when they’re out at restaurants and bars. If more people could respect the genre, it would be great.

Yuvash: Only a handful of people in Nepal listen to jazz therefore jazz musicians are rarely called to perform. Musicians are paid by the amount of crowd they can pull which shouldn’t be the case as this leads to artists performing more crowd-pleasers, often at the expense of experimentation or improvisation.
Medicine

A 23rd-generation Ayurvedic healer adapts to the times
texts, Ayurvedic medicine uses holistic methods to treat ailments as varied as colds, indigestion, headaches, and rheumatism. Now, newly-opened schools in Ayurvedic practices dot the Kathmandu Valley. But Vaidya holds no degree or certificate. Instead, he relies on a family formula, over 400 years old, that he continues to refine in a space behind his clinic. It is with these formulas that he heals scores of patients and by which he makes his living.

Despite the clandestine status of the Vaidya family’s unique herbal recipes, Yogendra makes no pretensions about the medicine’s aura. “All these ingredients are available in the world and the market. God gave us only so many plants. It is the unique combination that gives them their healing properties,” he explains. Vaidya points to patients’ belief in the effectiveness of the medicine over anything inherent in the ingredients. As society turns to nature in its food products and energy sources, Vaidya explains, they are likely to look to nature for their medicine as well. Business at the clinic is subject to these fluctuations in people’s beliefs. Now, with what the healer describes as an overall trend towards nature, business is doing well.

Vaidya returned to work at his father’s shop when it became apparent that his family’s traditional herbal formulas would otherwise go by the wayside. “I feared for my father’s formulas and recipes,” he says. “If I didn’t return to the clinic, his life’s work would disappear.” The fate is not an uncommon one in the largely hereditary practice. Vaidya recalls many of his father’s friends whose practices dissolved after their children left to pursue other fields. Of six brothers, only Yogendra now practices. But disinterest in successive generations is not the only threat to many of these clinics’ futures. Vaidya fears potential new government regulations would make practicing as he does now more difficult. The new rules could lead to prohibitive costs associated with seeking certification or buying new equipment. Vaidya, who researches and blends by hand with much of the same equipment as his father, would be forced to overhaul his entire process. If the new law requires Vaidya to become certified, his business would be liable to closure at any time.

While Vaidya sees the importance of these kinds of regulations for maintaining safety standards, he wants to make sure they are instituted with the realities of the plants’ medicinal properties in mind. Many regulations on herbal medicine, if merely lifted from their Western medicine counterparts, would be “wasteful and unnecessary” when applied to Ayurvedic practices. The idea of an expiration date, for example, while necessary for a chemical compound, wouldn’t serve a purpose on a herbal mixture. The same goes for an in-house pharmacist. Many of these measures would do little to nothing for patient safety while contributing to driving someone like Yogendra out of business.

Vaidya plans to preserve his family’s formulas and safeguard his clinic against new government regulations would make practicing as he does now more difficult. The new rules could lead to prohibitive costs associated with seeking certification or buying new equipment. Vaidya, who researches and blends by hand with much of the same equipment as his father, would be forced to overhaul his entire process. If the new law requires Vaidya to become certified, his business would be liable to closure at any time.

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Every year in the fall, in the world of cinema, the awards hopefuls start to come out in their bids to becoming contenders – reaching hopefully for that ultimate golden statue named Oscar.

This year Alfonso Cuarón’s *Gravity* opened at the Venice Film Festival in August to immense anticipation. Tales of his four-year long labour of love involving blood, sweat and tears, and the hype surrounding the groundbreaking effects and cinematography, created even in my fairly skeptical heart, a fair amount of excitement. And so it is with great delight that I went to see the film, available here now in 3D, and most importantly on the big screen.

I was not disappointed. *Gravity* is all that it has set out to be: a feat in cinematography, a step forward for cinema. Cuarón has always been far more interested in cinematic form than in narrative, so I will warn the viewers now that while the structure of the film is perfectly sound in narrative, so I will warn the viewers now that while the structure of the film is perfectly sound in narrative, so I will warn the viewers now that while the structure of the film is perfectly sound in narrative, so I will warn the viewers now that while the structure of the film is perfectly sound in narrative, so I will warn the viewers now that while the structure of the film is perfectly sound in narrative, so I will warn the viewers now that while the structure of the film is perfectly sound in narrative, so I will warn the viewers now that while the structure of the film is perfectly sound in narrative, so I will warn the viewers now that while the

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Quality French cuisine in the city is famously hard to come by and the places that do offer it are prohibitively expensive. Two weeks ago, Christian, a designer and artist living in the city for the last seven years, opened Café des Arts - a restaurant that drastically undercuts the competition, but does so at the expense both of quality and range.

The restaurant’s unfortunate temporary signage does little to betray the pleasant, al fresco dining area inside, walls adorned with work by a range of artists including Christian himself. Planning to stage live performances of Bach in the future and with the Velvet Underground playing in the background (a nod to the recent passing of the wonderful Lou Reed), the arts are, as the restaurant’s name suggests, of paramount importance here.

Sadly, such passion has not made its way onto the café’s menu. While more dishes will be added over time, the current selection relies far too heavily on a mishmash of Nepali snacks and European-escue food of no fixed abode. Indeed, for a restaurant that bills itself as French, there is very little French food on offer at all.

However, the quintessential croque-monsieur (Rs 350) does make an appearance, albeit a bit of a humble snack dates back more than 100 years in the cuisine’s history and has simple, but strictly defined characteristics - very few of which are adhered to here. Non-descript ham and cheese came without the required bechamel sauce and grilled cheese topping - surely a cardinal sin to even the casual Francophile.

Furthermore, the sandwich had been crammed into a paper press or similar and was made with mass-produced factory bread, rather than homemade. Perhaps the new kitchen and staff are ill-equipped to make their own bread, but then what about the delicious, fresh options available to caterers from an ever-growing number of great European bakeries?

That aside, we tried the ‘Green Village’ soup (Rs 250), which was not served with the promised toast and, while well spiced, tasted more like a cumin and coriander-heavy curry base than a dish in its own right.

There was a small serving of pork (from fellow Frenchman François’ Tokha farm) with rather overdone, curried vegetables (Rs 600), and a gigantic helping of chicken escalope panée (Rs 600), alongside a side salad and a grainy puree of potato. The escalope was a standout - tender, thin pieces of chicken breadcrumbed and toasted to perfection.

But with so few French options available, we also sampled the Newari buff set (Rs 290), which was passable, but lacked the garlic and ginger kick the combo is known for.

After overdoing it on the mains (and especially the XL portion of chicken), we decided to ditch dessert, which did at least bring it with the promise of French credentials - the menu offered crepes and a flambe - but I think I’d want the chef to nail the croque-monsieur before I’d let him loose with burning brandy.

Christian was chatty to a fault: very interested in our feedback, but rather cavalier with his own point of view, which at times bordered on bigotry. It’s great that there’s a new, cheaper French bistro on the block. But right now, c’est pas le Pérou.

How to get there: entering Thamel from Tridevi Marg, take a right at Narsing Chok and right again a couple of minutes later, immediately after the A1 business complex.

Before 20 October, nobody knew of UK-based Nepali banker, Bhim Niraula even though his YouTube channel already had 590 videos. Those videos barely managed more than 100 hits each. But his belly-jiggling song and dance buffoonery called Sunday morning love you with the Aztec ruins and the Sphinx as the backdrop led to an overnight change in fortunes and propelled Bhim to internet stardom.

Love him, hate him, and there are many who do so in equal measure as they engage in a puerile war of words on social media, but you can’t ignore him. With lyrics like, “Lady you are attractive, attractive,” which the 48-year-old composed himself, it is hard not to hum the tune once you have survived the (somewhat) embarrassing dance routine. Besides who wouldn’t want to love their significant other everyday of the week, well except for Saturday that is?

Sunday morning is rapidly nearing 600,000 unique views as fans from across the globe throng to see Bhim’s signature moves on YouTube and like, share, and tweet zealously. Buzzfeed.com, an American site that tracks viral content throughout the web, featured the video on its blogs, offering international viewers a tempting invitation to Bhim’s wacky moves. His supporters have even labelled the song Nepal’s answer to other nonsensical hits like Why This Kolaveri Di and Gangnam Style.

For the singer cum song-writer, however, this was no joke. Bhim spent £2,000 making the music video and £900 on recording. He initially wanted to feature a Nepali girl, but says those he approached were too busy. After filming his dance steps in a green room, the studio hired a local model and filmed her walking around a park over a couple of days. Bhim never met her.

The online sensation, however, seems very practical and has modest ambitions. “You can’t live on music alone in Nepal. I am in this for personal reasons and I make these videos because I don’t want to stop writing music,” he says.

Originally from Dhankuta, Bhim has been living in Reading for the last seven years with his family. He already has two albums Creation and Pratyek Baa to his name and is planning on releasing a third soon, which he will name Sunday morning. And after the raging success of his latest song, Bhim plans to sing in English more often to attract international viewers.

Regardless of whether Sunday morning manages to out “hit” other viral videos including One Pound Fish from which it is much inspired, Bhim Niraula has arrived.

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REACH US

Bhim Niraula

Bhim Niraula, a former banker, is quickly rising to fame with his YouTube videos.
Cheney’s change of heart

The way former US vice-president Dick Cheney fought with numerous life-threatening cardiac problems while holding several crucial government posts is stunning. Prevention of heart diseases is obviously the key. However, as ever, the new iPad’s interface is beautifully elegant with internal specifications brilliantly complementing the user interface.

Prevention of heart diseases is obviously the key. However, modern, innovative treatments that the vice president received again and again testify to the marvel of modern medical science.

Cheney started smoking when he was 12 and soon he was puffing three packs a day. In addition, his daily meal consisted of very fatty food including a dozen doughnuts. At 34, he became the chief of staff to President Gerald Ford during which time he undoubtedly faced numerous stress-filled moments at the White House. Clearly Cheney was asking for trouble and he got it with his first heart attack in 1978 at the age of 37 when he was campaigning for the US Congress. He subsequently had four more attacks in 1984, 1988, 2000, and 2010. As though these were not enough, Cheney also underwent angioplasty, open heart surgery, and a pacemaker implanted. More catastrophic interventions followed. He needed an implanted defibrillator, a gadget that would automatically shock his heart if the heart rhythm became dangerously abnormal.

There is an interesting terrorism-related story regarding his defibrillator, when he was vice-president. Fearing a terrorist could assassinate the VP by sending a signal after hacking into his implantable device telling it to shock his heart into cardiac arrest, Cheney’s cardiologist ordered the manufacturer to disable wireless features. There are obvious medical risks that a VIP government official faces that ordinary patients are spared.

In 2010 when Cheney was convinced his end was near, he discussed burial plans with his family. He had a left ventricular assist device (LVAD), a battery operated heart pump, implanted just to buy time while he waited for a transplant. After a 20 month wait period he finally received a new heart.

About 4,000 heart transplants are done every year around the world, out of which more than half are carried out in the US. Effective immunosuppressive medicines since the 1980s have been pivotal in the donor heart not being rejected by the patient’s immune system. About 75 per cent of transplant patients will easily survive beyond three years and the quality of life is excellent. As the vice-president jokingly explains, he can do whatever he wants except ski downhill. And that too because of osteoarthritis of his knees.

Although tremendous strides have been made in the treatment of heart problems, the focus especially in our part of the world has to be on prevention. So this Tihar we need to make sure that during the festival of lights, we stop lighting up cigarettes or bids. Not overindulging in laddos and pedas and controlling our consumption even after the festival are good plans. While science came to the rescue of Dick Cheney, we need to avert the disaster all together by leading healthier lives.

DAVID MCNEW/AP

It’s in the air

While there is no doubt that Apple popularised and revolutionised the tablet market in April 2010 with the release of its first iPad, pretenders and competitors have been vying for Apple’s crown ever since. Samsung, Google, and Nokia-made Android and Windows tablets have been encroaching on Apple’s territory, with cheaper, yet capable tablets of their own. With that in mind, how does the California based company’s latest iPad incarnation, dubbed the iPad Air, compare with the myriad of tablets available in the market today?

While iPads of old have largely followed the design footsteps of the first iPad, Apple has opted for a noticeably different redesign for its fifth generation iPad. The Air is now substantially thinner and lighter than ever, with Apple doing away with its traditionally chunky tablet design to offer a sleek gadget beautifully integrated with the aesthetically pleasing iOS 7, the company’s recently released mobile operating system. The 9.7 inch screen, almost the same size as the previous full-sized iPad, still looks as stunning as ever, with Apple’s Retina Display screen resolution of 3,264 pixels leading the tablet market in terms of display resolution and clarity alone, and weighing in at a mere one pound, the device is indeed as light as air.

Powered by Apple’s ridiculously fast 64-bit, 1.3 GHz A7 chip and supported by 1 GB of RAM, the Air is the fastest and best performing mobile Apple device till date which is capable of handling graphic-intensive movies, web pages, and games alike.

As ever, the new iPad’s interface is beautifully clean and smooth, with the internal specifications brilliantly complementing the user interface.

The iPad Air is equipped with the same five MPixel rear camera and a 2 MP front camera as its predecessor, which although not market leading, are still competent. The gadget still boasts the iPad’s legendary battery life, with a full charge able to deliver approximately 10 hours of tablet usage and Apple’s App Store still leads the way in quality of the more than 40,000 apps.

Yes, the iPad Air is ridiculously expensive, with the cheapest 16 GB Wi-Fi model priced at approximately Rs 65,000 and yes a finger print scanner (like the iPhone 5S) would have been nice. However, there is no doubt that the latest iPad, slated to release November end, will only cement Apple’s position at the top of the tablet food chain.

Yantrick’s verdict: Apple-heads, take out loans if you must, but the latest iPad from the best tablet makers is one you must own.
It is Friday afternoon in the dusty town of Nepalganj. A statue of late King Birendra stands in the middle of the main thoroughfare holding a tattered Nepali Congress flag and breathing in the dust. There are the usual sounds of early afternoon - the bells of tanga, the horns of microbuses that have made the tanga redundant, and the yells from conductors of Nepalganj-Kathmandu buses. A couple of cars with party flags wiz past, as if in a hurry to get out of the dust. There is less than three weeks until CA II election. But apart from a few pamphlets of Shiv Sena and RPP-N, all is quiet in Nepalganj.

Local labourers take a quick break for lunch after Friday prayers. As they sit down, another election campaign car passes by. A man is yelling on the microphone in Nepali. The car doesn’t stop. We follow the vehicle with our eyes trying hard to understand what is being said. The labourers wait until the sound fades and continue with their lunch. There’s no excitement about CA II election in Nepalganj. The air inside the roadside café is thick with disappointment. There’s a general sense of fatigue and an extremely uncomfortable feeling of hopes being dashed. “We are broken and we are tired,” they say. For this group of people from Nepalganj’s labour class, whom to vote for in 2008 was a no-brainer. Now they are conflicted and undecided.

In 2008, just like the rest of the country, Nepalganj was ready for the violence to end. They also hoped that their votes would safeguard their rights and they could finally concentrate on improving their lives. They knew that the new (and improved) parties would not tolerate the status quo. Their demands were not unreasonable: the right to work freely, the freedom to live happily with their family and neighbours, the opportunity for their children to go to school without any obstacles, the ability to go to the hospital if their loved ones fall sick, and the chance to finally talk about progress.

What they got instead was political bickering, high-level power-play, and many many days of Nepal banda. The people here feel they had no say in what happened after 2008. The situation got much worse for so many families in Nepalganj that they just up and left. Today, it is hard to find homes that don’t have a member who migrated to work abroad. Those who remain do not trust that this election is being held sincerely. Most can’t connect with their candidates or their promises because they feel they have heard it all before.

There is also an overwhelming sense that the reasons why CA I was dissolved hasn’t really been dealt with. “Just wait, we will get stuck on the same issues after five years and then what?” asks an angry fruit vendor. “By the time we are done writing the constitution it will be 2018 ... and then they will announce round three,” jokes another as if to lighten the mood. The fruit stall goes suddenly quiet as they realise that what is said in jest may actually turn out to be reality.

The political parties did a lot of things wrong in the last five years, but what will cost them the most this coming election is the way they betrayed the trust of sincere, hardworking Nepalis. This is especially true of the new parties because people feel they are still unproven. There are a lot more undecided voters today than in 2008, but what they are not undecided about is that they will not cast the ballot for the party they voted for last time around. Nepalis are resilient and compassionate, but five years of disappointment may be a little hard to forgive so easily.
A quarter of Nepal’s population is now online, nearly three million of them are on Facebook and the mobile penetration rate is now at 65 per cent with 15 per cent of the population accessing the net through their phones. Even in the last election in 2008, most Nepalis were not yet on the net and hadn’t discovered Facebook. But political parties and younger candidates for this month’s elections have made debuts on social networking sites to woo voters.

“Social media has already become an important campaigning tool in this election, giving way to dialogues. But since most of the users are still new to the medium it will be difficult to predict how decisive online campaigning will be,” says constitutional expert and former ambassador, Nilambar Acharya, an avid tweeter himself.

In the run up to the constitution deadline last year there was a spike in postings and the internet became a virtual battleground for netizens, many of them indulging in hate speech. This time the postings are more partisan and an overwhelming number of posts by Facebook and Twitter users ridicule the political parties and their discredited leaders.

One of the most prolific tweeters is Kamal Thapa of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal who has been using social networking sites to push his agenda of a return to monarchy and a Hindu state. Thapa’s opponents in the federalism debate, including Janajati activists who are for ethnicity-based federalism, have countered with a social media Times, while browsing the net. His Facebook followers have jumped to 17,000 in the last two months and complement his sharp oratory and unparalleled crowd-pulling qualities. Thapa adds: “Social media is a great alternative to mainstream media to gauge the mood of the voters, especially the young people.”

Thapa’s opponents in the federalism debate, including Janajati activists who are for ethnicity-based federalism, have countered with a social media...
India’s cyber code

India’s Election Commission issued detailed guidelines last week to regulate internet campaigns on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other social networking sites, asking candidates to declare their social media accounts and all political parties to pre-certificate advertisements before they are posted on websites. Political parties and candidates will now have to account for every penny spent on the use of social media for their campaigns for next year’s general elections in the world’s largest democracy.

The growing number of tech-savvy politicians in India has led to a massive use of social media to reach out to the public. Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi is one of the most intense users with over 2.6 million followers on Twitter. His nearest rival is Shashi Tharoor, who has over 1.8 million followers.

India’s Election Commission requires all political advertisements posted on the Internet to be pre-certified, just like advertisements put out on electronic media, by the state and district-level media monitoring committees.

GOING SOCIAL: Tech savvy Nepali Congress candidate Gagan Thapa campaigning on Thursday at Budanilkantha area which falls under his constituency. Thapa has the highest aggregate number of followers on his social media accounts.

There has also been a plethora of spoof sites on Twitter and Facebook, mainly of Maori leaders like Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his son Prakash, Baburam Bhattarai and his wife Hisila Yami, who have become common as social media allows the intolerant, racists unfettered access.

“Except for a handful of candidates, no one really seems to have a strategy, not even the bigger parties, to maximise user engagement with an effective campaign,” says Anil Ghimire, a social media specialist and tech blogger. “Social media is all about building credibility of a candidate and it cannot happen overnight or in a month.”

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campaign of their own. Thapa and anti-federalist Jana Morcha leader Chitra Bahadur KC have been singled out for vicious vilification on the net.

For now, Maoist second-man Baburam Bhattarai is far ahead of everyone else in terms of followers on Twitter, while Gagan Thapa of the Nepali Congress leads on Facebook. Both have been savvier than other candidates, with measured comments and minimal vilification of opponents and greater audience engagement. Gagan Thapa has also been using YouTube to post campaign songs, speeches, and videos of rallies. New and lesser known candidates like Ujwal Thapa of Bibeksheel New and lesser known candidates have been using social networking platforms to drive their alternative reform agenda.

However, cyber experts say most political leaders, especially the older ones, don’t yet understand social media. And even those who use it a lot, haven’t learned that many of their propaganda postings can backfire badly. In September, Baburam Bhattarai’s Facebook status and tweet on “progressive nationalism’’ generated plenty of negative reaction with people criticising the former PM’s double standards on nationalism rhetoric.

“Except for a handful of candidates, no one really seems to have a strategy, not even the bigger parties, to maximise user engagement with an effective campaign,” says Anil Ghimire, a social media specialist and tech blogger. “Social media is all about building credibility of a candidate and it cannot happen overnight or in a month.”

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Sleep to success

Binuta Dahal, Setopati, 26 October

They say success is 90 per cent hard work and 16 per cent luck. But in Pranjul Pranjuly’s case, the opposite applies. Author of the successful short story collection, The Country of Disbelief, Pranjuly admits he is too lazy to be working 90 per cent of the time. “I have to sleep a lot. It is only when I get tired of sleeping that I sit down to write,” he says. “But not without eating. I have to have some chocolates.”

Even before his book was published, the 29-year-old was already a well-known name in the Indian literary circuit. Besides signing a deal with British publishing house Queerzus for a collection of short stories, the writer was also asked to submit a novel, The Land Where I Flee, which will be released this December.

In each of the eight stories in the book, the authoravoids the usual tired and predictable family ties and lives bare a raw portrayal of human and social interactions. One would imagine the author an avid introspect in his personal interactions, but the writer demands, “I am not a very social person. The things I have written in my book are things that I know.”

Paranjuly admits he was never a good student. He recalls getting a score of 1 out of 100 in his Maths examination and was embarrassed when the teacher told him in front of his entire class that he had actually gotten a 0.9.

To make up for his failure in class, Paranjuly started sending his writings to a local paper in his hometown of Sikkim. Once his writing got published, he went on a tour of India with a friend. When the trip came to an end, instead of returning home, he saw the outside of four of facing questions from his parents on his decision to quit his job, he went to Manali. It was there that he wrote his story The Immigrants which would later fetch him a book deal.

While preparing for his admissions interview for a creative writing course at Oxford University, Paranjuly came to know about the London book fair. At the fair he met a literary agent named Susan and handled her a copy of The Immigrants. Few days later when Susan wrote saying she liked the story and wanted more, Paranjuly was in a state of disbelief. He sent more and soon the deal with Queerzus was finalized.

When asked how he became a writer he says, “I had nothing to do and I was on my own, so I quit my job. I wanted to know what I really enjoyed. I wrote to legitimise my existence.”

After the success of his book, Paranjuly had to travel frequently. He spent most of last year at his home town in Sikkim and later in Chitwan after both his parents migrated to the Tarai. Dahal’s uncle proposed that Renu run from Kathmandu and Dahal agreed, choosing to face the public persona of a person does not tally with the way they treat their drivers. But not all employers are like that, there are many who treat their drivers with respect. One boss runs his company with his son and daughter and they helped with the education of the driver’s son and helped send him abroad. When it’s late, they usually drive the car themselves. Another boss gets a driver’s wife a job and helped them financially to build a house on the Ring Road.

If employers didn’t take their drivers for granted and looked after them, it may actually make their lives smoother.
In hills and plains of central Nepal, people are too busy to get excited about elections.

Party leaders and cadre who used to have lots of free time during the festival season are all very busy this year. There is the door-to-door campaigning to organise, mass meetings to fix, and not to mention being alert of CPN-M cadre out to disrupt their activities. Aside from that, cadre also have to watch out for hostile locals who may ask their candidates nasty questions in front of tv cameras.

Badri Neupane of the small Chure Bhabar Party is flanked by three dozen cadre campaigning in the plains of Sarlahi. His party was set up to counter the rise of the Madhesi parties south of the East-West Highway and he sees massive support. “I see a lot of enthusiasm for the party,” Neupane says. Indeed, unlike the hinterland, in the district capitals and the bajar towns along the highways, the talk of elections and candidates dominate the public sphere in tea shops and in the shade of pipal trees. Even though people may not know the names of candidates, there is brand recognition of electoral symbols of the main parties. “I think it is too early to tell which party will win, although there is a lot of speculation,” says Madan Pradhan, who runs a small shop in Bardibas. Most voters Nepali Times spoke to said they hadn’t yet made up their minds. They return the namastes and smile at the campaigning candidates, but the people say that doesn’t mean they support them. However, the candidates have taken the greetings to mean they are more popular than rivals. Mohan Baral of the NC contesting Sindhuli 2, for example, says the UML and the UCPN (M) candidates there are way behind and he is confident of winning. In interviews, voters say their criteria for choosing candidates is performance, personality, and ethnicity. The national issues in the party manifestos seem to have little bearing in the way most will vote. Sambhu Shreshtha of the UCPN (M) is competing with UML leader Jhalnath Khanal in Sarlahi 2 and appears confident he will win because he is a local, whereas Khanal is a ‘tourist’ candidate. Khanal, however, has another ‘assured’ seat in Ilam. Despite attacks by CPN-M making headlines in the Kathmandu papers, there appeared to be little to indicate their presence in the central hill and Tarai districts this week. All indications are that the elections will go ahead relatively peacefully, albeit with lower turnout than 2008.
Seeing the others do it, acting was not allowed to fly to NYC. He gets, especially since he fly home to Palpa every chance think his job description is to fly over the holidays treating the Council and we saw KRR members of the Interim Erection Army’s chopper as his own. The helicopter rule, however, its rule on helicopter use. three weeks, the EC should relax the remaining jungles in the next war days and at this rate we are going to lose all our forests. and block roads just like in the operandi is to chop down trees impromptu bunds. The modus the Dash is sure to be declaring to deliver campaign speeches, everywhere the Cash leaders go other day. The reason is that from Kathmandu to Kavre the making a 10 minute air-hop Chairman Awesome even making a 10 minute air-hop from Kathmandu to Kavre the other day. The reason is that everywhere the Cash leaders go to deliver campaign speeches, the Dash is sure to be declaring impromptu bunds. The modus operandi is to chop down trees and block roads just like in the war days and at this rate we are going to lose all our forests. Just in order to save Nepal’s remaining jungles in the next three weeks, the EC should relax its rule on helicopter use.

The helicopter rule, however, does not seem to apply members of the Interim Erection Council and we saw KRR over the holidays treating the Army’s chopper as his own. The Home Minister seems to think his job description is to fly home to Palpa every chance he gets, especially since he wasn’t allowed to fly to NYC. Seeing the others do it, acting

CJ Damodar decided to also ‘request’ the Army’s Ecortel for a pilgrimage to Mountinah over Dasain. He had a night stop at the Army’s mountain training base in Jomsom and the next morning Justice Damodar also took a flyby of the holy lake that bears his name: Damodar Kunda in Mustang. The Army was only too happy to oblige and sent the government a bill for half a million roops, which taxpayers like you and me will have to pay for half a million roops, which taxpayers like you and me will ultimately foot.

The comrades have blood on their hands, but top corruption watchdog Lokantarick Man Sing had blood all over his feet when he choppered out to Manakamana Temple over the festival. The photograph of a police officer washing the Man’s feet went viral on social media ridiculing this royaist-turned-commie-turned-godman. Perhaps to escape further scrutiny, the Tantrick has suddenly upped and gone off to China on an extended two-week visit where he is expected to have tete-a-tetes with top GFC leaders who haven’t yet deigned to meet Nepali disciples of Mr Zedong. As an acolyte of Autopilot Baba of the South, the EPA’s enigmatic trip to the North is raising eyebrows. And as Chinese contractors like CAMC and Sinohydro come under the CIAA scanner, is this another effort to persuade The Man not to stand in the way? The comrades have blood on their hands, but top corruption watchdog Lokantarick Man Sing had blood all over his feet when he choppered out to Manakamana Temple over the festival. The photograph of a police officer washing the Man’s feet went viral on social media ridiculing this royaist-turned-commie-turned-godman. Perhaps to escape further scrutiny, the Tantrick has suddenly upped and gone off to China on an extended two-week visit where he is expected to have tete-a-tetes with top GFC leaders who haven’t yet deigned to meet Nepali disciples of Mr Zedong. As an acolyte of Autopilot Baba of the South, the EPA’s enigmatic trip to the North is raising eyebrows. And as Chinese contractors like CAMC and Sinohydro come under the CIAA scanner, is this another effort to persuade The Man not to stand in the way?

Other junkets in the past week include the one organised by the Unification Church through its unification church through its Unification Church through its

The story of the week was PKD threatening a campaign stop to go to the gallows if found guilty of war crimes. He must have expected everyone to say, “No, we won’t let you,” but the crowd cheered. Awesome didn’t look too pleased. He is also not so pleased about the thin crowds at the campaign stops that he does make it to by chopper. On Tuesday, he had to cancel a speech at his old constituency in Kirtipur because locals were stocking up with missiles to throw at his cavalcade. PKD must also be demoralised by the news that Bina Magar’s ex has decided to be the campaign manager for Padam Kunwar, the guy who slapped him in the face last year and is now standing as an independent from Kirtipur because locals were stocking up with missiles to throw at his cavalcade. PKD must also be demoralised by the news that Bina Magar’s ex has decided to be the campaign manager for Padam Kunwar, the guy who slapped him in the face last year and is now standing as an independent from Kirtipur against him.

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Bright eye love colors, so do ignorant eyes

Please try again later

Just like traffic rules, Nepal’s election code of conduct is just a suggestion. It would be fantastic if you followed it, but if you don’t that’s all right too. For instance the Erection Commissioners have a rule about the use of helicopters and have decreed choppers out of bounds in 45 districts. But candidates are whizzing about, with Chairman Awesome even making a 10 minute air-hop from Kathmandu to Kavre the other day. The reason is that everywhere the Cash leaders go to deliver campaign speeches, the Dash is sure to be declaring impromptu bunds. The modus operandi is to chop down trees and block roads just like in the war days and at this rate we are going to lose all our forests. Just in order to save Nepal’s remaining jungles in the next three weeks, the EC should relax its rule on helicopter use.

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