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BIKRAM RAI

Celebrating colours



Just like the Tihar palette (top), the country's top leaders are trying to find a way to craft a new constitution that will embrace all identities without undermining national unity. Senior leaders of the three main parties meeting at Gokarna Resort (above) over the holidays have so far failed to come up with a compromise between single-identity based federalism and the territorial model. But if the ruling NC-UML coalition agrees to increase the proportional representation ratio in future elections to make them more inclusive, it could convince the Maoist-Madhesi opposition about the rationale for fewer federal units based on geography.

POST-MORTEM OF A TRAGEDY

We know that our preparedness was disastrous, the question is how do we reduce the chances of needless casualties in future blizzards, floods or earthquakes?

EDITORIAL

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EYE-WITNESS TO SEARCH AND RESCUE IN MUSTANG

BY SUBINA SHRESTHA

PAGE 3



CHONG ZI LIANG

WHERE TO BE A GURKHA?

A retired Nepali soldier who served in Singapore tells authors of a new book: "I love Singapore. I am ready to go back and die for Singapore."

PAGE 16-17



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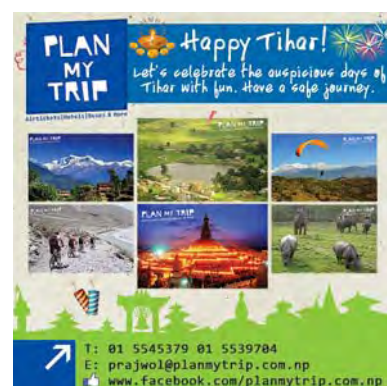
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POST-MORTEM OF A TRAGEDY

As with the other disasters in Nepal this year (Bhote Kosi landslide, Surkhet-Dang flashfloods and the Everest avalanche) there has been a lot of blame-throwing after the Annapurna blizzard last week that claimed at least 45 lives. This is not helpful.

The easiest scapegoat has been the government. There is a lot of things the government didn't do that it should have done, no doubt. Had there been better regulation, enforcement of existing rules and on safety standards for porters and guides, the death toll may have been lower. But that would be too much to expect from a bungling state that is so incompetent it could not even designate an official spokesman to provide the international media with a coherent and consistent message about the search and rescue.

The Disaster Response Committee did meet at the PMO, but it underestimated the scale of the disaster, and in typical Nepali fashion, hoped for the best. The Nepal Army and its rescue helicopter pilots, battle-hardened during the conflict, did an exemplary job flying in difficult terrain and tricky weather to rescue those stranded in the high passes. If some of its choppers had not been commandeered by the army brass for an ill-timed inspection visit to western Nepal on Sunday, more lives may have been saved.

The private sector filled the gap with air support as well as communication through social media. Much of the information from the local administration was contradictory, sketchy and too obsessed with numbers of dead, missing and rescued when relatives and friends in Nepal and all over the world really needed were lists of names, times and places. This would have demanded better coordination between the army, local administration and the private sector.

It was pointed out in this paper last week that the blizzard was not unprecedented, and there was plenty of warning. Information is important, but much more important is to get that information to where it is needed the most. Trekking lodges in Manang Village and Jomsom had the news, but

We know that our preparedness was disastrous, the question is how do we reduce the chances of needless casualties in future blizzards

hundreds of trekkers had already moved up the valley on the trails to Thorung La and Tilicho who could not be reached.

Where the government can come in is to require telecom companies to build cell phone towers on places like Thorung La, Larkya La, Gokyo and Renjo La which has heavy trekking traffic in the peak season. This may actually be a business proposition for telecom companies which will benefit from trekkers uploading selfies and videos on social media from phones.

ACAP collects \$30 from every foreign visitor, and the government makes another \$10 on the TIMS card. Multiply that by the 100,000 trekkers in Nepal and it adds up to a whopping \$4 million a year just from fees. It would only take a tiny fraction of that as a one-time cost to build shelters every one hour walk up to Thorung and other popular high passes. These shelters could be leased to tea shop owners in the peak season.

The Thorung traverse is not for beginners, and many trekkers underestimate its altitude and terrain. Trekking companies taking clients to passes above 5,000m could be required to have satellite phones, and better equipment and clothes for their porters and guides.

None of the above measures need a lot of money. In fact, had only one of them existed (cell phone signal) many people would have perhaps survived the blizzard. The reason trekkers did not get prior warning of the approaching danger was this lack of communication, and that was also the reason the outside world had to wait so long for news of the identity and whereabouts of the



PIC AND MAP: ANNAPURNA NEPAL AVALANCHE AND BLIZZARD INFO SHARE

survivors to assist in timely search and rescue.

The wrong response to last week's tragedy would be for the government to make even more regulations that will add yet another layer of bureaucracy and corruption. Experience from the TIMS card and trekker permits for national parks have shown that the original purpose of those measures has been lost. As with the Everest avalanche in May that killed 16 Nepali high-altitude guides, the best way to honour the memory of those who died so terribly and needlessly on Annapurna is to make sure that we do our best to minimise the loss of life.

Himalayan climbing and trekking will never be risk free. But it is in Nepal's self-interest to make such an important source of employment and revenue to be made as safe as possible for us and our visitors in future.

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

CHICKEN OR DUCK?

The decision to revoke this year's tax hike for Indian vehicles entering Nepal, as you argue in your editorial, could easily have been taken by the department of transport management ('Neither chicken nor duck', Editorial, #728). Apart from the first two points of the 5-point agreement, none of the others have anything to do with Parliament obstruction. Demands such as paying Rs 200,000 to the dead and the disappeared (are these for newly-discovered victims?) and legitimising 'land transactions' (which we all know were taken over by force) simply prove that the deal was just to accommodate demands of Maoists and Madhesi leaders. How utterly helpless the NC and the UML are. True 'wimps' as you call them.

Anon

The Constitution is merely a mechanism for the purpose of regulating the work of various organs of the state. It is not a mechanism whereby particular member or particular parties are installed in office.

R Ram

Nepali politicians are used to a lavish lifestyle, they live in a bubble of denial, deception and corruption. This bubble has to burst. The leaders are all the same, and every week Kunda Dixit dashes off an editorial to expose them. But it falls on deaf ears.

Mahesh

Absolutely bang on target editorial. It's awesome.

D Joshi

Yes, Sushil Koirala doesn't have the energy to argue any more, so better to quit and vacate the chair. The Nepali people need not suffer any longer. 'Dalal & Co' sounds better than 'Dahal & Co'.

Tapan Das

SNOWFALL

Avalanche forecasting is commonplace in most mountain ranges ('After the storm', Kunda Dixit, #728). The Nepal government and ACAP should work together on installing this technology. A simple sign in Manang showing weather conditions would help save lives and give guides a reason to hold eager or inexperienced trekkers back.

Ben Ayers

Trekking agencies are only concerned about pocketing money. Furthermore, the guides employed are not trained for natural disaster readiness.

Manish

Foreign media is blaming the weather and the crowded trail. Both detract from key areas of responsibility. Regardless of how serious weather might be, it is the guide's responsibility to adequately be pre-informed of weather trends and forecasts, to keep regular updates, and to take convincing decisions and unpopular decisions

at times. Having worked in Manang and Mustang, I know firsthand that the vagaries of mountain weather and effects of altitude make this area easy trekking only when the weather is fine. The rest of the time, these mountains are treacherous.

Jhilke

I had passed over the Thorung La a week before the heavy storm on my mountain bike and was lucky to have enjoyed perfect weather. What concerns me is that the authorities will in the aftermath of this tragedy take a hasty decision to curtail some of the freedoms that make trekking in the Himalayas such a wonderful experience. I realise many people who want to go trekking do not have the knowledge and experience of the mountains to go alone and thus capable guides are a must. But please let's avoid blanket restrictions that will prevent people from enjoying Nepal's wild places.

Stephen Keeling

The government and local authorities should absolutely be held to account, just like in the Doti crash. This is criminal.

Rabi Thapa

As Kunda Dixit recommends, to save lives in future, just add some cellphone towers. And as long as you are at it, build huts at one hour intervals on either side of high passes.

Derek

NEW CHIEF JUSTICE

Congratulations to Chief Justice Ram Kumar Prasad Sah. ('Supreme once more', Binita Dahal, #727). This is great news for Nepal and Nepalis and will encourage people from every corner of the country to dream big. I hope CJ Sah has the courage and guts to undo the corruption and degradation of the SC by his predecessors.

Mahesh

Hope his appointment is not just 'hugely symbolic' and he is indeed the best man for the job and gets things cleaned up.

David Seddon

CONSENSUS OR VOTE?

One Madhes or two Madhes, the call should be made by the people living in the region, and not left upon the political bosses ('Consensus on contention', Damakant Jayshi, #727). Out of the 20 districts in the Tarai, seven have Pahadis majorities. So, why not ask the people residing in these districts to make their choice. This is the democratic way to solve contentious issues.

D Raj

ASS

This week's Advertorial Ass (Have a blast, #727) was advertently asinine, was ass-phyxiated with amusement.

DD

THIS WEEK



NEPAL ARMY

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Nepal Army continue their rescue operation in Thorung La on Friday.

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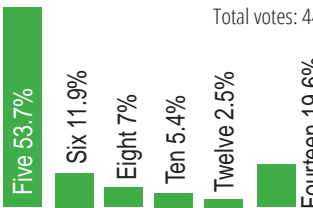
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Weekly Internet Poll #729

Q. How many states should there be in Nepal?



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Q. Will we have a constitution by January 2015?



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Go tell it on the mountain

Eye-witness account of the aftermath of the tragedy on the Annapurna Circuit last week



SUBINA SHRESTHA
in MUSTANG

By the time we landed in Muktinath, it was already 10AM on Thursday 16 October, it had been two days since the deadly blizzard lashed Thorung La.

Some frost-bitten trekkers waited anxiously to be rescued. One distressed man was helping the army identify bodies, his friend was amongst the row of five that were waiting to be taken away. Indian pilgrims adjusted their saris to enter the shrine at Muktinath, oblivious to the disaster unfolding around them.

The choppers climbed repeatedly up to the clouds at the pass, but often came back empty. The weather was not great that day, but they still pulled a man out alive from the snow and flew

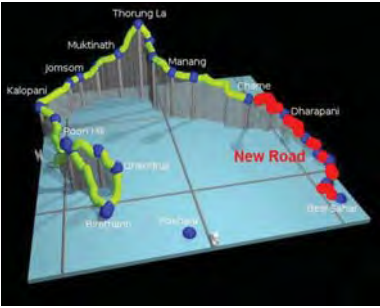
him down to Kathmandu.

In the small tea stalls, people huddled and asked questions. Why didn't anybody inform the teahouses in Manang that the weather was turning? What were ACAP and Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN) doing with the \$44 they charge every trekker? What was the role of the Himalayan Rescue Association?

The storm struck at midday, when most trekkers would have been close to the top of the pass. Lives could have been saved if they were fore-warned. Two army officers sipped tea and described how they trekked up at 4PM on Tuesday to try to rescue people, and how dark it was by the time they arrived back in Muktinath. Even they had questions: why was there no warning? People had a million questions, but the government was not there to answer them.

The next morning, the army chopper left Jomsom for Muktinath as soon as it was light to comb parts of the mountain they had not been able to search the previous day. By 9.30AM, three bodies had been brought down: their boots full of snow and hands still clutching snow. As the choppers flew off again for another sortie, soldiers held the tarpaulin tight so the downwash wouldn't blow it off the bodies.

Then plans went out of sync.



Trekkers who had been at Thorong Phedi and High Pass, instead of going back down to Manang, began trying to cross Thorung La on Friday morning. This meant 40 extra people had to be rescued by helicopter, at a maximum of two at a time. Trekkers said they had no idea that the pass was closed.

One woman was nearly snow-blind. Others were frost bitten, and medics tried to warm their bodies. One tired porter with a bleeding nose said that he did not want to leave the lodge, but the trekkers forced him to. It must have been very difficult to find the way through a metre or more of snow in Gold Star shoes with 30kg packs, but the porter was glad to have made it out alive.

It took the whole day to rescue everyone, and by the time the last person was brought down, it was already six in the evening and the weather had closed in on Thorung. While most of those rescued were grateful, some were angry and even abusive for having

been left in the cold for several hours. The sense of entitlement of the angry ones was an example of how twisted the trekking industry is. The Nepal Army rescue team had to walk down the treacherous trail at night to make space for the trekkers in the helicopter. Nepalis will die to save their guests, someone said in Jomsom. What a strange sentiment, I wondered.

The lack of leadership and coordination of disaster response was sorely felt. Whose responsibility was it to warn lodges and trekkers on the Manang side that the pass was closed? The Army was up on Thorung clearing the pass and recovering bodies, and had said it was still too dangerous. But that information didn't get to the other side. TAAN officials had arrived by then, but no one knew who was processing and sharing the information. Or did they just not know how to ask the right questions?

The Tourism Minister flew in on Friday afternoon with an entourage – the Labour Minister, Tourism Secretary, and MPs from Manang and Mustang. They were full of instructions for everyone. They yelled at the people from TAAN: "Did you not know that we have a disaster center in Kathmandu Airport?" Another one shouted: "You have to update us and tell us what's going on."

When we started asking

questions, the confused Tourism Minister just directed us to another person. The local MP admitted that he had no idea that the rescue and recovery operation was still ongoing. The officials did not seem to understand that it is their responsibility to seek and process information, and take informed decisions.

Back in Kathmandu, people were busy blaming hapless porters, forgetting that everyone -- trekkers, trekking agencies, TAAN, ACAP -- all bore some responsibility. But what stood out the most was the inexcusable ineptitude of Nepal's central government. Whether it is avalanches in the mountains, landslides in the hills, or floods in the plains, the government's disaster response mechanism is woefully inadequate despite all the money poured into it. Perhaps the death of so many foreigners will now make the government realise its shortcomings, and be better prepared.

Perhaps next time, Nepalis and foreigners alike can avoid deaths that could have been preventable through simple weather early warning and post-disaster coordination. 🇳🇵



Subina Shrestha is the correspondent of Al Jazeera English in Nepal. @ShresthaSubina

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KUNDA DIXIT

Connecting Nepal with ropes

After decades of delays, new cable car projects are getting ready to get off the ground

ELVIN L SHRESTHA

Ropeways have long been recognised as an ideal mode of transportation in Nepal, but despite some pioneering projects the potential has never been fully developed. Until now.

Several tourism-related cable car projects are coming up in the next year in Pokhara, Butwal, Bhaktapur, Nagarkot, and two in Kathmandu.

“Considering Nepal’s topography and socio-economic conditions, ropeways are definitely feasible,” says Guna Raj Dhakal of the group, Ropeway Nepal set up by Nepali engineers to promote cable car projects in the country. “Building roads is six times more expensive than ropeways.”

The best known cable car system in Nepal is the one to Manakamana temple in Gorkha district. There have also been smaller ropeway projects to help farmers get their produce to market quicker.

However, attempts to start similar ventures at other shrines and mountain tops in the past decade have been delayed or abandoned due to problems with land acquisition, bureaucracy and local opposition.

But now several projects are getting ready to get off the ground. Construction has begun on a tourist cable car system from Thankot to the summit of Chandragiri (2,563m) at the western edge of Kathmandu Valley. When it is completed in June 2015, the 2.4 km cable car link will take tourists to a temple on top as well as offer



spectacular views of Kathmandu and the mountains beyond.

The project includes a plan to construct a 100-room hotel designed by architect Arun Pant on the summit, a Shiva temple and an amusement park at the bottom station in Thankot. Equipment is being imported from Austria’s Doppelmayr company which was also used on Manakamana.

Another even more ambitious project is going to link Godavari to the top of Pulchoki, which at 2,672m is the highest point on the Kathmandu Valley rim. The project has got its final go-ahead from the government as well as the local authorities, and construction is expected to begin in December.

There are two other projects in

POINT OF VIEW: The view of Kathmandu and Langtang Himal that will greet visitors when the Thankot-Chandragiri cable car is operational next June, which will be the same equipment used in Manakamana (*above*).


Bhaktapur, one to the top of Sanga Hill and a smaller chair-lift project in Nagarkot. Designs for the Sanga cable car venture are complete and equipment from a Swiss company have been acquired, but local land compensation issues have delayed it.

Annapurna Cable Car, a joint venture between Himalayan Kanko Kaihatsu of Japan and Trans Himalayan Tour of Nepal plan to make a premium hotel on top of Sarangkot in Pokhara, famous for its sunrise views. Construction of the



hotel and cable car is expected to start in January. Butwal is also planning a tourist-pilgrim cable car next year.

In addition, Ropeway Nepal is getting inquiries from villages across Nepal to build cargo and passenger ropeways to cross major rivers as well as to shrines and tourist spots. “There is a lot of interest from districts like Myagdi and Sindhuli,” says Dhakal, whose company designs and fabricates Nepali-made ropeway systems.

There have been cargo ropeways run by local communities linking Kirne to Bhotechhap for the Khimti Hydropower project and Darimchhaur to Khaira for the Jhimruk Project. There have also been successful small gravity ropeways in Gorkha, Tanahu and Sindhuli. 



Ropeway relics

Nepal's Rana rulers were much more visionary about the potential for ropeways than our contemporary rulers. It was Chandra Shumshere who installed a 22km cargo ropeway between Dhorsing and Kathmandu in 1924, although he appears to have preferred ropeways in order to retain Kathmandu Valley's strategic inaccessibility from the Indian plains.

It took another 40 years for Nepal's second ropeway to be set up with the US government help. The 42km Hetauda-Kathmandu Nepal Ropeway (*pic, left*) cost half as much as the Tribhuvan Highway on the same route to build. The government-run ropeway and the private trucks on the highway were bitter rivals, and in the end, the highway won.

In 1964, when Nepal Ropeway went into operation, it pulled so much electricity from the grid that Kathmandu Valley's lights dimmed when it was running. Government apathy, mismanagement and neglect took their toll. The ropeway was never used to more than half its capacity northbound, and the cars always headed back to Hetauda empty. Although it showed its utility during the Indian blockade (1988-89) and when monsoon landslides washed off both Tribhuvan and Prithvi Highways in 1993, Nepal Ropeway was finally closed down in 2001. But its towers still stand and empty cars sit frozen above the Kulekhani reservoir. *Kunda Dixit*

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Huawei

Chinese smartphone provider Huawei became the first Chinese company to rank in Interbrand's Top-100 Best Global Brands of 2014. Huawei was placed 94th in the recently released 15th annual Best Global Brands report. "Huawei is honoured to receive this acknowledgement from Interbrand," said Shao Yang, Chief Marketing Officer, Huawei Consumer Business Group.

Top prize

Qatar Airways was named "Best Business Class Airline" for second year in row at the Business Traveller Awards 2014 held in London recently. Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Akbar Al Baker said: "Winning this accolade for a second consecutive year is a testament to the five-star service and quality that our customers have come to expect from Qatar Airways."



Golden gate

China Southern (CZ) has announced it will fly to San Francisco International airport from Guangzhou Baiyun International airport

via Wuhan Tianhe International airport three times a week starting from 16 December. Previously, passengers booking CZ's flight from Guangzhou to San Francisco had to fly to New York or Los Angeles, and then take a Delta Air Lines flight to reach the city. The route will be served by a 228-seat B787 aircraft.

Turkish+Sita

Turkish Airlines has again chosen air transport IT specialists SITA to provide telecommunications services for its 120 outstations around the world for the next seven years.

Ahmet Bolat, Chief Investment and Technology Officer of Turkish Airlines, said: "We've partnered with SITA for more than 15 years because they offer us high-quality, high-availability telecom coverage for all our outstations and back that up with excellent service and support."



Network services will be supported by SITA's global customer service team of more than 2,000 aviation IT specialists and engineers in over 200 countries.



Winning gold

DishHome handed over prizes to the fifth and sixth week winners of its "Sworna Utsav" campaign at a program on 20 October. Bal Kumar Giri of Jhapa and Dependra Khatri of Rupahehi, who were announced the lucky winners on

Kantipur tv's Call Kantipur program were awarded 10 tola of gold.

Brand new

Mahindra & Mahindra unveiled the New Generation Scorpio in Kathmandu on Monday. Built on an all new platform, the New Generation Scorpio comes with contemporary exterior styling, luxurious blue-grey interiors and advanced technology features.





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Off the people, for the people

NC's insecurities have pushed it to the conservative fringe, making it a part of the problem

'A true democrat never lays exclusive claim to the truth, but sees a part of itself in the opposition's argument as well.' These immortal words were penned by leader of Nepal's democratic movement and Nepali Congress founding figure BP Koirala in his Jail Journal in the winter of 1963 after a royal coup ousted him.

Last month, NC leaders travelled around the country preaching BP's political ideology to commemorate the centennial of his birth. But they seem to have learned little from the man's



badly. No matter how the districts are aligned, the NC will remain an influential party in the Madhes, unless it decides to unnecessarily antagonise local sentiments.

It will be more difficult for the NC to find a consensus on number of provinces in the hills, but it is not impossible. To begin with, it should stop treating the issue as a Maoist agenda and see it as an opportunity to address grievances of the genuinely marginalised.

Yes, there are clearly identifiable territories in Nepal where certain ethnic groups dominate. But these areas may be big enough to be autonomous areas, not an entire state province. However, if one considers demographic settlement of two or more ethnic groups (Taplejung, Panchthar, Ilam, Sankhuwasabha, Bhojpur, Khotang, Terhathum, Dhankuta, Udaipur, Okhaldhunga and areas of Sunsari and Solukhumbu) both Rais and Limbus dominate. So it makes sense to carve out a province that acknowledges and protects both of their identity and rights, while safeguarding rights of other communities living there.

Similarly, in the case of smaller ethnic groups like Dhimals of Jhapa and Sherpas in Solukhumbu, a clearly defined autonomous area safeguarding and promoting their culture and recognising their rights can be an amiable solution. It should be a matter of healthy debate whether Kathmandu can be a union territory and the national capital with autonomous Newa region protecting rights and culture of this unique community, or a Newa region which hosts capital of the country. There is no reason why both propositions can't be made workable.

However, while carving out proposed provinces, the names are best left for the local elected provincial assemblies to decide democratically.

Democracy is about celebrating and protecting diversity. As the party that has won the confidence of Nepal's diverse population, NC should not shy away from addressing the colourful aspirations of its electorate. 🇳🇵

@Anurag_Acharya



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

broad and tolerant democratic outlook.

Last week, amid a continuing impasse over contentious issues including that of federalism, the NC came out with not one but two alternative proposals on the number of proposed states, their structures and names. While both proposals understandably reflect NC's consistent concern about limiting the number of federal units to make them economically viable, there is a larger mentality that shape its arguments on proposed structure of the federal provinces.

In both the models, one cannot help but notice that the three districts of Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari in the east and

Kailali and Kanchanpur in the far west, have been erased from the proposed two provinces in the Tarai. Large swathes of territory in these districts are flatlands with demographical dominance of people belonging to various Madhesi communities.

So, one stops to ponder the rationale behind lumping these districts, in their entirety, with the hill provinces. The NC could be making an electoral calculation of securing traditional NC strongholds including Morang, where it won five out of nine seats, and Kanchanpur where it swept all four. It could also be a well-thought out plan to weaken Madhesi politics by isolating flashpoints like Duhabi and Biratnagar in the east, and separating the Tharu movement of Kailali and Kanchanpur from the western districts of Nawalparasi and Rupandehi. But the most

likely is that the NC remains suspicious of Madhesi loyalty and fears an embargo of Kathmandu by the Madhes in case inter-provincial rivalries in a federal Nepal get bad.

No honest NC leader will even try to answer in plain yes or no which one of these is the real reason for their formula of federalism, probably because the explanation lies in 'all of the above' or 'somewhere in between'.

Despite being the largest party that has led Nepal's democratic movement three times, the NC has always been insecure about its own legacy. The reason being its undemocratic and feudal leadership style since the days of Girija Prasad Koirala that has given the party a bad public image, especially amid marginalised communities whose representation within party structure and in the governments have remained dismal. This explains the

ROUNDTABLE:

(l-r) Krishna Prasad Sitaula, Madhav Kumar Nepal, Baburam Bhattarai, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Narayan Kaji Shrestha, KP Oli, and Ishwar Pokhrel at a meeting of the HLPC at Gokarna on Wednesday.

absence of any Dalit persona in its current cabinet and a single one representing both Madhesi and women.

So, when an insecure lot of hill male Brahmins sit together to carve out their own map of the nation, it is not hard to imagine where the borders will be drawn. If the NC's supposed fear of being weakened in Madhes is in anyway responsible for its bizarre proposal, it should do the fact checking.

In the 19 districts of Madhes from Jhapa to Kanchanpur, the NC has secured 51 seats out of total 101, which makes it the largest party there. Even if we look at the last CA election results, it has not done too

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EVENTS

Tihar,
The festival of lights ends this week with Mha puja and Bhai tika.
Mha puja: Newars do pujas on themselves and celebrate their new year. Nhu daya bhintuna (Happy New Year!).
24 October
Bhai tika: Sisters do pujas on their brothers to protect them from Yama, the harbinger of death. 25 October

Murals of Mustang,
Restoring the Murals of Mustang: A Journey through Body, Soul and Heart by Luigi Fieni.
28 October to 15 November, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal

Vintuna rally,
A cycle rally to mark Nepal Sambat 1135. 24 October, 8am onwards, starting from Patan Darbar Square



Planet Nepal,
A two-day art and environment festival, with performances, exhibitions, debates, discussions, screenings and concerts. (see page 7)
31 October to 1 November, Tundikhel, (01)4241163, www.planetnepal.org.np



Breathe in, Breathe out,
Deep and detailed learning and practice of a number of yogic breathing techniques.
Rs 1,500, 26 October, 2 to 5pm, Pranamaya Yoga Studio, Patan

Change makers,
Participate in, learn from and create social projects to address the contemporary issues of the country.
27 October, Change Fusion Nepal, Minbhawan, New Baneshwor
www.changefusionnepal.com

Click Annapurna,
Join photographers Ariel Estulin and Louis Au on a unique opportunity to experience the pristine beauty of Annapurna mountain ranges through the eyes of professional photographers.
\$1,775, 21 to 30 November, full itinerary on www.outdoorphotojourney.com

Sharing knowledge,
Donate old books to those in need through Gwahali for Differently-Abled People.
24 October, 9849250931/9813043484 , www.facebook.com/Gwahali

Plastic beauty,
The first plastic exhibition in Nepal with international and local exhibitors.
14 to 16 November, Bhrikuti Mandap

Entrepreneurs meet,
A platform to help entrepreneurs expand their professional network and to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration.
12 November, 5 to 7pm, King's College, 9813393561, www.udhyamibhetghat.com

Oh, wonderful,
Musical performances by children of various orphanages, churches and schools.
29 October, 3 to 5pm, Stuti Prashansa Church, Baafal, 9841021941

Photography workshop,
A seven-day photography foundational workshop by experienced and professional mentors.
28 October to 3 November, Image Park, New Road



DINING



Salt & Pepper,
Espresso, mocha, latte, frappuccino, cocktails, liquor, beers and flavoured shishas, with an outdoor lake-view terrace. Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)463484, 9846210568

Fire and Ice,
One of the oldest pizzerias in town, Fire and Ices serves the best pizzas in the city. Thamel, (01)4250210



Alfresco,
For homemade pastas and other lip-smacking Italian delights.
Soaltee Crowne Plaza, (01)4273999

Lal Durbar Restaurant,
Authentic Nepali dinner with cultural shows. Hotel Yak & Yeti, Darbar Marg, (01)4248999, reservation@laldurbar.com

K-too,
If you're tired of the cold, go in for the best steak in Thamel, a warm dining room, live sports on TV, and free Irish coffee with every main course and seasonal specials. Thamel, (01)4700043

Public Cave,
While its pizzas, sizzlers, and spring rolls are a hit among customers, the main attraction is karaoke.
Dihikopatan, Pokhara, 9856032958



Tian Rui,
If you're looking for genuinely good Chinese food this restaurant is the best place to go. Thapathali

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

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

Trisara,
With dishes like flambeed prawns, crispy chicken, and khao soi, it would be a folly to ignore its aromas. Lajimpat

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MUSIC



Rock tribute,

A tribute to legendary hard rock band, Guns n Roses by Nepali project band Destruction.

15 November, 3 to 6pm,
Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel

Bass camp,

A Tihar-festival gig with performances from Riddim Radicals, Ranzen EZ Riser (Mumbai) and Symbiz Sound (Berlin).
25 October, 9pm onwards, Club 25 Hours, Tangal

Deathfest 2015,

Accomplished local and international Extreme Metal bands come together to celebrate the glorious genre.
9 & 10 January 2015, venue to be announced



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Gaurighat, Lakeside, (061)465819



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Pharping, Kathmandu,
www.neydohotel.com

Barahi Jungle Lodge,

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Andrauli, West Chitwan,
www.barahijunglelodge.com

Waterfront Resort,

The lakeside hotel invites you for special barbeque dinners on Friday and lunches on Saturday.
Sedi Height, Lakeside road, Pokhara,
www.waterfronthotelnepal.com



Music mania,

Performances by Nepali bands The Edge Band, X-Mantra, and international bands Steve Iko (Denmark), and Thermal And A Quarter (India).
13 December, 12pm onwards, Bhrikuti Mandap, www.nepalmusicfestival.org

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Oozing talent at Jazz for the Next Generation

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STÉPHANE HUËT

Dozens of spectators had come to appreciate the four groups shortlisted to compete for the outstanding jazz band of 2014. Each had to perform three songs in front of the international jury composed of Pity Cabrera, Tran Vaun Trat, Emmanuel Hailemariam and Johan Hansén Larson – all musicians of Jazzmandu 2014 lineup.

Nikesh Shakya, who recently graduated from

Berkeley School of Music in Boston, was first up. The band covered Miles Davis' *Donna Lee* in an original contemporary fusion adaptation. They continued with *Autumn Leaves* before ending with their own composition. For this last song, Nikesh Shakya offered a thrilling experience to the crowd by switching his guitar to a sarod.

The second band on stage was Doxy Ltd (*pic, right*) led by the pianist Suyog Sotang, who performed a fascinating set with two of their own compositions. *Forgive* is a ballad in which Suyog Sotang plays spacious piano parts

with the other members playing well-coordinated segments. Suraj Pant's guitar riff gave a dreamy atmosphere to Doxy Ltd's next composition, *Divide*. But the band really captivated the audience with its audacious reggae version of Dave Brubeck's *Take 5*, driven by an energetic Babin Wagle on bass. During this tight set, Doxy Ltd showed sensible musical exchanges among its members.

The ethereal mood of the competition was then altered by the rhythmic drive of Mr Green. This trio started with a cover of Pat Metheny on which the guitarist,





BIKRAM RAI



BIKRAM RAI



NIRANJAN SHRESTHA



Dhrupad Caravan

GUILLAUME ZEMOR

SWINGING WITHOUT BORDERS

Jazzmandu 2014 spanned national boundaries with the universal language of music



Bruno Schorp and Rasmus Swensson-Blixt

BIKRAM RAI

STÉPHANE HUËT

‘Music for unity, peace and compassion’. The slogan might seem a bit cheesy, but it certainly made sense to the spectators of Jazzmandu 2014 that concluded on Wednesday. This year the jazz festival of Kathmandu showed how music is a strong bridge between different cultures.

The transboundary character of the music was most vivid in Jazz at Patan at Yala Maya Kendra on Tuesday 21 October. International artists met traditional musicians Gurudev Kamat, Suraj Raj Shrestha, Rabin Lal Shrestha and Santosh Bhakta Shrestha to create fusion tunes. Neither the jazz nor the Nepali rhythms drowned out the other, both seamlessly interweaving with each other. The performances seemed even more amazing knowing that the musicians had rehearsed only one day before the show.

There were two highlights in Jazz at Patan. First was the poetic conversation between Rabin Lal Shrestha's tabla and Rasmus Svensson-Blixt's drums. The climax was attained when the stage was brightened by the bliss of Tihar, and the Day of the Crow. A choir composed of KJC faculty members and Australian, Ange Takats, interpreted *Deusi Bhailo*. The jazz progression led by Cadenza Collective highlighted this classical Tihar song with brio to enchant the audience.

Earlier at the Jazz Bazaar in Gokarna Resort on 18 October, Dhrupad Caravan was another beautiful demonstration of music pushing boundaries. The project in itself is a melting pot with Nepali Vishal Bhattarai and Japanese Inoue Sou who met in 2008 when they were studying dhrupad music in Bhopal, India with the Gundecha Brothers.

As the headline act at Jazzmandu 2014, American artist KJ Denhart's performances revealed elements of reggae, sounds from Senegal brought in by her bassist Mamadou Ba.

"I like to think I'm like Sting who used to play rock music with jazz musicians," she explained. Indeed, Denhart showed her versatility during the jams with artists from different origins at Jazzmandu 2014.

Big bands are often said to be

less creative. Tropic Green put an end to this misconception with their performance. This cosmopolitan jazz ensemble based in Singapore has eight members originally from Cuba, Japan, Mexico, United States and Singapore. Their clockwork musical arrangements, composed by pianist Susan Harmer, put forward the mosaic of influences of the band members. At the Jazz Bazaar, Tropic Green even spiced up its set by playing a short melody of a Nepali song.

But undoubtedly, the most exciting and original band of Jazzmandu 2014 has been the Swedish combo Kristian Persson Elements, who added a touch of hip-hop and funk to Scandinavian jazz that aroused nostalgic feelings of Stevie Wonder's early days.

Leader Kristian Persson said: "When I met my band members, I immediately felt that they were the perfect choice." This was quite obvious during the concert at House of Music for Valley Jams. The joy of the band playing together was infectious to the crowd that couldn't resist dancing in the aisles.

This same team spirit could be seen during gigs of Pity Cabrera Trio. Considering that the band was formed only few months before Jazzmandu 2014, the three musicians showed a striking coordination – drummer Tran Vuan Trat and bassist Bruno Schorp giving a groovy punch to Cabrera's classical-Latin melodies on the piano.

In a completely different setting, the Australian Ange Takats performed alone with an acoustic guitar at Jazzmandu. Before her first live performance at the Jazz Bazaar, she was nervous about the reception of a Nepali audience. But Takats' lyrics and music charmed those who attended the Gokarna gig. Her dry wit definitely helped.

Jazzmandu 2014 showcased extremely talented artists from various generations and origins. Created by Navin Chettri in 2002, the festival has fostered dozens of artistic encounters between international bands from diverse cultural backgrounds. These reunions have enabled unique concerts. The only complaint is that Jazzmandu does not sell recordings of the concerts.

nepalitimes.com

Watch videos of Jazz at Patan from Tuesday, 22 October.



r the Next Generation

ngsters were hard pressed to decide who was best



Subash Siwa, showed his graceful talent. The peculiar sound of Mr Green was revealed by a jaunty composition with Birat Basnet playing jerky drum parts. The band finally ended its set with Sonny Rollin's *Oleo*.

The musical experimentation continued with the duet GT, formed just three days before Jazzmandu for the Next Generation competition. Table player Ramesh Pache Magar accompanied the guitarist Sudip Naubag to unite the Nepali classical music to jazz. GT began with a pleasant East-West fusion revision of the traditional

Nepali song, *Mangal Dhun*. The two musicians then surprised the audience with an entertaining version of the jazz classic, *Blue Bossa* with the tabla handling the rhythm duties.

After deliberation, the judges understandably chose Doxy Ltd as the outstanding band. Musicianship aside, Suyog and his fellow musicians complemented each other. Subash Siwa, received the outstanding musician award, a much-deserved accolade because Mr Green's guitarist is the archetype of virtuosity.

Said Doxy Ltd pianist Suyog

Sotang: "I felt we could win, but Mr Green was really good too and so I had my doubts."

As the winners of Jazz for the Next Generation 2014, Doxy Ltd were invited to stage along with the international artists for the Jazz Bazaar at Gokarna Forest Resort on Saturday. The band was also rewarded a free session at the Jazz Mean Studio to record a single.

"We are working on more original compositions for ourselves," said Sotang, "and we hope to produce 20 original songs."



As the autumn season comes round and with it the Oscar scramble, I tend to start my usual rant on the rather sad fact that we, living in Nepal, have almost no access to the heavy weight films that come out this



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

time of year as contenders in the run-up to the awards season. Hopefully, as time goes by, Nepali theatres will start giving space to the more independent of cinema; the smaller, quite stellar films that seldom get shown here. While I will try to bring these contenders to your attention over the next few months, this week I am writing about Abbas

Kiarostami's *Certified Copy* which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2010. This film is made in the spirit of films by Éric Rohmer, Michelangelo Antonioni, and more recently Richard Linklater's trilogy of the *Before* films, all of which deal with the nature of a couple's relationship over the course of the narrative, switching smoothly between real life drama and philosophical musings. Starring the beautiful and witty Juliette Binoche as the unnamed main character - a French woman living in Italy who deals in antiques, and one day goes on a rather strange journey with an Englishman named James Miller (played by the almost egregiously handsome opera singer William Shimell in a first time role), this is a cipher of a film that is as fascinating as it is infuriating. Over the course of the day as Binoche's character and James

CERTIFIED COPY

Miller debate on originality, love, nature of duty and family, the relationship begins to change; the people we initially thought were strangers start to blur into a bickering, playful long married couple who share an unruly child and are struggling to come to terms with their complex 15-year-long marriage. Binoche is a phenom in this film, playing a woman half neurotic but also tremendously sensitive and sensual, in a multi-lingual role where she switches from English to Italian to French (which is her mother tongue). She is undoubtedly Kiarostami's muse and in many ways the strength and focus of a film that might have otherwise collapsed without her prodigious talents - after all, it is not easy to make a film where all people really do is walk and talk, albeit through a gorgeous medieval Italian town. This film, as with many such "talky" movies, may not be quite your cup of tea, but be patient, *Certified Copy* is the work of a master filmmaker and it is worthy of your attention.

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■ Trailer 

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HAPPENINGS



END OF FAST: Minister for Peace and Reconstruction Narahari Acharya feeds Ganga Maya Adhikari at Bir Hospital on Saturday. Adhikari who had been on a fast-unto-death demanding justice for her son ended her hunger strike on Saturday.



ALL NEW: Managing director of Agni Inc Cabinet Shrestha and Sagar Bhadkamkar of Mahindra & Mahindra unveil the New Generation Scorpio in Kathmandu on Monday.



OUR DAY: Police dogs wait for their turn to be worshipped at the Nepal Police Academy during Kukur Tihar on Wednesday.



CYBER TALK: Paul Myers of the BBC Academy at a lecture on Investigating Online organised by *Nepali Times* and the Centre for Investigative Journalism on Wednesday.

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Politicians are always calling for a 'roundtable meeting' to forge a consensus on the constitution, but the social service organisation Round Table Nepal (RTN) has been at it since 1989 to promote service through fellowship. The organisation provides a platform for the young to make the most out of their spare time and take part in corporate social responsibility activities.

Today, RTN has 280 members between the ages of 18 and 40. "Young people are the agents of change for Nepal's future development, and they have a responsibility towards society," says Akash Golchha who started heading RTN this year. RTN is different from other service organisations like Rotary and Lions in that it has younger members.

RTN is one of the over 65 Round Tables all over the world that are a part of Round Table International. Round Table members meet regularly, discuss and network with other Tablers across the globe.

RTN has focused on schools through its Freedom Through Education to improve the quality of instruction in Nepal. Golchha explains: "Education is a priority sector that needs to be developed not just to make children self-reliant, but also so it can be a catalyst for overall development of the country."

Rather than simply giving cash money as donations, RTN builds and upgrades infrastructure for schools all over Nepal. Recently, in collaboration with Round Table Switzerland, RTN raised Rs 2.5 million to build eight

classrooms for Jhor Mahakal School in Kathmandu which will benefit 400 students every year. RTN has so far helped over 30 government schools in areas like Bhairawa, Birganj, Parsa, Morang, Biratnagar and Madi by building and providing hostels, classrooms, toilets, furniture and drinking water facilities.

There are 19 'Tables' throughout Nepal, each with between 15 to 25 members, each focusing on different service projects. Tablers meet every month to discuss reports, plans and project funds. They organise fund-raising events, and explore sponsors for their education work. Golchha is proud that RTN has zero overhead, all the money raised goes directly into implementing projects and is not diverted for administrative expenses.

RTN is currently planning an annual Carnival and Go-kart Competition in December, and the proceeds will be used for its Freedom Through Education initiative. A similar event last year raised Rs 1,600,000. Occasionally, international sponsors and other Round Tables in Europe also support education projects in Nepal through RTN.

In 2016, RTN is hosting a World Meet in Kathmandu which more than 400 Tablers from different Round Tables are expected to attend.

Currently, the average age of Nepali members of RTN is around 37. Golchha hopes to bring this down to twenties. He says: "We are continuously looking for new members, sponsors and schools. Service through fellowships is not just a social engagement project, it is making friends, networking and learning as well." 🇳🇵

Elvin L Shrestha
www.roundtablenepal.org



Safa Chaurasi Byanjan

Safa Chaurasi Byanjan touts itself as being a truly authentic Nepali restaurant, so imagine my surprise when the lewdly blown up posters displayed show pasta and French fries and burgers galore. But then again what is truly Nepali cuisine?

On asking one of the owners to explain this dichotomy between name and fare he told me that Chaurasi Byanjan refers to 84 varieties of food prepared according to exacting traditional methods and dependent upon recipes passed down generations. The restaurant opened seeking to preserve these fast disappearing methods of cooking and to remind customers of our rich culinary heritage. In principle extremely laudatory, but in practice impossible to sustain. To survive

they caved in to the crushing pressure to provide momos and thukpas and pizzas - fare that is available in practically every other restaurant in Kathmandu.

So why visit this particular restaurant? Because, the aforementioned owner informs me, the vegetables are organically farmed at their own farm in Lamatar, the meat available is all halal and butchered in their own abattoir, their fish is fresh and the rice is sourced directly from farmers in the Tarai. They also serve ostrich meat. Additionally, in their attempt to provide fresh locally sourced food, they work with small farmers and provide them a place to vendor their produce-fresh honey, yacons,

indigenous varieties of rice and such.

The restaurant is in New Baneshwor and is 'truly' Nepali in one sense at least - the complete lack of any aesthetic sensibilities to speak of. The main restaurant is housed inside a large shed-like structure that could be emptied to host banquets and receptions. The organic coffee station is housed in a bamboo structure painted green, and the whole area is altogether higgledy-piggledy, ramshackle at best. There is parking enough for about 10 cars but the land isn't leveled. For a restaurant that isn't even a year old, the aura is that of resignation at best, defeat at worst.

On to the food. They proudly said they were among a handful

of restaurants in Kathmandu to serve ostrich, so we decided on the Grilled Ostrich with Chips and Salad (Rs 999). The charred (actually, burnt) three pieces of ostrich meat were dry and burnt beyond redemption. The country fries that came with the meat were tasty even though they were burnt.

I had asked for the Chef's Special which was the intriguing sounding Apple Chicken (Rs 600). What was placed before me was a plate overflowing with a mound of cheese rice, cubed chicken breast in a thick Manchurian style gravy with boiled pieces of apple, steamed vegetables, baby corn fritters, and a hollowed-out apple with a strange tasting dark sauce in it. Your five servings of fruits and vegetables for the day on one plate. I am still confused about the dish and I don't like being confused about food.

Safa Chaurasi serves a Nepali buffet lunch from 9.30am to 2pm. They also make meat kattiya, a slow-cooked clay pot dish in a style that is indigenous to Rautahat, but this requires you to call in before-hand to place

your order. So there are things to recommend about Safa Chaurasi Byanjan. And to be honest the place was packed the evening I visited it. So will I be going back? The answer, surprisingly, is yes... only for their excellent dal bhat thalis. 🇳🇵

Ruby Tuesday

How to get there: Safa Chaurasi Byanjan is located between Naya Baneshwor department store and Everest bank on Madan Bhandari Road in New Baneshwor.



Great Food Deserves Carlsberg

That calls for a Carlsberg



When news broke of the fist fight between Sherpa guides and three international Alpine-style climbers on Mount Everest last year, many were left astounded. After all, violence was something that



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

the world didn't associate with Sherpas, the mountain community known for their friendly and helpful nature. Different versions of the event debating how and why the brawl happened and what this would mean for the future of mountaineering and tourism in Nepal emerged in the media soon after.

Every spring season, the high altitude guides fix ropes, set up camps and pave the way for less



experienced climbers to summit Mount Everest. The rescue teams that performed "long line" high altitude rescues in the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri regions of the Himalayas in the wake of last week's blizzards were comprised mainly of Sherpas.

This column will not extend on that debate further but look into what makes Sherpas physiologically well-adapted to performing arduous tasks like fixing ropes at high altitudes.

There is a sharp contrast in the adaptive mechanism between high altitude Tibetan (from whom the Sherpa people

derive their ancestry) population and the recently-settled Han Chinese population in the Tibetan plateau. Tibetan women have generally uncomplicated pregnancies compared to the relatively complication-ridden pregnancies of the Han Chinese women. In fact this problem is so acute that most expectant Han Chinese women move to lower altitudes during the course of their pregnancy for safer delivery.

It seems people of Tibetan origin are better adapted to hypoxia (low oxygen) even before their birth. Infants born

to Han Chinese parents may have pulmonary hypertension (increased blood pressure in the blood vessels of the lungs) leading to heart failure. This condition is seldom seen in a newborn Tibetan infant. Even if a Han Chinese infant survives childhood, she finds herself at a greater chance to suffer from chronic mountain sickness (CMS). CMS is rarely seen in Tibetans.

As opposed to acute mountain sickness (AMS) which is regularly seen in the Nepal Himalayas, CMS is characterised by excessive red blood cells and leads to heart failure and strokes due to

'sludging' in the circulation of blood. CMS is also common among the high mountain dwellers of South America.

From intrauterine life to infancy to adulthood, Tibetans seem to have a protective mechanism that helps them cope with altitude. The natural ability to adapt in high altitude when combined with training makes them able to perform difficult tasks like putting up ropes, setting up camps, and other exertion-related work better at high altitude areas.

These physiological findings have been corroborated by the molecular discovery of the potentially protective hypoxia inducible factor (HIF) gene by Peter Ratcliff and Greg Semenza. A flurry of medical reports has revealed people with Tibetans ancestry possess the HIF gene, but not the Han Chinese. No wonder the Sherpas are agile in helping people whether it is for guiding or rescue operations in the Himalayas.

GIZMO by YANTRICK

NOTED

Samsung's fabled Galaxy Note series has been credited with coining the term 'phablet,' and rightly so. The Note series proved that there was a huge market for oversized phones, and Galaxy Note phones are now the industry benchmark by which all phablets are measured. Last year's Note 3 was a brilliant phone, packed with specifications and features that put it on top of the smartphone pile. With the Galaxy Note 4, it is safe to say Samsung has outdone the success of its superlative predecessor.

Samsung phones have always packed in the latest specifications and features, but the plastic build that they have been sticking with religiously over the years was always somewhat of a letdown. However, the Note 4 has righted that wrong with a metal-rimmed smartphone sporting silver accents around the rim and buttons which look sharp. This helps to class up



the Note series.

The Note 4 retains its predecessor's textured back which now also sports a heart-rate sensor. Size-wise, there is not much of a difference from

the Note 3, because it is still 5.7 inches across. Forget the dimensions, the real distinction to be made here is how they have improved the performance. As soon as you power it up, the upgrade will strike you – visually at first. Screen resolution has been enhanced to 2,650 X 1,440 pixels and the screen is an HD AMOLED (improved from the Note 3's 1080p display), resulting in an incredibly detailed 515 PPI display that is impressively bright, clear and sharp.

Running on Android 4.4 (KitKat), the Note 4 has upgrades under the hood as well. It is powered by a 2.7 GHz quad-core Snapdragon 805 processor and 3GB RAM, resulting in a blazingly fast phone capable of handling the most intense of multi-tasking, expertly proven by the split-screen mode. The Note 4's stylus, the S Pen, has also been altered, and is now more responsive and smoother than ever.

Both the rear and the front-facing cameras have increased pixel-counts to 16MP and 3.7MP from 13MP and 2.0MP respectively. The inclusion of an 'Optical Image Stabilization' mode results in blur-free and incredibly detailed and rich images. Oh, and it also shoots videos in 4K resolutions.

Other features include a fingerprint scanner added security, and staples like the IR Blaster, NFC, and Bluetooth 4.0 are also present. While its 3220 mAh battery is almost identical to the Note 3's 3200 mAh battery, the Note 4 in fact is more efficient on usage: power now lasts a full day on a single charge.

Yantrick's Verdict: Available in black, white, gold or pink, the Note 4 will cement its place at the top of the phablet pyramid. But because of its top-of-the-range specs, it will also cost you upwards of Rs 85,000.



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Good cop, bad cop

Nepal Police needs a overhaul in its behavior, not just its uniforms

We were sitting in G Café in Baudha, enjoying the glorious autumn weather with dozens of other tourists and young people. Suddenly, there was a commotion outside and a group of police entered the room with a sniffer dog in tow.



ON THE ROAD
Guna Raj Luitel

The police wanted to go into the kitchen, but owner Vishwa Maskey argued with them: “Pets are not allowed in the kitchen, it’s against the law,” he said. The police then climbed to the upper floors, which was a residential area, and inspected that too.

Maskey was furious. “Can police just come inside your home or place of business without a warrant?” he asked. A group of police entering a home or business has a negative impact on the owner in the neighbourhood, and taints the reputation of the innocent. When it is a restaurant, it can impact on business.

I put that question to advocate Madhav Kumar Basnet. “The police can’t enter into any restaurant or hotel without prior notice,” he replied, “and entering a kitchen with a sniffer dog is actually a breach of the law.”

That is a pertinent question at a time when the Nepal Police, which is the guardian of the law, seems to flout its own regulations by invading private space, treating everyone as guilty until proven innocent and randomly stopping anyone on the street in the name of security or alcohol abuse by drivers. As the SAARC Summit approaches, this paranoia about security is only going to get worse.

A citizen or a business has the right to know why it is being searched, a warrant is necessary. Law enforcement officials have no right to just walk into private property. So, Maskey went to the neighbour police station to lodge a complaint.

A senior policeman said he had no idea why G Café had been searched, but he had a hunch. “*Mathiko Adesh hunuparchha*,” he said, using the catch-all term passing the buck to some unnamed higher-up authority which allows police to get away with anything.

Maskey’s plight forces us



BIKRAM RAI

to ponder rampant abuse of authority by Police which seems to have become a law unto itself. Some of the measures taken by Traffic Police against drinking and driving have yielded results, but there is an emphasis on addressing petty infringements like jay-walking and lane indiscipline when more serious crimes go unpunished.

Park buses on a public sidewalk, and the syndicate faces no punishment, but park your motorcycle in the same space and the police slaps a fine. One motorcyclist who turned on his headlights in the daytime for safety reasons was recently stopped by a cop and told to turn

it off or face a fine.

And yet, ear-piercing air horns blast the streets outside hospitals, trucks on the Ring Road belch acrid black carcinogenic diesel smoke and no one pulls them up.

We have an interesting phenomenon in Nepal where the police aggressively tries to make its presence felt everywhere: whether it is barking rudely at the x-ray machine at the airport (especially at migrant workers) or being arrogant and abusive towards drivers for no reason at all, it is as if the uniform is a license to be rude.

You don’t ensure security by a heavy and visible presence, it is done by melting into the crowd,

going under-cover or silent sleuthing. Any Police Academy would teach that to its cadets, and ours should also include a class in public relations and establish a protocol for talking to the public firmly, but politely.

Lately, the police’s high-handedness has got a boost from the arbitrary and misguided attempt by their boss-in-chief, Home Minister Bam Dev Gautam at moral policing. He issued an edict that Tihar celebrations should end at 7PM (later amended to 9PM after a public outcry).

Check into a hotel with a female relative these days and the cops pounce on you – they come to the firm conclusion that you are with a prostitute. Even if she is a girlfriend, or a mistress what business is it of the police? So what if a man and a woman are completing a transaction of a sexual nature? They aren’t building a bomb or plotting a terrorist attack, for god’s sake.

There are good cops and bad cops, of course. And, to be fair, police at checkpoints have become more civil these days, and don’t treat you as a criminal for just sitting in the driver’s seat. Recently, the Nepal Police changed its uniform as part of its image makeover. They should know it doesn’t matter what they wear, what is important is how they behave, whether they follow the law, and whether they are effective in busting the really serious crime in the capital. As Deng Xiao Ping said: “It doesn’t matter whether a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice.” 🇳🇵

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Where to

Singaporean authors ask why their country treats Gurkha commandos who defend their country so shabbily

KUNDA DIXIT

When Chong Zi Liang was interning at *Nepali Times* in Kathmandu 2009, he met young college students who looked and behaved like fellow Singaporeans, spoke English with a Singaporean lilt. But they were not from Singapore. They were sons and daughters of Nepalis who had served in the Gurkha Contingent of the Singapore Police Force, and had returned to Nepal. Chong’s journalistic instincts kicked in, and after profiling them for this newspaper he went on to do a final year project, and finally a book on them.

“I was struck by how alike we were, they were exactly like my friends from school,” Chong recalled. After four years shuttling between the two countries and many interviews later, Chong and his classmate from Nanyang Technological University, Zakaria Zainal, have produced *The Invisible Force: Singapore Gurkhas* -- an intimate and endearing portrait of Gurkhas and their families, their hopes and aspirations, and their nostalgia for Singapore.

Chong, who now works for the digital edition of *The Straits Times*, finally found a publisher (Ethos Books) and *The Invisible Force* was launched recently in Singapore.

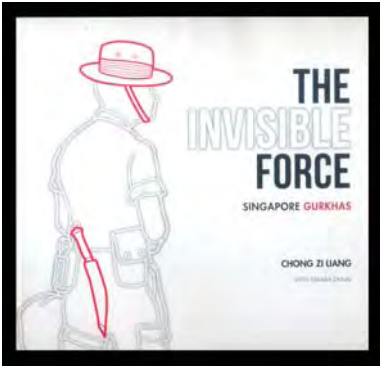
“The Gurkha involvement with Singapore is more than 65 years old, it is older than independent Singapore itself,” Chong said in an interview soon after the book launch. “This is a story that needed to be told because so few Singaporeans are aware of the Gurkhas.”

Although the number of Gurkhas in the British Army has gone down, in Singapore it has grown from 700 in 1990 to 2,000 as the Nepali soldiers take on more tasks in guarding important facilities, and serve in the Special

Action Group and the Special Tactics and Reserve.

As portrayed in Kesang Tseten’s 2012 documentary, *Who will be a Gurkha*, more than 15,000 young Nepali men aspire to be Gurkhas, and after a gruelling selection process, only 400 are chosen every year. One hundred of these are actually for the Singapore Gurkha Contingent.

As Chong cites in his book, there is no formal agreement between Nepal and Singapore about Gurkha recruitment, and the Singapore government subcontracts their selection to the British Army. British officers command and manage the Contingent in Mount Vernon in Singapore.



The Invisible Force

Singapore Gurkhas
Chong Zi Liang
with Zakaria Zainal
Ethos books, 2014 Singapore
90 pages, illustrated
www.ethosbooks.com.sg

After the Japanese capture of Singapore in 1942, Gurkhas played an important role in the British counterattack, and after the war the Gurkhas were once more deployed to fight Maoist guerrillas in the jungles of Malaya. Since then, they helped quell race riots in the 1960s, and in the *konfrontasi* with Indonesia.

Chong and Zainal interview scores of retired Singapore

Gurkhas in Kathmandu whose homes are crammed with jade merlions and other mementos. However, there is a sense of resentment building up about pensions which haven’t kept up with inflation in Nepal.

Gurkhas also have to leave Singapore with their families when they retire. Children born and brought up in Singapore are suddenly uprooted, and suffer dislocation in Nepal. What’s worse, although Nepali students could till recently study in Singapore, Gurkha children still don’t get student visas to go back.

Chong hints that it is perhaps the British officers who command the Gurkha Contingent who lack sensitivity to deal with the Nepalis. Which may have been the reason behind a serious brawl between new Gurkha recruits and their British officers at Mount Vernon in 2008.

Gurkha children born in Singapore are not entitled to Singaporean citizenship, and many Singaporeans themselves feel this is unjust. Architect Richard Ho, who wanted to hire Nirmal Rana, born of Gurkha parents in Singapore, found out he couldn’t. Chong quotes Ho as saying: “I felt ashamed that my country treats people like this.”

Kaji Thapa, who was born in Singapore in 1955, finally got his residence card in 2010 after a long, hard legal battle even though many foreigners can get PR after staying for just five years.

As Singaporeans, Chong and Zainal feel passionately about this, and want to correct the injustice with their book.

Chong’s own words resound as a cry for fairness: “What does it say when we repay such devotion by saying no to their requests to remain among us?”

As for the Gurkhas, the words of one elderly veteran of the anti-communist war of the 1960s in Malaya, whom Chong interviews in Kathmandu, says it all: “I love Singapore. I am ready to go back and die for Singapore.”

 nepalitimes.com

■ Becoming their fathers, #637

■ Invisible force, #511



be a Gurkha?



SINGAPORE VETS (pictures from the book, clockwise from left):

The poster on Sergeant Lal Ale's fridge in Kathmandu reminds him of his favourite beer during his time in Singapore from 1978 to 2004.

Singapore-born Umesh Rana and Dino Gurung hang out at Darbar Marg in Kathmandu.

Tulsi Gurung served from 1951 to 1972, a tumultuous phase in Singapore's history.

Staff Sergeant Chandra Gurung with a picture of an award a few years before his retirement.

Chandra Gurung in Singapore Police Force uniform before retirement in 1988.

Corporal Ishor Thapa served from 1978 to 2004, and got a job in Iraq after retiring.



Teacher, teacher

Bijay Mani Poudel in setopati.com, 21 October

सेतोपाटी

It is seven in the morning and I am returning from the shed. The shed is a cow-pen converted into a hostel for students who are giving their SLC exams next April. There is no one around the snaking foot trail, only nettle bushes on both sides. Two days ago Miraj was asking if we could generate electricity from the acid present in nettles. In reply I gave him a galvanometer so he could find it out for himself. No results yet.

At 9:15 the first bell sounds for a Grade 10 coaching class, which we've labelled Faraday. The students begin the day singing, *Yo mann ta mero Nepali ho*. I write the dates in English and Nepali and then a saying by Gandhi: "In a gentle way, you can shake the world." We spend some time discussing Gandhi.



SUNIR PANDEY

We are learning about sound and echoes today. I take them out to the terraces and instruct them to empty their lungs shouting. Expectedly, the echo returns. Everyone is puzzled. Ashok, leaning on the utis tree, wonders why we don't hear echoes in flat places.

At the end of class, Surbir, who has been declared 'journalist of the year', pipes up: "Sir, please let us sing *Namsa Namsa*." This is a Tamang language translation of the popular song *Gaun gaun bata utha*. Soon they begin singing it in Nepali, Tamang and even Maithili.

At the second bell, I go to Grade 8 aka Oxygen. The students start by singing Gopal Prasad Rimal's *Rato ra chandra surya*. Scientist of the year Bisham brings out his homework:

"Look, sir. I've made a bulb light itself using this circuit."

I see he has made this circuit out of an old switch and a torchlight bulb. Hoisal is excited that if you put more batteries serially, this makes the light brighter. We do other such experiments and end by discussing Abdul Kalam.

On to Grade 9, also known as Fluorine, at the third bell. The students want to sing Buddhi Krishna Lamichhane's *Pindhi ma basera merai aama rudi hun*. Today we are discussing Darwin. I let them interpret it in their own way. Some write stories, some write songs, some even poems about evolution. Bhim Maya has written a dohori song about the extinction of dinosaurs to the tune of *Lalupate jharyo bhui tira*, which all of us sing to end the class.

The fourth bell signals my free hour which I spend walking around the school. Grade 5 students are playing marbles in the field. Their class teacher is out in the sun,

The country beyond the clouds is a story by Narayan Dhakal. I don't know it by heart but I make things up along the way. The country is a utopia, a kind of Ram Rajya with social welfare, because I want the students to get inspired and do what is moral. The students want to know when the serialised story will be over. Two years, I say. They say, please finish this story before you go.

The science story is based on a children's book by Stephen Hawking and his daughter Lucy's work. Again, I take artistic licence. When I tell them about weightlessness in space they are all ears. When I show them a video about zero gravity, their amazement knows no bounds. The story of Bhagat Bahadur, a story I wrote about the struggles of a child somehow matches with an Indian film called *I am Kalam*.

The fifth bell takes me back to Grade 10. We start with Subhas Chandra Bose, although we are revising our lesson about the universe. The sixth bell is for Grade 6, called 'Newton'. The students want to sing *Hami dherai sana chhaun, hamro mutu sano chha* before we discuss photosynthesis. I take them out to a tree and ask them how plants eat. They have their own opinions, but most of them say plants make their own food. But where is the stove? Everyone laughs. I tell them about stomata, xylem, phloem and chlorophyll.

At the end of class everyone shows me their diary. Amrit's letters are too bold, I tell him to be lighter with his pen. To Norsang I say drawing a diko over the letters is like roofing a house – the rain will get in if you don't have a roof.

This is the end of my day. Or it should be. But again I see Grade 10 idling about, the economics teacher is absent. So I take them in and do something productive. The final bell rings.

In the staff room, they are talking about a student who has eloped. I return to my own room. Why did Suntali elope? Later I find out this was arranged by a sister-in-law. It's a custom around here: first you elope, later you get married. Although there has been a revolution in our politics, our culture is still the same.

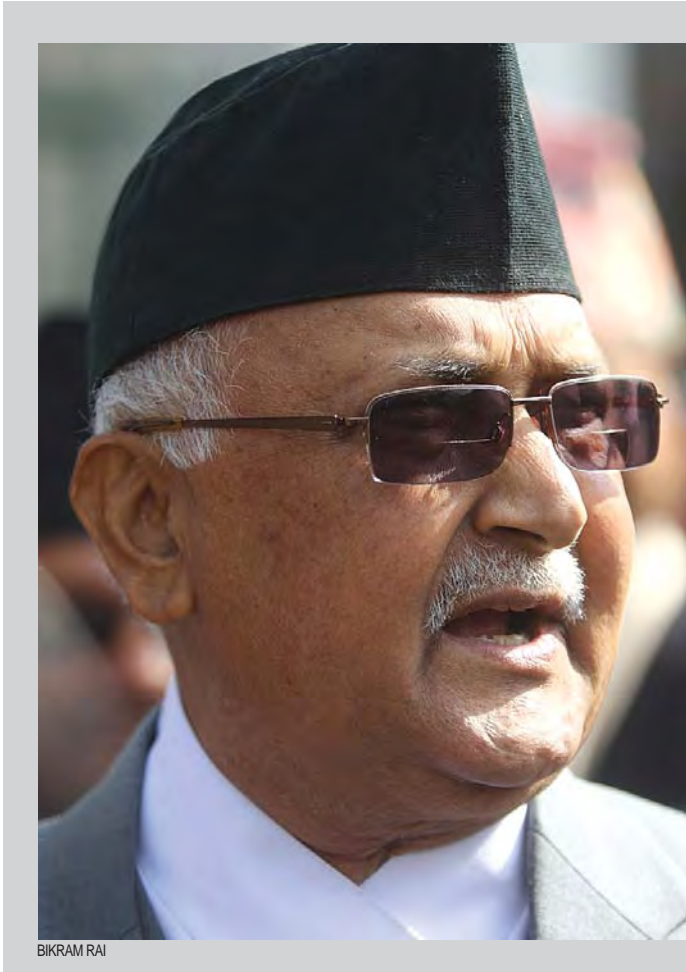
I return to our shed in the evening. Jyameng has brought me some rayo saag and a long stalk of sugarcane. Pradip gives me some bojho. I make them practice Maths, Science, English, and Social Studies.

At midnight, I read a page and go to sleep on a straw bed, inside the shed. Outside, and on the roof, there is the rush of rain.

Bijay Mani Poudel works for Teach for Nepal.

**nepalitimes.com**

■ Teaching for the future, #694



BIKRAM RAI

Oli bites

Nagarik, 21 October

नागरिक

UML Chairman KP Oli on Pushpa Kamal Dahal:

"We made him the head of HLPC on the condition that he would help us pass the constitution. Then he sides with the opposition and shows his dual character."

"We have a clear two-thirds majority, so we will pass the constitution on the strength of our numbers if they don't agree with us."

"We agreed to six states if the Maoists were willing to cooperate, else it's going to be four."

"We will not let them separate the fertile Tarai from the barren hills."

"You think 22 parties can sabotage constitution writing by assembling 2,000 people? How can you ask for referendum just because four leaders failed?"

"One man's selfishness can't put the country's interests at risk, so Dahal can stop deluding himself."



नेपाल

Rabindra Manandhar in *Nepal*, 19 October

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ We never wished for federalism. It is the foreigners who put upon us the heavy burden of federalism. ”

Rastriya Janamorchha Chairman Chitra Bahadur K.C, *Annapurna Post*, 20 October

Young mothers

Dhruba BC, *Rajdhani*, 20 October

राजधानी

ACHHAM: This week, Laxmi BK of Binayak became a mother at only 15. The district hospital said her delivery was normal but her newborn hardly weighs one and a half kilos. In the same delivery room was Rekha BK, 17, of Mangalsen, who suffered from contractions for a whole day before giving birth.

"Although the conditions of these two and their children are stable, not every teenage mother is as lucky," says staff nurse Ganga Budha Magar. In the last year alone Magar saw 43 cases of miscarriages, all from teen mothers.

The numbers are startling: 412 women out of 861 who came for assisted delivery at the district hospital and Bayalpata Hospital in July and August were teenagers. There are no guarantees that teenage brides aren't giving birth at other health facilities or at home.



According to the Regional Health Directorate (RHD) in Dipayal, an increasing number of young mothers are signing up for maternity facilities in the Far West. Almost 11,000 teenagers (out of a regional total of 38,224) came for safe deliveries in the last 12 months, among whom 38 mothers and 1,086 babies died from complications.

Health workers here are satisfied they've been able to convince women from remote places to turn up for institutional deliveries, but teenage weddings are out of their control. RHD stats show up to 37 per cent of girls in the Far West get pregnant in their teens.

The health of both mother and child is at higher risk when young couples have children without gaps between each child. Jaumati Sunar (*pic*) of Sera is only 17 but already has two sons.

"If this continues, we will have trouble achieving the millennium development goal of reducing infant mortality rate to 16 per 1,000 live births," says Siddharaj Bhatta, a health assistant at RHD.

**nepalitimes.com**

■ Phone engaged, #721
■ Stunted development, #719
■ Nepali Ama, #240,



PICS: NARAYAN DHUNGANA

NARAYAN DHUNGANA In CHITWAN

Nine years after the Maoists bombed a passenger bus in Chitwan's Madi region, the survivors and victims' families are still dealing with psychological trauma and economic hardship.

For survivors, the biggest challenge is still getting state recognition of the permanent physical disabilities they suffered from the massive bomb. Compensation has been distributed, but selectively and money has long gone.

Ashish Chhetri (*pic, above*) was six years old and accompanying his mother Man Kumari to hospital in Bharatpur on the fateful day in 2004. Authorities found mother and son thrown onto the riverbank and rushed them to the emergency. Man Kumari woke up after 12 hours of intensive care, but Ashish was in a coma for two weeks. Today Ashish has a scar around his head like the rim of a saucer and says he gets constant headaches and has difficulty studying.

In Kathmandu, records at the Peace and Reconstruction Ministry (PRM) have Ashish at number 39 on the list of those who died in the blast, which is why he was not eligible for any compensation and medical costs that survivors are entitled to. His mother, who was badly wounded and became

deaf from the blast is listed under 'minimal injury/disabled' and received Rs 52,000, which she says was a pittance.

When Man Kumari wrote to the PRM in November 2007 about a scholarship for her son, she was rebuffed. Five years later, she got the local Peace Committee to write to the Chitwan district office about her son, but the administration ignored the request. After a prolonged battle against an apathetic bureaucracy Ashish, now 13, got an annual Rs 34,000 scholarship. But officially he is still listed as dead.

For a decade, the survivors has suffered physical and mental trauma from the attack, but their families have also suffered indirectly. Tired of waiting for government compensation, Purna Bahadur Gharti GC sold his land to pay for the Rs 300,000 needed for treatment of his injuries. As a result, he now cannot afford to send his son and daughter to college.

When Bishnumaya BK's husband, Chandra, found his wife and 11-month-old son amidst the wreckage of the bombed out bus, he was psychologically scarred and is still unbalanced. He often turns violent, and once beat up his other son so badly he has head injuries. Today, Bishnumaya

is having to single-handedly care for all three members of her family and herself. All she got was Rs 40,000 eight years ago.

"I spend every day feeling financially and psychologically bankrupt. How can we live like this?" asks Bishnumaya.

Ganga Bahadur Gurung of Ayodhyapuri was injured when he tried to help the survivors at the scene of the blast. He thought it was just a flesh wound but one and a half years later, he suddenly started suffering from mental illness. Then his father died and while he was going to Dhading for the funeral, he jumped into the Gandaki and drowned himself.

"My son became mad because of the long-term effect of the bus bomb, God knows how many other people will end up like him," says his mother.

Although the government says 52 people were injured in the blast, the local victims committee has built a monument at the site, where an additional 23 people are listed as injured. None of them have received compensation. When they go to district administration office in Bharatpur to make their case, bureaucrats accuse them of lying.

Ishwari Prasad Poudel and his wife were injured in



Memories of terror in Madi

A decade after the bomb that killed 36 bus passengers, survivors are abandoned by the state and suffer physical and mental trauma



the blast but authorities at the district administration in 2005 said he was making things up. Later the CDO told him they lost his file. Ishwari resubmitted papers in 2008, but these were again lost. He tried a third time in 2012 and was instructed to go to the PRM in Kathmandu. This year, Ishwari was told there were no war survivor files registered in his name. By then he had spent more than Rs 30,000 just to prove his injuries were legitimate.

Laxmi Poudel had her five-month-old daughter Prasiddhi on her lap and was travelling in the bus with her grandmother when the bomb went off. Prasiddhi was thrown off the bus and was found near the river. She is now 10 and cannot walk, she has trouble studying and has nightmares. She never got any help from the government.

Sita Subedi of Ayodhyapuri was injured while her husband Atmaram and daughter Anjila died. At a program held at the Badarmudhe site to mark the ninth anniversary of the blast earlier this year, she was visibly distraught and traumatised. Sita says she has fainted while crossing the river to travel to Bharatpur. Sita's name is on the list of insurgency victims at the PRM in Kathmandu, but she has not received a paisa.

Seventy-six-year-old Man Bahadur Baraili lost his daughter-in-law and grandson in the blast. He received compensation of

THE UNDEAD: Mankumari Chhetri and her son, Ashish who is not eligible for compensation because he is officially listed as 'dead'.

Bishnumaya BK with her children, showing her leg wounds. Her husband was psychologically affected by the bomb and often turns violent.

Lalshri Gurung shows the picture of her son, Ganga Bahadur, to her grand-daughter. Ganga Bahadur suffered mental trauma from the blast and committed suicide.

Rs 150,000 each for the two, but nothing for another grandson who was injured. His son Prem, frustrated by the bureaucracy and obstacles ran away from home.

Lekhnath Adhikari, the deputy-chairman of the Badarmudhe Attack Victims Committee, spent nine months in bed recovering from his injuries. He was on a wheel chair for another year-and-half and four years on crutches. He has spent Rs 600,000 on medical bills, with no help from the state.

Says Adhikari: "If the government refuses to remember us victims of the Madi bomb even now, God knows how many tragedies will follow." (Centre for Investigative Journalism)

nepalitimes.com

■ Memories of mass murder, #301
■ Nine years later, still in shock, #713



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Worshipping the national animal



Some of the more discerning among you readers may have realised by now that we are in the midst of celebrating yet another festival. After killing and eating anything that moved over Dasain, we are now in Tihar, the festival in which we worship anything that moves. In fact, with Pashupati Nath as the patron deity of our secular federal republic, Nepal's zoological society has by now appeased the vehicles of all our gods and goddesses by worshipping the animals in us.

One indication of the considerable respect and devotion we shower on our fellow creatures is evidenced in the way we pamper the higher mammals by allowing them free access to our national highways and street intersections. Every year, this adulation for our four-legged and feathered friends reaches a climax at Tihar when we set aside one day for specialised attention to each of them.

We started on Tuesday with **National Crow Day** to honour Yamaraj's roving ambassador and plenipotentiary. Devotees get up early in the morning and travel to the banks of the Bagmati where crows can be found partaking of their communal breakfast on the city's choicest garbage. We then proceed to offer

them a plethora of sweetmeats which they totally ignore because (despite its name) a sweetmeat is vegetarian and the crows would much rather dine on a plethora of rotting cadavers. But it's the thought that counts, and how appropriate that at least once a year we recognise the valuable assistance that crows provide to the Kathmandu Metropolitan City as volunteer scavengers and honour them in nationally-televised ceremonies.

Thursday is when we can say "Oh my dog!" and actually mean it literally. This is the day we have set aside to worship man's best friend and to reward with treats Fido, Fuchhe and Lucky for being around when we need them most to provide us with security in these troubled times by yowling non-stop all night at everyone in general and no one in particular.

But disregarding our own personal discomfort and sleep deprivation, on Wednesday we got up at the crack of dawn on **Dog Day** to round up the neighbourhood dingo pack and feed them body parts of fellow animals, resisting the temptation to lace it with pulverised sleeping pills. This veneration of our nocturnal canine choir has a long and glorious tradition that has been passed down to us from the

ancient Egyptians who even built pyramids to immortalise their dead pets. Giza has three of them: one for Fido, one for Fucche and one for Lucky.

Then comes Friday, which is **Guy Puja** and is set aside for none other than the holy cow. This is the day when you can call your boss a cow and mean it as a compliment. During the monarchy days, the cow was our national animal but in the new federal secular constitution we have it on good authority that the cow will be replaced by the donkey. Ahem.

Nevertheless, cattle still have the right of way in the major thoroughfares of the capital and this is an indication of the reverence we still accord our ex-national animal.

No other animals, not even those sitting in the High Level Political Mechanism have as much priority as Kathmandu's urban livestock. The prime minister's motorcade, on its way to the Gokarna retreat this week for a last-ditch attempt to write a new constitution, had to make a slight detour into the sidewalk when a bovine traffic island at Chabel refused to budge despite sirens and commandos armed to the teeth. So, we aren't bullshitting when we say that we still care about cows.

In conclusion, and on behalf of all the animals who feel left out this Tihar, let me assure them that they are not forgotten. Ours is an inclusive people's democratic republic now and this means all animals great and small have the right to their own day of veneration. So, from next year's Tihar, by presidential decree, we shall also mark **Musa Tihar**, **House Fly Day**, the **Day of the Vultures** and the **Ass Puja Day**.



The Ass

PAST PRESENT FUTURE

DIWAKAR CHETTRI





It's nine pm already, we gotta stop now...



There's no ban against gambling though!





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