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

PAGE 2

EYE-WITNESS TO SEARCH AND RESCUE IN MUSTANG

BY SUBINA SHRESTHA

PAGE 3

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
As with the other disasters in Nepal this year (Illhote Kosi landslides, Sukchort-Dang flashfloods and the Everest avalanche) there has been a lot of blame-throwing after the Annapurna blizzard last week that claimed at least 43 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 it 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 typical Nepali fashion, hoped for the best. The Nepal Army and its rescue helicopter pilots, battle-hardened during the army brass for an ill-timed inspection visit to western Nepal

If some of its choppers had not been commandeered by the it’s rescue helicopter pilots, battle-hardened during the Nepal Army and local administration 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 communications 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 inspection and 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 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 make sure the trekking 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 $10 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 hour walk up to Thorung and others 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 places 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 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 seek such an important source of employment and revenue to be made as safe as possible for us and our visitors in future.

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 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 seek such an important source of employment and revenue to be made as safe as possible for us and our visitors in future.
Go tell it on the mountain

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

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 an army officer identify bodies, his hands still clutching snow. As the choppers flew off again for another round, we yelled: “You have to update us. Where is everyone? Where is Kathmandu Airport?” Another one shouted: “You have to update us. We have a disaster center in Mustang. They yelled at the people from the government’s entourage – the Labour Minister, Tourism Secretary, and MPs from various parties. They were busy blaming hapless guests, someone said in Jomsom. “What a strange sentiment, I wondered.”

In the small tea stalls, 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. 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.

Introduction to the New Polo G
Feels that good.

New Polo G with stunning features.

Presenting New Colors.

Volkswagen, Das Auto.

@ShresthaSubina
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 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 Tours 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 Dumchhaur to Khaira for the Jhimuk Project. There have also been successful small gravity ropeways in Gorkha, Tanahu and Sindhuli.

ELVIN L. SHRESTHA

Connecting Nepal with ropes

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

POINTER OF VIEW: The view of Kathmandu and Langjung Hotel that will greet visitors when the Thankot-Chandragiri cable car is operational next June, which will be the same equipment used in Manakamana (above).
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 Pritivi 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
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 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 underscore the appeals NC’s consistent concern about limiting the number of federal units to make them economically viable, there is a larger mentality that shapes 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 Dhibhi and Biratnagar in the east, and separating the Tharu movement of Kailali and Kanchanpur from the western districts of Nawaparasi 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 absence of any Dalit persona in its current cabinet and a single one representing both Madhes 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 31 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 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 sedentary settlement of two or more ethnic groups (Taplejung, Pancitthar, Ham, Sankhuwasabha, Bhojpur, Khotang, Terathum, 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 ethnic communities living there.

Similarly, in the case of smaller ethnic groups like Dhimal of Bhaap and Sherpas in Solukhumbu, a clearly defined autonomous area safeguarding and promoting their culture and recognizing their rights can be an amiable solution. It should be a matter of healthy debate whether both propositions can’t be done at the same time.

A healthy debate would make the NC a more viable option as a federalist party in the Madhes, unless it decides to unnecessarily antagonise local sentiments and weaken itself as a federalist party in the Madhes.

END

@Anurag_Acharya

Off the people, for the people

By The Way

Anurag Acharya

KRISHNA PRASAD STAALI, MADHAW KUMAR NEPAL, BABURAM BHATTARAI, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Narayan Kaj Shrestha, KP Oli, and Jharki Pratibhak at a meeting of the HIPC at Gokarna on Wednesday.

If not, call our

Himalmedia Pvt. Ltd.
Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur
5005601-07
Ext. 243

5005601-07
Ext. 243

@Anurag Acharya
Since 2010, Alliance Française of Kathmandu (AFK) and the French Embassy in Nepal has been organising Planet Nepal, a biennial art and environment festival, that sees artists, environmentalists, and organisations come together for the environment cause.

The third edition of the festival will take place end of the month 31 October. This year, the festival theme is ‘Family Farming’ to highlight the neglect that smallholder farms face in Nepal and around the world.

“As United Nations declared 2014 the year of Family Farming we chose this theme to be part of the worldwide celebrations,” says Ophélie Belin, director of AFK.

Organisers have prepared a long line-up of exhibitions, presentations, and performances for the two-day event at Tundikhel. French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) is curating an exhibition ‘Family Farming, An Asset for the Planet’. Likewise, Pokhara-based Li-Bird is putting on display seed varieties from community seed banks.

A group of organic farmers will also exhibit their produce at the event.

For the arts part of the festival, Kathmandu University School of Arts and Design students are hosting an exhibition of installation art, resulting from their workshop with American artist Karl Knapp.

Red Panda Trust is putting together a theatre performance to draw attention to the need to protect endangered species.

‘My Dear Little Planet’, a series of nine short stories explaining major environmental issues, will kickstart the film festival. A Dark Cloud on the Top of the World directed by Agnès Moreau, My Trash is Treasure, The Seeds War, directed by Clément Montfort and Stenka Quillet, will also be screened at the event. This film will be followed by a debate with co-director, Clément Montfort, Kanda Dsou, Ram Bahadur Rana of Li-Bird and noted agronomist, Madan Rai.

French artist Komplex Kapharnaum will open the festival with his performance of Do Not Clean, which is a multidisciplinary and itinerant show that will start from Shree Sankata Temple, in Teharbal, to end at Tundikhel. It aims at sharing new ways of up cycling and recycling with the dropouts of the society. Other musicians that will play at the fest are French musician Tangi Penard, and Nepali bands Night and Kutumba.

Says Belin: “We believe this dialogue between scientific facts and artistic performances is an attractive way of raising awareness on our impact of the environment.”

Stephanie Huet
Tihar,
The festival of lights ends this week with Mha puja and Bhai tika. Mha puja: People do puja on themselves and celebrate their new year. Nhu daya bhinntuna (Happy New Year!). 24 October Bhai tika: Sisters do puja 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 Lugg Freni. 28 October to 15 November, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal

Vintuna rally,
A cycle rally to mark Nepali Sambat 1135. 24 October, 9am onwards, starting from Patan Durbar Square

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

Planet Nepal,
A two-day art and environment festival, with performances, exhibitions, debates, discussions, screenings and concerts. (See page 7) 30 October to 3 November, Tundikhel, (01)4241163, www.planetnepal.org.np

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

Breathe in, Breathe out,
Deep and detailed learning and practice of a number of yoga breathing techniques. Rs 1,500, 26 October, 2 to 5pm, Pranayama 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, Mithibare, New Birendra. www.changefusionnepal.com

Photography workshop,
A seven-day photography foundational workshop by experienced and professional mentors. 28 October to 6 November, Image Park, New Road

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

Lal Durbar Restaurant,
Authentic Nepali dinner with cultural shows. Hotel Felix & Ivy, Durbar Marg, (01)428999, reservation@laldurbar.com

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

Now we bring to you the best of two worlds in a single edition.

You can also enjoy full digital access of New York Times with your subscription.

For subscription details call 4265100 ext. 208, 210, 211 or email to subs@myrepublica.com

NRs. 19.50 daily price

Check out

Salt & Pepper,

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

Saloon,
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

Planet Nepal,
A two-day art and environment festival, with performances, exhibitions, debates, discussions, screenings and concerts. (See page 7) 30 October to 3 November, Tundikhel, (01)4241163, www.planetnepal.org.np

Cosmopolitan Cafe,
Located in the heart of Basantapur, this cozy cafe offers arguably the best chicken sizzler in town. Basantapur, (01)425246

Chefrest
Deathfest 2015,
A accomplished local and international extreme metal bands come together to celebrate the glorious genre. 9 & 10 January 2015, venue to be announced.

Atithi Resort,
a perfect place to stay, near pool, massage, sauna, and delicious food. Shankumon, Lakeside, Pokhara. (061)466760/400207, info@atithiresort.com

Temple Tree,
a peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour, and sauna. Gangaflat, Lakeside, (061)465819

Rock tribute,
A tribute to legendary hard rock band, Guns n Roses by Nepali project band Destruction. 15 November, 3 to 6pm. Purple River Rock Bar, Thamel.

Neydo Monastery,
Home to many significant religious sites of the great siddhas. Leave your troubles behind and book a room. Pharping, Kathmandu. www.neydohotel.com

Starry Night BBQ,
Catch Ciney Gurung live as you chomp on your meat stick. Rs 1,299, 7pm onwards. Fridays, Shambhala Garden Cafe, Hotel Shangri-La, (01)4412999

Bass camp,
A Tihar-festival gig with performances from Riddim Radicals, Sansam EL Riser (Mumbai) and Symbio Sound (Berlin). 25 October, 9pm onwards. Club 25 Hours, Tangal.

Waterfront Resort,
The lakeside hotel invites you for special barbecue 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

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

Barahi Jungle Lodge,
The first eco-jungle lodge of Chitwan directly overlooks the Chitwan National Park. Spa, boutique guest room, individual and two-in-one private villas, the choice is yours. Andrauli, West Chitwan. www.barahijunglelodge.com

Deathfest 2015,
A accomplished local and international extreme metal bands come together to celebrate the glorious genre. 9 & 10 January 2015, venue to be announced.

Atithi Resort,
a perfect place to stay, near pool, massage, sauna, and delicious food. Shankumon, Lakeside, Pokhara. (061)466760/400207, info@atithiresort.com

Temple Tree,
a peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour, and sauna. Gangaflat, Lakeside, (061)465819

Rock tribute,
A tribute to legendary hard rock band, Guns n Roses by Nepali project band Destruction. 15 November, 3 to 6pm. Purple River Rock Bar, Thamel.

Neydo Monastery,
Home to many significant religious sites of the great siddhas. Leave your troubles behind and book a room. Pharping, Kathmandu. www.neydohotel.com

Starry Night BBQ,
Catch Ciney Gurung live as you chomp on your meat stick. Rs 1,299, 7pm onwards. Fridays, Shambhala Garden Cafe, Hotel Shangri-La, (01)4412999

Bass camp,
A Tihar-festival gig with performances from Riddim Radicals, Sansam EL Riser (Mumbai) and Symbio Sound (Berlin). 25 October, 9pm onwards. Club 25 Hours, Tangal.

Waterfront Resort,
The lakeside hotel invites you for special barbecue 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

Barahi Jungle Lodge,
The first eco-jungle lodge of Chitwan directly overlooks the Chitwan National Park. Spa, boutique guest room, individual and two-in-one private villas, the choice is yours. Andrauli, West Chitwan. www.barahijunglelodge.com

Deathfest 2015,
A accomplished local and international extreme metal bands come together to celebrate the glorious genre. 9 & 10 January 2015, venue to be announced.

Atithi Resort,
a perfect place to stay, near pool, massage, sauna, and delicious food. Shankumon, Lakeside, Pokhara. (061)466760/400207, info@atithiresort.com

Temple Tree,
a peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour, and sauna. Gangaflat, Lakeside, (061)465819

Rock tribute,
A tribute to legendary hard rock band, Guns n Roses by Nepali project band Destruction. 15 November, 3 to 6pm. Purple River Rock Bar, Thamel.

Neydo Monastery,
Home to many significant religious sites of the great siddhas. Leave your troubles behind and book a room. Pharping, Kathmandu. www.neydohotel.com

Starry Night BBQ,
Catch Ciney Gurung live as you chomp on your meat stick. Rs 1,299, 7pm onwards. Fridays, Shambhala Garden Cafe, Hotel Shangri-La, (01)4412999

Bass camp,
A Tihar-festival gig with performances from Riddim Radicals, Sansam EL Riser (Mumbai) and Symbio Sound (Berlin). 25 October, 9pm onwards. Club 25 Hours, Tangal.

Waterfront Resort,
The lakeside hotel invites you for special barbecue 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

Barahi Jungle Lodge,
The first eco-jungle lodge of Chitwan directly overlooks the Chitwan National Park. Spa, boutique guest room, individual and two-in-one private villas, the choice is yours. Andrauli, West Chitwan. www.barahijunglelodge.com

Deathfest 2015,
A accomplished local and international extreme metal bands come together to celebrate the glorious genre. 9 & 10 January 2015, venue to be announced.

Atithi Resort,
a perfect place to stay, near pool, massage, sauna, and delicious food. Shankumon, Lakeside, Pokhara. (061)466760/400207, info@atithiresort.com

Temple Tree,
a peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour, and sauna. Gangaflat, Lakeside, (061)465819

Rock tribute,
A tribute to legendary hard rock band, Guns n Roses by Nepali project band Destruction. 15 November, 3 to 6pm. Purple River Rock Bar, Thamel.

Neydo Monastery,
Home to many significant religious sites of the great siddhas. Leave your troubles behind and book a room. Pharping, Kathmandu. www.neydohotel.com

Starry Night BBQ,
Catch Ciney Gurung live as you chomp on your meat stick. Rs 1,299, 7pm onwards. Fridays, Shambhala Garden Cafe, Hotel Shangri-La, (01)4412999

Bass camp,
A Tihar-festival gig with performances from Riddim Radicals, Sansam EL Riser (Mumbai) and Symbio Sound (Berlin). 25 October, 9pm onwards. Club 25 Hours, Tangal.

Waterfront Resort,
The lakeside hotel invites you for special barbecue 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

Barahi Jungle Lodge,
The first eco-jungle lodge of Chitwan directly overlooks the Chitwan National Park. Spa, boutique guest room, individual and two-in-one private villas, the choice is yours. Andrauli, West Chitwan. www.barahijunglelodge.com

Deathfest 2015,
A accomplished local and international extreme metal bands come together to celebrate the glorious genre. 9 & 10 January 2015, venue to be announced.

Atithi Resort,
a perfect place to stay, near pool, massage, sauna, and delicious food. Shankumon, Lakeside, Pokhara. (061)466760/400207, info@atithiresort.com

Temple Tree,
a peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour, and sauna. Gangaflat, Lakeside, (061)465819

Rock tribute,
A tribute to legendary hard rock band, Guns n Roses by Nepali project band Destruction. 15 November, 3 to 6pm. Purple River Rock Bar, Thamel.

Neydo Monastery,
Home to many significant religious sites of the great siddhas. Leave your troubles behind and book a room. Pharping, Kathmandu. www.neydohotel.com

Starry Night BBQ,
Catch Ciney Gurung live as you chomp on your meat stick. Rs 1,299, 7pm onwards. Fridays, Shambhala Garden Cafe, Hotel Shangri-La, (01)4412999

Bass camp,
A Tihar-festival gig with performances from Riddim Radicals, Sansam EL Riser (Mumbai) and Symbio Sound (Berlin). 25 October, 9pm onwards. Club 25 Hours, Tangal.

Waterfront Resort,
The lakeside hotel invites you for special barbecue 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

Barahi Jungle Lodge,
The first eco-jungle lodge of Chitwan directly overlooks the Chitwan National Park. Spa, boutique guest room, individual and two-in-one private villas, the choice is yours. Andrauli, West Chitwan. www.barahijunglelodge.com
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’ Dona 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. Sunj 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,
Tenors were hard pressed to decide who was best for the Next Generation. Dhrupad Caravan was another beautiful demonstration of music pushing boundaries. The project in itself is a melting pot with Nepal/Vishal Bhattarai and Japanese show box. The Nihang band was also rewarded a free Forest Resort on Saturday. The band members. 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 Naas Chhetri in 2002, the festival has fostered duos of artistic encounters between international bands from diverse cultural backgrounds. These reunions have enabled unique covenants. The only complaint is that Jazzmandu does not sell recordings of the concerts.

Subash Sinha, showed his graceful talent. The popular 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 Cho. The musical experimentation continued with the duet GT, formed just three days before Jazzmandu for the Next Generation competition. Table player Ramesh Pachte Magar accompanied the guitarist Sudip Nashag to unite the Nepali classical music to jazz. GT began with a pleasant East-West fusion revision of the traditional Nepali song, Mandali Dhur. The two musicians then surprised the audience with an entertaining version of the jazz classic, Blue Rama with the tabla handling the rhythm duties. After deliberation, the judges understood unfluently chose Doxy Ltd as the outstanding band. Musicianship aside, Sotang and his fellow musicians complemented each other. Subash Sinha, received the outstanding musician award, a much-deserved accolade because Mr Green’s guitarist is in the archetype of virtuosity. Said Doxy Ltd pianist 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 award at the Jazz Mean Studio that aroused nostalgic feelings of Stevie Wonder’s early days.

Pakhari, as the lead singer of Jamjadamu 2014, American percussionist KJ Demire’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, Denhert showed her versatility during the jams with artists from different origins at Jamjadamu 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 were spotted on stage by playing a short melody of a Nepali song. But undoubtedly, the most exciting and original band of Jamjadamu 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.

Guillaume Zemor, archtypal of virtuosity. because Mr Green’s guitarist is the only few months before Jamjadamu 2014, the three musicians showed, striking coordination – drummer Tran Van Tuan and bassist Bruno Scherp giving a grouny punch to Calebret’s classic-Latin melodies on the piano. As the headline act at Jamjadamu 2014, American Ange Takats performed alone with an acoustic guitar at Jamjadamu. 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 Naas Chhetri in 2002, the festival has fostered duos of artistic encounters between international bands from diverse cultural backgrounds. These reunions have enabled unique covenants. The only complaint is that Jazzmandu does not sell recordings of the concerts.

Jazmandu 2014 spanned national boundaries with the universal language of music.

STÉPHANE HUÉT

M usic for unity, peace and compassion’. The slogan might seem a bit strenuous, but it certainly made sense to the spectators of Jamjadamu 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 on Yala Maya Kendra on Tuesday 21 October. International artists met traditional musicians Gurudev Kamat, Sunil Raj Shrestha, Rabil Lal Shrestha and Stransh Bhika 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 Rabil Lal Shrestha’s tabla and Varnos Gemson-Blot’s drums. The climax was attained when the stage was brightened by the lights of Diwali, and the Day of the Cow. A cho choir composed of 60 faculty members and Australian, Ange Takats, interpreted Jesus Bhalo. 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 Nepal/Vishal Bhattarai and Japanese show box. The Nihang band was also rewarded a free Forest Resort on Saturday. The band members. 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 Naas Chhetri in 2002, the festival has fostered duos of artistic encounters between international bands from diverse cultural backgrounds. These reunions have enabled unique covenants. The only complaint is that Jazzmandu does not sell recordings of the concerts.

Pakhari, as the lead singer of Jamjadamu 2014, American Ange Takats performed alone with an acoustic guitar at Jamjadamu. 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 Naas Chhetri in 2002, the festival has fostered duos of artistic encounters between international bands from diverse cultural backgrounds. These reunions have enabled unique covenants. The only complaint is that Jazzmandu does not sell recordings of the concerts.

Subash Sinha, showed his graceful talent. The popular 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 Cho. The musical experimentation continued with the duet GT, formed just three days before Jazzmandu for the Next Generation competition. Table player Ramesh Pachte Magar accompanied the guitarist Sudip Nashag to unite the Nepali classical music to jazz. GT began with a pleasant East-West fusion revision of the traditional Nepali song, Mandali Dhur. The two musicians then surprised the audience with an entertaining version of the jazz classic, Blue Rama with the tabla handling the rhythm duties. After deliberation, the judges understood unfluently chose Doxy Ltd as the outstanding band. Musicianship aside, Sotang and his fellow musicians complemented each other. Subash Sinha, received the outstanding musician award, a much-deserved accolade because Mr Green’s guitarist is in the archetype of virtuosity. Said Doxy Ltd pianist 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 award at the Jazz Mean Studio that aroused nostalgic feelings of Stevie Wonder’s early days.

Pakhari, as the lead singer of Jamjadamu 2014, American Ange Takats performed alone with an acoustic guitar at Jamjadamu. 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 Naas Chhetri in 2002, the festival has fostered duos of artistic encounters between international bands from diverse cultural backgrounds. These reunions have enabled unique covenants. The only complaint is that Jazzmandu does not sell recordings of the concerts.

Subash Sinha, showed his graceful talent. The popular 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 Cho. The musical experimentation continued with the duet GT, formed just three days before Jazzmandu for the Next Generation competition. Table player Ramesh Pachte Magar accompanied the guitarist Sudip Nashag to unite the Nepali classical music to jazz. GT began with a pleasant East-West fusion revision of the traditional Nepali song, Mandali Dhur. The two musicians then surprised the audience with an entertaining version of the jazz classic, Blue Rama with the tabla handling the rhythm duties. After deliberation, the judges understood unfluently chose Doxy Ltd as the outstanding band. Musicianship aside, Sotang and his fellow musicians complemented each other. Subash Sinha, received the outstanding musician award, a much-deserved accolade because Mr Green’s guitarist is in the archetype of virtuosity. Said Doxy Ltd pianist 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 award at the Jazz Mean Studio that aroused nostalgic feelings of Stevie Wonder’s early days.

Pakhari, as the lead singer of Jamjadamu 2014, American Ange Takats performed alone with an acoustic guitar at Jamjadamu. 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 Naas Chhetri in 2002, the festival has fostered duos of artistic encounters between international bands from diverse cultural backgrounds. These reunions have enabled unique covenants. The only complaint is that Jazzmandu does not sell recordings of the concerts.
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 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 Eric 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 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.

Sophia Pande

MUST SEE

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 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.
P

oliticians 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 well read, 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 Jhur 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 bazaar 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

S

afa Chaurusi Byanjan presents itself as being a truly authentic Nepali restaurant, so imagine my surprise when the newly 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 Chaurusi 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 – 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 so on.

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 levelled. For a restaurant that isn’t even a year old, the aura is that of resigning at best, defeat at worst.

On to the food. 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 Chaurusi 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 Raastabar, but this requires you to call in beforehand to place your order. So there are things to recommend about Safa Chaurusi 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 thali.

Ruby Tuesday
How to get there: Safa Chaurusi Byanjan is located between Naya Baneshwor department store and Everest bank on Madan Bhadur Road in New Baneshwor.
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 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 characterized 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 Ratcliffe 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.

Imitating nature

Nepal’s most modern printing facility, Jagadamba Press, now makes natural colours come alive with its state-of-the-art equipment.
Good cop, bad cop

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

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 Ashish husparcchha,” he said, using the catch-all term passing the buck to some unnamed higher-up authority.

Maskey’s plight forces us 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 being a heavy and visible presence, it is recently 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 Ram Dev Gautam at moral policing. He issued an edict that Tibar 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 coming to 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.”

@gunaraj

Not just a new car. A new breed.

Armed with a New Generation Platform, The New Generation Scorpio comes with New Cushion Suspension and New Anti-Roll Technologies to give you an unparalleled ride and handling experience. It is a bold new breed with more aggressive styling, luxurious new interior and advanced technology. It makes a statement when parked, and kicks up a storm, when on the move.
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 in 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.

As portrayed in Kesang Tsuten’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 subcontract their selection to the British Army. British officers command and manage the Contingent in Mount Vernon in 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.”

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

THE PICS: CHONG ZI LIANG
I took sir. I’ve made a bulb light itself using this circuit.

I saw he had made this circuit out of an old switch and a standard bulb. Holical is excited that if you put more batteries similarly, this makes the light brighter. We do other such experiments and end by discussing Abdul Hakim.

On to Grade 9, also known as Fluorine, at the third bell. The students want to sing Budhhi Krishna Lambahari’s Pathi ne cosmos rano aadu rudhu. Today we are discussing Darwin. Let them interpret 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 in the tune of Jokyaho Jonya Mokhoran, 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 Dhalal. 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 socialist story will be over. Two years, I say. They say, please finish this story before you go.

The story is based on a children’s book by Stephen Hawking and his daughter Lucy’s work. Again, I take artistic licence. I tell them about weaknesses in space and we’re 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 Sari jahan ese acha.

The fifth bell takes me back to Grade 10. We start with Sushma 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 from dense stars choose, bonno ros samojhchhao we do 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 stew? Everyone laughs. I tell them about stoma, sphen, phloem and chlorophyll.

At the end of class everyone shows me their diary. Arnis’s are too bold, I tell him to be lighter with his pen. To Nargis I say drawing a diko over the letters is like roasting a bird – 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 asking about the economics teacher is absent. So 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 do Satsari elope? Later I find out this was arranged by a lidar-in-law. It’s a custom around here: first you elope, later you get married. Although there has been a movement for a legal way, in our politics, our culture is still the same.

I return to our shed in the evening, joint has brought me some tea and saag and a long talk of sugar cane. Pradip gives me some bijo’s. 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. Or, and on the roof, there is the roof of rain.

Bijay Mani Poudel works for Nepal for Teach Nepal.

### Young mothers

Dhurba BC, Rajdhani, 20 October

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 Rohika BK, 17, of Mangalesh, 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 863 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.

### Oli bites

Nagarkot, 21 October

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 Mestics 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 interest at risk, so Dahal can stop deluding himself.”
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.

As a result, the survivors have 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 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 Aroydhupari was injured when the bomb went off. 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 on 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 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 those 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 Aroydhupari was injured while her husband Atmanand 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 fasted 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.

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 UNDEAD: Markumari 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 run 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 wheelchair 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

NARAYAN DHUNGANA
In CHITWAN
S
ome 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 Fuchhe 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.