A Trump World

Donald J Trump’s victory in the US presidential election this week shocked Americans and sent shock waves across the world. Here in Nepal, it had analysts scratching their heads about what it means to Nepal’s, especially the country’s tight balancing act between India and China.

Will President Trump really follow through on his threats to deport illegal migrants and how will it affect the US administration policy on these seeking political asylum, like the Bhutan refugees?

Trump’s disdain for human rights, his seeming sympathy for Russian President Vladimir Putin and criticism of Barack Obama’s Asian Pivot doctrine via-a-vis China could dramatically change America’s place in the region.

Despite his closeness to Obama, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was one of the first to greet Trump with a warm-hearted message. Some Indian Indians were vocal supporters of the Trump campaign.

Analysts say an unpredictable change in the US foreign policy could affect the political economy of East Asia and the Gulf where 2.6 million Nepalis work and send remittance home. What makes some nervous is quickly spreading Syria-Iraq conflict, dragging Saudi Arabia and Iran into the fray, and destabilizing the region.

“The direct implication of Trump’s victory will be his policy towards migrants and refugees,” says Nischalanath Pandey of the Centre for South Asian Studies. “But what his approach will be towards India and China will also have consequences for Nepal.”

Aside from strategic implications and foreign policy, there is also worry about what impact an inward-looking America will have on the US official development assistance and funding of the United Nations and non-governmental groups. The US has been one of Nepal’s major development partners for over 60 years with investment in health, education, food security and post-earthquake reconstruction.

Trump’s win has fueled speculation that the US will cut down on development aid across the world, especially given his vocal rhetoric of climate change, which he has repeatedly called a “Chinese hoax.”

Bhasakar Koirala of the Nepal Institute of International and Strategic Studies says Trump’s pitch to the American electorate has been to make ‘Make America Great Again’, for which his administration would seek to avoid unnecessary and unproductive engagements, including diverting its resources.

“We can expect a scaling down of aid and a re-engagement on traditional bilateral relations that feature more regular high level visits and exchanges and a focus on business promotion between the two countries,” Koirala says, adding that Nepal could assume greater importance under Trump because of its geo-strategic location between India and China.

Trump’s victory has upset liberals’ world over, and comes at a time when Nepal itself is debating amendments in the new Constitution to meet demands from Madhesi and other groups on federalism, citizenship and electoral rules.

There has been an outpour of nationalist rhetoric in the past week after an unofficial Constitution amendment bill that seemed to be aimed at enabling naturalized Nepali citizens to be eligible for the posts of President and Speaker.

Nepal, too, appears more divided than ever before, like Trump’s America.

On Astha Rai and Sureeti Barot
Nepal’s rulers still swing from one extreme to another: either needling neighbours needlessly or kowtowing to them. They seem incapable of being attentive to the sensitivities of our giant neighbours while minimising interference. Macho hyper-nationalism is futile in a country whose economy is in a shambles, where citizens have no trust left in government.

Last year, Nepal’s political leaders vanished in the weeks after the earthquake. The government spokesman was nowhere to be seen, there was very little coordination of international relief. When the government did speak, it was to render one gaffe after another that made Nepal an international laughing stock. Instead of thanking donors and couching statements positively to highlight relief that was really needed, the government came out looking mean spirited and uncaring.

To mask this prodigious incompetence the lame duck Koirala administration fast-tracked the constitution, and it was later promulgated without adequate consultation. Violence erupted in the Tarai, leaving at least 60 dead. Successive Nepali leaders visited India to reassure the Indians that Madhesi concerns would be addressed, and then came back and did just the opposite. India was miffed, and this turned to anger when Nepal’s leaders refused to put off promulgation by two weeks.

Things spiralled out of control after that, with the Indian blockade that lasted five months. Prime Minister Oli, instead of trying to keep back channels of communications open with both New Delhi and Madhesi leaders fell back ongrandstanding and loaning over backwards on China. Knowing fully well how it would rattle the Indians, he went ahead with largely symbolic moves to find alternatives to petroleum imports and trade and transit routes via China.

Whoever in New Delhi at the time was the architect of the blockade must be held responsible for a colossal blunder. India came across as a crude bully, reacting disproportionately to punish an entire people for the follies of a few in power. The blockade began to look like a siege, and the nationwide humanitarian disaster it unleashed was more destructive than the earthquake.

We wrote in this space at this time last year: ‘Short of declaring war on a neighbour and bombing it, a siege like this is the easiest and cheapest way for one country to wreck another.’ The most sobering aspect of the blockade was the utter disinterest of the international community which refused to speak even about the suffering of ordinary Nepalis. This allowed Prime Minister Oli to convince many Nepalis that this was all India’s doing, and even deflect criticism of delays in earthquake relief by blaming it all on the blockade. The blockade increased the chasm between the mountains and plains, deeply polarising Nepali society.

Exactly one year later, President Mukherjee arrived in Nepal, what was billed as a fence-mending trip. Nepal had not forgotten the blockade and the simmering anger was in open display on social media. But nowhere was the aftereffect of the blockade more apparent than in the difference in the reception that Mukherjee got. Empty streets of Pokhara and Kathmandu contrasted sharply with the spontaneous cheering in Janakpur.

As we deal with a festival hangover, it is clear that the incompetence of Nepal’s politicians and the failure of the Indian establishment to understand the Nepali psyche have brought us back to square one.
YOUR MOST IMPORTANT MEETING OF THE DAY

Savour our authentic Turkish coffee on board every flight, so you arrive refreshed and ready for whatever the day brings.

For more information and to join the club: TCC@THY.COM
TURKISHAIRLINES.COM
KTMSALES@THY.COM/01-4438363/4438436
I am an amchi
Marpha meeting of practitioners of Tibetan medicine plan revival of the healing tradition

SABINE PRETSCH
in MARPHA

Is Nepal losing the traditional wisdom of Tibetan healing? What kind of challenges do doctors practicing Tibetan medicine face? How will Nepal help preserve this ancient method of healing? These were among the questions discussed during an international symposium on healing practices in the Himalayas in Marpha recently.

Healers practicing Tibetan medicine, called amchi, came from Upper Mustang, Tibet, Khotang and Kathmandu with international experts and travelled to this scenic village in Mustang earlier this month for a three-day conclave.

In former times every village in Upper Mustang had its own amchi. Today one doctor is responsible for several villages. It has become more and more difficult for them to pass this wisdom on to the next generation,” said Nyima Samphel, an amchi from Marpha in whose family the practice has been passed down for nine generations through Buddhism and Bon rituals. He says the reasons for Tibetan medicine losing its appeal are out-migration, competition from western medicine, and a payment system that is based on voluntary donations.

Sowa Rigpa is Tibetan for the ‘science of healing’ and is still practiced in Tibet and throughout the Himalayas, originating from a mixture of traditional Chinese medicine and Ayurveda by exploring the interconnectedness of the mind, body and soul of a patient. Delusion, attachment and aversion, referred to as the three poisons in Buddhist philosophy, can have a harmful effect on one’s health.

Tibetan medicine assumes that an imbalance of three humours (wind, bile and phlegm) has an effect on the disease pattern, too. Medicinal herbs, minerals and natural products from the Himalayas form the basis for medical products and alternative, curative treatment.

In Tibetan medicine the diagnosis is mainly established by measuring the patient’s pulse, the analysis of the patient’s urine, and an examination of the tongue and eyes. Medical herbs are prescribed to cure diseases and activate self-healing forces. External therapies include bloodletting, moxibustion, compresses, oil massage and herbal baths.

Ach Kunsang, a female amchi from Trum Valley explained: “The combination of several herbal ingredients with the qualitative value of the elements, water and fire, has the same therapeutic value as a bath in a natural, hot spring. In Trum Valley medicinal herbs are identified and gathered up to an altitude of 5,000m. They are used for the manufacture of drugs and herbal pills.”

The Marpha symposium was also attended by German Ambassador to Nepal, Matthias Meyer, UNESCO representative Christian Manhart, and Christoph Clippes who is a Professor of Tibetan Studies. “We intentionally selected Marpha as the venue because the region has a long-standing history of Tibetan medicine, and we wanted to decentralise away from Kathmandu where most programs are held,” explained Nadine Flachia of the Kathmandu Office of Heidelberg University’s South Asia Institute.

Gaurav Lamichhane, a graduate student of the University of Heidelberg, said one of the reasons traditional Tibetan medicine did not have a wider reach was the lack of recognition by the government of Nepal. The state’s health policy is influenced by western medicine, and natural healing methods are ignored and not appreciated.

But Nepal has made progress in the preservation of Tibetan medicine. In 1998 the doctors and practising amchi doctors, Gyatso (picture above) and Tenzin Rista, founded the Lo Kurchep Amchi clinic in Lo Manthang and seven years later they opened Lo Kurchep Manchakhang, a school and training centre for amchis.

The Sktia brothers are founding members of the Himalayan Amchi Association which is active in the cultivation and sustainable use of medicinal herbs in the Himalayas and the improvement of medical standards. Since September 2019 a Bachelor course in collaboration with the Sowa Rigpa International College Kathmandu.

NOT TOO FAR NOT TOO CLOSE
Weekend or weekdays Patleeban Vineyard Resort is the place to rejuvenate yourself with friends and family. A perfect gateway to get refreshed from your daily hectic routine.

We are here for your service with,
- Deluxe / Superior Rooms with Packages
- Family Retreat
- Day Conferences
- Resident Conference Packages
- Family / Corporate Day Picnics
- Orientation Programs
- Team Building Activities
- Wine Testing
- Day Hiking
- Forest Walk
- BBQ Facility

Contact US:
Chitharpali-5, Baal Bhawan, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 00977-1 4433737, 9881075034
Kathmandu, Sales Office
Lastepal, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 00977 1 4400522
Email: info@patleebanresort.com
www.patrelebanresort.com
An eye for Kathmandu

Being posted to their Embassy in Kathmandu seems to be a great career move for Indian diplomats. Several former Indian ambassadors have gone on to become Foreign Secretaries, or posted to important missions like the High Commission in London. Diplomats also tend to be keen photographers and trekking aficionados. Former Indian ambassador to Nepal, Deb Mukharji, published a photobook the Magic of Nepal in 2008 and another one Kailash and Manaslu: Visions of the Infinite which was published by nepa-laya in Kathmandu in 2009.

Javed Ashraf was posted to Kathmandu 2004-7 during the critical period of the 12-point agreement between the Maoists and the political parties in New Delhi that led to the ceasefire and ultimately Nepal bidding goodbye to its monarchy. Like in about the devastation in his beloved Kathmandu. Because of his knowledge of Nepal, Ashraf was given the responsibility to support India’s rapid response team that rushed air support and relief to Nepal. A week after the earthquake, he came to Kathmandu and took more photographs. ‘I saw the devastation around Kathmandu’s Durbar Square. I saw despair, but also hope. And, the quiet determination and resolve of the people to rebuild their lives,’ Ashraf writes. ‘This affection for the city is visible in A Day in the Life of Kathmandu, a photographic portrait of Kathmandu, and even in pictures from ten years ago one can see how much more the city is bursting at the seams. Flipping through the pages, it is clear that although the book is about Kathmandu Ashraf’s eyes often dwell on the snow-capped peaks to the north. The silhouettes of Himalchuli, Ganesh Himal, Langtang, Dhorje Lakpa, Punpsi Chyachu appear in the many of the photographs like old friends. But there are also shimmering images of the Patan temples emerging through the winter mist, pilgrims’ progress at Boudhanath and Swayambhunath, the devotional fervour of the chariot pullers of the Machindranath and Indra Jatra festivals.

Ashraf dedicates the book to the victims of the 2015 earthquake, and recounts in the preface how he felt the tremors as far away as New Delhi and watched aghast as news came across the country. With these additions, the commercial bank now has 76 branches and 69 ATM outlets throughout Nepal.
The guardian of the shadows

Austrian architect Götz Hagmüller’s forthcoming memoir promises to be a homage to Kathmandu Valley’s heritage

SEBASTIAN GANSRIGLER

Austrian architect and filmmaker Götz Hagmüller sits on his porch far from the collapsed temple at Bhaktapur’s Durbar Square and ponders up at a trio of pagodas atop Buffalos Hill, surrounded by smoke from the ritual cremation of a body. The smell of incense drifts from the temple, and he mentions that the temple is surrounded by ancient trees. “I love being here,” he says, “because it’s like being in Kathmandu. When the sun goes down, I can see the lights of the city. It’s a peaceful place.”

Hagmüller has lived in Kathmandu for almost 10 years and considers it to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world. He began studying architecture at the University of Vienna and moved to Kathmandu in 2010 to work as an architect. The city has become his home, and he has become part of the local architectural community.

“Architecture is not just about Buildings,” he says. “It’s about the spaces between them, the way we use them, and the way they evolve over time.”

Hagmüller’s work has been recognized internationally, and he has won several awards for his projects. His most recent project is a series of murals on the walls of a school in Kathmandu. The murals depict the history of the city and its people, and they have become a popular destination for tourists.

“I love being here,” he says, “because it’s like being in Kathmandu. When the sun goes down, I can see the lights of the city. It’s a peaceful place.”

Hagmüller’s first book, “The Architect and the City,” was published in 2015. It chronicles his experiences in Kathmandu and explores the ways in which architecture can be used to address social and environmental issues.

“I want to bring attention to the ways in which architecture can be used to address social and environmental issues,” he says. “In Kathmandu, for example, there are many instances where architecture can be used to help improve the city’s infrastructure.”

Hagmüller’s memoir, which will be published in 2018, will continue to explore these themes and will include new insights into his work.

“I am looking forward to sharing my experiences with the world,” he says. “I hope that it will inspire others to think about the ways in which architecture can be used to make the world a better place.”

The guardian of the shadows

Austrian architect Götz Hagmüller’s forthcoming memoir promises to be a homage to Kathmandu Valley’s heritage

SEBASTIAN GANSRIGLER

Austrian architect and filmmaker Götz Hagmüller sits on his porch far from the collapsed temple at Bhaktapur’s Durbar Square and ponders up at a trio of pagodas atop Buffalos Hill, surrounded by smoke from the ritual cremation of a body. The smell of incense drifts from the temple, and he mentions that the temple is surrounded by ancient trees. “I love being here,” he says, “because it’s like being in Kathmandu. When the sun goes down, I can see the lights of the city. It’s a peaceful place.”

Hagmüller has lived in Kathmandu for almost 10 years and considers it to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world. He began studying architecture at the University of Vienna and moved to Kathmandu in 2010 to work as an architect. The city has become his home, and he has become part of the local architectural community.

“Architecture is not just about Buildings,” he says. “It’s about the spaces between them, the way we use them, and the way they evolve over time.”

Hagmüller’s work has been recognized internationally, and he has won several awards for his projects. His most recent project is a series of murals on the walls of a school in Kathmandu. The murals depict the history of the city and its people, and they have become a popular destination for tourists.

“I love being here,” he says, “because it’s like being in Kathmandu. When the sun goes down, I can see the lights of the city. It’s a peaceful place.”

Hagmüller’s first book, “The Architect and the City,” was published in 2015. It chronicles his experiences in Kathmandu and explores the ways in which architecture can be used to address social and environmental issues.

“I want to bring attention to the ways in which architecture can be used to address social and environmental issues,” he says. “In Kathmandu, for example, there are many instances where architecture can be used to help improve the city’s infrastructure.”

Hagmüller’s memoir, which will be published in 2018, will continue to explore these themes and will include new insights into his work.

“I am looking forward to sharing my experiences with the world,” he says. “I hope that it will inspire others to think about the ways in which architecture can be used to make the world a better place.”

The guardian of the shadows

Austrian architect Götz Hagmüller’s forthcoming memoir promises to be a homage to Kathmandu Valley’s heritage

SEBASTIAN GANSRIGLER

Austrian architect and filmmaker Götz Hagmüller sits on his porch far from the collapsed temple at Bhaktapur’s Durbar Square and ponders up at a trio of pagodas atop Buffalos Hill, surrounded by smoke from the ritual cremation of a body. The smell of incense drifts from the temple, and he mentions that the temple is surrounded by ancient trees. “I love being here,” he says, “because it’s like being in Kathmandu. When the sun goes down, I can see the lights of the city. It’s a peaceful place.”

Hagmüller has lived in Kathmandu for almost 10 years and considers it to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world. He began studying architecture at the University of Vienna and moved to Kathmandu in 2010 to work as an architect. The city has become his home, and he has become part of the local architectural community.

“Architecture is not just about Buildings,” he says. “It’s about the spaces between them, the way we use them, and the way they evolve over time.”

Hagmüller’s work has been recognized internationally, and he has won several awards for his projects. His most recent project is a series of murals on the walls of a school in Kathmandu. The murals depict the history of the city and its people, and they have become a popular destination for tourists.

“I love being here,” he says, “because it’s like being in Kathmandu. When the sun goes down, I can see the lights of the city. It’s a peaceful place.”

Hagmüller’s first book, “The Architect and the City,” was published in 2015. It chronicles his experiences in Kathmandu and explores the ways in which architecture can be used to address social and environmental issues.

“I want to bring attention to the ways in which architecture can be used to address social and environmental issues,” he says. “In Kathmandu, for example, there are many instances where architecture can be used to help improve the city’s infrastructure.”

Hagmüller’s memoir, which will be published in 2018, will continue to explore these themes and will include new insights into his work.

“I am looking forward to sharing my experiences with the world,” he says. “I hope that it will inspire others to think about the ways in which architecture can be used to make the world a better place.”
War is the crime

Photographer Stephen Champion goes from covering war between men to war on nature

LUCIA DE VRIES

Tigers in 2008, he covered the Marxist LPF Insurgency, crushed by government forces by 1992. Together, the war killed over 150,000 while more than a million got displaced.

Stephen Champion's war images were on display at the Photo Kathmandu exhibition Measures of Loss and Memories of War at Patan Museum. It was a selection from Champion's War Stories, published in 2008.

Displayed among the tall trees in the park behind the Patan Museum, they showed the terrifying impact of war on civilians. A Jaffna schoolboy showing his drawing of a bombardment by a military helicopter (left), with fire and dead bodies, and scared looking civilians; a young man grieving at the side of a body; amputees and internally displaced; blood seeping from a gate; messages warning people to vote; messages warning people not to vote.

The accompanying text by Champion reads, "War is brutal at best. It is not meant to be anything else...While we continue to create systems of war, we are all very much responsible for the residual events. There is no such thing as a war crime. War is the crime."

Among the 'residual events' of war, observes Champion, are violence within families, the rape of women, and the war on nature. The move from documenting the war between humans to the war on nature was a natural one, says Champion. "There is a strong connection between warfare and environmental pollution. The first chemicals pesticides were developed to act as war agents. As in war, environmental destruction helps some guys make a lot of money. And in both cases it's the common man who suffers most."

Sri Lanka has become a dumping ground not only for pesticides but also second-rate medicines and e-waste, reminds Champion. The country annually loses 1.4 per cent of its forest cover. Champion's adopted home is believed to be the world's fifth largest polluter of ocean plastics. The impacts are disastrous, not only for the island's biodiversity, thousands of Sri Lankans are dying from kidney failure caused by exposure to pesticides.

Champion's 'Colours of Change' series reveal this transformation in detail. Bulldozers eating into the nation's forest hills, elephants foraging on plastics, cement factories integrated into a Buddhist pagoda, the derailing of historical houses, the arrival of backpacker tourism and entertainment venues. Interestingly, the images are taken with the same 1959 Rolleiflex bus; Champion was gifted by his grandfather when he was 19 years old. Once a year the negatives are developed back in the UK and the prints scanned for use in publications.

Champion is not without hope. "My hope is that we start creating the dream that was dreamed by the idealists before the war started. It all begins with an understanding of our interconnectedness. We should know that by now our mixed blood lines and DNAs prove it. We are all connected. We all depend on the same life forces and on each other. Understanding that gives us the freedom to be who we really are, and to allow others to do the same."
A chariot through time

Exhibition that documents 40 years of the Rāto Matsyendranāth festival in photographs
Brace men who control the speed and pitch of the chariot with blocks of wood attached to reach the barriers in the minutes.

2.

Bruce McCoy Owens, a Associate Professor of Anthropology at Wheaton College in the United States.

The Chariot Festival of Maha Bazaar: 40 Years of Photographs

Fifty years ago at Patan’s Maha Bazaar a gang of young boys tried to be my guide. All but one recited the same litany of sights to see: “Golden Temple, Mahabodhi Temple, Krishna temple...” But one boy asked if I wanted to see a festival. I hired him on the spot. The spectacle to which he brought me has fascinated me ever since.

Fifteen years later, I stood on the steps of the Grab, watching the chariot races on the final day of the festival. The chariot on its descent from Charukot to Jawalakhel on the final leg of its journey during the twenty-year festival of 1991.

Tours of the neighborhoods and the temple grounds were provided by the tour guide. The tour guide, a local from the area, was knowledgeable about the history and traditions of the festival.

Bruce McCoy Owens is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Wheaton College in the United States.

For color I used Kodachrome slide film because of its accuracy and longevity. Though people were appreciative of the prints I gave them, upon receiving them, they almost inevitably asked, “Ratang malako!” (“Aren’t there any in colour?”)

The Exhibition at Patan Museum and my own personal Photo Kathmandu exhibits in Matayandira Bahal and Bungamati are continuations of my practice of learning through sharing images and thanking those portrayed within them. For the three exhibitions I have chosen only a few of the thousands, based largely on the power of the images to convey the beauty of the festival the wide range of participants who make it possible. I have focused primarily on images of decades past, as today thousands of festival participants are also photographing and filming it.

This exhibition is intended to honor all those who have contributed to the longevity and continued vitality of this extraordinary tradition, and I hope all those who view it will share their thoughts and memories with me and one another.
EVENTS

Impact marathon, Get up for the 10km, 21 km and 42 km scenic trail route run as part of the MYRA International Marathon. 28 November, 9 am onwards, Kakani. Registration deadline: 12 November, www.myramarathon.com

ADVENTURE STORIES

Yatra 5.0, A combination of art, technology and science featuring robotics competitions, workshops, art exhibitions and others at Yatra 5.0. 30 November to 5 December, Nepal Army training and Physical fitness centre, Lagankhel www.nam.org.np For tickets: http://bit.ly/2GyGuD0

EkaDeshina, Attend screenings of 78 films from around the world as part of the International Short Film Festival. 11 to 12 November, G6 Karnali, Kankeshwahal, 9847168708, ekaDeshina.org

PLANET NEPAL, A festival celebrating art and highlighting environmental issues with the theme of illegal wildlife trade for its fourth edition this year. 18 to 19 November, Jawalakhel Ground, Lalitpur. (01) 4247162, 4242002

ARTMARKET, Get your hands on some Nepal art, music, paintings, and print and design products at the Art Market. 12 November, 10 am onwards, The Yellow House, Hotel, 9843550578

Yum Yogic, Master the art of cooking Satvik Yogic vegetarian food and learn to make dishes like curd flat bread, Rajasthani curry, puri and more. 12 November, 10 am to 7 pm, Vedika Angas Adhikari, Siddhesh, 9851155746, Fee: Rs 500

PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP, Get to learn the basics of photography and images in the photography workshop organized by Krishna. 21 to 30 November, Arjuna, Chhonpur Hospital Road, 7 to 9 am, 9851597911, arjuna597911@gmail.com, Fee: Rs 550

MUSTANG MADNESS, Register to participate in the cross-country MTB race in Mustang to enjoy the best biking trails of the Himalayas and win cash prizes. The 220 km long race is a mix of adventure, culture, challenge and discovery. 24 November to 1 December. Start from Khagbeni and heads North towards 1st Monthnap, 9861623666, 9860794273, www.themustangmadness.com

MISS MOTIVATION

KIRPA JOSHI

I hate your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears. - Nelson Mandela

DINING

Grill Me, A restaurant with a warm ambiance and delicious grilled delights. Joshmahal, (01) 5515794

ALICE RESTAURANT, Step in for scrumptious Thai, Chinese, Continental and Japanese cuisine. Gai Khwani, (01) 4426261, Darbar Marg, (01) 4426001

BIPUL’S MAYA, Tag along with Bipul Chettri at the beers and launches from his new album Maya. First 100 ticket purchasers get a CD of the album for free. 26 November, 6 to 9 pm, Tangalwood, Anamul, For ticket inquiries, @modi2bipul

CAFÉ SWOtha, An intimate setting in the heart of Pashan, with an atmosphere of sophistication, romantic warmth. Patan, (01) 5557784, info@barahonglenhouse.com.np

OLD HOUSE, A beautifully renovated neo-colonial building, which houses an adventurous restaurant dedicated to the art of French cooking. Darbar Marg, (01) 4529931

SUPERFIZZ LIVE, Spend a musical evening with Superfizz, good music and food. Every Saturday, 7 pm onwards, The Factory, Thamel, (01) 4707085

GETAWAY

Buddha Maya Gardens Hotel, Add value to your travel in Lumbini with a stay at one of the best hotels in the area. Lumbini, (01) 5802038, 9849551099, info@buddhamayahotel.com

BARAHI JUNGLE LODGE, The first eco-jungle lodge of Chitwan directly over looks the Chitwan National Park. Annapurna, West Chitwan, (01) 477773, 8478060b@gmail.com, www.barahijunglelodge.com

DWARIKAS’ RESORT, A holistic lifestyle resort, drawing on ancient Himalayan knowledge and philosophy of care for nature and for ancient way to a magnificent natural surroundings Dwarikas, (01) 456872, info@dwarikas-bhaktapur.com

BALTHAI VILLAGE RESORT, A small, cozy retreat with a birds eye view of green terrace fields dotted with ochre painted houses. Bhaktal, Kail, 984708658

SHANGRI-LA VILLAGE, Enjoy a scenic view of the Annapurna range and Mahephuchhe with a three-day-two-night package stay at Shangri-La. Valid for both Nepali and expatriates till 30 November. Shangri’s Village Resort, Pokhara, Reservations: (01) 4803999, 4426261, (01) 4622239/960928999, Rs 6666 per person on twin/triple sharing basis

IMMITATING NATURE

Nepal’s most modern printing facility, Jagadamba Press, now makes natural colours come alive with its state-of-the-art equipment.
The history of Kathmandu Valley’s architecture is the history of living, adapting and reconstructing between frequent earthquakes. This cyclical renewal is at the core of our building culture. The energy for each successive renewal process, however, comes from the strength of our intangible heritage: festivals, jatras, nathkus and psythas. These are social bonds that have gelled the Valley’s society over the centuries.

For the indigenous population of the valley, these traditional practices continue to hold deep meaning. Otherwise, why would the golden window in the Patan Museum be opened during the recital of the Narasingh Avtar? Every year only for this recital, the golden window is flung open to honour King Siddhi Narasingh Malla. It remains closed the rest of the year.

Kartik Nach is one of the oldest and consistently staged dance drama jyathak traditions in Patan. It takes its name from the lunar month of Kartik, the month which held special importance to the king who was a devout Krishna worshipper. The eleventh day of Kartik is sitaradhisti (Radhas and considered one of the holiest days in the year when Vishnu wakes up from his slumber and presides over the universe.

Siddhi Narasingh Malla first staged this performance in Kartik in the mid-17th century. It went on for a week, and his son, Jitruvas Malla, and his grandson Yig Narendra Malla, added plays and musical skits, extending it to a month. This year, the dance is performed for 12 days from 3 November till 14 November.

A lot has changed since. Though the dance drama tradition still retains its religious values, it has taken on a far more significant meaning. After centuries worth of yearly recitals, it has evolved from its roots as not just a socio-religious play but also as a part of Patan’s cultural identity.

Residents of the town have absorbed this tradition in their cultural calendar. The elevated platform where the festival is staged is now known as Kartik Dub, and this annual tradition with such high historical and cultural importance runs on a shoestring budget.

Earlier, the dance was financed by royal patronage. The Malla kings encouraged cultural expression, and under their indulgence the arts and crafts of the Valley flourished. Numerous scholars had identified nine such dance troupes, but today most of them exist as a ghost of their former selves.

The reason is a lack of resources. The minimum budget to run the yearly recital, including paying the artists, musicians and organisers, and putting up such an extravagant show every night runs up to Rs 700,000. The Kathmandu Sub-metropolitan Office contributes Rs 100,000, the local chamber of commerce gives Rs 15,000, Rs 20,000 comes from the Patan Museum and the Ministry of Culture contributes Rs 74,000.

Starting last year, the organising committee did local fundraising on an ad-hoc basis. In between the acts, the organisers appealed to the crowd and the donations trickled in. They raised Rs 100,000. I thieves: My wife and I donated, and we are planning to do so this year as well and the rest came from savings.

Every paise raised goes directly to keep the tradition alive. The committee has registered with the Social Welfare Council and keeps an account of all income and expenses. It seems that the sense of identity and pleasure of viewing the performance prompts individual donations.

But funding fluctuates, and it may make sense to start something similar to Patreon the web platform that lets artists receive monthly payments from fans and well-wishers. It’s easy to point at government apathy for the preservation of cultural traditions and leave it at that. However, crowdfunding initiatives like this should be emulated extensively, both within Nepal and outside as the ideal way to keep a tradition alive in these trying times.
DOCTOR STRANGE

It is, quite frankly, very difficult to write about a fictional work when a catastrophic non-fiction event has just occurred in a country that has affected so much around the globe since World War II.

More than ever, action films from Marvel universes to X-Men reboots, bet their cinematic credibility on the incredibly high stakes that involve rescuing the world if not the universe, from disaster. From today onwards, with the shocking election of a fascist, racist, sexist demagogue, a purported billionaire who hasn’t paid his taxes in over 20 years, who has been accused of harassing multiple women, the parameters of what is at stake have just changed again.

Doctor Strange is a welcome break from our ugly world because of its digression from the usual tropes that make Marvel action films so successful, but also so very predictable. With a cast of diverse talents such as Chowetel Ejiofor and Benedict Wong, lead by a starring cast of Benedict Cumberbatch and Tilda Swinton, Doctor Strange abounds the usual brainy action for a gentler, more humourously-paced origin story about a man who must re-evaluate his priorities when he suffers from an unexpected, debilitating accident.

Benedict Cumberbatch’s Dr. Stephen Strange is a familiar archetype: an arrogant, immensely successful neurosurgeon who wields the power of life and death in his hands. The Dr. Strange at the beginning of this film is the kind of anti-hero that Cumberbatch has excelled at making, like Sherlock Holmes in ‘Moriarty’ and even as he implodes at the loss of the skills that prop up his ego, stunning visuals, and beautifully shot settings in our very own Swyambhunath, Pashupati, and the stunning Newar architectural backdrop of Patan Durbar Square, Doctor Strange succeeds in bringing glowing, original visual backup to a quirky, cosmic story about a man who is trying to find his own way but gets caught up in an epic battle of good versus evil.

As with most successful films of the genre, despite the exquisite visuals, it is the heart and the humour in the writing that wins the day, with the wonderful Rachel McAdams as Dr. Christine Palmer, the human foil and moral anchor to Stephen Strange’s initially cold brilliance. At a time when the future of the tangible world seems so bleak, one can only pin hope in the belief that even the lost can find their way - in fiction and in reality.

MUST SEE

Sophia Pande

RECOGNITION:

A travel agent gets an award at Qatar Airways’ Productive Agents Recognition event at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Kathmandu on Tuesday.

CEREMONIAL PRESENCE:

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal talks on Indian President Pranab Mukherjee, who wrapped up a three-day state visit to Nepal on Friday.

EXECUTIVE ADVICE:

Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba shakes hands with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Monday.

NORTH AND SOUTH:

Nepal’s newly-appointed ambassador to China, Laxmi Prasad Poudyal (left) and ambassador to India, Deep Kumar Upadhyay, at a function in Kathmandu on Sunday.

THE SUN GOD:

Women devotees offer prayers to the setting sun during Dahal festival in Kathmandu on Sunday.

SULJUX CENTRE

www.suljuxcentre.com

MAGAZINE - NOVEMBER 2016

11 - 17 November 2016

No. #832

RECOGNITION: Nepal Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba shakes hands with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Monday.

NORTH AND SOUTH: Nepal’s newly-appointed ambassador to China, Laxmi Prasad Poudyal (left) and ambassador to India, Deep Kumar Upadhyay, at a function in Kathmandu on Sunday.

THE SUN GOD: Women devotees offer prayers to the setting sun during Dahal festival in Kathmandu on Sunday.

SULJUX CENTRE

www.suljuxcentre.com

MAGAZINE - NOVEMBER 2016

11 - 17 November 2016

No. #832
‘Bizarre and baffling’

Excerpts of interview with Krishna Jung Rayamajhi, a former Supreme Court justice who headed the judicial commission that investigated abuse of power and misuse of the state exchequer during Gyanendra Shah’s authoritarian rule. Kantipur, 6 November

Kantipur: It has been almost a decade after the judicial commission headed by you submitted a report to the government, implicating several high-profile politicians, bureaucrats and security officers in abusing their authority to suppress the 2006 Democracy Movement. Are you satisfied with the implementation of the report?

Krishna Jung Rayamajhi: Not at all. Some of the authorities whom we found guilty of abusing power were later promoted, and they retired without being punished. Others were censured medals and awards by the government. And some are still in power. The suspended Chief of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) Lokman Singh Karki was also named for perpetrating excesses and abuse of power against pro-democracy campaigners during Gyanendra Shah’s reign. But the same leaders whom Karki once targeted also appointed him as the head of the anti-corruption agency.

Why do you think the government couldn’t implement your report?

Those who were involved in criminal activities have political protection. They reach out to the leaders using their connections to get off the hook. Some might have even bribed political leaders.

Some have also argued that a person should not be convicted just on the basis of an inquiry commission report. What is your take as a former Supreme Court justice?

Our Commission had a mandate to investigate royal excesses, abuse of power and violation of human as well as civil rights by thoroughly examining evidence. And we just did that. It was up to the government to further investigate the cases, and punish or free those named. But the government trashed our report.

Did you also recommend action against Gyanendra Shah?

We have concluded that Gyanendra Shah was the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and hence guilty. Tulsiraj Koirala and Krishna Bista were Vice Chairmen of the Council of Ministers and were also found guilty.

What actions were recommended against them?

We had recommended warning and dismissal against those found guilty of abusing authority to suppress the pro-democracy movement. They were to have been given a fair chance to defend themselves, and were to be punished only if found guilty. If the government had implemented the report, Lokman Singh Karki would have never been appointed. Implementation of the report could have benefitted the accused, probably including Karki.

How so?

Had the government implemented our recommendations some of those found guilty would have got a clean chit. But they were neither investigated nor punished on the basis of our report. The Big Three chose the man found guilty as the CIAA Chief. It is shameful how, those that ignored the report and got him to fill in the position of the CIAA chief have now come together to focus their energies on impeaching him.

Why do you think the Big Three chose Karki?

It looks like political leaders were not genuinely interested in investigating excesses of the royal regime. They formed a judicial commission only to deceive public anger.

Political leaders argued that Karki was getting a second chance to reform himself. Only an individual with a high moral character and integrity should be appointed CIAA Chief. This CIAA Chief was only fulfilling his own interests. He even obstructed the Supreme Court from issuing summons to him, which is wrong and has been counter-productive.

How do you view the role of the Chair of the then-Council of Ministers?

As a former justice, I find it unfortunate that Karki was made the CIAA Chief when Chief Justice Regmi was the Executive Head of the country. He definitely knows what worked in Karki’s favour. He knows who lobbied for Karki, and from where. To the common people, Karki’s appointment was bizarre and baffling.

Are you hinting at a foreign hand in Karki’s appointment?

The political events surrounding Karki’s appointment clearly indicate that. There is absolutely no need for an independent and sovereign country to rely on other countries to make its decisions.

Stay FIT, FEEL YOUNG.
Shipana Shrestha
in Jumla

After the word “Jumla” in Kathmandu, and the questions are of its grinding poverty, remoteness, poor health care, child marriage, high maternal mortality, chronic food shortages and malnutrition. Jumla has an image problem.

However, Jumla is changing and the reason is the arrival of the Karnali Highway which now connects this once remote region to Pokhara and the rest of Nepal.

Where there were once stone and mud houses with slate roofs, there are eraser of modernity and development: cement blocks, steel-framed windows, ATMs, department stores and a gym club.

“I am the first one to start a store of this kind here,” says Dipak Bikram Shahi, of the Royal Fancy Collection that sells designer clothing and bound accessories that has a monthly turnover of Rs 2 million. “The people’s buying habits and purchasing power is changing with the pace of development in Jumla,” he adds.

While many would lament the steady disappearance of Jumla’s quaint houses with roof terraces, og ladders and narrow cobblestone streets, most locals are proud of the town’s progress in the past ten years.

The district has even got a fitness centre, probably the first in the Karnali Zone. Khagendra Singh, 39, used to run a gym in Kathmandu for more than a decade but decided to return to his home town to open a fitness club.

“I wanted to set up a fitness trend here and succeeded in that. I already have 200 members,” Singh told the Nepali Times.

Construction of the Karnali Highway was delayed because of the conflict, but when it was completed in 2007 it linked Jumla to Pokhara (323km) and Kathmandu (950 km). The road was blacktopped two years ago, and although narrow and treacherous has transformed the lives of Jumla. The district’s apples and oranges, which used to rot on trees can now be transported to markets, and the road has also made food and other essential items cheaper.

Rupa Rakay, 52, is a successful entrepreneur and makes a profit selling fresh and dried apples after the Karnali highway linked Jumla to Pokhara.

Jumla Transformed: Dipak Bikram Shatti (above) sells designer clothing and branded accessories in Jumla.

Mani Neupane, 69, (right) used to walk 15 days to reach Nepalgunj just to buy medicines, and cannot believe how much and how fast Jumla has been transformed.

Rakayna Singh moved to Jumla from Kathmandu to set up a fitness centre in Jumla (left).

Rupa Rakay, 52, (above) is a successful entrepreneur and makes a profit selling fresh and dried apples after the Karnali highway linked Jumla to Pokhara.

(UNDP)

Mani Neupane recalls he had to walk 15 days to reach Nepalgunj just to buy medicines, and cannot believe how much and how fast Jumla has been transformed. There are now five daily buses to Pokhara, and two buses that connect Jumla directly to Kathmandu every day.

However, cheaper road transport has affected the Jumla Airport, which was upgraded ten years ago and used to see 15 flights a day to Nepalgunj, Surkhet, Simikot and Pokhara, but now gets only about three daily flights.

“I feel lucky to live to see the development of my district. Sometimes, when I remember the old days, it feels like a dream,” says Nepane.

Although the Karnali Zone still lies close to the bottom in terms of Human Development Index, the town is proof of how fast a district can catch up with road connectivity.
Neighbouring Dolpa and Humla are the only two districts in Nepal yet to be linked to the national road network. Already 24 of Jumla’s 26 VDCs have dirt roads and this has meant better health and education. The government-run Karnali Academy of Health Science is now up and running and preparations are underway to start a medical college. Jumla District Hospital, the Karnali Technical School and health posts in almost all VDCs are being upgraded.

Local Development Officer Hari Narayan Dhakal says poverty has been eradicated in Jumla. “Food shortages are now a thing of the past,” he says, adding that the district can now turn its attention to addressing various social ills like caste and gender discrimination. Looking around Jumla today, there are no signs of two deadly Maoist attacks in 2002 in which the GDO, DSP, 33 policemen, four soldiers and more than 55 Maoist cadres were killed.

Even so, not everyone is enamoured with the new trappings of modernity in Jumla. Health worker Radha Paudel, whose book _Khalangtama Hamals_ - on the Maoist attacks that won the Medak Pursakar, says just replacing stones and mud houses with sernoment buildings is not an indicator of development.

“The absence of war doesn’t mean peace,” she told us, “there are no more bombs and curfews but we have a lot to do for a socio-cultural transformation in the lives of the people.”

Paudel says the absolute poverty rate may have gone down but there are many for whom proper health care is still neither accessible nor affordable. She adds: “The war may have ended, but the fight to ensure health care is ongoing, health posts still don’t have medicines and water supply.”

Waiting for a tourism boom

With better road and air connectivity, Jumla is waiting for a tourism boom. When new hotels with better facilities come up, Jumla can be the springboard for the hermit 4-day hike to Har Shivar, or a wilderness trek across the Kagmara Pass to Dolpa and on to Phoksundo Lake.

Jumla is also located on the Great Himalayan Trail and could be a stopover for trekkers heading towards Kih Po and Maiti Sapal. Located at nearly 3,000m the jumla Valley is the highest paddy-growing area in the world with its famous red rice. The surrounding mountains get copious snowfall in January, and could be developed as a destination for cross country skiing.

Travel entrepreneur Lak Jung Muni sees possibilities for both downhill and cross-country skiing holidays. If lodging and facilities could be upgraded. In spring and summer, the area can also offer rafting and paragliding. Promoting religious tourism to the famous Chandanmata Temple and improving the hot springs at Tatapani could be combined as a health and pilgrimage package for domestic tourists.

“The proper management of Tatapani could boost Jumla’s tourism because the waters are said to be therapeutic and have healing properties,” says Laxmi Prasad Upadhyaya of Jumla DDC.
Life without water

After ground water, the most abundant liquid in the world is probably water. Cosmologists tell us that life on other planets is impossible unless water is present. However, I know from personal experience in my own life that semi-arid life can flourish despite a drop of water having flowed out of our taps since the reign of King Amourasura. They found water in Mars, but no life. In Kathmandu Valley we have no water, but we have single cell organisms inside Singh Durbar.

This scientific proof, if proof was still needed, that we don’t really need water at all is a keep body and soul together. We can carry on in the trajectory through our current immolation, as well as ensure future generations of life and re-born, with no water at all. We don’t need any H2O, thank you. So very kind of you, sir.

Generations of Kathmanduans have grown up in total absence of water, and our bodies have evolved gradually through a process of natural selection, and the survival of the fittest, to adapt to this waterless world. Our bodies have simply replaced water with alternative fluids whenever possible.

1. There are households in our neighbourhood, for instance, that have completely done away with washing. To spin Y-heads that they have been wearing every day since Chotu, a woman in Katmandu’s swelling or for the second term in office after being chosen as prime minister, they use a process called “dry cleaning”. Basically, this means spreading salt undergarments on a mat under a sun, sprinkling liberal amounts of salt and powder over the lungs, perch, moustach, and other eunuchic organs. While within minutes, the undergar and smell is as good as new.

2. Brushing teeth is a very water-intensive exercise. But many of us have totally adjusted the need for water and toothpaste after discovering that one can brush one’s teeth with great efficacy if one gargles with a dilutes 500ml bottle of beer (“Probably the Best Mouthwash in the World”) and then using the ensuing froth to vigorously mash all roots and corners within our oral cavities. Wipe, throw them, no plaque, no need for water, and a great way to start a new day.

3. There must have been a huge shortage of water in ancient Egypt, because we know from historical written records that Dhespatu bathed in asses’ milk. These hieroglyphic texts have been misread, deciphered, and have no records of what Mr. Mark Anthony thought of this practice, or if the in fact joined in the tub to do assme things. But I did see the Egyptian Civilization a lot of water, since we are told that Dhespatu was in the habit of bathing quite often.

Life is equipped with quite a lot of oronas in our line, but unfortunately none of them are presently lasting. This rules out bathing in asses’ milk for the time being, but when there is a will there is a way.

4. Desperately in need of a bath can join the entire city at the Bubal Stadium Swimming Pool which has recently been converted into a giant communal bathtub where the entire Valley can come to take a dip and clean the blackstuff that gathers in the gap between their toes. All we have to do is enforce a mandatory bath at the aforementioned facility for politicians and bureaucrats so they can wash their groupy glands and dirty inner in public and ensure a squarely clean administration.

5. In order to conserve water, the Kathmandu Metropolitan City has banned spitting in public and private places. Studies have shown that an average city dweller spits several dozen times an hour. All eased, this represents a great loss of precious moisture from the body and could lead to serious dehydration. Now that we are aware of all this, all we have to do is swallow the capricious cycles of rainfall during the day, and that would otherwise elapse, to quench our thirst. No longer need to buy Thirst Free Mineral Water (Registered Trademark, Patent Pending).

6. Water also used to be needed for irrigation. Not any more. Many of us have perfected intricate ways to keep our gardens moist. Dogs can be trained to regard the old water tank as the perimeter of their domain, which they then approach at regular intervals during the day, lift their hind legs, and turn on the sprinkler. For more water-intensive plants like the Omnamium cilities, you can employ the services of the zoo elephant, Gajraj, which will not only irrigate your gardens, but also replenish the flowerbeds with valuable phosphorus and nitrogen-rich nutrients.