DEUBA.5

A 75, Shar Bahadur Deuba is Nepal’s prime minister for the fifth time in 26 years—joining the ranks of other serial prime ministers Surya Bahadur Thapa and Ujirja Prasad Koirala. That fact alone shows that the structural defects in Nepali politics remain intact, so politicians can keep returning to power without learning from, and striving to, past mistakes.

Deuba first became prime minister of a coalition government under similar circumstances in 1995 after the Supreme Court overturned the decision to dissolve Parliament by Mammoth Khanal, who was leading a minority UML government.

Since then, Deuba has led the country through key moments in Nepal’s history: during King Birendra’s reign, he was in charge of governance, and during the first federal elections in 2017 under the new Constitution. But Deuba’s long political career is replete with missteps and controversy. He must have been a big disappointment to Deuba. He is known for his brokers and his brokers are known for their brokers. He has been a constant source of disunity and discord in the UML. He has not been able to unite the party and has been a constant source of division. He has not been able to lead the party and has been a constant source of division.

Deuba was then dismissed by his party in 2002, after which King Gyanendra sacked him for being ‘incompetent.’

Most Nepal’s, while glad that the uncertainty in the UML has ended, are dismayed that the party could find no one more promising than Deuba to lead the country.

Deuba’s first task is to bring his precious Cabinet members to make up for the fact that the UML government squandered in dealing with the Covid-19 health and economic emergency, obtain vaccines to prevent a third wave, and deal with a disastrous monsoon season. They do not have high hopes.

From the fire into the frying pan

Editorial Page 2
From the fire into the frying pan

S

o, this is the price Nepal had to pay for any two leaders of the ruling party not being able to sort out their personal differences. This is the result of the UML, which also had to bear for the intractable ego clash between its two headstrong leaders. If any other party leader in Nepal’s communist parties into smithereens, they could resort to better means to contain the fire. Oil. First, he decoupled the NCP from the UML, and then went on to split the UML itself. Along the way, he had also managed to attract the ex-Ministers of the UML from the main party.

Those who blame this on an outside anti-Communist force are deluding themselves. The Nepali Congress, the Centre or the United, whatever they are, are only euphemistically “communist”, and they have grown fat on the back of the tutelage of much of the anti-communist elite and their own resources. It may be an indication of just how far off the track K P Oli had drifted while trying to stave off multiple crises that matured into two major personalities as disgruntled in the main party.

It is true, Deuba and Dahal have shared power before. But this time, the two sworn enemies who tried to physically annihilate each other till 2006 have joined hands to “pursue democracy.”

Seeing many of the venomous comments on social media, most Nepalis see through this. They are glad the prolonged paralysis of government is over, but agitate that politicians with such checkered pasts have become guardians and defenders of democracy and constitutionalism.

Each of the members of the anti-Oli alliance are now demanding their pound of flesh from Deuba, and the first ministerial appointments of the new government are among the divisions of the spoils. It will take 28 days to win a confidence test in the House, and he has kept key portfolios as carrots for the UCPF faction, and perhaps to woo dissidents. Locking wickets in his ballot, Oli will also be trying to retain as many as the Nepal faction as possible in the UML, even though he probably will not mind unshipping Nepal core one by one.

Oli and Nepal have inflicted too many unkind cuts on each other, and are seeking so much with so much vengeance that even mediations have given up. Oil is banking on enough of Deuba’s supporters sitting quietly for the next elections over their loyalty to Nepal.

While Deuba grapples with trying to appease the multiplicity of the country faces during the pandemic. Knowing Deuba’s high-handedness, Nepal may have to accept the powers to the Home Ministry portfolios. Dahal appointed three of his supporters Badi Krishan Khadga as Home Minister, but in order to hang onto his post, he demands a 50 percent equity finance portfolio to the Dahal-appointed Janarmad Sharma. Dahal himself has to balance expectations and ambitions among his own covens, and has superseded the otherFinance Minister which controls budget allocation and money flows — crucial at election time.

The other Maoist in Deuba’s cabinet is Rampal Bhandari with the energy and waste resources portfolio, another ministry with access to purse strings. However much more many disliked Oli, most Nepalis are asking if the only alternative was to bring a former army minister back for the fifth time. And Deuba’s first ministerial appointments portend it is politics as usual: a predictable lack of transparency, woeful failure of governance and service delivery.

That is exactly what the UML is hoping for, so as the failure of the past days will be blamed on the incumbent rather than on Oli. Deuba could launder his legacy by proving everyone wrong by launching an effective social safety net and implementing the programs of Nepal whose livelihoods are impacted by the pandemic, and to prove himself a leader by vaccinating 70% of the population by end-2022.

Only that will convince Nepal that this Deuba swast is different.

Prime Minister Deuba has his work cut out, but can he deliver where he has failed so many times before?

On the web

Nepal and Sikkim

Acting on the Nepal-Sikkim border is a thorny issue. It is one of the most sensitive issues in the bilateral dispute, with both countries unwilling to back down.

For those of us at the border in the early 90s, this standoff is a historic moment that will be remembered for years to come. However, for those of us who have lived through this, it is a daily struggle that requires constant vigilance.

**Nepal**

Many of us have lived through this, and we know what it takes to resolve these disputes.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Nepal**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.

**Sikkim**

We hope that both countries will work towards a peaceful solution, and end this long-standing dispute.
HIGHEST HONORS COME WITH HIGHEST STANDARDS

We have been awarded the Diamond Status by APEX Health Safety independent audit powered by SimpliFlying for our efforts in ensuring the highest standards of hygiene and safety for our passengers.
No light at end of trans-Himalayan train tunnel

Engineering, financial and geopolitical challenges remain for Kerung-Kanthamandu railway line

The prospect of a trans-Himalayan connectivity has historically been a sensitive geopolitical issue since it concerns the region’s main rival: China and India.

Even back in 1963, when Nepal and China signed an agreement to build a highway linking Kathmandu to Lhasa there were mistrusts about Beijing’s strategic motive. India and China were about to go to war along the Himalayas, and the Cold War was at its height. King Mahendra allayed those fears by famously saying “Communism does not travel by tax.”

Sixty years later, similar suspicions have surfaced as China moves full steam ahead to connect its Tibet Autonomous Region with a new bullet train link that could ultimately extend all the way to the Nepali border, and even Kathmandu as a part of its Belt Road Initiative (BRI).

On 25 June, China made a high-profile inauguration of a 44km section of the Lhasa-Yigatse Electric high-speed Rail that will be a part of the new Sichuan-Tibet Railway. When connected to Kerung via Lhasa and Xigatse, the train could put Kathmandu within six hours distance and Chengdu within 10 hours from the Nepali border.

While China makes rapid progress on rail connectivity, on the Nepali side of the border talk of a trans-Himalayan railway is only political tokenism. Successive governments in Kathmandu have not even been able to maintain existing highways to Kodari and Rasuwagadhi to international standards.

But even the Chinese seem to be daunted by the cost, estimated at $5.5 billion and above magnitude of a trans-Himalayan railway, especially its engineering challenges. Nepal: Times had revealed in 2019 the content of a Chinese pre-feasibility study that proposed 179km alignment from Kerung to Kathmandu through a series of tunnels below the Himalayas.

A report in Railway Standard Design last week confirmed that the proposed alignment would include 106km of tunnels beneath Langtang National Park.

Jiang Long, a lead engineer with the China Railway First Survey and Design Institute Group will be presenting his report to the Chinese and Nepali governments.

He said the Himalayan Tunnel route from Kerung (Gyirong) to Kathmandu would be more challenging and costly, but other routes were rejected outright because the gradients were too steep, went through protected areas, or were geologically unstable and exposed to glacial lake outburst floods due to climate change.

The possibility of trans-Himalayan connectivity was first mooted as far back as 1973 by Mrs Zedong in a meeting with King Birendra in Beijing. Since then, China built the Qinghai-Tibet Railway connecting Lhasa to Xining, and in now working on the Xizang-Tibet Railway to Chengdu and Kunming.

The Qinghai-Tibet Railway was extended from Lhasa to Xigatse in 2014, and in 2013 those three tracks will reach Kerung on the Nepali border, only 70km in a straight line north of Kathmandu.

Even though it is just a secondary route in China’s ambitious BRI, Nepal could gain valuable access to Chinese specialities and trade centres, especially as relations with long-time trade partner India have been low and cold.

China had committed to financing Detailed Project Reports (DPR) for a 248km rail line between Kerung and Rasuwagadhi during President Xi Jinping’s visit in October 2019, but since then, government planners have blamed the pandemic for delays in taking plans forward.

Nepal used to have lost valuable time twinkling thumbs and waiting for China’s support, even while China aims to finish its Sichuan-Lhasa rail line by 2030.

A Kathmandu-China connection will prove to be costly and difficult. Nepal has no railway infrastructure and even if such a link could be built, it would be unable to bear the financial cost of building a difficult and expensive tunnel across the Himalayas.

Prabhu Bank

Greenlight for Lower Arun

India-owned Bowen Power Limited has begun final planning for the Lower Arun Hydropower Project after securing permission. The EPCW project based on the peak power of their power will cost $134 million.

No to privatisation

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation has reiterated its stance that the Nepal Airlines Corporation (NAC) is up for privatisation. NAC staffs earlier this week published a letter to a Board of Directors meeting on June 27 calling for a draft management letter and privatisation proposal to the Ministry.

ADB new country director

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has appointed Atmavesha Rasaily as the new Country Director for Nepal. AScottish national, he has the experience of working in the development sector, including over 15 years with the ADB.

Says Culture Minister "We remain committed to support the government of Nepal and its activities both in the immediate and medium-term recovery from the health crisis and social impacts of the Covid-19 crisis.

Eswara Remittance Payment

Eswara Global Transfers and International remittance giant Western Union have signed an agreement that will make the service more reliable.

Mobile crackdown

Mobile phones are illegal without paying customs duties on import so a bill was introduced in the government. An anti-criminal act from 1957 would make the bill illegal. Another law covering crimes like illegal trafficking.

Petroleum price hike

Nissan LEAF EV

Savings for recharged electric cars: EV owners have agreed on a price hike of Rs30,000. The car comes with an eight-year battery warranty on the first 160,000km and a maximum output of 110kW and 225Nm of motor torque. A running cost in India will cost $354 per mile.

Mobile consumers in the United Kingdom were shocked when they found out that their phone bills would rise by an average of 27%.

Eyes on the future

Eyes on the future — The future of travel is being shaped by the latest in technology and innovation. From self-driving cars to wearable tech, the possibilities are endless. How will the future of travel look like? Only time will tell.
Spotify, known for its music collection, offers a 2.2 million podcasts. Audible, an Amazon product, is known for audiobooks but also hosts 100,000 podcasts. TuneIn Radio, which streams more than 100,000 radio stations, hosts a rather large collection of 5.7 million podcasts.

Garber, a popular player, scrape podcasts from all over the web, including Times. It is totally free, comes without ads, and is especially great for those interested in language learning through listening.

Those who want to launch their own unique podcast can try Podbean, an Android podcast app where they can also create their own podcast, not just stream and download content, straight from the phone. Podbean offers a few handy features like adding sound effects such as applause, drum rolls or laughs, and placing music clips in your episode to give it a personality as well as create smooth transitions. And saving the best for last, there is Anchor, a professional yet beginner-friendly app that helps users record their own podcast and publish them online across listening platforms. Anchor is the right choice if you want to regularly publish episodes and grow your audience organically. It offers unlimited hosting, and makes money off your content, but also serves up ways to monetize your podcast. How about it? Now we are talking.

Saniaa Shah

Podcasts are perfect for those who want to listen to experts talk about topics they are interested in, or passionate about. They are a terrific way to entertain yourself without staring at the screen, while doing household chores. In fact, podcasts are a hit with multiskilled who love to listen to something stimulating while they are driving, cooking or folding laundry.

Some people even listen to podcasts while they are on the treadmill. Step aside, Justin Bieber, Joe Rogan is the new joggers’ jam. Additionally, bedtime reading has been swiftly replaced by bedtime listening, especially with adults who prefer to close their eyes and fall asleep to a pleasant, confident voice that they have grown rather fond of: information, entertainment, or education; the purpose of a podcast does not matter, as much as the quality of content. Podcasts tend to be of all kinds, in-depth conversations on fascinating subject matters, comedy and silly banter to destress and socialise with business and advisory from industry experts, insights and experience exchanges on parenting and child care, marketing tips and tricks, guided meditations, post-match sports talk, movie breakdowns, TV series discussions, literary interviews, observational humour, or cultural commentary. Podcasts are popular because they are easily accessible, just a few taps away, either on the browser or inside an app, and usually free.

What makes podcasting different is its ability to establish intimacy between strangers. Much like radio, it helps the listener form a relationship or connection with the voice they listen to, which is why podcasts enjoy impressive levels of loyalty. After a few hours of relevant and valuable content, audiences keep returning to the same creators for more episodes.

Another unique selling point of podcasts is that they are highly engaging, with astonishingly few drop-off rates, which means that they are ripe territory for advertisers to disrupt and catch users at. Hosted-content advertisers also mean that listeners trust the product more, so radio ad-like commercials do not need
O
n 15 September, a UK-based art historian and curator Viswa Shettar (via The Times) wrote an auction notification to its 500,000 members. For sale was a rare 1955 watercolour painting of a woman, and it bore the signature of Nepal’s foremost artist, Lain Singh Bangdel. Within two days of the announcement, the painting was bought for £50,000, and that price understandably left Nepal’s artist community, connoisseurs of Nepali art and Bangdel’s own family members disappointed.

“The 500 pound auction price is extremely low for someone of Bangladesh’s stature,” stated Sushma Thapa, art curator and director of Siddhartha Art Gallery. “Nepali artists and their art works are finally getting the momentum they deserve, but this is dismal.”

There is a lifelong admirer of Bangdel’s work, and she states she owes a lot to “Lain Singh’s” devotion to Nepal. She worked with Bangdel’s daughter, Tina. In promoting Nepal art in the international arena, Tina’s sudden death left a deep void in the country’s art scene. Thapa says, and Nepal will probably never have a better daughter-daughter duo than the Bangdels.

The auction in September was organized by the UK-based Sundar & Hewer via The Abbey Auction Gallery, and the watercolour portrait was under the lot number. But this is not the only Bangdel painting that has been sold abroad at such a low price: three other abstracts were sold via a Canadian auction house, Westbridge Fine Art Auction House, in 2015 and 2017, each at less than 700 Canadian dollars.

“Places like Canada, we can assume people haven’t heard enough about Bangdel and that could be why the determined price,” says art critic professor Jim J. Thompson of the City University of New York.

Thapa’s husband, Bhakta Shakya is also saddened to see the latest auction price. “Most of the paintings are in our collection at home, and my father-in-law never really sold paintings, he mostly gifted them in the later years of his life.”

Shakya has been keeping his late Lain Singh Bangdel’s legacy alive with their son, Jeven, cataloguing the collection of 300 to 500 of his father-in-law’s paintings at their home in Saru. He also plans to publish the English translation of Bangdel’s book, Langas Khe Sathi, and find a permanent gallery for the paintings.

“It was Tina’s dream to carry on her father’s footsteps. It is my responsibility to pick things up from where she left,” says Shakya, who says Bangdel could write as beautifully as he painted.

Lain Singh Bangdel was born to Bangdel in 1959 near Darjeeling. As a child, he would paint everywhere, even on the walls of his house and in small collections of postcards given to him by his British employers. Bangdel was only eight then, but the images of various impressionists and post-impressionists artists, Van Gogh, Millet, Monet, Manet and Turner were etched in his young mind. More than the others, Bangdel says later it was the French painter Courbet whose work “captured his soul” and inspired him to pursue his passion.

It was only in high school that Bangdel came to realize that he wanted to be an artist. In 1959, he joined Calcutta Art College. Calcutta was where he met Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray, and the two became lifelong friends.

In 1963, Bangdel enrolled at the French National Art School in Paris. Part of the cost was delayed in a strange way. Bangdel had painted a portrait of Bakulabanda Satta and it impressed General Professor Shukabala Rana so much that he sent over Rs 5,000, quite a hefty sum in those days.

In Paris, Bangdel was introduced to the works of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, and he was deeply influenced by their style. But he felt the fog of oblivion, and was taken by Laxmi Prasad Devkota’s Mantra Muslin which impacted on his paintings and writings. Bangdel later used the epic as a theme for his most famous impressionistic works.

In later years, Bangdel went on to receive many national and international awards, including the French Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, the Order of the Crown of Italy (Commander) for his contribution to the study of Nepal’s early history and art. In 1987, Bangdel was awarded the honorary Knight Commander of the Victorian Order by Queen Elizabeth II.

Bangdel died in October 2002 in Lalitpur at age 83. Two decades have passed, and many young Nepalis have never heard of him. His son-in-law Shakya wants to change this. “It is due to Lain Singh Bangdel that Nepal’s modern and contemporary art started being noticed internationally, and we have to keep his works alive,” he says.

Lain Singh Bangdel was not just a painter, he was also an established writer, art historian and to a select few, a passionate art teacher. His daughter Dina Bangdel carried forward his legacy until her own untimely death in 2017.

After Paris, Bangdel travelled to London in 1957 where he received a letter from his friend B P Koirala to return to Nepal. Koirala went on to become Nepal’s first democratically elected prime minister, but within a year was removed in a coup by King Mahendra. It was then Mahendra who convinced Bangdel and his wife Tina to return from Europe to Nepal.

In 1961 after moving to Kathmandu, Bangdel got a job at the Royal Nepal Academy and eventually became its vice-chancellor. He later went on to become the founding general-secretary of Nepal Art Council and the New Art Circle, where he taught 15 talented new artists for free.

Bangdel also wrote three Nepal-language novels between 1948 to 1951, Mahal Bahr, Mallhoner and Langas Khe Sathi. They tell tales of struggle and hardship of families in the mountains. Bangdel’s eye saw the world: he lived through wars and revolutions, he saw pain, anger and misery all around him, and he transformed them to canvas and text.

In later years, Bangdel went on to become an art historian and was an active lobbying for the return of Nepal’s stolen religious objects. He wrote Early Sculptures of Nepal (1963), 2500 years of Nepali Art (1987), and Inventory of Stone Sculptures of the Kathmandu Valley (1990). His most important book, and one that is still as relevant today as it was when it was written in 1989, is stolen Images of Nepal which documented 306 missing religious objects from Kathmandu. Most of them are still missing.

Bangdel built the home in Sarasu with his wife Mani Kumari Thapa, a nurse, who figures prominently in his biography, Against the Current: Life of Lain Singh Bangdel, to the book. Bangdel narrates his beautiful love story with Mani and her unyielding support for all his work. She went on to become a matron in Pratap Ghar, and is now in her mid-90s, still in the same home she built with her husband in Sarasu.

Dina was the scrumble of Lain Singh and Mani’s life. An only child, she was her father’s confidante in the later part of his career as an art historian, and shared the same passion for Nepal’s heritage and its preservation.

Dina and Bangdel’s daughter Thapa were childhood friends, and they used to walk to school from home together during which Bangdel would share extraordinarly stories of her adventures with her father, or going to various heritage sites and taking pictures.

“I remember Dina’s excitement when she narrated her father’s work to document stolen idols and we could all feel her passion even when young,” Bandana Thapa recalls.

Dina’s death left a lot of her work to preserve her father’s legacy incomplete. But Lain Singh Bangdel’s legacy was shocked by how little his father-in-law’s painting fetched in an European auction. He said, “Even in the nineties, Bangdel’s paintings were selling for at least Rs50,000 in Japan’s Fukushisa Museum alone. It is a sad day for Nepal’s modern art. We need to raise his work’s more.”

"Against the Current: Life of Lain Singh Bangdel (2006)"; From the collection of

Dina Bangdel
Oct 4, 2021, 10:30 AM

Recommended for you
Lain Singh Bangdel
1919-2002
Lain Singh Bangdel was born in 1919 near Dhading, and grew up drawing images of gods and goddesses on the walls of his home. He was inspired from an early age with the paintings he saw in the house of his tree planter father’s British employer. It was inevitable that Bangdel should join Calcutta Arts College in 1939. It was there that he met Indian painter Sajal Roy, and the two became lifelong friends.
In 1952, Bangdel migrated to the French Natural Art Studio in Paris where he was influenced by the works of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. It was here that he started to harness his creativity and desired to be supported by his impressionistic work.
Bangdel died on 26th October 2002 in Lalitpur age 83. Lain Singh Bangdel was not just a painter. He was also an accomplished writer, art historian and a passionate art teacher. His daughter Dina Bangdel carried forward his legacy until her own untimely death in 2017.

Lain Singh Bangdel’s ‘Sigh’

Why is there a look of quiet contentment in Bangdel’s visage in the artist’s self-portrait?

With this contribution, I am beginning a monthly column in Nepal Times and Himal Khabor in which I will select one piece of contemporary Nepal art from the collection of MoNA (Museum of Nepal Art), and try to explain the technique and medium used, the message being communicated, as well as the significance it holds in the country’s cultural history.

There are rare moments in the lives of great artists, when they create something for themselves and no one else. In those works of art they give us a glimpse of their soul, a secret sentiment not to be shared. An exposed of inner romanticism.

Self-portraits can be made during important milestones in an artist’s life, an illustration of an obstacle overcome, a portrayal of a life-altering occurrence, an interpretation of a discrete romantic escapade, a visual representation of a magical encounter.

Lain Singh Bangdel’s self-portrait from 1960 represents such a work. It is a ‘sigh’ that evokes a sense of fulfilled bliss to the artist’s life.

Bangdel associates this attention, recognition of his struggle and successful life, which resonated with imagination and motivation long after his death in 2002. Bangdel was the founder of modern and contemporary Nepal art. His authoritative and exemplary works explored the realism and preservation of Nepal culture, introducing it to the international art arena. His contemporary and abstract works are now revered across the world, and depict nature and creation in one way or another.

But this particular self-portrait stands apart. In it, Bangdel paints himself with contended closed eyes, an inconspicuous smile, a rough and incomplete brush stroke whose heart should be, a face expressing sustained relief about something, an assertive yet deferential posture, a shaved shoulder adorned around it. The painting is finished with confidant last strokes.

And a frame, an ordinary frame that he painted for himself as a laurel as if to encase his accomplished self. The self-portrait speaks of something beyond that which the eyes can see, it may be Bangdel’s reflection of himself at his best.

Self-portraits by famous international artists capture a moment of rapture, a reminder of an emotion, a particular sensation, never to be forgotten or revealed, but an aide-memoire to the self.

A self-portrait is a mirror of discovery. The viewer has to unravel the artist’s secrets layer by layer, see, feel and understand. It is from the past, by a person who has departed, combining clues for future generations about the lived life of an artist.

Everyone’s life is filled with expectations, successes, failures, joys and sorrows. When we learn and understand from each other, we develop empathy. In a life bound to obligations and responsibilities, it seems impossible to break away from every day struggles.

However, there are a few who have had transcendent experiences, and it is through such stories that we can better ourselves, and understand ourselves better.

Bangdel painted his self-portrait 31 years ago at a time when he felt freedom, responsibilities had been released from his shoulders with his retirement. He was finally liberated from relentless guidance, the bureaucracy, and he felt overwhelming gratitude to the monarch who had invited him to Nepal.

Bangdel always lived life on his own terms, whether struggling as an artist in Paris, or as a brave pioneer of a new genre of art in a conservative Nepal of the 1960s. His biography Against the Current by Dom Maseenschatz and his daughter, Dini, cites a conversation between Bangdel and King Mahendra: “Bangdel, upon being asked to settle in Nepal and lead the Royal Nepal Academy, replied with utmost modestly, “Nepal is an agricultural country, an artist like me does not have much to do.”

Bangdel headed the Royal Nepal Academy from 1972 to 1987, creating many exhibitions and participating in many exhibitions and participating in many historically significant books. He made this self-portrait the year he retired, and reveals his sigh of relief from all the burdens and responsibilities. This particular self-portrait Bangdel is on display at MoNA.

Looking at Bangdel’s paintings, one sees a distinct boundary before and after 1949, and we can assume that the artist could finally live life for himself, and for his art.

Rajani Shalik is the founder and director of MoNA Museum of Nepal Art and also the CEO of ART Group. This column, ‘Art’s Sake’ will appear in Nepal Times every month.
Events

Education exchange webinar
Join the British Council School education webinar - on ways teachers can inspire pupils to take positive action against climate change in the classroom. Sign up here: https://bit.ly/36yjat3
18 July

Bathak sessions
Join Tamar Carrow and Ma Edmunds live on Saturdays for the Bathak Sessions, where the musicians will play songs from their upcoming album, jam to other songs and improve. Catch the live show on Ser e Roj’s Facebook, Instagram and Youtube accounts. Saturdays, 8:45pm

Boudha market
Buy fresh and organic fruits and vegetables, baked goods, and other delicious goods. Support local small businesses and live, and follow their Facebook, Instagram and Youtube accounts. Saturdays, 10am - 12pm, Boudha

Photography contest
Take photos during the On The Move Again event depicting the interaction between people and the Moon, and share them with the caption ‘OnTheMoveAgain1’ on social media. Winners will be awarded. Fill the participation form at https://www.anthemnagri.org/content/10-19july

Kora Cycling
Participate in the seventh edition of the Kora Cycling Challenge, Phakding, taking place at 10 June. Register at http://mykoralchallenge.com/registration as a rider, runner, or both. 16 July

Documentaries

Herne Katha
The series tells untold stories of ordinary Nepali people via short documentaries. Head on to their YouTube channel to binge.

VICE
Watch documentaries about anything and everything from all over the world on the VICE YouTube channel. Start from documentaries about Nepal’s history survivors, The Nepalese Victory That Made People Unhappy, as well as the most recent one on human trafficking in Nepal.

Journeyman Pictures
Watch groundbreaking award-winning factual films about some of the most debated issues across the globe including politics, environment, and the current pandemic. Find journeyman pictures on Youtube.

Real Stories
Go to the Real Stories YouTube channel to watch compelling award-winning documentaries from all over the world. Browse for factual films about war, crime, mental health, technology and more.

Netflix on YouTube
Netflix has released some of its documentaries for free on YouTube for educational purposes in light of the global coronavirus pandemic. Watch them on the award-winning documentary Our Planet from Sir David Attenborough.

GETAWAY

Mirabel Resort
Perfect for family-friendly Mirabel resort offers comfort,ontiental cuisine and scenic views of Khotmandu Valley. Take a walk around 45 minutes before heading into a Nepali lunch. Get details of the Mountain offer on their Facebook page. Husband (01) 4430072

Hotel Country Villa
A relaxing renval for those wishing to escape the pandemonium of the city, the hotel provides simple but clean rooms of green, sunrise and sunset from top of the Nagarkot hill. (01) 4430012

Patalebani Vineyard Resort
Patalebani Vineyard Resort is an eco-resort with spectacular views, lush green fields, and picknics to rejuvenate from the stress of the ordinary routine. Operator: 9847610846

Green Valley Resort
Located 5.5km away from Bhaktapur Durbar, the resort is a lovely getaway for the weekend. Take a stroll around the Tamang Valley nearby at the first ray of sun wakes up the day. Sheep Hotel Nepal (01) 5440097

Godavari Village Resort
A 4-hour drive from Kathmandu, the resort offers mountain views and traditionally styled cottages and bungalows overlooking rice fields. Godavari (01) 3000069

Air Quality Index

The only thing standing between Khotmandu’s Air Quality Index (AQI) from deteriorating following easing of the lockdown and subsequent vehiclevation is heavy and constantshowers in the afternoon. The rains wash away pollutants but they also add up to quality as seen at this drastically AQI increased as heavy showers began between 1PM to 4PM on 14 July. Wash up outdoors maintainly to protect yourself from both harmful particulate matters and Covid 19.

Our pick

Chris Thrall’s critically praised British crime drama, Broadchurch. But in our favourite three series from 2013 to 2017, follows detectives Alex Hardy and Ellie Miller at the fictional English town of Broadchurch as they investigate the murder of 13-year-old Danny Latimer and the consequent grief and impact to the family, and the town, and the townspeople as the murder is brought to justice. The third season takes the show to the rape of a teenage murderer, Ted Winterborne, Star David Tennant, Olivia Coleman, Jodie Whittaker, and more.

Dining

Keventers
Hankering for a cold shake on humid monsoon afternoons? Look to the classics, or order a rich and light bubblegum shake. Choose from Keventers’ menu on Foodpanda: 9841725500

The Yard
The Yard has a variety of cuisine enjoyed from the Nepali, Thai, Mandarin, and Chinese, and offers an extensive range of dishes. (01) 5322903

Koko
Inkage in authentic Japanese cuisine from Makinuki Sento and Kurosawa Den to delectable rolls. Check out its menu on Foodpanda for a variety of other dishes to order. (01) 5490595 (01) 4209205

CurioL
Try delicious pastas, pizzas, and sandwiches. Order the signature La Curio Pasta, also freshly baked multigrain bread from Curio. Find the menu on Foodpanda. (01) 4209205

Bhumi
Experience authentic Kewa flavours of bara, chatamari, samaya baji, mane cha and more. Head on to facebook to breeze Bhumi’s menu. 9801338278

Nepal 2079

You have high standards. So do we!
Job-seekers now also jab-seekers

Mandatory vaccine requirement for migrant workers throws international migration into uncertainty

• Upasana Khadka

In February 2020, Nepal's migrant worker Min from Siddhuluitole was excited to visit Kuwait after completing two years of working in Kuwait. More than a year later, he is still here, due to Covid-19 travel bans by Kuwait.

He could have returned by taking an indirect route via the UAE since there were no direct flights from Nepal. But since quarantining in the UAE was too costly, he decided to wait for travel restrictions in Kuwait to be lifted.

"Now it looks like new rules regarding mandatory vaccination in Kuwait will further delay my return," says Min.

Another worker in Kuwait is Lila from Chitwan. He had spent 16 years there, but has been stuck ever since he came home for a break. Lila's employer in Kuwait is getting impatient.

Stories of stranded migrants are common, but with new vaccination requirements by destination countries, the situation has only become even more uncertain.

"From 1 August, Kuwait will allow entry of non-citizens only if they are fully vaccinated by one of the four vaccines: Pfizer BioNTech, Oxford/AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson," says Nepal's ambassador to Kuwait, Durga Shankar. Of these only Johnson & Johnson is available in Nepal with the United States footing in 1.5 million doses under the global COVAX initiative this week. But the migrants have not been prioritised for the single-shot vaccine.

Saudi Arabia is also set to impose similar vaccination requirements from 1 August. Until then, those who are not vaccinated have to undergo quarantine for a week.

While Qatar is allowing Nepali migrants with mandatory institutional quarantine, there has been no announcement regarding vaccines yet. Nepal is currently banned by the UAE and Bahrain for public health reasons.

The UAE has approved Sinopharm, Pfizer, Sinovac and Oxford/AstraZeneca and has imposed double vaccination mandate to South Africa, Nigeria and India, which will likely be applied to Nepal as well once the ban is lifted, according to UAE-based travel entrepreneur Krishna Shrestha.

As the Gulf countries ramp up their vaccination drives and seek to resume travel with some strictness for universal vaccination, they have started to require proof of full vaccination for all activities including workplace visits, public events, restaurants and malls.

Nepal, on the other hand, is bearing the brunt of the global vaccine inequality with a dismal vaccination rate of 2.8%. It is uncertain when outgoing migrant workers will return to them, and as they wait, how many will lose lucrative contracts or have visas or contracts expire.

"Even without these flight bans and the new vaccination requirements, it has been difficult for the migrants to get vaccinated, quarantine and testing costs," says labour recruiter Sumei Pkhahrel.

The cost for a two-week quarantine for institutional quarantine in Qatar depending on the standard of facilities, and many employers are reluctant to cover these expenses which get passed down to workers.

"The only way out is widespread vaccination, but at the rate we are progressing, I do not see the foreign employment sector recovering anytime soon," Pkhahrel says.

Quarantine costs are about $1,600 in Saudi Arabia as well. "Employers are required to foot the bill and have to commit in writing that they will bear the costs of quarantine. The Saudi authorities will also notify employers regarding this rule," says Nepal Labour Attaché Prem Uddhaya at the Consulate in Jeddah.

However, given that workers are desperate it is likely that they will pay for it covertly, no matter how high the cost, or how inconvenient.

The rules on quarantine and vaccines do not just involve Nepali workers, and other countries face the same problem.

In response, the Philippines has put its overseas contract workers in the 'essential' category alongside health staff which moves them up in the vaccination priority list. Bangladesh will prioritise workers heading to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for the Pfizer vaccine that it received as part of the global COVAX initiative. It is set to receive 2 million doses of the Moderna vaccine from the United States through COVAX. The country also has a scheme to reimburse quarantine costs of workers to Saudi Arabia.

In Pakistan, Saudi-bound expats broke into a vaccination centre in Islamabad after fear that the AstraZeneca vaccines would run out. Prime Minister Imran Khan has asked Saudi Arabia and other countries to accept the WHO-approved Chinese vaccine with which Pakistan is inoculating its population.

Sri Lanka has also announced free vaccines for those with confirmed overseas jobs, but is also dependent on the Sinopharm Chinese vaccine, which is not accepted by key destination countries.

In India, many migrant workers are stranded because their vaccine certificates expire to Covishield, and not Oxford AstraZeneca. However, Saudi Arabia finally recognised Covishield as equivalent to AstraZeneca after diplomatic dialogue. Vaccination camps have been set up for students and workers, although demand for outweighs supply.

In Nepal, however, there is growing frustration with the lack of progress in sourcing vaccines. Says Sujit Shrestha of Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies (NAFEA): "We need a way out because there is demand in those countries for Nepali workers. The government should get vaccines and prioritise outgoing workers, or coordinate with destination countries to provide quarantine and vaccines for workers. For many Nepali families, foreign employment is the only source of income."

After a few months of slow and uneven recovery of emigration, the second wave impacted both new and current Nepali workers. But even with cases falling and limited flights allowed, there is uncertainty because of the vaccines.

"It is not just about whether Nepal can inoculate outgoing workers soon, but also whether the vaccination provided is accepted by the destination country. Saudi Arabia has a demand for 40,000 Nepali workers that are waiting to be filled. In Kuwait, employers are struggling with labour shortages. This is in addition to thousands stranded in Nepal while on holiday like Min and Lila, who are at risk of losing their jobs overseas."

Says Kuwait-based Nari Tamrakar Bhumet. "If flights normalise and the issue of vaccinations gets sorted out, Nepalis will be able to find attractive opportunities here."
**Vaccine doses need to**

The Nepa-1johns Hopkins University COVID-19 Vaccine Advocacy Group is made up of:

Swttha Manohar, Johns Hopkins University, LRO
Bhita Adhikari, JSR and Health Foundation Nepal
Tirnav Pema Lams, JSR
Bijay Acharya, Nepal Medical Foundation and Harvard Medical School
Sneha Makwana, Department of Paediatrics, Kathmandu University, Nepal
Paediatric Society
Angele Riz, PDF, Asecmen
Dinesh Naupar, JSR
Sarsholt Dhakal, JSR

Global inequities in the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine have revealed themselves during the past six months. Based on the latest WHO data, today, more than half of the population in Bangladesh, the United States and the United Kingdom have been fully vaccinated.

In Nepal, this number is 2.6%. Despite constant health crises, a crisis of social and economic inequalities sharpens disparities in access to health, food, and financial security. Moreover, in countries like Nepal with a pronounced urban-rural and regional divide, in education, and health, access to medical care and vaccines are dependent on an already tenuous local health system. This results in worse health outcomes for underserved populations. With low vaccine coverages against the COVID-19 virus in Nepal, and the slow trickle of vaccines into the country, it is imperative to question how vaccines will be distributed across the country.

Biological risk factors like age tend to be the most severe risk of infection of any virus. But what about social disadvantage or inequities? Can such identification of population strata that have a high risk for severe disease inform the formation of the next tier?

Typically, when planning for vaccine rollout, the most common approach is identifying risk factors that are highly correlated with the virus and, thus, most vulnerable to infection risk. With Covid-19, risk factors to prioritize target groups have been those correlated with mortality (age) and those that can aid in preventing mortality (healthcare workers).

Thus, age and being a health worker are the two universally informed Tier 1 for the first recipients of the vaccine. But what about the next Tier? From an epidemiological perspective, vaccination efforts aim to reach the highest or tipping point of coverage that allows some level of herd immunity or reduction of transmission.

So, who is at most risk of transceiving the virus and, when positive for the virus, what non-biological factors put groups at a higher risk of having the worse health outcomes?

Historical learnings from Nepal have taught us systemic inequities persist along the lines of wealth, region, and caste to ensure and protect access to adequate and quality healthcare. Thus, there have been impressive gains in public health in recent decades; maternal mortality has dropped 73% since 1990, young child mortality has decreased from 47 to 30 deaths per 1,000 live births since 2010 and routine childhood immunization coverage has increased 21% since 2005.

But inequities persist in health and nutrition outcomes. For example, households with lower wealth, no maternal education, and residences in Province 2 have significantly lower immunization rates amongst infants.

Further, Dalit and Tanai caste groups (including Muslims) have a lower likelihood to have their children fully immunized compared to Brahmin and Chhetri. Similarly, socioeconomic disparities have been noted in vaccination experiences, with the poorest experiencing a lower rate of decline than those who were wealthier.

Taken together, this uncoordinated time of global pandemic, the question is why is it essential to achieve equitable distribution of the vaccine prioritising not just medically vulnerable, but also historically disadvantaged.

**Vaccines start trickling into Nepal**

But Nepal is still a long way from vaccinating 70% of its population.

Ram Prasad Tuls

Mutch-delayed vaccine deliveries to Nepal appear to be picking up with the United States flying in 1.5 million doses of Johnson & Johnson shots on Monday and 4 million doses of Chinese Sinopharm vaccines starting to arrive in Kathmandu. The country is expected to get additional doses through the COVAX facility in the coming weeks.

In a government-to-government deal, Nepal ordered 4 million doses of Sinopharm’s VeroCell vaccines, which will be enough to inoculate an additional 2 million Nepalis. The first shipment of 800,000 doses was flown in by Nepal Airlines from Beijing on 9 July.

The British Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, Lord Tariq Ahmed in a written response to House of Commons MP Sir John Hayes on 30 June said that Britain would be sending more vaccine through COVAX by next month.

COVAX has allocated 2.8 million doses to Nepal, of which 348,000 have already been delivered and we understand another batch will arrive by August,” Lord Ahmed’s letter, which was made available to Nepali Times, stated.

The Japanese announcement on Tuesday to provide 1.4 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine to Nepal comes as a relief for 1.4 million Nepalis above 65 years who are desperately waiting for their second dose.

The elderly were inoculated with their first dose more than 13 weeks ago with Covishield AstraZeneca manufactured by Serum Institute of India of which Nepal got 1 million doses as initial gift from India and then purchased another 3 million of which only 1 million were delivered before New Delhi banned vaccine exports.

Less than 3% of Nepal has so far received both doses of Covishield or VeroCell, and another 2.6 million have got only one shot.

Nepal needs to inoculate at least 22 million of its eligible population. COVAX had originally promised 33 million doses of Covishield to inoculate 10% of Nepal’s population.

The American 1.5 million (A) doses are a part of the 7 million pledged by President Joe Biden to South Asian countries last month, of the 1 billion doses from the G-7 promised at a summit in the UK last month.

The majority of the doses will go through COVAX, Lord Ahmed says in his letter. In addition, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (both partially UK-funded) have made available significant funding to enable the Government of Nepal to purchase vaccines. This financing together with COVAX supplies can vaccinate 79% of the population of Nepal.

Indeed, the World Bank has provided Nepal with a $100 million loan, and an additional $160 million from the ADB for vaccine procurement. World Bank former country director Taris Horst-Zerov told reporters in Kathmandu on 8 July that Nepal may have to wait for a few months to get vaccines as grants through COVAX, and it might be a better idea to buy them.

The EU had negotiated with vaccine manufacturers to provide 3.2 billion vaccines to low income countries through COVAX. It has exported 340 million doses of vaccines, half its production, to countries around the world.

Head of the EU Delegation to Nepal Nena Degree says the EU is not sitting on a big stockpile of vaccine at the moment, and has not been blocking individual member states from having direct vaccine deals with countries like Nepal.

A group of European, Nepali and Bhutanese personalities had written an open letter to the European Commission president last month demanding that countries be allowed to send surplus vaccines directly to countries without having to go through Brussels and COVAX.

‘Nepal is very much on our radar, and direct vaccine supply depends very much on individual member states who are owners of the vaccines,’ Degree told Nepali Times. ‘In fact, we have received requests from 20 countries, including Nepal, and have tried to facilitate the bilateral donations.”

The ON’s COVAX facility is mainly funded by the UK and EU, but its reliance on India’s Covishield as well as legally-binding shipments of doses to donor countries has set back its programs in Africa and Asia.

Pressure has been building in the UK, France, the US, and other NATO countries to provide AstraZeneca vaccines at least for the second doses. At least 65 Gorkha veterans have died in Nepal from Covid-19 during the second wave.

Nepal’s second wave has crested, but public health officials have warned of a second peak because of what they say in a premature relaxation of lockdown rules when not enough people have been vaccinated.

On Wednesday, there were 19 more deaths from Covid-19, and the number of infected people, while much lower than at the peak last month, has been higher than the total recorded patients for the last 20 days, with 2,903 on 14 July. The number of new cases in Nepal has risen slightly again to 20,966, after dropping from 120,000.

However, many experts have pointed out that the daily death and infection rates are severely underestimated.

**Nepal-Johns Hopkins University COVID-19 Vaccine Advocacy Group is made up of:**

Swetha Manohar, Johns Hopkins University, LRO
Bhita Adhikari, JSR and Health Foundation Nepal
Tirnav Pema Lams, JSR
Bijay Acharya, Nepal Medical Foundation and Harvard Medical School
Sneha Makwana, Department of Paediatrics, Kathmandu University, Nepal
Paediatric Society
Angele Riz, PDF, Asecmen
Dinesh Naupar, JSR
Sarsholt Dhakal, JSR

**Vaccines start trickling into Nepal**

But Nepal is still a long way from vaccinating 70% of its population.
be fairly distributed

socially excluded groups? Which are these groups? And how do we address the issue?

WHY?
As of mid-July nearly 1,800 people were testing positive daily for Covid-19 and a total of 3,382 deaths have occurred since May 2020. These numbers are most likely grossly underestimated, given a lack of testing. Only 13% of the population have been tested to-date and with 85% of the population residing in rural areas, access to testing centers can be challenging.

In a country with a dominant youth population – nearly 41% is between the ages of 16-40, having age alone decide vaccine prioritization lists seems ill-informed. Further, reports of differential age cut-offs between Kathmandu, and those residing outside the capital municipality could well be short-sighted and discriminatory.

Another issue in pandemic management has been a lack of widespread contact tracing to identify transmission patterns. Returning migrant workers since March 2020 have not been tested and quarantined properly.

Why should the focus of the vaccination campaign rollout for Tier 2 centre on underserved populations?

The WHO states there are three CVs that affect transmissibility of Covid-19: Crowded places, close-contact settings, confined and enclosed spaces. In many areas across Nepal, poorer households tend to be in densely clustered areas where conditions are ripe for the spread of the virus.

Social isolation is a privilege enjoyed by those of higher socioeconomic status. Close living spaces mean higher transmission rates among these communities. The intersection of social exclusion has fueled health disparities in Nepal despite successes. Ultimately, there are health, social and economic consequences at stake if we fail to take an equitable approach to vaccine allocation.

As with economic inequities, we see evidence globally with Covid-19 hitting hardest among ethnic and racial minorities. Lower socio-economic groups are typically employed in jobs that make up the backbone of the country’s economy, providing essential services such as growing and selling food, waste management, and public transportation.

If we do not prioritise these communities, we will not only have no chance of controlling the pandemic but also no prospect of allowing our economy to survive.

WHO?
Who do we need to prioritise beyond those of age 65 and above, and healthcare professionals?

The groups most vulnerable include frontline workers: food production and food service workers drivers, custodial staff, security personnel, transportation workers, caretakers of people who are immunocompromised residing at home, adults in a shared living facility such as private, nursing homes, or close-quarter communities such as the slum-based.

Among these groups, targeting historically underserved minority groups would be crucial step. This would help prevent further widespread health disparities and achieve broader population immunity once vaccines arrive in Nepal and immunisation effects are scaled up.

We cannot overlook the intersectionality here: those who experience economic disadvantages, regional and social exclusion overlap in significant numbers. The time has come for public health targeting to be guided by something beyond health metrics, and carefully consider economic inequity and social disadvantage.

HOW?
How can the health sector prioritise reducing health disparities, and promote equity?

We recommend the following strategies:

1. Utilise equity as a priority for vaccine distribution: After vaccination of those that belong to the Tier 1 group (the elderly, immunocompromised, and healthcare workers), prioritise Tier 2 by identifying socially and economically underserved communities. Other professional groups that clearly need to be prioritised include teachers, transportation, and custodial staff. The ultimate goal will be to not just individuals at the point of vaccination.

2. Build trust: While vaccine hesitancy was high during the first wave, this has shifted during this second wave. Initially, the older people were afraid to get vaccinated and needed much encouragement. But now people are eagerly waiting for their turn to get the vaccine, according to Rekha Chaudhari, a Female Community Health Volunteer in Sarlahi District.

Instead, target groups that are geographically clustered to get as close to herd immunity as is possible by prioritising those among the most vulnerable in the herd to economic and health disparities.

- Broaden and tailor behaviour change communication on Covid-19 vaccinations: Conduct clear and cohesive mass vaccination campaigns that include consistent messaging on the Covid-19 vaccine availability and their efficacy and safety. With 139 mobile telephone subscriptions per 100 people, appointment management through text messages to avoid overcrowded time slots should be considered.

- Further, continue the mass communication push through trusted social media, local TV channels, and radio in languages beyond Nepali or English.

3. Facilitate equitable access to the vaccine: Leverage trusted members of prioritised communities such as community leaders, female community health volunteers, and others, our suggestion is to set up vaccination drives as close as possible to those communities to overcome barriers of physical access and to sensitize communities to the intervention.

4. Misusing power to strengthen their way into vaccine access should be penalised.

Advancing equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines in Nepal, once adequate vaccine procurement occurs, is a clear opportunity for addressing existing health inequities in the country that have been further deepened by what indeed has been a global pandemic with a discriminating path.
Nepal’s Olympic dreams

Now the Euro Cup fever is over (“FIFA Ballon”) and we have all bought up with much-needed sleep, let us gear up for the Tokyo Virtual Olympics 2021.

This year, the Olympics organizers have made sure that it is first games in the modern era to be conducted in a city that is under an emergency. But I must play the donkey’s advocate here and argue that the Olympics has always been constrained by sports that date back to Ancient Greece.

If the discuss throw can be a track and field sport, then we should also include marathon discussions in parliamentary committees as a category in Nepal’s National Games. We have some sure fire gold medalists in that sport.

And javelin throw? How is that relevant in this day and age? Imagine if domestic termites get hold of such weapons. Even more absurd is the shot put, which back to the age of bagging around cannon balls in the heat of battle. Modern warfare has moved on – today we incinerate the enemy with lasers.

The International Ass of Athletic Federations would do well to change some of the categories to reflect more modern methods of biological warfare like the Kathmandu virus, which Nepal would with hands-down since all of us have so much practice.

Nepalis have broken all records in breaking records, and the Tokyo Olympics is a godsend opportunity for us to claim even more entries into the Guinness Book like the Nepali tv news anchor who conducted a continuous 62-hour talk show, the world’s most frequent prime minister, the most-righthemging Communist Party, the fastest clock in the world, and of all the donkey species in the world, Nepal has the biggest asses.

One sport that Nepalis have increasingly excelled in is rubber-band change. It will be too late to include it in the Tokyo Olympics, but we should definitely have it among the categories for the next games and start grooming our top notch change champions with a supplementary diet of performance-enhancing varuosum, It will be a proud moment for Nepal’s gold medalist in Rome in 2008 when the double triangle is raised to the tune of the national anthem.

Another Nepali sport that popular in Nepal before the invention of the bell is dandi-bic. We have to breed it a bit and call it dandi-charge so that contestants from the Police Club, who have been practicing it at street races, can reach medals at future international championships.

We are glad to see that mountain biking is finally an Olympic sport, but it has always been a bit unfair that mountain-ersing has kept out of the world games because it is one sport in which Nepalis could sweep the medals tally.

After all, if scantily attired women whose noses are clipped with clothespins can take part in an Olympic event called synchronised swimming, I personally see no reason why our Indefinate Doctors should not.

If it is a problem, we can have Nepali participants in the mountaineering category climb Mt Fuji with their noses clipped with clothespins.