



EXCLUSIVE FURNITURE FROM THAILAND

**CLEARANCE SALE**

30<sup>TH</sup> JUN - 13<sup>TH</sup> JUL

UPTO **30% OFF**

**SHOWROOMS**  
 LAZIMPAT 01 4419308  
 & JAWALAKHEL 01 5544270  
**VISIT US**  
[www.indexfurniture.com.np](http://www.indexfurniture.com.np)



ITALY'S FAVOURITE COFFEE



Marriott - Kathmandu  
 Vivanta - Kathmandu  
[lavazza@ssinepal.com](mailto:lavazza@ssinepal.com)

CREATE YOUR "OWN" ENVIRONMENT





For Trade Inquiry | Ph.: 01-4032624 | Mob.: 9801215111

**ISO/IEC 27001**

We facilitate you in implementing and maintaining your Information Security Management System



t : +977-1-4620741  
 w : [www.gtn.com.np](http://www.gtn.com.np)  
 e : [info@gtn.com.np](mailto:info@gtn.com.np)



**AMBIENCE LIFESTYLE PVT. LTD**  
 Bijuli Bazar, Naya Baneshwor, Kathmandu  
 Ph: 4781 071, 4781 072  
 Email: [ambiencelifestyle@gmail.com](mailto:ambiencelifestyle@gmail.com)



TRANQUILITY SPA  
 "Relaxing Body, Mind and Spirit"

BRING THIS CUTOUT TO GET

**30% OFF**

Applicable in all services in any of our outlets  
[www.tranquilityspa.com.np](http://www.tranquilityspa.com.np)



SEWA BHATTARAI

## Only half-prepared

Federalism was supposed to decentralise disaster relief, but it hasn't

The memory of the catastrophic flood of 2017 is still fresh in the minds of the people of Rautahat. But even though they are better prepared, there have been no moves to address the cause: floodplains of rivers blocked by embankments.

Rautahat is now in Province 2, and which is responsible for disaster management under Nepal's new federal structure. But even with the arrival of the monsoon, Kathmandu and Janakpur are still wrangling over power devolution. Ironically, the Bagmati that burst its banks here two years ago, originates upstream in Kathmandu Valley.

The 2017 Disaster Risk


and Management Act farmed out responsibility of preparedness, rescue and relief to central, provincial, and local governments. Province 2 has passed its own Disaster Management law, but it exists only in paper. By the time it is ready, the central Tarai could drown in another flood. New roads, embankments, levees and settlements along floodplains on both sides of the India-Nepal border will make future floods much worse.

"We have a total of Rs150 million in the Chief Minister's Relief Fund and in the ministry's own

disaster fund," says Arun Jha at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Province 2. "But we have not been able to procure rafts, tents, and food stockpiles in time. When the flood comes, we will find a way to deal with it."

The lack of civil servants has prevented the Province 2 government in Janakpur from functioning at full capacity, and so it depends on Kathmandu for everything. First responders like the Nepal Army and Police, for instance, are deployed by the central government. As the tornado disaster in Bara in April showed, the role of the Province 2 government is limited

to coordination.

It will take a few more years before all three levels of government work smoothly to prevent and cope with disasters. Till then, Lalita Kumari Ram (pictured above), who survived the 2017 flood by fleeing to a road embankment with her family, will be on her own. 

**Sewa Bhattarai, Rautahat**



## NEPAL TARAI LEARNS FROM PAST FLOODS

PAGE 14-15



WORLD'S BEST AIRLINE

**Experience Australia like never before**

Journey beyond wild coastlines and vast horizons, across the Martian red sands of the outback. Catch sight of koalas and kangaroos. Explore lush northern rainforests, or the vivid coral gardens of the Great Barrier Reef. Adventure is written into the history of Australia.

Contact our sales office at +977 1 4440467 or your preferred travel agency

[qatarairways.com](http://qatarairways.com)



**QATAR**  
 AIRWAYS القطرية  
 GOING PLACES TOGETHER



# FLOOD OF RECRIMINATION

It is that time of year again when we start getting inundated with news about floods. With the advent of the monsoon, floods, landslides and other water-induced ‘natural disasters’ will once more ‘wreak havoc’ throughout the land. But while floods are natural, disasters are not. Nepal has nine dry months, and three months in which we have too much water. In the rainy season, rivers used to spread along the floodplains, dissipating the force of the water. Nepalis traditionally knew better than to locate settlements on river banks. In the agrarian Tarai, farmers had learnt to live with floods and welcomed the annual replenishment of farms with vital, water-borne nutrients.



BIKRAM RAI

There were years when natural buffers would be overwhelmed and rivers burst their banks, eroding valuable farmlands as they changed course. But we have turned a predictable annual occurrence into a regular calamity because of bad planning. More than half of Nepal’s population now lives in the Tarai, and human settlements have encroached on what used to be floodplains. Deforestation of the fragile Chure hills has increased sediment loads on seasonal rivers, causing them to flow through villages and farms. A river will find its own way to the sea no matter what we do to block its path. It is true that floods are getting more destructive, but not just because there is more rain. Our attempts to control floods are making them worse. Levees built to ‘train’ rivers end up constricting their flows, embankments often act as dams blocking the natural course and submerging huge tracts of farmlands. Roads have been built on elevated land to prevent them from being submerged, but they just make the floods worse. Many roads just on the other side of the border in India have inadequate drainage and create vast reservoirs on the Nepal side every year. Meanwhile, tv news bulletins in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh blame Nepal for releasing water from its dams — not bothering to explain that Nepal has only one reservoir and the sluice gates of the three border barrages are under Indian management. After every disaster like Sunsari

Floods are natural, disasters are not.

(2008), Bardia and Surkhet (2014), Saptari and Rautahat (2017) and Bhaktapur last year, there is a flood of recrimination, blaming nature and bemoaning our lack of preparedness. Rescue agencies are usually at the scene quickly, but are overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the disaster. Relief and rehabilitation is mired in bureaucracy and corruption, with villagers still waiting for help decades later. Poverty-stricken farmers are impoverished even more, and floods force many to migrate. Once the monsoon tapers off in September, we will forget about floods for another year. Instead of taking preventive measures to improve drainage and poorly designed infrastructure that block the natural

flow of rivers, it will be back to business as usual. Most of the flood damage in the Tarai is not caused by Nepal’s four big rivers, but by Chure streams that are dry most of the year and become raging muddy torrents during the monsoon. The paradox is that boulder and sand mining in the Chure hills to feed the infrastructure boom in Nepal and

India actually make these floods more destructive in the Tarai and downstream in India. As we learn from a field report from Rautahat this week (*see pages 1, 14-15*) most flood victims are poor, and neglecting them comes naturally to the state. Because not enough is being done to prevent destructive floods, relief agencies are turning attention to early-warning systems and the management of disasters after they happen. Making all these problems more difficult is the climate crisis, which is leading to more extreme weather events. Monsoon cloudbursts are said to be more frequent and intense, causing localised flooding. And then there are disasters like the Sunsari flood, which have nothing to do with heavy rainfall or global warming, but are caused by contractors stealing boulders from the Kosi’s eastern levee, thus weakening the embankment.

Sunsari was just a rehearsal for a future Kosi mega-flood that is waiting to happen, and will hit millions in Nepal and India. It is a given that floods elsewhere will also get more destructive in the years to come. Preventing them requires an understanding of nature’s ways, and letting rivers flow free again. With federalism, flood prevention, management and emergency relief is no longer just the responsibility of the Kathmandu apparatus. In fact, first responders by definition have to be local governments, and the state needs to enhance their flood prevention and management capacity.

## 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Ten years ago this week, in issue #457 of 19-25 June 2009, Everest summiteer Billi Bierling wrote a story titled ‘The Bright Side of Everest’. Her words could as valid today:

*‘Mount Everest often gets bad press for commercialisation and the lack of morality of its climbers. But I saw a different side this spring. On 22 May, two mountaineers from Austria and the Netherlands found an American climber sitting at the Balcony, just above Camp 4, at about 8,400m. He was clearly confused, and he had taken off his gloves and parts of his down suit. Had these two climbers not helped, the man would have died.*

*Several doctors saved the life of a Sherpa, who nearly died after he had consumed a bottle of whiskey adulterated with methanol. There are gruesome books about Mt Everest: the commercialisation, greed, selfishness and crime. This season, I saw none of that, only humanity, generosity and courage. If I were to write a book about Everest (which I promise I will never do) I’d probably call it ‘The Bright Side of Everest.’*



## ONLINE PACKAGES



SHANTI CHAUDHARY

In this month’s Lightroom Conversation with Muna Gurung, writer Shanti Chaudhary talks about her life’s struggle for dignity and acceptance within society and her own community. Listen to her read an excerpt from her poem. Story *page: 11*.



CANNABIS WEAR

Hippies flocked to Nepal in the 1960s and ‘70s, drawn by the freedom to buy and smoke pot. But today, tourists are attracted by t-shirts, shawls and jackets made from the marijuana plant. Learn all about the nature-friendly hemp fabric and how it can be made into at least 100 types of high-end products. Story: *page 8-9*.

### BAD GOVERNANCE

This Editorial highlights some of my frustrations with Nepali politics right now (‘Own worst enemy’, Editorial, #965). Such a contrast working with inspiring entrepreneurs and then this government that lacks a true vision to move Nepal ahead.

Bahar Kumar

■ Communism isn’t working the way people were told it would. That’s shocking. Tim Pawlowski

■ Bad news. Sounds similar to what is happening in ‘democratic’ USA. Mary Ann Irvine

■ Which communist government in the history has allowed free speech or press freedom? A part of communist principles has always been repression of the press and freedom of speech. What we are seeing today in democratic countries is due to elected authoritarians. Rajeev Shrestha

### BHUTANESE REFUGEES

Nice piece (‘Who stands with Bhutanese refugees in Nepal?’, Bhuan Gautam and T P Mishra, #965). I am puzzled at how the international community continues to share the burden of refugee resettlement without putting any due pressure on the countries responsible for the refugee crisis in the first place. By turning a blind eye, the West and especially the US is doing injustice and encouraging bad behaviour. Bikash Chhetri

Bhutanese refugees share the love of their culture with us, while working hard to assimilate and assume the responsibilities of living here. They give back to both their ethnic community and the greater community at large. It saddens me greatly to think of the 7,000 left behind in Nepal. Jo Ann Radicchi

### KAKREBIHAR

I lived in Surkhet for five years and had seen this archaeological site progressively deteriorate (‘Buddhist relics in Western Nepal’, Sewa Bhattarai, #963). There is so much incredible history in Nepal’s hinterland....if only there were a concerted effort to find, catalogue and protect them. Iván G. Somlai

## WHAT'S TRENDING

### Himalayan meltdown from space

by Nina Pullano  
Proof that the climate crisis worries our readers is the fact that the story on US spy satellite images confirming accelerated Himalayan glacier melting was the most popular on our Facebook wall. Most followers clicked the link to read the story from Inside Climate News.

Most reached and shared on Facebook



### Motorcycle grandma

by Gopal Gartaula  
The story of 61-year-old biker Pushpa Lata Acharya astride her powerful 350cc Bullet made quite an impression on readers this week. This easy-riding grandmother of three defies tradition and norms and is vocal about women’s empowerment and rights. Go online for her profile.

Most popular on Twitter

### Own worst enemy

Editorial  
The Nepal Communist Party does not need enemies. It is doing its best to undermine itself. The ruling party is steadily squandering its two-thirds mandate with every act of omission, every speech by Prime Minister KP Oli, and by every bill he tries to ram through Parliament. Visit our website to read the hard-hitting Editorial and join in the online discussion.

Most commented

Most visited online page

## QUOTE TWEETS

**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes  
Irony of ironies: under a federal system that has theoretically devolved power to local governments, we have a government that is nearly as centralised as the Rana oligarchy. And it is displaying similar autocratic tendencies.

...

**Dipak Gyawali** @dipak\_gyawali  
Where in the world have you seen a communist government decentralizing power beyond its politburo dictatorship? I would have thought Chile under Allende but that was snuffed out.

**Princi Koirala** @princi\_koirala  
Editorial on point.

**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes  
UNHCR is likely to shut down the remaining camps, but #Nepal Govt has yet to advance long-pending repatriation. Resettlement program also ended in 2018. A #humanitarian crisis is likely to unfold, write former #refugees.

...

**Deepak Adhikari** @DeepakAdk  
On #WorldRefugeeDay TP Mishra and Bhuvan Gautam, former Bhutanese refugees, write about the uncertain future facing their fellows--around 7000, who still live in the camps. Via @NepaliTimes

Weekly Internet Poll #965

Q. Do you approve of Prime Minister KP Oli's performance so far?

Total votes: 228

Yes: **12%**  
No: **78%**  
Can't say: **10%**

Weekly Internet Poll #966  
To vote go to: [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)

Q. Is the country better prepared this year for annual monsoon floods?



Nepali Times on Facebook  
Follow @nepalitimes on Twitter  
Follow @nepalitimes on Instagram

Publisher and Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit  
Digital Producer: Sonia Awale, Design: Kiran Maharjan  
Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd | Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu  
editors@nepalitimes.com | [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com) | [www.himalmedia.com](http://www.himalmedia.com) | Tel: 01-5005601-08 Fax: +977-1-5005518  
Marketing: Arjun Karki, Surendra Sharma [rachanas@himalmedia.com](mailto:rachanas@himalmedia.com) | Subscriptions: Santosh Aryal [santosh@himalmedia.com](mailto:santosh@himalmedia.com)  
Printed at Jagadamba Press | Production Plant: 01-5250017-18 | City Office: 01-5529210-11 | [www.jagadambapress.com](http://www.jagadambapress.com) | [sales@jppl.com.np](mailto:sales@jppl.com.np)





A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

Special Business Class Fares Are  
**ON AIR**



**FROM KATHMANDU  
TO SELECTED  
AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN DESTINATIONS\***

Starting From **NPR 161000\*\***

**Ticketing Period:**  
Until - 15 August 2019

**Travel Period:**  
Until - 30 September 2019



**TURKISH AIRLINES**

For details please contact your nearest travel agency  
or Turkish Airlines Sales Office Kathmandu: 01-4438363 | 4438436 | ktmsales@thy.com  
\*Europe: Amsterdam - Barcelona - Athens - Brussels - Budapest - Copenhagen - Helsinki - Madrid - London - Zurich - Geneva - Warsaw  
America: Boston - Chicago - Miami - Newyork - Washington  
\*\*Taxes not included



# Fixing what ain't broke

Let us hope the government learnt the lesson not to tamper with what has preserved Nepal's unique cultural heritage for centuries

The Nepal government, which has done a dismal job managing public sector cement plants, trolley buses, cloth and shoe factories and many more, decided to nationalise the ancient *guthi* system of community trusts that manage festivals and shrines.



The residents of the Kathmandu Valley are well aware of the government's poor track record. They were already outraged by homes being bulldozed to widen roads, and holy places being excavated for highways. Plus, the government was unable and unwilling to deliver water supply or to clean Kathmandu's polluted air. Instead, it tried to fix something that was not broken: the *guthi* system. That was the last straw.

The people of the Valley set aside party affiliation and showed unity in numbers because this is the only language that the rulers in Kathmandu seem to understand. While the initial demand was to scrap the *Guthi* Bill, by the time of the 19 June march the protesters wanted more: the resignation of ministers who called the *guthi* system "feudal" and labelled demonstrators "hired crowds".

The anger stemmed from the fact that one of the ministers was from a community that has benefited from the caste system, while another was from a group that has been the victim of the tradition of bonded



BIKRAM RAI

labour in west Nepal.

Many of us are members of *guthis* set up by our ancestors. Us Chitrakars make colourful dance masks for the Valley's numerous festivals, paint paubha, temples, stupas and the eyes on the wheels of the great chariots before they roll.

The *guthi* system evolved as a result of the agricultural surplus from Kathmandu Valley's fertile soil. We had beyond what we needed to live, and dedicated

this to maintain a globally unique system to sustain our culture.

A positive aspect of the protests was the way people took responsibility for their actions. No one stepped on the sacred mandala at Maitighar, people offered water and flowers to riot police on duty, the crowd parted to let ambulances pass, there was music and dancing, and there were no political party flags but plenty of Nepali flags. And the best part was a clean-

up campaign when it was over that left the venue cleaner than it was before. With the march, we set a whole new standard for future protests, and there is proof that the *guthi* system and Nepal's heritage are in good hands.

Let us hope that the government elected by the people, and supposedly for the people, has learned its lesson, and that the state applies restraint in future instead of deploying riot police to suppress

peaceful demonstrators. One day the leaders will be on the other side with the people. The PM, who does not seem to have a sense of when and what to say, asked protestors disparagingly not to go running to Maitighar at the first sign of trouble. The name of the Mandala Square comes from a movie of the same name, and literally connotes the parental home of a married woman.

Perhaps the only thing that will save the Prime Minister from a political backlash in Kathmandu is that his wife is from the Newa community. Time will tell how the Newa will assert their new unity. Gone are the days when the Valley's educated middle class stayed on the sidelines and watched the decline of this country and its culture.

The young people are going to be responsible and hold rulers accountable. They have set an example by showing their patriotism, and also by demonstrating that they are not out to make a quick buck or grab a piece of land at the expense of their heritage.

The *guthi* has effectively conserved Nepal's globally unique, built and cultural heritage for thousands of years. There are short-term thinkers who are motivated by greed and ignorance to grab the land and assets associated with this ancient system. The recent protest and 'people power' pushed them back temporarily. But the greed is not gone, and we have to be constantly vigilant. 🇳🇵

**Anil Chitrakar** is the President of Siddharthinc. 1/2 Full is his fortnightly column in Nepali Times.



PHOTOS: THE YARD

## Great outdoors at The Yard

No one would guess that a residential neighbourhood in Sanepa housed an outdoor continental and Italian restaurant if they did not see the small yellow arrows with the words 'The Yard' pointing the way.

A white fence and an open door leads into a garden full of wooden picnic benches and a patio, as the speaker plays old English songs that set the mood to relax and enjoy

food with a glass of wine. The rustic outdoor feel of the place with its Mediterranean menu makes it stand out from the other eateries in the area.

The Yard was born out of three partners' passion for the culinary arts. Co-owners of a B&B in Jhamel, they had to shut that business after the 2015 earthquake damaged the building. On the hunt for a new location, they finally found an

abandoned place with tall unkempt grass. They planned to turn into a B&B with a small cafe, but it ended up as a restaurant.

"The earthquake gave us an opportunity," recalls Abishek Thapa, co-owner of The Yard. "But it was a challenge to turn what is in your head into reality."

The new space offered the natural ambience that they hoped to create. "We wanted to create an experience of eating outdoors. The senses are alert and while eating, the senses of food are alive," says Thapa.

The main menu was designed after a month of food tasting. Among the dishes, bruschetta, chicken schnitzel, Aglio e Olio and salads from an in-house kitchen garden are the most popular.

The bruschetta with its mushroom and tomato topping explodes with flavours of garlic, olives, mushrooms and tomatoes. The schnitzel is a golden, crispy chicken breast served with a choice of fries or mashed potatoes and a side of salad or steamed vegetables. It is crunchy and the organic vegetables are fresh and tasty. Aglio e Olio, a traditional Italian pasta, is a simple dish with garlic, olive oil, parsley and basil.

"We changed the menu six months ago. Bruschetta was kept while the dishes that were not moving were changed," says Chef Senu Ranjit Shrestha.

Just to remind you that you are still in Kathmandu, the Yard also serves sukuti and momo.

The restaurant has been hosting live shows on special occasions, such as the birthday of famous artists like Bob Dylan and Narayan Gopal and festivities like Holi. "Live shows are not a usual thing for us, just on special occasions. Other times, the atmosphere of this place is quiet and nice to come and relax," says Thapa. 🇳🇵 **Reeti K.C.**

prabhu BANK

BIZ BRIEFS

### Turkish Dreamliner

Thirty brand new Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft will join the Turkish Airlines fleet over the next four years. Regarded as one of the most advanced aircraft in terms of passenger comfort and fuel efficiency, the



### World Music Day

Aloft Kathmandu Thamel announced its Live at Aloft music series at the 2019 edition of 'Fete De La Musique' commemorating World Music Day, hosted by the Alliance Française de Katmandou on Friday at the Chhaya Devi Complex, Thamel. Live at Aloft is an internationally acclaimed concert series celebrating emerging and veteran artists.

### Make a difference

Radisson Hotel Kathmandu organised the Nepal version of the 'Make a Difference Campaign' on 19 June. The global campaign by Radisson Hotel Group, adapted by all member hotels, donated \$1 per room night to SOS Children's Villages. For its part, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu donated \$901 to SOS Children's Villages, Sano Thimi.

### Qatar expands

The first passenger flight of Qatar Airways to Portugal landed in Lisbon on 24 June 2019. QR343 was greeted with a water cannon salute on arrival. Portuguese Ambassador to Qatar Ricardo Pracana, and Qatar Airways Chief Commercial Officer Simon Talling-Smith were on board, the fourth new destination to be introduced by the airline this summer.

prabhu BANK



# How to restore the lure of Everest

Legendary British mountaineer offers solutions to overcrowding on the summit this spring

Doug Scott



I have been lured to Nepal many times, as much by the Himalayan landscape as to be with the mountain people. It is the people, more than the mountains, who bring visitors back to Nepal.

I realised this during two visits in 1972 and again during our first ascent of the southwest face of Mt Everest in 1975 (*above*). That was also when Nepal's first tourism master plan was drafted.

With increased global mobility, everyone today can sign up to the experience of the Himalaya. Mass tourism means that you should not go to the popular areas of the Himalaya these days to find solitude. Not even to the top of Mt Everest.

Trekking trails are no longer places of peace and spiritual renewal, due to the constant distraction of fellow trekkers. Most trails offer 'selfie' spots and wifi or phone signals so hikers can upload instantly on Instagram. This social media publicity in turn brings more tourists. At the height of the tourist season it is now hard to take a photo without capturing another trekker in the shot, or to make your hike a walking meditation.

How to reverse this situation and return

to the most beautiful and dramatic mountain landscape on the planet, to a place where the mountain people are not overwhelmed by the sheer number of visitors, and those who come are not disappointed?

What is the carrying capacity of the Everest Trail and other popular destinations? Experts on environmental impact, tourism and local culture can advise on how to enforce restrictions without causing offence to visitors or reducing local incomes.

There have been reports of insurance fraud involving climbers being rescued by helicopter. This is already hurting tourism, and will ultimately affect local incomes. The sector needs to be effectively cleaned up.

Pre-1986, there was one expedition per season per route, which was wonderful. Now, people are impatient and want to rush to achieve their goals and move on. Why should Everest be treated any differently than Mount Blanc or the Matterhorn? Because it is a holy mountain for locals, it is the highest in the world and of universal value. We have to protect not just the mountain's sanctity, but also what is sacred to mountaineering by respecting the style of the first ascents.

After this year's fiasco, it seems inevitable that the number of permits will be limited to reflect the carrying capacity of the mountain, as is done on Mt Denali. The challenge is to protect the mountain from the tyranny of numbers and accommodate those who have come to rely on Mt Everest and other popular mountains for their income.

The commercialisation of Everest and other Himalayan peaks is largely unplanned and uncontrolled. This could change if the Nepal government issued permits only to climbers who have summited at least one other 7,000m peak elsewhere in Nepal. Teams could be allocated certain climbing days, although this may not go down well with those on the mountain during bad weather periods. Agents who have previously acted incompetently or have transgressed on Everest could be blacklisted. And finally, permit fees can be increased.

Once we have restored serenity to mountains, we can work to use climbing royalties to improve the working conditions of Nepali guides by ensuring full insurance cover, and a welfare/compensation board to cover accident and death. A well-

remunerated mountain rescue group made up of elite mountain guides can be set up, and employed to fix and remove ropes for each climbing season. High-altitude porters and guides could be paid for collecting, sorting and recycling rubbish and waste from the mountain.

If Everest hopefuls climb elsewhere in Nepal, it will spread the benefits of mountaineering to other parts of the country. Encouraging tourism to less visited areas at less busy times of the year could reduce congestion on Everest. As new motorable roads replace trekking routes, this is starting to happen anyway.

Climbers used to visit Nepal seeking new peaks and routes, drawn by venturing where no one had been before. There are still more unclimbed peaks over 6,000m than those that have been summited, yet everyone wants to be on Everest, which has been climbed out. 🇳🇵



Doug Scott is an English mountaineer noted for the first ascent of the southwest face of Mt Everest in September 1975.

INTERNATIONAL PAN ASIAN RESTO-LOUNGE



NOW OPEN  
MAMA'S GOT YOU COVERED.

Pan Asian Fare & Handcrafted Cocktails, like never before.

Call 014446299 / 014416850 for reservations.  
Lazimpat, Panipokhari (opp. Agni Group)

mamagotonepal mamagotonepal





# Ill-fitting

Exposing bellies under saris and other parts of the body politic

Sheilin Teo

Buying a bouquet for a friend's wedding the other day, I got really involved in the process of choosing the flowers, arranging the blooms and packaging them up. So much so, I was bent over and stooping about the little flower shop to find the right coloured ribbons, paper and paraphernalia.

That's when my husband noticed my clothes.

Light coloured, because I dressed to cope with the stifling summer heat of the valley, traces of my undies showed through when I leaned down to scrutinise some ribbons. He noticed. And according to him, others noticed too.

Should I feel ashamed that they did? Should I wear the burden of having males stare at my bottom when I happen to bend over, or stare at me when I walk? It's not often I'm scrounging about a small shop exposing my bum to the world. When I walk, the pants don't pull tight enough to look 'indecent' or 'vulgar'.

In a country where exposed bellies under the drapes of saris are normative, or push-up bustiers and sexy, diaphanous tailoring are to be seen at any given wedding or celebratory event across the city, why am I made to feel like I've committed a great sin by wearing my kind of fuss-free, breezy fashion that happens to be in a light colour and fabric?

Why should my girlfriends feel intimidated by people staring at them when they wear skirts or shorts cut above the knees?

It is no wonder to me that the abuse of women and girls in Nepal, and in the rest of the subcontinent, is prevalent.

If women are yoked with the responsibility of presenting

ourselves in ways that do not offend the male or conservative gaze, where would the blame lie should such offence be taken, I would ask. Also, should we start examining the dynamics of treating women and girls in ways that are harmful to their well-being, in the

name of tradition and religion and along class and caste strata?

Generally speaking, like other South Asians, many Nepalis are quick to judge and bred to not question the status quo. In a situation like mine, with a Nepali husband who by so many measures is modern in his mindset, I am constantly surprised at the sudden

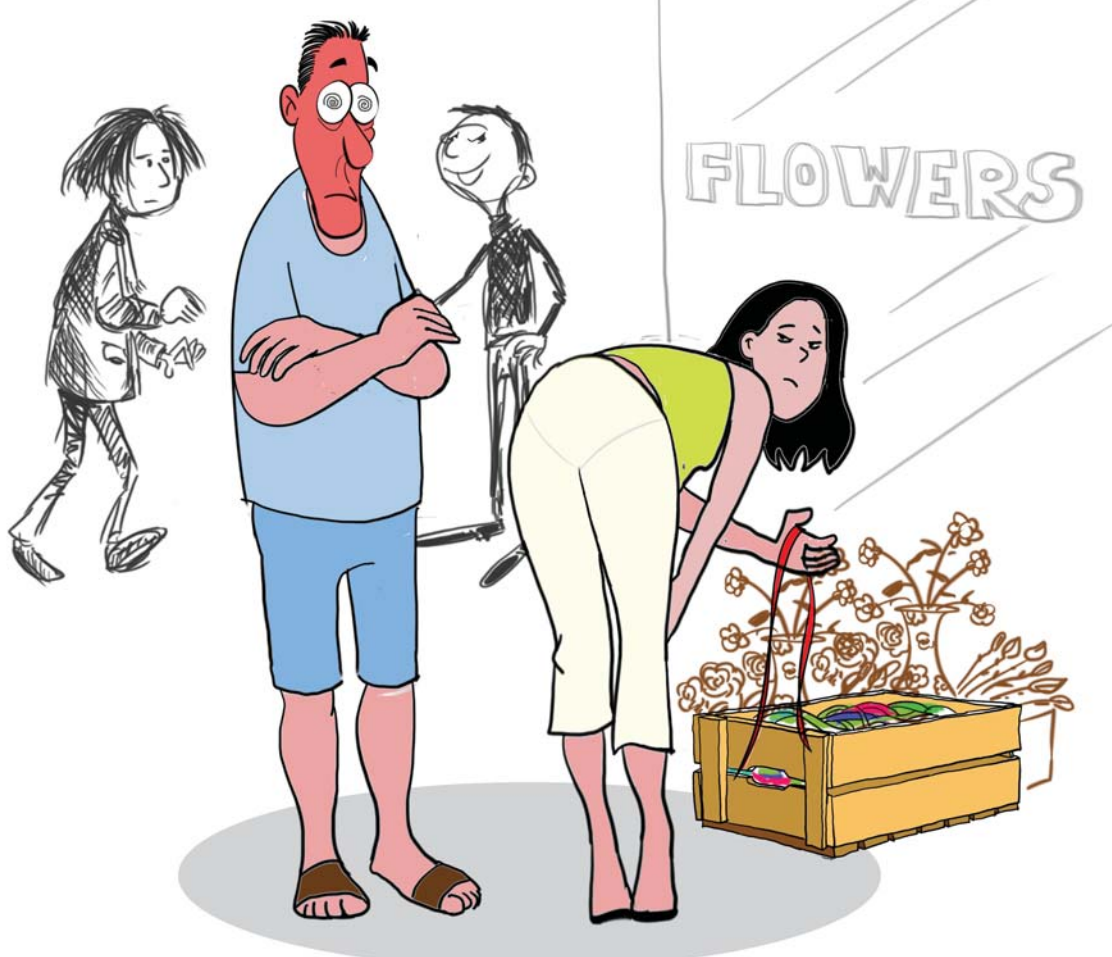
yanking of traditional mores at my ankles.

It's not like me to be too affected by it. I'll shake it off, like I'm doing now, but I'm irritated. I'll voice my disharmonising opinions, and I'll keep wearing what I want to, and doing what I need to, as long as I'm not hurting anyone to the best of my discretion. I'm a woman who knows herself and knows her self-worth as a human being.

However, there are many women brought up in this country who don't have the mindset that I do, perhaps fortunately for them, so that the harmony of life as they know it is maintained. I understand that unquestioning acceptance is often exercised in this culture I've chosen to be immersed in. But I do think it's healthy to question culture when it is domineeringly patriarchal, as it still is in this part of the world.

I question that in order to live harmoniously a woman has to give up her rights to be comfortable in her own skin, in how she chooses to look. She gives up her humanity, her security, her sexuality, her sensuality, her intelligence, her curiosity, just to please men and matriarchs, just to fit into a culture that validates only certain aspects of her entire nature.

Abuse of women in this culture will remain prevalent until the men and women of power speak up and act out against it, and until the downtrodden powerless learn to voice their *dukha* beyond the strains of sad folk songs. I am not of your culture, but I'm affected by it. This is my voice. 🇳🇵



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

## हिमाल

साप्ताहिक गवर्पत्रिका

### बार्षिक ग्राहक योजना !



हिमालको ग्राहक बन्नुहोस् र चन्द्रागिरी केवल कारको दुई वटा टिकट  
अथवा

रु. १०००/- बराबरको क्यालिवर सूजको गिफ्ट भौचर लिनुहोस् ।



पाटनढोका, ललितपुर, मोबाइल: ९८४९२४८८९४, ९८५१०५४७२९,  
फोन: ५००५६०१-०५, फ्याक्स: ९७७-१-५००५५१८, पोखरा: ९८५६०४५८६३

**कानून** बमोजिम लिनुपर्ने इजाजत नलिई वा इजाजत पत्र नवीकरण नगराई वा इजाजत प्राप्त व्यक्तिको मृत्युपश्चात् हकवालाको नाममा नामसारी नगराई वा अन्य जुनसुकै तरिकाले नेपाल राज्यभित्र कोही कसैले अवैध हतियार र खरखजाना राखेको भए यो सूचना प्रकाशित भएको मितिले ३५ (पैंतीस) दिनभित्र नजिकको प्रहरी चौकी, जिल्ला प्रहरी कार्यालय वा नेपाली सेनाको ब्यारेकमा अनिवार्य रूपमा बुझउनु हुन नेपाल सरकार(मन्त्रिपरिषद्) को मिति २०७५/११/१८ को निर्णय अनुसार यो सूचना प्रकाशित गरिएको छ ।

यसरी हातहतियार र खरखजाना बुझउनु ल्याएमा यसअघि ती अवैध हातहतियार र खरखजाना राखेको कारणलेमात्र त्यस्ता व्यक्तिलाई कुनै कानूनी कारबाही नचलाइने हुँदा तोकिएको समयभित्र अवैध हातहतियार तथा खरखजाना अनिवार्य रूपमा बुझउनुहुन सम्बन्धित सबैमा जानकारी गराइन्छ । यदि इजाजत प्राप्त नगरी आफूसँग रहेका हातहतियार तथा खरखजाना तोकिएको अवधिभित्र स्वेच्छाले नबुझएमा त्यस्ता व्यक्ति उपर प्रचलित कानून बमोजिम कारबाही हुने व्यहोरा समेत सूचित गरिन्छ ।



नेपाल सरकार  
सञ्चार तथा सूचना प्रविधि मन्त्रालय  
सूचना तथा प्रसारण विभाग

ACCA Think Ahead

Take a step that takes  
your career places.

**Go further.**

Register now for £30 (save £49)



For registration  
scan the QR code

Great Opportunity  
2,291  
approved  
employers

Global Reputation  
48,000 students  
and 200,000 members  
in 178 countries

Global Influence  
Over 80  
accountancy partnerships  
worldwide

Flexible Learning  
Full-time,  
part-time, self-study  
options

Robust Support  
System  
Student contact centre  
operating 24x7

www.accaglobal.com/nepal/indemand

977 1 5551126

infonepal@accaglobal.com





The monsoon got a bit sidetracked there by Cyclone Vayu and arrived on the west coast of India and the Bangladesh coast a week late. This pushed back the ETA for Kathmandu by another 10 days. What we had last weekend was a faux-monsoon, which sneaked in from the south. Friday, and into the weekend, we will get rains that are the real thing. Just in time for Paddy Planting Day on 30 June.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
28° 19°	26° 19°	26° 18°

Going places together - [qatarairways.com](http://qatarairways.com)

# They have stories to yell

The StoryYellers platform taps into every Nepali's desire to tell, and hear, a good story



THE STORYYELLERS

With its strong oral tradition, Nepal is a country of storytellers and listeners. Holding a steaming cup of chiya, a storyteller recites past adventures or tales about the best and worst days of her life, at roadside tea stalls, or under a *chautari*. Curious bystanders huddle together to listen. The crowd grows larger as more passersby join in. But stories had never been yelled on stage — until August 2016, when The StoryYellers launched a platform for those who wanted to tell their stories.

“I tell stories and help others tell theirs,” says Prashanta Manandhar (*above*), who explains that The StoryYellers started out as a joke, after a friend asked him why only ‘important’ people got a platform. By then, Manandhar and partners were already running The Storytellers, another stage for successful ‘local heroes’.

Today, the bi-monthly The StoryYellers is held at 25 Hours in Tangal, and features people from all walks of life describing the one incident that has created the biggest impact on their lives. Speakers either volunteer using an online form or are hand-picked by the team, which selects speakers from various professions. There is a rigorous process of story framing and rehearsal before the live show, and the team makes sure that the tale is told like a traditional story, with a plot, characters, conflict and resolution.

Manandhar rejects comparisons with TED Talks, explaining that The StoryYellers is more about personal stories well told, while the global platform is more about ideas.

The fact that The StoryYellers took off from its very first performance is proof that there was indeed a demand for just such a platform. Tickets have sold well, and the stories are

getting popular on social media, with viewers in 150 countries. However, Manandhar does not want to transform the show into an online-only event:

“Personal interaction is very important to us. It makes the shows much more intimate, and we do the show even if there is only one audience member.”

The event goes beyond telling a good story, challenging speakers to dig into the most important part of themselves, and then share that publicly.

“I spoke about my relationship with my parents after my experience with Solo Woman Travel,” recalls Menuka Gurung, who took the stage in March. “I had never spoken about this to anyone and talking about it on the stage made me very nervous even though public speaking is my thing. I think I was scared because this time, I was speaking about me.”

Gurung says she felt relieved after sharing her story, regardless of whether it inspired people in the audience.

The StoryYellers team also runs other platforms, such as Comedy Specials (stand-up comedy), College Edition (stand-up and storytelling) and Story Craft (inter-school storytelling competition). It plans to take StoryYellers to a national and then global stage, and conducted a session in Pakistan on March 2019.

About 150 speakers have made it to The StoryYellers stage to date, including well-known names like Ayushman Joshi, Neetesh Jung Kunwar, Swoopna Suman, Nattu Shah, Evana Manandhar and Jyotsna Yogi. Asked why he does it, Manandhar has a simple answer: “To inspire change through stories and help the world learn about Nepal.”

**Reeti K.C.**



245 (50 HD)  
Channels

at just **RS. 258**  
per month

25 + 245 (50 HD)  
Mbps Channels

at just **RS. 1216**  
per month

**SUBISU**  
GIGfiber  
[www.subisu.net.np](http://www.subisu.net.np)

**clear tv**  
[www.cleartv.com.np](http://www.cleartv.com.np)





# Clothed in cann

The weed may be illegal, but hemp fabric is catching on

**Pema Sherpa**

Hippies flocked to Nepal in the 1960s and '70s, drawn by the freedom to buy and smoke pot. But today, tourists are attracted by t-shirts, shawls and jackets made from the marijuana plant.

While there are still weed pushers on the streets of Thamel trying to sell you a smoke, the tourist hub is now better known for designer apparel made from a blend of cannabis fibre and cotton.

"In my business cannabis isn't illegal. If cannabis was illegal then we wouldn't



have these products on sale," says Yubaraj Timilsina, who started out as a vegetable vendor and now owns Hemp Headquarter, which manufactures and runs a wholesale shop for cannabis-based attire.

Timilsina and others who deal in cannabis fabric source their products from western Nepal, where marijuana cultivation is permitted for hemp production, under strict supervision of the local police. Western Nepal suffered greatly from the US-induced ban on cannabis in the 1970s, when already impoverished farmers were pushed into deeper poverty because of the loss of their cash crop.

On 26 June, International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, instead of encouraging farmers to



## Wearing paper

Lokta paper is shredded, soaked, and drawn into thread to be woven with cotton or hemp to make shirts, jackets and sofa cushions.





PHOTOS: SONAM CHOEKYI LAMA/ PEMA SHERPA

# cannabis



plant hemp and start a local industry, police are destroying plants in Tanahu and Chainpur. “The cannabis bushes grow in the wild, they are not cultivated, and we collect the stems from which the fibre is sourced,” says Baburam Bohra from Bajura, the district known to produce the healthiest cannabis plants. While the shrubs can grow up to 3m tall, those harvested for fibre are cut before they flower, which means they cannot be used for smoking. The stems are soaked in water for 10 days so that the outer layer peels off, making it easier for the pulp inside to be extracted. The raw plant tissue is then boiled with ash and washed multiple times to produce fibre. The whole process takes up to three weeks, giving one roll of fibre 3m in length. Hemp fibre is dark tan or

brown and is difficult to bleach, but it can be dyed bright and dark colours. The fibre does not contain tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the naturally occurring psychoactive compound that gives cannabis its narcotic property, so it will not, for example, alert sniffer dogs at airports. Clothing and bags made from 100% hemp fabric can cost up to Rs10,000 depending on their design and size. Yet production is still limited with those bags that are made going mostly to Australia, Spain and Canada, which have legalised marijuana to varying degrees. “I come to Nepal every six months to buy hemp bags to sell them in Spain,” says Nacho Baranas, who owns a shop in Barcelona featuring handicraft from all over the world, including Nepal. Timilsina sells a variety of hemp-based



Traditional Nepali paper made from the bark of the lokta plant is used for legal documents because they are insect resistant. Now, one company in Nepal is also making shirts and jackets from the paper. Lokta pulp sourced from the mountains of Myagdi district are processed and pulled out into lokta thread which are then interwoven with other fabric like cotton or hemp to make items of clothing, cushions, tote bags and placemats. “We decided to experiment and do something different, and thought why not use

## Green Gold

In 1976, after American youth started flocking to Nepal by the thousands attracted by cheap and legal pot, Nepal was forced by the US government to ban the use and sale of marijuana. This threw thousands of farmers out of work, and made impoverished western Nepal even poorer. Today, while US states are legalising marijuana it still remains banned in Nepal. Ravi Pradhan is a Nepali consultant who has been advising the Cambodian government on legalising marijuana. He says it is absurd that the US government still classifies marijuana as a narcotic drug when experts agree on its medicinal properties and therapeutic effects. “For Nepali farmers it can be a green gold,” Pradhan told a recent conference in Kathmandu on legalising marijuana. Nepal’s Narcotics Drugs Control Act allows the use of the wildly grown cannabis plant, but it is vague and confusing, and its enforcement even more arbitrary. Activists are now pushing for legalisation of hemp cultivation so that plants can

be used to make fabric, and – that battle won – they say want to shift their focus to legalising ganja for medical use and even recreational consumption. The activists’ approach is to clearly show the difference between hemp and marijuana. Although they are both derived from the cannabis plant, their morphology, properties and uses are different. Marijuana is a variety of cannabis that contains tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Hemp, on the other hand, is a non-psychoactive variety of the cannabis plant. Because the leaves look like marijuana, however, most people cannot tell the difference. Sales of hemp products worldwide are expected to reach \$2.6 billion by 2022, with China being the world’s largest exporter. Hemp production in Nepal is not banned, but is limited. For example, businesses can only use wild plants. Although marijuana is classified as a narcotic drug, the oil is used traditionally as a muscle relaxant, the leaves are made into chutney, and it is an active ingredient in many ayurvedic products. Pawan Joshi produces hemp oil called Dava, which contains Omega 3 and 6. He says: “It is totally legal to produce the hemp oil as the hemp seeds are legal and the oil doesn’t get you high. We now need across-the-board legalisation of hemp.”



**Hemp:** A variety of Cannabis plant that grows up to 3m tall and contains less than 0.3% of THC. Fibre is used to make clothing and bags (*see large story*). **Ganja:** Marijuana in Nepali, Hindi and Sanskrit, used to denote both the drug and the Cannabis plant. **Bhang:** Edible form of marijuana made by crushing green leaves and buds of the Cannabis plant. Smoked and eaten at festival time in Nepal. **Hashish:** Also known as *charas* in the Subcontinent, is the resin made from rubbing Cannabis flowers and top leaves.

## POT VOCAB

**Marijuana:** Psychoactive drug made from the dried leaves and flowers of the Cannabis plant, contains tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Also known as weed, pot, grass, Mary Jane.

products, including bags, shawls, shirts, trousers and yoga bags. “Foreigners like our hemp bags because they are durable and all-natural,” he says. Thamel trader Prem Dahal is acknowledged by his peers as the pioneer of the hemp trade. He was inspired to take it up 28 years ago after travelling with shepherds in western Nepal and finding that their hardy mattresses were woven from cannabis fibre. “Hemp fabric is stronger, more absorbent and has better insulation against heat and cold than cotton,” Dahal explains. “Hemp is environmentally friendly.” Given that half the pesticide sprayed worldwide is in cotton plantations, hemp is a nature-friendly alternative fabric. The plant also prevents soil erosion on mountain slopes because of its thick deep root system, and the fabric can be made into at least 100 types of products. “If hemp was fully legal, and allowed to be grown on an industrial scale, it would be as valuable as gold,” says Dahal, who is critical of MPs from western Nepal who do not push for the

legalisation of marijuana, which would be a rare job booster. Timilsina sells up to 400 hemp bags per month, but sees another threat on the horizon: cheaper Chinese bags. 🇳🇵



Thamel has transformed from a smoker's den to a hub for hemp-based products. Listen to shopkeepers talk about the trade, and how it could do much better with more support from the government. [nepalitimes.com](https://nepalitimes.com)

lokta also for fabric and not just for paper products,” says Rita Bhandari of Nepal Paper Crafts, which has been exporting Nepali paper products. Bhandari collaborated with the Netherlands-based designer Janske Megens with whom she was the recipient of the Dutch Design Award 2008 for innovation and simplicity of design for Paper Text Cushion. Nepali paper clothing is most popular in Holland. “Lokta fabric is strong, can easily be dyed, printed, embroidered and washed. It will not get brittle with age and has natural insect repellent

properties,” adds Bhandari. Paper cloth is made from lokta thread as weft and weaved with allo, silk, cotton, hemp, wool fabric as warp. The warp on the cloth depends on customers’ order, and the whole process is natural and handmade which is their unique selling point. “They are popular in the West because it is all natural, the clothing is cool in summer and warm in winter,” says Bhandari, who is now exploring a larger international market for Made in Nepal paper fabric. **Pema Sherpa**



EVENTS



Rice Planting Festival

Celebrate rice-planting season by getting wet and playing with mud, while interacting with local tradition and, of course, planting rice; Newari cuisine is on the menu.  
29 June, 7am-4pm, Rs2,500 (adult), Rs1,200 (children up to 10), Khokana, Bungamati (01) 4219865, 9801123401

Nepali Travellers Hang Out

If you like travelling don't miss this hangout, where you can listen to travel stories and chat with the winner of the Solo Women Challenge. Have fun wall climbing and enjoying other adventure sports too.  
28 June, 4-6:30pm, Outdoor Adventure Centre Nepal, Thamel (01) 4433515

NexTalk

Join the conversation with visual artist Prakash Ranjit and Jagannath Lamichhane, an activist/life coach. This second season of the ArtTalk series focuses on artists' creative processes, mental health issues and the Juggernaut Mindset.  
28 June, 4-6pm, NexUs Culture Nepal, (01) 5522393

Mandala Workshop

Learn about lines, shape and colours, how to draw a variety of sacred geometry motifs, and make your own mandalas. Knowing the basic principles of a symbolic language encourages a better understanding of our connection to this beautiful universe.  
29 June, 11-3pm, The Zeroth Studios, Bhaktapur, 9841403661



Word Warriors Live

Word Warriors are back with 'Asare Jun'. The featured poet is Samip Dhungel, who will perform his famous poem 'Chura ko Geet'. The event will include a panel discussion on poetry writing and other performances.  
29 June, 2:30-5pm, Rs49, Umi Fine Dine, Bakhundole (01) 5010793



Wood Carving Exhibition

Enjoy this wood carving exhibition, The Art of the Newars of Nepal, by Indra Prasad Shilpakar from Bhaktapur, along with drawings of wood carvings by architect Bijaya Basukala.  
1 July, 4:30pm, Taragaon Museum, Boudha (01) 6201035

Sirani series II

A solo exhibition by Manish Lal Shrestha, Sirani - series II will run until 6 July.  
7 June-6 July, 5pm onwards, Dalaila Boutique hotel, Thamel, (01) 4701436



Reminiscences

Siddhartha Art Gallery presents an exhibition of paintings & drawings entitled Reminiscences by Ishan Pariyar. See page 12  
12 June-9 July, 11-5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited (01) 4218048

Indian Classical Dance

If you are into Indian classical dance, this workshop is for you. Participants will be introduced to classical art forms, with the primary focus on Bharatanatyam and Kathak.  
29-30 June, 5:30-6:30pm, Rs3,000/2,000, Sooriya Wellness & Yoga Centre, Lazimpat (01) 4001714

MUSIC

Neetesh Jung Kunwar

This Saturday come listen to Neetesh Jung Kunwar perform his beautiful songs. Opening for him will be the duo Tunna and Sangye.  
29 June, 5-11:45pm, Trisara, Lazimpat (01) 4410200

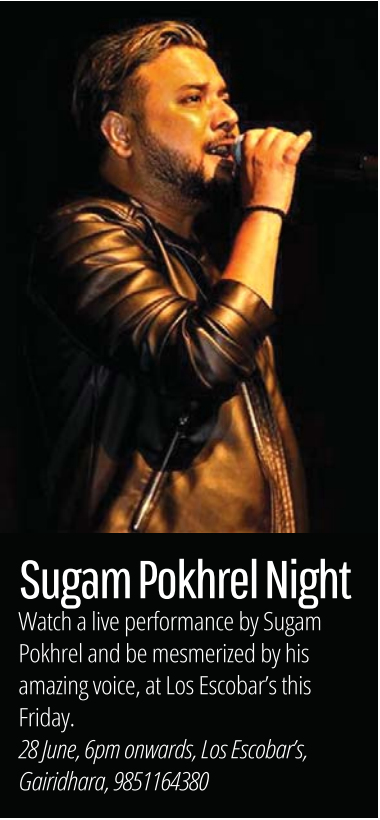


Monkey Temple

The band Monkey Temple is launching their 4th studio album, Ajambari, this weekend. Join the celebration of this new milestone in their musical journey.  
29 June, 4-7pm, Tangelwood, Naxal (01) 4428655

The Elements

Enjoy live music by The Elements and other artists this Friday. You can also take in a photo exhibition.  
28 June, 7-11pm, Rs300, House of Music, Thamel, 9849377915



Sugam Pokhrel Night

Watch a live performance by Sugam Pokhrel and be mesmerized by his amazing voice, at Los Escobar's this Friday.  
28 June, 6pm onwards, Los Escobar's, Gairidhara, 9851164380

Musical Muna Madan

Witness this musical presentation of Muna Madan by Shanti Thatal performed by Aavaas, Bimala Century Pradhan and Meena Niraula, with narration by Bhushita Vasistha.  
28-30 June, 5-8pm, Rs1,000, Nepa-Laya, Kalikasthan, 980391266

DINING



Imago Dei Café

The Nourish menu at Imago Dei features various options every weekday thoughtfully created with a healthy balance of nutrition and limited calories (approx. 500). Healthy food was never so good.  
8am-9pm, Nag Pokhari, Naxal, (01) 4442464

Family BBQ

After a long week, relax with your loved ones enjoying delicious food in the lovely garden and spilling your imagination onto a canvas. Every Saturday, 12-3:30pm, Rs1,800 (adult), Rs1,100 (children), The Chimney, Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg (01) 4248999



Achaar Ghar

Satisfy your desire for home-cooked meals, flavoured with an assortment of pickles prepared using recipes passed down through generations.  
10:45am-9:45pm, Jhamsikhel, Pulchok, (01) 5541952

Weekend Brunch

Have a splashing weekend in the swimming pool or just relaxing in the outdoor whirlpool and enjoy a wide variety vegetarian and non-vegetarian buffet spreads.  
Every Saturday and Sunday, 12:30-4pm, Rs2,699, The Cafe, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, (01) 5171234



Prazada

Enjoy Prazada's selection of chilled draught beers in the lush garden while tasting the special pizzas; accompanied by relaxing music on Fridays or a Pop-up market on Saturdays.  
12:30-9pm, Baluwatar, (01) 4410473

GETAWAY



Royal Singi Hotel

Distinctive and symbolic locally-crafted art elements of Tibetan culture add to the serenity and charm of the Potala suite at Royal Singi Hotel.  
Lal Durbar, Kamaladi (01) 4424190/ 4424191

Godavari Village Resort

Spread over 14 lush green acres, the resort offers mountain views and traditionally-styled cottages and buildings overlooking rice fields.  
Godavari (01) 5560675



Soalte Westend Premier

The new hotel stands out for its elegant architecture and interior design. It is the first hotel in Nepal certified Silver Category for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a designation awarded by the US Green Building Council for following strict energy-saving and eco-friendly criteria.  
Nepalgunj, (081) 551145



Hotel Yukhang

A new hotel built with Dachhi appa bricks from the Malla era and Bhaktapur's wooden crafts, for a royal and medieval touch to your stay.  
Thamel, (01) 4267358

Hotel Country Villa

From the top of the Nagarkot hill, the hotel provides spectacular views of greenery, sunrise and sunset, and showcases the mountain range on clear days. A natural and relaxing retreat for those wishing to escape the pandemonium of the city.  
Nagarkot, (01) 4700305, 9851192106



Heranya | Heranya Yala | Heranya Laku  
Uttar Dhoka, Lazimpat | 12th Century Courtyard, Patan | Durbar Square, Patan

Tel: 01-4412716, 98510 67168

info@hotelheranya.com | www.hotelheranya.com

OUR PICK

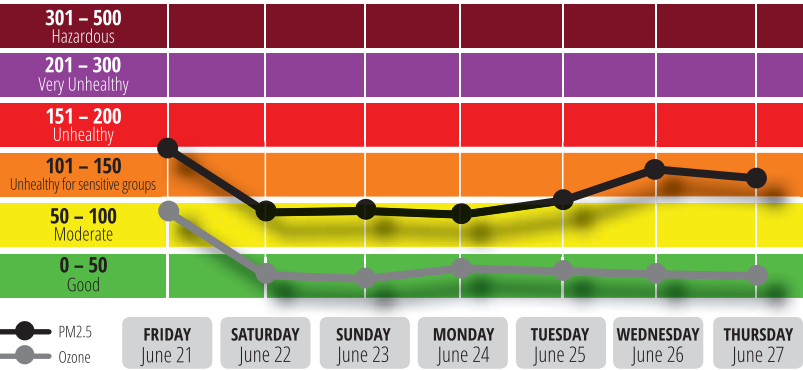


Opened in Kathmandu on 28 June

Appa takes you to the misty mountains of Darjeeling, where a taxi driver (Dayahang Rai) raises a founding of a different race (Siddhant Raj Tamang). It is the story of Appa, a single dad, and how his relationship with his adopted son changes over time. With pretty visuals of a familiar yet novel Indian location, the movie promises sentimental entertainment. Directed by Anmol Gurung, it also stars Allona Kabo Lepcha and Tulsi Ghimirey.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 21-27 June



For the first time this year, we are breathing relatively easier as the rains wash away the pollution. The effect of last weekend's rain is dramatically visible in the AQI graph (above), which shows the effect on the air lingering till Monday. After that, the rains stopped and the pollution levels rose again. But with the onset of the monsoon, there will be less particulate matter in the air and it will unquestionably be the best time to be in Kathmandu. Follow hour-by-hour live air quality on www.nepalitimes.com  
https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/



# Shanti Chaudhary: Poet-at-large

Shanti Chaudhary was born in 1955 in Kathmandu, where her father Radha Krishna Chaudhary was an influential person from Bara attending Tri-Chandra College. She is 63, and has written 65 books – many of them part report and part poems and songs, mostly written after the establishment of her Srijana Bikash Kendra (Creative Development Centre) where underprivileged women could share their sorrows, and gain income-generating skills.



**LIGHTROOM CONVERSATION**  
Muna Gurung

A lot of Shanti's early writing were specifically about raising awareness and educating her audiences. She was explicit about the nature of her poems and the way she hoped they would be used: in classrooms and trainings. She wrote about daughters and their plight in the Tharu community, poverty, child marriage, rape, drug addiction, justice, peace. Later, she spent many years writing biographies of leaders, both national and international. Shanti, the poet, is found in writings to her mother, to her fellow Tharu women or simply to herself. There is a song-like repetitious quality to these, that makes them sound fresh. It is her own brand of villanelle. In 1999, Shanti received the Rastriya Parijat Pratibha Puraskar (National Parijat Talent Award).

I meet Shanti Chaudhary in the quiet north wing of the library at the Department of Archaeology. She has her notebooks spread out before her on a large wooden table, and wears a black sleeveless coat over her sari. This is an essential part of a lawyer's identity, she says, ironing her coat with the flat palm of her hand. The tall ceiling of the room makes Shanti look smaller than she is. Behind her are rows of bookshelves neatly padlocked.

As Shanti tells me about her life, I keep interrupting her to ask about the timeline – When did that happen? Roughly which month, which year? This not only throws her off, it also proves useless because the math never does add up. Shanti tells me she had two children, but throughout she only speaks of one. Later, when I call her to verify, she tells me about her oldest son, who drowned when he was two. Then, right before I close the interview, I find out that Shanti is currently homeless. Suddenly her intimate knowledge of the library space and the way she hosts me as though we were sitting in her living room makes complete sense.

In this month's Lightroom Conversation, Shanti and I talk about justice and perseverance, home in the form of our own bodies and public spaces, and we question what literature is and who gets to create it.

**Shanti Chaudhary:** I had a happy childhood for the most part. Even after my father lost his government job at the Department of Forests because he raged against the Rana regime, and we had to move to a smaller house, I was happy. Every winter, we would go to Karahiya, our village in Bara district. The winter I turned 15, when we arrived in our village I saw that our house was freshly painted, and all the women were making beautiful designs on the walls. I loved drawing roses, so we decorated the entire house, and there were a ton of people milling about like it was some festival. Later, I found out that we were getting ready for my wedding that night.

**M: Wait, what?**

**S:** The women dressed me up and asked me to stay in my room, but when the janti arrived with noise and music, I ran out to see them. The women would drag me in and ask me to behave like a good bride. But I really wanted to see my groom. He was 27 years old, previously married and an alcoholic.

**M: Why would your father marry you off so suddenly, and that too, without your knowledge.**

**S:** My father was worried that he would not be able to find an educated Tharu man for me, and my husband was a 'graduate' then. He had finished high school.

**M: And you?**

**S:** I was in 9th grade. I remember coming to Kathmandu later to fill out the form for the SLC. I needed Rs100, but when I asked my brother he said, Why does a married woman need to pass SLC? I knew that the Nepal Academy was a refuge for writers and literature; I thought they would definitely help me. But I did not get any money from them. Later, when my family sent money for me to go back to Janakpur, I used that to fill out the form. In 1975, I finally passed my SLC exam.

**M: You were in Janakpur?**

**S:** Yes, both my husband and his brother had jobs at the cigarette factory, so we lived there for a few years. I already had a son by then. It was difficult living with my brother-in-law and his wife. Being the youngest daughter-in-law, I always had to eat last, and my meals were predominantly leftovers. I had to not only do all the housework, but also listen to my brother-in-law and his wife call me all sorts of names: they said I was a shameless woman who stood on the balcony looking at men, who went out of the house instead of looking after her child... it was endless. But I had begun to write about the pain and struggles of being a married Tharu woman. I would run to local newspapers in Janakpur and ask them to publish my poems.

**M: Did your family read these?**

**S:** No, but I will never forget the incident that changed our lives. We lived in a small community of Tharus, where we all had little plots of land in which we grew herbs. Because my coriander and onions grew larger than my sister-in-law's, my brother-in-law destroyed my garden and started calling me a prostitute. I was angry and hurt. That night, I left the house with my son determined to drown us both in the *talau* (pond) nearby. But as I sat there getting ready to jump in the water I got angry and thought, Why should I die? If I die, they will just continue living their lives and no one would know how they drove me to madness. These people should be punished. So at night, I set out to find the Chief District Officer (CDO). He was tall and fair, and I told him about my plight. He sent me home with some police officers, who brought my family out of the house and told them that they could not torment me anymore.

**M: Did that work?**

**S:** I still had to do all the housework, but they stopped saying nasty things to me for a while. I remember feeling like I had won. I don't know why my husband left the job in Janakpur, but his family insisted it was my fault, that I had urged him to leave. We moved back to his village, Gadahal, in Bara. I did not think that life could get worse. But ideas of touchables and untouchables were prevalent in the village, we had to wear *ghunghat* and cover more than half of our faces, we woke up before the sun and started our chores. For toilet, we had to walk half an hour to the river, and rich landowners regularly impregnated Tharu and Dalit women. These women would jump into the river and kill themselves.

**M: I guess sex is never an untouchable matter.**

**S:** You may not believe it, but there



SIKUMARA

have been countless cases of rich men killing people for beautiful Tharu and Dalit women, all for sex. I feel disgusted talking about all this. But it was moving back to the village that gave me more fuel. I saw my younger brother-in-law, Thakur Prasad, marry a 12 or 13-year-old girl through this terrible Tharu system of *kanyauti*. A widower, he could marry any girl from a poor family by giving them carts full of wheat in exchange. So he brought this little girl home and she would run away. And why wouldn't she? She was a child who was being raped every night.

**M: So how did you begin to speak against these practices?**

I began to write about what was happening in the village. Once I wrote a report, I would take it to the CDO office in Kalaiya. I wrote about the burden of the tax system for Tharus, about labour laws, about land rights, about women's rights... I was just writing what I was seeing. Soon, the rich and powerful began to despise me. They called me a communist, a Naxalite. My husband's relatives accused me of being a prostitute. They said I was going to Kathmandu, talking to men, and bringing back money. (Pauses). My husband was unemployed, and spent most of his time being drunk; if I did not bring home the money, who would? Meera Bhattarai, who had set up a women's skills organisation, paid me a monthly salary of Rs150 to bring Tharu handicrafts from my village to Kathmandu. That's how I bought food for my family.

I fled to Kathmandu because the CDO office produced a paper summoning me. Apparently, some rich landowners had complained. I brought my son and I stayed with my brother and his family in my old home. They did not like it. They asked me to go home to my husband. It was around this time that former attorney general, Sarbagya Ratna Tuladhar, paid me a monthly salary of Rs500 to work for him. I learned a lot about law through him. My son went to a school here in Kathmandu, and every winter he went to see his father. But one winter, school resumed but my son was not brought back. I went looking for him and found out that he had been sent to Janakpur.

**M: At the house of the same brother-in-law you had reported to police?**

**S:** Yes. But when I got there they would not let me see the child. So I went to the police again. But my brother-in-law told the police that I was a negligent mother who had left my husband and frequently interacted with different men, and that if my son stayed with me, he

would rot. They said the child's father had brought him to Janakpur and without his permission, they could not give the child to me. The police asked me to produce my husband. But I could not find him anywhere. I only saw my son later, when he was 18 in Janakpur. He had already become a man. We spent some time together. I bought him a watch. He still thinks I chose to leave him behind. He is here now in Kathmandu and I see him sometimes.

**M: And your husband?**

**S:** I heard he died. The last time I saw him was in 1980. (Pauses). I got really sick in 1983, and realised that I did not have anyone in my life to look after me. Then, like a sign, I saw an ad in the newspaper seeking a caretaker for three motherless children. It was a Newar man. I applied for the job and got it. I would bathe his three kids, make food for them and send them to school, all while working for the lawyer.

**M: And that's when you wrote most of your books.**

**S:** But my career as a social worker declined, too. Maybe if I was someone like Anuradha Koirala I would have been treated differently, but people started distrusting me and questioned where the money was coming from. Operations of large projects halted. (Pauses). You know, it is hard to live in a Tharu woman's body — you are never qualified enough to gain their trust, and your body is always at risk, always sexualised. I have realised that even as an older woman today with white hair, I am not safe. My age doesn't protect me.

**M: What does?**

**S:** Education. I thought that writing 65 books would bring to the Nepal Academy's attention, but that never happened. I spent some time reflecting on why that might be the case, and came away with three things: all academicians were highly educated and I only had an SLC degree, I was not affiliated to any political party, and perhaps I was not old and experienced enough. So, at 57, I enrolled at Padma Kanya to finish 11th and 12th grade, majoring in Nepali. But soon after, I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, so I had to lose a year. But I am strong now, and I am studying law. This is my second year.

**M: So you go to school every day?**

**S:** I go to college, yes. By 10am, I am done. I eat at the canteen there. They know me now and I can even eat on credit. Then I go to either the library in Jamal, or come here to study and do my work till the library closes. The library is my home, my temple. When I am here, I have shelter and safety. I have access to electricity, water and toilet.

**M: Despite your struggles with the state for all your social justice work, you still believe in this project of a nation.**

**S:** The country is innocent. It is the people who run it that make it hard for us. But, I have always believed in fighting for others. (Pauses). I did not think I would share this with you, but I have been homeless for the past month and a half now. Why? Because I live in Dakshinkali, where the CDO is building his home over indigenous Nagarkoti land. I am taking him to court. He did not like what I was doing, so he encouraged my landlord to kick me out of my apartment. I had to leave in the middle of the night with one sari and my backpack. I am staying with a few kind people. I do their dishes, clean and sweep their homes and they let me stay the night. It works for both sides. Also, they give me clothes – this blouse, this sari, and these slippers I am wearing are not mine. It is frustrating not to have my books when exams are around the corner, and to not be able to go to my own place, but we have to fight for the right thing, and for others. My time will come, but right not it is not about me. If we do not fight for others, what difference is there then, between us and dogs?

*Lightroom Conversation is a monthly page in Nepali Times profiling Nepali literary figures. Muna Gurung is a writer, educator and translator based in Kathmandu. For more of her work, visit [munagurung.com](http://munagurung.com). Full interview on [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)*

**Good Person**  
*Translated by Muna Gurung*

Hey, Good Person  
if you say,  
time might stop  
certainly, it will halt–  
I would go to my village to build a home.

I would go to my village and  
not to the city.  
I would build a home in my village that  
cannot be inherited  
by my own, but  
only by those who labour, those who serve.

Hey, Good Person  
you know what I will say then–  
I will say, Look, an ugly woman like me set  
an example

I would build a home in my village with  
simple, big thinking

14 March, 1997



Watch Shanti Chaudhary in conversation with Muna Gurung where she talks about her life's struggle against society and her own community for dignity and acceptance. Listen to her read an excerpt from her poem.




# Turbulent times



SEWA BHATTARAI

Ishan Pariyar did not intend for his exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery to coincide with the raging protests down the street against the *Guthi* Bill, but it so happened that it did. Pariyar’s series, started in 2015, seems prescient today: a crane moves in to dismantle heritage buildings, whose lion-like guardians rise up to form a protective guard of honour around the structures. Titled *Reminiscences*, the paintings are a voice raised for the protection of our culture and heritage, although the artist says he is not an activist. Most of his work depicts boats at sea. “Water is a symbol of time, and the boats are a symbol of

life,” says the artist. “I have used boats because they take you from one place to another. Here, the boats take us on the journey of life through time.” Many of the boats contain statues of deities: a golden Avalokiteswar and a large, red-hued Bhairav, among others. Pariyar says the deities symbolise our faith and the traditions they embody. As the boats ply vast bodies of water, sometimes gently floating and sometimes rocked by the waves, some deities floating as the boats capsize, the viewer gets the sense that the gods are delicate, fragile figures. They need protection, like our heritage. For Pariyar, it is all part

of looking back at history. He sees the deities as the end product of a long process of evolution, and believes that the faith they embody leads to spiritual growth. “Religious monuments are witness to different times and eras, and the moments we are breathing are the reminiscences for the future,” says Pariyar. “The eternal and invisible force of the divine is imprinted in our psyche, thus giving us inspiration to preserve these ancient monuments and beliefs.” Every inch of Pariyar’s paintings is covered by unique textures. The artist is from Pokhara, hence the images of boats, but unlike the colourful ones floating on Phewa Lake, his vessels are covered in wood carvings of Kathmandu’s monuments, in earthy browns and dark greys. Lion-like and garuda-like figures appear often protecting temples, the golden sculptures contrasting starkly with the watery background. The seas and oceans are rendered in minute, oval droplets, even when the colour ranges from a peaceful blue to menacing, stormy green. Pariyar says the texture is of a bitter gourd, because life is bitter and there is no option but to deal with it. However, the visual impact is not bitter — the droplets look pleasantly ornate. 

**Sewa Bhattarai**  
*Reminiscences, by Ishan Pariyar  
Siddhartha Art Gallery  
Until July 9*



PRADEEP GYAWALI/ TWITTER

**MEN ONLY:** Minister of Foreign Affairs Pradeep Gyawali with Nepali Consul Generals from around the world at the first meeting of Nepal’s consulates in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



LALIT SINGH / RSS

**WEEDING IT OUT:** Police in Chainpur, Sankhuwasaba district, destroy a cannabis plant on the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on Wednesday.



NABIN PAUDEL / RSS

**SURPRISE:** Child artists perform a traditional dance during a program organised by the China Cultural Centre Nepal in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



INDIAN EMBASSY

**POWER YOGA:** Participants hold a yoga demonstration at Pashupatinath Temple complex to mark International Yoga Day.



MONIKA DEUPALA

**PADDY NATION:** Farmers in Bhaktapur prepare for paddy planting on Thursday as the rains finally arrived. The monsoon has been delayed by 10 days this year.

M-Series Printers

EPSON  
EXCEED YOUR VISION

Get the most  
ECONOMICAL  
B/W PRINTERS ever

Best for Office and  
Commercial purpose

Just  
25  
PAISA  
per print

EPSON  
M200- PRINT / SCAN / COPY

EPSON  
M100- PRINT

Print upto  
8000 PAGES  
with initial starter ink kit

POWER SAVER  
JUST 12 WATTS  
POWER  
CONSUMPTION

WARRANTY  
UPTO 1 YEAR  
OR 50,000  
PRINTS

34 PPM  
HIGH  
SPEED  
PRINTING

MERCANTILE  
OFFICE SYSTEMS PVT. LTD.

Authorized Distributor:  
Hiti Pokhari, Durbar Marg  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: 1-4440773/4445920

Kathmandu Valley Dealers:  
Lazimpat : 4410423, New Road : 4220058  
New Road : 4227854, New Road : 4260173  
New Road : 4222384, Patan : 5536849  
Putalisadak : 4266820, Putalisadak : 4415788  
Putalisadak : 4227474, Putalisadak : 4436307  
Putalisadak : 4417050

Outside Valley Dealers:

Banepa : 011-660888, Biratnagar : 021-538729, Biratnagar : 021-532000  
Biratnagar : 023-540150, Butwal : 071-545399, Chitwan : 056-571764  
Dang : 082-561022, Dhangadhi : 091-523601, Dhangadhi : 091-521392  
Jankpur : 041-525565, Lahan : 033-561205, Mahendranagar : 099-523672  
Nepalguni : 081-527092, Pokhara : 061-525300, Surkhet : 083-522488  
Tulsiapur : 082-562575



# Taking away forests from communities



Bharati Pathak, Chair FECOFUN

ONLINEKHABAR.COM

## And now, the Community Forest Bill

Onlinekhabar.com, 17 June

onlinekhabar.com

Parliament's Agriculture Committee has started debating the government's draft bill to amend and integrate the Forestry Law. Just as there was opposition to changes in the *Guthi* Bill and bills on the Media Council and National Human Rights Commission, stakeholders also have concerns about revisions in more than two dozen clauses in the forestry bill.

The main critic is the Federation of Community Forest User Groups Nepal (FECOFUN), whose Chair, Bharati Pathak, says community forests would cease to exist if the proposed changes are passed.

Clause 31, sub-clause 5 in the draft amendment says, 'members of user groups shall be legally considered to be government employees'. This means that the 22,236 community forest user groups and their 100,000 members will no longer be volunteers if the law is adopted.

Pathak says with a note of irony: "If they consider us government employees, then why don't they also give us the same pay and facilities as civil servants and allow us to get into Singha Darbar?"

FECOFUN says the new law would take away its independent decision-making power on the sale of forest products and hand it over to the Divisional Forest Office. The federation also opposes a clause that would make the DFO a member of the community forestry group.

FECOFUN also wants restrictions on farming included in a clause that would ban settlements inside community forests, and another clause inserted stating that community forest management should be the main priority. The group argues also that the community forestry campaign should be added to the list of 'national pride projects', because of its contribution to ecosystem services, biodiversity protection, job creation and the role it plays in contributing to the carbon sink in Nepal.

Stakeholders are worried that proposed changes to the law would allow the government's DFO to arbitrarily dismiss a community forest, or seize its land

Abdullah Miya in *Kantipur*, 27 June

कान्तिपुर

Even though the Forestry Act 25 years ago granted community forestry user groups independence to decide on the price and sale of forestry products, a draft amendment to the act would revoke that right.

Clause 18 of the new law would require the user groups to submit an application to the Divisional Forest Office to approve any sale of

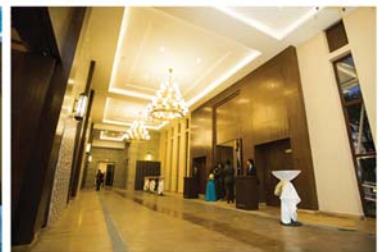
timber, charcoal, bark, grass, fodder, wild honey, herbal products, soil, boulders, rocks, sand and other products found in a forest.

FECOFUN Chair Bharati Pathak said: "The country is now a federal republic, but control of forests is being handed back to the DFO... our user committees had been deciding on the price and sale of products and how to spend proceeds to uplift the poor and marginalised. This right is being taken away from us."

Former Forest Secretary Udaya Raj Sharma says it appears that the government is trying to exert more control over community forests. "Nepal's community forest system is a model, and has now become part of the country's identity – it should not be restricted."

Forestry activist Bhola Khatiwada says community forests helped increase the country's woodlands from 39.36% to 44.74%, and yet the new law would take away the rights of the user groups that made this possible.

### THE LUXURY BANQUET EXPERIENCE IN KATHMANDU.



THE NEWLY OPENED ALICE RECEPTIONS LOCATED IN THE CENTER OF KATHMANDU, IS A PERFECT VENUE FOR ENGAGEMENTS, WEDDINGS, SEMINAR, CONFERENCES, CORPORATE AND SOCIAL EVENTS. IT CONSISTS OF 2 STUNNING BANQUET HALLS WHICH CAN CATER UPTO 1500 PEOPLE, 300 CAR PARKING CAPACITY.

WE OFFER VARIETIES OF DELICIOUS FOOD OPTIONS MAINTAINING THE HIGHEST FOOD HYGIENE AND QUALITY.



Events | Meetings | Weddings

For inquiries &amp; inspection

**Alice Receptions**

Gairidhara (Baluwatar), Kathmandu

T: 01-4444338, E: sales@alicereceptions.com

www.alicereceptions.com

**NIBL** **INSTANT GOLD & SILVER LOAN**

## सुन चाँदी धितो, नगद छिटो !

NIBL मा सुन, चाँदी धितो राखि चाहिएको समयमा नगदको आवश्यकता पूरा गर्नुहोस्, त्यो पनि बिना कुनै भन्फट, बिना कुनै चिन्ता ।

NIBL को प्रधान कार्यालय, दरबार मार्गका साथै न्युरोड, लगनखेल, बौद्ध र बतिसपुतली शाखाहरूमा यो सेवा उपलब्ध छ ।

**नेपाल इन्भेस्टमेन्ट बैंक लि.**  
NEPAL INVESTMENT BANK LTD.

10 Durbar Marg, P.O. Box: 3412, Kathmandu, Nepal | info@nibl.com.np | www.nibl.com.np  
Please visit our nearest branch for further details (थप जानकारीका लागि नजिकको शाखा कार्यालयमा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस्)



# Nepal Tarai learns from

Small steps prepare the plains for future floods as rampant construction sets the stage for more tragedies

**Sewa Bhattarai**  
in Rautahat

At Saraswati Primary School in Bhalohiya village in the central Tarai last week, children in Class 5 sweat in the humid heat, waiting attentively for a signal. A sharp clap from Disaster Focal Person Mukesh Jha, and they are down on the floor, covering their heads with their hands. Then they walk out single file from class, form a circle in the playground and start counting aloud their pre-assigned numbers.

The students are practising a drill on disaster response in these flood-prone plains bordering India. Two years after a devastating flood that displaced more than 400,000 people, destroyed 65,000 homes and killed 143 people, parts of the Tarai are beginning to incorporate disaster management activities.

Eighteen lives were lost and 325 schools were submerged here in Rautahat alone (pictured, right), including Saraswati School. It was repaired under the Flood Response Project funded by the European Union and implemented by the British agency, VSO (Volunteer Service Organisation) and local partner Mandvi.

Yet while disaster management is starting to attract the attention it deserves, rampant construction in the district, and across the country, is increasing vulnerability to disasters, say experts. Much of the new infrastructure actually blocks the natural drainage of rivers, resulting in flooding, especially along Nepal's southern border.

"Disruption by roads, low capacity bridges, urban expansion and embankments along the border in India constrain water flow," says climate expert Ajaya Dixit.

Inundation in the Tarai has got worse after roads were built on the Indian side, which act like

dams. The damage is more severe because river basins in Nepal are already encroached by roads and human settlements where there used to be only fields or sandy riverbanks. As a result, floods that could have passed by in a few hours with minimal damage now submerge farms and towns.

In 2017, heavy rainfall in the Chure catchment of the Tarai caused damage worth more than Rs60 billion, according to estimates. But such cost is set to increase, especially as rainfall patterns have become more unpredictable with the climate crisis. Higher intensity storms that drop more rain in shorter periods are becoming more common, raising the risk of sudden inundation.

Among the 49 disasters monitored by the Disaster Risk Reduction Portal under the Home Ministry, flooding is among the mostly minutely monitored. Water levels of major rivers are watched in real time, and if they cross the danger mark, the government sends out text messages to all at-risk residents or informs local disaster management committees. This early warning system was instrumental in evacuating residents and minimising the loss of lives in 2017.

The Disaster Risk and Management Act 2017 prioritises the role of local governments in disaster management. "After these policies came into effect, we have prepared for floods by stocking boats, tents and other emergency materials," says Arun Kumar Yadav, mayor of Durga Bhagwati rural municipality in Rautahat. Security forces at local levels have been trained for rescue and relief and are alerted when disaster is imminent.

Though Nepal has improved its performance in rescue and relief, many parts of the Act



are yet to be implemented. The government is still working on a comprehensive Disaster Information Management System, which is supposed to include information about areas at risk of hazards and the resources available nearby.

"We have asked local level governments to start sending us this

information, but they must conduct a hazard mapping in their area first for us to create a nation-wide risk atlas," says Bed Nidhi Khanal, the under-secretary at the Home Ministry who oversees the Disaster Risk Reduction Portal. The law also requires the government to conduct drills for disasters, but until now it

has only held sporadic simulations along five river basins, and has no immediate plans for systematic, nation-wide drills.

Many other aspects of disaster management are missing from the law, especially prevention activities.

"With increasing human

# Gaur gears up for another





# past floods



BIKRAM RAI

encroachment on rivers, the natural drainage systems of rivers are being blocked. The reasons for the increasing severity of floods are manmade and not natural,” says watershed expert Madhukar Upadhyaya. “But there is little understanding of these processes. If we continue to ignore it, we will

continue to face heavy economic loss and have to start over every year.”

India must also do its part, Upadhyaya notes: “We need to take not just national but also diplomatic steps to get India to address such construction on their side of the border as well.” 🇳🇵

Says principal Tripurari Yadav, “Drinking water is a big problem during floods because the hand pumps are submerged too.”

At Badharba, villagers were gathered around a local pond under a sweltering sun for a drill (*pictures, left*). Rescuers staged a simulated rescue of a drowning man, and trained locals to make temporary life jackets from plastic bottles. Drills are compulsory under Nepal’s Disaster Risk and Management Act passed in 2017, but until now the focus has been on early warning, rescue and relief.

“The Tarai does not just have flood risk, there are multiple hazards. Wild animals and snakes pose a great threat, and so do earthquakes. We identify these and plan for them,” says Anjoo Jha of Mandvi.

After the risk assessment, residents who panicked in 2017 and ran to road embankments, say they feel better prepared to face future floods. Lalita Kumari Ram (*pictured, page 7*) says the drills are reassuring: “Now these exercises have made us better prepared for future floods that are sure to come.”



PHOTOS: SEWA BHATTARAI

## In the driver’s seat

In many communities in the Tarai, women are still semi-veiled in public and hesitate to speak to strangers. But Geeta Devi (*above*) is quite a sight, driving her e-rickshaw around town with a big smile on her face, waving at passersby.

The 32-year-old mother of four was trained to drive an e-rickshaw by Mandvi, an NGO that works on flood management in Rautahat. Geeta Devi lost her farm and

livestock in the 2017 flood, so she has joined her driver husband behind the wheel.

Her teenage son and daughter are studying in Kathmandu, and their mother is determined to earn enough to give them the education she never had. Mandvi, which is supported by British volunteer agency VSO, trained six other women and helped them get loans to buy e-rickshaws.

Geeta Devi earns an average of Rs500 per day ferrying people around Gaur for up to three hours after her husband comes home. She does not take fares outside the municipality because the roads are bad.

“When they see a woman driving, some are surprised,” she says, “and some laugh out loud. But that is their problem. They can laugh all they want. I like what I do.”

# deluge

Most of Nepal’s southern plains were already vulnerable to floods from snow-fed rivers and streams from the Chure hills swelling during the monsoon. Rautahat is surrounded by rivers on three sides: Jhaajh in the west and Bagmati in the north and east. The district capital of Gaur is often inundated.

In 2017, floodwaters blocked by boundary walls and embankments rose 1.5m in a matter of minutes and entire settlements of mud house were washed away, leaving residents with nothing.

The Flood Response Project has built a safe house in Badharba village as an immediate relief structure. The ground floor is an open space, which can be used as a local market during normal times, and the first floor has separate rooms for men and women.

Three schools in the district have been repaired (*see main story*), and raised hand pumps have been built at every location for drinking water during floods.



**SURYA NEPAL**  
PRIVATE LIMITED



**DRUMJATRA**  
2019 Kathmandu  
Percussion  
Festival

**Rhythms of Unity & Diversity**

**TONIGHT**  
**EK TAAL**  
*Subtle Sounds of Percussions*  
Show Time: 7:00pm to 9:00pm  
Venue: Kantipur Temple House, Thamel  
Ticket: Rs. 1000/-

Featuring the subtle, delicate and charismatic colors of drums at the beautiful and intimate setting of the Kantipur Temple House with visiting drummers and some of Nepal’s top traditional percussionists!

**TOMORROW**  
**DRUM JATRA FINALE**  
Show Time: 7:00pm to 9:00pm  
Venue: Hotel Summit, Sanepa Height  
Ticket: Rs. 800/-

The Finale will showcase some of the top festival performers with high energy drumming traditions spanning from western percussion ensembles, African drumming styles, Brazilian rhythms to traditional Nepali drums such as Madal tarang and Women’s Tamang Selo ensemble.

www.drumjatra.com

**TICKETS AVAILABLE AT JAZZ UPSTAIRS, LAZIMPAT I KJC, JHAMSIKHEL I MY MART, THAMEL  
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL 9803001592 OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE www.drumjatra.com**







# Everybody loves a good hartal

The season of shutdowns is upon us again, and it fills us with nostalgia for the good old days in the Roaring Nineties when Nepal used to grind to a halt at least 10 days a month.

Sometimes, bund days would clash, and we had to have a makeup day sitting home to do nothing. This unique form of protest started in Bangladesh and was perfected in Nepal, but we had let it lapse as our commitment to democracy wavered, and we took our freedoms for granted.

Thank goodness, the Nepal Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist-Polpotist-Maduroist-Kim Il-Sungist) – not to be confused with the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist-Stalinist-Titoist-Trotskyite-Dengist-Xi-ist, Hun Senist, Kim Jong-ilist) – has decided to revive this glorious tradition and keep the spirit of democracy alive and kicking.

The success of a hartal hinges on people voluntarily keeping off the streets, exercising their freedom to do what the goondas want. The enforcers of our democracy must therefore gently persuade people not to drive on the streets by setting fire to a couple of taxis and leaving pressure cookers at strategic intersections early in the morning.

In the past, bicycles, rickshaws and planes have been allowed to merrily ply when all other forms of transport were grounded. We are glad to see that the concerned revolutionaries have now brought two- and three-wheelers, as well as twin-engine turboprops, under the ambit of a bund.

There are cynics who argue that shutdowns hurt the economy to the tune of Rs2.5 billion a day. Workaholics complain about not

being able to get to office. They should learn to see the bright side. In fact, the NCP (MLSPMK) are the only communists with a commitment to cleaning up Kathmandu's air pollution, and have allowed Nepal to reduce its carbon footprint by adhering to the emission reduction timetable in the Paris Rulebook agreed to in Krakow.

The result can already be seen in the measurements at the air pollution monitoring stations: a national shutdown brings air quality in Kathmandu to the 'Good Enough To Breathe Without Dying' level. And while most countries are hemming-and-hawing about meeting their Paris targets, with four shutdowns in the past three months, Nepal is well on its way to reducing its greenhouse gas emission to 1990 levels.

But we must not be complacent, we must enforce shutdowns every day to make Nepal carbon negative by bringing the country to a grinding halt. If nothing moves, we will not have to import any more petroleum either, and this will also solve our growing balance of trade deficit and bring the national economy back on track.

Let us turn petrol pumps into dairy outlets, spark plugs into cigarette lighters, motorcycles into hair dryers, micro buses into microwaves, and build a Communist Gun-tantra.



The Ass

