

## BIKRAM RAI

**PAGES 14-15**

**QATAR**  
AIRWAYS القطرية

GOING PLACES TOGETHER



# ELECTING TO GOVERN

Nepal’s political parties believe they have to be in power to be elected to power.

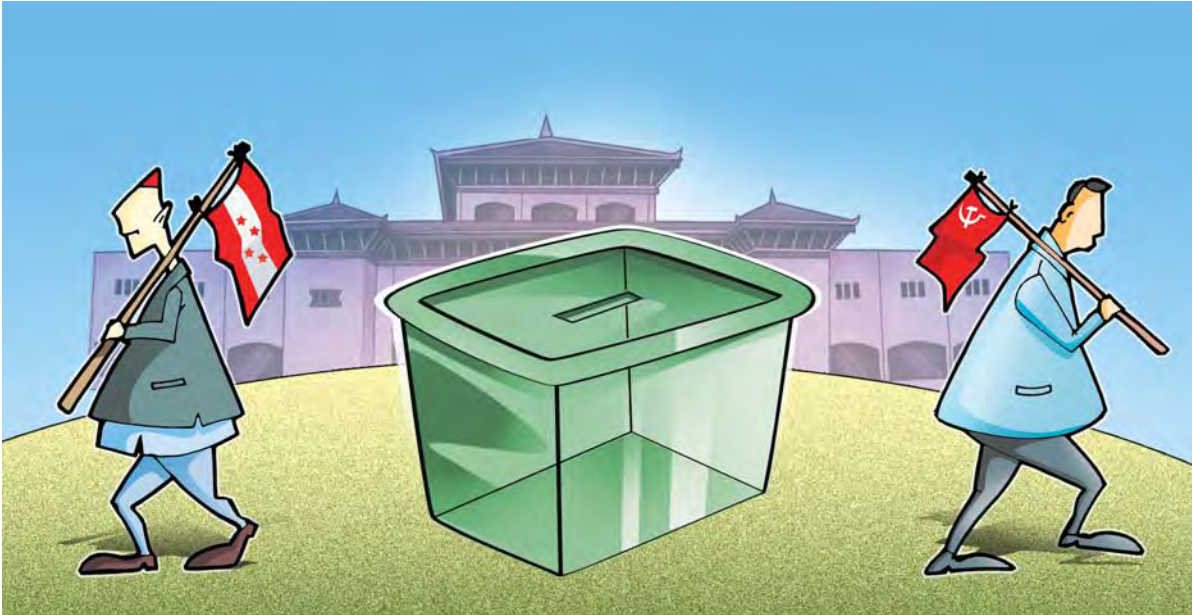
In most mature democracies, there tends to be a pattern of anti-incumbent voting. Even if a ruling party has performed reasonably well while in power, citizens often vote them out simply because they want a change of scenery.

In Nepal, it is the other way around: political parties all want to be in power when elections are conducted so they can help themselves to state resources in the campaigning in order to influence or buy vote banks.

It is in that light that we should interpret the sudden talk of regime change, and the proposals for a majority or consensus government to replace the Maoist UML RPP-N coalition led by Prime Minister Oli. After having foiled a ‘coup attempt’ two months ago by the opposition Nepali Congress, Oli is again facing an attempt to unseat him — this time not by the NC but by the Maoists who are threatening to pull the rug out from under him.

Even though the NC and the Maoists have tried to justify this new challenge by saying that they want to bring dissatisfied Madhesi parties into the fold to amend the constitution and finally conclude the constitution process, in actual fact it is just about being in power at election time. Otherwise, why would this new alliance want to remove the UML, which is the second largest party in parliament, and expect to have a consensus on the constitution?

The proof of a good constitution lies in its implementation. And the fate and direction of the country rest on adhering to the stipulated rules laid out in it to conduct periodic elections. According to the timetable, local, provincial and national elections should be completed by January 2018 at the latest.



The irony of it all, however, is that politics is stuck because of the endless power struggle in Kathmandu. Prime Minister Oli has announced approximate dates for elections, and has said he will conduct all three of them himself. Nothing could have spooked the Maoists and the NC more — imagine the nature and extent of incumbent advantage the prime minister’s party would garner.

However, what lends credence to the theory that Oli has left room for bargaining is talk that the NC’s Sher Bahadur Deuba and Maoist Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal will be allowed to rotate prime ministership to oversee two of the three elections. But even that merely confirms that this is purely about power, and not about ensuring an inclusive constitution to take this country forward.

Oli is banking on the Madhes movement running out of momentum in the months ahead so he can pick off their leaders one by one by offering them plum posts. That could still happen, but it does not address the uncertainty

and anger in the Madhes directed at Kathmandu-based politicians. Without resolving that issue, the constitution is a dead duck.

To be sure, Oli himself does not sound too convinced when he speaks about holding three elections in less than two years. He has announced a timetable, but has not done any of the necessary political footwork. Neither are the NC and the Maoists confident that there can be elections, but they want to be in power just in case it does somehow take place.

It is difficult to fathom the rationale behind the Maoists ditching the UML and getting into bed with the NC at this point in time, unless it is to be at the controls when elections are held. As for UML, there is nothing like the impending elections to focus the minds of its fractious leadership. Oli is banking on coasting along somehow -- at least until local elections are held in December -- to maintain the UML’s previous hold on local councils.

The wild card in all this, of course, is that Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Thapa of the RPP-N is already in campaign mode, touring the country giving fiery speeches to largely sympathetic crowds about restoring the Hindu state. In this, he appears to have considerable support from political forces down south, and flying the saffron flag could be a game-changer in future polls by pitting religious sentiments against secular and federal voices.

The tragedy in all this, needless to say, is that the same failed politicians from the past two decades are still playing politics as usual. Extraordinary times demand extraordinary statesmanship, a quality lamentably lacking in the personalities we see haggling over who should be in government at election time.

Times

THIS WEEK

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Most shared on Facebook

A model government school by Shreejana Shrestha

Most visited online page

A model government school by Shreejana Shrestha

Most popular on Twitter

Yes, Prime Minister by Kunda Dixit (87 retweets, 137 favourites)

Most commented

Yes, Prime Minister by Kunda Dixit

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

GOVINDA KC

I am appalled by the CIAA's abusive words against this gentleman ('Dr KC is mentally ill', Especial, 27 June). Dr KC is entitled to his opinion. Berating someone like this is not freedom of expression.

Utsuk Shrestha

Look at the question that BBC Nepali asked the CIAA spokesperson: "Is it Dr. KC or you who is mentally ill?" You are clearly taking sides. Please maintain journalistic standards.

Anon

LANGTANG'S NEW LIFE

With all that funding and international attention, Langtang will surely find a new life ('Langtang's new life', Upasana Khadka, #815). But what about the less glamorous villages in Sindhupalchok, is anyone bothered?

Birendra Mainali

EDUCATION SPECIAL

This is a model other government schools should adopt ('A model government school', Shreejana Shrestha, #815). They require a huge makeover. For this, education needs to be made the priority of the government. It should focus on providing better education to students instead of letting rowdy associations announce strikes left, right and centre, especially for unworthy issues such as pay raises.

Sunita Prasai

It seems as though Nepal's government does not want an educated nation - it needs to keep the work force uneducated so it can send them to slave camps in the Arab countries ('School mismanagement committee', Om Astha Rai, #815). Foreign aid agencies and donor countries do not want education - they need to keep their own aid workers in fat cat jobs in Kathmandu.

David Durkan

Change is good, but it should be gradual ('Grading the grades', Sahina Shrestha, #815). Had the government introduced the grading system from Grade 1 and slowly moved onto Grade 10, things would have been clearer and more systematic and there wouldn't have been half as much confusion regarding the deal. It is a good decision, but the timing is all off.

Rukmani Tuladhar

rabithapa @rabithapa

@nepalitimes @sahinashrestha no wonder the government hasn't done it's homework. Most of them hardly went to school! :)

bharat koirala @lampuchhre

@nepalitimes Amazing performance! Something other government schools could emulate.

Pratyoush Onta @pratyoushonta

This is on publication that those interested in funding education-related stuff in Nepal should support.

Nepali Times @nepalitimes

A monthly magazine's mission to highlight need to improve quality of government schools bit.ly/29cKOuj

Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #816

Q. Do you agree with the deal between the government and the main opposition NC to release the Rs 200,000 reconstruction grants in just two instalments?

Total votes: 200

Yes 48%

No 32.5%

Maybe/Don't know 19.5%

Weekly Internet Poll #817

To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you agree with Dr Govinda KC's demand to impeach the CIAA chief Lokman Singh Karki?





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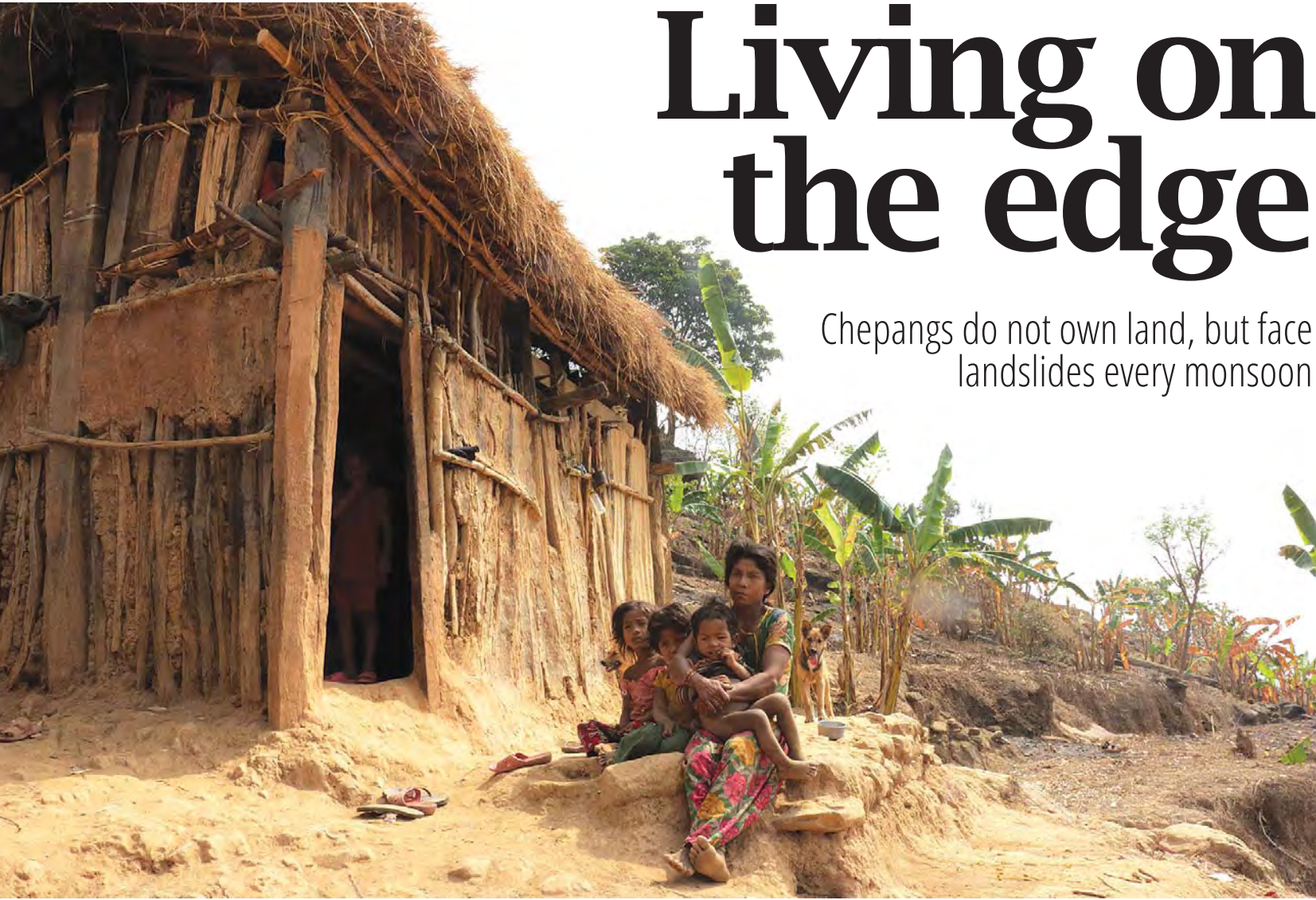


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PICS: RIWAJ RAI

RIWAJ RAI  
in MAKWANPUR

Rajkumari Chepang lives in the forested Chure Hills of Makwanpur district. She was poor, but a landslide made her poorer. Two years ago, just when her ripe maize crop was ready for harvest, a landslide took away her farm.

With no land to till, the 47-year-old mother of three, is now a construction worker. Accompanied by her husband, she walks two hours to reach the town of Manahari every day. At times, she has to travel even further.

“After the landslide, I can

grow nothing but bananas, and this is not sufficient to feed my children,” she said, staring at what is left of her terrace farm. “I need a job to feed my family.”

In Raksirang, a village north of the East-West highway, Rajkumari is not the only Chepang woman who has been affected by landslides. Some have lost their homes while others have seen their fields swept away as the rains wash down the fragile denuded slopes around them.

Tara Maya Chepang of Raksirang also lost a patch of her maize field last year. Fortunately, she still has enough land for planting. She says: “Usually it does not rain on time. But when it does, it rains so heavily that we

live in the fear of landslides.”

Raksirang lies in the Chure Hills, and is mostly inhabited by the Chepangs, one of Nepal’s most neglected semi-nomadic forest dwellers. Nirguretar is a typical Chepang settlement in Raksirang, and has 14 households perched along a ridge. It has suffered multiple landslides in the last few years.

“We see small landslides eroding our land every monsoon,” says Tara Maya. “I am afraid a big one will sweep us all away one day.”

A report published by the United Nations Development Programme says over 90 per cent of the human settlements in the Chure region of Makwanpur face

land degradation, and the threat of landslides is highest here. The report pinpoints deforestation and slash-and-burn agriculture as the main reasons for soil erosion.

Most Chepangs do not own the land they have been living in for generations. Even so, they have never tried to migrate to safer villages. Ram Kumar Chepang, one of the few literate men in Raksirang village, says: “Even if we want to leave these landslide-prone villages, we do not know where to go.”

The Chure Hills occupy the southern half of Makwanpur which is vulnerable to disasters caused by either too much or too little rain. “Because of its fragile



**LANDING:** (Clockwise) The family of Man Maya Chepang and Tara Maya Chepang in the fast-denuding Chure Hills are victims of frequent landslides. Rajkumari Chepang was poor but a landslide last year made her poorer.

geology, Chure is vulnerable to landslides,” explains Subodh Dhakal of Tribhuvan University. “Poor and marginalised communities like Chepangs who live on steep hills are at risk.”

The National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) has categorised landslides as the third most common natural disaster (after floods and forest fires) in the district, recording 106 major landslides there between 1973 and 2013.

With climate change and erratic weather, fragile areas like the Chure are even more vulnerable. Pratibha Manandhar, a government meteorologist says: “It is not just landslides. Droughts are also getting more frequent with rising temperatures.”

Some NGOs like the Makwanpur Development Institute (MDI) have encouraged the Chepangs to plant bananas, pineapples and broom grass to generate income and bind the topsoil. “These plants strengthen the slopes and survive even in drought conditions,” says Khop Narayan Shrestha at the MDI.

However, a majority of the Chepang families still practice slash-and-burn farming, which exacerbates the problem of land erosion and landslides, says Basanta Raj Gautam of the Rastrapati Chure Conservation Program: “The Chepangs are aware of landslide threats, but unaware of what cause landslides, and do not know how to be safe.”

(This report was supported by the Earth Journalism Network)

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# Insulting an ex-President

## Why top political leaders love to hate Ram Baran Yadav

“‘Hold on!’ former President Ram Baran Yadav commanded a *Nepali Times* photojournalist from taking his picture during an interview last week. He put on a Nepali *topi*, and then said: ‘Now you can take my picture.’”

In the eight years that he spent in Shital Niwas as Nepal's first civilian Head of State, Yadav rarely made public appearances without the *topi* on his head. He carefully maintained the symbolism of promoting Nepal's national unity and integrity.

This public posture has prompted Madhesi parties that voted for him in the 2008 presidential elections to dislike him intensely. Even non-Madhesi parties have fallen out. As a result of this collective disdain, Yadav is now enduring the state's apathy bordering on insult.

"I transferred my house in Kathmandu to my daughter, and my land in Dhanusa to my sons, thinking that the state would look after me," he told us. "But I am facing difficulty managing my life."

When Yadav quietly left Shital Niwas on a rainy afternoon in October 2015, the Madhes was burning and there was deep polarisation between the inhabitants of the hills and the plains. Yadav wanted to launch a nationwide campaign to stitch the social fabric together again, but he has been consumed by more mundane problems like house rent and electricity bills.

The owner of the house rented by the government for Yadav in Bagdole threatened to throw him out, demanding past dues publicly at a press conference. The government did not budge, and the landlord filed a case at the Lalitpur District Court seeking the administration's help to get the ex-president to vacate his house. It was only when President Bidya Bhandari took up the matter that the government finally paid the house rent.

When he was elected President, Yadav had good personal relations with almost




GOPEN RA

all political forces. By the time he retired, most were his enemies. It is not difficult to understand that the state's current harassment of Yadav is a result of this.

Prime Minister KP Oli always had good relations with Yadav, but when Yadav advised the Big Three parties to wait for a few days to bring Madhesi dissenters on board before promulgating the new constitution, Oli had snapped back: “A medical doctor knows nothing about legal issues.” Many believe that Oli’s disdain for Yadav is the main reason for the state’s apathy towards his post-retirement life.

NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba always considered Yadav 'close to the Koiralas'. Even when Oli agreed with other parties to re-elect Yadav as President after the new Constitution, Deuba stood against it. When Yadav faced difficulty in living a dignified life befitting an ex-President, Deuba couldn't be bothered.


The CPN Maoist (Centre) Chair  
Pushpa Kamal Dahal had pitted  
Ram Raja Prasad Singh against  
Yadav in the 2008 presidential

election. In 2009, when Dahal as Prime Minister sacked the Nepal Army Chief Rookmangud Katwal, Yadav reinstated him. After this high-voltage political drama, Dahal stepped down and never tried to make peace with Yadav again. 

*Rameshwar Bohara*

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prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

## Discounted data

Ncell has unveiled night data packages at 10 paisa per MB. Customers can subscribe to a daily night data pack of 40MB for Rs 8, a weekly night data pack of 250MB for Rs 40 and a monthly night data package of 1000MB for Rs 100. The packages are valid between 10 pm to 6 am.

## Their remit

Himalayan Bank Limited (HBL) and Tranglo Sendirian Berhad (Tranglo), an international money transfer

operator, have signed an agreement to assist in remittance transfers from Nepalis abroad. Himalayan Bank says the new partnership will benefit 2.2 million Nepali migrant workers abroad as they will have more options to send money home.

## Selfie 4 in town

The Indian smartphone company Micromax launched Q349 (Canvas Selfie 4) at Rs 11,110. The budget phone comes with features like 1 GB RAM with 8 GB ROM, high-resolution 8 MP rear and front camera along with a 2500mAh battery. The 5.0 inch HD display phone also has a front flash and dual micro SIM.

## Turkish in Hanoi

Star Alliance member Turkish Airlines recently added flights to Hanoi in Vietnam. This marks the 35th destination in the Far-east network

for the carrier. With a round trip fare starting at € 603, the airline will be operating flights between Istanbul and Hanoi five times a week.

prabhu BANK





# ६ कारण छ...

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# Identifying with identity

Calling Madhesis “dhoti” might still be a popular racial slur, but it doesn’t offend Madhesis anymore

The politics of identity stems from the common grievances of a social group, and can be a struggle against the structural discrimination of the state as well as day-to-day manifestations of inequality. Identity politics strives to make society progressive and inclusive: be it the feminist movement, the struggle for civil rights, the gay and lesbian liberation, or in the Nepali context the Madhes



GUEST COLUMN  
Mukesh Jha

movement. Some critics (like Bineeta Gurung in ‘What about whataboutery?’) offer a reductionist argument that the identity politics in Nepal is a by-product of the Maoist Revolution and that it has outlived its utility like the party itself. It is indeed ironic that people who eschew political philosophy, especially of the left, argue that only ‘class’ is relevant and not the grievances of people with respect to gender, caste, or ethnicity. Marx’s defense of the class struggle failed to grasp the social reality of the Subcontinent which

is inherently different than in the West. Marx did mention caste in some of his writings, but mostly ignored the discrimination based on it. In Nepal, caste and class intersect and cannot be viewed in isolation. Identity politics attempts to reject the negative attributes offered by the dominant culture and transforms a person’s identity into a sense of pride, without being apologetic about it. For example, dhoti or bhaiya were once derogatory terms used to address Madhesis irrespective of the class they belonged to. A respected university professor could still be called “dhoti” while in a public bus in Kathmandu. Today, a popular Dhoti movement has reinstated the pride of the cultural attire of the people of the Madhes. Calling Madhesis “dhoti” might still be a popular racial slur, but it doesn’t offend Madhesis anymore. The very notion that to be a Nepali one has to wear a specific set of clothes, speak a particular language, eat generic food and have definite facial attributes, is being challenged because of the politics of identity. It compelled contemporary nationalists to rethink and redefine Nepali nationalism. Identity politics has made it possible for everyone to know about the customs,

languages, and attires of fellow citizens. There was a time, a little more than a decade ago, when Maithili was considered a Bihari dialect instead of a language belonging to Nepal. The demands of proportional inclusion and political representation are extensions of identity politics that demand the recognition of everyone as they are, and not as someone the state once wanted them to be. To be sure, identity politics has its own pros and cons. One such criticism is that those in favour of identity politics abuse everyone; specially on social media. This claim cannot be denied. However, to blame only one side would be unfair. The Internet is a free space where people express themselves in their own unique ways; some more aggressively than the others. Such aggression is not exclusive to identity supporters alone. Despite the use of ugly

language and the abuse, the Internet, however, is only one aspect of society and does not represent society as a whole. People still talk to each other amicably, listen to views irrespective of how irreconcilable differences are. Another criticism is that identity politics offers a blanket description of a social group which in itself is diverse and hence fails to address underlying sub-identities. In Nepal’s case, the Madhesi identity politics is presented as an example of the eclipsing of the diversity prevalent within the community. But no movement - political or social - has ever denied the presence of the diversity of language, caste or religion. There is more than one Madhes-based political party and the Madhesi Janadhikar Party (credited for the first Madhesh movement) even unified with the Janjati party to form the Sanghiya Janadhikar Forum with Ashok Rai as its vice president. There is also a need to tackle



the social problem of caste-based discrimination in the Madhes, against which prominent intellectuals have started a social movement asking for an apology and sharing meals with people from the Dalit community. This has been followed by official resolutions of ‘apology to the Dalit community’ presented in the general convention of the Terai Madhesh Democratic Party led by Mahant Thakur. The identity movement is not just about being Madhesi or Janajati, but also about being from the Dalit community or the Madhesi Dalit community or a Madhesi Dalit Woman. Identity politics does not thrive on the dichotomy of ‘either you’re with us or you’re against us’. Did feminism thrive on women over men; the civil rights movement on blacks over whites, or the gay rights movement on homosexuals over heterosexuals? Feminism never vilified all men, just as the African-Americans didn’t demonise all whites. Instead Bridges were built to transform opinions as well as learn of one’s own shortcomings. To claim that identity politics is dichotomous is not only ludicrous, but also shows the lack of an in-depth understanding of identity politics. The basis of identity politics is change, and most of the time, it leads to an equal, progressive and inclusive society. 🇳🇵 Mukesh Jha is a founding member of Nepal Policy Center (NPC) and Madheshi Youth

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After that formidable monsoon pulse, the rains are taking a breather. Although there is plenty of water vapour in the air over Central Nepal, the temperature is still not low enough for condensation to take place. hence, the dark menacing clouds without much precipitation. This situation will continue into the weekend, with brief periods of thunder and lightning which are actually uncharacteristic of monsoon showers. A fresh monsoon wave is expected early next week. Expect extremely sultry afternoons into Saturday and Sunday.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
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GOPEN RAI

SMRITI BASNET

# THE WORLD BEYOND THANGKAS

Renowned thangka painter Urgen Dorje gave his son, Ang Tsherin Sherpa, an ultimatum: either get better grades in school or stay home and learn the ancestral art of thangka painting.

Sherpa instantly opted for the latter hoping it would be the easy way out, only to realise that it was going to be the most grueling six years of his life.

“I was forced to learn this very rigid traditional technique, I was never really inclined to it,” recalled Sherpa who at age 13 used to wake up at the crack of dawn, every day, to memorise the scriptures.

Finding no room for exploration, the young man deviated from the structured and pre-determined art form. Sherpa set out to find his own voice challenging the rigid rules of devotional art.

“The form is supposed to be exact in traditional art; when we change this form does the essence of the deity stay in that form? So, is the deity in the form or in us?” Sherpa asks rhetorically. One of his works is a digital manipulation of the image of a deity that has been transformed into a swirling figure of colors.

Infusing his own ideas, while retaining most of the traditional techniques, Sherpa’s

creations tactfully explore Tibetan deities, spirits and narratives in a modern-day setting. “This is a tradition that helps millions of people but it is not the only way. Sometimes you have to find your own path,” said Sherpa, who now lives in Oakland and was on a brief visit to Nepal this week.

Lauded for his intricate detailing and skilful depiction of contemporary issues, Sherpa has exhibited in prestigious venues like New York’s Rubin Museum of Art, Rossi & Rossi in London. The artist comes to Kathmandu to work with his uncle and cousin when he gets bigger consignments for artworks for large scale exhibitions.

Although trained in Kathmandu, it

The contemporary artist who lost and rediscovered his passion to adapt a traditional form of devotional art

was not until Sherpa migrated to the United States in 1998 that he discovered his true calling. “After going there I realised how rich my own heritage and culture were and it was then that I started appreciating it,” said Sherpa.

Sherpa started out using his technique for publicity posters for a California restaurant retailer Jamba Juice in 2003. This was just to make some money, but Sherpa found his calling in creatively adapting the traditional mural art from the Himalayas.

Sherpa feels that traditional thangka paintings have become monotonous and the audiences are desensitised by its uniformity. “Regardless of whether there is an audience or not I will still


create work just to satisfy my own inquisitiveness,” said the artist dressed in a plain white t-shirt and grey cotton half - pants, seated to next to his vibrant artwork.

Today, most of Sherpa’s works convey a sense of alienation and having to adapt to a new culture and society. Recurring themes and motifs of identity, blending of cultures and evolving sense of self, all evoke feelings of being uprooted and dispersed.

‘Fragments’, for example, uses cropped digital images of 14th-15th century thangka paintings that are assimilated into an abstract work to convey a sense of wholeness in fragments. “Wherever we go we try to preserve whatever we have, or at least a part of it, if not the whole,” explained Sherpa.

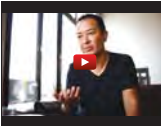
It is this freedom to experiment and discover, that Sherpa enjoys the most, and to use traditional motifs to depict political references and popular culture.

“I make my own rules, the image is my vocabulary.” 🇳🇵



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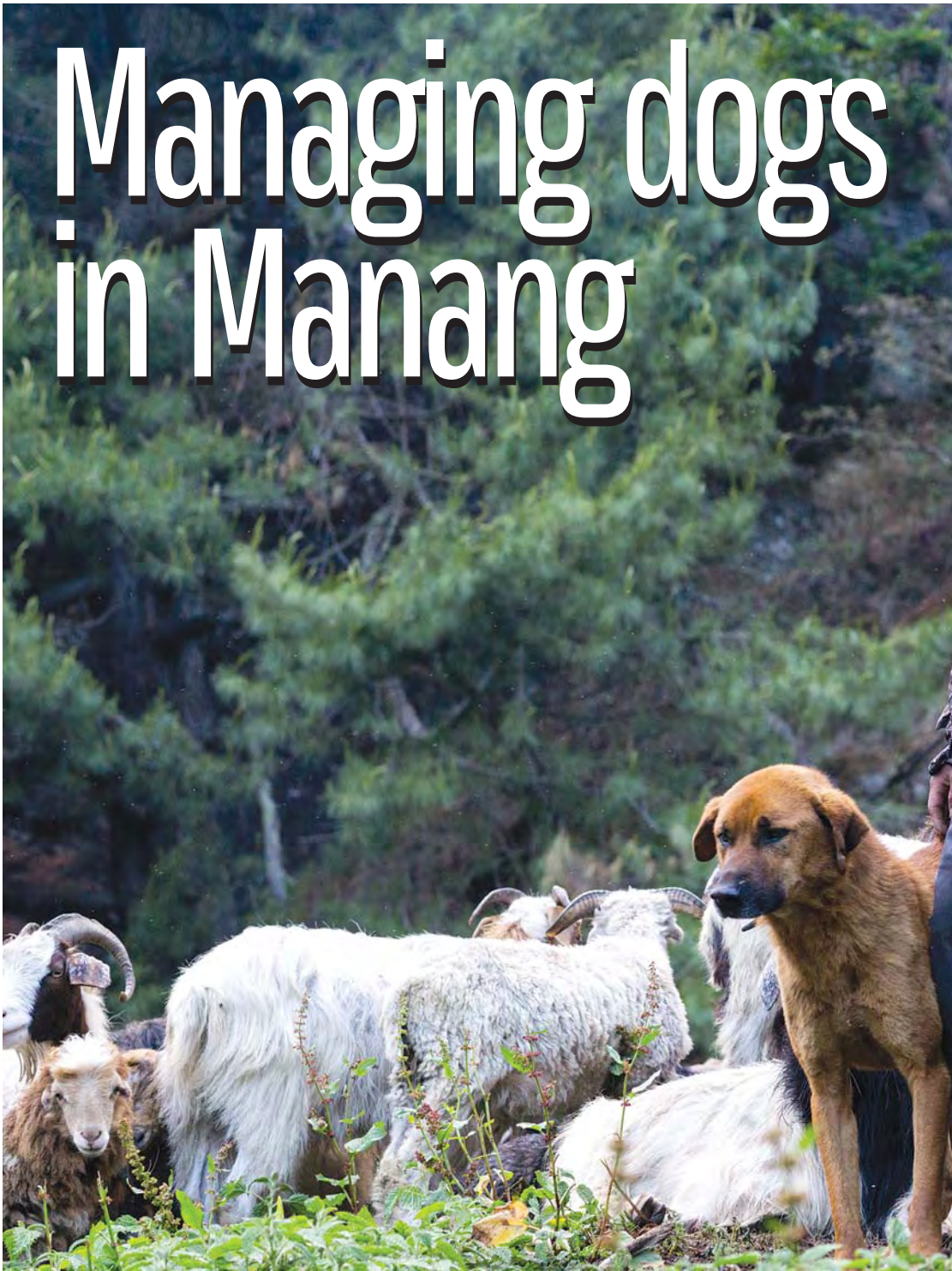
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# Managing dogs in Manang

**AJAY NARSINGH RANA**  
in MANANG

The majesty of Manang enchants and inspires thousands of visitors to the region every year, but there is a real danger, the growing number of dogs and cats threaten the delicate ecology of this trans-Himalayan valley.

In recent decades, the increasing, unmanaged population of cats and dogs in the Annapurna Conservation Area has frustrated locals and distressed the wildlife. Unwanted litter is released and is left to wander the forest where it can disturb and

kill endangered wildlife. Villagers in Manang have reported problems with managing unwanted dogs for over two decades.

Apart from wildlife, dogs also attack livestock and other dogs. There is a danger to humans from rabid dogs, and they can spread diseases that can further affect wildlife and humans.

Some in Manang have attempted to control the canine population by culling them with poison, but this sets off a chain reaction of other problems. Poisoned dogs die a very slow death and their carcasses are scavenged on by wildlife such as vultures and other carnivores which themselves fall sick or die. The cats pose a different set of problems altogether, as they prefer to target

smaller prey. Not every hunt is for food and the birds in the Himalayas are always vulnerable.

Things are set to change with the effort of the Himalayan Mutt Project which brings free neutering and anti-rabies vaccinations to communities for the first time. This unique project began the neutering and vaccination program for dogs and cats in Manang in 2014 with a follow-up in May this year.

This is a crowdfunded initiative that aims to control animal populations and to mitigate the risk of a rabies epidemic through Capture, Neuter, Vaccinate and Release (CNVR) programs which are recommended by the WHO for the

humane control of stray dogs and rabies transmission to humans.

The Himalayan Mutt Project relies on the generosity of donors to continue its programs which will benefit the people of the Himalayas, and its fragile and threatened wildlife. 🇳🇵

[www.himalayanmuttproject.org](http://www.himalayanmuttproject.org)  
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## EVENTS



### Kathmandu Kora,

Join hundreds of cycling enthusiasts and ride 50, 75, or 100 km to raise funds for a birthing centre in Pyutar, Lalitpur.  
16 July, 7.30 am onwards, Mangalbazar, (01) 4412508, [www.kathmandukora.net](http://www.kathmandukora.net)

### The rebound,

Cheer on as teams participate in the final round of the wheelchair basketball league championship followed by performance by the Nepal Break Dance Foundation.  
9 July, 8.30 to 12 pm, Army Training and Physical Center, Lagankhel, 9813053115, [info.engagenepal@gmail.com](mailto:info.engagenepal@gmail.com) or [engagenepal@gmail.com](mailto:engagenepal@gmail.com)

### Otaku next,

Dress up as your favourite anime characters in the third edition of the Otaku Next Nepal Comic and Cosplay Convention.  
30 July, 9.30 am to 5.30 pm, Alliance Francaise, Teku, [www.otakunext.com](http://www.otakunext.com), Tickets: Rs 300 (Entrance free for cosplayers), Rs 350 (on the day of the event)



### Tedx Thamel,

Get a chance to hear from eminent personalities like Bandana Rana, Bhumika Shrestha, Ishaan, Joseph Silvanus at the independently organised Ted event - TedxThamel.  
23 July, 11 am to 1 pm, Hotel Yak & Yeit, Darbar Marg, Tickets: Rs 750 (regular), Rs 500 (early bird)

### Trail run,

Gear up for the trail run between Chautara and Thulosirubari in Sindhupalchowk and help raise funds for earthquake relief efforts in the area.  
7 am onwards, Chautara, Sindupalchok, (011) 620477, Register: <http://goo.gl/ozPi59>



### Serdhak,

Attend the film screening of Rajan Kathet's Serdhak The Golden Hill, receiver of the best ICMOD Mountain Film at the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (KIMFF), 2015. All proceeds will go to Heartbeat and Dhondup Charity.  
9 July, 5 to 7 pm, The Taragaon Museum, Boudha, 9843882502/9851050299, Tickets: Rs 300

### Youth issues,

Engage in a constructive discussion with panelists Arna Raj Silwal, Vidhan Rana, Dr Usha Bhandari and Brabim Kumar on 'Changing landscape on youth employment in Nepal'.  
8 July, 2.30 to 4 pm, Namlo Gardens, Bakhundole, 9851103087, Register: <https://goo.gl/PnH6BD>

### Mending poetry,

The final installment of the poetry workshop series led by Samyak Shertok encouraging participants to share their April 2015 earthquake experience.  
9 July, 11 am to 1 pm, NexUS Culture Nepal, Maitri Marg, (01) 5522393, 9851026155, [nexusculturenepal@gmail.com](mailto:nexusculturenepal@gmail.com)

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### BBQ at Gokarna,

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Every Saturday, 12 pm to 3 pm, Gokarna Forest Resort, Thali, Kathmandu, For reservation: (01) 4451212

### Boudha Stupa Restaurant,

Enjoy wood-fired pizza with a superb view of the Boudha stupa and free wifi, candlelight dinner options are also available for the romantics every full moon night.  
Boudha, (01) 4478555



### Coffee Pasal,

A place to idly sip on a good cup of coffee while looking at the Narayanhiti Palace museum.  
Durbar Marg, 01-4246483

### Cafe Cheeno,

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Patan Dhoka



### Tass and Tawa,

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Jhamsikhel, (01) 5548499

## MUSIC



### Reggae sundown,

Tap to the beats of reggae music with the Nepali bands Cultivation, and The Himalion as they belt out tunes of Cultivation's debut album Plains, Hills and Mountains.  
23 July, 6.45 pm onwards, Basecamp, Jhamsikhel, 9841226397



### Music with Majipa,

Enjoy a rock-n-roll Friday with the Nepali hard rock band Majipa at Moksh.  
15 July, 7 pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, (01) 5528362

### Artha live,

Spend a musical evening with Artha Band as they belt out some of their popular tunes.  
8 July, 6.30 to 9.30 pm, Ai-La Lounge, Kumaripati, 9801018681



### Harmonix live,

Tap to the beats of some acoustic music with upcoming Nepali band Harmonix.  
8 July, 7 to 10 pm, Rato Mato Organics BBQ and Bistro, Lazimpat, (01) 4428576

## GETAWAY

### Hotel Barahi,

Enjoy a great view of the Phewa taal, the cultural shows, or indulge in the scrumptious pastries from the German Bakery on the hotel premises.  
Lakeside, Pokhara, (061) 460617/463526

### Famous Farm,

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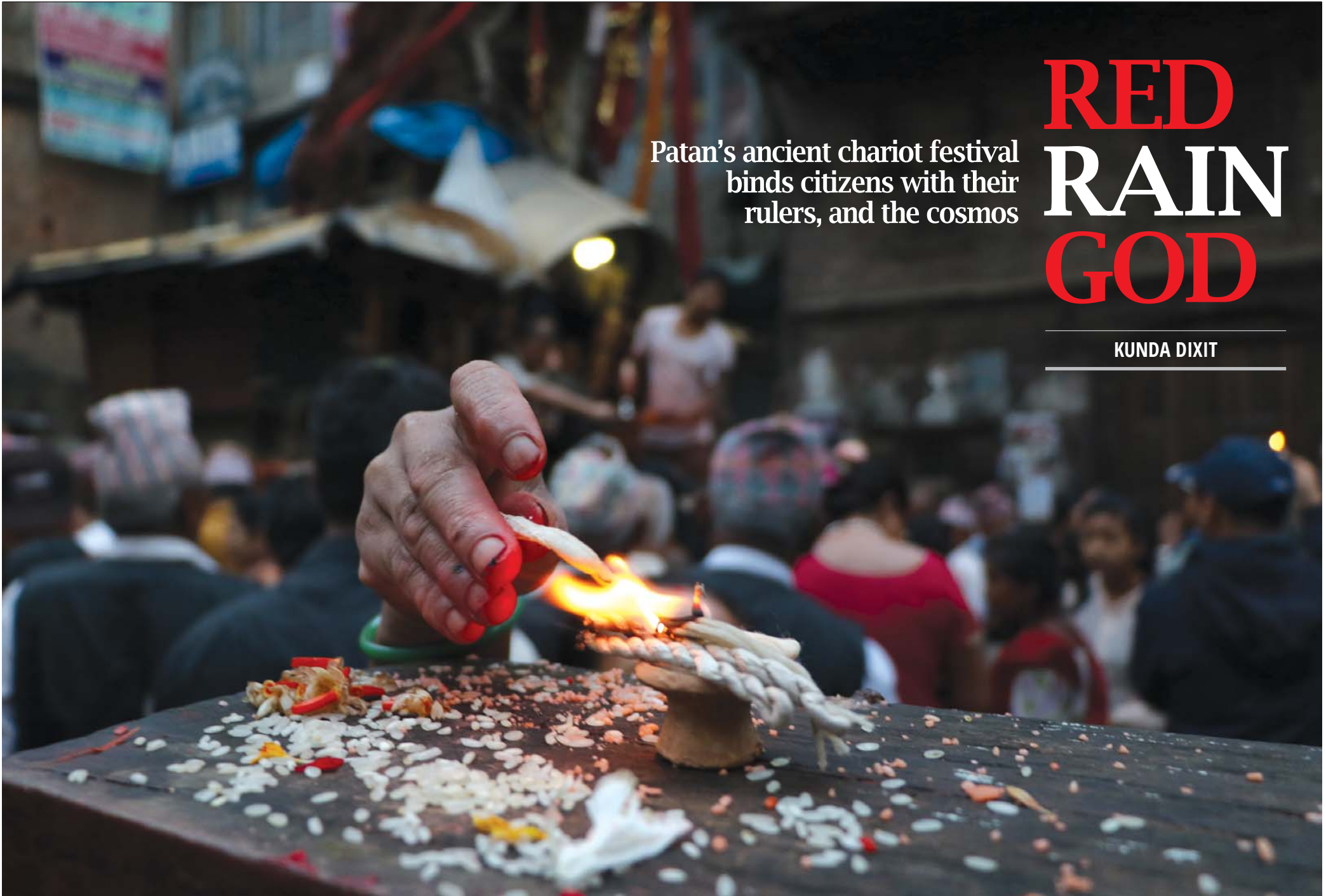
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PICS: KUNDA DIXIT

Patan's ancient chariot festival binds citizens with their rulers, and the cosmos

# RED RAIN GOD

KUNDA DIXIT

Heritage conservation has come to be synonymous with the restoration of temples and monuments, especially after the devastation of last year's earthquake. But the disaster also threw into sharp focus the importance of preserving the culture and festivals of Kathmandu Valley.

The Rato Machindranath chariot was on its once-in-12-year traverse from Bungamati to Patan when the earthquake struck on 25 April last year. The shaking worsened structural weaknesses in the chariot and it was dismantled and rebuilt before continuing on its journey, highlighting the importance placed by locals on the festival of the red rain god.

"There is a close relationship between the jatra and the cosmos, it has always been the belief that it augurs the fate of rulers," says anthropologist Bruce Owens, who has researched Machindranath for the past 34 years. Indeed, years when the chariot has caught fire or toppled have usually been

followed by political upheavals.

In 2000, the chariot keeled over twice on its way to the Bhoto Jatra in Lagankhel officiated by King Birendra. Within a year Birendra, along with nine other members of his family, were killed in the royal palace massacre. In other years, chariot malfunctions have been followed by droughts or floods.

Nepal transitioned from monarchy to republic in the past decade, and during the hybrid period both King Gyanendra and Prime Minister Girija Koirala presided over the Bhoto Jatra. Today, the belief that the fate of the chariot portends the destiny of the king has been seamlessly transferred to the longevity of the government of the day, and thereby the wellbeing of the country and its people.

The festival was such a powerful cultural force in Kathmandu Valley that after the Shah conquest, the country's new non-Newar rulers publicly worshipped at the Machindranath, Indra Jatra and other festivals to



legitimise their rule.

"They transferred to themselves the cultural understanding of the king as the quasi-divine intermediary between the spiritual and temporal realms," Owens explains.

There is an elaborate and colourful legend about how the Bodhisattva Padmapani Lokeswar, transformed into a bumble bee, travelled from Assam to Bungamati in a golden water pot. The red god resides in the Machindra temple in Bungamati except for six months in a year when it is drawn through the streets of Patan in a chariot.

Housed in a smaller chariot is Minnath, either the son or daughter (or both) of Machindranath, who has had a festival of its own prior to the deity arriving from Assam.

Every part of the chariot has religious significance and the coexistence of Buddhist and Hindu motifs. The yoke represents the Karkat Nag serpent which helped the deity travel from Assam. The



four enormous wheels of the chariot with painted eyes represent Bhairavs, the red god's bodyguards. And three directions of the chariot's deck are graced by the vehicles of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The presence of

these deities made it acceptable for Kathmandu Valley's Hindu kings to pay their respects to the Bodhisattva.

The red god had been taken out of the temple in Bungamati, ritually bathed and placed in the chariot when the earthquake struck last year.

The temple is still a heap of rubble 15 months later, and when the god returns to it next month, it will have to be sheltered in a temporary tin shed just like the priest and many of the still-homeless residents of Bungamati. 🇳🇵

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## Living culture

Despite the urbanisation and consumerism that has swept Kathmandu Valley in the past two decades, the Rato Machindranath chariot festival is more popular than ever. Before sunrise every morning this week in Patan's Poda Tole, hundreds thronged to witness the ritual bathing of the god's reflection on a silver mirror.

"For us, the Machindranath festival is part of our living culture," says Kulal Dongol of Jyapu Samaj in Patan, a society which has mobilised the youth to take part in every aspect of the festival. Unlike before, young women now play an increasingly dynamic and visible role in the activities. "The youth have taken ownership of the festival now, we don't have to worry much about it disappearing in the future," Dongol adds.

The renaissance of the intangible heritage of Kathmandu Valley is partly due to the rise of identity politics that has given Nepal's indigenous people a renewed sense of pride in their cultures, and also because of the expanding urban middle class with its disposable income.

The climax of the festival is at Bhoto Jatra which this year falls on 27 July. This year history will once more be made because Nepal's first woman president, Bidya Devi Bhandari, will be in attendance. On that day, the jewelled vest of Machindranath will be displayed from the chariot.

There is a complicated story about the symbolism of the vest, and it involves the Karkat Nag Raja's wife who had her sight restored by a miracle. But whether one believes it or not, the reverence with which Nepalis from all classes, castes and ethnicities greet the sight of the bhoto in the presence of the President, Prime Minister and the country's rulers imbues the chariot festival with a significance that links citizens with their rulers, to earth and sky, and the universe beyond. And it always rains on Bhoto Jatra.





# INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE

The first 'Independence Day' film starring a young, brash Will Smith was a smash hit when it came out in 1996. Due to a dearth of real creativity and a complete lack of original source material, Hollywood has resorted to making 'Independence Day: Resurgence' - a sequel set exactly twenty years later, and timed just right for a certain American holiday.



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

This is your typical summer blockbuster, directed by the veteran Roland Emmerich, who almost always yields to prioritising special effects over story, and unfortunately over meaningful, believable human relationships.

That said, who watches these action movies for the human drama anyway? If you are lucky enough to catch this film on the big screen, the special effects will more than make up for the banal love story, and the forced parent-child separation melodrama - so if watching a gargantuan alien space ship, spanning thousands of miles, land on earth and take over the entire northern hemisphere is your thing, then you won't feel cheated for the price of your ticket.



For the non-action movie people who have no idea what I'm talking about, well, in short, 'Independence Day' also refers, in the world of this film, to humankind's triumph over a terrifying alien invasion.

Twenty years on, the humans on Earth have used the alien technology salvaged from the war to prepare for the next invasion - an event that everyone dreads with every fibre of their being. However, the absolute conviction that aliens, when they can and do arrive, will be malevolent is a premise that perhaps ought to be questioned. After all, if extra-terrestrials have evolved enough in their own way to be capable to space-travel across light years might they not,

therefore, also be benevolent explorers, boldly going where their kind have not gone before and with no intent to destroy? Perhaps we are projecting our own acquisitive propensities upon an innocent unknown.

Philosophising aside, this particular alien resurgence is indeed awfully mean-minded, bent on destroying the planet and harvesting the earth's molten core for energy. As usual, the aliens look like overgrown insects, there is a suitably terrifying Queen, they have a hive mentality, and not even the likes of Jeff Goldblum and Liam Hemsworth can really save this film due to their ill-written characters. So be warned, the laughs are few, the thrills are so-so, but the effects are pretty darned great.

Despite its tepid story line the film has already made over \$250 million at the box office, doing well for a behemoth that took no less than \$165 million to make. You won't remember much about it when it's over and it certainly won't stay with you over the years, but the fun, while it lasts, is perhaps just the thing for a few hours out of the sun and the rain. 🇳🇵

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## HAPPENINGS



RSS

**EMINENT FOLKS:** Foreign Affairs Minister Kamal Thapa flanked by Bharatiya Janata Party leader Bhagat Singh Koshiyari (left) and former Nepali ambassador to India Bhekh Bahadur Thapa at the first meeting of the Nepal-India Eminent Persons Group in Kathmandu on Monday.



RSS

**GET WELL SOON:** Nepali Congress leaders gather at Om Hospital, Kathmandu on Wednesday to enquire on the health of their General Secretary Shashank Koirala. Doctors said on Thursday that Koirala is showing some signs of improvement.



GOPEN RAI

**A BEAUTIFUL MIND:** Prime Minister KP Oli launches a new collection of poems penned by Jhamak Ghimire in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



GOPEN RAI

**EID MUBARAK:** A Muslim father carries his little daughter to a mosque in Kathmandu to attend and offer Eid prayers on Thursday.



NEPALARMY

**RISKY RESCUE:** A soldier pulls up a man stranded because of landslides in his village in Dhading into an Army helicopter on Sunday.



# FIRST CHEPANG NURSE

Sajana Baral in *Himal Khabarpatrika*,  
3-9 July

हिमाल  
खबरपत्रिका

Twenty-year-old Gyani Chepang is the first nurse from her semi-nomadic community that makes a living mainly in the Chure Hills of southern Makwanpur district. After graduating from Shree Medical and Technical College in Bharatpur early this year, Chepang is planning to return to her village of Lothar in Makwanpur to serve her community which has very high maternal and infant mortality because of the lack of medical facilities and the low-level of awareness regarding the prevention of common infections. Low literacy and the poor state of schools means that communications is the first line of defence against communicable diseases.

Lothar was affected by massive floods in 2003 and the region has never really recovered from the calamity. It made an



already poor region more destitute. There is a health post in Lothar, but no health workers and hardly any medicines. Most Chepangs have to trudge to Bharatpur even to treat minor ailments.

“I have suffered and seen the hardships of my community, and I want to help to make their lives better,” says Gyani Chepang.

Most women in the community still deliver babies at home, and many died from complications. Malnourishment is endemic, this leads to stunting and makes children vulnerable to infections. Gyani was herself born at home, and raised by parents who eked out a living by earning daily wages in nearby towns and collecting roots and tubers from the forest for family meals. But Gyani was lucky, unlike most of her friends, she got to go to school.

Gyani knew her parents were too poor to pay for her higher studies, so she had almost given up. It was her elder brother who encouraged her to fulfill her dreams. Today, Gyani (whose name means ‘wise’ or ‘decent’) lives up to her name.

Inspired by the life of Florence Nightingale, Gyani dreamt about pursuing a career in nursing. As luck would have it, she found a scholarship to join a nursing course. “People in my community are still against sending their daughters to school,” she says. “I feel lucky that my brother was so supportive.”

# Bhotekosi flood

Dhruba Dangal in *Nagarik*,  
7 July

नागरिक

A flash flood on the Bhotekosi River - that flows down from Tibet to Nepal - has swept away at least 21 houses in the Tatopani village of Sindhupalchok district.

Tuesday night’s flood also damaged dozens of houses on the banks of the trans-Himalayan river in Tatopani and nearby villages like Liping and Das Kilo. The 45 MW Bhotekosi Hydropower and the under construction 102MW Mid-Bhotekosi Hydropower were also damaged.

Four vehicles, including two cargo containers parked at Tatopani, were also washed away. The flood has also damaged the building where an integrated office of immigration,

customs and security was set up near the Nepal-China friendship bridge after last year’s earthquakes.

Police had alerted the locals to run to safety as water levels in the river rose alarmingly.

Sindhupalchok’s CDO Gokarna Mani Dawadi called the Chinese authorities to find out the cause of the flood and was told that a massive landslide caused by heavy rainfall on the Tibetan side had blocked the river about five

kilometers upstream from Tatopani. The dammed river finally burst through on Tuesday night.

The flood has also damaged the 30 km Tatopani-Lamosangu section of the Kodari Highway, which was blocked by the massive Jure landslide in 2014 and in several other places by rockfalls triggered by last year’s earthquake. Tatopani was slowly limping back to normal after the road was cleared a few months ago, but the flood has once again turned it into a ghost town.

The locals say the last time they witnessed such a devastating flood was in 1980, when nearly 40 houses were washed away in Purano Barabise when a glacial lake in Tibet burst.



DHRUBA DANGAL



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# NIGHT

UPASANA KHADKA

“It is really expensive being a girl,” says Manisha with a smile, referring to her new make-up, high-heels, wigs and dresses. It has been three weeks since she came out as a woman, but she has not yet mustered the courage to confront her family and friends. During the day, she is Mahesh, a shopkeeper and a dutiful son. At night she is Manisha, the version of herself she is most comfortable with.

Muna, who was helping Manisha with her make-up one evening last week, also leads a dual life. It’s more complicated for her because she shares an apartment with her family.

Her nights out as Muna involve elaborate planning, excuses and even lies.

That evening, she decided to stay home and be a dutiful brother to appease her elder brother and his wife. She did not say much, instead she handed over a note explaining how it was not her choice but nature that put her in a man’s body. She did not regret being different, but hated being called names and was scared of coming out to her family.

Muna and Manisha were in Rolly’s apartment. They refer to Rolly as “Mom” because she helped them break into the network. “You cannot randomly show up out of nowhere as a queen,” Manisha explains, “other queens can be pretty territorial and aggressive. But when

you show up as the daughter of one of the queens, they are more accepting and let you be one of them.”

Rolly has nine ‘daughters’ after coming out last year, and Manisha thinks that is because she is very warm and knows how to make the newbies feel comfortable in their own skin. She says, “Transitions can be extremely frightening initially, but Rolly knows exactly how to handle that fear and reluctance.”

Rolly seemed comfortable talking about her life. She grew up as Ramesh in Chitwan, and always knew she was different. “I did not know why I felt like a girl, but I found support online by connecting with many people like myself through a fake Facebook account,” she confided.

One such friend was from her village; they decided to meet. To Rolly’s surprise, the person she had been chatting with was her friend Bikram (now Nirja). From the walks around their village in Chitwan as Bikram and Ramesh, to their scooty rides on the streets of Kathmandu as Nirja and Rolly, they have supported each other ever since.

Across town in another apartment, Nirja’s dual life is much simpler; she does not have to change to Bikram every day. She just maintains a façade of masculinity when she needs to visit her family in Chitwan a few times a year. For the rest of the time, she is Nirja, has taken part in beauty contests and is comfortable with being photographed.

“More awareness about our situation through the media could potentially make it easier for us to come out to our parents”, says Nirja, gluing on fake eyelashes.

Manu, on the other hand, dresses as a woman only a couple of nights a month. The rest of the time she is Bikash, a college student in a boy’s hostel. She has homework and tests to keep her busy, her other life is a secret. “I am the only son in the family which makes it more difficult to tell my parents. I hope to come out when I finish my studies and become financially independent,” says Manu. “Maybe once I earn a livelihood and fulfil my duties as a son, my parents will be more willing to accept me”, he adds.

Manisha, Muna, Nirja, Rolly and Manu say they have to be

# Finding refuge in cyberspace

Fear of ostracisation by family and friends forces Nepal’s LGBTI community to seek solace on social media

CHRISTOPHER KELLY

Nepal’s Constitution may be the most progressive in the region when it comes to recognising the legal rights of gay and transgenders, but social acceptance is taking much longer.

Stigma and ostracisation forces many from Nepal’s growing Lesbian Gay Bi-sexual Trans-sexual and Inter-sexual (LGBTI) community to hide their true identity. And since gay bars and clubs still cannot operate openly, most rely on Facebook and other social media outlets to find friends.

“Unfortunately, we don’t have a permanent place to gather so we use Facebook groups, Imo, Grindr, or Planet Romeo to meet people,” says Parsu Ram Rai of Blue Diamond Society (BDS), who adds, “coming out of the closet is a huge challenge in a country where being gay is not widely accepted as normal.”

People use secret names to

interact and meet with others from their community, but even on social media there are some who use abusive words or troll LGBTI people.

“If I know guys on Facebook are gay, I will chat with them and then meet up. It also helps us network within the community to tackle issues ranging from sexual health to social inclusion”, Rai explains.

The Constitution goes further than ever before on LGBTI rights, but doesn’t mention gay marriage (see box). As with other laws in the country, gaining full societal acceptance takes time. In fact, family conflict involving LGBTI people often leads to removal from inheritance lists and eviction.

There are cases of lesbians being forced to get married, other gays are subjected to drastic measures to ‘cure’ them, and family members try to force mutilation and surgery on some trans-sexual and inter-sexual members. One transgender person was forcibly taken to a rehab centre to set her straight.



FINALLY FREE: Esan Regmi, (See box, right) photographed holding the Freedom flag.

CHRISTOPHER KELLY

Rai says there is a double standard in the way society looks at the LGBTIs, who are accepted as long as they are not family members. “They don’t want to have LGBTI children within their

families, but outside the family, that’s okay,” he explained, adding that there seems to be more acceptance of the transgender community than of gays and lesbians.

The Blue Diamond Society offers counselling for drug abuse, treatment for HIV/AIDS as well as sheltering and finding jobs for those who are kicked out by their families. 🇳🇵





ALL PICS: UPASANA KHADKA

# AND DAY

thick- skinned to be queens. “People harass us. The police, the drunks, the drug-addicts chase us, call us names and treat us like animals, many fear us,” says Muna. Despite all this, they are relieved to be 'out', even partially. They wait for the day when they can transition fully.

Sharmila does not need to lead a dual life, she has come out completely. “It was not easy, people still talk; call me names,” she says, “but my Mom has finally come around and I feel very lucky.” She has a tattoo with her birth name ‘Shankhar Chowdhury’ on her hand, which reminds her constantly of her past life. “I can erase it but doing so costs Rs.18,000, so I don’t bother,” Sharmila laughs.

Sharmila’s family tried

everything to ‘heal’ her after they found out. They introduced her to girls to get her married off, even took her to a witch doctor, but nothing worked. She hated playing with her brothers, and felt shy around her guy friends. She preferred helping her mother out in the kitchen and yearned to wear kurtas.

“I always felt something was terribly wrong with me. Why could I not be normal like my brothers? Why did I feel like I was trapped in the wrong body? I did not know anything about transgenders,” she reveals.

She used to work at a bank, and finally met someone like her who took her to the Blue Diamond Society (BDS) where she learned that there was nothing wrong with her.

Sharmila is now the second wife of a taxi driver, and proudly displays two framed pictures of her wedding. “Every girl dreams of having a wedding and I did too,” she says, “I was so thrilled when he asked to marry me. We got married at Gujeshwori temple, all our friends came.”

Sharmila is happy and comfortable now, but is uncertain about the future. She says, “I will most likely run a small shop and continue to take care of my nephews whose parents passed away. I have to constantly remind the boys to call me aunty but they just won’t listen.”

*Names have been changed.*



## Coming out of hiding

Esan Regmi was born a girl in the remote district of Bajura in western Nepal. His parents named him Parvati, and he grew up like any other young girl in the village. At age 13, Esan realised he was different from other girls. Despite puberty, he was not growing breasts and he started sprouting facial hair.

“This was very distressing to me and my family, and in our conservative society people started looking at me differently,” Esan recalls. His father took him to India for reconstructive surgery to turn him into a boy, but found out it was not possible.

Some in India advised them to set Esan up for adoption by the hijra community, but the family brought him back to Nepal where he had to live the rest of his teenage years acting as a girl because he was legally a female.

“Despite wanting to have my freedom and be proud of being intersex, I was suppressed and forced to hide inside and could not share who I was with others,” Esan recalls.

At 19, he started going to college to get a degree in education. He was bullied by classmates, and strangers would stare. All this stressed Esan, hindering his studies. The last straw was during the final exams, where he was told his features and gender did not match his ID card.

Luckily, Esan got support from his family and continued his studies despite constant societal ridicule and discrimination. Little

did Esan know that his battle to finish his studies and complete his Masters degree in Education would lead him to the very help that he himself needed.

In 2011, he started volunteering at the Blue Diamond Society, and had the chance to interact with others like him and discover the larger LGBTI community, both within Nepal and abroad.

Esan was born with female genitalia, and only noticed he was different when puberty hit. Some intersex people are born with mixed genitalia and their parents are able to notice this difference at birth. Intersex genital mutilation has now become a problem not just in Nepal, but worldwide.

A recent report found that clinics were advertising genital mutilation - as an option for intersex children - to expand their revenue.

“The hospitals need consent for surgery, which they don’t get at the moment,” Esan says.

For now, the main struggle for Esan and other LGBTI or gender-fluid people in Nepal is to expand awareness so that intolerance, discrimination and stigmatisation can be eliminated. And the only way is through education and the mass media.

“I have been using social media to raise the issue of intersex children and young people who do not have good opportunities for education and employment,” he says. “Intersex is not a disease. Intersex is normal. Intersex people have the right to live with dignity.”

*Christopher Kelly*

## What is in the Constitution

When Nepal promulgated its new Constitution in September 2015, Madhesi politicians blockaded the border. However, Nepal’s sexual minorities hailed the document which explicitly guarantees equal rights for them.

Nepal became the first nation in Asia and the third in the world, after South Africa and Ecuador, to ensure equal constitutional rights to people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community.

The rights of Nepali citizens to choose their gender identity on citizenship and passports -- male, female or other -- is enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution. The Department of Passports

has already issued its first passport under the “O” category to Monica Shahi, 37 (*pictured*), a transgender activist.

Article 18 forbids discrimination against gender and sexual minorities by the state or judiciary, and Article 42 safeguards the right of gender and sexual minorities to participate in the civil service and state mechanisms.

Transgender activists have applauded the government’s efforts to protect the rights of sexual minorities, but they say implementation is slack.

“We are very happy that the government has explicitly guaranteed our rights in the Constitution. Now the government should implement them,” says transgender activist Bhumika Shrestha. She says the government needs to address issues of same-sex marriage, right to property, right to adopt children and affirmative action.

The Supreme Court in 2007 had issued a verdict to recognise LGBTIs as a third gender category and also ruled to recognise same-sex marriage. Pinky Gurung, President of the Blue Diamond Society, says the government should publicise recently-introduced provisions in order to facilitate the implementation process.

“Many LGBTIs are facing obstacles in obtaining citizenship despite provisions in the Constitution because local-level government officials are unaware of it,” says Gurung. “The government should circulate the necessary information to all government offices.”

*Shreejana Shrestha*



BIKRAM RAI

## WHO’S WHAT

**Lesbian:** A woman/female-identified person attracted to another woman/female-identified

**Gay:** A broad term referring to homosexuals, particularly to specify a man/male-identified person attracted to man/male-identified person

**Bisexual:** An individual who is attracted to persons of the same or opposite sex

**Transgender:** An umbrella term for persons whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their anatomical sex or the gender they were assigned at birth.

**Intersex:** Describes a person whose biological sex is ambiguous. The term 'intersex' is not interchangeable with, or a synonym for 'transgender'.





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Without further ado around the bush

Amidst the frenzy of the everyday rat race, daily commutes, keeping up with the Jains, and spending five hours a day watching videos of dog tricks on Facebook, it is understandable that you don't have time to keep yourself up-to-date with earth-shaking global and national events. In case you hadn't noticed, we had an earthquake here last year followed by a five-month blockade.

Being a newspaper of record, we take very seriously our responsibility to defend the public's right to say "no". It is therefore incumbent on the Ass to do periodic swift recaps of events to keep you all abreast of goings-on in Nepal which, let me be the first to inform you, has just fallen two notches on FP's Fragile States Index. This means we are now a failed state that is failing marginally more spectacularly than we were failing last year. Without further ado around the bush, let me list here some of the major accomplishments of the K P Oligarch grumblement:

**Uranium Discovered in Mustang**  
Among all the glad tidings this week, this was the one that took the cake, as it were. It warmed our cockles, so to speak. Stupendous news that the country with one of the highest per capita hydro-electricity

potential in the world can now forget about hydropower because henceforth and heretofore nuclear power plants will be sprouting like yarsagumba all over Dolpo and Mustang. This being Nepal, however, there will always be anti-nationalist nay-saying nabobs who will try to downplay the significance of this discovery. But we are reassured because a nation that can take 8 months to fix a broken down baggage carousel at its only international airport can do anything if it puts its mind to it. The dawning of the Atomic Age in the Federal Radioactive Republic of Nepal means that we can now follow the DPRK model and embark upon a clandestine



program to produce weapons-grade plutonium so that no one kicks us around when we take kickbacks on centrifuges. The next logical step is to attach our warheads to intermediate range ballistic missiles and fire them into the Bay of Bengal near Vishakapatnam from time to time to deter any future Blockades.

**Facebook Banned at TIA**  
The Oli Gobarment has taken the bold decision to ban Facebook at Kathmandu Airport so that immigration officials will be more attentive to delegates flying in for the Eminent Pensioners Group meeting. In the interest of staff morale, however, porn sites have not been blocked.



**Minister Boosts GDP**  
Minister of Environment and Copulation, Bishwendra Paswan has singlehandedly contributed to boosting the country's GDP

by taking the personal initiative to fly out 15 fellow-Nepalis to the Climate Change Conference in Paris by fobbing them off as members of Nepal's official delegation. The 15 are now researching the impact of global warming at various Indian restaurants in Barcelona and Lisbon. By allegedly pocketing 17 lacks from each climate expert in his entourage, the minister made a cool 2.5 corrodes, thus allegedly reducing Nepal's national poverty rate by an estimated 1.75 percentage points.



Another member of the Oli Gobbement, Agro Minister Comrade Horrible Gajurel last week demonstrated how Nepal can be self-sufficient in rice by planting paddy in a flowerpot. He follows the illustrious footsteps of his touchy-feely predecessor who last year went knee-deep in mud to personally reach out to farmers of the female persuasion.

**Underwater Electric Crematorium**  
The world got its first underwater electric crematorium this week when the brand-new facility at Pashupati was knocked out of action by a flood on the Bagmati. This was just as well because NEA raised electricity tariffs by 20% which would have meant the crematorium would have gone belly-up anyway. Load-shedding has been reduced by two hours in the Chabahil area because the crematorium was using enough electricity to supply 2,500 households.

**Make-believe Everest Designated**  
The Ministry of Marxism, Leninism and Tourism has designated a hillock in the Khumbu region as a standby Mt Everest for mountaineers who want to fake their ascents of the world's highest mountain, and where they can take selfies to be photoshopped later. Liaison Officers will be on hand to sign fake certificates, and they can be paid with counterfeit Indian 500 rupee notes.



The Ass

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