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KUNDA DIXIT

Calendar of economic change

The appointment by the Communist government of respected economist Yuba Raj Khatiwada (pictured above) as Finance Minister earlier this year was seen by many as a masterstroke. People hoped this would create jobs, maintain fiscal discipline and deliver prosperity. Seven months later, the euphoria is rapidly evaporating as the trade imbalance worsens with imports ballooning, foreign exchange reserves shrink, and there are fears of another liquidity crisis. Prices of food, vegetables, fuel and other essentials have soared ahead of the Dasain-Tihar festivals. A Nepal Rastra Bank report warns that the economy faces strong headwind despite robust growth in remittances. Last week, the Asian Development Bank

forecast that Nepal's economic growth would be 4.9% this year. The World Bank put it even lower at 4.6%. To be sure, they usually factor in possible natural disasters, institutional limitations and other constraints to project minimum growth. The National Planning Commission's projection is 7.2%. Khatiwada had introduced austerity measures, but his first budget plan was criticised by the opposition NC and independent economists as being laden with 'doctored data'. Some MPs of his own party were also critical because it ignored electoral promises of more jobs, social security, big-ticket projects and an economic revolution. In his defence, Khatiwada says the government has spent most of its energy so far in developing organisational, legal and financial

structures as well as managing resources. But even he admits it is now time to start delivering results. In an exclusive interview with *Nepali Times* this week Khatiwada said development will now be expedited because policy constraints are being removed. For example, the existing Public Procurement Act will now disqualify contractors who bid lower than minimum cost and delay completion. A new public company is being set up to rent out construction equipment for government projects. Private companies need not plant 25 trees for every tree felled, they just deposit a tree plantation fee which the government will use for reforestation. Khatiwada said: "I could have announced populist programs for short-term glory, but I gave priority

to achieving long-term goals." The WB Group is returning to hydropower investment with Upper Arun and Upper Trisuli, and the ADB has shown an interest in other projects like Dudhkosi. But Khatiwada says Nepal needs more investment to generate 15,000MW more electricity in 10 years, but Nepal's banking sector is incapable of lending so much and donors will not pay for energy infrastructure. He says: "We have no option but to take foreign loans, but we will accept and use them wisely."

Om Astha Rai

Interview with
Finance Minister
Yuba Raj Khatiwada

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TB OR NOT TB

Neglect by Nepal's rulers of the poor, the disenfranchised and marginalised has been a given throughout our history. Royal or revolutionary, democrats or demagogues, upliftment of the underserved has always been a mere slogan. This chronic inattention has determined who gets to live, and who dies.

Till about a decade ago, Nepal's main problem was with infectious diseases like diarrhoea, pneumonia, typhoid, and insect-borne ailments. The first line of defence against communicable diseases is communication: and the government's campaign for public health awareness through a network of female health volunteers yielded dramatic results.

Even though the emphasis has now shifted to non-communicable diseases, there is still one infectious disease that has fallen below the radar: tuberculosis. It is obvious why, TB afflicts the poorest in the remotest parts of the country.



BIKRAM RAI

This is true not just in Nepal but worldwide. Despite advances in medicine, TB is still the biggest infectious killer – 35 million people died of it in the past 18 years. If nothing is done, another 30 million will die of TB from now till 2030.

Tuberculosis is caused by a bacterium transmitted through coughing, and if left untreated, affects the lungs and leads to a slow and painful death. The fact that it is still killing millions every year despite the availability of antibiotics is an indictment of the global and national inequity in health care.

Most Nepalis are carriers of the bacillus that causes TB, but the disease is kept in check by our immune system. Chandra Shumsher had TB, and many of Nepal's kings died of it. The bacteria proliferates when a person becomes weaker due to malnutrition, age, or other diseases like HIV. Last year, 45,000 new cases were detected in Nepal, and nearly 7,000 of them died.

Although Nepal is a role model in the community-based DOTS process that requires medical supervision of the administration of antibiotic treatment to patients, researchers say a more active case detection method is now required. This calls for an increase in Nepal's annual TB control budget of \$18million of which about half is met

through donor contribution.

Last week in New York, the United Nations held its first ever high-level meeting on TB during which leaders adopted a historic UN Political Declaration on TB timed for World TB Day on 26 September. This largest ever gathering of world leaders hoped to do for TB what had earlier been achieved with such meetings for diseases like HIV and Ebola.

The declaration had a checklist that included reaching 40 million people by 2022 with diagnosis and treatment, and another 80 million with preventive therapy. It also committed to double the current \$13billion to fund the World Health Organisation (WHO) End-TB Strategy and the Stop TB Partnership's Global Plan to End TB.

WHO developed the End-TB by 2035 strategy in 2014 but it was clear more investment and political commitment was needed. Globally and within countries, it is the poor who suffer, which means the disease is not a priority for pharmaceutical companies, the private health care industry and most governments. Tuberculosis and poverty go hand-in-hand: TB fuels poverty, and poverty in turn fuels TB.

In addition to the challenge of surveillance, detection and early treatment, there is now a new threat: the tuberculosis bacterium is getting resistant to prevalent antibiotics, and untreatable superbugs are spreading. Multi-drug resistant (MDR) tuberculosis is difficult and expensive to treat, and the drugs have severe side effects.

New drugs, diagnostics and vaccines are urgently required but investment in TB research falls far short of what is needed. BCG vaccines are no longer considered effective enough, and diagnosis of multi-drug resistance is too expensive for poorer countries like Nepal. The 'Alaska Model' of treating all carriers preventively with antibiotics would be too expensive and too difficult here.

Nepal's location is an added problem: the two countries with the heaviest TB disease burden are India and China. Both have increasing numbers of MDR TB, and eradicating TB within Nepal will not be the end of the story.

There are new interventions on the horizon like the GeneXpert molecular diagnostic kits, but there are only 50 of them in Nepal and each cartridge costs the government Rs1,800. The Britain Nepal Medical Trust is using drones for delivery of specimens and drugs in a pilot project in Piuthan to overcome the accessibility barrier. (Story: page 14-15).

Since a national eradication program is too complicated, Nepal's strategy should be to adopt best practices from elsewhere like establishing TB-free zones district-by-district. One thing is clear: business as usual will mean this medieval disease will be around for much longer.

Chandra Shumsher had tuberculosis, and many of Nepal's kings died of it. Most Nepalis are carriers of the disease. More needs to be done than lighting up monuments in red.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The front page of *Nepali Times* ten years ago (#419) 26 September – 2 October, 2018 covered the visit by Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal to New York for the UN General Assembly, and attendance at a reception by US President George W Bush. The editorial cited Dahal's promise to generate 10,000MW of power in 10 years. It has been 10 years, and we still generate less than 1,000MW. Excerpt from the editorial:

'The Maoist-led government wants to "think big" and increase present generating capacity from 600MW to 10,000MW in 10 years. This will cost Rs 1.4 trillion. There's no harm in dreaming, but even if we manage to generate that amount of electricity by 2018, our domestic demand will have risen to 3,000MW and India's generation capacity will be 300,000MW. Our exports will make up only 2% of India's electricity needs in 10 years, so they can do quite well without our power. We need it much more here. Nepal needs to generate more electricity to meet rising domestic demand and then sell the surplus to balance our Rs150 billion annual trade deficit with India. The most prudent course of action for us is to fast-track hydroenergy projects by turning Nepal into an investment-friendly destination. For this, the new government must get serious and streamline licensing, respect the sanctity of contracts, and temper militant labour. If that isn't done, forget about 10,000MW in 10 years.'



ONLINE PACKAGES



FIRE AND ICE

Everest Base Camp today is 50m lower than when Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay climbed the mountain in 1955. The Khumbu Glacier has been retreating at 30 metres per year, and thinning because of rising global temperatures. But how fast is global warming melting the Himalayas? Join us on this aerial survey of Khumbu and watch for yourself the melting of permanent ice and snow, and its impact on a billion people downstream. Story: 8-9.



GRANNIES AT WORK

At Aji's, the elderly community make a range of products for sale, depending on their skills and passions. Watch a video of the grandparents and join them as they excitedly make socks, mini bags, sculptures, and many other items. By working this way, they remain engaged, happy and connected to their families and communities. Story: 7.



FINANCE MATTERS

Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatiwada talks to *Nepali Times* about foreign aid, the West and mega infrastructure projects like Nijgad and Budi Gandaki. Go online to watch an exclusive interview with him. Story: 4-5.

CARING FOR THE POOR

NGOs, INGOs, and high placed persons have enriched themselves at the expense of people in the most remote parts of Nepal (Life and livelihood in remote Nepal, #929, Jocelyn Powelson). I believe the real culprits are national and international intellectuals pretending to help the poorest in countries like Nepal. Poor people will continue to be victims until they can be reined in.

Jitendra Rana

DASAIN VACATION

Where does the money for these abroad vacations come from (Where are you going this Dasain?, #929, Sikuma Rai) ? How come we have higher purchasing power than all the foreigners coming to Nepal? Our country is poor, but the people seem to be rich. This cannot be. Either most people are evading tax, or we have a large informal sector, or black money is rampant.

Roshan Bhatta

COMPELING READ

Powerful editorial by Nepali Times (Megalomania + Kleptomania, #928, Editorial). Communism in Nepal is all about capturing resources and allowing cadres and cartels to seek rent.

Sujeev Shakya

LOW IQ

When it comes to innovation, the Oli-garchy has a combined collective IQ of a single digit (Thinking big, #929, Ass).

Alex Ferguson

WHAT'S TRENDING

Kathmandu's Little Kabul

by Gopal Gartaula
A small group of Afghan refugees fleeing violence from their home country came to find a new life in Nepal, and this report encapsulating their struggles was read and shared most extensively this week. Visit www.nepalitimes.com to read their stories of struggle and hope in case you missed it this week.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most visited online page



Daughter Slaughter

by Monika Deupala
Heinous crimes of violence against women have been increasing, adding up to 479 rape cases in Nepal in two months. Go online to read an account of the tragic and heart-wrenching story of acid attack on the Das sisters showing how devastating such attacks can be.

Most popular on Twitter

Where are you going this Dashain?

by Sikuma Rai
As Dashain approaches, this report about Nepalis spending their Dashain in foreign cities of Thailand, America, Europe, Singapore, Dubai and other nations sparked many people's interest. Read the story on our website and learn more about these international sojourns, and share your views on it.

Most commented

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
The harrowing story of Samjhana Das, who succumbed to her injuries from an acid attack this week. @MDeupala talks to Das' father and her alleged attacker, and her sister Sushmita who is still recovering from acid injuries.

#hellomynameisKaren @churchillkt
Such a harrowing tale of sadness. Unfortunately, having worked in a hospital in Nepal earlier this year I can say I believe this is only the tip of the iceberg. #womenmatter #EqualityForAll #sadtimes

Mohna Ansari @MohnaAnsari
Violence against women & children is an appalling human rights violation, government must act proactively and aggressively. Can government ignore these incidents or make excuses of political or economic progress?

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
Many Nepalis are spending their Dasain-Tihar in Bangkok, Bali, Singapore, Turkey, Russia, London & the US. In fact, Nepali outbound travellers spent Rs80 billion against Rs67 billion spent by foreign tourists in the country over the same period last year.

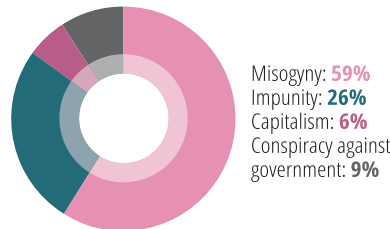
Ashutosh Jha @asjha
This is what happens when the Government doesn't promote domestic tourism. The Kathmandu- Chitwan road which is the main lifeline of Kathmandu has been in a poor condition for years, and still there are no initiatives to speed up the process.

Sumit Piya @SUMIT_PIYA
It is a good initiative from fellow Nepalis. Slowly Nepalis are learning to explore their life with their savings rather than just accumulating properties for their future generations!

Weekly Internet Poll #930

Q. What is the main reason for gender based violence?

Total votes: 161



Weekly Internet Poll #931
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. How do you rate the performance of the Finance Minister so far?



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“The West is even more ready than before



Excerpts from an interview with Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatriwada on Tuesday in which he played down rifts with Western donor agencies, or that Nepal did not want assistance for ‘soft’ sectors like human rights and democracy.

PHOTO: BIKRAM RAI

Nepali Times: It has been seven months since you became Finance Minister, what are your tangible achievements so far?
Yuba Raj Khatriwada: If you ask me how many more kilometers of road or railway lines have been laid or how much more electricity has been added to the national grid, we cannot claim to have achieved much. But what we all need to understand is that the process of implementing the Constitution began only after we came to power. We had to spend a lot of time in

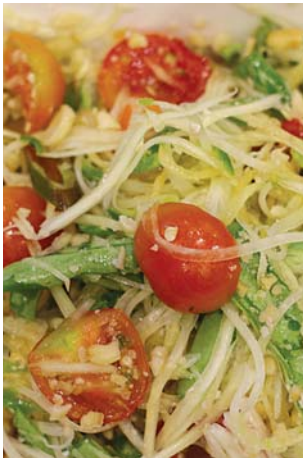
developing organisational, legal and financial structures of provincial and local governments. However, we have made significant progress in managing resources for mega infrastructure projects like roads, railways, airports and hydropower. We have laid the foundations, and we will now start delivering results.
How about foreign aid?
We have been able to convince bilateral and multilateral donors that our government will not waste foreign aid in populist programs

for short-term gain. We will use it for long-term benefit. This is why the World Bank has agreed to provide more financial assistance to us, and other bilateral donors are also excited. We are looking for foreign assistance especially in infrastructure like roads, tunnels, railway and hydropower. We are receiving around Rs 300 billion in foreign assistance annually, but we want to increase this amount to Rs 500 billion next year. We will not be able to finance the annual budget just from tax revenue.

But Western aid agencies are alarmed that the government is restricting them, and the shrinking democratic space in Nepal.
They must be worried about the National Integrity Policy, but that is not a policy that was proposed or considered by our government. We are serious about good governance, and this is not just a responsibility of the government. Donors, INGOs and private sector must also contribute. We will take measures on good governance only after consulting them. They need not worry about it.

Are you saying donors and I/NGOs are not transparent and accountable?
We have proof that some of them have overstepped their mandates. It is the State’s duty to act against those who disrespect Nepal’s sovereignty, integrity and national interest.
There is a sense that Nepal is now cosy up to India and China, but it is alienating its long-term Western development partners.
I have heard this is the subject

Taste of Thailand



PHOTOS: MONIKA DEUPALA

Inside the new Fairfield by Marriott in Thamel, there are traditional Thai umbrellas, lanterns and purple orchids and Thai folk instrumentals play gently in the background. There is an aroma of coconut and lemon grass, and there are people in traditional Thai attire milling about. The ambience takes us directly to Thailand.
For those from Kathmandu not going to Thailand this holiday season, Fairfield by Marriott is bringing Thailand to Kathmandu

this week and next week through a culinary extravaganza at its Kava Restaurant. Tapping into the popularity of Thailand as Nepal’s top vacation destination and the growing interest in Thai culture, the hotel has organised a taste of Thailand.
The 10-day long food festival is led by Chef Kroongtana Nimnu who also goes by the name Chef Chāng (meaning elephant in Thai) and has been promoting his country’s cuisine all over the world, working with

reputed international hotel chains like Royal Angkor Silk Hotel, Le Meridian and Westin for the past 20 years.
This time he is in Nepal to prepare and share Thai dishes from the common Tom Yum Goong (spicy shrimp soup) to Tom Kha Kai (coconut based chicken soup), Kao Na Phet (duck with rice), Som Tum (raw papaya salad), Pad Thai, Gaeng Keow Wan Kai (green Thai chicken curry) and dessert options like sweet sticky rice, egg custard, and many more. Just rolling those Thai names makes one salivate.
“Thai cuisine is a mixture of Indian and Chinese food culture. It is not very similar to Nepali cuisine, but Nepalis have developed a taste for Thai food”, says Chef Chāng. “My menu respects the food culture here, so it does not incorporate too much meat.”
This is first time Chef Chāng is promoting Thai gastronomy in Nepal and has brought along the key Thai ingredients like galangal and Kaffir lime which are not available in the Nepali market. But some ingredients like fermented bamboo shoots (tama) have been sourced from the local market. Chef Chāng uses this sour item to make Gang Ped Kai (red chicken curry with fermented bamboo shoots).
The first day of the festival was inaugurated by Thai Ambassador to Nepal Bhakavat Tansku, and was attended by ambassadors of Myanmar and Singapore, Thai Airways Country Manager Peerapong Jutaganon, and Hotel Annapurna General Manager Raju Bikram Shah. A cultural dance performance by Thai students added colour to the event.
With warm hospitality, a talented culinary team, Fairfield hopes the festival will bring a memorable gourmet dining experience to Kathmandu.
Sikuma Rai
30 September- 9 October, 6:30-10:30pm, Kava Restaurant, Fairfield by Marriott, Thamel, Rs2,199 (+taxes), (01) 4217999

BIZ BRIEFS

Turkish profits up

Turkish Airlines’s total revenue increased by 30%, reaching \$6 billion during the first half of the year compared to the same period last year. Achieving the highest load factor

in its history for the first half, the airline collected net operating profit of \$258 million, despite the increasing fuel prices.

More Pokhara flights

Yeti Airlines has announced ATR 72-500 flights with 72 seats twice a day in the Kathmandu-Pokhara-Kathmandu route at 7 and 9 in the morning. Because of the growing demand and the approaching travelling season, the airline currently already serves 10 flights daily to the destination.

Highway loan

The Asian Development Bank has approved a loan of \$180 million to support improvements to the east-west Mahendra Highway, Nepal’s main domestic and international trade artery. The bank is

Global Airline Partner

Qatar Airways has announce its Official Global Airline partnership with the NBA’s Brooklyn Nets, and the team’s home

to help Nepal”

of talk over tea in some quarters. But I have found Western donors even more ready to help us. At the World Bank headquarters, I recently met the heads of USAID and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) who are happy that an elected government is in place and they have promised to increase their financial assistance. Switzerland and Germany are also ready to step up aid. The European Union is also saying this is the right time to increase support to Nepal. We may have opposing views on certain diplomatic issues, but Western donors are more willing than ever to help Nepal.

What is your take on the Nijgad airport debate?
There was a proposal that Nijgad airport will not be profitable by itself, so whichever company builds it must be given a large swathe of land to develop an aeropolis to make it more attractive. The government has now discarded this proposal. We are now committed to building just an airport causing minimum damage to the local ecology. We need two runways as per the original design, but we are now building just one runway. Adding the second runway will depend on the passenger volume. The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Tourism have agreed to involve the private sector in developing the airport. The revenue generated by cutting down trees in Nijgad will not be misused.

Why is the government considering the same Chinese company for the 1200 MW Budigandaki hydroelectricity project without calling for an open competition?

The same company gets selected for some mega hydropower projects like Budi Gandaki irrespective of how many times an open bidding is called. This is what happened in Upper Karnali and Arun. Only a couple of other companies showed interest, but they were not qualified. That was just a waste of time. Budi Gandaki will be essentially built by us. We will dictate its design or financial management. The Chinese company will just help us get credit and construct the project. The real debate is about how high the Budigandaki dam should be for which we need a technical review. Our plan is to generate 15,000 MW more electricity in 10 years, and we require more than Rs 300 billion for this. We cannot finance these projects on our own, and our banking system does not have the capacity. Donors will not finance such projects, either. So we must seek foreign loans, as in Budi Gandaki. The challenge is to take and invest foreign loan as wisely as possible.



Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatri talks about donors, foreign aid and how the government is building mega infrastructure projects like Nijgad and Budi Gandaki. Go online to watch an exclusive interview with him.

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Nepal's cities of the future

Mayors brainstorm about new ways to raise money to pay for infrastructure and services

A year has gone by since mayors were elected to head municipalities across Nepal. They came to office with great fanfare and much hope.

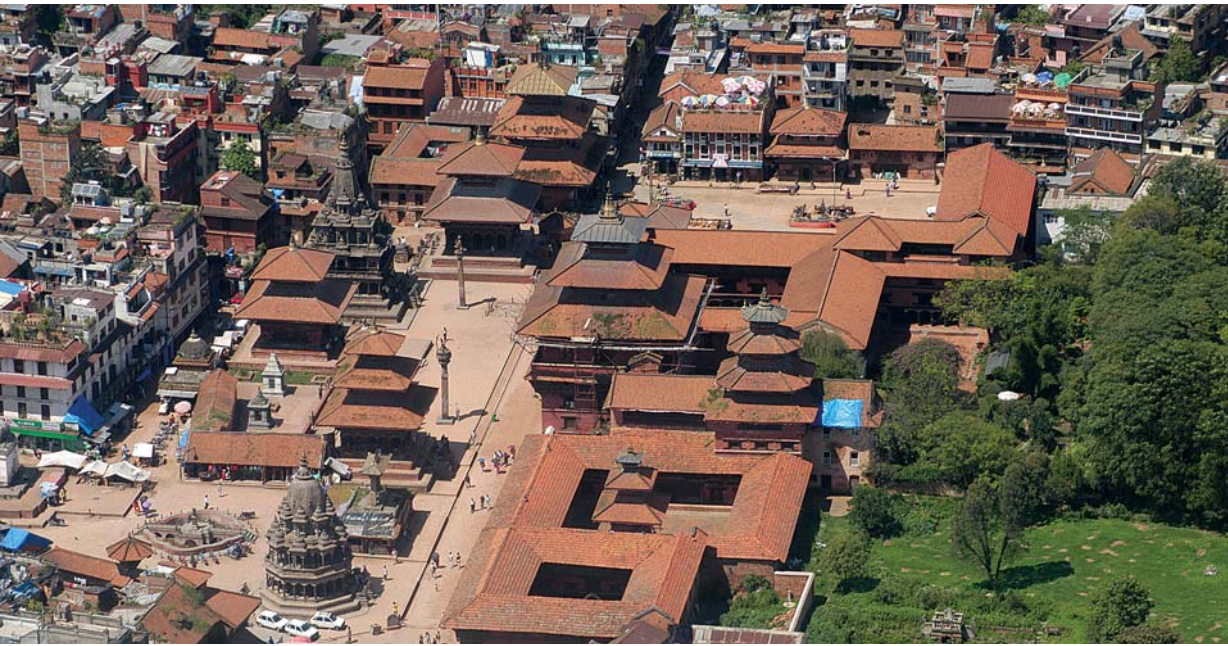
With many hopes dashed, and public disenchantment rising, many have started to explain why they are not able to do much. It is a bit late in the day, and impatient voters do not want to hear excuses.



1/2 FULL
Anil Chitrakar

We know there are problems but is that not the reason we elected these mayors, is the common refrain. Remember how they convinced us that they would give us utopia in return for our votes?

Last week nearly 50 mayors, their administrative and technical staff, along with resource persons from the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the Town Development fund (TDF) came together to explore how cities can do a lot with a little by simply being creative about mobilising new and additional resources. The examples



HANNAN LEWSLEY

of Singapore, Ahmedabad, Dar e Salam, Buenos Aires were cited. At the end of the two days, everyone left energised because of the way they now looked at resource for city building differently.

Bel Prasad Shrestha, the former elected mayor of Dhulikhel, used to gather people who had voted

for him and ask a simple question, “How many of you have had a family member die in a vehicle on the way to hospital in Kathmandu?” Lots of hands used to go up. He asked them to contribute, if he took the lead to build a world class hospital.

Dhulikhel Hospital, which is

a model for an affordable facility offering quality health care, was the result. He did not start with a budget or how much money the municipality had, but with the commitment to fulfill a need. Elected mayors ought to know what their citizens need and why they can trust them with their

money to create a facility, service or infrastructure.

Cities were the beginning, they are the present and they are also the future. They are densely populated, have services and shortages, they have cultural centres and criminals, they have photo spots and garbage dumps. Cities continue to attract people as they have done for thousands of years. They have great learning centers and jobs, they have billionaires and the poor, traffic jams that seem to inspire more and more to want to own a car.

People migrate to cities with their dreams and aspirations. Some make it to the top, and no one remembers the failures. There is money, there is credit, and demand for almost anything you want to sell or buy. All this makes it a real challenge to be a mayor.

Municipalities across Nepal have assets that few know about: bus parks, open spaces, forests, roads, drains, traffic islands. It could look like a dump today, but could be of huge value in the future like a water source or river front properties. Cities also have the monopoly power to issue building permits.

Combine these and we can see how a city can ‘make money’. One of the mayors attending the conference was very excited about the possibilities in the two days which he said felt like a compressed diploma. It would require real team work and also educating the citizens and opposition to implement the ideas.

There were practical challenges like the fact that whoever sat in Singha Durbar and wrote the rules asked the mayor to provide the vision and the deputy mayor to prepare the budget. Many mayors who used to be VDC chairs are now managing cities.

Then, there are the tens of thousands of business school students and graduates who are looking for work closer to home. They understand assets, asset management, city credit rating, how to attain a high city credit rating, how municipal bonds work and how to issue them. Cities across Nepal could use their skills and knowledge.

Nepal has a public private partnership policy that can bring in the private sector to pay for, build and manage city infrastructures that have a good revenue base. We do need a few trust-building projects across Nepal to boost confidence.

Cynics will say that everything a politician promises will be funded by new taxes or debt. But the glass is half-full and today we have other ways to raise money for city services and infrastructure. The city can indeed be the engine of growth. 🇳🇵

Anil Chitrakar is the President of Siddharthinc



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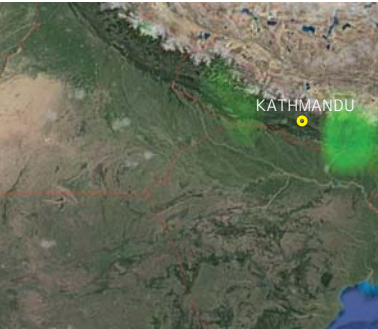
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Dasain is around the corner and the crickets are going full blast wherever there is vegetation, and the dragonflies are out in swarms. Sure sign that the monsoon has bid good bye till next year. But the weather can spring a few surprises, as we have seen with wet Dasains in the past. There is still lots of moisture and transpiration about, and despite the wind from the west expect passing showers in the mountains mostly towards evening.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
 24° 14°	 24° 13°	 24° 13°

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MONIKA DEUPALA

Innovative project revives traditional crafts and allows the elderly to keep in touch with their communities

Prakriti Kandel

Champa Devi Tuladhar loves knitting socks so much that at 76, she wakes up at four in the morning and gets to work. Having learned the skill from her sister at age 8, she has knitted consistently throughout her life. Tuladhar's hands are never idle, as she knits away to prepare her grandchildren for the coming winter.

Lorina and Irina Sthapit grew up wearing those socks. And since they were always close to their grandmother, the sisters understood their grandmother's love for knitting and wanted to share her socks with the world.

They founded Aji's (grandmother in Newari) where six elderly makers are hard at work, creating a range of hand-made products from traditional pouches, to replicas of famous temples,

bracelets and puja sets.

"We were inspired by our grandmother to start with, but realised that everyone from her generation has some unique skill to offer, which is backed up by years of experience." Lorina Sthapit said. With six makers and five more ready to start, Aji's seeks to expand and involve more grans (there is one grandfather so far).

Gyani Laxmi Manadhar, 91 (pictured, right) is the latest addition to Aji's team, and is the most elderly member. She makes traditional Newari pouches called mheechas. She is jovial and energetic, and imaginative.

"I cannot move around much, but by closing my eyes, I can get to anywhere in the world," she says with a beaming smile.

Manandhar receives scraps of discarded materials from tailoring shops, and selects the fabric to create pouches of diverse patterns and colors. She has a methodical step-by-step process.

"These are my riches and my own little factory," she says, pointing to her scissors, cloth, and the finished products. She used to make meechas as a hobby and gave them away as presents to people visiting her home. She still does not want to make money out of selling them, but will donate the income from Aji's to charity.

As the elderly are restricted in their movement, family has moved away, and there is loneliness setting in, the elderly need activities like these to root them in their communities. They feel most excited when their work is appreciated by Aji's customers, they say they feel valued and rejuvenated.

"Sitting idle makes me feel sick," says 70-year-old Juju Ratna Tamrakar, for whom art and sculpture-making have been a life-long passion. He makes cute little stupas and dharma chakras for sale at Aji's.

Aji's also aims to revive

inter-generational bonds as joint families split up. By signing up their elders, buying materials for making the products, coordinating communication and helping to create optimal working space at home, children and grandchildren can play an active role to supporting their grannies.

Champa Devi Tuladhar says she is now bonding with her grandchildren like never before. "We now actually talk about my work, and we didn't do much of that before," she adds.

Another aspect of Aji's is the #AskAnAji campaign which wants to preserve traditional knowledge that is endangered because they have not been passed down to younger generations. People from all over the world can send in questions about recipes, crafts, festivals, or even baby massage and get an answer quickly.

In the year it has been in operation, Lorina Sthapit says Aji's has a growing pool of loyal

customers online through Instagram or website. "I think it resonates with people because everyone has elderly relatives at home," she explains, "and they feel they are motivating senior citizens by selling their products worldwide." 🇳🇵

<https://www.ajisproducts.org>



Watch this heart-warming video of grandmothers and grandfathers busy with their hands making craft items for sale. The work keeps them busy, connected to their grandchildren, extended families, and the community. Share video this holiday season through the *Nepali Times* YouTube Channel.

nepalitimes.com

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The Great Himalayan Thaw

Nepal may have lost one-third of its permanent ice in the past 40 years due to global warming

Hurricane Florence and typhoon Mangkhut, droughts and record-breaking temperatures this summer have highlighted the increasing threats of extreme weather events in a warming world. Although impact of climate change on weather is still not well understood, intense short duration rainfall events are becoming more frequent in Nepal and across the world.



CLIMATE FOR CHANGE
Ajaya Dixit

Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change. For the country and its people to successfully adapt, it is necessary to better understand changing rainfall hazards so new strategies can be developed for farming, drought management, flood risk reduction, a healthier landscape and more robust infrastructure and services.

The inability of global and regional circulation models to capture climate dynamics over Nepal due to low spatial resolution means that it is difficult to project future rise in temperature and changes in rainfall.

The models incorporate some differentiation between the country's east, centre and west but do not account for the north-south topographic gradient of the Himalaya. This means existing simulations do not accurately represent the changes in monsoon circulation.

The higher elevations in the Himalaya involve three dimensions critical for the health of the water cycle of the Ganga Basin downstream: snowfall, snow and ice reserves, and glaciers. There is now better understanding of the risks of glacial retreat, but there is not much on-the-ground study of the impact of snow and ice recession on regional hydrology.

A report in 2014 by the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) said that there were 3,808 glaciers in Nepal covering a total area of 3,902 km² with an estimated ice reserve of 312 km³. It said the total glacier area decreased by 24% between 1977 and 2010 and the estimated ice reserves by 29% (129 km³). This means that in the three decades since, the tributaries of the Ganga River were deprived of an average base flow of 123 cubic metres per second of water.

The rate of glacial melt in the Himalaya due to global warming is an inexact science. In 2007, the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was dragged into controversy following

a publication of a report that said Himalayan glaciers could all melt away by 2035. When several scientists questioned this proposition as unrealistic, the IPPC admitted that 'the findings were based on poorly substantiated estimates of rate of recession and date for the disappearance of Himalayan glaciers and the clear and well-established standards of evidence ... were not applied properly'.

However, the 2014 report of ice reserve depletion, if true, should make everyone sit up because of its serious consequences. Changes in snowfall patterns as well as melting of ice reserves mean serious risks locally, to the regional hydrological system and the hundreds of millions of people living downstream.

Not much has been done to make more realistic estimates of rate of ice reserve depletion and assess its implications. The institutional response to assess changing snow dynamics and its effect on the dry season flow of snow-fed rivers has been grossly inadequate.

There are very few stations that monitor snowfall at elevations above 3,000m. Snowfall is not regularly monitored even in existing stations, except episodically when international research organisations work in partnership with DHM.

This low priority corresponds to the inadequate budget allocated to DHM to be Nepal's climate science institution. According to Climate Change Financing Framework, Rs393 billion (31% of its annual budget) is allocated to climate change. But the DHM's annual budget at Rs714 million is only 0.18% of this allocation. In the previous fiscal year, the DHM could spend only 27% of even that paltry amount.

This low spending capacity is a reflection of deeper institutional challenges: inability to set priorities, systemic apathy, bureaucratic hurdles, societal inability to nurture a scientific ethos and the government's unwillingness to transform DHM into a Nepali version of US Geological Survey to provide high quality climate services. Interestingly, it was USAID that helped establish DHM in early 1960s, but the department never really morphed into Nepal's premier institution for research into climate impact.

The changing nature of rainfall hazards, as one of the determinants of climate change, have exacerbated vulnerabilities in Nepal. Continued low investment and apathy in buttressing the country's climate science capacity also mean that Nepal and its people are poorly prepared for future disasters induced by climate change. 🇳🇵

***Ajaya Dixit** is Executive Director of Kathmandu based ISET-Nepal. This is the first of his monthly column Climate for Change in Nepali Times, dealing with the impact of global warming in Nepal.*

On thin

Global v



For many tourists trekking to Mt Everest Base Camp this autumn, the trip will be an adventure of a lifetime. The thin clear air, stark landscape, and ice-tipped peaks pierce the inky sky providing great Instagram backdrops.

However, what is stunning scenery to tourists is for climate scientists an apocalyptic sight. They see dramatic evidence all around of a rapidly warming atmosphere.

Visitors returning to the Everest region after 20 years also notice changes: large lakes where there were none, glacial ice replaced by ponds, boulders and sand, the snowline moving up the mountains, and glaciers that have receded and shrunk.

All these features are visible from ground level right from the start of the trek in Lukla. The banks of the Bhote Kosi still bear the scars of the deadly flash flood in 1985 which washed off a long section of the Everest Trail and the hydropower plant in Thame. It was caused by an avalanche falling into the Dig Tso glacial lake, causing it to top over.

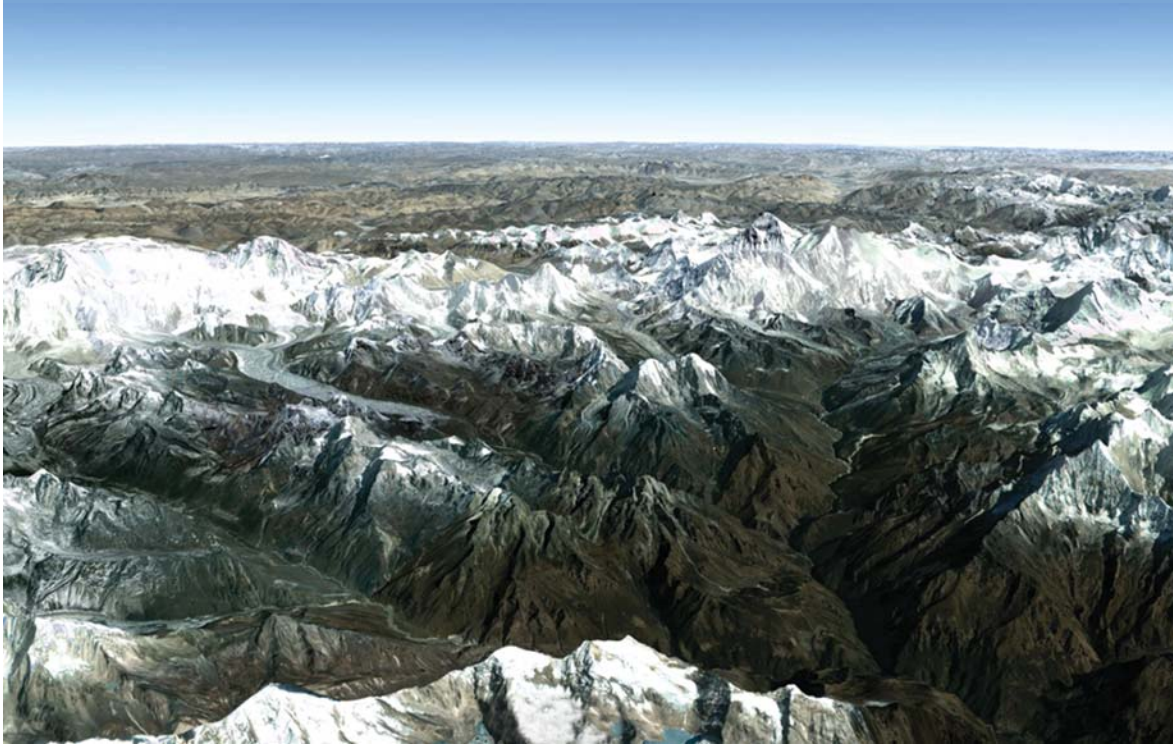
Further up near Tengboche, the Imja Khola also bears signs of a

huge glacial lake outburst flood that thundered down the western flank of Ama Dablam in 1977. And below the formidable south face of Lhotse is Imja Tso, a lake 2km long that has formed and grown in the last 30 years. It does not exist on trekking maps from the 1980s. All these lakes were formed and enlarged as a result of global warming melting the ice.

The terminal moraine of the Khumbu Glacier looms 400m above Dughla. This is the debris bulldozed down from Mt Everest and surrounding peaks over millions of years, and represents the extent of the glacier's advance in the last Ice Age. Today, the surface ice on the world's highest glacier is all but gone due to natural and anthropogenic warming.

For an even more dramatic glimpse of how global warming is changing the Himalayan landscape, there is nothing like an aerial perspective. *Nepali Times* got a chance last week to take these striking images of the terrain below Mt Everest. The barren beauty foretells of a time when this terrain will be stripped of much of what remains of its ice cover.

The Khumbu Icefall funnels



Ice in the Khumbu

warming is melting our mountains like ice cream cones



ALL PHOTOS: KUNDA DIXIT



ice from the Western Cwm below Everest, Lhotse and Nuptse, through the Icefall to the glacier below. The ice here has receded at an average of 30m/y in the past 20 years, but it has also shrunk vertically, losing up to 50m in thickness. Everest Base Camp was at 5,330m when Hillary and Tenzing climbed Mt Everest in 1953, today it is at 5,270m.

The glacier is also getting flatter: the darker debris makes the ice beneath melt faster near Base Camp, but the thicker layers of boulders and sand further down insulate the ice. Glaciologists say this flatter profile means the ice moves slower, leading to more ponding, and more rapid melting of the ice underneath.

The velocity of the glacier is 70m/y at Base Camp, and it slows down to 10m/y further below, but is zero at the terminus situated at 4,900m. This means the ice is decelerating as it is squeezed, and the pressure is being released by the melting of the ice mass.

Researchers monitoring the supraglacial ponds say their area has grown by 70% in the past ten years alone. The ponds are fringed by ice cliffs and caves which accelerate the melting. The melted ice has carved an outflow channel

through the left lateral moraine, so there is no large glacial lake on the Khumbu like as elsewhere in Nepal.

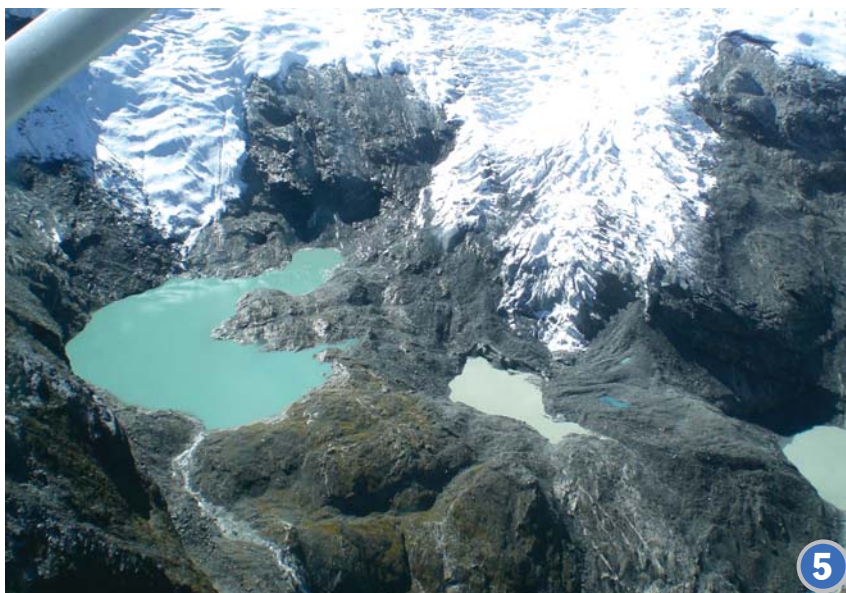
Scientists conclude that the Khumbu Glacier is not about to vanish, and the Icefall is not going to turn into a water fall any time soon. However, the permanent ice catchment of the glacier above 6,000 could start to deplete under the worst-case 'beyond catastrophic' scenario of +5°C warming. 🇳🇵

Kunda Dixit



CO₂ from fossil fuel burning traps sunlight in the atmosphere, leading to the greenhouse effect which warms the earth's surface. This is melting Mt Everest and the glaciers flowing down from it at an unprecedented rate. Join us on an aerial survey of the Khumbu.

nepalitimes.com



HIMALAYAN MELTDOWN:

- 1 The Khumbu Glacier is the highest in the world and receding at 30m/y. It is also shrinking: Base Camp is now 50m lower than when Hillary and Tenzing climbed Mt Everest in 1955.
- 2 The Khumbu Icefall funnels debris and ice from the Western Cwm down to the Khumbu Glacier 1,000m below.
- 3 The Lobuje Icefall is now a hanging glacier, having retreated above the cliff.
- 4 Imja Tso did not exist in trekking maps 30 years ago. Today it is 2 km long and 1 km wide. Supraglacial ponds dot the debris-covered glacier.
- 5 Green and blue meltponds on the North Ama Dablam Glacier, where the vanishing icefall has exposed the eroded bedrock below.

More pictures online.

CLIMATE ECO-TOURISM

Will more tourists visiting areas threatened by global warming spread awareness and help save the planet, or will the energy they burn contribute to making the earth warmer?

Both. Tour operators offer Antarctic cruises, trips to Greenland and the Arctic to observe calving glaciers up close. Many have scientists on board instead of tour guides, and the travel companies say the trips help spread environmental awareness.

However, mass tourism also comes with its own enlarged carbon footprint and the very act of visiting the Himalaya to see melting glaciers may contribute to thawing them faster. The carbon emitted by a holiday charter plane to the Maldives, for example, leads to sea level rise that may ultimately submerge the archipelago nation by the end of the century.

However, as awareness grows about the effects of global warming in the poles and the 'Third Pole' (as the Himalaya is called) there is also increasing interest among the public to see up close the impact of climate change on the mountains. Many trekkers visiting Nepal are eco-conscious and aware that their travel and stay in Nepal comes with a carbon cost.

As they share their impressions on social media, there is evidence that climate tourism can indeed turn many visitors into environmental activists, or at least convince them to lead less carbon-intensive lifestyles when they get back home.



Many environmentally sensitive visitors to Nepal these days calculate their carbon footprint from the aviation fuel per passenger on their flights to Kathmandu and Lukla, in taxi rides, and even the carbon emitted by the LPG gas in lodges along the Everest trail. And they try to offset all that by donating to agencies working on adaptation or mitigation of climate impact.

Even so, there are critics of carbon offsetting who say that it is cosmetic and does not address the wasteful consumerism that is at the root of the climate crisis. They say trekkers on Everest hikes who buy carbon offsets are simply washing off their guilt, and shifting the responsibility to do something about global warming on someone else.

On balance, however, there is a case to be made for climate eco-tourism creating jobs and benefitting the Nepal economy, ultimately allowing the tourism industry to introduce less carbon intensive technology. Tourists from all over the world can also see

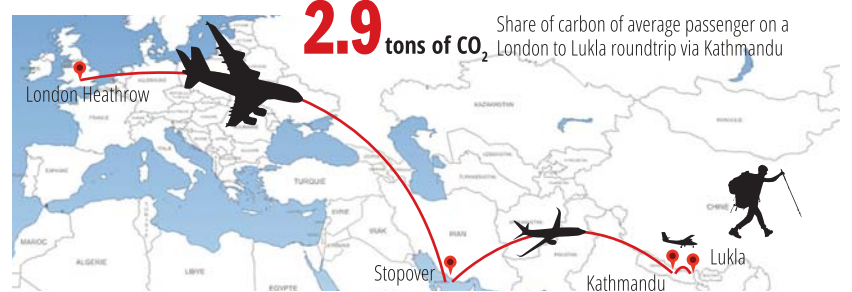
for themselves how the people suffering the most from the effects of climate change are the ones least responsible for it.

There are websites to calculate your carbon footprint and how to offset the cost to the climate of your tour. There are also trekking agencies and airlines that try to minimise their carbon footprints.

Carbon Footprint: www.carbonfootprint.com
Responsible Adventures: www.responsibleadventures.com/
Mountain Helicopters: 01-4111032

HOW MUCH CO₂ DID YOU BURN TO GET HERE?

An economy class roundtrip passenger on a flight from London Heathrow to Lukla via Kathmandu emits 2.9 tons of carbon. The emission can be offset by contributing to verified climate protection projects that do not just contribute to reducing greenhouse gases and creating carbon sinks through forestry, but also for sustainable development.



EVENTS



Kumari and the Beast
A fund raising performance in collaboration with Sushila Arts Academy to support micro women entrepreneurs. It is based on the legend of living goddess Kumari and written and directed by Kavita Srinivasan.
6 October, 1pm and 5:30pm, Russian Centre of Science & Culture, Kamalpokhari, Rs1,000, (01) 5010674, 98614877894

Nepal Inked Revisited
A tattoo and lifestyle festival, featuring 45 tattoo artists, offering more personal interaction with tattooists and their artworks. Music, art, exhibition, holy pilgrimage, yoga, live acts, trail running, cycling, hiking, climbing, shops, stalls and many more.
5-7 October, 11am-8pm, New Dakshinkali Village Resort, Dallu, Pharping, 9801112323

Industrial hemp expo
Cosmic hemp charcoal and by-products, hemp foods, hemp Crete Construction and many more at the 4th Nepal Industrial Hemp Exhibition.
5-6 October, 2-7pm, Evoke Café & Bistro, Jhamsikhel, 9841430679



Wake
Bringing together the diverse art forms to create one coherent and meaningful multi-media art experience for the audience. Nine artists, musicians, actors, poets jointly produce an unforgettable experience for the participants.
6-12 October, 4-7pm (5:30-6:30pm for highlight), Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal, Rs200, For ticket: Gyan Mandala, Jhamsikhel

Nepal-China Expo
Trade and culture exchange at the expo with over 100 stalls showcasing a variety of popular Chinese and Nepali indigenous goods.
5-9 October, 10am-8pm, Patan Durbar Square, 9862457222, 9851133717

ART 25
A live 25-minute painting competition with four thrilling rounds of fast colors and speedy hands working under pressure. Witness the thematic competition for free.
6 October, 2-6pm, Civil Mall, Sundhara, Kathmandu, collective@sattya.org

Study in Europe Fair
A higher education fair where universities from eight European countries will interact face-to-face with students, exploring opportunities and scholarship programs.
8-9 October, 10:30am-5pm, Hotel Annapurna, Darbar Marg



Frog Symposium
Inspired by Kanak Dixit's beloved book *The Adventures of a Nepali Frog* and Wildlife Conservation Nepal's commitment to preserve the biodiversity of Nepal's ecosystem, the event features scientific and literature panels, photo exhibitions, children's activities, and more.
9 October, 1:30- 4:30pm, Dhokaima Cafe, Patan Dhoka,

KTM marathon
Run for human rights awareness at the 12th edition of Kathmandu Marathon: marathon, half-marathon, 5K open, 5K master, 5K school, cooperate marathon (relay).
6 October, 5am-1pm, Dasarath Rangasala Stadium, Tripureswor, 9851016492

Portraits and caricatures
Nabin Nalbo with specialisation in portrait paintings, and also known for his caricature and illustrations is exhibiting at the event.
7-12 October, 4pm, Taragaon Museum Contemporary Art Gallery,

ABOUT TOWN

MUSIC



90s Hip Hop and RnB
Come over to Base Camp this Friday to listen to the favourite tunes from 90s and groove along.
5 October, 7-10pm, Base Camp: Outdoor Lifestyle, Jhamsikhel, 9841226397

Blackout Pride
Blackout Pride Phase VI presents Ugrakarma, Obliterating Vortex, Disorder, Strangle, Aatmaglani, The Inception and Krur. Join in for underground Nepali music.
6 October, 1-6pm, Rs300 (pre-sale), Rs400 (door), Reggae Bar Thamel, 9851053436

Wind-down Friday
A wind-down Friday with an acoustic band Artha coming up with their new originals and some covers. Sip some wine or beers and give your week a proper send-off.
5 October, 6:30-10pm, Bikalpa Art Café and Bar, Pulchok, 9851147776



Sunday songs
Come and enjoy your Sunday afternoon with songs by Iris Kolodji, friends and family.
7 October, 4-7pm, Musicology, Maitri Marg, Lalitpur, 9860368061

Narayan Gopal tribute
Reminiscing Swar Samrat Narayan Gopal, a tribute gig by Nepali artists and his all-time favourite songs. The stage is open for songs or poems from guests as well. Also enjoy chef's special BBQ.
6 October, 2pm onwards, The Yard by Oasis Garden Homes, Sanepa, (01) 5532965 / 9851095046



Opens in Kathmandu on 5 October
Releasing in Kathmandu on 5 October, Andhadhun is a story of a blind man who gets embroiled in tragic events, and raises suspicions of whether or not he is blind in the first place. It stars Ayushman Khurana as a blind pianist, Radhika Apte as his love interest, and Tabu as a woman who changes his life. Is the blind man's music a melody, or a cacophony? Directed by Sriram Raghavan, this movie promises to be an interesting roller coaster ride into love, crime, and suspense.

DINING



The aromas of Awadhi
Savour the authentic delicacies through a mesmerizing peek into the royal flavors and culinary heritage of Awadhi, the land of Nizams where the authentic Mughlai preparations of Nawabi kebabs, curries, biryani originated.
5-15 October, 7-10:45pm, Kakori, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal, (01) 4273999

The Taste of Thailand
Revel in an array of signature Thai delicacies from the diverse state of Thailand, specially curated by specialty Chef Kroongtana Nimnu. Som Tam, Pad Thai, sweet sticky rice and many more.
5-9 October, 6:30-10:30pm, Kava Restaurant, Fairfield by Marriott Kathmandu, Thamel, Rs2,199 (+taxes), (01) 4217999, 9801227613

Barbecue Brunch
Enjoy Lebanese Shawarma, Hyderabad Biryani, Mongolian or Japanese Teppanyaki, Tibetan Momos, Italian Pasta and Nepali Thukpa with friends and family accompanied by live music.
Every Saturday, 12pm onwards, Courtyard, Gokarna Forest Resort, Thali, Rs3,500/2,500 (adult), Rs3,000/2,000 (children), For prior reservations: (01) 4451212

Gangnam Galbi Barbeque
Enjoy with Korean barbecue, grill and stick food, a.k.a. galbi, roasted in charcoal at high level of heat to add more softness, different flavor and scent to meat.
Lal Colony Marg, Naxal, (01) 4434780



Tasneem's Kings Kitchen
Pre-order at the restaurant for the festive season special Mumbai Misal Pav and Vada Pav. It is finger-licking! Also order biryanis and more by the kilo for the festive feast.
5-6 October, 12-3pm, Pulchok, 9801282727

GETAWAY

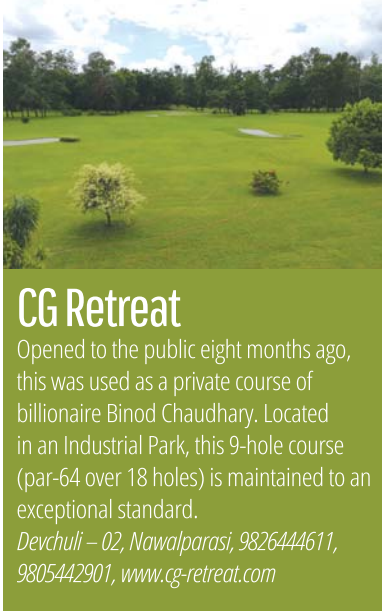


Godavari Village Resort
Spread over 14 lush green acres, the resort offers mountain views and traditionally-styled cottages and buildings overlooking rice fields.
Godavari, (01) 5560675

Hotel Annapurna View
The new boutique hotel situated at 1,600m in Sarangkot offers everything: sunrise, the Annapurnas, view of Phewa Lake, serenity, and luxurious accommodation.
Sarangkot, Pokhara, (01) 443566



Hotel Yukhang
A new hotel built with Dachi e-ta, bricks from Malla era and Bhaktapur's wooden crafts. A royal and medieval touch to your stay or unlimited buffet dinner at the hotel.
Thamel, Rs2,500/3,500 (rooms), (01) 4267358



CG Retreat
Opened to the public eight months ago, this was used as a private course of billionaire Binod Chaudhary. Located in an Industrial Park, this 9-hole course (par-64 over 18 holes) is maintained to an exceptional standard.
Devchuli – 02, Nawalparasi, 9826444611, 9805442901, www.cg-retreat.com

Gaida Wildlife Camp
Bordering the rhino zone in the central area of Chitwan National Park, the camp is a great place to reconnect with wildlife. Drive to Sauraha, and the Camp folks will take care of you from there.
Chitwan, (01) 4215409/ 4215431

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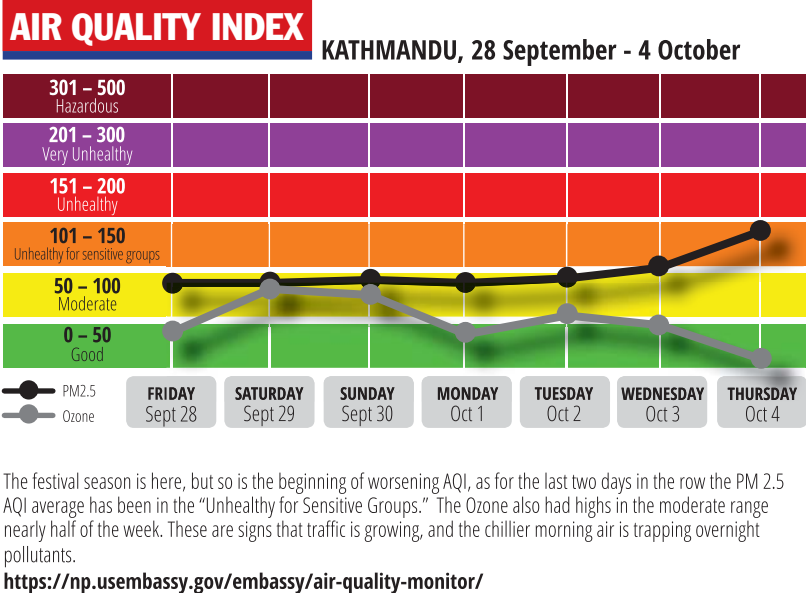
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Remembering not to forget Nepal's war

Sewa Bhattarai

Books are scattered around in a dark room, an earthen pot lies shattered to pieces, and clothes litter the floor. The sound of crickets chirping and a woman sobbing add to the eerie atmosphere. This is an installation at Nepal Art Council, recreating the room of a woman who was forcibly detained and raped by the security forces during the 1996-2006 war.

It is part of an exhibition titled *Memory, Truth, and Justice* organised by Voices of Women Media and Conflict Victims Common Platform, which shares stories of more than 100 victims from both sides of the conflict. Some are audio-visual testimonies, there



SEWA BHATTARAI

are photographs while others are artistic recreations.

"We wanted to bring these stories out because we realised that everyone was forgetting the war," explains project manager

Bikkil Sthapit. "The government and leaders are not doing anything. And even for family members of those killed and disappeared, memories are fading. Justice is being forgotten. We wanted to record these memories before they are totally gone, inform the public and advocate for justice."

The ten year war cost 17,886 lives, 1,530 were forcibly disappeared, 8,191 were maimed, millions were displaced. The conflict left deep physical and psychological scars on individuals, families and society. Like most wars, many of the victims were civilians. Innocent bystanders lost their limbs in bus bombs, girls and women were subjected to sexual violence, suspects were tortured, former child soldiers sacrificed their childhood and are now abandoned.

Conflict victims and family members

have lent items they have preserved lovingly: a shirt bought from first salary, letters smuggled in with noodle packets. These items present victims' stories with an urgency and immediacy that is lacking in the numbing statistics of war. The first person accounts, often graphic and intense, can be very hard to watch and listen to.

"The exhibition reminds us that we should be ashamed that so little has been done for the justice of conflict victims," says Prakash Wasti of the National Human Rights Commission. "These issues do not belong to the 100 people whose stories are represented here, but to the whole country."

Memory, Truth, and Justice
Nepal Art Council
Until 6 October



ALL PHOTOS: MEMORY, TRUTH, AND JUSTICE

◀ Krishna Ghising, Dolakha

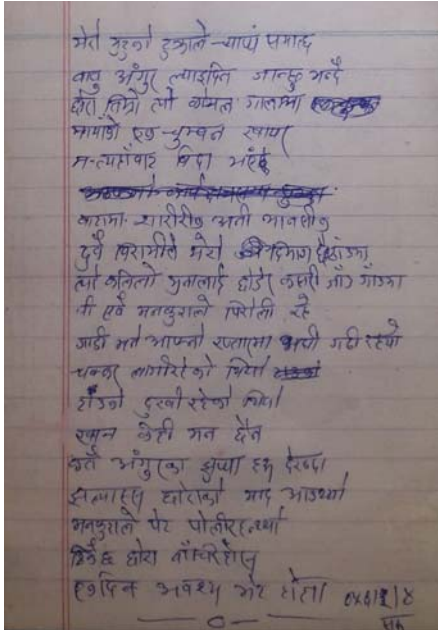
Even today, I get scared every time I hear a certain kind of music. There was music playing when I gained consciousness after 19 days in a coma. It was a radio jingle which played during intervals of news bulletins of Radio Nepal.

I had gone to my village to make my passport with a dream of going to Korea. On the way back to Kathmandu, our bus was moving slowly when there was an explosion. Some passengers died on the spot, the injured were taken to hospital. I survived, but over half my body was paralysed because of a spinal injury. All my dreams were shattered.

I left the hospital in a wheelchair after nine months. It was a difficult time. When I was in the ambulance, I felt like I was carrying my own corpse.

I wanted make my son a famous person one day. The conflict made me incapable of looking after myself, who cannot move without the help of others.

Perhaps, it would not have been so much pain if I was born disabled. But we were made disabled. It is the duty of the state to take care of us. Instead, they humiliate us. I have spent 15 years in a wheelchair now. This is my second life. I don't know how long this one will last.



▲ Sandip Pun, Rukum

Sandip's parents, Surya Prakash Pun and Parampara Gautam, were Maoists and were killed by the army. Parampara wrote this in her diary the day she left home. Sandip has treasured the diaries, but has never turned the pages to read them himself.

The day I left my son behind
(My son), a piece of heart holds me close
I tell him I am going to bring him some grapes
Son, I give him a loving kiss on the cheek
And tell him I am leaving
On the way my mind and body are both unwell
My mind is not in its place
How can I leave the little one behind
and travel to village after village
All these things trouble my heart
The bus continued at its speed
I was feeling dizzy
My head was aching
I do not feel like eating anything
When I see bunches of grapes somewhere
Suddenly I am reminded of my son
And my heart was troubled anew
It's ok, I hope my son lives
One day we will surely meet
- 1999/ 6/ 18, Paru



▲ Sharmila Chaudhary, Dang

Sharmila is the mother of Jagi Ram Chaudhary, a Kamaiya who was disappeared at the age of 17. "I still put some food for my son in this plate before I eat any meal. Though he was disappeared 16 years ago, I still hope that one day he will come back to eat what I serve."



▲ Shova Rayamajhi, Nuwakot

Shova Rayamajhi was 11 when she was given a gun to fight for a cause she did not understand. After the war, the UN Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) verified a total of 4,008 minors and 'disqualified' them from compensation. She missed out on education, even though she fought for the rights of the oppressed. She is now an activist demanding rights for child soldiers like her. The government had earmarked Rs 200,000 for child soldiers so they could reassimilate into society. A writ petition was filed against the decision which the Court stayed.



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GREETINGS FROM NEPAL: Prime Minister K P Oli meets United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres at the UN Headquarters in New York last Thursday.



GREAT EXPECTATIONS: Tourism Minister Rabindra Adhikari meets French Ambassador Francois-Xavier Leger to discuss Visit Nepal Year 2020, and about lifting Nepal's aviation from EU safety list.



ON TRACK: Major General of Nepal Army Yogendra Bahadur Khand signs an agreement on Wednesday with Keehyun Hwang of South Korea's Soosung Engineering, which will prepare the Detailed Project Report for Kathmandu-Tarai fast track.



SWEEP IT UP: Indian Ambassador to Nepal Manjeev Singh Puri participates in a voluntary community service program in Kathmandu to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on Tuesday.



NEPATHYA FOR GIRLS: Amrit Gurung, front man of Nepali folk rock band Nepathya, called on all to contribute to end violence against women, during a concert at Swayambhu on Sunday.

Internal and external expressions



Siddhartha Art Gallery's current exhibition hosts two completely different kinds of expressions: one is introspective and seeks to express feelings, while another is a visual exploration of social change.

On the ground floor are the paintings and installations by Manish Lal Shrestha, titled 'Shirani - The Headrest'. Frightened, scared eyes look out from white backgrounds -- some heads wrapped in snakes, some protected by helmets. Obviously this head on a pillow is trying to sleep, but we see that it is unable to do so, tossed and turned by a sea of stormy thoughts.

Once you realise that Shrestha is trying to deal with the loss of his mother nearly a year ago, the paintings make sense. "They represent my spiritual inquiry. Shirani is a symbol of contentment. And through it I question pain in



the relentless journey of life, and the fragmentary sense of comfort that the sense of touch provides," Shrestha explains.

The artist uses only black and white because colours are banned during the mourning period. However, there is a colourful button in the little silk pillows floating in the air, signifying memories of his mother. Shrestha also questions tradition, wondering why our rituals are so restrictive.

Upstairs at the gallery, Bidhata

KC looks at it all from the outside. Her work is all about society's visual elements: landscape, architecture, and decorations of Mustang. Known as a centre of Nepal's trans-Himalayan heritage, KC documents how it is all changing with modernity. Above a wall full of ancient scriptures, modern signboards jostle for space: a German Bakery here and a Yak Donald's there. Mud walls that carry hundreds of years of history and culture are repaired in cement.

KC's paintings are rendered in wistful shades of yellow, reminiscent of faded old pages, or of wind-blown sand. They are reminders of a forgotten time, rapidly replaced by the glare of a globalised world.

"I am trying to show my concern for our disappearing culture and heritage," says KC. "When I went to Mustang a few years ago, I saw that instead of a traditional parasol, a plastic pink umbrella was held over the king's head. Our heritage is our identity, and we should preserve it even while we adapt to modernity," KC says.

While Shrestha and KC's internal and external worlds complement each other, a visitor can be overwhelmed with the intensity of emotion. This is one exhibition you might want to spend some time in, rather than popping in at lunch break.

Sewa Bhattarai

Shifting Values - Expectations vs Reality & Shirani - The Headrest
Siddhartha Art Gallery
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Newspaper Headline: 'Nepal Drowning: Madhav Nepal'
"Mr. Prime Minister, it says Nepal is about to drown!"
"Which Nepal is drowning? The country Nepal or Madhav Nepal?"
Abin Shrestha in *Kantipur*, 1 October



Madhav Nepal: The country (Nepal) is drowning
On his briefcase: China visit
Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 2 October



In the newspaper: The country is drowning
KP Oli on TV: The country will not drown, I am bringing ocean liners
Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 30 September



Policeman: The criminal is found!
Capitalism had raped Nirmala!
Durga Baral in *Kantipur*, 30 September



Signboard: gate to heaven
Gatekeeper: Is everyone from prosperous Nepal?
Girl: Yes, everyone raped
Rabin Sayami in *Nagarik*, 5 October



Signboards outside the window: Punish the rapist, Stop rape, etc
Prachanda: This is definitely a conspiracy against the government!
Durga Baral in *Kantipur*, 16 September

Comical communists

Of late cartoonists have tapped into the rising public disenchantment with the government on issues as disparate as the rape of Nirmala Panta, the proposed Nijgad airport that will require felling millions of trees, and the friction between two factions of the NCP. Cartoonists have zeroed in on the government's insensitive responses to serious issues, the seemingly nonsensical quotes providing easy fodder for satire.



On the JCB: Proposed Nijgad airport
Rabin Sayami in *Nagarik*, 28 September

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TB

The high prevalence of tuberculosis in Nepal means new tools are needed to eradicate the scourge

Sonia Awale

Access has always been the biggest obstacle in diagnosing and treating tuberculosis patients in Nepal's harsh terrain. Without reaching the poorest in the remotest villages, the country cannot meet the target of eradicating this infectious disease by 2035.

So, to find and treat patients in remote areas, health experts will soon be testing drones to fly diagnostic samples and drop off medicines in Piuthan district in Nepal's rugged mid-western mountains.

"Medical drones are ideally suited for remote Nepal where people with TB have to walk for hours every day to reach health posts for medication, and eventually we plan to scale it to other parts of the country," says Maxine Caws of the Britain Nepal Medical Trust (BNMT) which is working with the Nick Simons Institute on the pilot project. (See interview, below)

The Trust is also helping to mobilise rural female health volunteers in active case finding across Nepal. It is deploying the new GeneXpert molecular diagnostic tool that is much more accurate in detecting TB infections than the traditional sputum swab, and can also identify patients with multi-drug resistant (MDR) TB.

Tuberculosis is the biggest infectious disease worldwide, with 10 million new cases every year that kills some 1.5 million people,

mainly in poor countries. Despite antibiotics, it is difficult to reach patients in underserved parts of the world, and an increasing number of patients are now developing resistance to commonly used drugs. If nothing is done, TB could kill 50 million people by 2050.

Prompted by this alarming prognosis, the UN General Assembly last month held its first-ever high-level meeting on tuberculosis to draw attention and generate investment for TB research, treatment and diagnosis.

Here in Nepal, there were 45,000 reported TB cases last year. The last survey showed that among previously treated cases, anti-microbial resistance was found in 15.8% of the cases, against the world average of 18%.

Bhawana Shrestha at the Tuberculosis Hospital in Kalimati says up to 12,000 TB cases may be missing from that total because patients do not have access to government diagnostic facilities. She says tools like GeneXpert should be expanded to improve surveillance.

In 2014, WHO passed a resolution to reduce TB mortality by 95% and to cut new cases by 90% by 2035. But experts say countries like Nepal with very high rates of latent infections are unlikely to meet the target. Mantoux tuberculin skin tests show that most adult Nepalis are carriers of the TB bacillus.

At Patan Hospital this week, physician Gyan Krishna Kayastha was examining x-ray reports of 50-year-old Bunu Maya Tamang who was tested positive after a



sputum test, and is responding well to antibiotic treatment (above).

In Nepal, children below the age of five whose family members have positive sputum tests, and people living with HIV are provided with latent infection treatment known as Isoniazide Preventive Therapy, but Kayastha says preventive antibiotic treatment for healthy adults is impractical in Nepal because 90% of people carry the bacillus.

"Even I am probably a carrier because I am exposed to tuberculosis patients, but I would not take this test because latent TB is so common," he adds.

Nepal also has the added challenge of an open border with India, a global hotspot for TB and its drug resistant variety. "Unless TB is controlled in India, it is unlikely the situation in Nepal will improve," says Bhawana Shrestha. "The open border means migrant workers are bringing infections

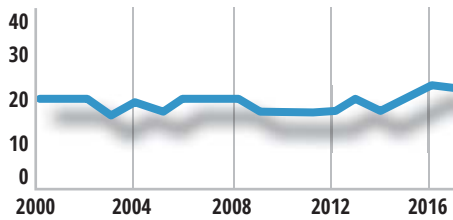
home, and a lot of patients from India come to Nepal for treatment."

Russia, India, China, South Africa and Brazil account for nearly 60% of all drug resistant infections worldwide, while South Asia is home to 40% of the global TB burden with over 4 million cases. The region also has a disproportional share of TB deaths (40% of total fatalities worldwide), with a third of them because patients with drug resistance fail to respond to treatment. The SAARC TB Centre is located in Kathmandu and is involved in research, prevention and control of tuberculosis, TB/HIV co-infection.

Worldwide only 12.5% of TB patients have HIV, and the number comes down to 3.5% in South Asia, yet most of the research and investment is focused on HIV associated TB. Whereas worsening air pollution, smoking, malnourishment, diabetes and

PREVALENCE AND

Number of patients per 100,000 (excludes HIV TB) people who died of TB in Nepal



SOURCE: WHO

alcoholism are bigger risk factors for TB infection in the region.

"There is a large number of people with TB in South Asia, in particular India. This means they have a big enough sample size to conduct studies and trials for new drugs with shorter regimen," says Buddha Bansyat of the Patan Academy of Health Sciences.



#ENDTB

Tuberculosis expert Maxine Caws of the Britain Nepal Medical Trust spoke to *Nepali Times* this week about meeting the End TB target by 2035. Excerpts:

Nepali Times: How important was the UN high-level meeting on tuberculosis?

Maxine Caws: There have been five high-level UN meetings, and this was the first ever for tuberculosis. The ones on HIV and Ebola galvanised the momentum, investment and action for those diseases. So the hope for TB is that the same thing will happen and get governments and organisations to invest in research and development.

Why is TB so underfunded?

TB affects the poorest in the society and is a long-term problem. Everybody likes short-term results, especially politicians. TB needs a long-term commitment.

Isn't Nepal a success story for its DOTS program?

We have been satisfied with far too little. There are still 44,000 cases and 7,000 deaths a year from a preventable, curable disease. We need to do much more and it is the right time to push for TB eradication.

Aren't we all potential TB carriers?

TB is hard to eradicate because of this very reason. Globally 25% of people have latent TB infection, in Nepal at least two thirds of the total population are carriers. It is higher in low-income groups.

How does HIV co-infection work?

People with HIV are much more susceptible to TB.

Because of their weakened immune system, they either develop the infection or the bacilli present in their lungs activate to develop clinical TB. This is also the case for the malnourished and elderly. Most healthy individuals can control the bacillus, which is why many Nepalis are not sick despite high latent infection.

How about air pollution?

Anything that damages lungs like smoking, working in brick kilns and construction, air pollution -- all increases the risk of developing TB. Children with chronic lung condition are more susceptible.

How serious is drug resistance?

On a global scale, Nepal has been good at controlling drug resistant tuberculosis, with only 2.2% of new cases being MDR. This means there is an opportunity to stop it while it is still containable. But only a third of total MDR cases are being identified. If we do not improve diagnosis, the problem will escalate. Good news is we have two new drugs for TB but unfortunately they are not reaching the patients who need them the most.

Are we at a stage where the focus should be on treatment and cure, instead of prevention?

That is not necessarily true. Prevention, diagnosis and treatment should go together. We know we are missing TB cases, so one of the things the Britain Nepal Medical Trust is working on is active case-finding. Traditionally the

health system waits for patients to come for diagnosis. In active case detection, female health volunteers gather information about household and social contacts of an infected person, talk to them and decide whether they need a test.

We are also scaling up the GeneXpert test, a molecular diagnostic tool, which has been found to be more effective than traditional smear microscopy that misses half the cases. There are 50 GeneXpert kits in Nepal, we need to expand the network.

We hear you are testing drones?

Drones are ideally suited for the geography of remote Nepal where distance poses a challenge to accessibility of health services. We are in the process of obtaining permit for drones to transport test samples to health posts in Piuthan and fly back medicines if a patient has been tested positive. Drones will also allow the whole district to get access to GeneXpert tests, which is currently available only at the district hospital.

Can we replicate the Zero TB City initiative in Kathmandu?

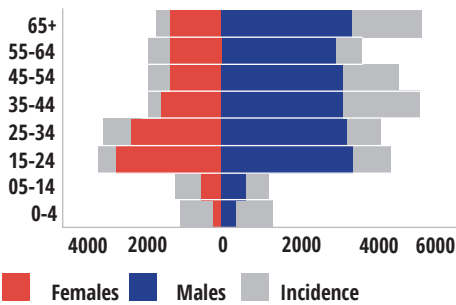
Cities in the South Asia like Chennai and Karachi are moving towards Zero TB, which means finding and treating every TB case using preventive therapy systematically. We should start from smaller population and expand it to bigger cities in Nepal.



SONIA AWALE

MORTALITY

Reported TB by age and gender



In a paper he co-authored recently in *Multidisciplinary Respiratory Medicine*, Basnyat concludes: 'From bacterial biochemistry to policy implementation, South Asia can seize the opportunity to lead global TB elimination and we cannot defeat TB without understanding how to eliminate it in South Asia.'

Tuberculosis was neglected, underfunded and under-lobbied for so long because it was mainly a disease of poor people. In Nepal, DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment Short-course) was considered a success story with its supervised antibiotics administration to patients. But experts say new funding is now needed for a much more aggressive case detection system.

Nepal's rapid development and population mobility makes it important for the government to step up the momentum to fight tuberculosis with better diagnosis and treatment. For this, it may need to replicate the Zero TB City model in the region, and go district-by-district to eradicate the bacillus in all patients and carriers.

Says Maxine Caws: "If we keep on doing what we are doing, we will still be here in 50 years time." 🇳🇵

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So you want to trek?

A trek is a highly recommended workout in which you will come face-to-face with the exotic realities of a Turd world country.

The word 'trek' is derived from an Afrikaan word which means: "Carry your body weight and a backpack weighing a ton up and down vertical mountainsides for 10 days, share sleeping quarters with yaks, while attending to calls of nature in the company of friendly local people."

Why we had to import a South African word for the completely indigenous activity of walking from one Nepali village to the next, I have never quite figured out. But I guess the whole philosophy of trekking is to get unsuspecting visitors to pay \$140 a day for the masochistic pleasure of inflicting extreme hardship on themselves so that when they return home to their mundane, soulless materialistic existence, it will seem like paradise.

Here are some useful tips on the joys of hiking in Nepal and how to make it fulfilling for mind, body and sole:

Am I fit?

The main pre-requisite to trekking is that you should train yourself in the art of walking straight up and straight down like a gecko. Practice on a wall at home. One month before trek, stop using the lift. Climb 36 floors to your office every day, and use the stairs down. Now multiply this by 10.

What should I eat?

Muesli. This is what they give mules to eat for breakfast on the Mustang trail so their after-burners can kick in during the steepest inclines, adding critical thrust to propel them over Chuksang Pass in time for lunch. Just ask your mule to share his muesli.

Dal-bhat. Tea-shops along the trail have a wide variety of dal-bhat so you never get tired of Nepal's national dish: dal-bhat with alu, dal-bhat with moolah, dal-bhat with banda, dal-bhat with bodi, dal-bhat with sag, or even dal-bhat with dal-bhat.

To level out a steep uphill there is nothing to beat the locally-brewed high-octane apple brandy. Pour a little of this into your and watch yourself fly like the wind, leaving gasping fellow-trekkers in the valley below. (Statutory Govt Health Warning: Hangovers are a pain in the ass.)

Is it safe to drink the water?

The first rule of thumb is not to drink anything that doesn't have the mandatory hologram Seal of Approval of the Nepal Bureau of Standards ISO 90002. Adhering to this rule will mean that you will die of thirst on the first day of your trek, therefore exceptions are allowed in emergencies.

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