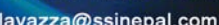


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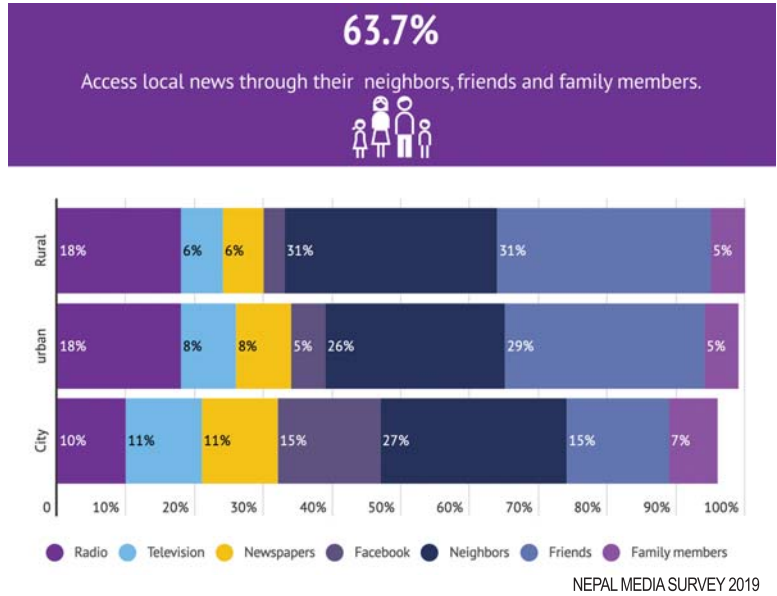
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NEW NEWS

When enumerators from Sharecast Initiative Nepal fanned out across the country in January, they asked more than 4,100 respondents if they had mobiles on them — 91% produced phones. Of these, half were smartphones.

Eighty-eight percent of them said they used Facebook, and 45% were on Facebook Messenger, and 35% on IMO which uses less bandwidth, many to communicate with relatives and friends working in the Gulf.

Information technology is changing Nepali society faster than many of us realise. It is rapidly transforming the ease and speed of communication, and where we get our news



and information. The changed media consumption pattern has created a crisis for Nepal's mainstream media, which has found that the revenue model has collapsed. The subscription and paywall methods do not work, online advertising is limited and has low yield, and the Nepali Net has a long tail of new portals vying for the same ads.

Four years ago, there were less than 4 million Nepalis with Facebook accounts, today it has more than doubled. In last year's Sharecast survey, 81% of respondents who used the Internet said they used Facebook, that number has risen to 88%. Even usage of the Nepali app HamoPatro has increased from 1.3% last year to 4% in this year's survey.

Facebook is not only used to exchange holiday pictures among friends and relatives, it is also increasingly the main source of news and information about local, national and international happenings. As the results of the Sharecast survey in this edition (*page 1, 14-15*) show, it is a one-way street. Most Nepalis do not seem to post much local news on their walls. Also, while they use Facebook a lot, they do not seem to trust the content on the platform very much.

The other surprising finding is that the most trusted source of news and information for most Nepalis is not the media at all, but their neighbours, friends and family. More than 64% of respondents said they relied on that network for local news, and one-third depended on acquaintances for even

national and international news. Interestingly, Province 2 ranks highest for its dependence on family and friends as a source of news, with half the respondents saying they depend on them for news and information.

YouTube use has soared dramatically from almost nothing last year to 34% in this year's survey. The Facebook-owned platform Instagram is used by a much lower proportion (4.2%), although that increases among urban educated youth. Twitter usage is almost negligible (1.2%) even though the media fraternity and some politicians seems to think it is hugely important.

In response to a multiple choice question, 99% of respondents said they do most of their Interneting on mobile phones. Only 6% of Nepalis use laptops or tablets to browse the Net, and less than 1% use PCs. As smartphones and mobile data packages get cheaper, Internet use is going to grow.

Today, about 60% of those who use the Internet on their phones have mobile data, 34% use wifi. Despite this, there is still a yawning digital divide: asked how often in the past six months they had used the Internet, 67% of 4,125 respondents said they had never logged on.

Interesting also is the number of people who said they had not read a hard copy newspaper in the past six months – over 73%. And even more revealingly, when asked why they do not read physical newspapers, an overwhelming 57% said it was because the papers never got to their area, or delivery was unreliable. Only 3% said it was because they rely on some other medium for news and information.

Mainstream media owners and editors blame the Internet for the loss in readership, but maybe they should be blaming their distribution departments. Of those who said they still follow the mainstream press, 94% were still reading the paper newspaper, 14% read it on apps, and 6.4% went to their home pages online. Nearly all survey respondents found newspapers and magazines trustworthy.

The take-home message from the survey for the Nepali media and public is that the mainstream press still has a check-and-balance role in our democracy. Internet usage is growing rapidly, but that is not the reason people are not reading newspapers less.

Facebook may be omnipresent, but most users are sceptical about its content. As in most countries, social media platforms will be dissemination tools, Internet sites will be more and more entertainment-driven, and it will be the portals with the higher credibility and exclusive multimedia content that will be rewarded with clicks.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The page 1 item of the #446 edition of *Nepali Times* of 10-16 April 2009 delved into Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's thin skin for criticism:

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal appears to be increasingly frustrated with the delays and has been trying to use his deft negotiating skills to try to convince the leaders of the UML and NC to smooth things along.

The prime minister has been barely able to hide his frustration. A day after returning from a week-long visit to Norway and Finland, during which he assured leaders there that he was serious about protecting democracy and the free press, he lashed out publicly using abusive language at his colleagues in the NC and UML. The next day, he turned his aim at the media, accusing publishers of being "smugglers" and under the control of "feudalists, capitalists and reactionary forces".



ONLINE PACKAGES



DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

Go online for interactive graphics of the data from the Nepal Media Survey 2019 performed by the group Sharecast. Find out which provinces are best connected, and trends in mobile and internet use. Story: *page 14-15*.



CANADA-NEPAL CONNECTION

Watch Canadian Ambassador Nadir Patel in conversation with *Nepali Times* about Canada's priorities in Nepal, the need for an improved investment climate and more trade, as well as the climate crisis that the mountains in both countries face. Story: *page 4-5*.



GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS

Find out how Offering Happiness has filled a gap left in Nepali diaspora families who are separated by geography. You can order a surprise for loved ones and spread the joy around. Hear from people who have been surprised to get surprises. Story: *page 7*.

SPINY BABBLER

The hill forests that surround Chitwan play an important role in protecting the Valley ('Protecting the last home of the Spiny Babbler', Carol Inskipp and Rupendra Karmacharya, #954). They serve as a watershed for Kalika Municipality and as a source of water for Gadi, Kape and Gardas villages but time and again they have been threatened by quarry companies. Village representatives are shortsighted and easily cooed by bribe and commission. There is no way to stop the damage unless the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation takes action against the culprits. Construction of the new road will cut water supply as well as turn the area into a dust bowl. This must be stopped. These hills are the lungs of Chitwan Valley.

Prem Thapa

NEPALIS IN FINLAND

A good report...sadly this is the case in many restaurants across Asia, Australia and the Middle East ('Finish paper exposé on Nepali restaurants', Namrata Sharma, #954). There may be a few good owners but most are out to make a profit and that means exploiting cooks, waiters and helpers whose passports are seized upon arrival and they live and work in horrible conditions.

Satyawan Lopchan

BARA TORNADO

What is good preparedness is going to do when you don't have the necessary infrastructure like proper shelter, clean drinking water and food, the basics to ensure safety of the people during such storm ('The new normal') Editorial, #954?)

Jyoti Simha

WHAT'S TRENDING

Chaos at airport due to runway repair

by *Sharad Ojha*

For the first time in Nepal's aviation history passengers spent an entire night in a plane at Kathmandu Airport to protest the delay of a Dubai-bound Airbus 330 of Nepal Airlines. The flight was cancelled on the night of 2 April after all 257 passengers had boarded because it was four minutes after 10pm, when the airport closes for the night for runway repairs.

Most reached and shared on Facebook



Protecting the last home of the Spiny Babbler

by *Carol Inskipp and Rupendra Karmacharya*

Construction of a new road through Gadi Forest in Chitwan threatens the last remaining habitat of the bird species unique to Nepal. The report was shared widely on social media and generated sharp criticism online about rampant infrastructure development that ignores wildlife and nature protection. Go online to join in the debate.

Most popular on Twitter

Most commented


Finnish paper exposé on Nepali restaurants


by *Namrata Sharma*


Following the original report by *Nepali Times* in January, Finland's largest-circulation newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, dug deeper to expose trafficking and tax evasion by Nepali restaurants in Finland. Readers were not surprised by the news, and strongly condemned the culture of Nepalis cheating Nepalis overseas. Read full story only at nepalitimes.com


Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS

- 

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Officials at the Investment Summit vowed that no Nepali youth will now have to seek jobs abroad. But given that every day at least 1,500 Nepalis left for work overseas, we need to start thinking of reversing the flow, writes Anil Chitrakar
- 

Prabir Rana @PrabirRana
Nepalis have started getting pretty decent jobs & are working in places like the Louvre, Ferrari World, GrandMosque and many swanky malls. You want to reverse that to what in Nepal?
- 

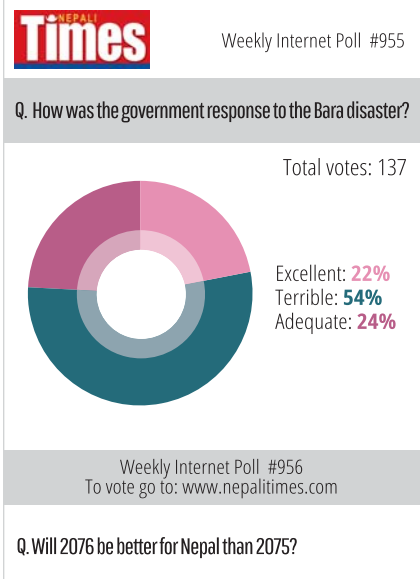
Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
The last home of the Spiny Babbler, the rare bird found only in Nepal, is threatened by the construction of a new road through Gadi Forest in Chitwan. Ornithologist Carol Inskipp and Rupendra Karmacharya report. #Nepal #birds#conservation #infrastructure
- 

Roshani Malla @roshanimalla
There is no such a thing as environmental risk assessment before constructing anything in Nepal. Destruction in the name of development is not cool.

- 

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Finland's largest-circulation newspaper @hsfi exposes the scale of widespread exploitation of Nepalis by Nepali restaurant employers in Finland. @NamrataSharmaP brings the details, who originally reported the case in January.
- 

Jules @juliansarangi
I know sadly this is definitely not an isolated case in one country. this is widespread as hell!!!!



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Canada and Nepal want to up trade,

Generally, it is the nature of Canada and Canadians to be low-key, and that has been the North American nation's approach to development assistance in Nepal.

The first time many Nepalis heard about Nepal and Canada working together was when the Taliban massacred 13 Nepali security personnel guarding the Canadian Embassy in Kabul in 2016.

Although Canada has been involved in development assistance in Nepal for the last 50 years through its aid arm, CIDA (now Global Affairs Canada), or NGOs and agencies like CECI and IDRC, most Nepalis do not know much about their work. Even though some of the projects have been criticised for being unsustainable, they have left their mark.

For example, it was Canadian assistance that allowed Nepal's civil aviation sector to graduate from piston-engined DC-3s to STOL turbo-props, which in turn opened up remote-area airfields to air travel even before the roads got there.

Canada provided the assistance for Royal Nepal Airlines to buy de Havilland Twin Otters and train Nepali pilots. Some of these planes are still the workhorses of Nepal's domestic aviation, and a maintenance hangar built by Canada still stands at Nepalganj airport.

Canada's early technical assistance was in hydropower planning, and in setting up the



MONIKA DEUPALA

Water and Energy Commission Secretariat. However, much of the cooperation was below the radar, and that concerns Canada's ambassador to Nepal, Nadir Patel. Besides bilateral programs, he says Canada also helps Nepal through the Asian Development Bank, World Bank and the UN system.

"It's not just about direct

bilateral projects, it is about the sum of all initiatives and Canada's overall footprint in Nepal, which in fact is quite significant," Patel told *Nepali Times* in an interview.

Canada's involvement in Nepal has grown since Prime Minister KP Oli met his Canadian counterpart Justin Trudeau on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly last

year. Canada sent a delegation to the Nepal Investment Summit last month, where one of the biggest projects signed was the joint venture between the Chaudhary Group and Toronto-based SkyPower for a 600MW utility-scale solar energy farm in Nepal.

There are now 70,000 Nepalis settled in Canada, and about 2,000

students are enrolled in Canadian universities. More than 6,500 refugees from Bhutan have been resettled in Canada since 2007. In 2017, 15,000 Canadian tourists visited Nepal, and there is a huge untapped potential to promote Nepal as a destination for the Visit Nepal 2020 campaign, says Deepak Raj Joshi of the Nepal

Indo-Chinese food fest



With five outlets across Kathmandu, Bawarchi is popular for its Indian food. But lesser known is the Tangra Chinese cuisine that the restaurant also offers. At the Tangra Chinese fest in Bawarchi at Baber Mahal, you can now go Indo-Chinese in style.

The Tangra region in East Kolkata was famous for its Chinese migrant settlement in the British days. Tangra's cuisine thus evolved to become an amalgamation of Indian and Chinese tastes, much like Peranakan is an amalgam of Malay and Chinese cuisine in Singapore and Penang. Bawarchi's new menu offers items like Hakka noodles, originally Chinese noodles made with a twist of Indian spices.

"We found that Tangra-Chinese really suits the Nepali palate, since people here have always enjoyed items such as Chicken Chilli," says Marcia Adhikari of Bawarchi. She says the idea of the festival is to make food fun.

Even though Chinese cuisine may be meat-heavy, the menu in Bawarchi has been specially designed to provide equal



vegetarian and non-vegetarian options. Vegetarians have a delicious range to choose from, such as the Nimbu Mirch Babycorn,

Salt 'n Pepper Mushroom and Veg Dim Sum. And while Indian food can be heavy and rich, the fest's menu is a refreshing change for those looking for light on oil snacking options like the Nimbu Mirch Babycorn. The babycorns are fried to a soft texture, with the natural taste oozing through with each bite. They say that what is tasty cannot be healthy but this dish proves that adage wrong. A variety of sauces add spark to the dish, with sweet and spicy options, ensuring that these babycorns are unlike anything you have tasted before.

The Salt 'n Pepper Mushroom is another classic spicy and fun dish, bursting with Indian spice and sauce flavours, a sharp contrast to the babycorn. This variety, however, is a pleasant reminder of the origins of Tangra-Chinese as a mixture of two distinct cuisines.

Bawarchi has been offering Tangra Chinese for a while, but this time the menu includes new items such as the Tandoor Bun. Another new dish, the Macher Fingers with Tartar sauce, is designed to resemble Chinese stick food.

The chef here plates all dishes so that they look exquisite. There are also delightful dessert options to end your dining on a sweet note. Bawarchi's signature kulfi has been elevated with almond and chocolate dust. The Strawberry Phirni, a strawberry flavoured version of the Indian desert khir, is a new addition.

Let us raise a toast at the Tangra Chinese food fest so that Hind and Chin are *bhai-bhai*. 🇳🇵 **Prakriti Kandel**

Until 16 April
Bawarchi, Baber Mahal Revisited

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Great Move concludes

Turkish Airlines has completed the final operations in its move to the new Istanbul Airport, which will be the airline's new centre of global aviation. On 6 April, the airlines conducted its final flight from the Atatürk Airport - to Singapore - which had



been Turkish Airlines' home for 86 years. The new Istanbul Airport, also known as the Monument of Victory is expected to be the largest airport in the world.

Qatar Duty Free awarded

Qatar Duty Free (QDF) has won the DFNI-Frontier 'EMEA Airport Retail Operation of the Year' award, which recognises QDF's outstanding commercial performance and customer service to more than 30 million passengers annually. The travel retailer was also commended for its QDF Learning Academy, which offers all employees training through its career development program.

Public health partners

The Ministry of Health and Population and Nyaya Health Nepal marked 10 years of partnership with an event to assess how



Public-Private Partnership models can be iterated to provide improved healthcare for underserved communities. The partnership between Nyaya Health and the government has provided integrated healthcare from hospital to home for more than 230,000 people in Achham and Dolakha.

P30 series

HUAWEI P30 series has been launched in Nepal showcasing the HUAWEI P30, HUAWEI P30 Pro and P30 Lite phones. According to the company, this series offers its most advanced cameras, with features like the innovative HUAWEI SuperSpectrum Sensor, an optical SuperZoom Lens, a new HUAWEI Time of Flight (ToF) Camera, and enhanced optical and AI image stabilisation technology. The price range of the phones is Rs40,000 to Rs100,000.

NIBL's New Branch

Nepal Investment Bank opened its 97th Branch and 112th ATM machine in Pepsicola, Kathmandu. The bank now has 24 branches in the Kathmandu Valley and 55 branches outside it. NIBL strives to provide services to customers throughout Nepal, in rural and urban areas alike.

prabhu BANK

tourism and investment



@NADIRYPATEL

Tourism Board. Ambassador Patel is also concerned that trade between Canada and Nepal is very low, and points out that since political and regulatory predictability has been lacking in Nepal for some time, Canadian companies need to be reassured about investment guarantees. “There is reason to be cautiously optimistic about the business climate with the economic reforms the Nepal government is undertaking,” he said, “but much more work needs to be done to ensure rule of law, governance issues and investment protection.” Patel is on a 10-day trek to Everest Base Camp (*left*) this week to see for himself the

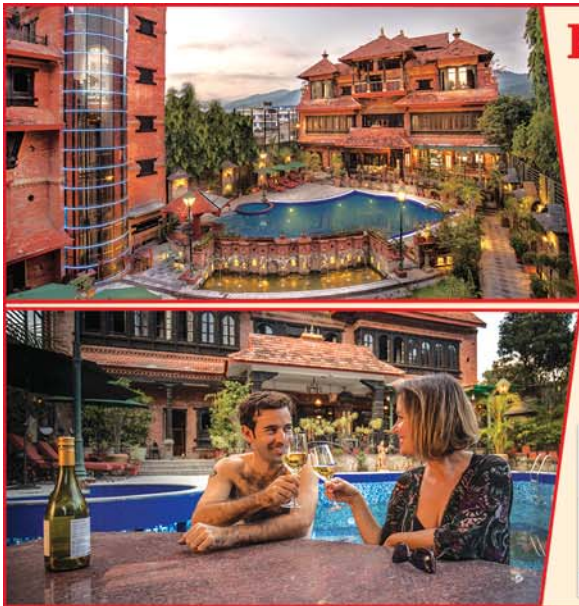
impact of global warming in the Himalayas. He said: “Canada and Nepal have similar mountainous terrain topography, could share best practices, capacity building and exchange experiences to address climate change.” Indeed, Canada’s IDRC (International Development Research Centre) held its annual Board of Governors Meeting in Kathmandu last week and showcased its support for the assessment of climate impact on the Himalayas carried out by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). That report said the Himalayas was warming nearly twice as fast as the rest of the world, and if present trends

continue, the warming would be as much as 7°C by the end of the century. If that happened, two-thirds of Himalayan glaciers and ice would melt. IDRC President Jean Lebel said the assessment was an urgent reminder that the world needed to act: “Unlike earthquakes, which happen suddenly, climate change is a slow-moving disaster. The ICIMOD report provides the science to be converted into policy and action. If we do not act now, all our development efforts will be put at risk.” IDRC has been involved in Nepal since 1972, mainly in agriculture and health. Lebel said that although IDRC had been pushing for climate adaptation, its Kathmandu meeting discussed how even developing countries now needed to move towards a low-carbon economy. He added: “Carbon mitigation is going to take a lot of amplitude in the coming years, for IDCR this is the next frontier.” 🇨🇦



Watch Canadian Ambassador Nadir Patel in conversation with *Nepali Times* about Canada’s priorities in Nepal, the need for an improved investment climate and more trade, as well as the climate crisis that the mountains in both countries face.

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Stellar Lifestyles !

Nepal's naturalist elite

In Chitwan and Bardia young khaki-clad kids were the vital link between celebrity guests and unfamiliar tiger terrain

The shadows on the grass walls of the hide reflected the outlines of the Chitwan guests, anxious to catch a glimpse of the tiger's powerful striped muscles in the jungle clearing below, lit by a rudimentary handheld battery spotlight.



SO FAR SO GOOD
Lisa Choegyal

The silhouette of Harpo the Clown's fuzzy hair, porkpie hat and bulbous nose struck an incongruous note in the dark silence of the jungle blind amongst the other clients, and Mash Thapa struggled to suppress his mirth and keep his hand steady.

Mash was one of the elite band of highly skilled guides trained by Chuck McDougal who made the Tiger Tops experience so memorable and unique. With oodles of energy and a background in river running, Mash had been put in charge of looking after Harpo's visit, a famous American Master Clown and veteran of Ringling Bros Barnum and Bailey Circus from Florida.

Celebrities and stars were not unusual in Nepal before the insurgency.

Harpo communicated in the universal language of mime using no words.

Mash wrote: 'I was so privileged to have had the chance to meet so many extraordinary people. It was curious how he never spoke when dressed up as a clown. He explained to me (when back in normal clothes he became his real self, Steve) that it was the sacred rule of the clown organisation.'

The 1985 Meghauli school children were entranced by his balloon tricks and flat-footed antics. At the end of his wildlife safari, all the elephant mahouts were wearing Harpo's multi-coloured personalised balloon hats.

The naturalists usually came with a background in conservation and the outdoors, gravitating into our orbit from their homes all over Nepal and India, keen to make a career out of their passion or hobby.

Their biodiversity expertise was imparted by Chuck, and their jungle skills moulded by his team of shikaris who spent a lifetime in the forest. The on-the-job training was systematic and rigorous, and the Tiger Tops naturalists acquired a knowledge skill set unmatched by other camps.

In Chitwan and Bardia these young khaki-clad kids constituted



the vital link between guests and the unfamiliar tiger terrain which surrounded them – dense sal and riverine forests, crocodile infested rivers and tall grasslands teeming with rhinos, deer and hundreds of species of birds. The naturalist's role was to guide and interpret the flora and fauna on hikes, boat rides, jeep drives or elephant safaris, giving clients an unforgettable experience but bringing them back safely in one piece.

And not just the big stuff – butterflies, beetles, dragonflies and termites were sometimes all that were encountered on an unlucky outing, and it was the naturalists' task to tell the stories and bring the park alive.

Their work did not end when the sun went down. Within the military-style hierarchy of the Lodge, local staff ate in rotation

in the elephant camp canteen and slept in quarters by the river. Naturalists and guest relations (such as me, at the time) stayed in rooms across the nullah but were expected to eat with the guests in the thatched rotunda, waiting until the circular tables of eight were filled, then slipping into an empty chair beside whoever looked the most interesting.

Our mostly male macho naturalists were the mainstay of the wildlife operations, and some of them lasted for many years. Their names echo down the decades, balancing with bravado behind the elephant howdahs, the high calibre cadre includes KK Gurung, Hashim Tyabji, Ashish Chandola, Manvijay Singh, Balam Thapa, Devendra Basnet, Wangdi Gyamcho, Yam Gurung, Dinesh Thapa, Karan Rana, Devi Gurung, Suhail Gupta, Bhim

Gurung, Dominique Ishmael, Pushpa Maskey, Kamal Rai, Surendra Rai, Mitra Paudel, Dhan Bahadur Tamang, Ramjan Chaudhary, Chandra Thapa, Dushyant Singh, Adam Barlow, John Roberts, Kalu Ram Tamang, Sukram Kumal, Pradeep Rana and more.

Rahul Brijnath, the charismatic nephew of Billy Arjun Singh, Dudwa tiger champion, worked all through the 1980s. He remembers being sent off to start up a new camp: "It was the making of me, but I was amazed that you and Jim trusted me to do it. I was 23 years old, arrived on a local bus, looked around at the empty clearing, took a deep breath, and set about the business of creating a luxury wildlife camp."

Rahul now runs a global travel business with his English wife from their home in Devon. Others

LINE UP: (Clockwise) Nepal's early naturalists in Chitwan guided celebrities like Beatle Ringo Starr (in Dhaka topi). From left to right: Yam Gurung, Rahul Brijnath, Devi Gurung, Ringo Starr, Wangdi Gyamcho, Mash Thapa.

American Master Clown Harpo, of Ringling Bros Barnum and Bailey Circus from Florida, as he sets out on a game drive in one of Tiger Tops' classic open land rovers in 1985. Mash Thapa standing in the back.

Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge in 1973 was a model for India on how to promote responsible wildlife tourism and conservation.

graduated away from tourism into conservation, academia, research or filmmaking. None will forget those years in the Nepal jungles, which so strongly shaped their lives and careers.

Over the years many jungle romances ended in tears but a surprising number blossomed into marriage, including my visiting sister who still lives in the wilds of India. The list of Tiger Tops' liaisons is long but to name a few: Mash married Narece, Toby married Laxmi, Bhim married Sandhya, Adam married Cristina, Pushpa married Dominique, Nick married Beant, and Jeff married Christina.

Jim Edwards, our big boss, used to proudly quote Prime Minister Indira Gandhi: "Why does India have to look to Nepal to see how to achieve responsible wildlife tourism?" That all changed in 2012 when the Nepal government closed the lease concessions for reasons that still remain unclear, in one blow removing the ability of Nepali operators to successfully deliver high quality wildlife attractions to high paying punters.

Today the tables are turned and Indian national parks boast an impressive array of elegant lodges, tented camps, restored forts, palaces and havelis glamorously adapted for visitors, although Nepal still has the edge when it comes to walking safaris, effective protected area management and the control of poaching.

The ultimate irony and loss for Nepal tourism is that many of these Indian boutique properties and wildlife operations celebrated throughout the subcontinent are today run by our very own naturalists who cut their teeth in the incomparable jungles of Chitwan and Bardia. 🇳🇵

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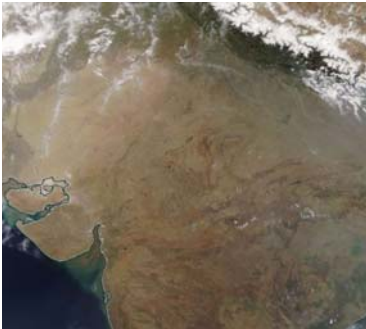
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Looks like we are not done with the rains yet. The weekend will see more electrical storms, with high winds and hail in some places along the mountains. This has been a volatile and unusually wet spring season, and it looks to continue that way. More clouds and rain are forecast into early next week as well. All this is keeping the maximum temperature 5-6° C below normal for this time of year.

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ALL PHOTOS: OFFERING HAPPINESS

Retailing happiness

Nepali company that turns spreading joy into a business proposition is a finalist for a global entrepreneurship award



JOY RIDE: (Clockwise) Co-founders of Offering Happiness Santosh Pandey, Avinash Chaudhary, Darshan Parajuli and Niraj Kafle selling gifts at Labim Mall. Siblings celebration for a combined Dasain and Tihar for Kshitij Raj and Arju Lohani arranged by Offering Happiness. Customised picture collage designed for client.

Shikha Neupane

It was difficult enough for Kshitij Raj Lohani to be apart from his sister Arju for four long years, but it was even more heartbreaking that when he finally came back to Nepal to be with her, they could only be together for a month.

Kshitij, 26, lives in the US and on a visit to Kathmandu last year, he wanted to make up for lost time by celebrating festivals from their childhood that they had missed. So he contacted Offering Happiness, a new Kathmandu-based startup to surprise his sister with a combo celebration of Dasain, Tihar, Rakhi and her birthday.

“My brother’s surprise made me really happy. I was finally able to celebrate Bhai Tika with him after so many years,” Arju recalls. Offering Happiness is in the business of retailing joy, and in a country with such a large diaspora population, it means delivering pleasant surprises for families back home in

Nepal. The company organises surprises for any occasion: birthdays, anniversaries, you name it and they do it.

The company offers two kinds of services: personal presents and experiences. Presents include customised gifts like Mayako Batta (Package of Love), and experiences like Dancing Panda, event decorations, Table for Two (Dinner Date) and a musical surprise. In the two years since it started, Offering Happiness has sold 1,000 experiences for prices from Rs1,000 to Rs50,000. The company hires artists, musicians and even helium balloon sellers for its gifts, surprises and decorations.

The idea for Offering Happiness came to friends Santosh Pandey, Niraj Kafle, Darshan Parajuli and Avinash Chaudhary in 2016, while they were discussing set design for a social centre. After much research and brainstorming, they launched the initiative out of two rented rooms at Dhumbarahi two years ago. Today it employs 13 people, all of them below 27, and generates business for dozens of others.

“We did a lot of research, and found that there was no one else doing this then in the whole region,” says Pandey. The idea seems to have caught on, and there are similar companies coming up in India. Co-founder Kafle, 25, explains why the venture is so innovative: “We are not a 10 to 5 business. We use research to see what people like and how to be different.”

Most of Offering Happiness’ clients are Nepalis abroad who miss home, friends and family. People migrate for education, jobs and a better life and miss out on festivals and shared experiences because travelling to Nepal is expensive. Now, they can just email Offering Happiness and buy a surprise for their loved ones back home, or organise a surprise event when they are in Nepal.

“We just make it easy for them to organise surprises and spread happiness,” explains Pandey, whose company is a finalist at the Global Student Entrepreneurs Award (GSEA) this week in Macau, a premier global competition for students who own and operate a business while attending college or

university. Pandey was selected from among 90 other applicants from Nepal.

We ask Offering Happiness Executive Director Manish Khatiwada if his company is commodifying happiness. He replies: “What we sell are surprises, happiness is an outcome.” 🇳🇵



Find out how Offering Happiness has filled a gap left in Nepali diaspora families who are separated by geography. You can order a surprise for loved ones and spread the joy around. Hear from people who have been surprised to get surprises.

nepalitimes.com

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NEPAL'S YOUNGEST CUV

LIGHTNING KILLS MORE PEOPLE THAN FLOODS IN NEPAL

Topography is one reason, but lack of public awareness poses a much bigger threat

Sonia Awale

The devastating tornado that ravaged Bara and Parsa districts last week, killing 28 people and injuring 600, made daily headlines. But lightning strikes kill more people annually in Nepal than floods and storms, yet do not get as much attention.

Lightning is responsible for 24,000 deaths worldwide every year. In Nepal, after the 2015 earthquake, lightning accounted for the highest number of deaths due to disaster in the last eight years, with 840 fatalities. In fact, Nepal tops the list of countries with the most lightning fatalities per unit area. More people die every year in electric storms in Nepal than in the whole of North America.

Janak Rawal, 14, of Accham lost his life when he was struck by lightning at his house on Monday night. Sixteen others sustained injuries. A similar incident in Mechinagar Rural Municipality on the same day claimed the life of Prakash Raut and left two injured. Recently, three people in Baitadi were struck with lightning as they were using their mobile phones outside their homes.

“We ignore lightning because unlike other disasters it rarely leads to mass casualties. The strikes are sporadic and scattered, but it is a major killer nonetheless,” says Shri Ram Sharma, professor at Amrit Science Campus in Kathmandu.

Sharma developed a keen interest in lightning after his sister was struck by a thunderbolt when he was a child and survived miraculously. He now researches lightning strike patterns in Nepal.

Since 2011, lightning fatalities have exceeded 100 every year except in 2015/16 and 2018/19. In 2015, the Nepal earthquake struck during the pre-monsoon and led to miscalculations on total deaths caused by lightning. The sharp decline in human fatalities this year is mostly due to under-reporting. Lightning strikes are also occurring more often at unusual times, such as early mornings and late nights, when people are safe in their homes.

However, the decreases in these two years are anomalies in the overall trend of fatalities, which are much higher. This could be due to better reporting after the National Emergency Operation Centre was set up at the Home Ministry five years ago, but studies have also linked the increase in intensity and frequency of thunderstorms to climate change.

A 2014 report in the journal *Science* stated that for every 1 degree Celsius of warming, there is a 12% increase in lightning activity, meaning that the number of strikes in the United States could increase 50% by the end of the century.

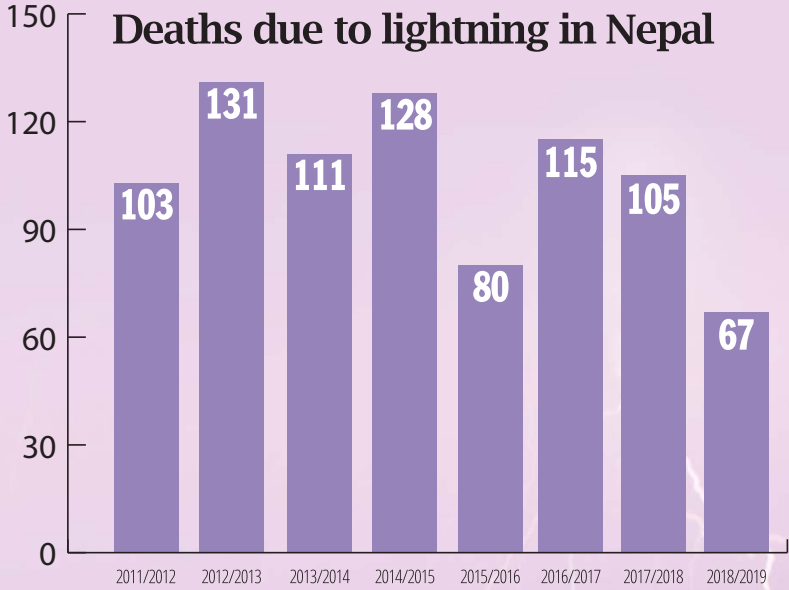
Nepal has just experienced an unusual winter with heavy precipitation, and rare thunderstorms. Such storms are uncommon in winter in the Himalayas, occurring primarily in the pre-monsoon season between March-June as a result of convection systems created when hot air from the Indian plains rises along the mountains.

“Extreme weather events caused by climate change have a role in increasing the electric charge inside clouds and occur at times when they traditionally would not,” explained Sharma. “This has added to Nepal’s pre-existing vulnerability as one of the countries most susceptible to lightning fatalities.”

Globally, up to 95% of all lightning is negatively charged, but it is the 5% of positively charged lightning strikes that are more lethal. In Nepal 34% of all cloud-to-ground strikes are positively charged.

Nepal’s topography, and the proximity of eastern mountains to moisture from the Bay of Bengal, make the country more prone to thunderstorms. The other reasons for the country’s high fatality rate is that lightning from storm clouds travels much shorter distances to reach the ground in the high mountains. Nepal is also the most densely populated mountainous country in the world.

Within Nepal itself, a districtwise breakdown of fatalities



(see charts) shows that Makwanpur is the most dangerous, with 54 deaths and 245 injuries due to lightning in the last five years.

Lightning is particularly destructive in an agriculture-dependent country. Thunderbolts deposit a significant amount of nitrate in the soil every time they strike, and an excess of nitrate is detrimental to crops. The fatality rate from lightning strikes for livestock is higher than that for humans. Cattle are five times more likely than people to get killed in an electric storm.

In industrialised countries, there are only 0.3 deaths per 1 million population caused by lightning. The fatality rate is much higher in the developing world, with up to 6 deaths per million. Lack of knowledge about lightning and insufficient safeguards in buildings are the main reasons.

In Nepal the latter factors compound the topographical and meteorological reasons for fatal strikes. Added up, Nepal’s vulnerability is further increased by the rise in frequency and intensity of storms caused by global warming.

“We have to get used to more potent lightning and its increased

frequency. We need better protection, preparedness and public awareness,” said climate scientist Ngamindra Dahal, who says lightning risk should be prominently incorporated into school curricula.

Public buildings such as schools, hospitals and government offices should be equipped with lightning rods. Telecommunication and transmission towers are at high risk because they are located on mountain tops, and need special safety measures integrated into their design. As more people use mobile phones, they must remember that it could be dangerous to use electronic devices during thunderstorms.

Experts lament that despite the high fatality rate, lightning does not command the same priority as earthquakes and other disasters. They want the government to focus on policies that require the public to take lightning into consideration before building new structures.

The best strategy moving ahead should be to invest in forecasting equipment and better preparedness. The good news is that the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology has set up nine lightning detection stations

across Nepal (Dhangadi, Surkhet, Nepalganj, Pokhara, Bhairawa, Kathmandu, Simara, Tumlingtar and Biratnagar) to study thunderstorm activity and provide more accurate forecasts.

“Data generated at these stations can indicate long-term lightning trends, their frequency and concentration, which in turn can help with better 'now-casting' of electric storms so people can seek safety,” said senior meteorologist Archana Shrestha at the Deaprtment of Hydrology and Meteorology.

Nepal is hosting the annual South Asian Seasonal Forecasting Summit this month, at which international climate scientists will work to provide a collective monsoon forecast for South Asia so that governments in the region can plan for better agricultural productivity and be prepared for extreme weather events.

Said Shri Ram Sharma: “With Nepal’s diverse climate and weather systems, we are the best lab in the world for scientists. Nowhere else will you find terrain rising from 70m to nearly 9,000m in the span of 150km. This is what makes Nepal more vulnerable to extreme weather, and why we need more research for better disaster preparedness.”

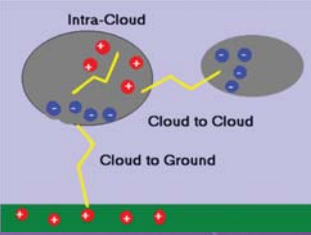
Thunderbolt physics

Simply put, lightning flashes are a flow of electric charge, but they are created via a complex mechanism.

Through ionisation and movements within a cumulonimbus cloud, two distinct clusters of positive and negative charge form at opposite ends of the cloud. Negatively charged particles accumulate at the bottom while positively charged particles gather at the top.

This creates an electric potential difference, or voltage. When the voltage is strong enough, the negative particles move towards the positive side for balance. This can occur within a cloud or between two clouds.

The particles, mostly the negatively-charged ones, can also travel down to the ground. This creates the lightning flashes. Extremely high energy is also released in the process, producing heat with temperatures that are five times hotter than the surface of the sun. Because of this heat, air surrounding the lightning flashes heats up and expands quickly, generating loud bursts of thunder.



LIGHTNING FATALITIES IN NEPAL

13 April 2012–11 April, 2019



SOURCE: NEPAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION PORTAL

BOLT FROM THE BLUE: A cloud to ground lightning flash strikes Chobar, illuminating Swayambhu and the Balaju area of Kathmandu in 2011.

EVENTS

New Year 2076

Celebrate the beginning of Bikram Sambat 2076 of our very own Nepali calendar.
14 April



Biskaa Jatra

Also known as Bisket Jatra, this Newa festival is celebrated by Bhaktapur's community for nine days and eight nights. The major attractions of the festival include pulling the chariot of God Bhairava and Bhadra Kali through a bustling crowd.
14-15 April, Bhaktapur

Narrative Impact

Designed at Harvard University's Center for Public Leadership, the course, Narrative Impact: Storytell Your Way Into College, seeks to identify and address adaptive challenges through impactful and personal storytelling. You can signup by contacting contact@nepalleadershipacademy.org
20 April, 9am-12pm, for high school students, Rs 2500, Daayitwa, Kupondole, 9813350534



Miraculous Places

After first visiting Nepal in 1993, Dagmar Mathes went on many expeditions. She was fascinated by the country's natural wealth, which inspired her to create art. Mathes works with locally produced Lokta Paper creating mostly collage-like compositions.
17-28 April, 10am-5pm, The Taragaon Museum, Hyatt Regency, Boudha (01) 6201035

NexTalk

Adrian Bättig is a Swiss artist who works in diverse media: drawing, painting, performance and text. Join his talk in this edition of the NexTalk conversation series.
19 April, 3pm-5pm, NexUs Culture Nepal, Patan (01) 5522393

Sunday HaaT

An afternoon getaway for all those wishing to lead an environmentally conscious and sustainable life. Find unique local products offered by both Green Growth and KtmHAAT.
Every Sunday, 2pm-6pm, Bhanimandal (01) 4112128 (green growth)



Nepal is Beautiful

A collection of more than 100 pictures by local photographers from all over Nepal. The Included are landscapes, portraits, monuments, heritage, new destinations, culture, including festivals and cuisines, wildlife and micro worlds.
13-15 April, 10am-5pm, Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal, 9851045680, 9841258516

New Year Carnival

Grand Norling Resort hosts a fun carnival to celebrate the new year with your loved ones. Attractions include food stalls, live music, games, face painting, kids zone and more.
14 April, 11am-6pm, Rs100 (children), Rs200 (adults), Grand Norling Hotels' Resort, Gokarna (01) 4910193

German Travelling Expo

The Expo illustrates the German economy's transformation towards reusable energy sources. The program has three different parts: the exhibition, a talk program on 'Energizing Nepal' and 'German Day' in cooperation with experts from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).
Exhibition: 12-26 April, 10:30-4:30pm, Talk Program: 15 and 19 April, 10:30, German Day: 20 April, 10:30-1:30pm, Information and Technology Communication Centre, Pulchok Campus

MUSIC



Bipul Chhetri Live

The singer/songwriter from Kalimpong will perform at Lord of the Drinks (LOD) on New Year's Eve. His music will take you to the hills of Darjeeling.
13 April, 7pm onwards, Lord of the Drinks (LOD), Rs1500 (Regular), Rs2000 (Standard), 9843948991

Beard of Harmony

Kerala-based duo Beard of Harmony will perform their acoustic originals, followed by a DJ session by IZZI, aka Rips Kans. Enjoy a relaxed and fun afternoon this New Year's Day with your friends, while the kids enjoy the kid's corner.
14 April, 3pm onwards, Rs300, The Yard, Sanepa (01) 5532965, 9851095046

Karma Band

The performance by this Nepali folk rock band on New Year's is set to be a memorable evening. Enjoy refreshing drinks, good food and quality entertainment.
13 April, 8pm onwards, Melrose Restaurant and Bar (01) 4258861



Popular tunes

A musical celebration with some of the most popular artists. Featuring the evergreen rock band 1974 AD, talented singers like Swoopna Suman, Kenjel Meher Shrestha, Dream Big Project Artists, and more.
13 April, 5pm onwards, Hotel Annapurna (01) 4221711

Abhaya & the Steam Engines

Count down to the new year with energetic music from the rock band Abhaya and the Steam Engines
13 April, 6pm onwards, Ai-La Lounge, Kumaripati (01) 5008681

DINING



Ghangri Cafe

A multi-cuisine restaurant with a fine dining ambience. Enjoy mouth-watering food like the Sumai open Mo:Mo with your friends and family in its spacious gardens and cozy dining rooms.
12:30pm- 9:30pm, Jhamsikhel (01) 5528703

Octave Kathmandu

Drop by to enjoy some Japanese and Intercontinental food. This restaurant offers an outdoor garden lounge with pool table, terrace lounge with a spectacular view of Durbar Marg, cozy attic lounge and indoor multipurpose hall.
11-5pm, Woodland Complex, Durbarmarg (01) 4220569



La Dolce Vita

The restaurant brings a piece of Italy to Nepal. Spread over three floors, theearthy, rustic and comforting venue is a perfect place for pizzas and pastas in rich, delicious sauces.
11am - 9pm, Thamel (01) 4426474

Doko Deli

Doko Deli strives for customer satisfaction through good food and the best hospitality. Dine with your friends, family or acquaintances in its cozy ambience and well-designed indoor and outdoor spaces.
12- 10pm, Jhamsikhel (01) 5555041



The Village Café

This Newa Restaurant is an initiative of SABAH Nepal - SAARC Business Association of Home Based Workers Nepal. For foodies, the cafe recommends Chatamari, Bara, the village Café platter and Yomaree for dessert.
11am - 9pm, Pulchok (01) 5540712

GETAWAY

Yatri Suites and Spa

Relax yourself with a stress-relieving spa treatment that includes full body massage, body scrub, sauna and steam.
Amrit Marg, Thamel, Rs5,999, Reservation: 9802063086



Hotel Moonlight

Although located in bustling Thamel, this hotel is a tranquil oasis. The gardens are beautiful and the rooftop terrace offers amazing views of Kathmandu. Their boutique rooms are unique and a refreshing change from the typical hotel room.
Thamel (01) 4383566/ 4380636/ 4383528

Raniban Retreat

A unique boutique hotel located on the secluded hillock of Raniban forest, offering an eco-friendly environment specifically tailored for guests. A must visit for peace and serenity and views of the Himalaya.
Pokhara (01) 5185435



Baber Mahal Vilas

A quaint boutique property with an architecture that melds 4 Nepali designs: the neoclassical Rana Durbar style, followed by Newari, Mustang and Terai designs. Choose from four varieties of beautifully designed rooms with their own distinctive decor and ambience.
Baber Mahal (01) 4257655/4248747

The Famous Farm

This three-storey boutique hotel in the subtropical Middle Hills, west of Kathmandu, is Nuwakot's best kept secret next to the district's historic palace. This small traditional house has a lot of rich cultural heritage to share.
Kuwapani, Nuwakot (010) 413044

OUR PICK

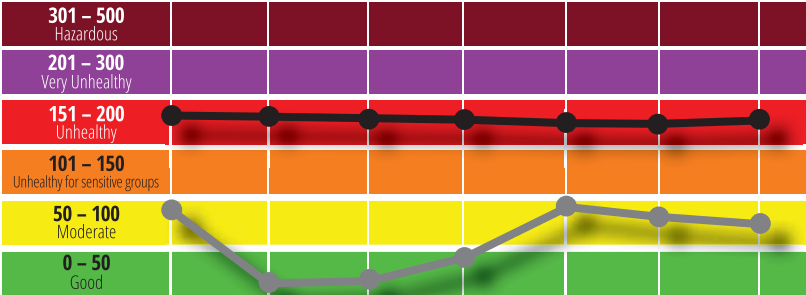


Opens in Kathmandu on 12 April

Pet Sematary is a horror film adapted from Stephen King's 1983 Novel. After Dr. Louis Creed (Jason Clarke) and his wife Rachel (Amy Seimet), along with their two kids, move to Maine, they discover a burial ground in the woods close to their house. This place intertwines with their lives in a horrific and evil way, making them face death in the most terrifying way possible. With a suspenseful plot and dark, frightening visuals, the film lives up to its horror genre reputation.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 5 - 11 April



Legend: PM2.5 (black line), Ozone (grey line). Legend: FRIDAY April 5, SATURDAY April 6, SUNDAY April 7, MONDAY April 8, TUESDAY April 9, WEDNESDAY April 10, THURSDAY April 11

This week the daily average of the air pollution index in Kathmandu city centre is marginally improved because of the frequent rain. However at peak traffic hours it is still pretty unhealthy. The only good news is that the daily average did not reach the Purple 'Very Unhealthy' zone this week. Follow hourly pollution updates live on the *Nepali Times* homepage, www.nepalitimes.com
<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>

On Everest 4 years after the Nepal earthquake

Mountaineer returns to the world's highest mountain after being thwarted by the 2014 and 2015 tragedies



FLATTENED: Photographs from Base Camp after the quake-induced avalanche on 25 April 2015, and a damaged lodge in Pheriche.



ALL PHOTOS: DAMIEN FRANCOIS

Damien Francois
at Everest Base Camp

It has been exactly four years since the chair I was sitting on at Mt Everest Base Camp started to rock, and there was a deep rumble from beneath the Khumbu Icefall. It was 11:56 on 25 April 2015.

We were 150km from the epicentre of the earthquake in Gorkha, but for one long minute we rocked and rolled. Then the sound was not from beneath, but above us. Although we could not see it at first because of the clouds, a chunk of the flank of Mt Pumori had broken off and was falling onto Base Camp, which was crowded with climbers preparing to go up the world's highest mountain.

The avalanche was filmed by my German climbing friend Jost Kobusch and can be watched on YouTube. The wave of snow and ice swept over Base Camp, obliterating a section of it and killing 16 Nepali porters and guides and 2 foreigners.

I did not suffer from post-traumatic stress after that near-

death experience, and I do not get panic attacks when I see in my mind's eye the terrifying, roiling cloud of ice that descended on us. But I can still hear the screaming and swearing of teammates as we ducked into our tents.

I had been at that exact spot one year earlier, on 18 April 2014, when another avalanche struck. At about 6am, a serac broke loose from Everest's West Shoulder and killed 16 high-altitude workers in the Khumbu Icefall.

Telluric sounds always come with natural disasters, and both events one year apart came with those deep guttural roars and cracks. My friend, the well-known Nepali sitar player Satendra Bir Singh Tuladhar, asked me after the big 12 May aftershock in 2015, which I experienced at his Patan home: "Did you hear that sound?"

After being thwarted twice by the avalanches at Base Camp, I returned to the mountain in 2017 and 2018 to make another, and yet another, attempt. I had to turn back. But here I am again at Base Camp, where the memories of the 2014 and 2015 tragedies keep coming back.

Mountain climbing is a risky business. We expose ourselves to danger by just being there. It is part of what we do. Avalanches, rock falls and earthquakes are called 'objective dangers', added risks to the hazards of climbing. The danger is disproportionate: for example our porters and high altitude guides put themselves in harm's way more often as they carry gear up through the Icefall. The 2014 avalanche was a tragic reminder of that. And other Nepalis live with the danger of earthquakes all the time.



There are not too many scars of the 2015 earthquake and avalanche in the Khumbu besides landslides. Thame was badly hit, but was rebuilt quickly. Many Sherpa families still carry the heavy burden of the loss of family members, but Khumbu's strong sense of community has allowed them to rebuild and move on.

It is inspiring to see a

community manage to deal so effectively with disaster. I look up to the Sherpas, and admire the Nepali people for their strength of spirit and of holding together, a trait we have lost in the West.

The Nepali attitude of *Ke garné?* (What to do?) is often given a negative fatalistic interpretation, but it holds a real inspirational lesson for me. There is nothing we can do to stop an earthquake, but we have to deal with it. That is precisely what Nepalis did – they coped brilliantly. They did not wait for help but started rebuilding themselves, and are still doing so.

As a survivor of the 2015 earthquake myself, this is also what I personally learned from Nepalis four years ago: the ability to cope and move on. Too often, 'hope' means delegating to others what in fact you can still begin to do yourself. It is a bit like that in mountaineering. Although we rely on our high-altitude workers, we nonetheless have to set one foot in front of the other ourselves.

We non-professional expedition members are not as

strong as the locals. So, climbing Chomolungma is kind of like a bit of heaven and hell together, to paraphrase William Blake. But isn't that what life is anyway?

Being back here in the Khumbu is like returning to heaven, so beautiful and sublime is the environment, the friendliness of the locals. But it has also about suffering, exhaustion and danger. Four years after 2015, I feel an additional danger this year: I am more aware of what can happen naturally to all who live in this stunningly beautiful land. To be able to share that risk, I think, makes me a little more of a Nepali.

Soon, I hope to make it to 8,850m and kiss the forehead of Jomo Myo Langsangma, as my friend Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa wishes I will. If that happens, I will dedicate the achievement to what I care most about: *mero biralo, mero ama, ra mero Nepal.* 🇳🇵

Damien Francois is a climber and author of *The Holy Mountains of Nepal*. He lives with his cat and mother in Antwerp, and is at Everest Base Camp this spring for his 19th expedition in Nepal.

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Leaving an imprint

Printmaking is as old as Nepal's history itself, and printmakers have brought fame to the country by winning many international competitions. For all that, little is known about printmaking here. An exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery titled *Seduction of Printmaking*, organised by Print Making Nepal Artists' Collective, seeks to change that.

The exhibition features prints by more than 30 artists, reflecting various genres: from traditional arts like Paubha and Mithila art to contemporary pieces on nature and urban life, and fusion works as well. While the pieces are a delight to see, the

exhibition is also an opportunity to understand the complex art of printmaking. The pieces may look like paintings, but in fact, prints are created through a variety of complicated processes.

Some methods require carving the basic shape on wood, painting it in colours, and stamping it on paper. In others, motifs are etched on metal and the art emerges by applying acid to the metal, which erodes it into different patterns. Still others require the use of a printmaking machine. Prints were first produced in China and Japan and were used to illustrate Buddhist texts, but now have spread all over the world. Printmaking is quite

difficult and expensive too, as it requires equipment and tools. Until recently, there were only a few private printmakers in Nepal, but now the Printmaking Association has acquired a machine that can be used by all printmakers.

"Our aim is make printmaking more known in Nepal, and also to make it easier for future printmakers to work," says association President Uma Shankar Shah, lamenting that the government has neglected the genre. "No printmaker has ever been awarded by the government, and it has conducted no printmaking workshop till date. We hope to work for more



recognition."

Set up in 2017, the association seems to have succeeded in pumping some fresh blood into the printmaking community. Senior printmaker Birendra Pratap Singh, who was the first person to own a printmaking machine in Nepal, had not made a print for 18 years. But he was energised to make one for this exhibition. The exhibition has also managed to rope in renowned non-printmakers into making prints, like the Paubha artist Lok Chitrakar and Mithila artist SC Suman.

Inaugurating the exhibition this week, French Ambassador Francois-Xavier Leger said: "Printmaking artists are dynamic and creative. It confirms what I always thought, that the new generation is active."

Sewa Bhattarai

*The Seduction of Print Making
Till 24 April
Siddhartha Art Gallery,
Baber Mahal Revised*



PRADEEP GYAWALI

BACK TO BUSINESS: Minister of Foreign Affairs Pradeep Gyawali inspecting the progress of reconstruction at Tatopani customs in Sindhupalchok on Monday. The checkpoint, closed since the 2015 earthquake, will reopen 31 May.



INDIAN EMBASSY

BRAVE HEART: Deputy Chief of Mission at the Indian Embassy, Ajay Kumar, lays a wreath at the tomb of Begum Hazrat Mahal, who stood up to the British in India in 1857, at Jame Masjid in Kathmandu on Monday.



KAMAL THAPA

THE KING AND US: Former king Gyanendra Shah poses for a selfie with a supporter during a tour in Panchthar in eastern Nepal last week.



KUNDA DIXIT

NEPAL ART NOW: Artist Ashmina Ranjit, curator Swosti Rajbhandari Kayastha and Nepal Art Council's Sagar Rana at the launch of the six-month exhibition of contemporary Nepali art at the Welt Muzeum in Vienna on Wednesday.



BISAM GYAWALI/UNDP NEPAL

WINNING SPIRIT: Nepali hitech agriculture startup Aero Roots bagged the People's Choice and Potential Economic Value Generation Award at the Youth CoLad Summit in Hanoi last week.

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Nepal is becoming a nation of net addicts

Sabina Devkota

A couple in Kathmandu, tired of their daughter playing with her mobile all the time, cut off the home internet and hid her phone. The 23-year-old got severe withdrawal symptoms, became agitated, was weeping and yelling, and even slashed her wrist. Her parents had to take her to a psychologist.

A woman in Baneshwor disabled the home wifi because her 17-year-old son was always on his mobile. The teen then started going to his aunt's home just to use the net. He told his psychiatrist: "If I don't have my phones, I get anxious. I don't even want to eat or talk."

A father was concerned that his daughter studying the A-levels appeared lethargic every day, and wondered if she was on drugs. He peeked into her room one night and found her watching pornography on her phone.

Psychologist Ganga Pathak who treated all three patients, says Internet addiction has become an epidemic in Nepal in the last five years. A psychological counselor for over 20 years, she says this phenomenon is similar to drug addiction or alcoholism.

Instead of linking people, she believes that as elsewhere in the world the Internet is making Nepali users lonelier, unhappy, insensitive and unproductive.

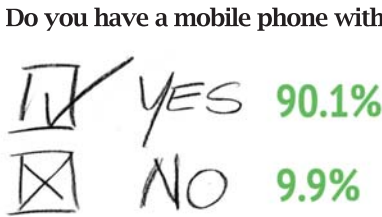
A 12-year boy in Dharmabari had pasted a notice on his door forbidding anyone from entering because he was on his mobile all the time. When his parents tried to get him to talk to people, he would cry. They took him to Pathak, who diagnosed digital addiction.

Children's minds and bodies grow rapidly before the age of five, so they should be kept away

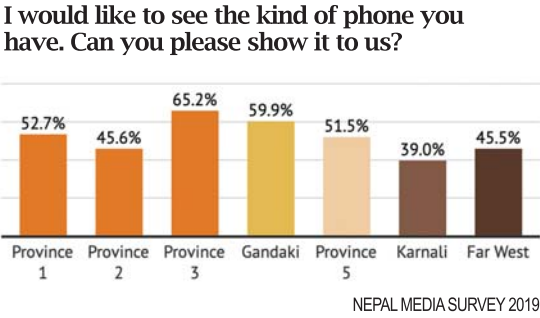


MONIKA DEUPALA

Phone Ownership



Smart Android 53%



from mobile phones. However, since most parents are busy, they prefer to distract their children with gadgets, which is the beginning of children's addiction, says Pathak.

Sabrina Thapa, who teaches at a school in Balaju, says her students are mostly up all night playing games on their mobiles, so they are drowsy in class. A study of 136 students three years ago by the Manmohan Memorial Institute of Health Sciences showed that 92.8% were affected by digital addiction or Gaming Disorder. In 2018, WHO listed Gaming Disorder among international diseases. Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and more recently TikTok are the most popular sites (see page 14-15).




While last year's Sharecast survey showed that 86% of youth aged 16-24 used Facebook regularly, the proportion has grown to over 90% this year.

Digital addiction among the youth seems to be a result not of the need to communicate through the Net, but of habit formation. Tirsana Sharma, 18, of Kalanki says: "I alone use almost a dozen communication apps like Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Tiktok, Viber and WhatsApp. If I do not use them all, I might miss what my friends are up to."

Sociologist Janak Rai believes digital addiction is changing the communication culture and socialisation within Nepali society. "Due to digital addiction, the new generation is becoming self-centered. We cannot stop the use of these technologies, but it is time we began a public debate on how and for how long we should be using them every day."

Digital addiction also leads to insomnia, which invites further health problems like migraines, anxiety, and depression. According to Sirjana Adhikari, eye specialist at Tilganga hospital, constant exposure to the blue light from smartphones and laptops directly affects the eyes, and leads to problems like itchiness, dry eyes, headache and blurred vision. Constant bending to use the devices leads to chronic neck ache called 'text syndrome' or 'text neck'.

Digital addiction also makes users more aggressive, and the Police believe that it is contributing to crime. SP Narendra Upreti of the Crime Investigation Division says: "There is a trend of shooting pornographic videos, exchanging them, blackmailing people and attempts at character assassination. Up to 90% of the digital crimes that we investigate are related to sex." 🇳🇵



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Nepalis are drifting to digital

**Madhu Acharya and
Bhumiraj Chapagain**

Until a few years ago, Nepalis were forced to consume whatever the mainstream media disseminated. Radio, tv and newspapers thought that they knew what their audience wanted and needed.

All this is changing. Nepalis today are increasingly in control of what media content they like. Media preference is now not only dependent on our socio-economic status, age, geographic location or education, but personal choice, context and content.

There is now a proliferation of mobile devices, internet connectivity and the choice of new traditional and new media platforms. As this 4th edition of the Nepal Media Survey by Sharecast Initiative shows, the Nepali audience is catching up with the global trend.

Affordability is no longer an issue for media device ownership.

Sixty percent of Nepali household now own tv sets whereas only 28% of households have a functioning radio, as mobile phones are increasingly used as radio receivers. Radio repair shops have converted to mobile maintenance.

Access to regular electricity, increased urbanisation, remittance income, as well as the purchase of tv and mobile phones being the first choice of migrant workers are reasons why tv ownership has overtaken radio. A tv set is no longer a status symbol, but is seen as a necessity.

A surprising 95% of households now own mobile phones (average of 2.5 devices per home) whereas ownership of landline telephone has fallen to only 4%.

Ownership of media devices is higher among those with better



MADHU ACHARYA

education and jobs, as well as among those with so-called higher caste and ethnic backgrounds. The illiterate, unemployed, daily wage labour, traditional agriculture farmers, Muslim and Tarai Dalit household have lower ownership of any media devices.

Province 3 and Gandaki

Province have about 73% tv ownership at household level whereas the Far West Province has the lowest tv ownership at home. Though Province 2 has the highest mobile phone ownership (96.8%) at household level, only 86.6% of individuals have their own phones. In Gandaki Province mobile

ownership is 94.6%.

The survey shows that tv has the highest device ownership and is the highest accessed mass medium. More than 60% of respondents said they had watched tv in the past six months: 42% watching it daily, while 40% had not watched tv at all in the same period.

Television is the key source of national and international news and also tops the list of media for reliability with 32% saying they trust tv content. More than 76% in Province 3 and more than 73% in Gandaki Province access tv regularly, and it is highest among the educated. While 43% in Province 3 and 39% in Gandaki Province prefer tv as the main source for national and international news, only 19% of respondents in the Far West province prefer tv.

Tv is regarded as the second preferred source for local news and information at all demographic variables, and radio is still king.

Among the tv viewers, 91% percent watch during evenings. Surprisingly, 20% of tv viewers never watch Nepali channels, 60% never watch local channels and 27% never watch international channels. 65% watch Nepali channels for up to 2 hours and 61 percent respondents watch international channels for 2 hours or less every day. Among those who watch local channels, only 30% watch local channels for less than 2 hours duration.

Half the survey respondents say they have listened to the radio in the past six months, and only 24% listen to it daily. Listenership is highest in Karnali Province with 70%, and the figure is only 40% for Province 2 in the eastern Tarai. Radio is popular in the 16-24 age group, and less so among those 55 and above. Radio is more popular among the more educated.

Radio is the more dominant medium than tv to access local news and information, and the exception again is Province 2 where only 11% access local news from radio.

For national and international news, radio is the second-best choice (23%) compared to tv (29%). Nationwide, more than a quarter say radio is the most reliable medium for news, and the figure was 55% in Karnali Province.

More than a quarter of

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media

respondents found radio the most reliable medium, and that proportion goes up to 55% in Karnali Province and 40% in Far West Province.

Radio listenership spikes up during national events like elections, or natural disasters. It is a go-to medium during crises, but during normal times Nepalis seem to prefer other media that they can access through mobile phones.

Most radio listeners tune in for less than two hours daily, and 56% use mobile phones while 49% use a regular radio receiver. Among listeners, 44% say they tune in to a specific station because the quality of reception is good and 54% of listeners tune in to two news bulletins a day — most of them between 6-9AM. Only 3% of radio users listen to news every hour.

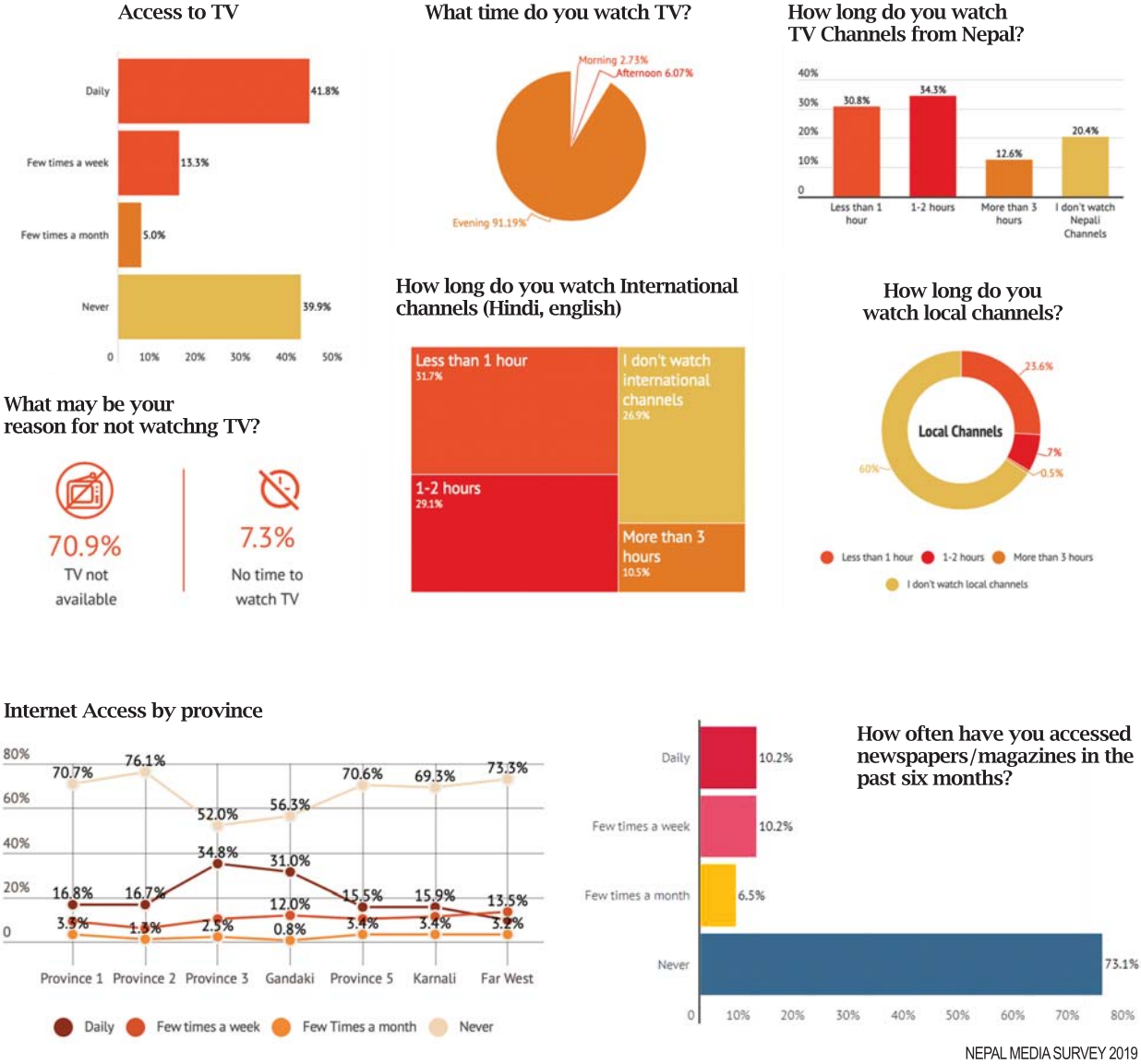
Newspaper publishers lamenting the loss of readership to digital media may need to heed this survey in which 59% of respondents say they did not read newspapers and magazines because they were not available in their area.

The circulation and distribution channels of legacy media have remained largely the same whereas political centres have increased from 75 districts to 7 provincial capitals, 77 district headquarters as well as 753 local bodies.

Among those who read newspapers regularly, 10% did so daily, and 32% of men and only 21% of women read them. Understandably, Province 3 dominates readership with 54% users, followed by 37% in Gandaki Province. Provinces 1 and 2 had the least access to print media.

Only 19% of rural respondents say they have access to print media whereas more than 54% of city dwellers do so.

Among those who read newspapers and magazines most read the main news (77%), news headlines only (22%), news about politics (19%), art, culture and entertainment (17%) and 15% regularly read the sports section. Interestingly, 94% of respondents who say they read newspapers do



SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Radio is the most preferred medium to access local news and information whereas tv is the key source of national and international news.
- Occupation, education and caste/ ethnicity of Nepali audience determine type of device ownership.
- Women lag behind in access to all media.
- The 16-24 age group and those with bachelor's degrees are the heaviest consumers of all types of media.
- The 55 and above age group and the illiterate have the least access to media.
- Tarai Dalits have the least access to tv, newspapers, Internet, mobile phones and smartphone devices.
- News has the highest access to all media except radio.
- Media saturation is highest in Province 3.
- Karnali and the Far West Provinces use radio the most, listeners in Province 2 use it the least.
- Mobile is least accessed in Province 5, and tv viewership is lowest in province 7.
- Trust of media does not depend on size of audience.

The Method

Nepal Media Survey 2019 is the fourth in a series by the research group Sharecast Initiative Nepal. It was administered in January-February of 2019 through face-to-face interviews among 4,129 respondents in 42 randomly selected districts spread over seven provinces. This sample size produces a +/- 1.52% error margin at 95% confidence interval at the aggregate level. Data was collected using mobile devices with ONA software. Respondents were 18 years or above, residing in the same household for at least 6 months. The five-stage sampling methodology used in this survey includes a primary sampling method to randomly select districts, rural/urban municipalities and wards. The random-walk method was used to identify households and the random-lottery method to identify individual respondents. All data is weighed back to the Nepal Census 2011 to provide a representative picture of Nepali media consumers. Data quality control measures were employed.

Survey administered by Sharecast Initiative Nepal.
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Go online for more details of the survey

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Anthropomorphic cars

As cars become driverless, new designs are making automobiles look more and more like human beings.

Give it another million years of evolution and automobiles will shed their hatchbacks and start walking around on two hind legs. In the old days, when they designed cars, they got a box and attached four tyres onto it. These days, they take a finalist of the Miss Universe pageant, install an internal combustion engine on her, attach four T-bone McPherson struts with titanium torsion bars and smart hydraulics.

This is why you may have noticed that cars these days look like fashion models on wheels. Some have grinning radiator grilles, others put on false eyelashes. There are cars with flawless skin and body-coloured waistline moulding; some cars have cleverly concealed double chins. Newer models greet you and obey voice commands with a purr, or are passive-aggressive and sulk unless you tickle them behind their lithium ion batteries.

Today's anthropomorphic car designs strive to endow their creations with human attributes. So much so that some cars even have sex. No, they don't do it in the garage. I meant there are cars that are definitely male, there are cars that are definitely female, and there are cars that are definitely both.

Take the new Toyota Lexus UX subcompact crossover, for instance. With its protuberant Y-front crushable bonnet, this

is an unmistakably masculine machine packed with testosterone that likes to run around in its undies. On the other hand, the sleek curves, well-proportioned chassis and slanting eyes of the new 2019 Mazda 3 make it most assuredly a car that belongs on the catwalk.

Besides looks, a car's name also contributes to its overall personality. Many car names end in 'o', like Terrano, Scorpio, Sumo or the one made for us digital hacks, the electric Journo. Given that Daihatsu calls its latest model the Scat, it is obvious automakers are running out of car names, so here are some ideas for the cars of tomorrow:

Hydra H20: The first climate-friendly, hydrogen fuelled car, which will fail police emission tests in Nepal because soot content in the exhausts are below permissible limits.

Libido SX: Ideal car for lovebirds. The 16-valve, multi-point fuel injection system gives it more power and faster pick-up.

Idiota 1200L: The only car in its class especially built for Nepal's roads, with brick-proof teflon windscreens, armoured turret with forward-mounted 7.5 mm cannon, and side-firing rocket launchers to blast one's way through traffic jams. Wheels optional.

The Ass: This car is behind the times and has a posterior motive. Its extra 30cm of trunk width is accessed via a redesigned liftgate which, in hindsight, has a striking resemblance to a rear view of Donald Trump.



The Ass

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