With 91% of individuals now owning at least one mobile device and almost half of them smartphones, the number of Nepal's Internet users is rising exponentially. Among them, Facebook and its Messenger app is by far the most popular, according to the Nepal Media Survey 2019 conducted by Shreecast Initiative. There are now more than 8 million Nepal's Facebook accounts, and almost 80% of 4.129 respondents to the survey say they use Facebook, while 43% use Messenger. Facebook and Messenger are far ahead of the second most popular social media app, IMO, used by 35% of respondents, while 34% regularly access YouTube. The Nepali app HamroTikko has now matched 4%. Facebook is also increasingly the preferred source of news and information about local, national and international happenings. Almost 5% of respondents use Facebook to learn about local events, and 9% rely on it for national and international news. Despite that, the level of trust for Facebook content is low (2%) compared to mainstream radio, tv and newspapers. This indicates that Nepali Internet users do not necessarily trust the most popular Internet sites. User-generated content appears to be lower in Nepal than in other countries, meaning most respondents appear to be only consumers of information. Nearly three-quarters of those questioned say they have never posted about local issues on social media, and only 1% actually post local happenings on their walls.

Another Facebook-owned platform, Instagram, is used by a much lower proportion (4.2%), although it appears to be more popular among urban educated youth. Twitter usage is almost negligible (1.2%). Inevitably, growing access to mobile phones and the Internet has increased the use of Facebook and other media. 90% of households now own mobile phones, on average 2.5 devices per home. Province 2 has the highest mobile phone ownership – 96.8% at the household level – followed by Gandaki province at 94.6%. Even though use of broadband and will has not reached rural areas, mobile data services from telecommunication companies like Ncell and NTCL have facilitated social media usage in rural Nepal. Mobile data usage is highest in the Far west at 80%.

Medha Acharya

FACEBOOK NATION

Most used Internet applications in Nepal

NEW NEWS
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2

INTERNET USE AND MENTAL HEALTH
PAGE 13

NEPALIS ARE DRIFTING TO DIGITAL MEDIA
PAGE 14-15

Experience the world like never before
Find yourself in a world you have only ever imagined, amidst the charm and unique history of diverse cultures. Fly with us to more than 160 destinations worldwide.
NEW NEWS

When enumerators from Sareeshed’s initiative Nepal fanned out across the country in January, they asked more than 4,100 respondents if they had mobile phones on them — 93% of them said yes. Eighty-eight percent of them said they used Facebook, and 45% were on Facebook Messenger, and 30% on IMO: which uses less bandwidth, many to communicate with relatives and friends working in the Gulf. Smartphones are changing the way the young and educated youth. Twitter usage is also increasing (1.5%), even though the media fraternity and some politicians seem to think it is hugely important.

In response to a multiple choice question, respondents said they do most of their Internet usage on mobile phones. Of these, 60% of people 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 growing.

Internet usage is growing rapidly, but that is not the reason people are not reading newspapers and magazines. 4,125 respondents said they had never logged on.

Nepal is the number of people who said they had not read a newspaper in the past six months, over 70%. And even more surprisingly, when asked why they do not read physical newspapers, an overwhelming 37% said it was because the papers never get to their areas, 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 circulation, but they may be missing a trick in their distribution departments. Of those who said they still follow the mainstream news, 44% were still reading the paper newspaper, 14% read it on apps, and 6.6% went to their home page online. This is not all: many respondents found newspapers and magazines trustworthy.

Make 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. Facebook may be omnipresent, but most users are skeptical 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.

DIGITAL PRINTOUT

ONLINE PACKAGES

WHAT'S TRENDING

Chaos at airport due to runway repair by Maoists

For the first time in Nepal’s aviation history passengers spent hours on an airport tarmac in Kathmandu to protest the delay of a critical bound Air India 130 to Nepal. The flight was due to be back by 12 pm on 2 April after 257 passengers had boarded it, but it delayed again when the aircraft departed for the flight for runway repairs.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Protecting the last home of the Spiny Babbler

Construction of a new road through Sikkim Forest in China has destroyed the last remaining habitat of the world’s unique species of Spiny Babbler. The report was shared widely on social media and generated strong opinion online about the importance of forest conservation and its impact on wildlife and forest protection. Go online to join the debate.

Most popular on Twitter

Popular paper expo on Nepali restaurants

Following the original report on Nepali papers in Times in January, the new generation of Nepalis in Kathmandu, Sikkim, and Darjeeling have expressed their interest in exploring Nepali culture and cuisine. The event was supported by the Nepal Tourism Board, which is also looking to promote Nepali culture worldwide.

Most visited online page

GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS

Find out how Dholing lavender in north is filled up in a Nepali lavender farm that is associated by growing it. You after a surprise and live event and graphics are the fun. How people who have been surprised open to countryside. Story age.

SPINNY BABBLES

The film forests that surround Chitwan play an important role in protecting the Valley (Protecting the last home of the Spiny Babbler), Carol Teal and Rajendra Kamalwarah, Rediff. They serve as a watershed for the Maunka Forest and as a source of water for Chitwan. They are a wintering ground for birds and other wildlife. The forests are under threat, and the people who live there are struggling to protect them.

NEPALIS IN FINLAND

A good report...closely this is the case in many restaurants across Asia, Australia and the Middle East (Finish paper expo on Nepali restaurants), Namita Sharma, 33pm. There may be a few good owners but most are out to make a profit and that means employing cooks, waiters and waitresses whose passports are seized upon arrival and they live and work in horrid conditions.

BARA TORNADO

What is good preparedness is going to be when you have to? Here is the new infrastructure like proper shelter, clean drinking water and food. The lessons to be learnt and the safety of people during such storms? (The new normal) (Editorial, 20947) Jyoti Simha

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The page 01 from the 846 edition of Nepal Times on 10th April 2009 featured the Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on the cover. Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal is a Nepali politician currently serving as Prime Minister of Nepal. Dahal has been the leader of the Nepali Congress Party since 2018.

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2.0 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The page 01 from the 846 edition of Nepal Times on 10th April 2009 featured the Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on the cover. Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal is a Nepali politician currently serving as Prime Minister of Nepal. Dahal has been the leader of the Nepali Congress Party since 2018.

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Monday morning talk #1

How will the government respond to the Baghpati massacre?

Total votes: 177

Excellent: 2.2%
Terrible: 5.4%
Almonds: 92.4%

Monday morning talk #2

How will it be better for Nepal in 2028?

Total votes: 137

Excellent: 2.2%
Terrible: 5.4%
Almonds: 92.4%
WISHING YOU
AND YOUR LOVED ONES
A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR 2076
FILLED WITH LOVE, PEACE
AND HAPPINESS
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 Nepalis, six of whom were Canadian, on a road in southern Afghanistan near the border with Pakistan. This was in 2001.

Although Canada has been involved in development assistance in Nepal for the last 50 years through its aid arm, CIDA, Nepal, and NGOs and agencies like CBOI and INR, most Nepal do not know much about these projects. Even though some of the projects have been criticized for being unsustainable, they have left their mark.

For example, it was Canadian assistance that allowed Nepal’s civil aviation sector to graduate from pilot-engaged DC-3 to STOL turbo props, which in turn opened up remote-airfield airports to travel even before the roads got there.

Canada has also provided the assistance for Royal Nepal Airlines to buy additional Twin Otters and train Nepal pilots. Some of these planes are still the workhorses of Nepal’s domestic aviation, and a maintenance hangar built by Canada still stands at the airport.

Canada’s early technical assistance was in hydroelectric planning, and in setting up the 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’s about the sum of all initiatives and Canada’s creedal footprint in Nepal, which is felt quite significantly,” Patel told Nepal 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 6,000 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 Kaj Jha of the Nepal

Indo-Chinese food fest

With five outlets across Kathmandu, Bawarchi is popular for its Chinese cuisine. What 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 community settlement in the British days. Tangra’s cuisine thus evolved to become an amalgamation of Indian and Chinese tastes, much like Panikan is an amalgam of Muslim 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.

The Tangra Chinese food fest really suits the Nepal palate, since people here have always enjoyed items such as Chicken Chilli,” says Marcus Achithika of Bawarchi. She says the idea of the festival is to make food fun.

Even though Chinese cuisine may be most-favourite, 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 Nimbh 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 all smoking options like the Nimbh Mirch Babycorn. The baby corns are fried to a soft texture, with the natural taste coming through with each bite. They say that what tasty cannot be healthy but this dish proves that adage wrong. A variety of sauces add spice to the dish, with sweet and spicy options, ensuring that these baby corns are unlike anything you have tasted before.

The Salt ’n Pepper Mushroom is another classic spicy and fan dish, bursting with Indian spices and sauce flavours, a sharp contrast to the baby corn. This variation, 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 Tandoori Bahn. 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 dinner on a sweet note. Bawarchi’s signature knol has been elevated with almond and chocolate dust. The Strawberry Phal, a strawberry and phal version of the Indian dessert khiri, is a new addition.

Let us raise a toast to the Tangra Chinese food fest that Hind and Chin are Machtchali. Prakriti Kandel

Until 16 April

Bawarchi, Balkot Mall

Great Move concludes

Turkish Airlines has completed its final special charter flights to the new World Trade Airport, which will be the latest new centre of global aviation. In April, the airline conducted its final flight from the KICK airport in Singapore, which had been Turkish Airlines for 65 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 O’Hare Frontier ‘EVA Air’ Airport Duty Free of the Year award, which recognizes O’Hare’s outstanding commercial performance and customer service to more than 30 million passengers annually. The Travel retailer was also nominated for its O’Hare Accenture, which offers all employees training through its Career development program.

Public health partners

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

NIBL’s New Branch

Nepal Investment Bank opened its 50th branch and 13th ATM machine in Nepalgunj, Kathmandu. The bank now has 24 branches in the Kathmandu Valley and 15 branches outside of Nepalgunj, to provide services to customers throughout Nepal, in rural and urban areas alike.

Prabha Bank

Public-Private Partnership models can be leveraged to provide improved healthcare for underserved communities. The partnership between Nayauna Health and the government has provided integrated healthcare services from hospital to home for more than 330,000 people in Kathmandu and Sauraha.

P30 series

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

BIZ BRIEFS
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 Nepalese 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 until this week to see for himself the impact of global warming in the Himalayas. He said: “Canada and Nepal have similar mountainous terrain topology, 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 Joan Label 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. Label 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 ambition in the coming years. For IDRC this is the next frontier.”
The silhouette of Harpo the Clown's funny hair, perky hat and bulbous nose struck an incongruous note in the dark silence of the jungle and amongst the other clients, and Mash Thapa struggled to suppress his smile and keep his hand steady.

Mash was one of the elite band of highly skilled guides trained by Chuck McDonald 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 movie clown and veteran of Ringling Bros Barnum and Bailey Circus from Florida.

Celebrities and stars were not unusual in Nepal before the internationalisation of Harpo

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 obvious how he never spoke when dressed up as a clown. He explained to me (when back in normal clothes) how he became his real self. Stated that it was the sacred rule of the clown organization.'

The 1983 Megheuli school children were enchanted by his balloons, tricks and flat-footed antics. At the end of his wild 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 camps 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 shikars who spent a lifetime in the forest. The on-the-job training was systematic and rigorous, and the Tiger Tops naturalists acquired a knowledge and skill set unmatched by others.

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 un exceptionally exciting, 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 took a satchel, at the time stayed in rooms across the road and the mahouts were expected to sit with the guests in the thatched restaus, 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 brawn and behind the elephant howdah, the high calibre cadre (includes KK Gurung, Gahim Tami, Ashish Chandola, Manvir Singh, Balram Thapa, Suresh Baran Bhatt, Mangal Gurung, Yagnyup Gurung, Dinsh Thapa, Karan Rana, Devi Gurung, Shubh Gupta, Bhim Gurung, Dominique Imanooel, Padma Maskey, Kamal Rai, Surendra Rai, Mitra Feudel, Dhan Baburam Tamang, Ramjan Chaudhary, Chandra Thapa, Debraj Singh, Adam Balrow, John Roberts, Kali Ram Tamang, Sukram Kumal, Padam Rana and more).

Rahul Brinhart, the charismatic neighbour of Bully Ahsuj Singh, Dudhwa tiger champion, worked all through the 1980s. He remembers being sent off to start 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

Lined up: (clockwise) Nepal’s early naturalist in Chitwan, guide and celebrity like Steve Ringo (far left) to right: Tam Gurung, Kali Brinhart, Devi Gurung, Ringo Tamang, Wangdi Gyami, Mash Thapa.

American Master Clown Mash, of Ringling Bros Barnum and Bailey Circus from Florida, as he sat on a gift made to me at Tiger Tops classic open land camp in 1985. Mash Thapa standing in the back.

Tiger Tops Lodge in 1978 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, still alive in the wilds of India. The list of ‘Tiger Tops’ linkages is long but not to mention:

Mash married Narace, Toby married Laxmi, Rihan married Sadyata, Adam married Gunida, Padma married Dominique, Nick married Berton, and Jeff married Christine.

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 Nepal’s operators to successfully deliver high quality wildlife attractions to high paying punters.

Today some of the oldest and Indian national parks boast an impressive array of elegant lodges, tented camps, restored forts, palaces and bawnis gloriously adapted for wildlife viewing. Although Nepal still has the edge when it comes to walking safaris, effective protected area management and the control of poaching.

The ultimate irony is that 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 once lived in the incomparable jungles of Chitwan and Bardia.
Shikha Neupane

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

Kabriti, 26, lives in the US and on a visit to Kathmandu last year, he wanted to make up for last 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 Dashain, Thaipusam, and her birthday.

“My brother’s surprise made me really happy. I was finally able to celebrate Bhai Tikka with him after so many years,” Anita 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 Mayak 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 3,000 experiences, for prices from Rs 5,000 to Rs 50,000. The company hires artists, musicians and even balloon sellers for its gifts, surprises and decorations.

The idea for Offering Happiness came to friends Santosh Pandey, Niraj Kaffe, Darshan Parajuli and Avishek 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 Dharmahal two years ago. Today it employs 13 people, all of them below 27, and generates business for dozens of others.

“Often 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 Kaffe, 26, explains why the venture is so innovative: “We are not a to 5 businesses. 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 book 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 Maastricht, 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 Keshwala if his company is commoditising happiness. He replies: “What we sell are surprises, happiness is an outcome.”

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.

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.

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.
SONIA AWARE

Lightning kills more people than floods in Nepal

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

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 season 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 those 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 7% 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 western 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 district-wise breakdown of fatalities...
Deaths due to lightning in Nepal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>131</td>
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<td>2023</td>
<td>67</td>
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(see chart) shows that Makawanpur is the most dangerous, with 54 deaths and 243 injuries due to lightning in the last five years.

Lightning is particularly destructive in an agriculturally dependent country. Thunderbolts deposit a significant amount of nitrogen 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 risk in frequency and intensity of storms caused by global warming.

“We have got used to more potent lightning and its increased frequency. We need better protection, preparedness and public awareness,” said climate scientist Ugyenlha Tamang, 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, so we 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 (Bhaktapur, Sukhmati, Katmandu, Pokhara, Bhairawa, Kathmandu, Simara, Tumlingtar and Biratnagar) to study thunderstorm activity and provide more accurate forecasts.

“Data generated at these locations can be used for long-term planning, their frequency and concentration, which in turn can help with better “now-casting” of electric storms so people can seek safety,” said senior meteorologist Chandra Basnet at the Department 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 Dr. Ram Sharma: “With Nepal’s diverse climate and weather systems, we are at the top of the world for scientists. Nowhere else will you find terrain ranging from 700m to nearly 9,000m in the span of 95km. That 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 movement within a cumulonimbus cloud, two distinct discharges 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 negatively charged 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. It is called the lightning flash. Extremely high energy is also released in the process, producing heat with temperatures that are three times hotter than the surface of the sun. Because of this heat, air surrounding the lightning flash heats up and expands quickly, generating loud burst 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 Chabahil, illuminating Swayambhu and the Balaju area of Kathmandu in 2011.
**New Year 2037**
Celebrates the beginning of Bikram Sambat 2576 in our own Nepal calendar. 14 April

**NexTalk**
Adrian Lailing, a Swiss artist who works in diverse media: drawing, painting, performance and text, joins in this talk in the edition of the NexTalk conversation series. 14 April, 3pm-5pm, NexTalk Culture Nepal, Patan (01) 5722259

**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 Kimi-AAI.
Every Sunday, 2pm-6pm, Bhaironnand (01) 4771278 (green grow)

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**Biskat Jatra**
Also known as Biskat jatra, this New Year festival is celebrated in Bandipur’s community for nine days and eight nights. The major attractions of the festival include playing the charan of Lord Bhishma and Bishnapati Raya through a bustling crowd.
14–15 April, Bandipur

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**Nepal is Beautiful**
A collection of more than 100 pictures by local photographers from all over Nepal. The included are landscape, portraits, monuments, heritage, new destinations, culture, including festivals and cultures, wildlife and mena worlds.
15 April, 10am–6pm, Nepal Art Council, Baluwatar, (01) 4911285, 9810960697

**Karma Band**
The performance by Nepal folk rock band on New Year is set to be a memorable evening. Enjoy relishing drinks, good food and good entertainment.
15 April, 6pm onwards, Mintra Restaurant and Bar (01) 458861

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**New Year Carnival**
Grand hoarding ineats has a fun carnival to celebrate the new year with your loved ones. Attractions include food stalls, live music, games, live painting, kids corner and more.
14 April, 11am–6pm, Bari Pokhari (01) 4970937 (986), Grand Noeling Hotel, Naxal, Kathmandu (01) 4001037

**German Travelling Expo**
The Expo illustrates the German economy’s transformation towards sustainable energy sources. The program has three parts: the exhibition, a talk program on the “German and German Day” in cooperation with experts from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).
Exhibition: 12–26 April, 10:30–12pm, 7pm–10pm, 11 and 29 April, 10–10, German Day: 20–24 April, 10:30–12:30pm, information and Technology Communication Center, Kathmandu

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**Miraculous Places**
After five visiting Nepal in 1992, Dougma Matteson went on many expeditions. She was fascinated by the country’s natural wealth, which inspired her to operate an art gallery. Matteson works with locally produced Lapis Fear creating mostly village landscape compositions.
7–14 April, 10am–7pm, The Kingson Museum, Hyatt Regency, Basdih (01) 4020125

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**Bipul Chhetri Live**
The singer-songwriter Bipul Chhetri will perform in Lord of the Drinks (LOD) on New Year’s and New Year’s Eve. His music will take you to the hills of Darjeeling.
14 April, 7pm onwards, Lord of the Drinks (LOD), 1447 (Lodge), Katmandu, (00) 100 (standard), 9810960269

**Beard of Harmony**
Kaski-based duo Beard of Harmony will perform their acoustic originals, followed by a DJ session by DD, also Raa Raa. Enjoy a relaxed and fun environment this New Year’s Day with your friends, while the kids enjoy the kids’ corner.
14 April, 2pm onwards, A33, The Ford, Seto (01) 5129265, 9810504906

**October Kathmandu**
Drop by to enjoy some Japanese and international food. This restaurant offers an indoor garden lounge with pool side, terrace lounge with a spectacular view of Durbar Square, cozy atria lounge and indoor multi-purpose hall.
15–16 April, 7pm-12am, Pineapple, Dattatray (01) 4577000

**Ghangri Café**
A multi-cuisine restaurant with a fine dining ambiance. Enjoy mouth-watering food like the famous openmenu with your friends and family in its spacious garden and cozy dining rooms.
12.30pm–11.30pm, Prakalpataru (01) 4252703

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**La Dolce Vita**
The restaurant brings a place of joy to Nepal. Specialized in ethnic food, this restaurant offers traditional, unique and famous atmosphere in a perfect place for pastries and pastries in the wide range of delicious dishes.
17 April, 8am–11pm, The Chautari, Durbar Square (01) 4562916

**Doko Deli**
Doko Deli offers you customer satisfaction through good food and the best hospitality.
Drives with your friends, family or acquaintances in its cozy ambiance and well-designed indoor and outdoor spaces.
12–10,.getOutputStream (01) 305 0335

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**Abhya & The Steam Engines**
Count down to the new year with energetic music from the band Abhya and The Steam Engines.
17 April, 4pm onwards, A30, Ai Lounge, Katmandu (01) 4201711

**The Village Café**
This New Year, the Village Café in Kathmandu, an initiative of S>$Nepal – S>$AHA, Business Association of Home Travellers Worldwide (BAHW) for17th year, the café recommends Chautari, Bara, the village café platter and tonmare for dessert. 7am–7pm, Thalapai (01) 4565712

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**Hotel Mountain**
Although located in bustling Kathmandu, high in the hills. The gardens are beautiful and the rooftop terrace offers amazing views of Kathmandu. Their rooftop zones are unique and a refreshing change from the usual hotel rooms. Thapathali (01) 43465384/1056328

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**Yeti Suites and Spa**
Relax yourself with a stress-relieving spa treatment that includes full body massage, body scrub, sauna and steam.
Amrit Hotel, Thapathali, 805, 999, Address: 3607220586

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**Banbury Retreat**
A unique bedouin hotel located on the secluded bank of Ramunbar forest, offering an eco-friendly environment space specifically tailored for guests. A must-visit for peace and serenity and dinner at the Himalaya.
Anandapur (01) 5806154

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**Babar Mahal Vilas**
A quaint boutique property with an architecture that melds 4 Nepal designs: the medival Rana-Durbar style, followed by Newari, Mallasna and Tera designs. Choose from varieties of beautifully designed rooms with their own distinctive deen and ambience.
Babar Mahal (01) 4256545/4281487

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**The Famous Farm**
This three-storey boutique hotel in the suburban Middle Hills, west of Kathmandu, is Naawal's best-kept secret next to the district's office plaza. This small restaurant has a lot of rich cultural heritage to share.
Kuwopani, Nawalparasi (01) 5710394

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**AIR QUALITY INDEX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>AQI 1</th>
<th>AQI 2</th>
<th>AQI 3</th>
<th>AQI 4</th>
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**Newspaper**
This week’s copies of our sister publication Air Quality Monitor feature an article on the current status of the air quality index in Kathmandu city. The city’s air quality is significantly impacted by the presence of a large number of vehicles, which contribute to high levels of pollution. The local government has implemented several measures to improve air quality, including the introduction of stricter emission standards. For more information on the current air quality index, please refer to the sister publication’s website, www.nepaltimes.com.
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

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 13:56 on 25 April 2015.

We were 15km 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 Joel Kubusch 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, rolling 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. About 6am, a snow-covered piece of Everest’s West Shoulder and killed 16 high-altitude workers in the Khumbu Icefall.

Tragic words 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 star player Sattendu Rit, 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 mountains 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 ‘Kha gaat?’ (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 bravely. 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 Nepal 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 Imo Myster Langmonlangma, as my friend Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa wishes. I will. If that happens, I will dedicate the achievement to what I care most about: more khamsa, more ama, ra, more Nepal.

Damien Francois is a climber and author of ‘The Holy Mountains of Nepal’. He lives with his cat and mother in Wairarapa, and is at Everest Base Camp this spring for his 7th expedition in Nepal.
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 Siddharta Art Gallery titled Seduction of Printmaking, organized by Print Making Nepal Artists’ Collective, seeks to change that.

The exhibition features prints by more than 30 artists, reflecting various genres—traditional arts like Pashupati 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 to make printmaking more known in Nepal, and also to make it easier for future printmakers to work,” says association President Uma Shrinker 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 10 years. But he was encouraged to make one for this exhibition. The exhibition has also managed to rope in renowned non-printmakers into making prints, like the Pashupati artist Lok Chitrakar and Mithila artist SC Sumant.

Inaugurating the exhibition this week, French Ambassador François-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
15-24 April
Siddharta Art Gallery,
Biter Mohel, Kathmandu

BACK TO BUSINESS: Minister of Foreign Affairs Pradeep Gyawali inspecting the progress of reconstruction at Taraiyapani outskirst in Sindupalchok on Monday. The earthquake, caused due to the 2015 earthquake, will happen on May.

BRAVE HEART: Deputy Chief of Mission at the Indian Embassy, Raj Kumar, lays a wreath at the tomb of burglar Fazlal Mohar, who stood up to the British in India in 1857, at Jami Masjid in Kathmandu on Monday.

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

NEPAL ART NOW: Artist Ashima Tiwari, curator Swati Rajaibhandar Kayastha and Nepal Art Council’s Sagar Rana at the launch of the six-month exhibition of contemporary Nepali art at the Webi Museum in Verma on Wednesday.

WINNING SPIRIT: Nepal hybrid agriculture startup Amro Foods bagged the People’s Choice and Potential Economic Value Generation Award at the Youth Calcut Summit in Fulari last week.
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 smashed her wrist. Her parents had to take her to a psychologist.

A woman in Ramshwaqo disabled the home wifi because her 17-year-old son was always on his mobile. The boy then started going to his aunt’s home just to use the net. He told his psychiatrist: “If I don’t have my phone, 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, insomniac and unproductive.

A 12-year-old boy in Bhimdahal had passed a notice on his door for bullying 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 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 so wrapped up in all night playing games on their mobiles, so they are drowning in class. A study of 126 students three years ago by the Manipal 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 disorders.

Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and more recently TikTok are the most popular sites (see page 14-15).

While last year’s Shrawcraat survey showed that 66% of youth aged 16-24 used Facebook regularly, the proportion has grown to 90% this year.

Digital addiction among the youth seems to be a result of the need to communicate through the Net, but of habit formation. Times Sharma, 19, of Kalanki says: “I alone use almost all the social media apps like Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, TikTok, Viber and WhatsApp. I’ll 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 begin a public debate on how and for how long we should be using them every day.”

Digital addiction also leads to insomnia, which invires further health problems like migraines, anxiety, and depression.

According to Shyam Shrestha, an eye specialist at Tilganga hospital, constant exposure to the blue light from smartphones and laptops directly affects the eyes, and leads to problems like incontinence, dry eyes, headaches 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 believes it is contributing to crime.

Senior Inspector 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.”

Do you have a mobile phone with you?

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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 the 4th edition of the Nepal Media Survey by Starcast Initiative shows, the Nepali audience is catching up with the global trend.

Affordability is no longer an issue for media devices ownership. Sixty percent of Nepali households 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 it is seen as a necessity.

A surprising 95% of households now own mobile phones (average of 2.2 devices per person) whereas ownership of landline telephone has fallen to only 4%. Ownership of media devices is higher among those with better 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 Tamang Dalits 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 (80.6%) at household level, only 46.6% 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: 82% watching it daily, while 68% had not watched tv at all in the same period.

Television is the key source of national and international news and also tope the list of media for reliability with 32% saying their tv source content. More than 70% in Province 3 and more than 71% in Gandaki Province access tv regularly, and it is highest among the educated. While 3% in Province 3 and 18% 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 tv channels, 60% never watch local channels and 27% never watch international channels. 8% watch Nepal 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 15-24 age group, and so too 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 (21%) compared to tv (20%). Nationwide, more than a quarter say radio is the most reliable medium for news, and there was 55% in Karnali Province. More than a quarter of
Anthropomorphic cars

As cars become driveless, 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. Those 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 windshield moulding; some cars have cleverly concealed double chins. Newer models greet you and obey voice commands with a purr, or are passive-aggressive and snark unless you tickle them behind their lithium ion batteries.

Today’s anthropomorphic car designers 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 chessies and slanting eyes of the new 2019 Minda 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 hackers, the electric Jazoo. Given that Dushantu 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 pollution emission tests in Nepal because 90% of its carbon footprint is emitted in the exhausts and this is below permissible limits.

Libido 500: Ideal car for lovebirds. The 16-cyl, multi-point injection system gives it more power and faster pickup.

Idiot 3000L: The only car in its class especially built for Nepal’s roads, with broadside rainwater, a dedicated 78 mm rain screen, and side-firing radar launchers to burst a way through traffic jams. Where’s optimal.

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

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