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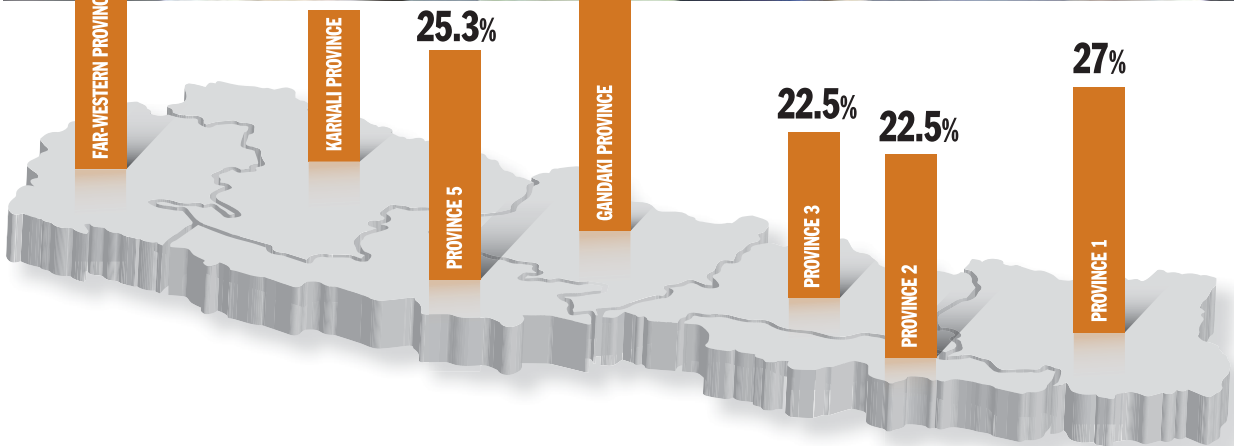
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BIKRAM RAI

SHARECAST INITIATIVE

# Outward bound

More than 26% of Nepali households have someone working outside the country. This includes 43.4% of families in Far-Western Province, where most migrate to India. Gandaki Province is next with 38.3%, while the number is 18.3% in Province 3, which includes Kathmandu.

A nationwide survey by Sharecast Initiative shows that most of the \$6.6million that the 4 million Nepalis working abroad sent home is used for basics like food (60%), clothing (42%), medical treatment (36%) and children's education (35%). Only a small amount (10%) is invested in land, and just 6.5% is saved in a bank.

The proportion of households with at least one person working

abroad is highest among Muslims (36%) and Hill Dalit (34%) families, while 'High Caste' Tarai and Tharu households have the fewest members abroad.

The survey found that most workers (48%) used bank transfers to send their earnings home, while a third still use the informal *hundi* channel. Only 1% say they send money home with friends. *Hundi* transfers are lowest in Province 3 (24%), while bank transfers were lowest in Far-Western Province (21%).

Thanks in part to these foreign earnings, the survey reports a number of positive developments: 94% of respondents had electricity, 95% had latrines, 74%

(which is still low) had a drinking water supply, 75% now live near some kind of road, and 70% of households use LPG for cooking.

Nepal's poverty rate has fallen dramatically due to remittances, which could be why the survey shows that 41% of Nepalis feel the country is headed in the right direction.

But most respondents had a very low opinion of politicians. More than 54% said they did not believe what political leaders said, and half did not trust the parties.

More than a quarter did not trust the Federal Parliament, and 26% were not satisfied with local governments. Most respondents were apathetic.

**CAN'T GET NO SATISFACTION**  
EDITORIAL  
PAGE 2

**FULL STORY** PAGE 14-15

% of households with at least one member working abroad.



**More routes opening to new trekking destinations**

PAGE 8-9

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GOING PLACES TOGETHER



# CAN'T GET NO SATISFACTION

On the face of it, when 41% of Nepalis in a public opinion poll say the country is headed in the right direction it could be taken as a decent level of approval of the government's performance. Indeed, the way the question is framed in the Nepali language gives broad leeway for interpretation: if we should be going north, any course bearing between 270 degrees to 90 degrees would mean we are more or less on the right track.

The question was part of a public opinion survey carried out by Kathmandu-based Sharecast Initiative in January among a statistically representative sample of 4,129 respondents in Nepal's 42 districts. The survey takes the pulse of the nation, showing the general mood of Nepalis two years after local governments took office, and a little over a year after the federal and provincial governments were formed. In all three tiers of government, it is mostly the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) that holds sway – only Province 2 and a handful of municipalities are with other parties.

As with Himalmedia polls in previous years, the results show that the Nepali people are alert and aware of what is going on – they also seem to be short-term pessimists and long-term optimists. Even if 41% of respondents felt the country was on the right course, a full 27.1% felt Nepal was headed in the wrong direction, and 22.6% were undecided (*see chart*).

One of the more positive outcomes of the survey was the response to a question on which facilities people have in their homes. The government's initiatives over the past four decades on safe drinking water, sanitation, rural electrification and infrastructure appear to be yielding results. Well over 90% of Nepalis now have access to electricity and latrines.

seem to think that Nepal is headed more or less in the right direction.

However, there is growing public dissatisfaction with governance: only 4.2% were happy with the functioning of the federal government, 35% were dissatisfied and nearly 61% said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The greatest discontent is in Province 3 and Far-Western Province. People in the centre and the periphery both give Kathmandu failing grades.

People do not seem to have faith in the federal Parliament either: more than a quarter of respondents said they did not trust the legislature, only 7% said they trust it, and 43% were ambivalent. Neither was there much approval of the performance of local governments: more than 26% were dissatisfied, and only 7% satisfied with the way provinces and municipalities were going about their business; 66% were apathetic.

The survey also proves just how important migration for work overseas has become for Nepalis. More than a quarter of respondents said they had a family member working abroad, with the highest percentages among Muslims and Hill Dalits, and in Far-Western Province. Tarai 'High Castes' in Province 2 and Tharu households had the fewest members abroad. Most of the money sent home by overseas workers goes into subsistence (food, clothing, children's education and medical treatment), and very little of it is invested in land, saved in banks or ploughed into productive sectors.

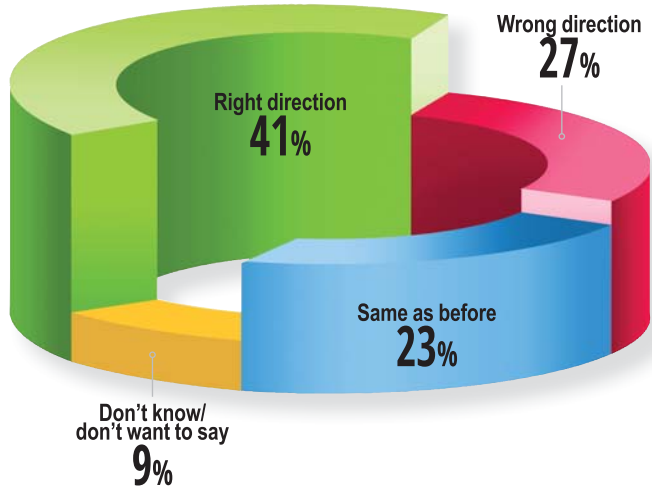
Opinion surveys are a way for a democratic country's rulers to gauge the public mood between elections. They should also be a wake-up call so course corrections can be made. They are a tool available to politicians, the bureaucracy and other agencies of the state to see if their actions fulfil the aspiration of citizens. Many of these checks and balances in a country are performed by democratic institutions and the mass media, but when the other sectors of the state (legislature, judiciary, executive, bureaucracy and the security agencies) are not functioning at an optimum, opinion surveys directly reflect the public's frame of mind.

It is clear from some of the results of the survey in this edition (*pages 1,14-15 and online*) that citizens' faith in government is faltering, that a large section of the public does not trust politicians and

that they are unhappy with the slow pace of development. Yet, they have not given up hope and hold out the expectation that things will get better. It is still not too late for the NCP government to go beyond slogans, deliver more than rhetoric, and walk the talk.

Nepalis seem to be short-term pessimists and long-term optimists.

## Which direction is the country headed?



Three-quarters live near a road, or use gas cylinders for cooking. Although the 74% with access to safe drinking water is still quite low, and only 5% of mountain dwellers live near a black-topped road, overall the country is making progress. Which may be why so many

## 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

It was 10 years ago this week that Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal had to resign over his sacking of Army Chief Rookmangud Katawal. A page 1 analysis in #450 of *Nepali Times* of 8-14 May had the following advice for him, which could still be valid 10 years later:

*'The resignation of Dahal over the sacking of the army chief presents us with another opportunity to get the peace process and Constitution drafting back on track. The row has gone beyond just civilian supremacy over the army, with the Shaktikhor Tape confirming a Maoist gameplan for total state capture. That strategy was to replace the army chief with a friendlier general.'*

*However much Dahal's party may try to explain away the tape, the fact is that he has admitted to deceiving the UN and everyone else on guerrilla numbers and about his commitment to the democratic process. Dahal has cloaked himself in a martyr complex with his resignation, but the international community and other parties are now going to take what he says with an even bigger pinch of salt.'*



## ONLINE PACKAGES



GOOD AS OLD

Join a field trip to Patan Darbar Square, where restoration architect Rohit Ranjitkar takes us on a tour of the Bhaidega Temple, which is being restored to its original pre-1934 form after it was destroyed in the earthquake 85 years ago. Story: *page 11*.



GERWIG & GONZÁLEZ

Christine Gerwig is from Germany and Efraín González Ruano is Mexican, and the two have been making music together for 10 years. The duo came to Nepal to teach budding musicians to use the electronic piano that they left behind. They are determined to return. Watch their video. Story: *page 7*.



### IMPACT

*Nepali Times* reportage in issue #950 (8-14 March 2019) on the plight of earthquake survivors who also belong to single women-headed households generated concern from readers. This week, Modern Indian School Class of 1992 handed over a cheque of Rs50,000 to Nani Maiju Prajapati of Sankhu. The class is also providing the same amount to Ishwori Bhandari and has proposed to pay tuition fees of Rs50,000 for the sons of Rupa Maharjan and Pampha Nepali.

### PRESS FREEDOM

Press freedom is essential in a democracy ('Long shadows', Sewa Bhattarai, #958). In the UK, the government is always under press scrutiny, as it should be, as it is using our taxpayer money to fund its policies. The different ministries are also criticised when they underperform. It's a part of a democracy.

Alan Roadnight

### LUMBINI

The first time I visited Lumbini was in February 1980 ('Lumbini is not a Buddhist Disneyland', Anil Chitrakar, #958). It was peaceful, quiet and deserted. I came back in 2017 and what I found was the setting up of a giant fun park where parcels of land had been allocated (or sold) to different nations to build their own temple, outdoing each other. The ultimate offense was hundreds of tourists running around following their guides, dragging loud speakers, being extremely loud and disrespectful of anyone else around. At least Disneyland is honest about its effort to entertain. Whoever runs the Lumbini show, needs to learn basic rules that visitors need to follow.

Alain Rouveure

## WHAT'S TRENDING



### Lumbini is not a Buddhist Disneyland

by Anil Chitrakar

A trip to Lumbini should be a life-changing experience influenced by the teachings of the Buddha. However, Lumbini today has turned into a Buddhist Disneyland. The author's sentiment resonated with many readers and the piece was shared widely on social media with calls for a moratorium on construction.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most visited online page

### Yeti was born in Nepal

by Ass

How could the Yeti not exist when we have honoured it by naming an airline, a yoghurt, a casino, a luxury hotel that is code-sharing with a Yak, a Škoda SUV, and a vacuum-insulated tumbler after it? This spoof on the Indian Army's 'discovery' of Yeti footprints was the most popular story last week on Twitter. Re-read it at nepalitimes.com.

Most popular on Twitter

### Long shadows

by Sewa Bhattarai

On paper, Nepal has some of the most progressive laws on press freedom. However, these have been superseded by potentially draconian provisions that could allow the state to deny media rights. Published on World Press Freedom Day, the report generated concern about press freedom and online surveillance by the state.

Most commented

## QUOTE TWEETS

**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes  
#POLL Are you worried about your online activities being restricted under the government's increasing surveillance?  
#WorldPressFreedomDay #Nepal

**Valar Morghulis™** @VaMorghulis  
In developed countries government surveillance is regulated and controlled, there is minimum chances of misuse by the government officials. In Nepal, everyone in power, including the party cadre, junior police officer and software vendor have access to the data and misusing it.

**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes  
Anita Tuladhar was a prolific writer who published four books in a short span of 12 years. But her 30-year silence as a writer seemed to have erased large chunks of Nepal's collective literary memory. @munagrg #literature #Nepal

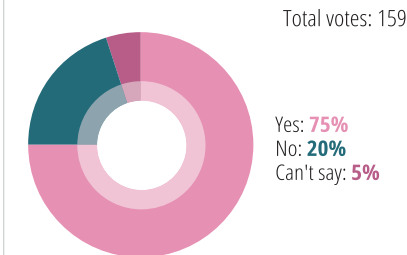
**Milan Raj Tuladhar** @Milanrtuladhar  
Great to hear interview of one of the best creative writers of Nepal. Thanks Nepali Times.

**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes  
Muslims across the country are celebrating #Ramadan, but they continue to be in the margins. Madrasa education needs to be improved to uplift Nepal's Muslim community. Full video + story: <http://bit.ly/Nepali-Muslims-on-the-margins-nt> ... @praktikandel8 reports from Nepalganj. #Nepal #education

**Adarsha Tuladhar** @Am49T  
Big question is: do they want any improvement? if so, what kind of improvement do they indeed want?

Weekly Internet Poll #959

Q. Are you worried about your online activities being restricted under increasing government surveillance?



Total votes: 159

Weekly Internet Poll #960  
To vote go to: [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)

Q. Is the government serious about creating jobs so that Nepalis no longer have to migrate?



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# Nepal and the Ncell arbitration

**Semanta Dahal**  
and **Vikas Mahendra**

The spate of investment treaty arbitrations that have inundated developing countries in recent times has now reached Nepal. At stake is a Rs39.06 billion tax imposed by the Large Taxpayers Office (LTO) on Ncell, following a decision of the Supreme Court.

Ncell contested the LTO assessment, saying it is liable to pay only Rs14.5 billion. It also obtained an interlocutory interim stay from the Supreme Court on these grounds.

The initiation of investment treaty arbitration by Axiata Investment UK Ltd (Axiata UK) through an intermediate special purpose vehicle not directly investing in Nepal, while challenging the same action before the Supreme Court of Nepal and bypassing other statutory remedies, raises questions as to the use of investment treaty arbitration and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).

Axiata UK filed a request for arbitration at the ICSID regarding the capital gains tax levied by Nepal's tax authorities on the indirect transfer to Axiata UK of an 80% stake in Ncell through the sale of Reynolds Holdings Limited, by the previous foreign investor, TeliaSonera Norway Nepal Holdings AS, to Axiata UK.

The arbitration was initiated on the basis of the 1993 bilateral investment treaty between the

governments of Nepal and the UK (UK-Nepal BIT). Ncell also initiated proceedings before the Supreme Court of Nepal challenging the CGT assessment.

In doing so, Ncell and its indirect shareholder Axiata UK have not availed statutory remedies otherwise available under Nepal's law. This presents the government with credible arguments to resist the investment treaty claims. First, it is doubtful Axiata UK's indirect acquisition of Ncell's shares qualifies as an 'investment' in the UK-Nepal BIT. Axiata UK's role in the transaction is limited to its



acquisition of Reynolds, which owns 80% of Ncell.


Moreover, Axiata UK is a wholly owned subsidiary of Malaysia-based Axiata Group Berhad. The Government of Nepal could argue that Axiata UK Ltd has no real interest in the transaction and is merely being used as a vehicle to bypass the jurisdictional hurdle of the UK-Nepal BIT.

It could be argued that Axiata UK is required to exhaust local remedies before resorting to arbitration under the UK-Nepal BIT. The ICSID Convention expressly

provides that if a dispute arises, parties may refer arbitration if they are unable to resolve it within three months 'through pursuit of local remedies or otherwise'.

By its decision on 6 February, the Supreme Court held that capital gains tax could be levied on the transaction. Thereafter, the CGT was computed by the assessing authority, and this was also challenged by Ncell via a writ petition on 21 April. Subsequently, Axiata UK submitted its request for arbitration on 26 April. The sequence of events shows that the decision to invoke arbitration made immediately pursuant to the calculation of CGT liability, instead of pursuing local remedies to challenge the assessment. The strategy appears to be motivated by the desire to avoid the requirement of depositing one-third of the disputed tax liability as a condition to challenge the assessment.

The government can now argue that the invocation of arbitration is against the letter and spirit of the UK-Nepal BIT and the ICSID Convention. Ncell's present challenge before the Supreme Court is limited to the amount of tax, so it has admitted to a portion of the liability.

The Government of Nepal can now consider all options available, including raising preliminary objections on jurisdiction under ICSID Arbitration Rules and the ICSID Convention. 

**Semanta Dahal** and **Vikas Mahendra**  
are lawyers and partners at Abhinawa Law  
Chambers (Nepal) and Keystone Partners  
(India).

## Istanbul Modern art

A special selection from the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art is now displayed in the Turkish Airlines Business Lounge at the new Istanbul Airport. The art work includes



examples that represent four main genres of Turkey's modern art, ranging from early 20th-century landscapes to abstracts created by artists fusing eastern and western styles during the 1950s.

## Qatar Premium

Qatar Airways offered First and Business Class passengers an upgraded premium experience 'like never before' from 30 April to 6 May 2019. Customers were provided



premium check-in desks, a generous baggage allowance, lounges and Qatar Airways' new Qsuite concept on board. The multiple-award-winning airline will add a number of new destinations to its route network in 2019.

## UNICEF Representative

UNICEF welcomed Elke Wisch as its new representative for Nepal, succeeding Tomoo Hozumi. A German national, Wisch has been with UNICEF for over 23 years and joined the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia in Kathmandu in August last year until taking up her new post.

## Hyundai Winners

The winners of the bumper prizes in the Hyundai Festive Delight 2075 are Bhawana KC, who took home a Hyundai i20 Active, and Badri Kumar Khadka, who received a Hyundai Creta. Other winners took home cash and 10g of gold in the annual offer, announced live on Himalaya tv on 5 May.



The airline acquired the planes from Nok Air of Thailand, and will now be phasing out its BAe Jetstream 41s to save fuel and reduce its carbon footprint.



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# The genesis of elephant polo in Chitwan

Pachyderm polo was Nepal's star sporting event until it succumbed to the tide of public opinion in 2016

“Get up, get up, get up!” Raj’s clipped staccato shout echoes across the polo field. My teenage son lay sprawled on the cropped green grass, his glossy chestnut skittering to a halt with the stirrups flying and reins dangling.



**SO FAR SO GOOD**  
Lisa Choegyal

“Get up, Rinchen!” Col Raj Kalaan slapped his brown boots with a riding crop as he strode towards the winded boy struggling to his feet. “Pick up your polo stick, back onto the pony, grip with your knees and swing your arm.”

We are at the Kalaan farm on the outskirts of Delhi. Myna birds fidget in the trees, the polo lesson progresses, and I continue to chat with Sunny the family matriarch amidst her buzzing flowerbeds and tinkling teacups in the soporific Haryana afternoon. My boys learned their subtle stick and ball skills from Raj, and aspired to the dashing expertise of his sons Angad and Uday, professional players who together comprised half the Indian national polo team. But Sangjay and Rinchen were far from that league, more comfortable with elephants than horses.

Col Raj’s silver hair, neat moustache and military bearing with the sari-ed Sunny at his side were a familiar sight at both pony and elephant polo matches around the region, especially in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. But there was none of the taint of privilege or elitism about the Kalaans — Sunny’s mischievous smile was all embracing and Raj shared his passion for the game with all comers, generous with his knowledge and patiently enduring



the teasing imitations of his archetypal clipped army accent.

“Raj could always be counted on for some pitch-side advice whether you wanted it or not, and he was always right,” remembers master-hotelier Jason Friedman, one

of many fans of the consummate coach. “On or off the pitch Raj was the supreme gentleman sportsman, trainer, friend, mentor and drinking buddy. He taught me the finer points of polo and made me a better player and person because of it.”



Raj (above) was a key figure at the annual world elephant polo championships, played on a makeshift polo ground adjacent to Chitwan’s Meghauli airstrip. In adapting the game from the speed and agility of horses to the lumbering gait of elephants, the pitch was shrunk, polo sticks were lengthened and only two *chukkas* were played of ten minutes each, switching mounts at half time to neutralise the ‘elephant advantage’.

Metal spikes (*ankus*) were banned, and pith helmets were mandatory in an effort to mitigate accidents. At the annual pre-match meeting around a blazing fireplace with whisky tumbler in hand, Raj could be relied on to slow down proceedings pedantically to review the rules, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of elephants and riders.

Four elephants with a driver and player roped onto the *gaddi* (padded saddle) comprised each team, and the ball used was the same as regular polo — the footballs first tried burst when stamped on. The field was festively lined with banners, team tents, commentary stands, pop-up shops, local musicians and hundreds of villagers gathered from far and wide to enjoy the spectacle.

Clad in white jodhpurs, riding boots and team shirts, the over-excited braying participants competed for barmy team names (Rusty Kukris, Pukka Chukkas, Tickle & the Ivories,

Afghaniphants), clutching bloody marys between chukkas and comparing blisters. Distracted by off-pitch party pranks, the point of elephant polo is to take it seriously or not, in careful measure, and beware to those who underestimate the complexity of pachyderm skill and strategy.

The novel idea was first revived by Jim Edwards on the back of a bar mat in St Moritz with bobsleigh champion and Scottish landowner James Manclark, between Cresta toboggan runs, inspired by a cartoon of the invincible Jaipur polo team that still hangs in the Rambagh Palace Hotel.

“I have the elephants,” cabled Jim in 1982, “you show us how to play polo on them.” From the start my task was organising this batty idea, and making it a success. In time, we attracted scores of high-profile sponsors, flash players and media attention; extra tents accommodated the overflow, and Lodge staff came to dread the extra work and long hours.

My career on the *gaddi* was undistinguished (though I did make the Tigress’ team for a few years) but with their affinity for both mounts and mahouts, my sons went on to take all the glory. Sangjay (pictured, left) was three times world champion and twice became most valuable player. “Elephant polo’s answer to Lionel Messi!” I overheard one awed sponsor describe him.

National Parks were the team to beat, and Chitwan government elephants used to supplement Tiger Tops’ stable, all subject to the same strict rules to safeguard the highest standards of treatment and care. WWF experts certified our *hatisar* as a model of best practice, ‘exemplary in Nepal and most responsible in South Asia’, with each animal employing three local keepers, mainly Tharus, Kumals and Botes.

Conceived to raise funds for elephant conservation and wildlife research, and to fill a quiet shoulder season, WEPA ran for 35 annual championships (challenging Miss Nepal as the country’s longest running event) before succumbing to the tide of public opinion. Nepal’s last elephant polo championship was played in 2016.

In 1996, Col Raj Kalaan was instrumental in reintroducing polo to its historic roots in Mongolia, with Jim Edwards at Christopher and Enkhe Giercke’s riding camp high above the silver ribbon of the Orkhon River. In the harsh clear light of Mongolia, the azure skies and grassland horizons stretched limitless as sturdy native ponies galloped towards the goal posts in a bevy of waving sticks, excited shouting and flying *dels*, the evocative Mongol robes.

The descendants of Genghis Khan are more at home in the stirrups than on their feet, and took to polo with panache as flying hooves kicked up the summer dust. Released during the harsh winter months to fend for themselves, the Mongol horses are rounded up and retrained yearly after the snowmelt.

Raj and Sunny arrived every July to embed the spirit of fair play into the herdsmen of the high steppes, and to mentor the Mongols on the finer points of polo: “No hooking above pony height!” Mongolia now fields a team to international tournaments. The Giercke pitch is marked by a prehistoric stone pillar that casts a long afternoon shadow.

But not longer than the memory of Col RKS Kalaan, the epitome of polo, whose benign shadow lingers wherever polo is played throughout South Asia and beyond. ■

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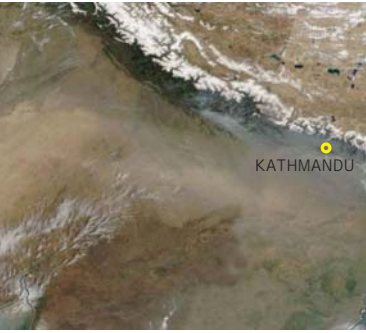
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Summer is here in force. From Friday into the weekend the maximum temperature in Kathmandu Valley will climb to 30C for the first time this year, while the minimum will be 17. These figures look unusual only because we have had such a cool first half of the year, but they are actually much closer to the average. However, there is a low pressure system approaching from the west, with moisture, which means localised thunderstorms along the mountains early next week. This will cool the air somewhat, but humidity will go up.

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## Tune in and turn up support for education, say visiting classical musicians

Marty Logan

The original dream of Gerwig & González was to bring a grand piano from Germany, and fly it around Nepal from one school performance to another using a military helicopter. That idea was not very practical, so they settled on an electronic keyboard to leave behind in Nepal after their visit.

For the classical musicians from Germany and their two children, the experience does not sound at all like a failure — they were already making new plans for inspiring the growth of music in Nepal before flying home after a busy 15 days with the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory (KJC) last month.

Sitting on a couch during a rare break in their schedule, Efraín González describes visiting a school outside the Valley where one of the teachers sat at the keyboard and played the Nepal national anthem with one hand. That sparked the idea to train at least one teacher in every school in Nepal to be able to perform the anthem daily on a simple keyboard.

“Why not? Why shouldn’t we dream big?” González asks with the passion that obviously drove this latest musical mission to Nepal.

The pair, based in Germany, say they were impressed by the talent and potential of the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory (KJC), but disappointed that the school does not have more resources for instruments and teachers. There are only three grand pianos in Kathmandu, and a city this size could do with more.

“There are millions of dollars for playing football and for running elections, there are billionaires who have way too much, and yet we have to work so hard to get just a little money for music education,” said González.

Christine Gerwig, from Germany, and Efraín González Ruano, Mexico, (right) have been making music together for 10 years. The duo perform in concert halls and festivals throughout the



PHOTOS: EFRAÍN GONZÁLEZ

## A gift of music to Nepali children



world, and also regularly conduct workshops for children in schools in Germany and Mexico.

The family worked hard raising money for the trip to Nepal, which Gonzalez had been dreaming about

for years. Crowdfunding raised enough cash to cover costs for the parents and Alejandro, 11, a pianist, and daughter Valeria, 9, who plays both violin and piano. It also enabled them to donate the

electronic piano. Donations came from friends and friends of friends worldwide, including a supporter in India who paid for two air tickets.

The concert that the family performed at KJC as part of the Katjazz International Festival this month was the first time the four shared the stage – including a piano duet for four hands by the parents -- although both children are experienced performers, and have been playing since age 3.

“We were very humbled to host the Gerwig & González at our annual Katjazz Festival,” says KJC’s Abhisek Bhadra. “We are primarily a contemporary music school but we have actively started to promote western classical music education from this year. We hope to host more musicians and educators as they play a crucial role in realising competent and holistic music education in Nepal.”

Besides visiting two schools, Gerwig & González also held a master class and teaching workshops at KJC. Gerwig remembers one young musician in particular: “He wasn’t a KJC student but he was very good. He said he had taken lessons only for one

year and after that he kept learning on his own, because his parents disapproved of him becoming a musician.”

Her message: “If someone finds their passion in music, if it’s really in their heart, then that is what they should do, even if it is difficult to make a living.”

The two say they would love to return to Nepal to continue working with KJC if support can be found. Meanwhile, they hope to continue working with young musicians here via video-link from Germany. 🇩🇪



A keyboard brought from Germany by classical music duo Gerwig & González was a big hit at schools they visited around Kathmandu. The musicians also carried a message: it’s time to invest in music education in Nepal.

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# DAZZLING DOLPO



The unprecedented blizzards this year in Dolpo and other trans-Himalayan districts have affected spring-season trekking. Most high passes in Dolpo, and between Dolpo and Mustang, are still blocked by heavy snow, with many trekkers turning back or taking longer alternative routes.

With better road and air access, Dolpo has seen a spike in trekkers, with Shey Phoksundo National Park registering 514 visitors this past year. And with motorable roads opened on popular trekking routes, visitors are venturing further afield.

“Most trails in Upper Dolpo are still closed because the high passes got heavy snow, and even local villagers have not returned to their villages in Saldang,” says trekking guide Norbu Lama, who adds that two Czech trekkers could not even cross Baga La (5,170m) recently because of snow. “I am taking one group this month, but worried about which route to take since almost of the passes are closed.”

There is a risk of avalanches, and melting snow has made rivers rise to levels usually seen only in July-August. Says Tashi Lama in Ringmo: “Right now all the passes are snowed in, but with the temperature going up, we expect them to reopen soon.” That will coincide with the yarsa picking season.

Trekking routes to Upper Dolpo all have to cross numerous passes above 5000m, like Shey La (5,010m), Kanga La (5,360m), Baga La (5,310m) Numa La (5,310m) or Ghami Pass (5,310m) (*see map*). Kanga La is the most trodden route, but this season has been blanketed by heavy snow.

For those who do not want to cancel plans, there are alternative paths. Or it may also be worthwhile just trekking up to the stunningly beautiful Phoksundo Lake (*right*) to explore the surrounding mountains.

For adventurers who still want to trek up to Saldang and Bijer, there is also the route via Dho, Shiman, Tinge and, thanks to rising temperatures, Choi La and Sagar passes are now open.

The new road up to Triveni to the south and the upgraded airfield in Jufal means there are now more Nepali and foreign visitors here. Ringmo has eight new guest houses, and there is a lot of anticipation ahead of the Dolpo Festival in the Dho Tarap Valley, 10-14 September.

“In these past months, the number of tourists was fewer than last year because of the weather, but the flights have resumed and they are full both ways, says Dilip Karki of Tara Air in Nepalganj, the takeoff point for trekkers to Dolpo. 🇳🇵

**Sonam Choekyi Lama** in Dolpo  
Photographs by **Bharat Bandhu Thapa**



The other-worldly beauty of Phoksundo Lake at 3,660m.



Ringmo children out to welcome visitors.



Dolpo is getting into the mood for the Dho Tara

## Nepal's Grand Trek Ro

As new roads crisscross the mountains and valleys of the Himalaya, Nepal's most famous attraction – trekking – is unfortunately being sullied. When asked what facility they want most from the government, villagers living in remote districts unanimously respond: a road. It is therefore a given that the roads will be there, we just have to make sure that they are built with care so they are safe and do not damage the fragile slopes.

A recent survey (*page 14-15*) has shown that three-quarters of Nepal's population now has access to at least a dirt road, and a quarter live near a black-topped highway. What this means is that while established trekking trails like the Annapurna Circuit or the Mustang Trek may have the familiar roadside noise and dust, better access also makes it feasible to discover remoter side valleys.



RAJENDRA LAMA

For example, after driving to Chame, more trekkers can now visit Nar, Phu and do the Seven Pass Trek from Manang to Mustang. When the Budi Gandaki road reaches Philim, it will make the Tsum Valley and Manaslu more accessible.

Roads will also make it easier for tourists looking for adventure in Nepal who do not have the four months necessary to do The Great Himalayan Trail at one go, to take it in instalments. You can now drive up to four days below Kangchenjunga base camp, trek for two weeks, and ride/fly out of Tumlingtar, then return the next season to do the next segment.

Despite all the road-building, there are plenty of pristine valleys, high passes and remote villages in the Himalaya where we can still go to experience the 'Old Nepal': Nyingma Gyansen La between Mugu and Dolpo, or Kang La in Manang (*left*) where you feel like you can venture no further on this Earth, or Tashi Labtsa Pass, from where





Spring has arrived along the Phoksundo River, but high passes are still snowbound.



Mt Dhaulagiri looms over Central Nepal on the flight from Nepalganj to Jufal airfield.



Up Festival in September.

# oad

you can peer down at the layers and layers of mountains and contemplate infinity.

The perfect guidebook for a cross-Himalayan trek is just out in its second updated edition. Robin Boustead’s *The Great Himalayan Trail: A Pictorial Guide* has more recent photographs, excellent new maps from Himalayan Map House (*the GHT passing through Dolpo, above*) and lots of tips and information for both the first-time Great Himalayaner, or a return trekker doing it in chapters.

Trekking in Nepal has never been just about the scenery. It is also about the people and travelling along the traditional caravan routes, the rural trading trails or herders taking mountain goats to *goths* in the monsoon. It is along these trails that Nepalis and tourists visiting the country have formed a bond that goes back decades.

As Peter Hillary said at the launch of the second edition of Boustead’s book recently in Kathmandu: “I have a love affair with

Nepal because there is nowhere else with this scenery. But much more than that, it is also the people — Nepalis are the most open-hearted people in the world.”

And what better way to meet Nepalis face-to-face than on the up and down paths, through villages and forests, across yak pastures and passing smiling faces on trail bridges.

‘Although the mountains are beyond compare, it is the people you meet along the trail that linger in your memory... their indefatigable boldness and energy, their independence, strength and resilience when times are bad ... it is impossible to make a comparison but surely the people of the high Himal are the best of mankind?’ Boustead writes in his Introduction.

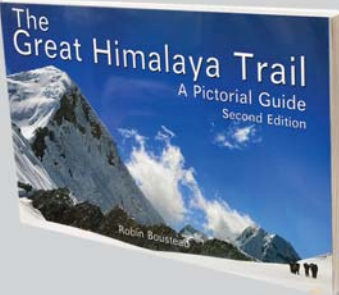
After leafing through this book, and admiring the foldout panorama of the



Hongu Basin from the West Col, there will be very few who will not want to pack their gear and head off to do at least one part of The Great Himalayan Trail.

As the book makes clear, the GHT is not just for mountaineers — any fit person with basic climbing skills can do it. Traversing Nepal along The Great Himalayan Trail is the last great adventure left in the world today. 🇳🇵

**Kunda Dixit**



*The Great Himalayan Trail  
A Pictorial Guide  
(Second Edition)  
by Robin Boustead  
Himalayan Map House, 2019  
176 pages, Rs3,000*



EVENTS



Trishul

An exhibition of oil paintings by Pragendra SJB Rana featuring the “Trishul”, an ancient relic known to Hindus as the thrice powerful weapon. Enjoy the evening, along with cheese and wine.  
10-20 May, 5-8pm, Kathmandu Art, Le Sherpa, 9851177901

Aama

Solo exhibition by Sandhya Silwal showcases artwork praising her mother for her patience, strength and energy.  
7 May-5 June, 5-8pm, Dalai-la Art Space, Thamel (01) 4701436

Nude Carpet

A single-object exhibition, ‘Object in Focus’ Series - 2 features visual artist Kapil Mani Dixit exhibiting his work done in a used carpet. The exhibition showcases an object, artists and one big idea.  
12-21 May, 10-5pm, The Taragaon Museum, Boudha (01) 6201035



Yoga and Hike

Hike and meditate on the hills of Champadevi to find peace, freedom and full awareness of your body, mind and soul. Experience the guided journey with foot on ground and mind on mind. Call to book your space.  
11 May, 8am (departure from Sooriya Wellness and Yoga centre, Lazimpat), Champadevi (venue) Rs1,500, (01) 4001714, (01) 4001719, 9818481972

The Missing Souls

This exhibition by Muna Bhadel is a nostalgic look back at the Dapcha Bazaar that the artist knew as a child.  
12-21 May, 10-5pm, Taragaon Museum, Boudha (01) 6201035



The Park Bazaar

Celebrate Mother's Day at Astrek Park, with your little ones. Enjoy various fun activities, indulge yourself in wonderful local stalls, mouth-watering food and super healthy juices, or simply sit back and sip a glass of wine.  
12 May, 10am onwards, Astrek Park, Thamel

Military to Market

Political ethnographer Amanda Chisholm will discuss how security work is constructed and valued, through a detailed account of the people who work as security contractors.  
15 May, 5.30pm, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka (01) 4472807, 4480091



Poetry Night

Join this poetry and storytelling night, where you will hear from the brave ones who dare to recite their stories.  
10 May, 6-9pm, Tales from Palpasa, Thamel (01) 4266886

Lost in Transition

Siddhartha Art Gallery presents Lost in Transition, an exhibition of Mann Gurung's paintings and drawings. Gurung is the recipient of the Himalayan Light Art Award.  
10-23 May, 11-5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited (01) 4218048  
Review: Page 12

MUSIC



Kanta Dab Dab

Kanta Dab Dab introduces you to contemporary Nepali music where western meets ethnic, traditional and classical. The soulful music of this band cannot be missed.  
11 May, 8-11:45pm, Shisha Lounge & Bar, Thamel (01) 4701104

Jam-up Session

Jam-up with other musicians in Bikalpa Arts Cafe & Bar. Not an open mic but you can shoot a message to their Facebook page if you want to play.  
11 May, 6:30-10pm, Bikalpa Arts Cafe & Bar, Pulchok, 9851147776

Funky Afternoon

Enjoy funky music? Swing by Funky Afternoon at The Yard, featuring the band What The Funk, dedicated to the funk genre of music.  
11 May, 3pm onwards, Rs300, Sanepa (01) 5532965



The Soul Nepal

Indulge in melodic songs by The Soul Nepal to delight your evening. End your busy week on a high note with good food, drinks and music.  
10 May, 7-10pm, Fiesta Lounge & Restaurant, Thamel, 9818552009

Jazz & Funk

One By Three But Whole plays jazz, funk and blues tunes. Listening to the trio will be an amazing experience.  
11 May, 7-11pm, The Bar Bar Black Sip, Thamel, 9803859320

DINING



Bayleaf

Drop by this garden restaurant for multi-cuisine food. Serving special Burmese dishes like Burmese Tofu Thoke, Khao Swe Thoke (noodle salad), Mohinga (fish noodle soup) and other signature pork dishes.  
Tangal, opposite Attic Bar (01) 4437490

Garden Terrace

Taste from a wide selection of international cuisine including Nepali, Indian, Continental, Oriental, Japanese and Italian. Relish delicacies from the hotel's lavish buffet spread or order a la carte dishes from the elaborate menu while you gaze at the picturesque landscape.  
6:30am-10:45pm, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal (01) 4273999 ext 6560



The Bent Fork

This European style restaurant offers the best salads and varieties of continental dishes. Try their signature Grilled Chicken Burger or Beef Burger. Enjoy cosy evenings with family and friends.  
Bishal Nagar, 9802049888

The BLVD

The newly renovated restaurant at Hotel Royal Singi serves healthy and flavourful gluten-free meals. Try Quinoa Tabbouleh served with grilled skewers of paneer, mushroom, tomato, pepper and onion. Enjoy a meal with your family and friends.  
Lal Durbar, Kamaladi (01) 4424190/ 4424191



Embers

A large, cosy place serving a variety of cuisines. The traditional, marinated boneless chicken kebab served with vegetables, rice and chutney is delicious.  
Krishna Galli, Pulchok (01) 5555306

GETAWAY



Hotel Heritage Bhaktapur

A Newari-style boutique hotel influenced by the rich art and architecture of the ancient city of Bhaktapur. The culture starts and ends at the gate of the hotel.  
Suryabinayak, Bhaktapur (01) 6611628

Buddha Maya Garden Hotel

Wake to the sounds of birds, relax in the beautiful garden and take a 5-minute walk to reach the Maya Devi Temple. Enjoy the peaceful atmosphere with comfortable rooms.  
Lumbini, (71) 580219/220, 9801033114



Hotel Annapurna View

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



Hotel Yukhang

This new hotel is a combination of Newari & Tibetan architecture, built with Dachhi appa bricks from the Malla era, and including Bhaktapur's wooden crafts to add a royal and medieval touch to your stay.  
Thamel (01) 4267358

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Chitwan National Park, 9851218500



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OUR PICK

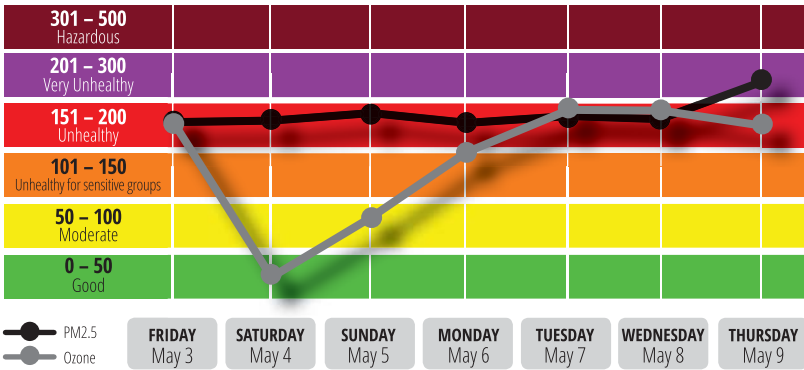


Opened in Kathmandu on 10 May

This teenage romantic comedy features current heartthrob Tiger Shroff and introduces two hyped newcomers, Ananya Pandey and Tara Sutaria. Teenage excitement, rivalries, dances, fashion, sports — the movie has it all. The first edition of the film, in 2012, introduced three newcomers, of whom Alia Bhatt and Varun Dhawan went on to become Bollywood stars. So all eyes are on the newcomers in this edition, directed by Punit Malhotra.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 3 - 9 May



The daily average of the Air Quality Index in Kathmandu was persistently in the red Unhealthy zone all of last week. This week, it has jumped to the Very Unhealthy purple zone. In addition to vehicle emissions within Kathmandu Valley, the air quality of late has deteriorated because of two seasonal phenomena: wind-blown dust from the Thar that is common this time of year, as well as a spurt in brush fires across the Tarai and the mid-mountain regions, which have added dust and ash to the Valley air. To make you feel worse, toxic ozone gas has hit a new high with the longer duration of direct sunlight.  
<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>



# Good as old after two earthquakes

Patan's historic temple is not just being rebuilt, but restored to its pre-1934 look

Kabita Maharjan

When an 8.3 magnitude earthquake struck Kathmandu Valley on 15 January 1934, killing more than 10,000 people, among the destroyed structures was the 17th-century Bhaidega temple in Patan. The three-tier pagoda temple was quickly rebuilt, but in the Moghul stucco dome style.

Eighty-one years later, the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT), with support from the Norwegian Embassy, had just started restoring Bhaidega in its original tri-pyramid design when the 25 April 2015 earthquake hit. Four temples nearby went down.

Reconstruction of temples that were destroyed in both 1934 and 2015 are now simultaneously nearing completion in Patan, drawing attention to how damage from the two earthquakes often overlap in Kathmandu Valley.

"There was so much destruction here in 1934 that many of temples were quickly rebuilt in the Moghul style, but finally Bhaidega is being restored to its original glory," says Rohit Ranjitkar of KVPT.

Architecture is much more than the sum of its structural elements, and nowhere is this more true than in Kathmandu Valley's historic monuments. The structures go well beyond physical materials like wood, stone and bricks, and include intangibles that give them inter-generational continuity. After 2015 devotees continued to worship their gods amidst the ruins of destroyed temples.

Located at the western edge of Patan Square, the three-storey Bhaidega was supported by exquisitely carved wooden struts and capped by a golden pinnacle. After 1934, Nepal's Rana rulers rebuilt it to less than half its size using the cut-and-paste Moghul dome design like other damaged structures in the Valley.

Luckily, many carved eaves, columns and stone carvings at the base were preserved, and have featured in Bhaidega restoration. Nearly 20 artisans from Bhaktapur and Patan are hard at work at the site re-carving the missing pieces.

The temple is named after its creator, Bhagirath Bhaiya, a



HRUJATA DAHAL



**OLD IS GOLD:** Artisans busy rebuilding Patan's Bhaidega temple to its original design (top).

Photograph of the old Patan courthouse with the pre-1934 Bhaidega (above, left).

The same view with Bhaidega rebuilt in the Moghul stucco dome style. (above, right)

Drawing of what Bhaidega will look like when restoration is complete next year (left).



commoner who rose to prominence in Patan and built the structure in 1687, dedicating it to the Bishwanath form of Lord Shiva. It is the only temple in Darbar Square not commissioned by a king.

"It was a travesty that such an important monument was not rebuilt in its original design after 1934," says Ranjitkar.

Fortunately, there were some grainy black-and-white photographs

taken before 1934 as well as meticulous sketches by Henry Ambrose Oldfield, a surgeon at the British Residency in Lazimpat in the 1850s, which showed the original form of the temple.

"Without Oldfield's drawings, we might not have known what the original looked like or that it had been altered," explains Ranjitkar.

Based on these early records, restoration work began in January 2015 with



a ritual *Chhyama Puja* performed by *tantrik* priests. But within three months, the 7.8 magnitude quake struck, destroying many of the temples that had survived 1934. The priority shifted to rebuilding the other Patan temples and work on Bhaidega was delayed.

KVPT has tried to salvage as much of the original material as possible for the reconstruction, but for new wooden columns and struts the right kind of timber was needed and artisans with carving skills had to be located.

Earthquakes have actually helped keep the ancient craftsmanship of Kathmandu alive because of the need to rebuild temples and monuments. However, Ranjitkar is worried that the traditional skills required are disappearing and it will be difficult to find expertise in future.

Reconstruction of

Bhaidega is expected to be completed by November 2020, with support from Lalitpur Municipality and Prithvi B Pande of Nepal Investment Bank. KVPT is also involved in rebuilding nearby Char Narayan, Hari Shankar and Krishna Mandir temples and other monuments like Mul Chok and Sundari Chok.

KVPT believes in transparency in its projects – quite literally. The artisans crafting pieces for Bhaidega work behind a see-through plastic fence so passersby can observe the skill and devotion needed to build these ancient temples. There are other structures in Patan Darbar Square that were also rebuilt after 1934 with stucco domes and need to be rebuilt in the original *shikhara* or pagoda styles. The Mangal Bazar police station itself is where a large *shikhara* temple once stood.

Says Ranjitkar: "Our immediate focus was on Bhaidega as there were sketches and photographs of the original structures. Earthquakes happen once in a generation, and what matters is how we rebuild after each. If we fail to maintain our tangible heritage, we will weaken our intangible heritage." 🇳🇵

## GOOD AS OLD



Join a field trip to Patan Darbar Square, where restoration architect Rohit Ranjitkar takes us on a tour of the Bhaidega Temple, which is being restored to its original pre-1934 form after it was destroyed in the earthquake.

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

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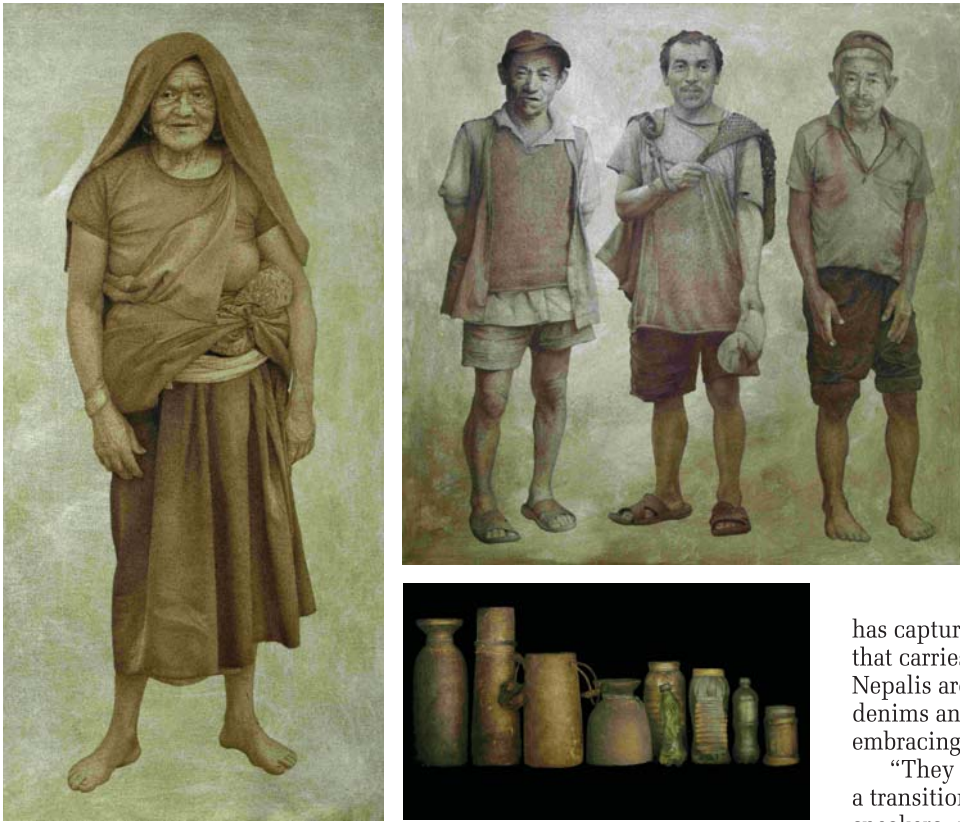
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# Lost in Transition

Though the medium is oil on canvas, Mann Gurung employs only sepia tones in his paintings, evoking the era of old photographs. Indeed, his artwork harks back to an older, more innocent time in Nepal. The women still wear the *fariya choli*, and the men are in *patuki* and *dhaka topi*. Gurung's second solo exhibition, *Lost in Transition*, opened at Siddhartha Art Gallery in Baber Mahal Revisited on Thursday, and will run till 9 June. Though most of the works are oil paintings, there are also graphite and ink drawings. They differ from his previous solo

exhibition *Power, Politics and War*, which was predictably focused on politics. This time around, the emphasis is on a visual depiction of social change. Gurung has captured women who collected milk in wooden *theki*, and have now turned to plastic Coke bottles. Though they cling to traditional dresses, they cannot help wearing Crocs on their feet. He has captured the *dhyangro* hand drum, an important instrument in his community that seems torn and neglected, and an old record player that looks like it hasn't been used in a while.

These portraits are from Khorla, a mountain village in Gurung's home district of Gorkha. Collectively, the impression is of a bygone era: of a place caught in transition as traditional values are fast being replaced by modern ideas. Gurung's paintings capture the reality of most of Nepal today. With the youth migrating out, the elderly and women are left to fend for themselves. It is an uphill battle to cling to their traditional lifestyles.

Gurung believes he has captured the last of a generation that carries our identity, as younger Nepalis are 'already fitted out in denims and pride themselves for embracing western culture'. "They have already made a transition from *madal* to box speakers, *rodhi* to mp3 players, hand sewn bags to polythene ones, handmade garments to imported polyester, bamboo baskets to zebra bags, and from *sanduk* to flatscreen TVs. We will soon lose the older generation, erasing hundreds of years of our identity, tradition and culture," laments Gurung. His paintings force us to ponder identity, how we can hold on it, and whether it is even possible. The paintings are a testament to a lost time, and present Gurung's concern for his own heritage, which he seems powerless to conserve. But at least he has preserved and documented a part of his culture in his art.

*Lost in Transition*  
Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited  
Until 9 June



**UNCHARTERED WATERS:** Chairperson of Federal Socialist Forum Nepal Upendra Yadav and coordinator of Naya Shakti Baburam Bhattarai form a new party Socialist Party of Nepal with unification of their former parties on Monday.



**ON STREET FOR THE STREET:** Local people and businessmen in Baudha block the streets on Thursday to protest the delay in blacktopping of the road near the heritage site.



**FOOD-VAGANZA:** Indian ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri lights a lamp to open a South Indian food extravaganza at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Friday.



**HOMECOMING:** FC Zurich and Swiss National team's Malin Gut with the players of the Mahila Premier League during a workshop in Kathmandu last week. The 19-year-old Swiss footballer was in Nepal to explore her grandmother's heritage.

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# Women of substance

## RANJANA BISWOKARMA LAWYER

Few of Ranjana Bishwokarma's friends in Mahottari have passed Grade 10, and most were married young, which makes her journey to be a lawyer in the Patan High Court all the more extraordinary. She was determined to support her family and completed her masters in law and a postgraduate degree in management.

"I could accomplish all this because of my parents and my hard work," says Ranjana, whose father and mother are now rightfully proud of her. Ranjana herself feels she is now in a position to legally do battle for justice and against discrimination based on gender, caste and religion. "I want to serve society through my legal skills," she says.



## SULOCHANA POUDEL ARMY MAJOR

When the Nepal Army opened its doors to women as officer cadets 14 years ago, then college student Sulochana Poudel of Thimi immediately joined. She was always fascinated by army parades at the nearby Gothatar barracks, and had wanted to become a soldier for as long as she remembers. Today, thanks to hard work and determination, Sulochana is now an army major.

She is the first woman to take the Nepal Army's Command and Staff course, and a road has now opened for her to become a brigadier general. If she is able to participate in the National Defence Course, she could even compete to become the first female chief of the Nepal Army.

"I grew up in a traditional environment. Some didn't get the opportunity to study like me and some got better education than me. But Nepali society is changing for women and that is what is most important. We have still have a lot more to do, but we have also achieved a lot."



## SABITRA BHANDARI FOOTBALLER

Having scored 29 international goals for Nepal's national foot team, 'Samba' has not only established herself as a ferocious striker, but has also become an inspiration for other Nepali young women.

Now 23, Sabitra grew up working in the fields of Pamchok village in Lamjung. The second of four sisters, she did not wear kurtas or saris and was a bit of a 'tom boy' with short hair and blonde highlights, which earned her the nickname 'Samba' after the Brazilian dance.

Sabitra wore football boots for the first time for a women's match in a neighbouring village. But her career kicked off when she was invited to play for the APF Club in kathmandu.

As she prepared to leave for the city, she was told that girls should not take such a journey alone. But Sabitra ignored that advice and snide comments from her neighbours.

Today she is able to help her father pay the tuition fees of her sisters and brothers at home, a football field is being built in her village in Lamjung, and the neighbours who dissuaded her now welcome Sabitra with pride, saying, "Take other young girls from the village to play football with you."



## MAYA GURUNG MOUNTAINEER

When Maya Gurung was a child in Sindhupalchok, she used to gaze out at the Gyalzen Peak of the Jugal Himal Range and dream one day of setting foot on its icy summit. But her parents wanted her to get married and have children.

At age 14, her parents fixed her wedding to a person she had never met. One day before the ceremony, the seventh grader ran away from home. Two days later, police found Maya and brought her home, but her father refused to let her enter the house because of the shame she had brought on the family.

In 2008, Maya became part of the First Inclusive Women Sagarmatha Expedition and reached the top of Mt Everest, the first woman from the Gurung community to do so. Her village organised a program to honour Maya, and invited her father. With tears in his eyes, Maya's father admitted that he had not known that of his daughter's determination and interest. He asked for forgiveness, and Maya hugged him tearfully.

Today, Maya helps trafficked girls from her district who have been rescued to become trekking guides. For that work the Nepal Government honoured her with the 'Prabal Jana Sewa Sri Padak' award.

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# Survey is wakeup call for



Public opinion poll shows the people’s trust in government is falling sharply

Analysis by  
**Rameshwar Bohara**

There was great hope among Nepalis that the first local government elections in two decades, in 2017, would finally improve accountability and help raise living standards, but a recent public opinion poll shows that their optimism has faded.

Two years after the local governments were formed and a year after provincial and federal governments took office, most Nepalis say they are disillusioned with their elected representatives in all three tiers of government.

There is a yawning chasm between slogans and performance. The Nepal Communist Party (NCP)

government that promised ‘Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepalis’ and ‘Zero Tolerance of Corruption’ is seen to not be walking its talk. Public disdain for politicians and their parties has never been greater.

There appears to be a correlation between widespread media coverage of the executive, legislature and judiciary being under the control of vested interest groups and the public’s negative perception. For example, when asked if they trusted President Bidya Devi Bhandari’s office, only 7.8% said yes while 14.6% said they did not trust it at all. This is likely due to press coverage of profligacy of her office, and frequent traffic snarls caused by presidential motorcades.

The survey results, carried

out by Sharecast Initiative Nepal among a sample size of 4,129 respondents in 42 districts, reveal that disillusionment is greatest in areas and among groups with greater access to the mainstream press and social media.

While most of the results indicate growing public dissatisfaction with the government, 41% agreed that the country was headed in the right direction, while 27% felt it was going the wrong way. This is a slight decline compared to last year’s Sharecast survey, when 43% of respondents felt the country was on the right track.

This result corresponds with findings of A Survey of the Nepali People, carried out by Inter Disciplinary Analysts and Kathmandu University among a much larger sample size (7,056)

in 73 districts in 2018. That poll showed that overall 51% of the people felt the country was headed the right way.

Responses to the question broken down by province are identical in the Sharecast and KU/IDA surveys even though they were taken a year apart.

The highest percentage of those who think the country is headed in the wrong direction is in Province 3 (34%), while 56% of respondents in Far-Western Province say Nepal is on the right track.

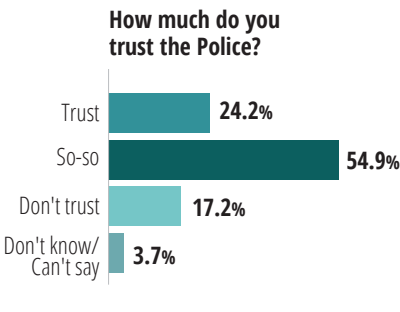
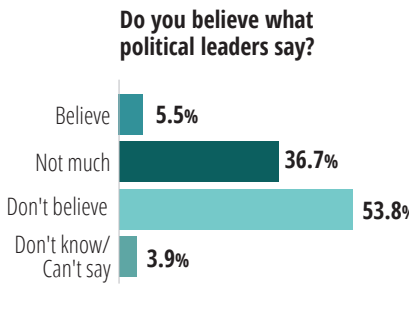
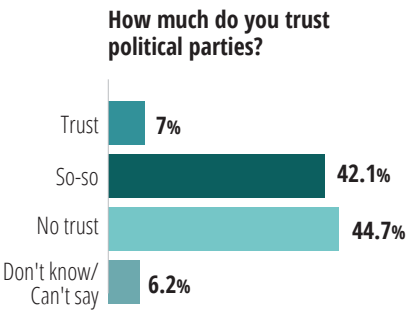
It is not unusual that Province 3 is so cynical, since it includes Kathmandu Valley, whose citizens are most exposed to media reporting of corruption and the lack of accountability. Residents of the Far-Western Province and Province 2, by contrast, still seem to hope that things will get better.

Indeed, overall the people of the Tarai seem more convinced than those living in the mountains that the country is moving in the right direction.

A cross-tabulation of the responses shows that the more educated Nepalis are, the more they seem to think the country has drifted off track. And among ethnic groups, the Newa population seems to be the most cynical about where the nation is headed.

The Sharecast survey also shows that the Nepali people were at best apathetic and at worst negative about the work of the federal government in the past year. Only 4.2% were satisfied, 35% were dissatisfied and nearly 61% said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

The greatest discontent about the conduct of the federal



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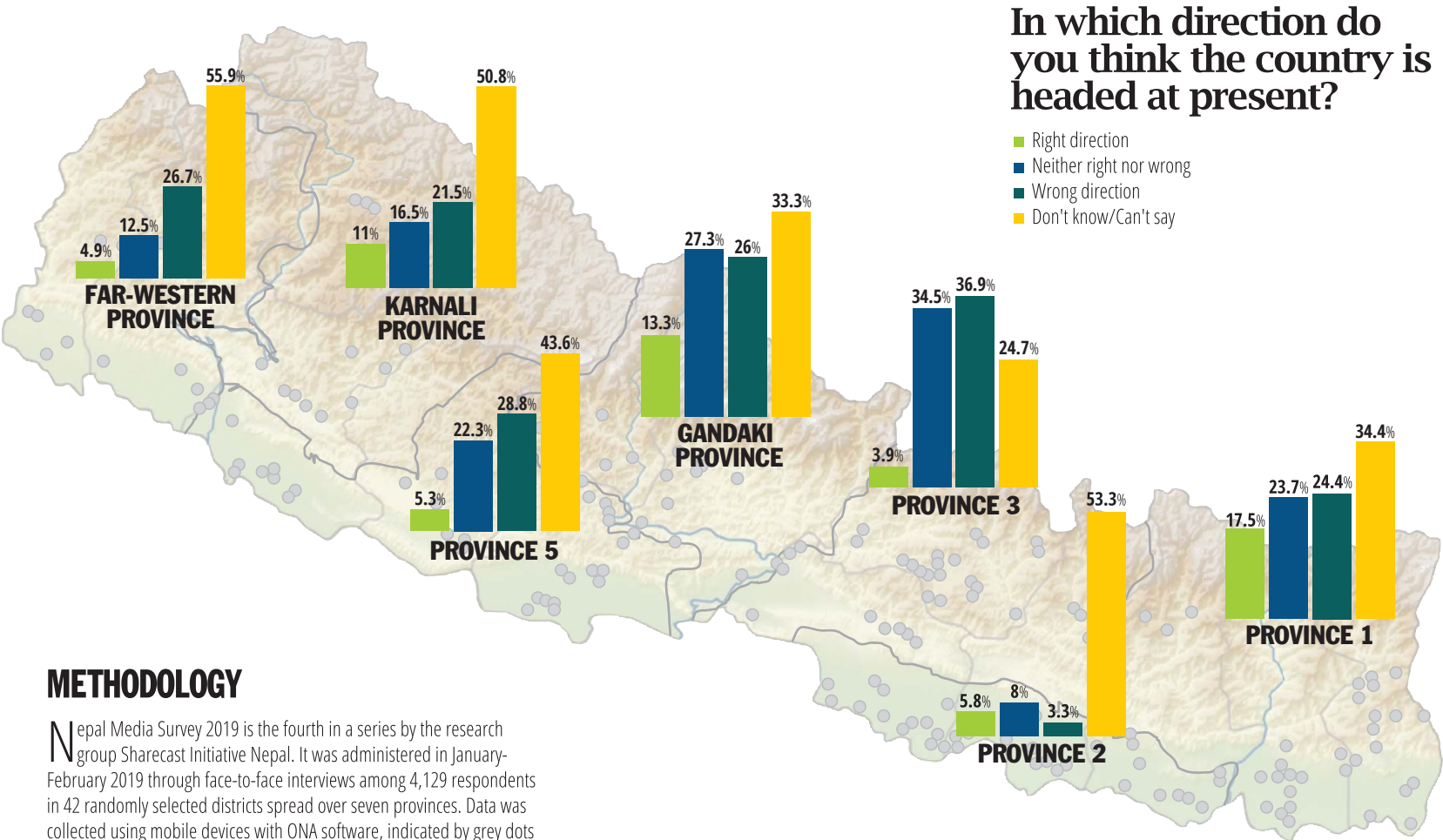
यसरी हातहतियार र खरखजाना बुझाउन ल्याएमा यसअघि ती अवैध हातहतियार र खरखजाना राखेको कारणले मात्र त्यस्ता व्यक्तिलाई कुनै कानूनी कारवाही नचलाइने हुँदा तोकिएको समयभित्र अवैध हातहतियार तथा खरखजाना अनिवार्य रूपमा बुझाउनुहुन सम्बन्धित स्वैमा जानकारी गराइन्छ । यदि इजाजत प्राप्त नगरी आफूसँग रहेका हातहतियार तथा खरखजाना तोकिएको अवधिभित्र स्वेच्छाले नबुझाएमा त्यस्ता व्यक्ति उपर प्रचलित कानून वमोजिम कारवाही हुने व्यहोरा समेत सूचित गरिन्छ ।



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# Nepal government

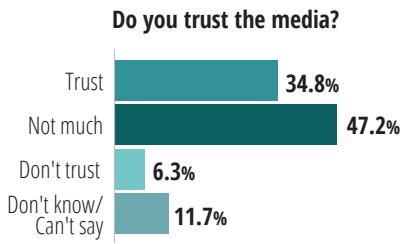
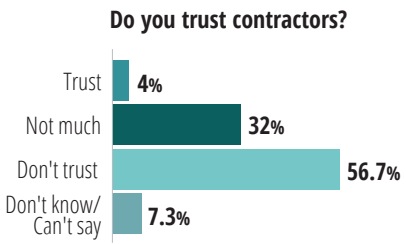
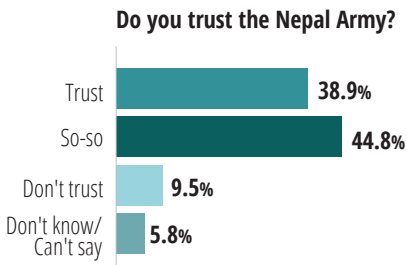
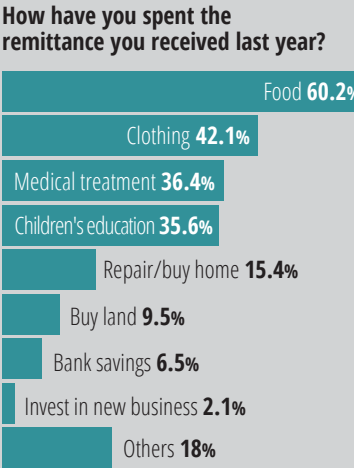


### METHODOLOGY

Nepal Media Survey 2019 is the fourth in a series by the research group Sharecast Initiative Nepal. It was administered in January-February 2019 through face-to-face interviews among 4,129 respondents in 42 randomly selected districts spread over seven provinces. Data was collected using mobile devices with ONA software, indicated by grey dots in map (above). Respondents were 18 years or above, residing in the same household for at least 6 months. All data is weighed back to the Nepal Census 2011 and data quality-control measures were employed.

## Social indicators

The Sharecast Initiative Survey conducted in January also included questions about socio-economic development and migration. The most encouraging sign is that the government's emphasis over the past decades on rural electrification, water and sanitation appears to have yielded results. Of the 4,129 individuals surveyed in 42 districts, 94% had electricity or solar, 95% had latrines and 74% (which is still low) had a drinking water supply. However, it is a sign of development that 75% now live near some kind of road, while 70% of Nepalis seem to use LPG for cooking.

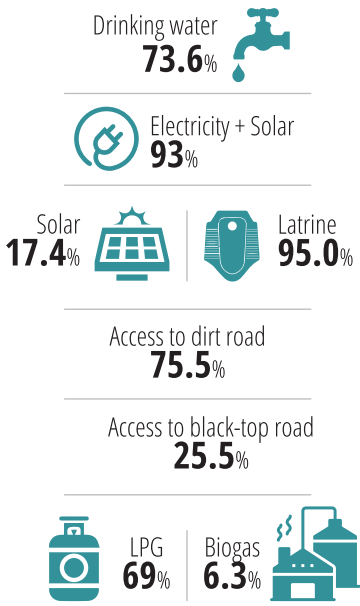


government in Kathmandu is in Far-Western Province – indicating that despite devolution people living in the periphery still feel neglected. But even the centre is not impressed with the centre. Most respondents in Province 3 had a dim view of the federal government's functioning. Amid allegations that political power today is centralised among advisers in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the level of distrust of the PMO (16.2%) was much higher than those who trusted it (10%), with 36% rating it 'so-so'. The national Parliament also suffers a trust deficit, with more than a quarter of respondents saying they lack faith in the federal legislature. Only 7% said they trusted Parliament, while 43% were ambivalent. Views of the track records

of local governments and municipalities are also not encouraging. More than a quarter of respondents were 'completely dissatisfied' with their work, and only 7.4% were pleased. Again, the highest level of discontent with local government is in Province 3, while people in Province 1 seem to be most content with the performance of local municipalities. General dissatisfaction with all three tiers of government appears to be linked to confusion within infrastructure projects, corruption in sand mining and quarry contracts, obsession of elected representatives with their own perks and privileges, and poor governance. When asked how much they trusted political parties, nearly 45% said they did not trust them at all, while in Province 2 more

than half said they had no faith in the parties. This figure has gone up: in last year's survey 38% said they did not trust the parties. Nationwide, leaders of parties do not fare much better: 54% of respondents did not trust them, and it was a whopping 63.4% in Province 3. In a wakeup call for journalists, a full 47.2% said they did not have much faith in the media. Politically-slanted content and the over-commercialisation of the media appear to be behind this. Lawyers fared even worse, with 63% saying they don't trust them much. But the most untrustworthy profession seems to be contractors, with 57% saying they do not trust them. This figure is even higher for Karnali Province, which is plagued by delays in infrastructure projects. 🇳🇵

### Facilities at home



With four million Nepalis working outside the country at any given time (half of them in India) responses to survey questions on migration and remittance show just how dramatically society is changing. A quarter of respondents had a household member working abroad, highest in Muslim (36%) or Hill Dalit (34%) families. Tarai Caste and Tharu households had the fewest members abroad. The proportion of families with at least one member working abroad was highest in Far-Western Province. Asked how overseas workers sent money home, most now use bank transfer (48%) while a third still use the informal *hundi* channel, while only 1% say they send money home with friends. Province 6 tops the rest in bank transfers — 81%. Asked to name the top three items that they spend remittance money on, 60% say they use it to buy food, 42% for clothing, 36% for medical treatment and 35% for children's education. Some 10% used earnings to buy land, while only 6.5% saved it in a bank.



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