DIGITAL DETOX

The recent sign that Nepal has already become an online society is the spreading practice of "digital detox", where addicted users completely abandon connected devices, or at least take steps to drastically limit their online time.

When checking, then rechecking, devices becomes such a daily distraction that it starts to disrupt our work, sleep or relationships, it is time to take a step back and evaluate the benefit of clicking yet another link to reveal the unimportant bit of information for the day and ask: "Is it really necessary?"

To be sure, there are many benefits also of the digital world for Nepal. The internet has democratized information flow, levelled the playing field, and in many cases turned citizens into actors and content providers themselves. #occupypalace/hashtag movement encouraged long suppressed revelations about sexual assault in Nepal.

Whether we see growing digitalization as positive or negative, one thing is sure: it is both, and Nepal will be even more digitized in the coming decades. A recent survey showed that 90% of Nepalis own mobile devices, with half of them producing smartphones when asked, 69% of households have mobile phones for an average 2.5 devices per home, 86% of us use Facebook frequently, and a whopping 8.5 million Nepalis are on the platform today. 45% are on messenger, 33% use IMO for instant messaging and 34% are regularly on YouTube.

These trends already have a major impact on where Nepalis get their information, what information they believe, and how that affects the trust between individuals and the institutions at the heart of a democratic society, including media and government.

The survey found most Nepalis still consider mainstream media as generally reliable, as opposed to information on the Net, which very few believe. But as recent cases of Rahi Lamkha, monks against heritage destruction, violence against women and corruption have shown: social media content is now driving mainstream media coverage. It is setting the agenda, and with it the potential for manipulation is growing.

The Nepali Net is affecting politics because the young middle-class is now wired. Half of Nepal’s population is under 21, and this networked youth bulge will have huge political implications in the 2023 general election. Where now voters get their information, how they get it and what kind of information it is, will determine who rules Nepal and how its future. If the information is correct and credible, expunges wrongdoing, is fair to all concerned, and lets voters make up their own minds, the New Media will strengthen Nepal’s fragile democracy.

If not, to hear more cries of "fake news" and the growth of a digital media landscape that is likely to fuel the "digital detox" trend.
THE MESSAGE IS THE MEDIUM

There was a time until recently when we were often editorializers in a space about how the global digital divide was microwaved within Nepal. Just like the have and have-not, we used to say Nepal had the ‘know’ and ‘know-not’, because access to the internet base was so skewed.

How fast things have changed. Till 2012, we were reporting that there were 1.4 million Nepal Facebook users. Today the figure is nearing 8.5 million. The number of Twitter users is much lower, but it has a following among the intelligentsia, media, and political influencers, which magnifies its impact.

In April, Nepal Times printed the results of a Shreeram Initiative survey that showed:
- 95% of Nepali households own a mobile
- 90% of individuals own a mobile
- Half the mobile users had smartphones
- 18% used laptops, desktops or tablets
- Among the 35% who used the internet, 98% said they used mobile phones to get online
- 75% used mobile data to access the internet, the rest on WiFi

As our review of the survey in this page (page 2) shows, the shift ofowell to digital media is going to have a profound impact on the way Nepalis communicate with each other, the way Nepal is governed and how Nepal society functions.

While the legacy press is still strong and influential, and people do not fully trust information on the Net, the window for print is shrinking. As elsewhere, it is inevitable that the online editions of the mainstream press, digital news portals and YouTube channels are going to be the main sources of news. Print media will have to re-invent its revenue model, or perish.

Interest viewing patterns in Nepal and other parts of the region show increasing dominance of entertainment content. Facebook and social media addiction is becoming a problem, reducing the attention span of readers, exposing them to click bait, fake news and rumours.

As the recent case involving Rash LaLipte - as well as protests against heritage destruction, violence against women and corruption - shows, social media context is now driving mainstream media coverage, setting the agenda, and the priority accorded to events, personalities and issues.

Not all of this is improper, damaging or dangerous. The internet has democratized information flow, levelled the playing field, and in many cases fulfilled the expectation of actors and content providers themselves. Cyberpunks have become the new big public spaces, a chastuari and our own global village, where the medium is the message.

People like Kilmur Chhial, Nepal Electricity Authority, Vijey Lamsu of Nepal Airlines and Sanduk Ruit of Tijagana have been propelled to national stardom through social media. They have been supported by large and direct anti-establishment, greedy and corrupt politicians.

No wonder, then, that the greedy and corrupt feel threatened by these new circumstances. In the battle between populism and poppycock, these new terrorize the hopelessness of those who want a better, more just and political and political, we have seen backlash from the ruling elite.

The Nepal Net is affecting politics because the young middle-class is now wired. Half of the public under 21, and this networked youth will have huge political implications in the next general election in 2022.

Who tells them their information, how they get it and what kind of information it will, ultimately determine who rules Nepal and how. If the information is credible, exposes wrongdoing, is fair to all concerned, and lets workers speak up their minds, the New Media will strengthen Nepal’s fragile democracy.

But if in the next three years, fake news becomes the norm, but armies are deployed, false social media accounts target individuals to destroy their credibility, and troll factories are created to widen and exploit religious, sectarian and ethnic fault lines, then Nepal is headed for disaster.

For sure, Nepal is not free for all. It is still dominated by the personal, but it is increasingly being used as a political platform by citizens to air their views. It is in this dynamic, interactive and instantaneous public cyber-space that Nepali society is increasingly being made and spread.

The Internet is a double-edged sword. It can mobilise pro-democracy protests and be a marketplace of ideas, but it can also radicalise society with algorithm-driven echo chambers, hate speech and corrup convincement. As with all media there are the good, the bad and the ugly. At a time when mainstream press is co-opted, coerced or bought off by political leaders, social media still holds out the hope of keeping the democratic space open.

Fortunately most Nepalis, wired or otherwise, value peace and harmony. This silence must be absolute to no more, and speak out on the social web to drown out the fake and phony. •

THE INTERNET IN NEPAL HAS BECOME A BATTLE GROUND OF POPULARITY.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

This was the front page story on Nepal Times A4+ of 12 November 2012 showing what had happened on the eve:

There is no other way to look at the new Constitution, peel the process and resolve ‘sagas’ and tensions than for the political leadership to work together. Yet, they fail to bring themselves to do it.

Individually, they all talk about the need for a peaceful political transition. They talk about parties pulling together, let us be frank and the MARA is, by both sides and the parties, there is a draft and part of consensus that our country can split and then we need to do it.

If we all talk about the need for peace and to have a peaceful transition, in the next few months of the Constitution, the country will remain at war and the country will suffer.

Garden-walls and boodhunat are the least of our problems. Nepal has many more problems to solve before Nepal can ever think of peace and stability. Whether we want to or not, Nepal is in for a period of chaos and destruction.

How can the country be saved? Is there a way out of this mess? No matter what happens, we will have to work together to make this country work. We have to work together to save this country. We have to work together to save our country.

Come Together: Nepal Times

GARDEN WALLS: Never mind ‘vertical gardens’ (Garden Walls, Nepal Times, Nov 10). What about planting trees and shrubs and beautification parks everywhere possible? For example, along rivulets and in other open spaces like Tundikhel?

David Seddon

A very interesting idea that needs to be widely disseminated.

SHранjula Upadhyay

RETIREMENT: I am just a 53-year-old man who loves Nepal (Retire in Nepal, Asia, Nov 9). If I were to retire there, then it really seems to me that Nepal is not a place where I can live comfortably.

Mark Steven Bigelow

Nepal will need at least 10 years to get ready for genuinely rich reforms in legacies. Why are we at risk of missing the 2030 window? We need to be careful.

Kripal Sudhi

ONLINE PACKAGES

WHAT’S TRENDING

Garden walls

Retire in Nepal

Climate Change Budget

Garden Walls

NEPAL ATRIA

India has, on the other hand, conducted a gradual transition from the high to low pastures. In 2018, when the UK, defined the climate, how much it will change over the next 100 years, it is important to understand how women and young in rural areas are roughly. Page 8

EVESTREK TRAVEL

Looking at the photo of a trash on the South Col, which are needed, not only about attempting to climb this great mountain, but as cleanliness (Overstock Everest, Damian Francis, Times), this is dubious. Alane Roadtigh

CLIMATE BUDGET: Climate change is not a priority in Nepal since we have not seen economic growth equally distributed (Cash for Climate, Nepal Times, May 31). Many Nepalis can’t even afford a plate of rice, let alone worry about climate change. According to management theorists Mohott, unless basic and safety needs are fulfilled, higher issues like climate change would be tough to think about. Hope we can get there sooner than later.

Gyorme Dondup

GARDEN WALLS: Never mind ‘vertical gardens’ (Garden Walls, Nepal Times, Nov 10). What about planting trees and shrubs and beautification parks everywhere possible? For example, along rivulets and in other open spaces like Tundikhel?

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Kripal Sudhi

This is how to upgrade Nepal’s natural health

by Santhosh Devara

Reports from the faraway hill stations of the state, and the bandwagon of the private sector, are instead, are00 of ‘heal your body’ for the target group of 10 to 50 years old, have seen a huge influx. Many people are now seeking to improve their health and understand their own health, and they can now afford health institutions.

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QUOTE/TWEETS

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Dr Nirmal Kandel @NirmalKandel Nepal must be doing all necessary steps to promote health in rural areas, as a security services. Countries where health is a major problem should follow the change in the national medical care, that of an immediate statement. @neduts @santhoshdevara

Weekly Mirror Tour

10. WILL THE CIRCLE CLOSE? Let’s discuss the current trend and improve the future. 

Total votes: 176

Yes: 64%
No: 26%
Can’t say: 0%

Weekly Mirror Tour

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The Inn pizza

Finding pizza in Kathmandu has become almost as easy as ordering mama. From high-end restaurants to corner eateries, places are everywhere. Enter Pizza Inn. With its seemingly vertical and narrow building in mid-Lainchaur, this place is in a league of its own. The menu has vegetarian or non-vegetarian, regular or thin, wheat or even heart-shaped crust. The Meat lover’s Pizza on a thin-thin crust is ideal for the heartbeats among us who like a generous helping of salami and ham but prefer to lay off breads. But if you are not a meat person, the Papaya Chicken Hawaiian and Heart-Wave are just as good. Beyond the pizzas, the restaurant offers cheesy garlic bread, chicken wings and pastas, staying true to the American-style pizza experience. Co-owner and chef Sajo Deep KC won at Popa Johns in the UK and wanted to transplant that sort of casual pizza experience to Nepal.

KC makes everything in-house, from the sauce to the dough, using fresh produce and a mixture of cheeses to create the pull. And you do not have to worry about the food not being fresh because everything is consumed the day it is made.

KC credits Pizza Inn with Nabin Agrawal, both pizza lovers. “We wanted a different pizza place in Kathmandu that won affordable, accessible and of course, delicious,” says Agrawal. Appetizers start at Rs.220 and the most expensive pasta is only Rs.700.

Chicken fingers with house-made hot sauce is a juicy starter—strips of chicken are coated in breading, deep fried and coated with a mixture of savoury spices. Dipped into the spicy and tangy hot sauce, the hit almost every flavour note. While pouring a cup of hot vanilla and blueberry tea with a thin crust pizza, sound the alarm goes surprisingly well, and makes you feel fresh!

Pizza Inn stocks a distinct design, with the building divided into three differently decorated floors. The ground-floor has an open seating area and multi-coloured walls decorated with drawings of pizza. The first floor, on the other hand, is a sports watchers’ oasis, well-equipped with comfy couches, large flat screen TVs and phones paying homage to both Nepali and foreign athletes.

As a huge sports fan, I wanted to create a space in the restaurant to allow other sports fans to gather and watch matches together with good food,” says Agrawal. During the US Open or European football matches, the floor is filled with cheering fans.

The rooftop sitting area is as canopy level with mosaic tiles, and raised from the noise below. By the terrace is a snug with chairs, many parasols, fitting from tree to tree. But you will not forget that you are here mainly for the pizza.
Can Nepal invest in the cloud?

Ganesh Acharya

A group of young overseas Nepalis based in the UK wanted to invest in cloud computing in Nepal. They were already doing work for Amazon, Microsoft and Alibaba and were attracted by Nepal’s lower labour cost, as well as the availability of professional software engineers. It took one year for them to just register the company. In that same time, a company they set up in Bangladesh was not only registered, but had already started its work. In Nepal, they were given the runaround, sent from one ministry to another, and spent a year explaining what cloud computing was.

After much twisting and fouling the company was finally registered, and once fully operational, it will employ 500 young Nepali IT engineers and spend more than $100,000 a month here.

“Not only does Nepal not even have rules about cloud computing, people in government have no idea what it is. If this goes on, no foreign investors are going to come here to invest in information technology,” said an investor involved in the project.

According to the National Planning Commission, Nepal needs $220.3 trillion worth of investment to reach the

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in 10 years. While most of these investments will have to be in infrastructure and transportation, the country needs to make it easier for foreign investors to bring in new technology and resources so Nepal can leapfrog into the IT age.

However, as our example shows, Nepal does not seem to be technically and mentally prepared for IT investments. Talk earlier this year about the need to register social media platforms before they can operate here shows how regressive the government’s mentality is. None of the multinational giants involved in IT do all their work at headquarters. They outsource it to parts of the world with lower costs and know-how, like Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia or India.

Those countries have given IT investors tax holidays, as well as streamlined repatriation of profits. The greatest potential for foreign investment in Nepal is in the IT sector— in third-party contracts for developing apps, web design and maintenance, animation, digital mapping, etc. Nepal has a competitive labour cost, and the country produces 7,500 IT graduates a year. We have to cash in on this potential, which would provide jobs for youths who would otherwise emigrate to find work. But first, we need to streamline the bureaucratic and legal process, and update our investment laws.

Anil Chitrakar is President of Siddharta Bank.

The history maker:
Manakamana Cable Car

Three hours uphill walk cut short to 10 minutes

Location: Kurintar, Chitwan
Commercial Operation Date: 23-Nov-98

The cable car has provided service to over 10 million visitors as of today and provides two YOGAs, Dhadhak at the bottom and Manakamana at the top, with a sum of Rs. 500,000 annually. The Cable Car service promotes religious and eco tourism to the area and contributes to the upsurge the local economies.

SAGARMATHA CEMENT
Juni Jnanat

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— BY MARGARET THATCHER

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GOD AND SUPERMAN

Another chance to see Ang Tserin Sherpa, this time at Taragpoon

Sewa Bhattarai

Surrounded by overwhelmingly large ‘Sale’ signs is a tiny object in a large hall. Ang Tserin Sherpa’s golden statue of a Tibetan deity to wear is literally the object in focus at an exhibition at Taragpoon Museum this week, part of the ‘Object in Focus’ series, designed to give viewers the opportunity to understand art in depth.

“When we are surrounded by many exhibits, we often cannot digest what it all means. So this is our effort to delve deep into an important piece of art,” says museum curator Roshan Mishra. US-based Nepali artist Sherpa is the third artist featured in the series. Sherpa’s statue presents many interesting facets to explore:

its face, hair and nose are those of a Tibetan Buddhist deity. But instead of wearing the usual flax, it is attired like a modern superhero, and poses with one arm thrown in the air…Superman style. This piece… and the winner is a replica of Sherpa’s 2D work ‘Victory in Space,’ but the actual metal casting was carried out by Shyam Maharjan, a traditional craftsman from Kathmandu.

Sherpa’s work carries on his previous tradition of mixing traditional and modern art. Coming from a family of renowned tangka painters, Sherpa himself trained as a painter from the age of 13, and worked with his father on monasteries and monasteries for almost 20 years. He migrated to the US and painted there, also giving classes on traditional painting. That was when western art motifs began to infiltrate his work.

Sherpa’s later works have depicted ancient deities caught in the modern world: gods in non-traditional poses, wearing western coffee-t-shirts, trying to break out of little boxes, fluttered inside catastrophic modern motifs and trying to be heard amid the cacophony.

The 3D work at Taragpoon Museum fits this mould, but Sherpa does not want to talk about what it means. “To me, the pose symbolizes a subjugation of negativity, it’s about hope,” he said at an interaction at the museum. “But I don’t want to attribute a particular significance to it. I would rather let viewers explore their imagination.”

Instead, Sherpa wants to talk about traditional art and his role in promoting it. “I used to work for months on a tangka piece, but then clients would ask why they should pay $3,000 for it when they can get a thangka for $200.

The ordinary customer does not know the difference between real traditional art and souvenir art. Artists often have to pay these market forces and are forced to compromise on quality,” he says.

“That leads me to question what will happen to this art form 20 years down the line. Will we have any masters left, or only souvenir artists?” asks Sherpa.

In an effort to promote traditional art, Sherpa visited many museums in the west and spoke to many curators. He found that they too had been de-stressed by the flux of copies, and were unable to tell the difference between quality art and mediocre art. Sherpa then decided to contribute to his own way to get more recognition for traditional art.

He returned to Nepal after the 2013 earthquake, and since then has been trying to serve as a bridge between traditional artists and the modern, western art world. For this exhibit, he sought out Shyam Maharjan, renowned for casting religious figures. “I did have to convince him to take up my unconventional work, by showing him photos of myself being blessed by several rinpoches,” laughs Sherpa. “But this is a way of highlighting high quality traditional metal casting as well, when this statue is exhibited abroad.”

Taragpoon’s Roshan Mishra also raised the question of ownership about pieces of art like this one while the metal craftsman is the one who makes the physical object, the art is usually attributed to the designer who conceptualizes it. For his part, Maharjan is glad that the statue came out so well.

“Many religious teachers have complimented me on my work, and I know I am a good craftsman. I am happy to see that even this unconventional design looks so good,” he says.

Though his work veers far from his traditional roots, Sherpa contends that he has a deep respect for traditional arts, and aims to put more focus on them.

“We don’t have an infrastructure to support traditional artists, due to which it is dying out. Through my work I want to open up a conversation about how to best address this,” he says.

Sherpa has sometimes been accused of ‘selling’ but the art world has welcomed his work as a breath of fresh air. “Thanks to the artist for this dialectical piece,” says Sangreeta Thapa, founder of Siddhartha Art Gallery. “We always see the same deadly everywhere and wonder why artists don’t experiment.”

Object in Focus 3rd Edition
3-15 September
Taragpoon Museum, Bhaktapur
Prepping for Indra Jatra

The late monsoon calendar in Kathmandu Valley is filled with festivities, there was Krishna’s birthday last week, then Diwali, Panchami and Tihar this week. But none is more important than the week-long Indra Jatra — the chariot festival presided over by none other than the Living Goddess Kumari.

Indra Jatra, which falls on Friday the 13th this year, is traditionally when Nepal’s rulers congregate at Hanuman Dhoka to be blessed by the Kumari as she is pulled past on her chariot.

This is the annual festival dedicated to Indra, the god of rain. But it also honours Taleju Bhawani, the powerful goddess and protector of Kathmandu, who will manifest herself in the Kumari to empower the government and citizens of Nepal with divine powers.

Interestingly, Taleju is supposed to be the family deity of Ravana, the demon king of mythic Lanka, and the Taleju of Kathmandu is said to have been brought from India in ancient times.

Pritiví Narayan Shah in 1770 merged Kathmandu on the day of Indra Jatra, and is said to have won over the local population by kneeling at the feet of the Kumari.

The Kumari House courtyard bears the most exotic of all wood carvings in the area, and was built in 1787 during the reign of king Jaya Prakash Malla, the last Malla king, who was deposed by the invading army of Pritiví Narayan.

History books tell us that Jaya Prakash Malla was pulling the Kumari charriot himself, and enjoying every bit of it. But by the time the chariot reached the Lagan neighbourhood, Gorkha forces had captured his palace at Hanuman Dhoka. He then fled across the swollen Bagmati river to seek refuge in the neighbouring kingdom of Patan.

Indra Jatra is marked with much enthusiasm and devotion by both Hindus and Buddhists in the Kathmandu Valley, and celebrated for eight days by singing, dancing, feasting and rejoicing.

People throng excitedly to see the chariot and to watch the ritual dances — featuring masked demons, gods and goddesses. Kathmandu’s famous Lakhey dancers are also part of the chariot procession.

Indra Jatra re-enacted at Dwarka’s

Nepal’s Dwarka’s Hotel has won many international awards for its generation of Kathmandu’s Newa architecture. But it is also involved in preserving the Valley’s intangible heritage. Its festivals.

As in 2018, the hotel will mark Indra Jatra this year. On Friday 13 September, Dwarka will feature a re-enactment of the real-life procession in the city, with a stand-in Goddess Kumari on hand throughout the entourage.

Guests can witness the Living Goddess repeatedly seated in the hotel’s receptionist, clad in elaborate costumes (some of them 800 years old) showing the series of performances, replicated exactly from the original Indra jatra celebration in Kathmandu.

Dwarka Square earlier that day.

Another major attraction of the evening will be a display of the iconic performance of the famous Dama-ê Jali and other food of the noted Jara feast, the Kumari chaital festival, with Sharrin and Gunech, as well as the Lhakhe dance. Kumari dance, Buxa-Ra and Shariyak-Kali dances, will be performed.

Guests can also savour a special Indra Jatra buffet with meals from Newari cuisine, washed down with the traditional akha spirit, while they watch the Dama-ê Jali dance and other classical fabled dances.

Dwarka’s Hotel
6:30 pm, Friday 13 September
sales@dwarka.com
+977 1 478400, 440070.
Pangolin smugglers in India are zigzagging up the endangered mammals with a battery-operated device that emits sparks from their tails to convince buyers that the animal has magical healing properties. Impressed, some gullible customers pay as much as $40,000 for a live pangolin.

These animals are used to be killed for their scales, which were smuggled through the country’s Northeastern states to Burma, and then on to China. But increasingly, live pangolins are being trafficked to feed China’s voracious appetite for the meat, which is believed to boost medicinal properties.

“The buyers don’t usually keep the pangolins with themselves, they sell it to the customer for a profit, and everyone in the chain ends up making money,” said KS Sharath, a former inspector for India’s Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) now posted in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Pangolins are small, solitary and largely nocturnal mammals known for their distinctive, armadillo-like appearance. They are hunted for their scales, meat and other body parts. Four species are native to sub-Saharan Africa, with another four spread across south and southeast Asia. India is home to two of the species, the Indian pangolin (Manis crassicaudata) and Chinese pangolin (Manis pentadactyla) — and as such, they are protected.

The web of illegal trade in pangolins spans across several states, including its Northeastern states. Traffickers sneak some of the pangolins from Nepal and Bhutan bound for ready-made markets in China and Vietnam.

Rahul, a 37-year-old from Tamil Nadu who was the collection hub for pangolins in the region, used to transport the contraband to the country’s Northeast. The hub has now shifted to Westbumpur in Odisha state due to the presence of Burmese settlers there.

Powdered pangolins from southern India are collected in Kerala and taken to the Northeast via Odisa, where more scales are picked up. Shipment from Manipur and Madhya Pradesh is moved to West Bengal and then by train or road to Burma via the Mornsh border in Manipur state. (See map)

“The scales are smuggled hidden with dried fish and unless one pulls out all the items they can go unnoticed in checks,” said Sharath.

The other smuggling route for pangolins and their scales — from Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Haryana — is across the open border with Nepal, and then over the new roads being built across the Himalayan mountains to China.

Traditional enke charmer communities like the Savar and the semi-nomadic Bhagiyapathis catch the pangolins for sale to middlemen. India’s Wildlife Protection Act 1972 restricted the way of life of these hunting communities, but they still depend on forest products for sustenance. Being skilled hunters, they can track and kill the elusive animals. One animal can yield nearly 1 kg of scales which they can sell for $700. Conservationists say the upswing in the trade of pangolin scales is due to the crackdown on the smuggling of rhino horns. Pangolin scales, like rhino horn, have no proven medicinal value and yet are used in traditional Chinese medicine. Both are made of keratin, the same tissue in nails and hair.

Samuel K. Wasser, a conservation biologist at the University of Washington in the US, has pioneered DNA from animal ear to track wildlife poachers and combat wildlife crime. His team plans to set up a lab at the Wildlife Institute of India to build a pangolin DNA reference library to map the genetic diversity of Asian and African pangolin species.

This can help conservationists and law enforcement officials compare the DNA from pangolins to determine where the creatures were poached. Wasser plans to deploy trained dogs to find pangolin scat.

Pangolin smugling to China thrives as rhino

Anup Sharma
in Guwahati

The global focus on the smuggling of rhino horns and other parts of these iconic species from India to China has led to a drop in smuggling, but that has been replaced by a surge in trafficking of smaller species like pangolins and geckos.

Pangolins caught dead or alive here and in other parts of India are being trafficked to China’s Yunnan province via Burma, which shares a porous 1,600km border with these Indian states like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram.

The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) in Assam has seized 30 live pangolins in the last 3 years from northeastern Indian states. In the last seizure in June, officials were forced to deal with smugglers to buy a live pangolin for Rs 10,000.

Eleven seized and rescued pangolins were taken to Assam State Zoo between January 2017 and July 2019, according to Tejas Marwamey, Divisional Forest Officer at the zoo. Ten more pangolins were rescued recently from traffickers, who abandoned them to evade a dragnet by law enforcement agencies.

“We have in recent times been able to stop the poaching of one-horned rhinos and smuggling of its horns, but we have noticed a sudden rise in seizures of pangolins from the region,” says KK Sharma of the WCCB, based in Guwahati.

The Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation Conservation (CWRC) near Kaziranga National Park in Assam has also seen a sharp rise in seizures of smuggled pangolins, proving the existence of a trafficking network using the India-Burma-China route. Indian pangolins are also smuggled to China via Nepal. (See adjoining story)

“The recent increase in seizures indicates that there is a racket in smuggling out pangolins,” said Rohit Barman, Joint Director of the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and Head of the CWRC here. “Last month we found one dead pangolin in an abandoned bag at a bus stop in Upper Assam.”

Traffickers buy pangolin scales from farmers for up to Rs70,000 and take them to Manipur state, from where they are smuggled across the border to Burma and on to China. Pangolin scales are used in Chinese traditional medicines, much like rhino horns and tiger parts. Enhanced security and an international spotlight on the trafficking of rhinos and tigers has forced smugglers to shift to small mammals like pangolins.

Besides pangolins, the Tockay gecko is also being smuggled into China, following the same route used by traffickers of rhino horns — through Manipur and Burma to Yunnan province of China. Fluid extracted from the gecko is used in traditional Chinese medicine to treat cancer.

The demand for rhino horns rose after rumors spread during the last decade that a Vietnamese minister was cured of cancer after taking traditional medicine that included rhino horn powder.

Rhinos in Kaziranga park came under pressure after that. The state government then set up a special investigation team (SIT) to stop rhino poaching, conducting special operations between 2008-2016, leading to the arrest and killing of several...
Pangolins are the most trafficked mammals in the world. With increased connectivity between Nepal and China, the country is becoming even more of a transit point for wildlife smugglers. Even African pangolins are being smuggled to China via Nepal.

Sona Awale

The pangolin’s scales are the parts that are in demand in Asia. They are used in traditional medicine to treat a variety of conditions, including cancer and diabetes. However, the trade in pangolin scales is illegal in most countries, and smuggling is rampant.

The illegal trade in pangolins has led to a massive decline in their population. In recent years, the number of pangolins caught has decreased significantly, indicating that the illegal trade is ongoing.

The scale of justice

Although poaching is illegal in Nepal, the country has not taken strong measures to combat the issue. The country has not effectively enforced its laws, leading to a booming trade in pangolins.

Scales of justice

A newly made up word for the ‘trade in pangolins is the ‘scale of justice’. The word has become synonymous with the illegal trade in pangolins.

The future of the pangolin

The future of the pangolin looks bleak. Without effective law enforcement and strong measures to combat the illegal trade, it is unlikely that the population of pangolins will recover.

The story of pangolins

The story of pangolins is one of survival. Despite the challenges they face, pangolins continue to adapt and survive, thanks to the efforts of conservationists and wildlife officials.

The pangolin’s journey

The journey of the pangolin is one of survival. From being hunted for their scales to being protected, the story of the pangolin is a testament to the power of conservation and the importance of protecting wildlife.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the illegal trade in pangolins is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. The country needs to take strong measures to combat the illegal trade and protect the pangolin population.

Sona Awale

This article is based on a joint research project by Nepali Times, Prabhat Times, Bajura, and the Pandit Report.
**EVENTS**

**Film Month**
Watch some of the UK's finest films about diversity and neurodiversity, crafts and fashion, animation and art every Friday till the end of September.
6 – 7 September, 5:30pm – 7pm, British Council, Lancaster (01524 637700)

**Art Exhibition**
Renowned artist Nabil Prasad Sharma’s ‘Nepal through the Ages’ depicts the glorious history, art and architecture of Nepal.
You can look at his paintings and watch documentaries about his artwork.
7 – 28 September, 7am-7pm, Nepal Art Council, Robina Mahal (0141 407 7775)

**Pahenlo Bath Muni**
Pahenlo Bath Muni is a fine person-entranced rock band that takes its name from the experience of playing in Kathmandu by candlelight during the days of load-shedding.
5–6 September, 8pm onwards, 8,539 per person, The Pub, Hotel Nepal (98416/1470)

**Reggae/Highop**
Listen to the eclectic sounds of Culuvian, a Nepali reggae musician and Webster, a Canadian hip-hop star.
23 September, 6pm, Alliance Française Kathmandu, Hotel Jomtien (01489 671)

**Acoustic Atom**
Enjoy authentic Hawaiian food while you listen to the dynamic sound of the Acoustic Atom Band.
1 September, 7pm, Rooftop Bar, The Imperial, Hotel Park Hyatt (01489 671)

**Sounth Healing**
Learn more about the history, mechanism and magic of singing bowls at this sound healing workshop.
8 September, 9am-1pm, Dhaka The Weekender of Life, Chobiling, Hotel Everest (01489 671)

**Amalgam**
Pantries, sculptures and mixed media artworks by more than 50 Nepali artists will be showcased. Exhibition opens 8 September, 9am-5:30pm.
19–28 September, 6pm-7pm, Sixth Sense Art Gallery, Robina Mahal (0141 407 7775)

**Neve**
Janko Mayer and Nevre present a new form of musical expression that is entirely unique. Natural electronic and analog, not truly jazz or rock, Neve has a sound of its own.
29 September, 7pm onwards, Nepal Art Council, Hotel Nepal (98416/0000)

**Lucknowi Festival**
Chef Zakir Ali from Lucknow will be serving a variety of dishes, like Gheewal Cubit, Kebab, Mughlai Kebabs, Panner Achar & Kheer.
Kanteil Neftali and his crew are the food festival is sure to whip up your taste buds.
7–15 September, 5:30pm onwards, Rs.1,500 per person, The Fun Café, Robina Hotel, Lahore (0141 407 7775)

**Fire & Ice**
Fire and ice is shaped by both Nepalis and tourists alike. But their laughter and fun is Free.
On the evening before that diverse fun begins.
19–20 September, 7pm, The Fun Café, Hotel Nepal (0141 407 7775)

**Rakhi Music Bar**
Ladies, bring your friends, enjoy bottomless cocktails and great food, then dance the night away.
17 September, 6pm onwards, Rakhi Music Bar, Hotel Nepal (0141 407 7775)

**Experience Thamel**
Take a trip down memory lane with chibos that represent the best of old Thamel street food.
Join family and friends for a buffet and unlimited drinks.
6 September, 6pm onwards, Restaurant Kitchen, Hotel Motel, Hotel Nepal (0141 407 7775)

**Vino Bistro**
Taste the best of French cheeses and imported wines.
Located in the heart of Thamel, 10pm.
Hotel Nepal (0141 407 7775)

**Chandragiri Hills**
Chandragiri Resort is a lush green hill overlooking Kathmandu Valley.
Catch glimpses of snow-capped mountains, manicured gardens, and spend a day in their infinity pool before the summer ends.
Thursday, 01 September (0147 492 07)

**The Last Resort**
With the leaves beginning to change, the exciting possibilities of summer are far away.
Select the last of the sunny days by bungee jumping, sandboarding or white-water rafting.
Bhimesh, Sundhara (0147 492 07)

**The Famous Farm**
The three-story restaurant hotel is known to keep secrets of its traditional architecture and rich natural history will take you back to a time beyond our own.
Kawserbazar, Lalitpur (01489 671)

**Scotia Westend Premier**
Located in the green plains of Nepalgunj, this resort hotel is one of Nepal’s most energy efficient and eco-friendly getaways.
Nepalgunj (081) 271 685

**Retreat at Damaar**
Located at Damaar is a humble stay within the heart of Kanpur.
This getaway is ideal for those seeking peace of mind, sacrumous food and a home away from home.
Sunderbans, Jharia, 98416/0490

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**MUSIC**

**GETTING THERE**

**DINING**

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**AIR QUALITY INDEX**

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Freak me out!

There’s at least one bombshell in Far Out, an engaging history of Nepal’s tourism

Marty Logan

Always read the footnotes, someone once told me. I hadn’t followed that advice—I would not have learned that in 1968 an American-British expedition, led by a nuclear-powered sensing device, an ascent in the Himalayas along the Nepal-Afghan border. Five pounds of plutonium were gone: ‘When it contained a boulder as big as an apple, it will contaminate much of north India’s water supply.’

So writes March Leslie in Far Out: Countercultural Seekers and the Tourism Encounter in Nepal, a history of the evolution of the country’s visitor industry. Other facts in the book that might surprise those with just a passing knowledge of Nepali history:

The legendary and immensely well-connected adversary and Royal Hotel owner Boris Johnson, sometimes called the ‘father of tourism in Nepal,’ died penniless in a public ward in Durbar Hospital on 20 October 1985.

Everest pioneer Tenzing Norgayalmost made it to the summit with a Swiss expedition in 1952, which turned back just 300 feet from the peak. But Norgay’s first summit attempt was in 1967 with an unauthorised ‘ultra-light’ Canadian climber, Earl Feenman, from the Tibet side.

A rivalry of sorts existed between hippies living in Bouddha and those in Swayambhunath. ‘It was a little like the Fields and the McGovts.’ Leslie quotes one author writing in reference to the two competing, but interlinking, feeding families, ‘except that the Westenisers in Sotha were too much back and the Westeners in Swayambhunath were too stoned to ever do anything about it.’

On 16 July 1973, the Nepal Government banned the sale of pot. The next day a fire started in Sanga Durbur that burned for three days and destroyed half of the seat of government. Lord Shiva was not happy, observers noted.

Much more than a collection of entertaining facts and anecdotes, Far Out situates tourism in Nepal in a global context. It starts with the trickle of wealthy (mostly) Americans who flew in after royal rulers opened up the country’s doors in 1960, followed by the well-told story of the hippies.

Disillusioned with western society and seeking a deeper meaning in life, they journeyed overseas from Europe to India to then northward, congregating first in Maro Hill, in later years Freak Street, and then Thamel. Finally, came the trekkers, who nestled in on increasingly larger and cheaper flights, seeking an adventure experience just as Nepal’s leaders realised that tourism could be a game-changer for the economy.

In their own words, argues Leslie, all of these different tourists were nourished by deep streams of Western desire for meaning and healing (founded) in the Himalayas and Himalayan people. Yet, he adds, tourism should not be measured by its impact on Nepal but as an encounter between Nepalistas and the rest of the world.

Malcolm, a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Leslie backs up his thesis with impressive references and quotes from locals but assembles his information with a light touch in an immensely readable story. He quotes a merchant: ‘What we would call hippies they called hippies. I mean, they had a free life, living this blissful existence, worrying about nothing, not even money. They used to eat as much as they wanted, smoke ganja as much as they wanted. We Nepalis drink hooch and go crazy but [with ganja] they would just get peaceful and quiet.

The numerous quotes from Nepal are among the strengths of Far Out, published in 2017 but released in South Asia last month by Martin Chauvat in Kathmandu. One of the few Nepalis ‘hippies’, Wilkes Shrestha remembered walking down New Road in the early 1970s and seeing relatives approaching — they would quickly cross the street.

‘It wasn’t because I had done anything. It was because I was breaking the rules, the norms by which a Nepali woman—a good Nepali woman—was supposed to live. So the fact that, “Oh my god, she’s smoking dope! She’s been seen with the hippies! She’s having a drink openly!”

After the government’s 1973 ban on pot, ‘the counterculture still flocked to Nepal... but the writing was on the wall and it said, with growing clarity, Hippie-Go-Home,’ wrote Leslie. This period of tourism was replaced by government policy that produced new brochures, maps and hotels. An increasingly conservative world clouded by a global recession, travel was also changing—career-focused and responsible and they were preoccupied with time. Fewer and fewer people were interested in the journey — the Kerouac-inspired experience of life on the road. Rather than pursuing travel as an end in itself, people were now focused on destination-specific activities.

And for Nepal: ‘If Freak Street had been a lack, Thamel meant getting down to business, a business that transformed tourists from foreign curiosities to extractive resources.’

Tales from roads less travelled

In By the Way of the Border: Travels around the frontiers and byways of Nepal, Maximillian Morch tells the story of not just Nepal’s mountains but of the people who call them home, using descriptions that paint a vivid picture of his experiences and help the reader to experience the journey through his eyes.

Morch chronicles the adventures around the byways (the holy hidden valley) of Nepal, ranging from Kalanga to Hile, during his time as a postgraduate student at Trinity University in 1977.

Filled with extensive background research of the places he visited and of their inhabitants, the book acts as an abridged history that spans both the social and geographical changes of the region. Morch also covers the symbols and history of the traditions practiced by the people he meets, which could be useful to foreigners who wish to learn more about Nepal beyond Kathmandu.

The book is structured according to the regions Morch visits, with a geographical aspect as the focus of each chapter. This makes the book an easy read and also allows for quicker comparison of the places he visits. Each chapter also contains photos taken by Morch, which helps readers to visualize his journey and provides a feel of the place.

While remaining reflective of his position as an outsider, Morch also shares his personal experience and his interactions with the locals, which allows him to make interesting observations about the various places and people he encounters. For example, he acknowledges the rose-tinted glasses view the romanticizations he associates, a position he argues most westerners share when writing about their experiences of the mountains.

Although he intends it to be a collection of tales from his journeys, Morch’s book does not fit into a particular genre. The mixture of history, personal experiences and observations does not make it a coherent read but rather a Khalid (miscellaneous) that seems to contain all the right elements for a good book, but which is unable to balance them.

Moreover, while he certainly is more thoughtful about his interactions with locals than other western authors, there are numerous works where he comes back.

Kishah Lama

Lama is a freelance journalist who specializes in political, developmental and human rights issues in South Asia and South East Asia.

www.himlayanbank.com
The great feast of death

Right before by-elections for the seat in the Parliament, the corpse of a man called Disheshwar or ‘Bibu’ is found below a bridge in Sitapok. Educated and swarthy young dalit farmers raise their voices for this man. That is bow the drama Mahabharat starts.

Bibhu has been murdered, but parties politicise his death. Journalists try to take advantage of the situation. Police are complicit with the political parties. Bibhu’s friend Billoo knows the murderer, but the police compel to frame Billoo himself to hide the culprits.

Leaders are merely enjoying a feast, sharing the stage with the dead Bibhu. This is a stark scene depicting how leaders make pawns of ordinary people, and entrench injustice. The crook of the story is how powerful people make fun of the dreams of the poor and innocent.

The drama is based on a novel of the same name by Indian writer Manzur Bhanderi. Written in 1979, it begins with the murder of a dalit youth just when local and central-level elections are approaching. Bhanderi himself converted the novel into a play, and poet Vijay Pratik translated it into Nepali. Pratik says the novel, written 46 years ago, is still relevant in Nepal.

“This drama shows the impact on society when the 10% — politicians, press and police — are corrupt,” he says.

“Vultures are circling a corpse, dancing as they devour it,” says the first paragraph of the novel. Critic Pooja Talad devas says that writer Manzur Bhanderi has evoked volumes as politicians benefitting from murder. The play is also a satire on an opportunistic bureaucracy. Says director Anup Baral: “A drama should not just give a message, but also portray reality correctly. It should be able to communicate to the audience and raise questions and curiosity.”

The performance, which is playing to packed halls, shows ordinary people become hostages and playthings of the media, politics and police. Director Baral says the play is a socio-critical rather than revolving around characters or events like most dramas, while presenting a realistic story in a poetic way.

Actor Suresh Budhathoki plays central character politician Ramesh Bhattarai. “My character shows how a clever politician can turn the situation to his advantage,” he notes. Actress Srijana Subba makes an impact as an honest, pro-poor police officer and says her character is meant to show that being pregnant is not untenable.

The play also includes contemporary songs by the poet Vijay Pratik. Strong acting by Dayasung Rai, Bishnu Tamang, Rajan Khatriwada, Vijay Pratik and Vriona Pratik brings the play alive.

Nunuta Rai
Machhia, Mandala Theatre, Kathmandu
5:30 PM, 8th Oct

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FRESH FIGURES: Suman Rai Aryal, Director General of the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), and Numa Asutam, CBS Representative of JICA Nepal, release the National Economic Census 2018 at the CBS on Sunday.

FREQUENT FLYERS: Captain Vijay Lama and a Nepal Airlines crew pose in Japan before the airlines’ inaugural Embraer E190 flight from Kathmandu to Fukuoka on Sunday.

ANIMAL PLANET: Nairit Sreeta Shrestha at a protest against the mass killing of dogs in Sikkim and the death of cows in Guwahati this week.
How ill is Prime Minister Oli?

Ramu Sapkota

Prime Minister KP Oli is returning to Nepal on Friday after his second trip in a month to Singapore for medical treatment. Nepali politics has been in wait-and-see mode as the head of government is away for extended periods. Oli has tried to keep in touch via conference calls, but his party and government are currently on autopilot.

Oli had spent 3-12 August in Singapore, but faced complications and returned on 22 August (pictured sight at Kathmandu airport with his wife Radhika Shakya). This time, he got his seventh glaucoma procedure at the National University Hospital, and is said to be improving.

Rumours are flying because even as the country's chief executive battles a serious medical condition, government and party channels have said little about the state of his health.

On 26 August, Nepal Communist Party (NCP) co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal informed a meeting of the party’s central secretariat that the prime minister would be undergoing glaucoma surgery. Dahal, a top leader told us: "If he responds well to the treatment, the PM will stay in Singapore for another week, if the treatment is not working, further decisions will be taken based on the hospital’s suggestions."

The suggestion could be a transplant of either Oli's previous kidney, or the one that he got from a donor—depending on which one is not performing.

Oli is accompanied by his wife, Chief Political Advisor Bibhu Rimal, Personal Physician Divya Singh Shah, Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali and NCP General Secretary Bishnu Prasad. According to him in Singapore, this week, and will fly back with Oli on Friday.

Below he left, Oli confidently declared that he would be back to celebrate Constitution Day on 20 September, and looked out at detractors, saying he would be in politics for 15 more years.

After both of his kidneys failed, PM Oli had one kidney transplanted in India's Apollo Hospital in 2007. Transplanted kidneys work for 8-20 years, but antibodies can reject the organ, which is why plasmapheresis is needed. If Oli needs another transplant, he may have to go to India after returning to Nepal.

Neither political advisor nor physician Shah responded to queries about Oli's health on Yiber. Physician Shara noted Oli had to go to Singapore because there is no plasmapheresis machine in Nepal. The PM stayed only nine days in hospital on his last trip to Singapore, though doctors had advised him to stay a week or more.

A hectic lifestyle after returning led to a steep decline in his health. Despite official assurances that he was ok, the second trip fuelled rumours that his condition was much more serious.

The Prime Minister did not refer to his health when he addressed Parliament on 18 August. He flew to Singapore after participating in several high-profile meetings in Panchayat, including with Indian Minister for External Affairs S Jaiswal. Doctors say a patient whose kidneys are failing should be resting at least six hours a day. People with kidney diseases have low immunity and need to watch their health. But Oli has a habit of not listening to medical advice, and carrying on in the belief that he can be well with sheer will power.

Last Dearth, he gave tips to visitors for four straight days, after which he had to be hospitalised with a respiratory infection. During the 2017 election campaign, his hands and feet got infected. After his health failed to improve despite taking medicines for two months, he was taken to Grande Hospital, which referred him to Max Hospital in Delhi.

The PM’s health problems stem from extended periods in jail as a political prisoner, of which he spent nearly 16 years in solitary confinement during the Panchayat. Hypertension and insufficient water intake in jail possibly led to the failure of his kidneys.

Meanwhile, the PM’s prolonged illness has led to an internal power struggle in the ruling party. Gagan Thapa of the opposition NC told Parliament on Wednesday Oli should step down as PM.

"It is not in the national interest for the country’s leader to be away for so long and run the country via Skype. Thapa said. "He has played an important role, but it would be better to retire on grounds of poor health. "

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So, you want to quit Facebook?

It is not easy, but you will be happier if you do

Reeti K C

Just after waking, the first thing many people across the world, and increasingly in Nepal, do is pick up their mobile phones. Social media now connects not just people, but is deeply rooted in our everyday lives. It has become an addiction, a cure for boredom, a source of information (and entertainment), a new form of escapism.

Research has shown that social media addiction is an established mental health condition. This week, US lawmakers introduced a bill that would require platforms to deactivate algorithms designed to keep users hooked to their sites.

Symptoms of internet addiction are insomnia, irritability, lack of appetite, difficulty in focusing on the task at hand, and distraction. Addicts have a hard time making even simple decisions or taking action because there is too much to consume; it can also divert them from what’s really important.

As a result, the number of people who want to disconnect and deactivate their social media accounts (‘commit Facebook suicide’) is growing even in Nepal.

“I was using many social media platforms. Choosing the right one to post my content was becoming overwhelming. Then there was the pressure to keep posting content. I shared my personal feelings online, but it was a false sense of security,” recalls Manoj Bohora, who decided to take the 30-day No Social Media Challenge in February.

“I took part to see what would happen if I totally disconnected. It takes 28 days to get rid of the habit, and I wanted to change desperately,” he recalled.

Bohara was social media manager for International Youth Media Summit and being online was a part of work. Now, he gets around it by scheduling posts weeks ahead. He says the 30-day challenge helped him re-connect with friends and family in real time and improved his concentration. He started using reliable websites for information rather than being dependent on friends’ posts.

Today, Bohara uses only Facebook and Instagram, and limits online time to under 15 minutes daily. “In the long run, I think I will quit social media altogether, but I am not sure yet,” he smiles.

As far back as 2001, Norwegian anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen published, ‘Tyranny of the Moment: Fast and Slow Time in the Information Age’, analysing Internet consumption. But that was even before Facebook, Twitter, and all the other apps that came later. In a research paper, Eriksen claimed human beings were “in the process of becoming enslaved by the technology that was supposed to liberate us”. That was then. Nearly two decades later, things have gotten much worse.

The rapid spread of mobile phones in the past five years means that more and more people are seeking instant gratification through their devices. More than 99% of households in Nepal have mobile phones, some have several, and 92% of individuals have one. Nearly all Nepalis who use the Internet do so with their smartphones (see adjoining article).

According to Madhav Acharya from Shreicast Initiative, which conducted a social media survey of Nepal last year, the number of social media users is also rising. Some 98% of Internet users are on Facebook, 45% are on Messenger and 34% use YouTube. Although the numbers are smaller for Twitter, there is a multiplier effect because its users are opinion-makers and influencers.

But even Acharya says he has felt the impact of Internet addiction, and is thinking

Device ownership of households at provincial level

- Mobile
- Desktop/Computers

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Enter the world of furnishing...
Nepal’s new digital landscape

Nepalis are now increasingly in control of the media content they consume thanks to the proliferation of mobile devices, better internet connectivity and new media platforms.

A survey conducted in 2018 showed that 90% of Nepal’s own mobile devices, with half of them producing smartphones when asked. 85% of households have mobile phones, for an average 2.5 devices per home. Nearly everyone uses mobile phones to access the internet.

These results are from the Nepal Media Survey 2018, which queried 4,129 respondents in 42 districts. A summary of the survey, conducted by Sharechat Initiative, was published in this paper in April, and is now available in book form.

With 80% of respondents using Facebook frequently, it comes as no surprise that 7.5 million Nepalis are on the platform today, while 43% are on messenger and 35% on IMO for instant messaging between friends and relatives. YouTube is also popular, with 34% using it on a regular basis.

Twitter has a much smaller following in Nepal but influences, academics and more users and shakers are progressively using it to wield power online. This trend is only likely to rise with affordable 3G and 4G services and expansion of broadband Wi-Fi service across the country.

Sysballs are shifting to online media at a rapid pace. Nepalis are now using Facebook not only to connect with near and dear ones but increasingly as a source of news and information. While very few trust social media content, networking sites are no longer confined to personal sharing but are being adopted by politicians and activists for their campaigns. This has larger implications for Nepal society, politics and development.

Radio continues to be the main source of local information, with 49% tuning in regularly for news bulletins, but this is catching up. Surprisingly, 58% said they consider neighbours and friends as a key source for local news and information. This number falls considerably when it comes to national and international news, where TV is preferred.

TV is the most accessed form of mass media in Nepal, with 60% of households owning a set, whereas only 28% of households have a functioning radio. But more people listen to radio than on their phones than on a radio set.

Legacy media continues to hold its own against online portals for now, but newspaper readership in Nepal is fast shrinking and is limited to major centres. Distribution is a major hurdle – 59% of respondents said they did not read newspapers and magazines because they were not available in their area.

With alternative methods to access news, publication houses lamenting the decline of traditional print media might want to invest in better online and multimedia content to hold the interest of readers whose attention span is declining by the day. This is further proven by the fact that Nepalis are ambivalent about the content of all mass media. The good news is that Nepal media is generally reliable. Among the respondents who regularly accessed TV, radio and newspapers, most trusted the content. And although most get their information on the Net, very few trust it.

Notable points:
- The 16-24 age group and those with Bachelors degrees are the heaviest consumers of all types of media.
- Nepalis have the highest access to all media except radio, whereas Tarai Dalits have the least access.
- Women lag behind in access to all media.
- As expected, media saturation is highest in Province 3 while mobile is least accessed in Province 5.

Sonia Awale
Nepal Media Survey 2018
Nectar Survey of Nepali Media’s Landscape
Sharechat Initiative Nepal
Rs1,000 (Inclusive) Rs50 (Exclusively)
Paper: 50

Most used applications

While browsing internet, what applications do you use most?

Don’t ignore Tooth sensitivity

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Fly-By-Night Airways

The trend in international civil aviation these days is low-cost, no frills airlines like Ryan Air (pronounced “Lion Air” in Thailand). Thank heavens that in Nepal, despite derogation, our domestic airlines haven’t stooped that low. Our carriers will never sacrifice friendly in-flight service to undercut rivals by getting into a suicidal price war. No sir, our airlines cartel has opted to keep fares high and slash services instead.

It speaks volumes about our sense of commitment to comfortable and reliable air transportation that Nepal’s no-budget airlines would rather make passengers pay through their noses than provide them unnecessary luxuries while going from Point A to Point B.

When domestic flights first started in Nepal, passengers got to eat actual meals. As time went on, they got rid of the same. The next to go were peanuts, then they took away the bar bags, and finally they got rid of the co-pilots.

Nepal is also one of the few places in the world where VIP’s can take SUV right up to the plane, but they have to first prove to security personnel on duty that they have contributed in some measure to ruining the country. Next time, ex-prime ministers should take the rungs because some of them look more airworthy than the aircraft they board.

For a time, airlines used to offer us the luxury of pre-flight cotton wool and candy. The cotton goes into your ear canal and the sugar goes into your alimentary canal, or is it the other way around? But as a cost-cutting drive and to avoid further confusion on the 12-minute Kathmandu-Simara shuttle these days, they pass around chewing gum, which you are supposed to stuff into your ears after chewing, thus saving the airline industry lakhs of rupees a year.

Increasing fuel prices mean no-frill airlines are even less frilly, stripping their planes of everything except the bare minimum required to defy gravity. All seats have been taken off flights to and from Pokhara on Cessna 123, but premium passengers on Royal Unnconic Air can sit cross-legged on step stools on the floor at the front of the cabin.

Toilets have been done away with, but a hatch is available for in-flight emergencies. (Not to be used while flying over open defecation free districts of Nepal.) In the run-up to Dasain, gasts will be allowed on board as carry-on luggage provided they do not exceed the dimensions of the overhead racks.

If they do, the gasts will have to be sacrificed on the spot prior to boarding.

“Ladies and gentlemen, in a few moments we shall be landing in Simara. Please stand in an upright position and bang on the overhead luggage. Please stow the guma you are chewing in your ear canal at this time. Thank you for choosing Fly-by-Night Airways.”

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