Prime Minister KP Oli’s new health emergency on Tuesday has threw off his meticulously crafted plan, and added a sense of urgency to the question of his succession.

After doctors advised him to get a second kidney transplant earlier this month, Oli had put his house in order, appointing loyalists to the cabinet and changing advisers. He planned to leave for a transplant abroad as soon as a donor was identified. Sources said two female relatives were undergoing matching tests. But on Tuesday he was rushed to hospital for an appendectomy.

His condition has improved, and doctors say a transplant is now out of the question for several months. He will need regular dialysis for the time being.

Since his decade in jail in the 1970s right up to the current prime ministership, Oli is known to ignore doctors’ orders to rest. But close aides say it is also this strong personal drive that makes him ride out health emergencies. This time, the combination of kidney and other ailments may complicate recovery.

Oli recorded an interview at noon in Baluwatar for Bhusan Dahal’s Fireside show on Kantipur TV (pictured, above), 12 hours before he was hospitalized. Dahal said the prime minister looked alert: “In fact, I had expected him to be more frail, but he was jovial and perfectly fit.”

About his health, Oli underplayed his kidney problems, telling Dahal: “Dialysis takes time, but I am right back to work. It is a normal process. I will be around for another 15-20 years.”

In the interview he also took a dig at co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal, with whom he had agreed to look after the government while Dahal headed the party. But Oli told Fireside “We are both caretakers, but in seniority I am more senior, and he is the other chair.”

On Thursday, the PM tweeted that he was “recovering rapidly” and thanked well wishes (left).

Party insiders say the time may be near for Oli to step down, but it is the prospect of handing over the prime ministership to Dahal that is making him hold on. Former water resources minister Dipak Gyawali says the NCP never really unified, and that fissures have started to appear between the former UML and ex-Maoists.

He adds: “This is going to be a Subhash type succession in which every contender has dirt on the other, so you either win or you are a dead loser.”
BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

ONLINE PACKAGES

WHAT'S TRENDING

BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS

POLITICS is dirty. The manpower business is dirtier. Nothing can change the difference of life or death for hundreds of thousands of desperate Nepalis seeking work overseas.

Labour Minister Gokarna Bista (picture) worked last week in the cabaret supperhouse by Prime Minister KP Oli under pressure from foreign employment mania—the cartel of unscrupulous middlemen who profit from the blood, sweat and tears of fellow Nepalis. The recruiters had been paying him for his help over since Bista started dismantling the corrupt system that profited from exploiting and abusing workers.

Immediately after the minister’s removal, the Nepalese Association of Foreign Employment Agencies (NAFEA) published a press release warning the government’s department of foreign employment management to desist from any future consultation with them. Is it that easy? You bet. But not as powerful as the mafia is that can go against intimidating the state.

What is move, NAFEA’s blatant warning was a net- small-yetta ‘subject’ you are not. Reminders to Bista’s success, Ranawat Rai Yadav, Rather than to obstruct their next- seeking activities by using Bista’s reforms.

Prime Minister Oli himself carried out his long- sworn rebuke to address public disillusionment with his administration’s failure of governance. Given that honest heads- rolled, politicians with questionable reputation were legislated, current and former state workers were retained, the intention was to consolidate Oli’s position ahead of his prolonged absence for health reasons.

By sacking Gokarna Bista, the Oli administration has sent a clear message that predatory recruiters are free to exploit poor Nepali workers as much as they want, exploiting their desperation for job. Bista's non-stop initiative may have been difficult to enforce not just for Nepal but for all labour-sending countries faced with this shared challenge. But his departure, the Oli administration has sent a clear message that predatory recruiters are free to exploit poor Nepali workers as much as they want, exploiting their desperation for jobs.

On 21 November, Bista walked out of Singh Darbar after his farewell dinner and took a taxi home. This tested public opinion and public relations were fully validated by the output of shock statement on social media. His own words to his steady team and gathered media: “The post of a minister is temporary. Life itself is temporary. I am coming out of this with more inspiration and vigour to serve the country.”

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RETURN OF THE GHARIAL

The nearly extinct Gharial has been found to be breeding in the wild for the first time in nearly four decades in Nepal’s Bardia National Park, giving new hope for conservation of the critically endangered species. See photos and video of the breeding pair, page 8.

Gharial, Gharial, Gharial

Bina Khatri

RETURN OF THE GHARIAL

THE REALITY

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DISCOVER MORE: MALTA

with the airline that flies to more countries than any other
Turkish marks 6 years serving Kathmandu

Turkish Airlines Kathmandu celebrated its 6th year of operations between Istanbul and Kathmandu on Saturday 24 November with a gala event at Dakshinkali Resort. The only country spanning two continents, Turkey has long served as a bridge for people travelling from east to west and vice-versa. So it is appropriate that Turkish Airlines is the only European airline flying to and from Kathmandu, connecting Nepal to its 385 world destinations via its Istanbul hub. It has been called Asia’s second-largest carrier and the airline is taking advantage of Turkey’s location to become one of the world’s largest carriers.

"For the past six years we have been bridging Nepal with the rest of the world, through our ever-expanding fleet and flight network. We will continue to be the main supporter for Nepal’s tourism and trade," said Turkish Airlines General Manager for Nepal, Abdullah Turker Kose, pictured, adding about the carrier’s hopes to continue to make it easier for Nepalis to travel.

Turkish Airlines was voted the best airline in Europe, and serves an important link for Nepal-bound tourists, businessmen, Kathmandu-based embassies and other Nepali diaspora because it's the only carrier that connects Nepal directly to Europe. (NRC's) advantage is its location, which is ideal for short and long-haul passengers for flights travelling between Nepal and South America, Australia, North America and the Far East. It's just a one-stop-shop from anywhere in the world.

Last month, after its overnight flight from Istanbul’s old airport to its new one, known as the 'Great Gatwick,' Turkish passengers now have much more efficient transfers and connections. With three of the airport's six concourses and the four of the five catwalks complete, the airport is well on its way to becoming the world’s busiest. By 2025, Turkish’s F-q wing will have a 500-aircraft fleet serving 465 cities around the world.

Most passengers flying Turkish Airlines to and from Kathmandu transit 70 million sq km in terminal with five gates and 45 boarding gates, so the airline is promoting Nepal tourism in Istanbul, encouraging Nepali visitors to visit the country or take advantage of stopovers en route to other destinations.

Turkish passengers can get city tours or take flights if the time between flights is more than 9 hours for business and 12 hours for economy. Those with round-trip tickets and connection periods of at least 20 hours can get a stopover privilege of a free one-night stay in a 4-star hotel (economy class passengers) or 2 nights in a 5-star hotel (business class passengers) in Istanbul.

At the new airport we are going passengers to and from Nepal much more comfortable and better, with better connectivity during the COVID-19 period," Abdullah (Turker) noted.

The gala anniversary event was attended by members of the Kathmandu-based business and diplomatic community, travel trade executives and premium members of Turkish Airlines’ Miles & Smiles loyalty program.

A Turkish Airlines chef was on hand to add culinary delights like baklava and sahlep to the afternoon, as guests enjoyed prawns, desert felafel, a treasure hunt and grill. Grand prizes included business class and economy roundtrip tickets to any Turkish Airlines destination, package tours to Istanbul, Turkey and dinner with vouchers from various hotels in Kathmandu.
Nepal rises in Prosperity Index

Nepal has risen in this year’s overall prosperity rankings, but is still the 22nd poorest out of the 29 countries in Asia-Pacific.

The London-based Legatum Institute’s 2019 Prosperity Index released on Monday analyses 167 countries around the world on 12 different measures of prosperity, from economic metrics to safety and security, personal freedom, health, education and living conditions.

The index shows that Nepal is currently ranked 11th in the world for overall prosperity, a rise of 13 places since 2009.

“Over the last decade, Nepal has seen the biggest improvement in safety and security, in which it rose from 158th to 78th globally, but it has also seen improvements across the other institutional pillars of personal freedom and social capital,” said Shaun Flanagan, Director of the Mexico Team at The Legatum Prosperity Index, which is issued every year.

However, despite an improvement in Nepal’s economic quality, the openness of the economy has stagnated, and consequently the country has fallen from 117th to 130th in the world rankings in the last 10 years.

Personal freedom is important for a country to be prosperous. The personal freedom pillar incorporates elements such as freedom of assembly and association, freedom of speech, absence of legal discrimination and social tolerance. This is Nepal’s strongest pillar, ranking 67th in the world. The country basks the global trend of decline in personal freedom over the past decade, and its improvement has resulted in it moving up 14 places in the rankings,” Flanagan told Nepal Times.

The 2019 index reveals that global prosperity is at its highest ever level, with 148 out of 167 countries experiencing greater prosperity than a decade ago — mostly in the Asia-Pacific. This increase has been driven by more open economies and better health, education, and living conditions around the world. However, weaker personal freedom and deteriorating governance are holding back further improvements in prosperity, finds the index.

Nepal’s peace process, and freedoms guaranteed in the new constitution are positive factors, but the country needs to work on improving its investment climate and protecting its environment, the Institute says.

adds Flanagan: “With the strong improvement seen in safety and security, Nepal is well set to build upon this and strengthen other areas of prosperity.

In particular, Nepal could improve its prosperity by strengthening its investment environment and enterprise conditions, as well as improving the quality of its natural environment, all of which have seen a decline over the past decade.”

Flanagan added that a nation is genuinely prosperous when it has effective institutions, an open economy, and empowered people — all three domains are important. However, safety and security is the foundation of any successful nation building, as it enables the other pillars of prosperity to follow.
Michihara-san: a life devoted to Nepal

Takashi Michihara, who died on 24 November at age 85, first came to Nepal in 1962, and never left. He saw vast potential in this country, invested in many landmark hotels, married a Nepali woman, became a Nepali citizen, and when he saw politicians ruining the country he contested the 2008 elections to try to change things. He lost that election, but never lost hope. He was always swimming with ideas, and listening to this tenacious Nepalese of Japanese descent one wished he would one day become prime minister of his adopted country. Michihara’s office featured a map of Nepal that was a blueprint for the country’s infrastructure-led development. An east-west electric railway artery linked to north-south feeder roads with tunnels, and cable-cars to hilltop tourist sites. He wanted to shift Nepal’s capital to Chitwan to reduce the pressure on the Kathmandu Valley. He had master plans for hydropower, tourism and water supply.

These perfectly do-able plans were in the manifestos of the Nepal National Development Party that he founded. The party failed to win even a single seat in the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections, but Michihara kept trying to change Nepal’s faultsie culture by setting an example with hard work and putting the national interest first. Over the course of his life, the jovial Japanese traveled across most of Nepal’s 77 districts, and got to know Nepal better than most Nepalis. He felt the country’s challenges were not insurmountable with vision and hard work they could be overcome. He also believed that the older failed politicians should give way to younger blood, and he tried to monitor the next generation of politicians through his party. Michihara set up Tame Himalayan Tours and built the iconic Hotel Everest View at 3,600m in 1973, even getting permission from the government to buy out an airstrip in Syangja. He established the Himalaya Hotel in Patan, and was already bringing 1,000 high-end Japanese tourists to Nepal in the 1960s. He was working on his life-size dream project, Annapurna View Hotel in Sarangkot, till his last days.

Michihara always felt that tourism held the key to Nepal’s development, and told this paper over: “Tourism will not only increase national income but also help Nepal become self-sufficient. This means using Nepal’s natural resources like rivers and forests and moulding them for tourism purposes, and also harnessing their potential through hydropower generation and transportation.”

Michihara dreamt big, and tried to get other Japanese officials excited about tourism, infrastructure, energy and nature conservation. He was met with distaste, but that never deterred him.

He told Nepali Times in another interview in 2015: “The public must be aware of the political failure that led to this. Bureaucrats don’t take decisions and just shift responsibility. There is greed, and society lacks a moral compass.”

Takashi Michihara’s attempt to change Nepal’s political culture remains unfinished. But there are many young Nepalis who he inspired, and who will build the future of new Nepal.

He was survived by his wife and daughter, and by his daughter Sonia Michihara. “My father wanted to be cremated near Mt Everest. The Himalayas is where his heart is.”

Kunda Dixit

For Information activist and community media proponent Vinaya Kasajoo died on 26 November in Kathmandu at age 72. Kasajoo devoted his career to transparency and accountability in government through a free press. Starting his career in Madan Pithakar of Palpa, he was a pioneer of community radio and rural communications for development. It was in recognition of his contribution that the government appointed him founding chair of the National Information Commission, where he pushed for greater transparency in government via freedom of information. This set a historic precedent for others to use this provision. He also served for a time as director of the National News Agency (RNA).

In later years, Kasajoo became known as a writer of children’s literature, both translating English works into Nepali and writing 50 of his own books. He was suffering from hypertension and diabetes when he died at Mediciti Hospital.

Binaya Gurubacharya, 82

Nepal correspondent of the US-based Associated Press news agency for nearly four decades, Binaya Gurubacharya died last week in Kathmandu. Gurubacharya covered most of the landmark events in recent Nepalese history for the world through AP, from King Mahendra’s coup in 1960, the coronation of King Birendra, the 1980 referendum, the royal massacre of 2001 and the Maoist conflict. He was also on the frontlines of coverage of mountaineering expeditions in the Nepal Himalaya, and served as Kathmandu correspondent of the Japanese newspaper Mainichi Shimbun. Gurubacharya was a founding member, and president for a time, of the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NFEJ). NFEJ used the freedoms after 1990 to not just push environmental activism over issues like the Chobar Cement Factory and Arun III, but also to open up space for media coverage of other political and economic matters. Gurubacharya was suffering from Parkinson’s disease.
Manose Newa says of his music that longing is more precious than the fulfillment of longing.

When Manose Newa brings his bansuri flute to his lips, his entire demeanor changes. His shoulders relax and his elbows extend as his fingers move skillfully along the wooden instrument's length. Once he closes his eyes and the rich, fluid flute sound flows, the musician gets lost in his music. And along with him, so does the audience.

Manose, along with New Age musicians Deva Premal and Miton, has been nominated for a Grammy Award in the New Age Album category for his latest album, Deva. Manose is the first Nepali to be nominated for a Grammy.

Manose told Nepali Times: “Devaa and Miton were quite excited about the nomination, but when all the Nepali media started calling me in the middle of the night, I realised that this was not just our day but a day for Nepal and Nepalis.”

Manose met Deva Premal and Miton at a studio in San Francisco almost two decades ago. He was invited to play with them and was introduced to how religious mantras could be sung and produced in contemporary Western fashion. His bansuri fitted perfectly with their music and the trio have been collaborating and travelling together for 15 years.

“We have become family,” Manose added.

The seven-track album Deva takes the listener through a spiritual journey, beginning and ending with the familiar tones of the Gayatri Mantra, adopting a more meditative sound in contrast to the original percussion-heavy background.

Manose’s melodic flute, Deva’s spell-binding voice, Miton’s soothing low tones and the melody of the flute and contemporary instrumentation make the Sanskrit and Tibetan mantras even more enchanting, guiding listeners toward a tranquil state. Even as a solo artist, Manose’s music is gloriously enchanting, inviting listeners to close their eyes and reach into their inner selves to grasp the energy within.

Manose told this newspaper in an interview five years ago that he heard the haunting, resonant sound of the Bansuri at age eight and had been searching for it ever since.

This week we asked him: If he had found it.

His response: “I realised that the sound I longed for is a deeper sense is not a worldly sound. As a boy, I chased for that sound in empty fields of Bodhnath and Patan. Now I get to travel all over the world and I still long for it. In this phase in my life, I have come to realise that longing itself is precious — it may be even more precious than the fulfillment of that longing.”

— Sanghamitra Subba

Manose Newa says of his music that longing is more precious than the fulfillment of longing.
More than 100 gharial hatchlings were found in Bardia National Park

World’s rangers face.

I.

As many as 5 rangers may have been killed in Africa and Asia.

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The nearly extinct Gharial crocodile was found to be breeding in the wild on the Ganges River in nearly four decades in Nepal's Bardia National Park, giving new hope for conservation of the critically endangered species. See photos and videos of their breeding site.

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EVENTS

Our Planet
Our Planet is not only a visual masterpiece that captures the immensity of filming technology in wildlife documentaries, but also a warning for human beings about endangered habitats, species and the environment.
1 December, 6pm-7:30pm, Jyoti Mandir Kendra, Patan, 9801202694

Paragy Vaptzarova
During the upcoming Christmas market, Marina Vaptzarova’s beautifully designed and handcrafted stationary items and jewelry pieces will be available for purchase at dinner wear prices! The products are sustainable and unique for your needs.
8 December, Summit Hotel, Bagmati Height (35) 5557847

Appearance of Light
An unique art of life is a 16 art exhibition depicting the ray of Padmasambhava, Buddha master, through traditional and contemporary artistic styles. TIU November, 11am-5pm, Nepal Art Council, Bohor Mahal (35) 4207971

Christmas Bazaar
For some pre-Christmas merriment, come to TIU’s Fire & Christmas Bazaar. The mulled wine, gifts, decorations and carols will get you in the holiday spirit. 30 November, 9am-4pm, TIU, Thamel, 9865173844

Our World

Chatter talk
Gratids are one of the most interesting and strangest-looking animals in Nepal. Few remain, despite intense conservation efforts. Wildlife Conservation Society’s Phoebe Griffin will discuss her efforts to save the gruats in Chitwan National Park, and why you should love the animal as much as she does. Hosted by the Cultural Studies Group of Nepal.
30 November, 30am, Somehow, 485p (non members), Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat

Yin Workshop
Rejuvenate your mind and body at a Yin Yoga workshop. This is a slow-paced yoga that focuses on holding poses for a longer duration, breathing deeply and stretching out your muscles. Limited seats.
30 November, 9:30am-12:30pm, Yoga Studio Passion, Jomsho, 9818144070

Mary Poppins
SOLS Performing Arts presents the timeless tale of Mary Poppins. Start this dynamic musical and dance performance!
14 December, 4pm, Tickets: 800/- (adults), 400/- (children), Siles School, Khokana, 9863444964

Mary Poppins

Charlotte Jacobs
Brooklyn-based singer Charlotte Jacobs is performing songs from her latest album "Folklore." Her music's eastern classical tunes, Scandinavian sound and intelligent Carmen Musiek is bound to mesmerize.
25 November, 6:30pm-8pm, Tickets: 1500/-, Methal, Jomsho, (35) 5017827

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 21-22 November

Marina Vaptzarova
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8 December, Summit Hotel, Bagmati Height (35) 5557847

Mukti & Revival
Known for their fusion of blues and folk rock, Mukti & Revival has played all over the world. Bagged many prestigious music awards and government fellowships in base of young and old alike.
30 November, Tom anawake, toons Lounge Club, Jomsho, 9841967218

Funky Friday
Get a weekend groove with Funky Friday! Their joyous tunes and R&B undertones will have you unwinding in time for the weekend.
30 November, 5pm onwards, Electric Pagoda, Thamel (35) 4207131

Reggae Sundown
Enjoy an evening of ska, jamaica rhythms, folk tunes and Bob Marley music as you Reggae Sundown, a family-friendly music event.
30 November, 5pm onwards, Ati Restaurant, Gopi (35) 4211762

Sugam Pokhare
Sugam Pokhare established himself as a budding Nepali pop singer with his debut solo album. He will be performing along with The Sign Band and DJ Dhun.
3 December, 5pm onwards, Ananta Lounge & Cafe, Hardwar

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Garden Terrace
The Garden Terrace has a wide selection of international cuisines including Nepali, Indian, Continental, Chinese, Japanese and Italian. Bellini dedication from the hotel’s buffet spread or order a carte from the a-la-carte menu.
30 November, 12pm-10pm, Dolder Crowne Plaza, Thamel (35) 4273999

The Coffee Shop
For a good cup of coffee and freshly baked goods while the serene. The Coffee Shop is the place to be. Try their cranberry on your next visit.
Jomsho, Annapurna Hotel, Dohar Marg (35) 4227771

Lahka’s Chulo
Lahka’s Chulo has something and everything you might be craving. From Nepali daal bhat and Newari kheer to snacks like basil and Indian rosas, this eatery will not disappoint. Gain their dessert a try and you will be back for more.
Jomsho, (35) 5549496

Carpe Friyay
Ladies can enjoy unlimited free cocktails and gentlemen get two free beers for the price of one. Grab a drink while you listen to live music.
Every Friday, Jomsho, Hotel Annapurna, Dohar Marg, 9802025049

Casino Medow
What’s striking about this Mediterranean city is not just its fascinating authentic tales, but the warm and welcoming service. The owners are more than happy to walk you through the menu and make sure that you wait for varieties on the mouth-watering dishes (logo) cage. 2:30pm-9pm (except Saturdays), Gokarna and Patan, 9845435662

Our Pick

Relaxation & Rejuvenation

Opening in Kathmandu on 22 November
Matt Damon stars as Cardiff Deboy, an automotive visionary, who has been trained to create revolutionary cars for his firm, Deboy, along with car designer Mia (played by Christian Bale) and a team of American engineers, to build a car that he hopes will match a worldwide record set in the 1984 Le Mans race in California.

Weaver's Retreat

With over 30 years’ experience, Weaver’s Retreat’s Air Quality Index has remained remarkably above 115 most mornings. Even the daily average value is above 130. By afternoon, the breeze blows away some of the harmful pollutants below 2.5 microns, but the 2.5 RSDs still cause environmental health problems. The index in Kathmandu has not been exacerbated by high-altitude smoke from northern India for the latter half of this week after a strong monsoon in the region. Follow the Soup-up to K2 readings here: 7 Cimbi’s website monitoring station at Manakamana at www.cimbi.com.np

https://np.airqualitymonitoring.com/embassy/air-quality-monitoring/

Hotel Barahi
Located just beyond the banks of Phewa Lake, Hotel Barahi offers stunning views and luxurious rooms. The rooms are decorated with rustic pieces, earthy tones and a clean design that will leave you feeling relaxed.
Lakeside, Pokhara (35) 40672

Tuki Resort
With modern structures, dedicated service and comfortable rooms, Tuki Resort offers great accommodation at an affordable price.
Lakeside, Pokhara (35) 40650-406517

Pavilions Himalayas
This resort has Baghpati first lakeside, retained, luxury establishments offering every amenity you could possibly need. Their spa also has some of the best treatments, guaranteeing rest and relaxation.
Dhulikhel, Pokhara (35) 5828177

Himalayan Front Hotel
Sarangkot’s Himalayan Front Hotel is located atop Sarangkot, overlooking the Annapurna range and Phewa Lake. With luxury rooms, exhilarating sunsets and one of the best restaurants in Pokhara — The Summit Restaurant — this is the ideal place to unwind.
Sarangkot, Pokhara, 9809168370

Royal Palm Resort
An expat retreat that sits at a view away from the mountains. It offers “The Royal Palm Resort every guest has the luxury to enjoy the Annapurna range from the comfort of their beds.”
Kathmandu, Pokhara (35) 542407
Think locally, act locally
Local activists goad local governments to deliver services

Consider these events:
1. In May, residents and traders burned trees to block the Chabahil-Jeejal road, signalling their frustrations at long-delayed construction on the dusty, crater-filled stretch. They succeeded in sparking action, but after upgrading work stalled, protests erupted again last week in a bid to force the contractor to finish the job.

2. The road-blocking trend morphed into poster protests, where the faces of delinquent road contractors were plastered to poles and vehicles. This included Nagarkot, where contractor Shandra Prasad Adhikari, also the landlord of Nepal Communist Party Co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal, was targeted. The tactic spread further, with Mayur Shrestha, an NPC office-bearer, being publicly shamed last week.

3. Residents attempting to stop road-building in Baglung in October were turned on by an excavator operator, whose shock attack with the machine injured eight people. Attempted murder charges are pending.

4. In Itahari last week, locals clashed with police after seizing more than a dozen dump trucks and an excavator that were being used to gouge sand and rocks out of a local river. Residents of Charkhra in Dolakha district took to the streets last week to protest the lack of progress in repairing the Jhiri Highway. They blocked the main intersection to vehicular traffic for hours.

When local government elections were held in 2017 after a 20-year gap, hopes were high for improved service delivery at the community level. Unfortunately, at least here in the Kathmandu Valley, that hasn’t happened. But the sentiment that local government representatives ‘care’ about infrastructure development is long seen by many as the measure of the country’s development, and proving controversial. During the recent monsoon, newly constructed local roads were said to be the cause of many landslides, destroying homes, temporarily obstructing access to commercial centres and in some cases killing people. Partially built bridges collapsed when floodwaters swirled around their foundations. Given the lack of action — or in some cases oversight — by elected governments, it appears that local people have stepped in to fill the gap. Or could it be that the process of electing local officials also emboldened residents themselves to get active?

Both factors play a part, said Meghan Naish, Nepal Country Representative at The Asia Foundation and Bikash Adhikari, governance project lead, in a joint email interview.

“The recent instances of citizen activism appear to be a sign of filling a gap that is not being effectively filled by the local governments or any other higher authorities in the country. Citizens are now more aware of the process, or lack thereof, by their federal, provincial, and local governments as a result of free media reporting and an increasing access to and use of social media,” they wrote.

These information sources are also revealing “increasing collusion of political interests with local or national contractors,” say Adhikari and Naish.

In many cases local governments are not acting because there is confusion over which level of government is supposed to regulate such things as water and land, says Khum Raj Nepal, who was secretary in the former ministry of local development. The jurisdiction is shared among the three levels of government but there is a lack of clarity about the roles of each one, resulting in inertia and inaction.

“Governments commit to completing a particular project within a certain timeframe and budget, but when they do not deliver, and appear to be favouring other interests, people get frustrated,” adds Nepal.

Adhikari and Naish note that residents in some municipalities have been effective in convincing local governments to stop some plans, such as hiking local taxes and service fees, a trend that should grow. “Local governments would need to be more accountable and responsive,” they added.
Guru Rinpoche in a new light

An exhibition of contemporary art on Padmasambhava does not just revive the legend of the Buddhist guru, but also displays the wide variety of art practised in Nepal today. These artworks explore spiritual questions like the value of life, afterlife and a world beyond human experiences. Ten artists each bring their distinctive style to the personality of Padmasambhava, the Guru Rinpoche who mediated across the Himalayas, creating along the way what are now important pilgrimage sites. Known as the founder of Vajrayana Buddhism, Padmasambhava was a monk from India who travelled to Nepal to meditate among the mountains, and went on to Tibet. He is still highly revered by many Buddhist communities, including Newa and Tibetan Buddhists of Nepal.

"The teachings of Padmasambhava mark the third turning point in the evolution of Buddhism, and advocate the importance of a guru in attaining salvation," the exhibition wants to convey this particular message," says art critic Medan Chhatrasak. Many of the works in this Nepal Art Council exhibition depict the figure of the renowned Rinpoche, but it is the work of Iowo Omu Lama that stands out, with its Padmasambhava echoed in bright white lines against a deep red and black background. Departing from traditional colour palettes, Lama chooses a minimalist theme that gives the appearance of transience and transcendence. Sahil Bhupal paints a monastery in another planet, in the theme of past, present, and future. "In the past, I saw a monastery in Hisachil Prakash and Padmasambhava’s sculptures were peeling off. Today, it is being restored. Tomorrow I see the guru’s teaching finding new followers," explains the artist, whose work features silhouettes and modern technology in hologram.

Other artists have also experimented with the tangka form. Sunil Baku Karri ‘Putch’ portrays himself awakening with surprise to Padmasambhava’s light, and Sunil Lama paints Padmasambhava in traditional poses but against neutral backgrounds, as a symbol of timelessness. Bidyu Maharjan has depicted the guru, his vajra, and many other traditional items as an interplay between light and shadow and colour and form, which change as you gaze at them. Bidy Koithar presents Padmasambhava in a more angry form, via a faded painting. The exhibition includes sculptures and installation artwork. Sculptor Chandra Sivam Dangol provides a traditional interpretation of the guru, with simplified statues in beautiful, glowing black stone. He has also created abstract themes in stone and sand. Sushma Shaky has created an umbrella out of rubatokha beads.

"An umbrella signifies protection, and is often used over gods. An umbrella of rubatokha beads is meant to give protection to people and devotees," she says.

Exhibits artist Saroj Bajracharya, who also curated the exhibition, "We want to explore Padmasambhava’s message of compassion, which is central to our spiritual life," says Apann Bhattarai, Nepa Art Council until 1 December

OPEN HOUSE: US Ambassador Randy Berry and Minister for Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation Yogesh Shrestha jointly open the recently restored Cotdi Bahucka to the public for guided tours, in Kathmandu Durbar Square on Tuesday.

DEAL SCALED: World Bank Country Manager Tara H. Hladik-Barnes signs an agreement with Rupin Modal of the ministry of Finance on Wednesday to support employment and education services for Nepal.

RALLYING FOR A CAUSE: Cyclists, including global traveller Pashan Shah, took off on a rally to promote 32 days of action against gender-based violence in Kathmandu last week.

TEMPLE TEMPOS: President of the Indian Women’s Association, Namila Puri, hands over two 8-seater electric vehicles to Pradhu Dhakal of the Pushpa Devi Area Development Trust at Pushpa Devi Temple on Wednesday.

TAKE THAT: The Nepal women’s volleyball team defeats Bangladesh 3-0 in set straight in Kathmandu on Wednesday during a match off the 13th South Asian Games being held in Nepal.
Alarming rise in violence against women

Province 2 women seek justice

Ilda Devi Das of Janakpur has endured torture and abuse from her in-laws for not providing enough dowry when she got married. She complained to the police twice, but they only forced the couple to sign a pledge and sent them home. The abuse did not stop. Dasa complained again, but her in-laws got a day order from the district court.

Rita Devi Yadav of Dhanka, Mahottari district, registered a complaint against her husband and his family at the district police office, Dhanka, on 5 September. She accused them of physical and mental torture and of throwing her out of the house. Yadav then started living with her parents. She assured her father-in-law and brothers-in-law of not taking any criminal action. Yadav’s husband has gone into hiding after the complaint was filed. The couple has a 30-month-old son.

Shyam Mahato of Shastri Nagri in Dhanka beat his pregnant wife Khudia until she fainted, and then threw her in the river seven days ago. Mahato filed a complaint against his husband 5 days later, on 6 September. Khudia and her family then took her home a week later. Mahato was again admitted to the hospital this month when her baby was due. The baby was delivered with a cancerous section, but was in poor health. Her in-laws disappeared after they admitted her, saying her with Ksh. 300 in hospital charges per day. She gorged for food from other patients.

FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

Aijaya Amatari in
Himachal Pradesh, 24-30 November

Brutality against women exists in families across Nepal, but nowhere more so than in Province 2, police figures show. What is not so clear is whether gender-based violence is becoming more common in this plains province, or if better educated women are now taking complaints to the police.

Complaints of violence against women in the eight districts of Province 2 surged dramatically, from 602 three years ago to 10,243 in the past year. Most of the complaints involved dowry-related violence, polygamy, physical domestic violence against women, traffic accidents, and theft of property.

There were 125 murders of women in the past three years, mostly by drunk husbands or in-laws.

Province 2 police statistics show women are more unsafe outside homes than inside. In the past five months, 58 women who were driven from their homes due to domestic violence sought refuge in a shelter run by the Women’s Rehabilitation Centre (WIDREC) in Janakpur.

‘Women are unsafe everywhere, but the statistics for Province 2 look a lot worse,’ says Gunamata Mahato of the provincial police office.

Karki, chief of police in Karki, claims the number of crimes has increased because more people are reporting them.

Previously, people used to try and bash up crimes like rapes. But now more people are aware of the existence of the police, and we get all sorts of complaints,” Karki says.

Advocate Raksha Jha agrees: “Women have tried to hide these incidents in the past but are now coming forward with their testimonies. That is the reason the numbers look higher.”

Others, however, say that while there may be an increase in complaints, the number of incidents has also shot up because of new factors like the spread of social media, unregulated sale of alcohol, drugs and extramarital parasites in the still largely conservative region.

“The misuse of social media is contributing to violence against women,” says Raksha Thapa of the National Human Rights Commission, Kathmandu office.

‘Weak implementation of laws further encourages criminal tendencies. When perpetrators go free because of political pressure, it raises the confidence of those who prey on women. ’

Yagya Prasad Acharya of the district court in Dhanusha has a different take on the problem: “Now, men also have the right to file for divorce. In the past when only women could file for divorce, men hesitated to commit violence. Now that fear is gone.”

Court records show that abuse of social media was a cause in increasing cases of violence against women in the province. With the rise in female literacy, women are now more assertive, refusing to get married early, or if they do, brides are not as submissive towards in-laws as in the past.

Another reason for the rise in violence against women is mismatched marriages, activists say. Four families still try to marry their daughters into rich families by offering dowry, even by incurring large debts.

Dowry-related violence against young women is still a major cause of domestic violence — police records show that the number of incidents rose from 3,609 last year to 4,671 this year.

In the past three years the highest number of complaints about gender-based violence came from Bara and Parsa districts, and rape cases were most prevalent in Siraha, Saptari and Sarlahi.

Politicians at all three levels of government underline that ending violence against women and establishing gender equality is their priority. Province 2 Chief Minister Lall Badhak Kauti even announced the ‘Chief-Minister Educate Daughter, Save Daughter’ campaign, amidst much fanfare.

Padmin Prasad Pokharel, information officer in the province’s cabinet office, says the campaign is mainly focused on education. “The campaign aims to end child marriage through education — it is also working on women’s safety,” he says.

“The province’s ministry of social development is importing self-defence training to girls students of public schools, aiming to protect them from abuse, violence and rape. ‘The schools wrote to us saying the program was effective, so we are continuing it this year,’ Pokharel says.

In the past year the province spent Rs 1 million on self-defence training at schools, but it has taken no other initiative to reduce violence and crimes against women. At the provincial level, the ministry of internal affairs and law is in charge of the issue. ‘We are drafting a bill about controlling domestic violence and violence against women,’ says Surendra Mahato of the ministry.

“लोग, लालच र प्रलोभनमा नपरो अब: छैन्द्रक हिस्ना विरुध्द लगाइ सब।”
“लोग्को विरोध एक नयो स्वास्थ्यकोश।”
“नेपाल सरकार सन्तुष्ट तथा सुचिपत्र प्रसङ्गकक्ष सृजनाता सूचना विभाग।”

नेपाल सरकार सम्बन्ध तथा सुचिपत्र प्रसङ्गकक्ष सृजनाता सूचना विभाग।
Nepal villages cope with climate

Sonia Awale
in Kanchanpur

M
test research about climate impact in the Himalayas
deleads to receding snowlines and retreating glaciers.
A lot less is known about how farmers are managing with too
much—or too little—water due to the changing climate.

Recent floods and extreme rainfall have made floods more
destructive in recent years, and about 15 to 20 percent of
half of Nepal’s live is the
worst affected area. Rivers here are
carrying more silt more frequently,
submerging paddy fields and
washing away homes.

Disastrous floods in
the districts of Sauraha (2006), Barahi
and Bhusukh (2014), Nepali and
Rautahat (2017) and in eastern
Nepal earlier this year killed
hundreds of people and caused
colossal destruction. Damage from
floods caused by extreme weather
is exacerbated by encroachment on
floodplains, and road
embankments that block natural
draining channels.

“Unlike in the past, when we
used to have gentle showers
every other day during monsoon,
nowadays it does not rain for
weeks and when it does, it comes
down in destructive torrents,” says
Bai Sugrite Rana of Shikhapal Municipality
in Kanchanpur. He
points above his head to indicate the
level that water reached in the
great floods of 11 years ago that
forced farmers to abandon the village.

Farmers have now returned
and are not waiting for government help,
but taking their own measures to
reduce the threat of future floods.

With support from global
humanitarian organization Mercy
Corps, farmers like Rana in Kullali
and Kanchanpur have reduced the risk
of floods by planting bamboo
and napier grass on embankments
and riverbanks, known as
zabangi or swaths. Not
only are they now better protected
from future floods, the new crops
are earning them important
income.

Sugarcane is so resilient it can
grow in sandy floodplains, where its
stem and roots can reduce water’s
velocity and destructive force. The sugarcane
plant can also
survive for up to 10 days when
floodwaters descend.

“They said I was crazy when
I planted sugarcane in the sand,
but it has reduced the severity
of floods, the riverbanks are not
baren anymore and we earn money with
relatively little investment from
the sale of the cane to the sugar
factory,” explains Mangal Prasad
Chaudhary of the village
management committee.

In the nearby village of Tikili,
villages also plant pumpkin,
watermelon, banana, squash and
guards after floods recede—taking
advantage of nutrients deposited by flood
waters—which adds to their income. This has
discovered sugarcane and open
cattle grazing, which in turn
helps the vegetation to grow back
and provide an additional layer of
protection from the floods.

Now that the river has been
turned by barriers of galvanized walls,
sugarcane, bamboo and elephant
grass, the land is secure enough to
plant paddy, vegetables and other
cash crops.

“We earn an extra Rs60,000 per
year selling bananas, which has
been quite helpful in running the
household,” says Rajdevi Rana,
40, as she picks clusters of the ripening fruit from her family plot
next to the river.

Most of the rain in Nepal falls
in the three monsoon months of
July-September, and the rivers
are dry the rest of the year. The
climate crisis has exacerbated this
phenomenon, but with the help of
development organisations farmers
have learnt to adapt to the
new weather pattern.

“We did a lot of research to
come up with the solution of
combining flood risk reduction
with income generation,” explains
Sarj Kummar Thakuri of Mercy Corps
Nepal in Kanchanpur. “This is
now a working model that can be
replicated in other parts of the Tarai
suffering flood risk.”

Indeed, the Kanchanpur success
story can easily be up-scaled in
flood-prone districts like Rautahat,
Sarlahi and Mahottari, which faced
devastating floods in the recent
years.

The success of sugarcane,
banana and vegetable plantations
has even persuaded young farmers
who had planned to go to the Gulf
or Malaysia for work to change their
minds. For Mayer Dil Babu Ayer,

In Nepal’s weather, erratic
So, green infrastructure would be the answer to managing stormwater in Kathmandu

Olivia Molden
and Tyler McMahon

The 2019 monsoon was an erratic one. It
was not as wet as the previous year, and
it seemed to come late. But now, it is
looking like a very dry monsoon, with
considerable concerns of drought.

Indeed, recent forecasts from
the Meteorological Department
predict a below-normal rainfall
for the coming monsoon season.

The monsoon has a direct
impact on the agricultural
sector in Nepal, as it
provides water for irrigation
and also increases the
availability of water bodies
for drinking, sanitation,
and other purposes.

However, the erratic nature
of the monsoon can
lead to floods and
water scarcity, which
can have
severe implications
for the
local communities.

In recent years, Nepal has
experienced several
floods and
water scarcity events,
highlighting the
importance of
effective
management of
the
monsoon
resources.

A holistic approach
is needed to
address
the
challenge of
monsoon
management in
Nepal. This
includes
improving
the
monitoring
and
prediction
of
rainfall
patterns,
building
resilience
measures
such as
water harvesting,
and
implementing
strategies
for
adaptive
management of
drought.

The government of Nepal
has taken several
initiatives
in recent years
to
address
the
issues
related
to
the
monsoon
season.

These include
the
establishment
of
the
National
Monsoon
Management
Programme,
which
has
focused
on
improving
the
monitoring
and
prediction
of
rainfall
patterns
and
implementing
water
harvesting
techniques.

The programme
has
also
worked
on
building
resilience
measures
such
as
rainwater
tanks
and
ingroundwater
management.

Despite these efforts,
however,
the
challenge
remains
large,
and
there
is
a
need
for
continued
investments
in
the
area
of
monsoon
management.

In conclusion, the
management
of
the
Nepali
monsoon
is
a
critical
issue
that
requires
continued
attention
and
investment
from
all
divisions
of
society.

By
addressing
the
issues
related
to
the
monsoon
season,
we
can
work
towards
creating
a
more
resilient
and
equitable
future
for
the
people
of
Nepal.

They have found that the costs of
transforming drainage systems and building
green infrastructure has significant benefits.
Green infrastructure is a set of practices
that utilities and public agencies within
and between watersheds, urban areas,
neighborhoods and households. Permeable
pavement, rain gardens, bioswales, and
household-level rainwater harvesting are
common examples of green infrastructure
solutions for stormwater.

As cities elsewhere have found, green
infrastructure saves. Financially, green
infrastructure reduces the capital investment
and operational costs of urban infrastructure.
For cities like Philadelphia in the US, the
cost of implementation has been four times
lower than conventional stormwater drainage
and watershed treatment system upgrades.

New York will see significant savings over
the lifespan of its project, both in capital and
operational costs.

A review of over 400 green infrastructure
initiatives by the American Society of
Landscape Architects showed that three
quarters of these investments were cost
effective, or more so, than alternatives.
TAMING FLOOD RISK

Farmers in the Tarai are learning how to mitigate flood risk during the increasingly deadly monsoon months by planting new crops like sugarcane. This has the added benefit of providing families with additional income. Watch the video to see how it’s done.

nepaltimes.com

is the new normal

Moreover, these examples were primarily on-site initiatives and not at the city-scale, which can be more cost-effective.

In Kathmandu, 150 billion litres of rain fall on rooftops and paved surfaces in one year. Spread over 365 days this would be 420 million litres daily, but during the monsoon rainfall is much more concentrated. A 60mm storm produces 5.5 billion litres of stormwater, more than 50 times what wastewater treatment systems could handle if they were completely functional. The same storm would produce 5,000,000 of water on a normal household rooftop, 15 times their daily wastewater production.

If much of this water was retained and recharged on-site the cost reductions, additional groundwater supply available, and the reduced pollution of the Bagmati and its tributaries would be enormous.

Green infrastructure already exists in this growing city. Ancient water infrastructure and management systems continue to function in the Valley. Historians, archaeologists, engineers and architects have found that each area of the Valley has a water system that is not only suited to the local environment but that also integrates ecology with Newar social and cultural practices. These social and ecological interconnections between ponds, aquifers, peren brick surfaces, green space, channels and stone spouts still help to move, store and treat stormwater.

Sustainable development means moving away from cement solutions to promote and integrate green infrastructure in ways that suit Kathmandu’s social and ecological landscape. This could include protecting the city’s few remaining green spaces or providing meaningful support of local efforts to revitalise ancient water systems. It can also include reimagining rainwater harvesting as more than an alternative water source for householders, but a city-wide infrastructure for sustainable stormwater management.

It is time for the city to rethink stormwater management. It is time to look beyond dated development practices of more pipelines and channelised rivers towards those that are not only cost-effective and enhance local ecosystems, but also integrate with the Kathmandu Valley’s traditional water infrastructure.

Olivia Mollen, PhD, has studied Kathmandu’s water infrastructure since 2013. Tyler McMahon is Co-Founder of SmartHill & President of One Planet Solutions LLC.
New, improved TIA

New that G Adventures has listed Nepal as Number 1 of the Top 12 Destinations Worldwide for 2020, we can all sit back, relax and give every tourist daring to visit Nepal an experience of a lifetime they will not forget in a hurry.

Even though Nepal is ranked as a most popular destination, Nepalis themselves do not seem to know what their destination is as a nation. For a country that doesn’t know whether it is coming or going, we are sure getting there fast. One way the Ministry of Varniculture, Tourism and Gymnastics can move ahead is by upgrading Kathmandu’s boutique airport in preparation for Visit Nepal 2020 with these measures:

1. The Ministry has decreed that all international flights circle for at least 2 hours before landing in Kathmandu from January 1 onwards so passengers are given free mountain flights during 4VNY2020.
2. The fleet of ramp buses that bring passengers from the aircraft to the terminal building have been replaced with a fleet of elephants. Passengers will disembark directly into howdahs, and be transported to the visa queue.
3. A replica of a rhino and calf have been installed at the arrival area. For 4VNY2020, these will be replaced with a herd of real rhinoceros roaming around the apron in addition to monkeys, leopards and feral dogs that showcase Nepal’s flora and fauna. Rodents have recently been added to promote Nepal as a MICE destination.
4. TIA has been officially reclassified as a ‘Butterick Airport’ with an open-definition lane in the arrival area that accommodates tourists by accurately replicating the aroma of the Bagmati.
5. After complaints that the visa process was too convoluted, the Department of Immigration has added a fast-track queue so that the average time passengers spend applying for an e-visa, paying for it, and having it stamped will be reduced to just 3 hours.
6. Arriving passengers will be x-rayed on arrival to check if they are metal free. If found carrying an excess of 50gm of gold, they will be strip-searched on the spot. However, those with more than 33kg of gold in their false bottoms can sneak out through a hidden side door.
7. Passengers are now allowed to bring only one 1-litre bottle of tax-free whisky into the country. Anyone found bringing a second bottle will have in personally drink the extra bottle right there, stagger out into Nepal, and pass out.
8. Passengers now have a choice of extreme left-leaning or extreme right-leaning luggage trolleys depending on their personal political persuasion.
9. The Domestic Terminal just broke the Guinness World Record for packing the maximum number of passengers into a finite area without any agitation.
10. Don’t come back in 2020, we don’t want the world to get a bad impression about Kathmandu Airport.