





# Political smokescreen

There is political miasma suffocating the country, and like the smoke shrouding Nepal for the past week, there is no immediate end in sight.

An environmental crisis is never just about the environment: climate change has political-economic antecedents in energy policy, hazardous air pollution is caused by regulatory failure, political neglect leads to health crises. Poor governance turns rivers into sewers, and policy miscarriage makes pesticides poison the soil.

Disasters, too, have political roots. There is nothing natural about 'natural disasters'. An earthquake does not kill people, corruption that allows building permits for illegal, sub-standard construction does. Floods cannot always be blamed on heavy rainfall, they become human disasters because of poor drainage in new infrastructure.



PHOTOS: PRABIN RAJBHANDARI

Disaster preparedness is all about foreseeing risk, putting preventive measures in place, and when a calamity does strike, having search, rescue and rehabilitation exercises on standby.

The newly-formed Disaster Preparedness and Risk Management Authority has a long list of the dangers that this country is cursed with: earthquakes, landslides and rockfalls, floods, droughts, wildfires, lightning strikes, glacial lake outburst floods, avalanches. And this does not even include disease outbreaks, road traffic accidents and deaths due to preventable causes.

More than 7,000 children still die in Nepal every year from diseases that can easily and cheaply be prevented with vaccines, clean drinking water, or smokeless kitchen fireplaces. That breaks down to 20 children who die every day across the country, mainly

in poorer, remoter parts of Nepal. They do not make the news because they are not all killed suddenly in one place where there is a tv camera to record the tragedy. But it is an unacceptable crime that should garner banner headlines in the media: '20 More Children Died Today'.

But the media does not because that is the nature of this voracious beast. It only responds to a narrow definition of 'all the news that is fit to print'. The news business is not geared to predicting disasters, it responds nearly always after a disaster strikes, and then there is a mad scramble to chronicle the carnage.

The media is also not so good at covering slowly unfolding disasters, the ones that get worse bit-by-bit and are difficult to measure—like the increase in carbon dioxide concentration in the air, or the winter fog in the Tarai that is worsening every year.

'No news is good news', and journalists are not primed to cover positive trends, improvements, solutions, or progress. We take our adversarial role so seriously that most reporters think it is not their job to cover development.

In a democracy, media is the essential feedback loop to highlight problems, preferably before they become unmanageable, or to cover individuals or communities that

## The smoke that shrouded Nepal for the past week was a metaphor for the state of the state

have surmounted obstacles and save lives by being prepared for known hazards.

The media's lapse in serving this essential public service function lets

governments, policy-makers and politicians off the hook. They can shrug and pretend they had no idea disaster would strike.

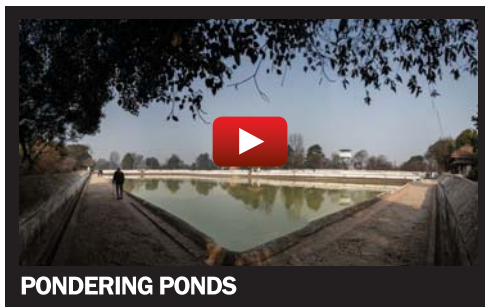
It is because Nepal's politics is a disaster in itself, that we had the unprecedented wildfire catastrophe this week. In satellite pictures, we saw the entire country in flames, and the smoke haze was so thick it was off the charts. No one remembers it being so bad for so long. And it will happen again if the root causes are not addressed.

Those in government knew all along that this was the fire season. Every year, there are devastating fires that take a toll on lives, property and forests. This year, it should have come as no surprise that fires would be worse because winter precipitation was only 10% of normal in Central Nepal.

The Met Dept could have sounded an early-warning, but didn't. Sure enough, the wildfires started as early as November, and soon spread to different parts of the country, until last week it became just one nationwide bonfire.

Nepal's leaders are too busy in political firefighting to fight actual fires that are ravaging the country. It took some rain to douse the flames, when will it rain on Nepal's desiccated politics?

## ONLINE PACKAGES



PONDERING PONDS

When it comes to conservation of ponds, Bhaktapur is leading the way and involving local communities in conserving and restructuring ponds. Story: *page 8-9*.



MADE IN NEPAL

In this latest edition of Made in Nepal, meet 37-year-old old Sushil Thapa from Ilam, who strated out as a bus conductor and went on to become a transport entrepreneur. Profile: *page 5*.



IN THE LINE OF FIRE

Watch how hundreds of wildfires are spreading right across the Tarai and mid-mountains of Nepal, shrouding the whole country in smoke. See: *Editorial and page 1*.

### STATE OF DISILLUSIONMENT

Damning revelations in your public opinion survey. An overwhelming majority of Nepalis are disenchanting with political parties, federal and provincial governments ('In a state of disillusionment', #1054) . But thankfully, elected local municipal leaders generally enjoy people's trust and deliver services that people care about.

**Kul Chandra Gautam**

- A glimpse into citizenry's view about their government, political parties, what worked well and what didn't. The void of political leadership is evident. Will democracy in Nepal find the ecosystem to flourish, or languish as an orphan?

**Navita Srikant**

### SPRING MOUNTAINEERING

Everest after the storm -- time for the mountain to forgive, heal, allow a safe passage to the limited number of climbers ('Spring returns to Nepal's mountaineering' by Tulsī Rauniyar, #1054). Sadly, I won't be going this year but I'm rooting for my business partner, Jangbu Sherpa on his 17<sup>th</sup> Everest summit.

**Karma Tenzing**

- Mountaineering season is back and my friend with two other doctors from Mountain Medicine Society of Nepal will voluntarily run EverestER, a medical clinic at EBC for whole season. EverestER was founded in 2003 by Dr. Luanne Freer has been conducted yearly by Himalayan Rescue Association.

**Suman Acharya**

### WOMEN SURVIVE PANDEMIC ECONOMY

Covid has disproportionately impacted Women ('Nepali women survive pandemic economy,' by Namrata Sharma). It's not the virus that discriminates: study shows that during the crisis, it's our existing patriarchal social, economic, political systems that have further marginalised disadvantaged groups.

**Shilshila Acharya**

### WILDFIRE AND AIR POLLUTION

Needs immediate intervention by the Nepal Army ('Wildfires in Nepal cause air quality to plummet', [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)). Use of helicopter to douse the fires makes more sense than taking ministers on junkets.

**Sunil Sakya**

- I remember 12 years ago there was a huge fire in the northern hills of Kathmandu Valley. I was frantic and called everyone I know-- fire department, national park, and police but no one was prepared for a forest fire. They all hoped for rain. Unfortunately, we are still in the same situation same now. We need to curb forest fires, especially since they are precious resources in combating climate change.

**Sanjeevani Yonzon**

- I lived in Nepal many years and developed serious respiratory problems caused by pollution. I had to leave in 2006. It is not a liveable country anymore. Does the government simply not care about the health of its people?

**Margaret Kerr**

**Karen Shanahan**

- Australia had the huge bushfires in late 2019 and every year around this time. Singapore, which has no forests, gets a haze for a couple of weeks from forest fires in Indonesia. What can we do with a warming planet? Ask the Chinese to invent some artificial rain clouds?

**Kalinga Seneviratne**

## 20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

*In the midst of political, environmental and public health disasters this week, let us revisit the story of the first Nepali couple with HIV/AIDS to get married. The pair's role was instrumental in raising public awareness about the disease and reducing stigma associated with it in Nepal 20 years ago.*

*Reporter Sali Subedi visited the couple, only a year into their marriage, happy but struggling with their daily lives. They were trying to revive Prerana, an organisation they established to assist and help 'positive' people move on with their lives.*

*Excerpts from the issue #36 of 30 March-5 April 2001, 20 years ago this week:*

Asha and Sharan live in a dingy mud house in Dilli Bazar and they are lucky to have a kind landlord— they have shelter, even though they haven't been able to pay rent for a few months. This winter was cold, and perhaps that's why both were ill.

"I almost had no hope of seeing Sharan alive this summer," remembers Asha. It is a tough battle—when Sharan gets better, Asha is sick, and vice versa. But they still take pleasure in living. Sitting on their bed, the only seat in their house, sipping tea, watching Sharan light a cigarette, I found myself laughing more heartily than I'd done for a long time.



Sharan's intriguing sense of humour and Asha's quick responses were too life-affirming to be depressing.

We continued laughing as we walked down to Nag Pokhari. "One day I lost Nani (Asha) in a cinema queue. I looked around. Couldn't find her. But suddenly I realised she was standing at the back. She's so small," laughs Sharan.

Asha replies: "Wait one day, I'll really shrink and you'll look for me the whole day." Food and cash are a problem, but this couple survives on faith. Their room is filled with small

pictures of poubha-style Ganesh and Tara, and photographs of friends. They have a small cassette player and a black-and-white TV.

Sharan's neighbourhood friends love him. They sometimes offer him raksi to lift his spirits. Says Sharan quietly: "Sometimes I take it. It's okay if you drink within limits. Earlier I used to argue when my wife scolded me. But these days, I don't do anything to make her feel angry and sad, because I love her very much."

Smiles Asha: "He's a very good husband. We fell in love because we understood each other so much."

**From archives material of *Nepali Times* of the past 20 years, site search: [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)**



Nepali Times on Facebook  
Follow @nepalitimes on Twitter  
Follow @nepalitimes on Instagram

Publisher and Editor: **Kunda Dixit**  
Audience Engagement: **Sahina Shrestha**, Associate Editor: **Sonia Awale**, Layout: **Kiran Maharjan**  
Published by **Himalmedia Pvt Ltd** | Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu  
editors@nepalitimes.com | [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com) | [www.himalmedia.com](http://www.himalmedia.com)  
Tel: 01-5005601-08 Fax: +977-1-5005518



## WHAT'S TRENDING



### Wildfires in Nepal cause air quality to plummet

by *Nepali Times Online*

This week, Kathmandu Valley endured one of the worst air quality in recent years as wildfires fanned by strong winds scorched forests in the Himalayan foothills. Visit our website for detailed coverage.



**Most reached and shared on Facebook**

### In a state of disillusionment

by *Nepali Times*

A new nationwide survey quantifies widespread public disillusionment with the political leadership in Kathmandu, but shows that people have a favourable impression of local governments in the past three years. Full story on [nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)



**Most popular on Twitter**

### Happy-go-lucky Nepal

by *The Ass*

As Nepal was declared as the happiest country in South Asia, The Ass explores the possible reasons why Nepalis continue to be so cheerful these days. Hilarity promised.



**Most commented**

### SJ Moto bike gallery

by *Sonia Awale*

Saurabh Jyoti combined his infatuation with motorbikes and his hobby collecting superhero figurines to create Nepal's first motorcycle museum. Watch video on our YouTube channel.



**Most visited online page**

## QUOTE TWEETS



**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes

#Wildfires are spreading across the Tarai and mid-mountains of #Nepal, shrouding the whole country in smoke. People complain of stinging eyes, headaches and breathing difficulties.



**#We want aggressive Kohli back** @crickohli18

Had this occurred in Amazon or Australia, people would have started #PrayForAmazon or #PrayForAustralia across the world. But since, it has occurred in a small country, everyone is mum.



**Elina, PhD** @ElinaADH

This has never happened before in Nepal, that the government closed schools because of hazardous air. I can't believe what I am reading it in the news. Climate change is real. We need to do more to prevent this from happening.



**Priyanka** @priyankasshhh

What can we do to solve this? Cause currently it feels like this smoke is going to be the end of us.



**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes

In her column 'Life Time', Anjana Rajbhandary writes about how educating men can play a part in minimising the way women live in constant fear for their physical safety.



**Avigya** @Avigya\_K

In agreement with article but bit sceptical on impact of method suggested. I believe parents teach their kids to be good person. Eg: parents teach kids not to smoke as it bad for health but largest segment of new smokers are teenagers. Thinking of solution for behaviour change.



**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes

Since Nepal has now been declared the happiest country in South Asia, The Ass explores the possible reasons why Nepalis continue to be so cheerful these days.



**Er. Bijaya UG Nihilist** @WhitedwarfU

The meticulously chosen first point is actually there to stay for quite a long time... Epic...!!  
...'... We have a prime minister who is a first-class clown, and keeps everyone entertained...'



**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes

Most Nepalis are happy with the devolution of political power and resources to local councils.



**Marty Logan** @martydlogan

It's good to see positive coverage of federalism. People were initially sceptical & cynical - who can blame them? & vested interests want to maintain the status quo, but it seems to be working.



**Himalaya Night** @Night04812666

The expansion of affordable and easily accessible health care is crucial for the well-being of all residents in municipalities. The local leaders, who gain confidence from the constituents disenchanted with the central legislature are expected to play a vital role for locals.



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

# TIME TO MEET AGAIN: MANCHESTER

Have a healthy journey with all precautions taken down to the smallest detail for your in-flight safety.



TURKISH AIRLINES

ENGLAND



# Delayed dreams for Korea-bound Nepalis

Nepali migrant workers have been waiting for more than a year to join jobs in Korea

● Upasana Khadka

From his early years, Bhim Oli from Dang knew that he wanted to go abroad to work and earn so that he could support his family. His dream, like that of many Nepali men, was to work hard and make a comfortable living for his family.

On the top of that list for overseas job destinations was Korea. But the preparation costs for South Korea's Employment Permit Scheme (EPS), language training, food and lodging expenses in Kathmandu were exorbitant.

For the majority of Nepali migrant workers, the Gulf and Malaysia are final destination countries. But for Oli, Qatar was a means to an end. He took up a stint in Qatar as a waiter so he could save up enough to focus on his Korean language tests.

The now-familiar acronym EPS usually conjures up images of tens of thousands of Nepalis lining up to register for the mandatory Korean language tests. Since 2008, over 66,000 Nepalis have obtained jobs in South Korea through this program in the agriculture and manufacturing.

The exam itself has been taken by a staggering 585,000 Nepalis, but less than one-tenth of the test-takers eventually get a job in Korea.

After toiling for 18 months in Qatar as a 'target earner', Oli returned to Nepal with savings of Rs650,000 to begin his preparation for the Korean EPS. In 2017, he failed his exam. Undeterred, he studied harder for the next one and was one of the 7,996 who passed it, out of 82,264 test-takers in 2018.

But his dreams came crashing down with the onset of the pandemic. Oli was matched with his employer on 3 March, 2020. But his contract was cancelled after he had waited for over six months.

The pandemic has thrown the prospect of the new cohorts of aspirant EPS workers in a limbo. The flight restrictions, lockdown and the classification of Nepal by South Korea in the 'red zone' for public health reasons has riddled the past year with uncertainties.

"They have other options to bring in workers from East Asian countries where mobility has not been barred, so it is understandable," Bhim Oli says.

For Ajay Sodari from Kailali, the lure of South Korea came from the transformation he saw in the living standard in the life of an acquaintance. It seemed within reach for someone like him from a humble background, if he only put in the effort.



He failed the Korean language test in 2018. Unable to afford another expensive stay in Kathmandu, he went to India to pick apples and returned to try again.

"I studied around 18 hours a day for the language test—I had not studied that hard for my SLC, 12th or Bachelors, but I finally passed in 2019," says Sodari. Altogether, 92,000 individuals took the test that year, of which only 12,000 passed.

Sodari was selected to work in an aluminium company. He was thrilled when the cabinet decided in May 2020, to let workers head to South Korea. But none of the migrants have been able to travel.

Frustrated, and knowing that there were thousands of others in his situation, Sodari started a group called EPS Struggle Committee and staged a protest at the Mandala in Kathmandu. They have held three such protests in the last year.

The group has met labour ministers, Korean and Nepali authorities. While they are only met with empty promises they remain persistent. The absence of a Nepali ambassador in Seoul for the last two years has affected active diplomacy.

"The issuance of visas has been stopped due to public health concerns. Until last week, Nepal was included in the red zone. But as of last week, they have lifted Nepal from this category and partially started issuing visas in certain

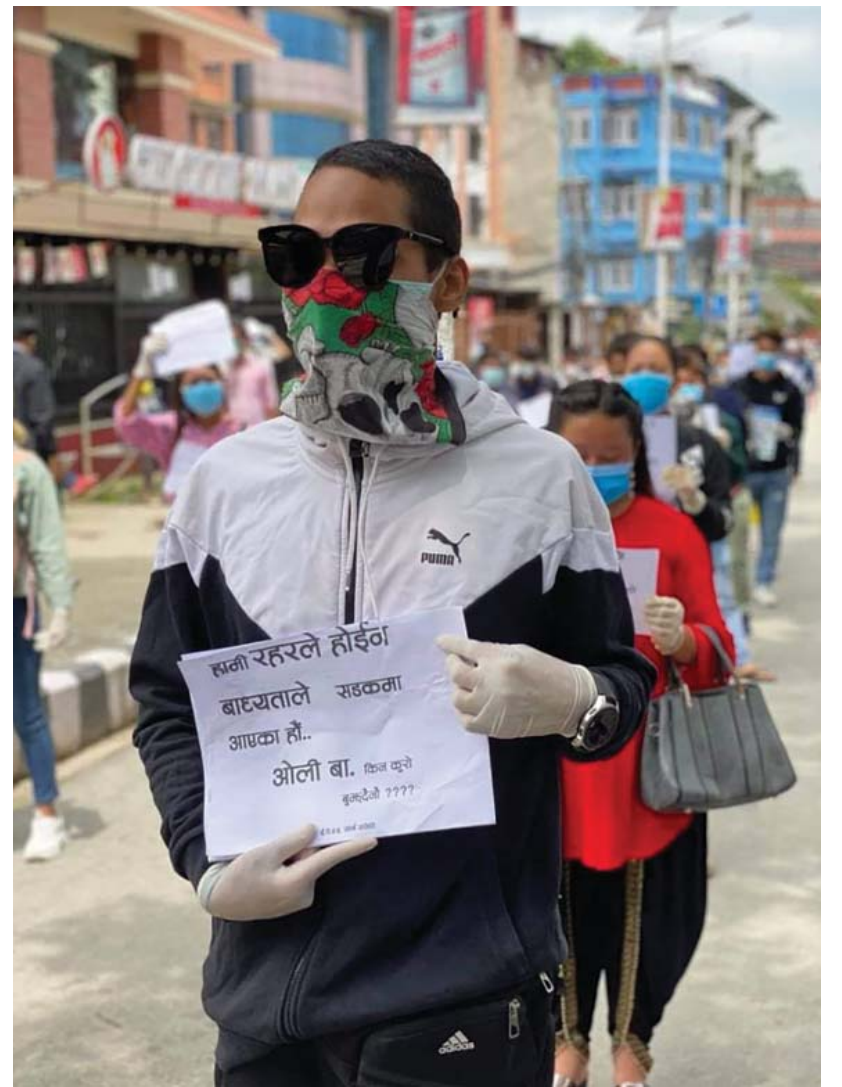
categories, like for students," says Indra Gautam, Director of the EPS Department. "Gradually, they will start issuing visas for EPS workers as well and we are putting in the necessary requests."

The men who have been waiting report that they have not just lost face in their families, but also money and suffered overwhelming mental stress.

"We have invested so much time and money and cannot afford to give up on our dreams. But this has been dragging on for so long, we cannot invest in businesses here, migrate to another country because we will be left neither here nor there as this will eventually work out," he says.

Since 2008, Nepalis have been taking their chances in this highly competitive program alongside competitors from 15 other countries from South and Southeast Asia. The annual quota has fluctuated, which is attributed to the domestic labour demand in Korea as expressed by employers, diplomatic ties, and the number of workers who overstay their legally allotted time that can penalise the country quota in the subsequent years.

The volume of workers from Nepal and Cambodia, in particular, had become relatively more important over the years. One of the reasons for it was the rising share of these workers in the agriculture sector. The number to be hired from



AJAY SODARI AND BIRENDRA BOGATI

Nepal remains uncertain.

Nepalis who pass the EPS exams are educated, whereas the jobs they are offered are what are categorised as 'dirty, dangerous and demeaning'. Mismatched expectations along with expectations from families can be unbearable for some.

Some migrants succumb to the pressure as has been previously reported in *Nepali Times*. Of the 143 deaths of Nepalis between 2009 and 2018, for example, 43 were suicide cases which got the attention of policymakers from both countries but little by way of action.

It is not just new workers who have been impacted by Covid-19. Of the estimated 10,000 EPS workers stranded, a significant number are committed workers who completed over four years of stay already and were returning.

The Korean government has imposed a '4 years 10 months' cap, to ensure that migrant workers under EPS cannot qualify for permanent residency, which is available to other foreigners after they reside legally for five years.

Prakash Shrestha, a member of the EPS Struggle Committee, is a returnee migrant, who wants to go back to Korea to the same employer. "Once we land in Korea, we already dream of returning to Korea as committed workers for another 4 years and ten months, so we can double our savings," he says.

One of many rallies organised by the EPS Struggle Committee in which Nepali migrant workers prevented from going to Korea have taken part (above, right).

Ajay Sodari and others have met both Nepali and Korean officials (above) in Kathmandu to raise their concerns about the jobs awaiting them in Korea.

Prior to moving to Korea, Shrestha worked in a restaurant in Kathmandu but was not able to save much with his monthly earnings of Rs 12,000.

He competed with 64,000 individuals taking the EPS exam in 2014. His starting salary in Korea was Rs101,000. By the time he left in 2019, he was earning close to Rs300,000 a month.

He was supposed to return at the end of February 2020 as a 'committed worker' but has been stuck in Nepal. "I was so close to flying out and resuming my job that would have been safe for the next four years. What a difference a few days can make," adds Shrestha.

"My employer has been patient and is willing to wait for me. Having worked with the same employer for four and a half years, we have developed trust so I feel fortunate," says Shrestha. Like many others, he is now waiting for the announcement to be allowed to fly back to Korea. 🇳🇵

PRABHU BANK

## 2.7% growth

The twice-yearly World Bank South Asia Focus report has projected Nepal's economy to grow by 2.7% in the coming fiscal year, up from 0.6% in the previous forecast. The Bank said this was because economic activity was picking up and remittances had not fallen as previously predicted.

## DishHome Lucky Draw

Customers of DishHome have a chance to win Khushi Ko Udaan to Bangkok for the new year. Two lucky couples will be chosen from the Weekly Lucky Draw who have topped up their DishHome monthly subscription either via Fund Transfer through DishHome dealers, e-wallet apps or recharge cards will get a chance to win a free trip to Thailand. The Lucky Draw will be shown live on DishHome channels.

## Summit women

Summit Hotel and Open Space Network jointly organised Summit Woman of the Year 2021 to honor business women below 30 with sound business sustainability plan



as well as social impact. There were 160 applicants of which the Top 5 were: Twinkles by Jaya Rajbhandari, Leklekk, by Yajnaswi Rai, Tittofritto Foods by Arunima Shrestha and Urusha Shrestha, earn Infinity by Aditi Goyal and Pure Joy by Binita Pokhrel.

## Turkish art award

General Manager of Turkish Airlines for Nepal Abdullah Tuncer Keceli handed over an air ticket prize to the winner of the Turkish Airlines art competition Subham Sah, organised by Glocal Skill Week. The art competition



highlights students' talents, promote reflective and critical thinking regarding visual arts.

## Maiti Nepal, Indian Embassy

The Indian Embassy organised an All-Women Hike to Shivapuri National Park, on 27 March dedicated to building a society free from trafficking and other forms of exploitation of women and children. The Embassy teamed up with Maiti Nepal, founded by Padma Shri awardee, Anuradha Koirala.

## Global IME E-com dollar card

Global IME Bank is launching 'Global E-Com Dollar Card' to pay for the purchase of goods and services from abroad online. The customer can pay up to \$500 from Nepal.

## GE Grid Infrastructure



GE Renewable Energy's Grid Solutions business won a multi-million dollar contract to upgrade three substations in Khimti, Barhabise

and Lapsipedi which will deliver uninterrupted electricity to households in the power scarce regions.





PHOTOS: NARESH NEWAR

# The road to success

How hard work and patience helped lift a bus conductor in Ilam to becoming an entrepreneur

● Naresh Newar in Ilam

It is a story that 37-year-old Sushil Thapa had been waiting all these years to tell his 13-year-old daughter, one that panned across episodes of his struggles before she was born.

When he was 22 years old, Thapa eloped with the love of his life, his college friend, Nisha Fago. Little did he know at that time that his family would disown him for marrying someone from a different ethnicity.

When he entered his home with his bride, his parents asked him to choose between his Limbu wife and them. He naturally chose the one he had already committed himself to for life.

“Being the only son in my family, I thought they would welcome us home. But instead, they asked us to leave. We left with nothing except a few kitchen utensils and a blanket,” says Thapa, still hurting from the memory of the way his parents treated him and his wife all those years ago.

In their journey together of being estranged from their respective families, Nisha and Sushil supported each other.

“She was the one reason that I managed to survive and she gave me a lot of confidence. And today, I tell everyone, my wife was the one behind my success story,” explains Thapa.

The newly-wed couple did not have any cash with them at the time, so Fago sold all her jewellery to start a small cosmetic shop in Ilam Bazar. The shop ran successfully for some time, but the couple had debt to pay



off and eventually ended up selling their shop.

Plunged into financial hardship, Thapa and Fago were faced with the challenge of finding jobs. While college days were dotted with the memory of their romance, incomplete college degrees did not do much in terms of job prospects.

The only employment Thapa could find was to work as a bus conductor, something he did not want to do. But he had no choice.

“Society looks

down on *khalasi* and it’s one of the most undesired jobs where you can easily be exploited. But I was determined to start somewhere to put food on the plate,” says Thapa, who recalls how he used to sleep in the bus during long journeys, earning barely Rs10 per day as allowance. He still managed to save money and could afford one meal a day for both himself and his wife.

In the months that followed, he learned to drive. When he found a job as an ambulance driver for a hospital, life



Taxi entrepreneur Sushil Thapa (*above*) believes that every job has dignity. His own life in which he has climbed up the career ladder starting as a bus conductor is proof of this.

Sushil’s wife Nisha (*left*) kept his spirits high to become a successful entrepreneur even after his family disowned him. The parents only recently told their daughter about the struggle.

started looking up.

The salary was good and there were other benefits. He was able to save some money and eventually, he bought a second-hand Maruti van and hired a driver to run his taxi service, while he continued working as an ambulance driver.

In a few years, he bought an off-road jeep and started running long route taxi service from Ilam to Kathmandu. His journey as an entrepreneur had begun.

“I learned a lot about how to become a taxi entrepreneur. I also managed to secure a loan to buy more jeeps that helped to increase our income. Today, our family is doing very well,” Thapa says.

He has managed to buy a piece of land in Damak, where he is planning to build a small house for his family. He has also saved money to buy insurance for his teen daughter and three-year-old son, so that they can use the insurance money for their college education after they grow up.

Thapa explains how during the most desperate times, people can become entrepreneurial.

Getting bank loans to buy vehicles to start taxi hiring service, has been a major risk. He says many taxi and ambulance drivers

still do not want to take the risk of buying their own vehicles to start a business.

“Without risks, you can never hope to succeed and with emotional and moral support from my wife, I found the courage, and it has really paid off,” says Thapa. He adds that as an entrepreneur, one of things he has learnt is that maintaining a good relationship with his customers can be the key to success.

“You need discipline and respect for your customers even if they are very demanding so that they can keep coming back to you for service. Most of my customers call me based on my reputation and their word of mouth has helped to market my name,” says Thapa.

“At first, I thought the job of *khalasi* was degrading but I know it was a stepping stone for me to learn so much about the transport business and I am glad I started as a *khalasi*,” he says.

Thapa shared his story with his daughter only recently and he says she beamed with pride when she heard about how her parents had been through hard times and emerged successful. He wants his daughter to also become tough, face challenges and find a way to survive and become successful.

“Going to foreign countries for education or jobs should not always be our alternative. There are lots of opportunities in Nepal if you know how to tap into them. But of course, it takes time to become successful,” he says.

And he throws in a nugget of wisdom: “In our life, there is no work that we should be ashamed of. What we should be ashamed of is living as social parasites.” 🇳🇵



# Getting away with killer liquor

One year after 29 people were killed by homemade alcohol, culprits remain unpunished

सग्लो समाज



Anbhauri Chaudhari



Rajmati Devi Singh

Last year about this time, one month into the coronavirus lockdown, 13 people died of a mysterious illness in a single village in Mahottari. A few weeks later in a Dhanusa neighbourhood, another 16 people died with similar symptoms: severe headache and vomiting.

These two tragedies have long disappeared from the media headlines. And so has their cause: the consumption of home-made liquor.

Nepal has laws against adulteration of food and the sale of edibles past their expiry date. Yet, a year after the deaths in Province 2, no one has been found responsible, there has been no justice, and no compensation for the families of the victims.

"He came back complaining of a headache, I rubbed oil on his head, we even took him to Bardibas hospital, but he did not make it," says Anbhauri Chaudhari, widow of Mahendra Chaudhari, a farmer who had consumed the liquor.

The next day, their neighbour Mohan Chaudhari also complained of a headache. His family knew that a neighbour had died, so they looked around for an ambulance to take him to hospital in Janakpur. But by the time it came, Mohan Chaudhari had also died.

"They said it could have been because he drank too much, or maybe they mixed something in

the drink," his brother Dasrath says.

In the next few days, 13 people in Meghnath Gohanna village had died of similar causes. There was terror in the surrounding villages because everyone thought it was Covid-19. The bodies were tested for the coronavirus, but they came out negative. People turned to superstition to appeasing the gods to put a stop to the calamity.

Local police started to investigate and through a different kind of contact-tracing than for Covid-19, they found out that all the dead had consumed the same locally distilled liquor in the same shop. Autopsy results of the dead also showed alcohol-poisoning.

"The usual liquor shops were closed because of the lockdown, but there was one woman in the village who was selling home-made spirit in her house. My husband and many others had eaten and drank there, she killed my husband," says Rajmati Devi Singh, adding that the woman was later chased out of the village.

Mamata Mahara's father-in-law had come home late at night, and at about 1AM he started to writhe in pain. By morning he was dead. Ramrati Devi Mahara's husband said her husband also started complaining of a headache at night, by 2AM he was in great pain, and by morning he died in hospital.



Sanjiv Kumar Sah

"At first we did not take it seriously, but when they started dying one by one, we started having suspicions about the alcohol they consumed, and that was confirmed by the post-mortem," recalls mayor Sanjiv Kumar Sah.

Most alcoholic drinks contain various concentrations of the organic compound ethanol (C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>OH) which is used in cleaning fluids and disinfectants, but is also present in wine and beer, and has addictive psychoactive properties. However, ethanol smells and looks similar to methanol (CH<sub>3</sub>OH) which is highly poisonous even in small doses, causing blindness and even death.

"Earlier, the villagers used to distil alcohol from molasses

or grain, but as consumption grew they started adding all kinds of material including urea fertiliser," explains journalist Rajkarna Mahato. "Driven by demand, there are many underground distillers over which there is no regulation and quality control. The ones who die are the poor who cannot afford commercial alcohol."

Mahato says that despite the series of deaths in the past year, there are no entries in the police records of people who have died of alcohol poisoning. "There is absolutely no government monitoring of this problem, there is no concerted effort to raid the distillers and confiscate the equipment," he adds.

A month later in Dhanusa, 16 people died with similar symptoms, and there too the locals at first feared a coronavirus outbreak. The local authorities then went house-to-house to ask about where the dead had been in the past 24 hours, and that is how it was traced to a local house selling home-made liquor.

"You cannot stop people from drinking, the fatalities are due to poor governance and a weak state," says consumer rights activist Jyoti Baniya.

There are two laws against harmful food items, even though they do not specifically

relate to poisonous or adulterated alcohol. But if people who consume spurious liquor die, those selling the product are liable to be tried for manslaughter. The Alcohol Law of 1975 stipulates taxes on the sale of alcohol products, and also prohibits the sale of alcoholic beverages without a license.

However, despite the spate of deaths, no one has been tried and punished for these crimes in Dhanusa and Mahottari last year. In fact, some of the perpetrators are carrying on with the same business.

"Usually, the police acts after the deaths have occurred. What is the point of that? Preventive action could have saved the lives," says Mayor Sah. "We are not going to solve this problem if we catch the culprits after people have died, and then let them go after some time in jail."

However, the issue in Dhanusa and Mahottari is that even one year later, no one has been caught. So there is no question of letting anyone go. Police inspector Prakash Bista says one of the sellers of liquor was investigated after the events last year, but could not be arrested because of the lack of evidence.

"This is what it means to be poor, we have a hand-to-mouth existence," says a relative of one of the victim, Shivanarayan Mahato. "We do not have the power to pursue justice or compensation."



Dasrath Chaudhari



Prakash Bista



This week's Saglo Samaj takes us to Mahottari and Dhanusa where it has been almost a year since 29 died by consuming poisonous liquor. Yet those who produce it go unpunished.



# Nepal relaxes entry for tourists

After much criticism about unnecessary hassles for tourists, the Nepal government has further relaxed entry formalities for foreigners arriving by air.

Tourists visiting Nepal will no longer have to stay in mandatory hotel quarantine for five days as long as they have a PCR negative report before boarding, and again test negative on arrival in Kathmandu. They will have to stay in a hotel until negative test result.

Tourists will also now be eligible for visa on arrival at Kathmandu airport, as long as they can provide necessary documents about their itinerary approved by the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) or the Department of Tourism (DoT). The government has also done away with the \$5,000 travel insurance requirement.

Although at first glance it looks like the government has streamlined a previously cumbersome and confusing process, tour agencies say it still leaves a lot of grey areas that could still create unnecessary muddles.

“Why do arriving foreign passengers have to provide travel itineraries approved by the tourism authorities? What if they are here to visit relatives or friends?” asks an exasperated airline executive, whose job it is to check passenger documents before they board flights to Kathmandu.

Indeed, the new directive stipulates that the same documents that are needed for visa on arrival also have to be presented at the check-in counter before Nepal-bound flights. These include: a PCR negative report taken not earlier than 72 hours before departure or a

No quarantine required, and visa on arrival allowed now, but conditions apply.



KUNDA DIXIT

vaccine certificate, travel itinerary approved by the NTB or DoT, proof of hotel booking.

The Cabinet decision was made on 17 March, but details were only published in English on 29 March. Although the decision to relax rules seems to be aimed for the spring tourist season, it comes a little too late and after many potential visitors had already cancelled.

“Most trekkers or mountaineers make preparations months in advance. Very few will just get up and go because they can get visas on arrival,” said one trekking agent.

The government's rules have

flip-flopped with each new guideline in the past year, adding to the confusion. The latest directive does clear the air, but is still vague and leaves a lot to the discretion of immigration officers at Kathmandu airport.

Many tourists had cancelled plans to visit Nepal because of the difficulty in getting visas in countries where there are no Nepali missions, and even where there are embassies, they complained that staff in the visa section were either not picking up the phones for enquiries or did not have the correct information.

The Tourist Arrival Management Protocol 2077 passed by the Cabinet states: ‘Tourists wishing to visit Nepal should have their agents contact the DoT or NTB for a recommendation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Department of Immigration and convey the necessary documents to the tourists.’

Among the list of documents required for visa on-arrival, are airline check-in and a ‘recommendation letter from Department of Tourism/Nepal Tourism Board for participation in any tourism activities within

Nepal’.

Again, that list does not mention the recommendation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Immigration Department. Nor does it clarify what the requirements are, for foreign passengers who are not going on a trek or expedition.

Aside from the confusing discrepancy, adding another layer of bureaucracy will turn tourists off, say tourism entrepreneurs.

The directive requires all arriving tourists to get a PCR test ‘immediately upon arrival in coordination with the concerned Association (at their own cost) ...if the report is negative, tourists can continue their itinerary...if positive, the tourist must continue to stay in hotel quarantine.’

The directive comes as Nepal braces for a second wave, mainly from travellers from India where there has been a surge in new cases. The daily new case load exceeded 70,000 on Monday for the first time this year.

To be sure, there are countries with much stricter requirements. China, for instance, actively dissuades foreign visitors with a 1 month quarantine and anal swabs. Some European countries do not allow their citizens to leave the country unless they can prove it is on essential business.

Nepal's new directive does not lay out any extra precautions for passengers from Delhi, the only Indian city from where flights are allowed to Kathmandu at present.

‘For Indian tourists arriving in Nepal through air route, the existing provisions will remain as per the Nepal-India Travel Bubble Agreement,’ it says. 🇳🇵

Reach your customers every day  
in the new year, and build your brand

## 2078 Calendar

For customised  
calendar design and printing  
Contact us.



यूनाइटेड मल्टि प्रिन्टर्स प्रा.लि. | United Multi Printers Pvt. Ltd.

Hattiban, Lalitpur-23, Nepal ☎ 01-5250017, 01-5250018

info@unitedmultiprinters.com www.unitedmultiprinters.com

विदेशबाट पठाएको रकम  
सजिलै **IME Pay App** मा  
प्राप्त गर्नुहोस्।



IME Complex, Panipokhari, Kathmandu, Nepal  
+977 1 4217600, 4430600 / 4425800 (Fax)  
facebook.com/imeremit  
info@imeremit.com.np  
www.imeremit.com.np

Toll Free :  
**16600 151515**  
(For NTC users only)







## Kathmandu Valley's ponds need to be revived, not just restored

● **Alisha Sijapati** and **Sahina Shrestha**

**G**hanshyam Rajkarnikar still has fond memories of the wide pond near his house in Kathmandu. As a child, he played along the edge of Kamal Pokhari, named after the lotus that once grew profusely on it.

The lotus does not grow anymore, the pond has shrunk,

and in the past months its water has been drained to make way for commercial development. Wild grass has taken over the dry bed where a fisherman used to take his boat out to catch fish to sell in the market.

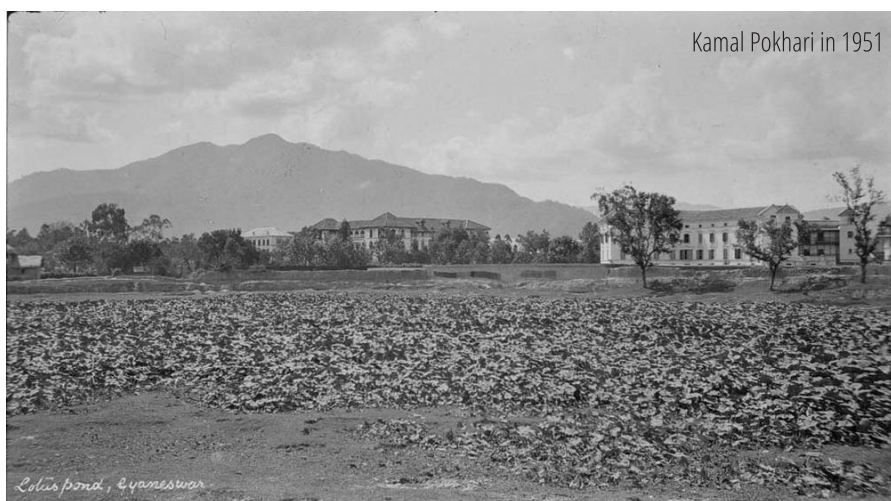
“We would ask him to pick us some lotus flowers from the middle

of the pond,” recalls Rajkarnikar, now 80, and whose family owns Krishna Pauroti Bhandar, one of the oldest bakeries in town.

Ever since Mayor Bidhya Sundar Shakya of Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) tried to repeat what he tried to do in Rani Pokhari, heritage conservationists have been up in arms to stop the use of concrete to ‘beautify’ a water body that served to recharge Kathmandu’s groundwater and had cultural significance.

Mayor Shakya’s team calls it a ‘fusion’ project to merge modern urban needs with traditional heritage. But activists have been up in arms about the use of concrete, and the construction of a ferro-cement lotus in the middle of the pond.

“If you do not allow aquatic plants and animals to grow naturally, they will die and that is why the use against concrete is dangerous for biodiversity,” says land and water management



MADAN PURASKAR LIBRARY ARCHIVES



AMIT MACHAMASI





KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

engineer P S Joshi.

There have been previous efforts to revive Kamal Pokhari. In 2017, Nepali Congress MP Gagan Thapa worked with environmentalists to revive the pond and to stop garbage dumping.

But by 2019, Kamal Pokhari had turned into a wasteland, and the KMC announced plans to develop the area into a recreational space with an artificial lotus. The plan has been met with stiff resistance from activists.

“Currently, the swampy soil bed is the lifeline of the pond, it retains water,” says architect and activist, Susan Vaidya. He explains that in situations when a pond is left dry for a long time, it loses its ability to retain water.

“It is not about how much concrete is being used, it is about destroying the natural water levels,” says Vaidya, who, along with other activists, has met Mayor Shakya to try to make him understand local sentiments.

*Nepali Times* asked Shakya to respond to the criticism. He said, “Kamal Pokhari was already a lost case, sewage and garbage was being dumped. As soon as the contractors finish their work we will fill it up with water.”

The KMC says it will “beautify” Kamal Pokhari and will retain its originality. The water will be recycled so that it does not gather algae.

Engineer Prem B Shrestha Ranjit is coordinator of the Kamal Pokhari Restoration Project, and says, “There will be smaller ponds at the four corners of the pond where lotus flowers will be grown to ensure that the pond retains its identity.”

Ranjit disclosed that the pond will be first filled with 25 million litres of Melamchi water, and topped off with water pumped from a deep well.

Activists say all this is proof that the KMC has no idea about the ecological and cultural



AMIT MACHAMASI

## Lost lotus ponds

The sky is overcast. Bhaktapur’s Kamal Binayak is dotted with people enjoying the serenity of this ancient pond (*above*). Sixty-year-old Chandra Bir Prajapati walks past them, pushing a trash trolley, collecting litter.

He has been the sole caretaker here for decades, employed by the Kamal Binayak Sudhar Samiti to ensure the lotus pond is clean. In the next few months, this historic pond will be handed over to the Bhaktapur Metropolitan City by the Nepal Army, and it wants to draw more visitors and augment local income.

Heritage activists, historians and water heritage conservationists have hailed Bhaktapur as an example of how heritage should be preserved amidst rapid urban expansion. The city’s efforts to revive its ponds and cultural sites has important lessons for Kathmandu, Patan, Thimi and Kirtipur.

Patan’s Kamal Pokhari, for example, was buried

under a parking lot by the Lalitpur Metropolitan City itself. And its idea of beautification is to line the remaining pond with glazed tiles and a fountain in the middle.

The Kamal Pokhari in Bode, Thimi is embroiled in a legal battle between the public and one Gyalpo Sherpa who claims that he had bought the pond from a woman called, Kanchi Podini. The locals argue that she had been contracted the pond for fish-farming during the Panchayat years, and would have no legitimacy for its sale.

Elsewhere in Kathmandu, there are only memories of extinct ponds. Few know that the Dasrath Stadium is built over a vast lotus pond. Other ponds now have structures like the Chhaya Centre built over them. With the ponds gone, so have the rituals, festivals and folklore that were associated with them.

Kathmandu’s ponds were not just woven in the sentiments of the local Newa people, they were a well-thought-out plan by people of the past, who understood the valley’s ecology. The loss of these ponds is a loss of that knowledge in a world that is fast being lost to invasive urban development.

importance of Kathmandu Valley’s network of ponds like Kamal Pokhari and Rani Pokhari. They point to Gahana Pokhari in Handigaon which was also lined with concrete in the name of ‘renovation’.

According to the Ancient Monument Preservation Act of 2043, using concrete in a historical monument is prohibited and is subject to penalty. When approached, Ram Bahadur Kunwar of the Department of Archaeology refused to comment.

Sanjay Adhikari of the non-profit group Pro-Public has filed a petition at the Supreme Court to stop reconstruction at Kamal Pokhari. But three months have passed since, and there have been no hearings.

As the struggle between the city and heritage activists drags on, Kamal Pokhari is dusty and overgrown with weed. Stray dogs roam about, and neighbourhood children play in the dry bed.

“Ponds act as diaphragms, they allow the intake of rainwater into the groundwater which helps maintain the groundwater table,” says Joshi. “When the surface is sealed with concrete, rainwater cannot reach the ground and the groundwater table drops.”

Without ponds and open fields to ensure that Kathmandu Valley’s groundwater is recharged, there is the danger of sinkholes and land subsidence. The valley’s early inhabitants had created a network of ponds to recharge aquifers, so water would be stored underground for use in the dry season through wells.

While most big cities in the world are located on a sea coast or alongside rivers, Kathmandu Valley had its own unique system. Beginning from the Kirat period, people settled on elevated land and the fertile river banks were

strictly for agriculture, and for flood control. This knowledge was passed down to the Lichhavi and Malla periods.

The ancient kingdoms built an elaborate network of *rajkulo* canals that channeled water from springs on the Valley rim to ponds, hiti water spouts, and wells. The Newa people of the valley created three types of ponds with varying functions to maintain the hydrological balance.

Ponds upstream from towns acted as buffer reservoirs that stored rainwater, and recharged the aquifers. They also helped reduce the risk of floods in the settlement during the monsoon, and in the dry season provided water for irrigation and household use.

Rani Pokhari and other ponds in Lainchaur, Lagankhel, Pulchok, Siddha Pokhari, Bhaktapur’s Rani Pokhari and Bhaju Pokhari are some examples of ponds built for this purpose.

The ponds built within settlements were smaller and used mainly to recharge aquifers and for rainwater harvesting. The recently restored Pim Bahal Pukhu in Patan, Purna Chandi, Khicha Pokhari and Byasi Pokhari are examples of these local ponds.

Ponds downstream from settlements had flood and landslide control functions, with Chaysal Pokhari in Patan being an example.

Kathmandu Valley was hydrological civilisation that understood the value of water conservation, and had an intricately engineered water management system suited to the topography. It dated back to the Kirat and Lichhavi era, 1,500-2,400 years ago, and passed down to the more recent Malla period.

Hitis and dug wells in the towns were fed through aquifers,

and to ensure that there was flow of water even during the dry season, ponds were built as reservoirs to recharge the groundwater. These ponds were in turn fed through *rajkulo* canals.

In the 1800s, the Ranas introduced piped water, replacing the traditional water system. But the modern systems were not able to cope with the rapid urbanisation of Kathmandu, especially in the past 50 years.

“One of the reasons Kathmandu Valley civilisation thrived in the past was because of its intricate water system, of which ponds were an important part,” explains Joshi.

Much of this network of canals and ponds are now destroyed. The stone spouts are mostly dry. The Ring Road expansion destroyed much of Patan’s underground *rajkulo* canals. And the ponds started going dry because of the loss of replenishment through the water channels, and encroachment.

Heritage conservationists say that Kamal Pokhari and other ponds in Kathmandu Valley need to be revived, not just reconstructed. This means restoring their original water channels and the natural soil characteristics with an understanding of their ecological and cultural importance. 🇳🇵



PONDERING PONDS

When it comes to conservation of ponds, Bhaktapur is leading the way and involving local communities in conserving and restructuring ponds. Join our video team on a trip.



EVENTS



**Happy Easter**  
Head on over to Timro Concept Store with the family and join the chocolate Easter egg hunt in the garden. Event to be followed by a cupcake decoration session to let the little ones explore the crafty side.  
*4 April, 2pm, Timro Concepts Store*

**Sukrabare**  
Enjoy a weekly Friday evening market at Dhokaima, with stalls and interesting local products to be added every week as it goes along. Support Nepali small business owners and shop for your grocery/food stuff as well as other unique locally manufactured items at this special curated market.  
*2 April, 5pm, Dhokaima Cafe*



**After School Music**  
Buy local products, listen to some live music and witness live portraits, and open mic sessions at the Table Market by Tehra Family.

*3 April, 11am, the yantra house*

**Kholo 2.0**  
Digital Artist, Rajesh Budhathoki's work will be on display as a part of the the seven-month-long exhibition series, Tulikaa's Kholo 2.0 – A Cycle Of Life.

*12 February - 27 August, Van Gogh Gallery, Dhokaima Cafe*



**BlaBla Language Exchange**  
Become fluent in any language while making friends with native speakers online. Get access to a host and plan your lesson plans, text chat rooms and more. Visit their online page.  
*4 April, 5pm*

ONLINE ARCHIVES



**Shilpee Theatre**  
Plays from Shilpee Theatre are on YouTube channel. Watch COMA, and their adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's Hedda Gabler

**Digital Archaeology Foundation**  
Look at historic photographs from Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur durbar squares, and watch 3D reconstructed videos of temples around Nepal. Visit the Digital Archaeology Foundation website for more details.



**Sustainable Summits 2020**  
Listen to Sustainable Summits global leaders speak out on World Environment Day. It is an online 50-minute programme at which inspirational leaders deliver powerful messages on the future of mountain environment. Watch videos on YouTube



**Global Nepali Museum**  
Global Nepali museum is the first database of its kind in Nepal that features Nepali art and artefacts, housed in museums around the world. Go to the museum website and learn about sculptures, paintings, as well as contemporary art, and other Nepali cultural objects.

DINING



**Fresh Bakes**  
New in town, Fresh Bakes sets up a few tables and serves a myriad of baked items and cakes, coffee and a variety of doughnuts. Pick up their nutella-filled doughnuts or browse through other food products for breakfast, lunch or dinner.  
*9887165566, Thamel*

**The Village Cafe**  
Head to the Village Café, Patan to try out delicious Newari Platters. Or order the much-loved Yomari and selroti, one of the finest dishes on their menu.  
*(01) 540712, Jhamsikhel*



**The Fusion Bar**  
Here's some respite from city life-- unwind by the poolside at the Fusion Bar in the Dwarika's hotel to indulge in the age-old ambience. Witness the finest art of mixology, serving you with the best of drinks and food.  
*(01) 4470770, Battispatali*

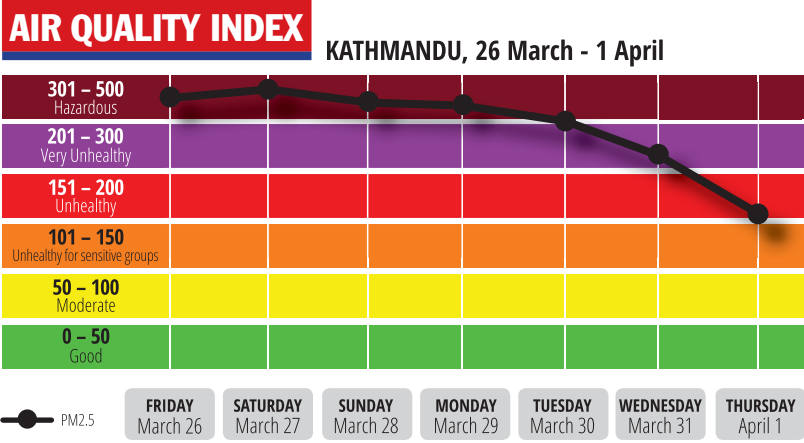


**Patan Museum Café**  
Hit the oasis of calm in the midst of a bustling metropolis and indulge in delectable food and beverages, at Patan Museum Café.  
*(01) 5526271, Patan Durbar Square*



Those welcome showers on Wednesday and Thursday in Central Nepal doused some of the wildfires, but it still was not enough to drench the undergrowth. This NASA satellite photo still shows blue smoke. The actual fire season in Baisakh is still ahead of us. Expect a clearer, warmer weekend with the sun shining bright without the filtering action of the smoke of the past week. Some afternoon buildup in the mountains, with isolated storm activity.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
 25° 10°	 25° 10°	 25° 11°



the graph above shows how smoke that enveloped Kathmandu drove the Air Quality Index (AQI) to record high for days on end. On five out of seven days this week, Kathmandu's city centre recorded dangerous concentration of particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns. Brief showers on Wednesday and Thursday cleared up sky temporarily, but it is a short respite as we head to another dry spell after the weekend. Check out our Editorial on the topic (*page 2*) and its graphical representation (*page 1*).



**OUR PICK**  
What We Do in the Shadows, a horror-comedy mockumentary by New Zealand writer-director duo Jemaine Clement and Taika Waititi, follows centuries-old vampire housemates Viago, Vladislav and Deacon, who grapple with the complexities of life in Wellington in the 21st century, while trying to teach a newly-turned vampire the nuances of the undead experience. Stars Jemaine Clement, Taika Waititi, Jonathan Brugh, Cori Gonzalez-Macuer, and Stu Rutherford.



**Kholo 2.0**  
A CYCLE OF LIFE



(DIGITAL ART)

**RAZESH BUDHATHOKI**

APR 2 - APR 7


Van Gogh Gallery

DHOKAIMA CAFE, PATANDHOKA  
+977 9869579723  
GALLERY TIME 12 PM TO 7 PM





YOU HAVE HIGH STANDARDS.  
SO DO WE!



Drink responsibly





# The anatomy of a flower

Neera Joshi's unique paintings of plants combine scientific accuracy with botanical art

Joshi got her Master's degree in Botany from Tribhuvan University in 1995.

Although her father, Ramananda Joshi, was a noted artist, it was only in 1996 that she considered art as a career after her Master's. "Becoming an artist had never crossed my mind, although I was raised surrounded by art," she says.

For picking up the paintbrush relatively later in life, Joshi honed her skill swiftly over the next few years and had her work on exhibit for the first time in 1999.

Her work has been on display at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, and more recently at the Wuhan International Botanical Art Exhibition, where three of her paintings were exhibited virtually, owing to the Covid pandemic.

"Most Nepalis don't know indigenous flowers from exotic ones, which is especially concerning at a time when conservation of biodiversity is

so important," says the artist, who also trains students and budding Nepali artists at her Studio Petals.

"I hope this exhibition will provide exposure to botanical art and generate interest among young Nepalis," she says. "This will help in education, conservation and research." 🇳🇵

Neera Joshi's collection of botanical art, *The Beauty of Nepal's Flora*, will be exhibited at Siddhartha Gallery from 6-26 April.



Meet Neera Joshi, and listen to her explain her art while she paints plants, combining scientific rigour with art to create exquisite images that pay homage to nature's beauty.



● Shristi Karki

"I just can't help myself when I see flowers," says botanical artist and illustrator Neera Joshi. "I have to paint them."

Outside her studio, the spring garden is blooming with bright pink azaleas, orange daisies, and lush calla lilies. They were splashes of colour against a city shrouded in smoke this week.

Inside, Joshi sits cross-legged on the floor, surrounded by framed botanical artwork. On Tuesday, 32 of her paintings will be on display at Siddhartha Art Gallery for a three-week-long exhibition.

"Many people do not know what botanical art is because they have never seen it," explains Joshi. "It is a means visual communication that will enable Nepalis to recognise and appreciate our rich and varied biodiversity."

Indeed, the art comprises botanical drawings with art. While both styles need to be

scientifically accurate, and require equipment different from other art forms, botanical drawings are more scientific, the figures need to be precise and to scale, and they contribute to scientific studies and plant identification.

Botanical art, meanwhile, allows for more focus on the aesthetics and the creative process. Joshi plays to both of those styles in

her artwork.

Half of her collection for the exhibition includes flowers native to Nepal— from wildflowers of Champadevi done in greens and browns to the soft pink *Luculia gratissima* and Himalayan blue poppies. The other half are exotic plants, ranging from orchids in pinks and yellows to kalakaua, magnolias, and more.

Joshi experiments with multiple mediums in her artwork while balancing scientific accuracy and artistic expression in her paintings. One of her pieces of mahonia berries, called *jamaane mandro* in Nepal, is a mixture of watercolour and pen-and-ink, while some of her pieces are half watercolour and half pencil sketch, with a series of smaller, more detailed, and scale illustration of the plant, depicting every stage of its life.

"There is little room for free expression, freestyle or imagination with botanical art, and there are lots of rules and regulations," says Joshi.

She prefers being in nature and doing live paintings, and recently trekked up to 3,500m in

Gorkha to study flora in previously unexplored forests.

Although botanical artists also work with herbariums, a collection of preserved plant specimens, she usually documents flowers live in her field sketchbook, later referring to them to translate her art to watercolour. If the plant is small and manageable, Joshi brings them back home to study.

"My mother wanted me to become a doctor," Joshi says, smiling. "But I studied botany."

SUBISU  
GIGfiber

अब इन्टरनेट अनुभव हुन्छ अमर  
उत्कृष्ट  
5G+  
DUAL BAND ROUTER को साथमा

20  
Mbps  
@ JUST  
RS. 1100\*  
PER MONTH

30 +  
Mbps  
FULL  
HD  
PACKAGE  
@ JUST  
RS. 1208\*  
PER MONTH

High Speed  
Internet

Smooth  
Gaming

Quality Video  
Streaming

Seamless  
Connection

#### CONTACT DETAILS FOR SALES & SUPPORT

HEAD OFFICE • Baluwatar: 01-4235888, 9801235888

Email: consumer.sales@subisu.net.np, support@subisu.net.np

Website: www.subisu.net.np

FOR SMS BOOKING: Type Your Name<Space> Location and send SMS to 9801116552

बालबालिका माथि हुने हिंसा, दुर्व्यवहार,  
शोषण भएको, जोखिमपूर्ण अवस्थामा रहेको वा  
बालअधिकारको उल्लंघन भएको छ भने बाल  
हेल्पलाइनको पैसा नलान्ने  
फोन: नं. १०९८ मा खबर गरौं ।

नेपाल सरकार  
सञ्चार तथा सूचना प्रविधि मन्त्रालय  
सूचना तथा प्रसारण विभाग





BRITISH EMBASSY

**EDUCATION FOR ALL:** British Ambassador Nicola Pollitt during a sharing session on providing quality education to marginalised girls in Nepal on Tuesday in Kathmandu.



WWF NEPAL

**NATURE MANTRA:** World wildlife Fund Nepal appointed Nepal's singing nun Ani Choying Drolma as its Goodwill Ambassador. Pictured is Ghana Gurung of WWF.



ABHUSHAN GAUTAM/UNDP NEPAL

**FIRE DRILL:** Local fire brigades in Lalitpur receive training on firefighting, rescue and hazardous material handling.



MACHAMASI

**SUPPORT BURMA:** Rights activists condemn civilian massacres in Burma demanding unconditional release of political prisoners and restoration of democracy.



AMIT MACHAMASI

**CLOSED UP:** A teacher locks up a classroom in Bhaktapur on Monday after the government closed all educational institutions due to hazardous levels of air pollution.

# Nepal's e-economy rapidly goes digital

## Pandemic propels Nepal to a mobile wallet economy

There are an estimated 4 million digital wallet users in Nepal now. They have graduated from ATM debit/credit cards to e-banking and mobile banking to the M-wallet movement.

A smartphone with a mobile number with Internet access is the only tool one needs to make payments quickly and conveniently.



**TECH-AWAY**  
Saniaa Shah

If you have not jumped on the mobile wallet bandwagon already, or if you have dipped your toes but want to know more before diving into the digital payment lifestyle, here is a quick recap of the top five e-wallet platforms in Nepal.

### eSewa

Nepal's first online payment gateway (outside of e-banking) was launched in 2009 and has grown to become the top choice when it comes to mobile wallets. eSewa got the first player advantage in the fintech sector, having accumulated more partners and built many tie-ups so that users can treat it as a true one-stop-shop for regular payments.

with a smooth, simple UI/UX along with a web application to match.

Khalti is a step ahead with easy onboarding of new merchant accounts, a real-time dashboard and automated reports, salary distribution and other e-banking options for companies, easy website integration for e-commerce sites, and innovatively pitching itself as a marketing strategy for lesser known businesses that need online visibility.

Having tied up with over 40 banks, Khalti is no small fish and is in the market for the long haul. Besides being convenient and offering the same services as eSewa (or similar features), Khalti makes itself known for being not only customer-friendly, but business-friendly to boot.

### IME Pay

IME Pay is a relatively new player in the digital wallet market, but being associated with one of the biggest remittance companies, IME Remittance, it is not minor. IME started late but caught up fast by launching aggressive, widespread marketing campaigns across media and brand-building tactics like sponsoring major Nepali TV shows that receive thousands of viewers every day. With attractive cashback offers and a strong sales network,

with 'The Voice of Nepal' to become the official voting and payment partner boosted its popularity and brand status. With a few upgrades on the mobile app, bug and glitch fixing, and a significant push in tie-ups with partners, PrabhuPay can keep up with its competition.

With other digital wallet platforms entering the scene, such as QPay, a promising entrant that entices users with high cashback offers, and iPay, a Muncha.com product that is best suited to online shoppers: Nepal's fintech sector is moving at a rapid pace.

The Covid-19 crisis catapulted this trend, with users forced to use digital payment methods for necessary money transfers during the lockdown in 2020. With smartphones becoming increasingly affordable, widespread Internet penetration across the country, thanks to mobile data services, and the younger generation rooting for a cashless economy, urban Nepal has quickly moved from a cash-dependent economy to become digitally savvy.

However, lack of education and literacy also implies lack of digital literacy. Besides, banking fees and lack of access to banks are major reasons why the less developed rural and semi-rural areas of Nepal are far from ready for

## THEN



## NOW



Water, electricity, TV and other utility bills, school fees, movie tickets, flight or bus tickets, insurance premium payments, important fees to be paid to government bodies, or mobile balance top-ups, eSewa is the go-to app for it all. Transferring funds from one user to another is just a few finger taps away, making it easy for Nepalis to lend or borrow money, casually purchase inexpensive goods and even help family and friends financially. To ensure cyber safety, eSewa has enabled biometric security (fingerprint verification) as well as MPin and password features. That said, the app does store its users' personal data to regularly enable transactions, as do all such apps.

### Khalti

Fast-forward to 2017, Khalti gives eSewa a run for its money, as it were: quickly rising to become Nepal's second most-preferred e-wallet, thanks to a strong, creative technical team, Khalti set the new standard of a digital payment app

IME Pay is catching up with the rest.

However, a lack of transparency and information for customers along with occasional technical issues confirm that IME Pay has some ways to go. This is a classic case proving a key business lesson: investing time and effort in consistent product development and improvement is more valuable for long-term loyalty than spending on marketing and dramatically increasing sales.

### PrabhuPay

A fintech platform that is a subsidiary product of the corporate giant Prabhu Group, comes with its perks. PrabhuPay lets users pay various utility bills as well as transfer funds within the PrabhuPay network. The app is simple and easy to use, but customers have mentioned issues with KYC form updating, lack of partnerships with popular banks and the much-missed feature of peer-to-peer money transfer that other mobile wallets offer by default.

Following the footsteps of IME Pay, PrabhuPay smartly partnered

digital payment systems. The Nepal government is working towards digital adoption by digitising government transactions (online tax payment options), launching the National Payment Gateway, and establishing many products like ConnectIPS, ConnectRGTS and Electronic Cheque Clearing (ECC).

But nationwide restrictions imposing a one-time transaction limit of Rs5,000, daily limit of Rs10,000 and monthly limit of Rs50,000 force the masses to heavily depend on physical cash and cheque payments. With digital literacy awareness, initiation for new users from the private players themselves and incentive-based strategies built for disadvantaged people, Nepal's fintech market can grow.

The future is here. We know a healthy digital economy can be corruption-free, convenient and empowering for Nepalis across all income strata. 🇳🇵

**Saniaa Shah** writes this fortnightly column, Tech-Away for Nepali Times.



# Write fearlessly, she said

The difference women can make as mentors

Jyoti was standing just outside the gate when I stepped out. I walked past her hurriedly, on my way out to work. She caught up with me.



SUBURBAN TALES  
Pratibha Tuladhar

Hello, I said.  
Hello, she smiled.  
My father is asking if you will tuition me, she asked.  
Tuition, what? I asked in return. I'm not sure.  
Oh, if you will teach me.  
Teach you what? I laughed lightly.  
Teach me. She smiled again.  
I said: Okay. Let me think about it. Let's talk about this later?  
I smiled and she smiled back.

Rushing to work, I kept thinking about how she had beamed when I had said okay. And inside my head I was already starting to plan what I could 'teach' her. The opportunity that had presented itself to me drummed an excitement in me. I was being given this chance to influence a young mind and how much I could do to help her discover.

I could not stop smiling to myself. Book, books, I thought. I could begin with a book. I rummaged through my bookshelf in my mind. What would an 11-year-old want to read? Maybe stories about birds or dogs? Or about women role models? Or maybe a



PRATIBHA TULADHAR

book of short-stories. Or maybe a comic book?

When I was 11, one of my uncles had given me a book. Here, he had said, presenting it to me. Pretty As You Please (365 Recipes for Young Ladies). Read it when your period comes, he had said. And it did come soon after.

The book had exactly 365 chapters, beginning with what it means to be a lady. So, a lady was what a woman was not, which introduced the idea of 'class'.

The book had a list of instructions on a number of things: how a young lady should sit, how she must speak, how she must walk. A lady is never supposed to sit like a man, she must sit with her legs together. She must speak with her

voice calm and low, and walk in the same manner, calmly. Never run!

The book also prescribed the correct way to laugh. Do not open your mouth and laugh like boys do. Laugh softly and wave your hand before you, just so that you can hide your embarrassment a little.

Years later, I had retrieved the book from a box of old things and dumped it into the carton going out to trash. i am not a pretty girl. that is not what i do.

The book did have a couple of useful tips though -- exercises for menstrual cramp, and on how to ask a male friend not to touch you. But do it politely, it said. I can barely recall what else the book had, but what I do remember is that I had gobbled the book down.

At that time, I heard the term 'act like a lady' so often in school that I was convinced that was the only way to behave. Never sit with your legs spread out. Be kind, polite and gentle—all very well, but also to male friends who touch you in ways you do not like?

So, when a boy punched me, I would say 'ow' in pain but never retaliate. When a family friend tripped me on Holi and pinned me down to the marble floor, the cold, hardness of it stinging my back, while he put abir on my face, again, I did not retaliate.

When another boy slammed my head with a water-filled balloon and when the balloon fell on the road without bursting, I merely crushed it under my feet so that he would not pick it and use it against me again. I did not pick it and throw it back at him or tell him he was being a jerk. I had to be polite, right? Even in my aggressions. That is what the book said. And I had read the book too many times.

In those days, my access to books was limited to the Enid Blytons. And while mysteries were still my genre, Nancy Drew Case Files were still not allowed because she had a boyfriend. And Agatha Christie, you could read a page or two in the library, but not borrow. So yes, I read *Pretty as you Please* on repeat, until I knew some recipes by heart: A good girl takes care of everyone around her.

It was a while before Nancy Drews and other books happened. But it was not until I turned 14 that I met Little Women. I won the book as a prize. Spelling competition. And it was then that my impulse to run

was validated. It was possible to be a girl and want to only read and write and not cling to a man, like Jo March -- the girl who changed the lives of millions of young women.

Over the years, though, I find myself gravitating towards the idea of Aunt March. I've often wished I could have one to whisk me out of certain situations, but now, I want to become one. For Jos. Maybe for Jyoti.

I make a mental list of books for her. I imagine explaining books to Jyoti. I plan assignments for her. She will be rewarded with a new book every time she finishes her assignment.

Her first assignment will be around A House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros. When I hand her the book, I will ask her to open to the chapter, 'A house of my own' and ask her to read aloud:

*Not a flat. Not an apartment in back. Not a man's house*

*Not a daddy's. A house all my own. With my porch and my pillow, my pretty purple petunias. My books and my stories. My two shoes waiting beside the bed. Nobody to shake a stick at. Nobody's garbage to pick up after.*

*Only a house quiet as a snow, a space for myself to go, clean as paper before the poem.*

I surmise at Jyoti's surprise and the sense of familiarity the words might evoke in her as she reads. I imagine she will shut the book and look at me and smile at me in acknowledgement. And I smile to myself.

*Suburban Tales is a monthly column in Nepali Times based on real people (with some names changed) in the author's life.*

हिटो भनेको

WORLDLINK

Watch 3000+

Movies and

Web Series on

NET TV

Cine+

Enjoy on

NET TV

APP

Download Now From

GET IT ON Google Play

Download on the App Store



# The carbon footprint of Nepal's tourism

The post-pandemic period will be an opportunity to do tourism in a better way

● **Sonia Awale**

Even the most optimistic scenario is that it will take at least five years for Nepal's travel industry to recover from the pandemic impact.

However, the country has an opportunity for a 'better normal' and to evolve a tourism model that does not damage nature and heritage, but rather enhance them-- a clean industry that is environmentally and socially sustainable.

The pandemic has shown that many journeys may actually not be necessary at all, and when they do travel, passengers are now more aware about their carbon footprint.

"Low carbon footprint tourism that benefits the maximum number of local businesses is the only way forward," maintains Shilshila Acharya of the Himalayan Climate Initiative (HCI).

International aviation accounts for 2.5% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. At a first glance, this may look insignificant but its impact is disproportionate across the world and more acute in the Himalaya.

Moreover, the 2015 Paris Agreement does not include other greenhouse gases from aviation. International air travel is not counted within any country's emission targets either.

The International Civil Aviation Organisation

Energy promotion Centre (AEPC) is the only Nepali entity that offers carbon credits, mostly in biogas, micro-hydro and wind energy, with buyers and rates already fixed.

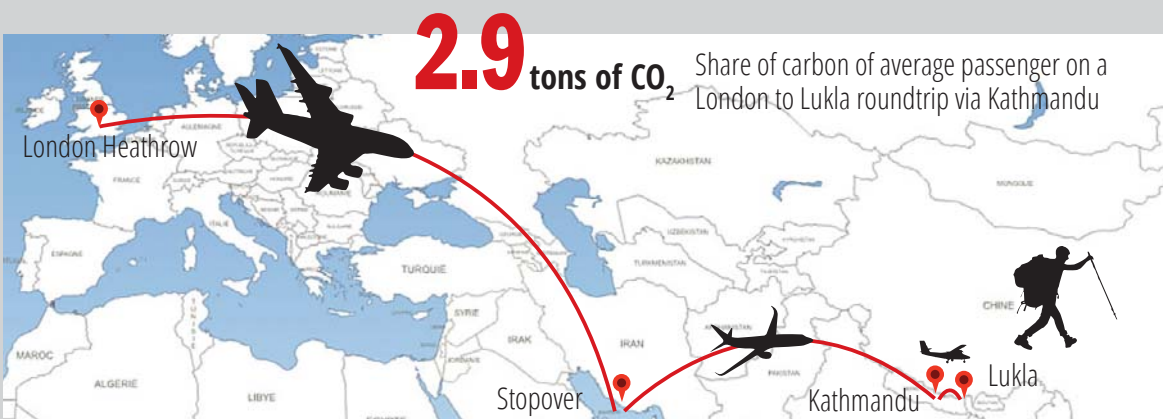
Pre-Covid, voluntary offsetting interationally was at an all-time high with a 140-fold increase between 2008-2018 and 430 million tonnes of emission reductions generated worldwide.

The demand for voluntary offsets has grown exponentially, often leading to oversupply of carbon credits in countries like India and China.

Companies claiming to be green often buy cheap credits, which is why it is crucial to check a project is certified.

Some experts say offsetting does not tackle the root of the problem, which is wasteful consumption. They say the priority must be to reduce emissions at source, and not try to assuage one's guilt by buying offsets. Buying carbon credits should go hand-in-hand with a domestic reduction strategy, they add.

"For a landlocked and tourism-dependent country like Nepal, carefully selected and accounted for carbon offsets in aviation in the absence of low carbon travel can be a good option, at least in the short-term," says carbon finance expert Rastraraj Bhandari. "But air travel is only one aspect of green tourism. There is domestic transport that needs to transition away from fossil-fuel and the energy-



(ICAO) has adopted the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) requiring member states to voluntarily offset carbon starting this year. This may mean individual passengers will not have to offset themselves, but the additional cost of carbon credits might trickle down to air fares.

An average tourist flying to Lukla from London via the Gulf burns nearly 3 tonnes of carbon. On treks, LPG for cooking and fuel for jeep rides add up.

While airlines wait to switch to biofuels, there are alternatives like carbon offsetting which allow passengers to compensate for the CO<sub>2</sub> by paying for projects around the world that reduce the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Passengers calculate the carbon they burn on a trip, and buy equivalent credits from organisations working on projects such as biogas, reforestation, hydropower, water treatment or solar energy.

"It would be ideal if Nepal could offer a locally-based offset system, for example through community forestry or social impact projects so tourists could increase the benefits of their trip to Nepal," says Robin Boustead, promoter of the Great Himalayan Trail, who is researching the effect of climate change in Sagarmatha National Park (*read box, below*).

"Such a program could become a significant point of difference for Nepal and put tourism and the climate agenda in the spotlight, especially as the Himalaya are suffering so much."

At the moment the government's Alternative

intensive hotel industry that can make strides by reducing its carbon footprint."

Even though Nepal boasts that it has maintained 40% of its area under forest cover, and has targets for switching to renewable energy, there are contradictory activities like haphazard road-building, sand mining on rivers, as well ecologically disastrous projects like Nijgad airport.

"We might not be able to do much regarding international aviation, but we can improve and then electrify mass transport, build cycling lanes, push electric vehicles and save billions," says energy expert Manjeet Dhakal. "This will help tourists and locals alike, and also reduce air pollution."

Green tourism is a holistic approach that takes into account all forms of transportation, fuel for cooking and heating, accommodation, and food sources. A packet of pasta flown from Europe has a much greater footprint than a plate of *dal bhat*.

Promoting community-based initiatives such as homestays in the plains, mid-hills and mountains that depend on locally grown products will also generate jobs at home for youth. (*See, right*)

Shilshila Acharya's non-profit is preparing to clean up Lhotse, Pumori, Ama Dablam, Dhaulagiri and Makalu in a campaign led by the Nepal Army to bring down 35 tonnes of waste this spring.

She says, "What the pandemic has taught us is not to depend solely on international visitors. We have to promote domestic and land-based regional tourism for the sustainability of the industry itself." 🇳🇵

In a report on the impact of climate change in the Sagarmatha National Park, Robin Boustead of Great Himalayan Trail counted 40-100 flights a day to Lukla during the peak climbing season.

He then calculated that a Viking Air Twin Otter that carries up to 16 passengers and three crew had a fuel burn rate of 500kg/hour. This means every passenger is responsible for 135kg of fuel on a return flight from Kathmandu to Lukla.

"Aviation fuel has a CO<sub>2</sub> emission factor of 3.1, so this equates to 418.5kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per passenger," he says.

Over 95% of tourists who visit the Khumbu fly to and from Lukla from Kathmandu, so in 2019 tourists contributed at least 22,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, the report estimated.

On top of that, there were 70-100 mostly Airbus HP350 helicopter flights to higher valleys every day carrying cargo or passengers (mountaineers, sightseers and medical evacuations). This translated into additional 4,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> just in Khumbu alone.

Says Boustead: "Without any monitoring or evaluation of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, nor offsetting programs within Nepal, these results suggest that tourism is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions."

## Calculate your foot size

A passenger on a London-Lukla roundtrip via Kathmandu burns 2.9 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> on average. But that is just an estimate, it is not easy to calculate the exact footprint of one's travels.

There are multiple online tools developed by organisations like WWF, The Nature Conservancy and the US EPA, and companies that offer offsets also calculate footprint and suggest carbon credit projects best suited to buyers. But the figures are often not consistent.

A report in 2019 by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) projected that transport-related emissions from tourism are expected to increase to 5.3% of all anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> in the next 10 years.

But following the pandemic and increased awareness about low-carbon travel, emissions per passenger/km is expected to decline. In Nepal, for example, tourism post-pandemic is expected to be even more nature and adventure-based as companies here respond to international demand.

# Tourism that

The pandemic has pushed Nepal towards tourism that is more sustainable and equitable

We have had more than a year now to ponder a 'better normal' for Nepal's tourism industry. It has been pointed out that in the post-pandemic age, Nepal's unique selling point should be parts of the country with unspoiled nature, tranquility, wilderness, and a sustainable and equitable tourism model.

Instead of mass tourism, experts have laid more emphasis on high value guests who prefer activities that are light on the land, rely on locally grown and made products as far as possible, and carry a smaller carbon footprint (see above).

A new breed of social entrepreneurs had been trying out this new style of tourism in Nepal even before Covid-19. But the pandemic has helped turn the trend from a fad into a necessity. The questions being asked are: who really benefits from tourism and at what cost? How can the pluses be made to outweigh the minuses? What are the ways that trekking can inject income directly into the village economy instead of local people getting only a trickle after the European wholesalers and their Kathmandu-based agents have subtracted their margins?

The entrepreneurs who were trying out this new model, are now in trouble because of the collapse of Nepal's tourism industry. However, as consciousness grows among Nepalis with disposable income about environmental degradation and the need to reduce waste, plastics and fossil fuel use, domestic tourism could also be a driver for a better normal in tourism.

Indeed, three of the initiatives featured here indicate that tourism entrepreneurs have also woken up to the value of the domestic market. The growing number of Nepalis on the trekking trails and at major destinations, the initiatives to clean up garbage mean that Nepalis want to help fellow-Nepalis by travelling in Nepal.



This quaint collection of cottages in the midst of forests hills with a magnificent view of Annapurna and Machapuchre is located in Tanchok, a ridge 35km northwest of Pokhara off the Lumle Highway. It is high enough to get some snow in winter, and low enough for it to be warm and comfortable rest of the year.

Kalsee Ecolodge was established to stimulate the local economy with an emphasis on income generation for women, promote eco-friendly practices and cultivate the idea of sustainable tourism for rural development.

It is 2km from the nearest settlement, and by staying off-grid and relying on renewable energy to power the hotel, supporting the local economy by providing jobs as well as sourcing all raw materials including food locally, taking innovative waste management practices including the use of eco-friendly composting toilets that use natural decomposition

and evaporation to recycle human waste, Kalsee touches upon several of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is well aligned with carbon neutral accommodation services.

"Each cottage was designed with extreme care for the surroundings using local craftsmanship," says General Manager Ram Bhakta Gurung. "Our food is all local dishes using ingredients produced by farmers in the surrounding areas."

Because of its location and surroundings, Kalsee Ecolodge offers a variety of activities from meditation and yoga to short forest hikes to unspoiled traditional Gurung villages nearby, bird and butterfly watching. The semi-tropical forests teem with wildlife, and there are 400 species of birds just in the surrounding mountains. A nearby hilltop offers spectacular sunrise views, and a longer one-day walk away are the hot springs in Jhinuwa.



# treads lightly on the land



Madi Eco-village

The Madi Valley is in Nepal, but its location south of the Chitwan National Park has meant that it has always been isolated from the rest of the country. This is also what preserved the region's pristine environment and the unspoilt lifestyle of its people.

The village of Bankatta is inhabited mostly by the indigenous Bot people who depend on the forest and river for their livelihood, but are adaptable and willing to take on ecologically-sensitive nature-based community tourism that the Madi Eco-Village project will promote.

Madi feels like rural Nepal a few decades ago, and its promoters say the project does not try to



idealise that time, but to lay out a different path of development that appreciates and values natural assets, strong local culture and while embracing careful modernization to raise local living standards.

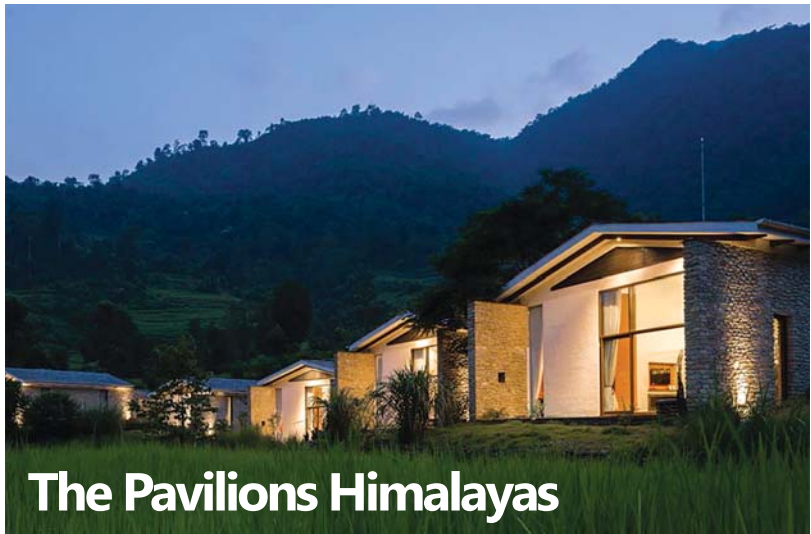
The prime mover of the project is Sarita Bot, a community leader who has been working

with international partners. Sustainable Mountain Architecture (SMA) was building the first of two cottages and a community hall before the pandemic hit, but construction has restarted and the facility is expected to open by Dasain.

The village-stay concept is designed so that both Nepali and international guests can immerse themselves in the local culture and nature, get to know the way of life, and get an authentic experience of rural Nepal.

The Madi Valley is wedged between the edge of the forest and the Indian border. It teems with wildlife, and the 32 sq m cottages are designed for serenity and comfort. There will be home-cooked meals and activities that provide an alternative to the mass tourism prevalent in Sauraha. The architecture of the cottages are made to resemble traditional Bot homes with large porches. They stand on an elevated plinth of river stones, and the wall and tile roofs are all made with local bamboo and sal.

The project is supported by REPIC Switzerland and MyClimate. "The idea was to explore model for holistic tourism as a means to catalyse sustainable rural development in Nepal," says Monika Schaffner of REPIC. "Tourism has the potential to bring the economic, ecological and cultural aspects together in an ideally win-win situation for people, place and planet."



The Pavilions Himalayas

Nepal's leading eco-sustainable resort, The Pavilions Himalayas which operates The Farm has added its Lake View property, and re-opened both after the lockdowns and closures. These two properties are now offering exciting getaway packages for Nepalis.

The Pavilions prides itself as a truly eco-sensitive luxury resort that ploughs some of its profits into the local community and to

It produces its own biodegradable signature toiletries from natural local ingredients. The Farm has 14 bungalows powered with solar energy, and rainwater harvesting. Employees are from nearby villages, and the resorts try to forestall out-migration of youth.

"This is a feel-good getaway in every sense," says founder Douglas MacLagan.

The Lakeview satellite resort has eight tented villas situated in the midst of lush forests alive with birds that mix luxury with adventure. The glamping site offers stunning views of Phewa Lake's unspoilt western edge and the Annapurnas beyond.

"We're thrilled to finally re-open and welcome guests back. Nepalis are ready to explore our beautiful country and it feels good to offer an exclusive package with a delicate balance of adventure and relaxation," says General Manager Rajiv Desraj Shrestha.

The resort's 'Naturally Yours' offer is for a 2-night, 3-day eco-getaway that includes airport transfers for Rs22,000 for couples at the Farm and Rs24,888 for two at Lakeview.



charities. Set on an organic farm with goats, free-ranging chicken, cows, and even a rice paddy, the resorts recycle all water, compost all biodegradable matter and use biogas in the kitchen.

**TATA MOTORS**  
Connecting Aspirations

**TATA**

# NEW FOREVER

A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF POWERFUL & ADVANCED CARS FROM TATA MOTORS

**NEXON**  
with Electric Sunroof

**TIGOR**  
New Powerful BS6 Engines with AMT

**ALTROZ**  
India's Safest Hatchback

**TIAGO**  
New Powerful BS6 Engines with AMT

**H5**  
with Automatic Transmission and Panoramic Sunroof

**SAFETY IS NEW FOREVER**

GLOBAL NCAP

★★★★★

Safest Range with 5-Star and 4-Star Rated Cars

**DRIVING PLEASURE IS NEW FOREVER**

Multi-drive Modes

Automatic Transmission

Powerful BS6 Engines

**DESIGN IS NEW FOREVER**

Panoramic Sunroof

**BS6 ENGINE**

SIPRADI TRADING PVT. LTD., An ISO 9001:2015 Certified Company,  
Thapathali 01-4250610, 4222150, 4222152.

**SIPRADI**





**LIVING THE Ruslan VODKA MOMENT**

**Ruslan VODKA**  
Triple Distilled  
FOR OUTSTANDING SMOOTHNESS

**PREMIUM QUALITY**  
100% PURE VODKA

70° PROOF | 750 ML

ENJOY WITH RUSLAN RESPONSIBLY

## A self-reliant Nepal

Once in a while, amidst all this gloom and doom, we detect a silver lining, a light at the end of tunnel, a ray of moonshine. I am, of course, referring to the heartening piece of news this week that Nepal is now self-sufficient in chicken and eggs.

Although we should not be counting our chicken before they hatch, this is a phenomenal piece of good news. It means we will finally be putting to rest an answer to the scientific riddle that has bedevilled mankind since the dawn of human history: which came first, the chicken or the egg?

We have it on good authority that it was neither. What came first was the rooster that impregnated the hen. I know, many of you are itching to ask, so where did the rooster come from? Was he also not from an egg born? You are right. Hadn't thought of it, let me make a mental note of that, and get back to you.

But I digress from the main point on the agenda this week, which is that with self-sufficiency in poultry products, it is clear that Nepal's Human Asset Index is now on an upward trajectory, and the country is well on its way to graduate to Middle Kingdom Status.

Unbeknownst to most of us, Nepal had already achieved self-sufficiency in various commodities that are of strategic importance. But, being a modest nation of humble means that does not like to toot its own trumpet unnecessarily, we did not make a big song and dance about it before. However, now in strictest confidence, we can reveal to you this highly classified list of items in which Nepal is self-reliant:

- **Instant Noodles.** Nepal now makes enough chow-chow to feed the country's population many times over.
- **Uranium.** The discovery of a sackful of U-238 in Boudha last month is proof that the country does not have to rely anymore on imports of fissile material.
- **Iron Rods.** The number of commercials of TMT bars on TV these days, must mean that Nepal has now formally and definitively entered the Iron Age.
- **Gold Biscuits.** Till not long ago, Nepal had to import all its gold from abroad countries. We are glad to announce that henceforth Nepal does not import any gold, we just smuggle it in.
- **Alcohol.** The Nepal government's concerted efforts to promote new beer and liquor brands has paid off in the long run. It can be officially announced that we are now not just self-sufficient in alcoholic beverages, but are actually exporting it across the porous border to India to reduce our balance of payments deficit. Which is why the present system of retail sales of Old Smuggler whiskey is too cumbersome, and should be upgraded. Since fuel tankers and LPG Bullets are returning empty to India, how about NOC barter booze for petroleum in a daru-for-diesel deal? And if this takes off, we can extend the India-Nepal Petroleum Pipeline to Chitwan so that petrol is pumped up to Nepal in the daytime, and we send down Barahsinghe Premium beer by night in the other direction to Bihar.
- I bet many of you do not know that the Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Midwifery has proudly declared that Nepal is now self-sufficient in **bovine semen**. This means Nepal's street oxen have no function anymore and can be retired.
- The Minister for Forest and Environment has announced that Nepal is now self-reliant in **carbon monoxide**. However, he said the oxygen concentration in the atmosphere was at dangerously high levels due to the wildfires in the country, and he was working to reduce it.



The Ass

**vianet** | अब सबै connected

१ वर्षको नयाँ subscription लिन मन छ तर बजेट अलि कम छ?

**vianet**

**EMI**

**Easy Monthly Internet**

अब भायानेट EMI अफर अन्तर्गत पाउनुहोस् १ वर्षको इन्टरनेट सहित जडान खर्च र डिभाइसहरुको मूल्य सजिलै EMI मा तिर्ने सुविधा !

सबै कर र शुल्क सहित १२ महिना अवधिको EMI **रु. १२५६** मात्र

30 Mbps इन्टरनेट for 1 year

**viaTV** for 1 year

Fiber WiFi Device Installation

**SET TOP BOX**

For more information

01-5970444, 9801046410

✉ sales@vianet.com.np | 🌐 www.vianet.com.np | 📱 vianetnepal | 📷 vianetfth

Now available in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Banepa, Birgunj, Butwal, Bhairahawa, Biratnagar, Chitwan, Hetauda, Pokhara, Lekhnath, Dadeldhura, Dhangadhi, Tandi, Itahari, Inaruwa, Dharan, Damak, Birtamode, Kritipur, Panauti, Nepalgunj & Kohalpur.