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Paddy and maize fields in Kavre district. A heavier than usual monsoon this year brought destructive floods, but was a boon to farmers.

AMIT MACHAMASI

## Green pathway

● Sonia Awale

Human influence has increased the chance of concurrent heat waves and droughts on the global scale, fire weather and compound flooding in some locations.'

That line from the IPCC report this week described exactly the series of disasters Nepal has suffered in 2021: a prolonged winter drought, devastating nationwide wildfires followed by deadly debris flows.

Even as hundreds of scientists drafted the report for the UN's IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) the pandemic raged across the world and news of climate calamities came in thick and fast: heat waves, continental-scale wildfires, floods, loss of Arctic ice.

A summary of the report was released this week, ahead of Climate Summit (COP26) in Glasgow in November. It lays out the scientific consensus on climate change, with forecasts that will directly affect the Himalaya during this century. The IPCC report contains the most direct

correlation scientists have yet drawn between climate change and extreme weather around the world.

It says: 'Increases in monsoon precipitation since the 1980s have resulted from rising greenhouse gas concentrations ... monsoon precipitation is projected to increase in the mid- to long-term, particularly over South and Southeast Asia.'

Even under the best-case scenario, global average temperature is set to exceed 1.5° Celsius by 2050. The Himalaya is getting hotter even faster than that. The 2015 Paris Agreement recommended capping global warming at 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels in the next 30 years by reducing emissions. However, the increase is already at 1.2°C.

If emissions are not controlled, the result will be mass species extinction, more widespread diseases, heat waves making parts of the world unliveable, permafrost melting, receding snowlines and shrinking glaciers.

For Nepal, even a 1.5°C rise in temperature will unleash weather extremes of the kind the country saw in 2018 and this year. At 2°C

increase, the floods, heat waves, and droughts will be deadlier. Erratic rains will exacerbate the trend of natural springs going dry.

'The global nature of glacier retreat, with almost all of the world's glaciers retreating synchronously since the 1950s is unprecedented in at least the last 2,000 years,' the report says.

But even if greenhouse gas emissions are cut, glaciers will continue melting for decades or centuries more. This will impact not just Nepal but about 1 billion people living downstream from the Himalaya in China, India, Bangladesh and Southeast Asia.

"The most vulnerable countries, including mountainous areas, are already at the forefront of fatal climate and weather disruptions," says climate expert Majeet Dhakal. "These countries with limited resources will continuously require international support to combat climate change, and at a scale well beyond current levels."

The main cause of all this warming is that in 2019, atmospheric CO2 concentration

was higher than at any time in at least 2 million years. The only solution is for world governments to immediately agree on reaching net zero CO2 by 2050 to slow global warming.

If the biggest carbon emitters meet cut back targets, under the most optimistic scenario global average temperature would stabilise at 1.5°C by 2050. At current rates of growth that is not likely.

Nepal's per capita carbon footprint is negligible, but emissions have doubled in the past seven years with increases in petroleum imports. The country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) targets zero emission by 2050. More important may be adapting to the climate crisis by irrigating rain-fed farms, managing water supply, protecting valleys from floods by reducing water levels in expanding glaciers.

It is a sign of just how desperate the situation is that the IPCC scientists say the only hope for life on the planet may be a major volcanic eruption this century that would reduce global surface temperature.

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

For a longer version of this story and a commentary by Manjeet Dahal, go online.

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# They fail, we fall

At first glance it may look like the infighting within Nepal's main political parties are internal matters, but the lack of a national purpose is adding to the people's hardships at a time of national crisis.

It was because of leadership clashes that the NCP split vertically down the middle into the ominous sounding Unified Marxist-Leninists (UML) and the Maoist Centre (MC). The emasculated MC is now in dalliance with former sworn enemies, and the UML is not just in the opposition but is itself far from unified.

Former prime minister K P Oli has sidelined Madhav Kumar Nepal, and it now looks like not even a miracle will save the party. Nepal is now setting up a parallel party with its own cadre base.

The Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP) is split in two. Technically, Mahanta Thakur and Rajendra Mahato may still be in the party, but they have been evicted from the Central Committee, sacked from the leadership, and along with 16 others are demoted to ordinary membership.

The Nepali Congress (NC) had greatness thrust upon it when Sher Bahadur Deuba became 'accidental prime minister' last month. But his feud with Ram Chandra Poudel goes back at least two decades. The Koirala clan could still have some heft within the party if only the family could speak in one voice.

NC infighting has prevented the party from conducting its 14th general assembly, which raises questions about internal democracy. The NC is not on the verge of a split like the UML or the JSP, but it is getting there.

Till press time on Thursday, Prime Minister Deuba has not been able to expand his Cabinet beyond the three ministers he currently has. This is for no other reason than the need to offer lollipops to his own colleagues, reward the Maoists for carrying him on their shoulders, give the JSP its pound of flesh, and find a place for the pro-Nepal UML dissidents who cast the decisive vote.

All this is nothing new. Ever since the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, Nepal's personality-driven politics has split because of personality clashes. The need to buy loyalty to divide and rule, or to keep parties together, contributed to the rot.

Successive elected governments have failed to deliver despite enormous mandates,

and the same feckless faces have populated the political stage for the past two decades. This is the fifth time Deuba is prime minister — that says it all.

Nepalis have long given up expecting anything good to come out of Singha Darbar. Except for party cadres, the ordinary citizen is least bothered about who said, or did, what to whom today.

However, such toxic and perpetual discord does not just hurt the parties, but keeps the country down, its self-esteem, governance, service delivery, long-term planning,

crisis and disaster management.

It was K P Oli's inability to appease Dahal and Nepal that drove the NCP and later the UML to a dead end. The winner takes all zero-sum game held the country hostage for three full years.

Oli considered himself duly elected party chair and prime minister, and saw no reason why he had to give up either just because his rivals found him "autocratic". But it was Oli's failure as a supposedly astute politician to propitiate them.

Oli's advisers now tell us that they were able to work properly for only half the time he was in power, the rest of the time was wasted on dealing with the political fallout of the power struggle at the top. As the pandemic spread, the rival factions spent millions on staging rented rallies as shows of force.

The instability allowed outside powers, and especially Nepal's neighbours, to meddle in Nepal's domestic politics. Those opposed to the hammer and sickle flag waving over Nepal appeared to be most active behind the scenes.

Meanwhile, the government forgot all about the people reeling under a health and economic emergency. No one expected much from the five-party coalition in government, and no one is surprised that we do not even have a fully functional government yet.

The five parties did manage to agree on a Common Minimum Program, which was just that: the bare minimum. Deuba and Dahal have so many mouths to feed within their parties that they haven't been able to agree on ministerial portfolios. They are also waiting for Nepal to finally and formally leave the UML so his loyalists can also be offered positions in government.

Not even the rise of the Hindu right, monarchists, or the call to scrap federalism and secularism has united Nepal's politicians.



SUBHAS RAI

**Not even the rise of the Hindu right, monarchists, or the call to scrap federalism and secularism has united Nepal's politicians.**

## 20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

### A flood of recrimination

Water disasters are a way of life in Nepal's Tarai, annual flash floods are a given. Yet, there is no real preparedness in place and the plains on both sides of the border suffer huge losses in lives and property every year. In the aftermath, India blames Nepal for flooding them and we accuse the southern neighbour of encroaching in our territory.

This was the case two decades ago and it still is, the only difference being the increase in the frequency and intensity of flash floods due to global climate change. The summary of the IPCC report (more on page 1) has projected more rains in the mid to long term, particularly over South and Southeast Asia.

For Nepal, this will mean heavy precipitation and associated flooding of the kind the country saw in 2018 and this year in Melamchi. Excerpt from the editorial 20 years ago this week from issue #55 10-15 August 2001:

Nepali rivers contribute two-thirds of the flow of the Ganga. The Karnali, Rapti, Gandaki and Kosi irrigate, and occasionally inundate, the plains on both sides of the border. Farmers of the Nepal tarai and the plains of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have learnt to live with annual floods. Sometimes they submerge homes, sometimes rivers change course devastating crops, but mostly they bring valuable silt that makes the Gangetic plains one of the most fertile regions in the world.

But mix this with the greed of politicians who benefit from fat contracts for embankment building and you have disaster. Instead of rigging irrigation canals for the dry season and public flood-shelters for the monsoons, our downstream neighbours have built thousands of kilometers of embankments. Numerous studies by Indian engineers and activists prove that embankments have not just been ineffective against floods, but have actually made them worse.

To address this perennial problem, the District Boards of India and District Development Committees of Nepal need to sit down with the technical line agencies of both countries. This exchange should be institutionalised and carried out in a spirit of mutual trust. Areas of possible conflict can thus be thrashed out in advance. At the national level, the Water and Energy Commission in Kathmandu and its counterpart in New Delhi must begin to monitor the flow of our rivers so they can better manage the extremes of droughts and floods.

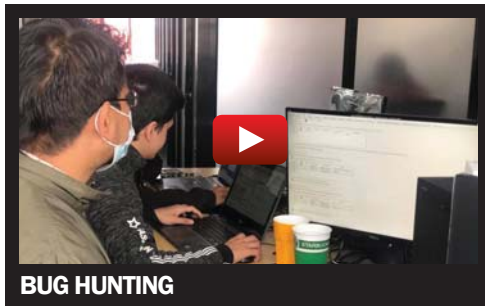
Crying wolf about India gobbling up Nepal after every flood event does more harm to our nationalism than good. Millions of poor Nepali and Indian peasants suffer every monsoon because of the folly of the flood control mafia. Corrupt officialdom on both sides of the border that promote this failed paradigm should be our common enemy.

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



SUBHAS RAI

## ONLINE PACKAGES



BUG HUNTING

Nepali researchers are getting handsome rewards troubleshooting potential privacy and security breaches on Google, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Get up and close with young bug hunters and learn more about this 'white-hat' ethical hacking. Report: [page 9](#).

### DEGRADING ENVIRONMENT

A must read for all residents and government employees ('Kathmandu's flash floods are 4 decades in the making', Tom Robertson, #1073).

**Ron Ranson**

• A great article, now planning and action needs to take place to maintain this sacred landscape.

**James Giambrone**

• I just can't understand the mentality of people who cause this devastation and sadly it is becoming a world problem ('Pokhara's shrinking Phewa lake', Krishnamani Baral, [nepalitimes.com](#)).

**Valerie Gilchrist**

• I made my way around the entire Phewa Lake in November 2017. I witnessed shrinkage and the build-up of plastic waste. Sustainable tourism is an oxymoron.

**Robert Chapman**

### SOCIAL SECURITY FUND

'Yeah, all our planners are experts on building castles in the air ('Nepalis insecure about new social security fund', Masta KC, [nepalitimes.com](#)).

**Lal Bahadur**

### POLITICS AS USUAL

And we are stupid enough to call this morally unaccountable set of leaders and the system they created to benefit only them and their coterie "democracy" ('20 years ago this week: full circle', #1073)? When are we going to wake up?

**Dipak Gyawali**

### SUMMIT HOTEL

As so many others say, this hotel has been such a place of respite and comfort ('Losing the Summit is not just the loss of a hotel', Anne Goldie, [page 5](#)). To tear it down is so disheartening.

**Natalie Rykiel**

• I am almost certain there could have been a better plan. In fact I had seen it, and am shocked it has come to this.

**Varun SJB Rana**

• I hope this article reaches the short-sighted money-minded businessmen who do not seem to value the peaceful ambience in the midst of polluted Kathmandu.

**Sweta Koirala Adhikari**

• This article raises a voice for something all good citizens have cared about for years now. The valley's green spaces and age-old natural charms are being destroyed at an alarming pace.

**Nep Hygge**

• It is a pity that there is no understanding of what makes Nepal Nepal, what it is that attracts tourists from all over the world to come and visit. You can find big hotels all over the world, it does not help if Nepal starts looking like the rest. Embrace your uniqueness, reinvent it and bring it into the 21st century, but do not dispose of what makes you stand out.

**Jeroensumi Nepal**

• The Summit Hotel is an iconic reminder of what Nepal really has to offer. It is idyllic. To replace it with yet another in-your-face corporate monstrosity would be outrageous.

**Steve Razzetti**

• The highlights of my frequent visits to Kathmandu were the lush gardens and calm atmosphere of hotels like the Summit.

**Nick Deacock**

• I have been bringing expedition and trekking groups to the Summit hotel for 27 years. It has always been like the Garden of Eden after three months on the high plains of Tibet. A home away from home with a fantastic staff. This is a real crime and will be a great loss.

**Dave McNally**

• My dad was responsible for 'building' the Summit-project starting in 1978. This is where he met my mum who worked at the hotel. This magical plot of land, it will never be the same again.

**Sarban Grimminck**

• It seems like that in our part of the world, there is no regard for heritage.

**Karma Luday**

• I had the best childhood memories there and still enjoyed the wonderful garden till recently. Just terribly sad for this loss.

**Raphaelle Kafle**

• So sad that developers seem determined to turn Kathmandu into a clone of so many other cities.

**Pamela Ingram**

• A beautiful historic hotel is going to be trashed by a multinational Nepali company. Do you really have your country's best interests at heart?

**Bunny Risley**

• The Summit Hotel was a very special place for our family when we lived in Nepal: the weekly market, the Christmas market to name a few. We are devastated.

**Gaynor Taft**

## Times.com

## WHAT'S TRENDING



### Nepal needs to plan for plenty and scarcity of water

Retired Secretary of the Ministry of Water Supply Madhav Belbase talks about water management, viability of the Melamchi Water Supply Project, opportunities and challenges for transboundary water cooperation. Access the interview online.



**Most reached and shared on Facebook**



### Elderly left in Bhutan refugee camp

by [Mukesh Pokhrel](#)  
With younger relatives resettled around the world, seniors Bhutanese refugees stranded in Nepali camps during the pandemic wait in the hope of returning to their homeland that evicted them. Read their stories on [nepalitimes.com](#)



**Most popular on Twitter**

### Losing the Summit is not just the loss of a hotel

by [Anne Goldie](#)  
Long-time resident of Nepal laments planned demolition of an iconic hotel in Sanepa and appeals to the promoters to rethink their 'development'. Read her impassioned plea and send in your thoughts to join hundreds of others urging for the preservation this quiet beauty. ([page 5](#))



**Most commented**

### Nepal's flash floods are 4 decades in the making

by [Tom Robertson](#)  
As the global temperature rises, the flash floods will get more frequent and intense, the new IPCC report has projected. Together with haphazard urban growth, there is nothing sudden about the floods in Kathmandu Valley, and they will get worse. Full report on our website.



**Most visited online page**

## QUOTE TWEETS



**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes  
With #Delta, the most important prevention behaviour is to avoid crowded public spaces — particularly when there is poor air ventilation. A #vaccine is not a passport to resume life as normal. Sushil Koirala and Ben Ayers write:



**Sujan Dhakal** @SujanDhakal90  
Tough times for Nepal ahead amid Delta! Any misadventure can cost us heavily on lives and economy especially where there is no backup from the Government to deal with the situation. Let's see how PM Deuba will deal with the crisis.



**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes  
"There is a popular misconception among many Nepali people that #Nepal is the second most water-rich country in the world. This is added to a narrative that if you have a resource in abundance, you do not need to manage it. But it's not true."



**ART** @AmulyaSir  
Over abundance is a curse on economic growth as proven by Jeffrey Sachs, based on quantitative survey of world countries from resource rich Kuwait to resource poor Hong Kong.



**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes  
It may not be too late for the promoters to rethink their 'development', stop the bulldozers and preserve the quiet beauty of the Summit Hotel for posterity, writes Anne Goldie.



**Nick Sankey** @NickinNepal  
This is so sad, this is vandalism, not progress @chaudharygroup



**Mark** @Marko1888  
This is vandalism. Mad, bad idea.



**Timila Dhakhwa** @timila\_d  
This is really unfortunate. Not every hotel needs to be a high rise.



**Penny F** @PennyF\_UK  
Sad times - it was such an oasis. Its calm tranquility will be much missed

**Nepali Times**

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Summit Hotel rooms and verandah overlook verdant gardens that will give way to the new hotel complex.

ANNEGOLDIE



Architect's rendition of the three hotel towers that will come up on the property of Summit Hotel in Sanepa.

# Losing the Summit is not just the loss of a hotel

Long-time resident of Nepal laments planned demolition of an iconic hotel in Sanepa

● **Anne Goldie**

All around is green and lush, with beautiful jacaranda and laburnum trees, bushes of gardenia and jasmine, petals of rose and marigold, seats in the shade, the blue of a pool, the sounds of birds and the wings of butterflies, a mongoose in the undergrowth.

Where am I? Take a deep breath. Relax.

In a city of crowds and houses, green spaces are shrinking fast. Temple roofs are lost amidst concrete high rises of apartments and hotels. The air is becoming difficult to breathe, and the remaining trees are crying out for help as yet another is taken down to be replaced by a pillar of steel.

I am in Kathmandu, but for a moment I am transported into the old magic: the most wonderful hotel in the Valley. The Summit Hotel in Sanepa has always been a haven of beauty and tradition, a place representing all that is magical about this land, a combination of old and new, of history and culture, of beautiful bedrooms overlooking gardens tended with loving care that soften the hearts of all who spend restful nights there.

I lived at the Summit in the 1980's as a Scottish VSO volunteer and then again a decade later when my family was young, and we would come to Kathmandu from the mountains and stay in the annexe of what used to be Holland House. We enjoyed spending time in the gardens and restaurant. I also brought tours to

Nepal from the UK, and their time at the Summit Hotel was cherished, remembered, and never forgotten.

Since my 20s, I have loved this country, lived mainly in eastern Nepal, and later in Pokhara and Kathmandu. Things change continually, and they should of course, but hearing about the Summit Hotel being replaced by a new high-rise 'boutique five-star hotel' broke my heart.

It will have three 11-storey (perhaps 15, if approved) apartment buildings on what used to be its beautiful gardens. The jacaranda will be dust, and Kathmandu will be deprived of yet another serene oasis, another green space erased.

Why is this happening? Where is the thought for the environment at this critically sensitive time for the planet and for Nepal? Are the city's planners and the hotel promoters in total denial of the most urgent issue of our times: the preservation of as much of the natural environment as possible within an over-built urban setting so as to make it liveable.

There are many other high-rise hotels in Kathmandu. They are all empty. Do we need another? CG Hospitality has hotels in Dubai, Maldives, India and other properties in Nepal, including another one up the road in Jhamsikhel. Why cannot the Summit be similar to Meghauli Serai, its other hotel in the Tarai that accents nature and cultural preservation?

Can the Summit not be upgraded and the ambience made even more tranquil, preserving the

traditional style and craftsmanship, and the gardens left to grow even more beautiful each year? A high-end property like that can attract a premium market.

What of the generations of dedicated staff who have cared for and loved the hotel over the past decades? What is the motivation behind this? Who will come to visit and stay here? Why buy a hotel with such history and beauty only to destroy it?

It is indeed sad to see what is left of the beauty and greenery of Kathmandu being replaced by an ersatz culture that makes it indistinguishable from any other place in the world. This is not just a 'colonial' or 'bideshi' speaking, I am now in my 60s and have lived most of my adult life in Kathmandu. I had my first child here in Patan Hospital in 1986.

I have witnessed many of the changes and troubles this amazing country has faced, and the way in which each crisis has brought out the best in the Nepali people. It has always humbled me, and my attachment is strong.

Despite all that has happened here, I have always felt optimistic about Nepal's future, and this is because of my admiration and trust for the Nepali people, especially the youth: their enthusiasm, creativity, and intelligence. The skilful rebuilding of some of Kathmandu Valley's iconic landmarks has taken my breath away.

Still, many of the old buildings have been torn down, the remaining open spaces are being built over,



but the planned destruction of the Summit Hotel has spurred me to speak out. It is a place of memories for me for sure, and it is where the footsteps of many like me have fallen. Nepal has always welcomed its tourists, and over the decades the Summit Hotel has had many repeat visitors. Guests just kept coming back. What a huge loss for Lalitpur, and the Valley's communities.

It may not be too late for the promoters to rethink their 'development', stop the bulldozers and preserve the quiet beauty of the Summit Hotel for posterity. 🇳🇵

*Anne Goldie has lived in Nepal since the 1980s. She has started a petition to save Summit. Sign it at [change.org](#).*

## What a tragedy

Selected comments from [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com) to Anne Goldie's opinion piece:

As co-founder (in 1978) and ex-chairman of our wonderful Summit Hotel, I feel sad indeed to understand that our successors intend to break down our life's work. When we, a group of Dutch owners, sold the Summit Hotel in 2012, we were promised that our Nepali friends, the new owners, would continue the Summit in its style and glory... but the reality turns out to be different. Is this the 'progress' Nepal needs?

**Cas de Stoppelaar**

My dad is one of the owners and he is the one who thought of acquiring it from the Dutch. But we are not the sole decision makers anymore with the CG and other shareholders involved.

**Amrita Shaky**

Tourists come to Kathmandu for its uniqueness, the monstrosities planned to replace the Summit Hotel will make the city no different than others. This will be counterproductive to Nepal's struggle to recover from the earthquake and now the pandemic.

**Lobsang Gyalpo**

This is a haven for people and nature alike in an increasingly stressed world. We need more places like this to thrive and grow. Don't get rid of it, use it as a model.

**Jane Clark**

Summit is beautiful, a model hotel that makes you breathe the moment you enter.

**Hildegund Sarita Selle**

May right thoughts, right speech and right action come to people who are in decision-making positions.

**Sanjeevani Yonzon**

The Summit was a home away from home for me for so many years. Sadly when I left Nepal in 2006, the city was already becoming unlivable due to pollution and uncontrolled development. Now one of the few green oases left is being destroyed.

**Margaret Kerr**

This is short sightedness, plain and simple. Heart broken doesn't nearly cover the loss of this oasis. Stop demolishing heritage, invest in a green economy.

**Renate Schwarz**

With innovative design and careful planning established gardens can be incorporated into any project. Such living spaces would be much sought after in today's world and would also offset any extra costs involved.

**Frances Howland**

The Summit Hotel is more than a refuge from the city crowds and noise. How can the charm of this culturally quaint, yet modern spot be replaced by multi-storey buildings? Who can conscientiously agree with such a loss?

**Jo-Anne Pach Koirala**

The article sums up the nature of urban development in Kathmandu. There is a big competition among Nepalis to build concrete towers but they get approved easily despite it being the seismic zone.

**Sujata Thapa**

I loved staying at the Summit. Wouldn't want to stay anywhere else in Kathmandu. Will not opt to stay at the new high rise. Is there any way these plans can be stopped/reversed?

**Fiona McLean**

**prabhu BANK**

## FinMin White Paper



Finance Minister Janardhan Sharma's white paper forecasts little recovery for an economy owing to Covid and mismanagement, while blaming the current economic climate to the Oli administration's ambitious budget. As per the report, accumulated national debt ballooned from Rs48 billion in early April 2017 to Rs143 billion last fiscal year. Public debt is also rising

at Rs1.729 trillion.

After the economic growth plummeted to -2.1% in 2019/20, it is expected to reach only 1% this year while people living below the poverty line increasing to 18.7%. Sharma on the other hand has pledged to set aside Rs5 billion for the procurement of Covid vaccines.



## RBB credit card services

Given the increasing demand and risks in cash-based transactions, Raastriya Banijya Bank has introduced credit card services, which is available across Nepal, India and Bhutan as the bank prepares to go fully digital.

## Turkish Airlines to Dallas

Turkish Airlines will operate four weekly flights to Dallas in the United States from 24 September, making it the airlines' 11th American and 326th worldwide destination. Flights will operate on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.



## Global IME- Leo Club for laptops

Global IME Bank Limited and Leo Club of Kathmandu Temple Peace Kavre have signed a MoU to provide Kavre's teachers with laptops for online classes at feasible installments under the 'Easy Buy Easy Pay' system. The bank has also pledged to provide banking literacy programs for teachers throughout the district.

## Chery in Nepal

Chinese brand Chery Automobile is bringing its products to Nepal and has appointed SPG Automobiles, a company under Sharda Group, as its authorised distributor.



## Nepal Bank extension counters

Nepal Bank has opened an extension counter in the premises of the Lalitpur Metropolitan City office. The Bank and the city have also entered an agreement to ease revenue collection from all 29 wards of Lalitpur.



## Branchless Sunrise Bank

Sunrise Bank has launched branchless banking services in three areas with no bank service penetration: Bayalkanda in Surkhet and Khairphanta and Dhansinghpur in Kailali. Services include deposit collection, money transfer and bill payment.



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# Nepal's history

The four paintings by Dr HA Oldfield that we selected from the Royal Geographical Society collection to print as postcards for sale in Kathmandu in the early 1980s.



## Rediscovering the Victorian-era paintings of Kathmandu by early British and Nepali artists

● Lisa Choegyal

Back in the day when my walls were empty, I used to buy old paintings and photos with whatever cash I had, rummaging around in Darbar Marg antique shops and Thamel bookstores. Particularly fruitful were the exhibitions at the then-newly created Vajra Hotel.

I picked up several pictures from some of the whacky international cast of characters with strange names like Firefly and Tango who congregated in the roof-top meditation pagoda with its aspirational view of Swayambhunath.

The Vajra's Naga Theatre troupe is still going strong, led by the indefatigable Sabine Lehman and Ludmilla Hungerhuber, but long gone are the 'scientists' from the US Institute of Ecotechnics, paid for by a visionary Texan squillionaire who funded marine research vessels and a futurist biosphere experiment to save the planet.

Several of our Tiger Mountain staff, including a Sherpa and

a Tharu, travelled to the US to be sealed into the massive biodiversity dome as part of their mysterious innovations, surviving to tell the tale. 'Pursuing the harmony between ecology and technology since 1973' – I never could fully grasp what they were all about. 'If you are too stupid to understand, than you don't deserve to know' pronounced Lute Jerstad, America's first Everest summiteer, giving up on me.

But they were an entertaining bunch, and in the early 1980s the Vajra art enthusiasts sold me wondrous works by M M Poon and Chandra Man Maskey for what seems today like an embarrassingly small amount of rupees. I also acquired a couple of contemporary portraits of Jung Bahadur, one with three of his many wives, but perhaps my most precious find was a watercolour of Bhadgoan Darbar showing Nepal's first glass window pane, beneath which red-jacketed troops paraded on inspection.

It was allegedly painted around 1850 by pioneer Nepali artist, Rajman Singh Chitrakar, pupil of



A contemporary portrait of Maharaj Jung Bahadur with three of his wives by an unknown artist.

LISA CHOEGYAL

the series of artistically inclined Brits based in the British Residency in Lainchaur – Brian Houghton Hodgson, Henry Montgomery Lawrence and Henry Ambrose Oldfield.

Captivated by the historical insights that these early English-style pictures promised, my investigations took me to musty

London archives and basement reading rooms where the collections are now stored. With the Royal Geographical Society, we selected four from amongst their collection of H A Oldfield treasures to be printed as postcards sold in Kathmandu in the early 1980s. My favourites were the ones of the Nepal army marching through the

'Keerung Pass', invading Tibet under cobalt blue skies and fanciful white peaks.

This era of Western realism paintings started with the polymath Brian Hodgson, an East India Company official who served in Kathmandu for over 20 years from the time of Bhimsen Thapa in 1820 until 1843. Hodgson used the

## NARÌ by Mukti Singh Thapa

A skilful but blunt depiction of Nepali society on canvas

“Your paintings are as unique as my chips,” Bill Gates said to Mukti Singh Thapa during a lunch conversation back in 1992 in the canteen of his Microsoft office in Redmond, Washington. Gates had acquired seven of this Nepali artist's paintings at an exhibition.



FOR ART'S SAKE  
Rajan Sakya

Besides Microsoft, Thapa's paintings also adorn walls at Boeing headquarters in Seattle and other corporate offices around the world. Thapa's other masterpieces are prominently displayed at the Nicholas Roerich Museum in New York, Oglethorpe University Museum in Atlanta, Vienna's Welt Museum and as a permanent collection at our very own Museum of Nepali Art (MoNA) in Kathmandu.

Despite his international acclaim and being



MONA

one of the most sought-after artists for *paubha* and contemporary art, Thapa is a modest man who yearns to share his skill and knowledge with a younger generation of aspiring artists and art enthusiasts. Nepali art in the 21st century will be incomplete without his mention, yet only a handful of people here know about him, or have seen his work. This is unfortunate.

Thapa is also the youngest artist ever to receive National Award from Nepal Academy of Fine Arts at the age of 20.

The time has come to take pride in our art and recognise ourselves as a nation of great artists and artisans. Nepali art has thrived for over 2,500 years, but we are yet to truly acknowledge and appreciate our past and present masters.

The streets of Kathmandu Valley are consecrated with temples and monuments, which are also exemplary, exquisite works of devotional art. We worship these sculptures, scroll paintings and murals, but do not acknowledge the anonymous artists who create them. The *paubha* and *thangka* artforms represent illustrated spiritual and



# Through art



COLLECTION: BRITISH LIBRARY

Budhanilkantha Vishnu in 1856. HA Oldfield's paintings revealed details of the Valley and its people which have benefited recent restoration work.

HA Oldfield's 1850 painting of the British Residency in Kathmandu (now the Indian Embassy) showing the empty, barren landscape of Nagarjun in the mid-nineteenth century.



COLLECTION: BRITISH LIBRARY

extensive leisure time afforded by his job to make the first systematic study of Nepal's fauna, flora, religions, culture and languages. In order to illustrate his findings, he trained the artist Rajman Singh Chitrakar, introducing him to the European principles of *camera lucida*, 'light and shade and perspectives'.

For someone steeped in Nepal's rich heritage and the traditions of *paubha* art, Rajman's drawings indicate a major shift in style. Kanak Mani Dixit, curator of the influential 1999 Oldfield exhibition in Yala Maya Kendra at Patan Dhoka, credits Rajman as being Nepal's first ever landscape and architectural painter, and his

work was recognised by the world of art and science in Europe at a time when photography was in its infancy.

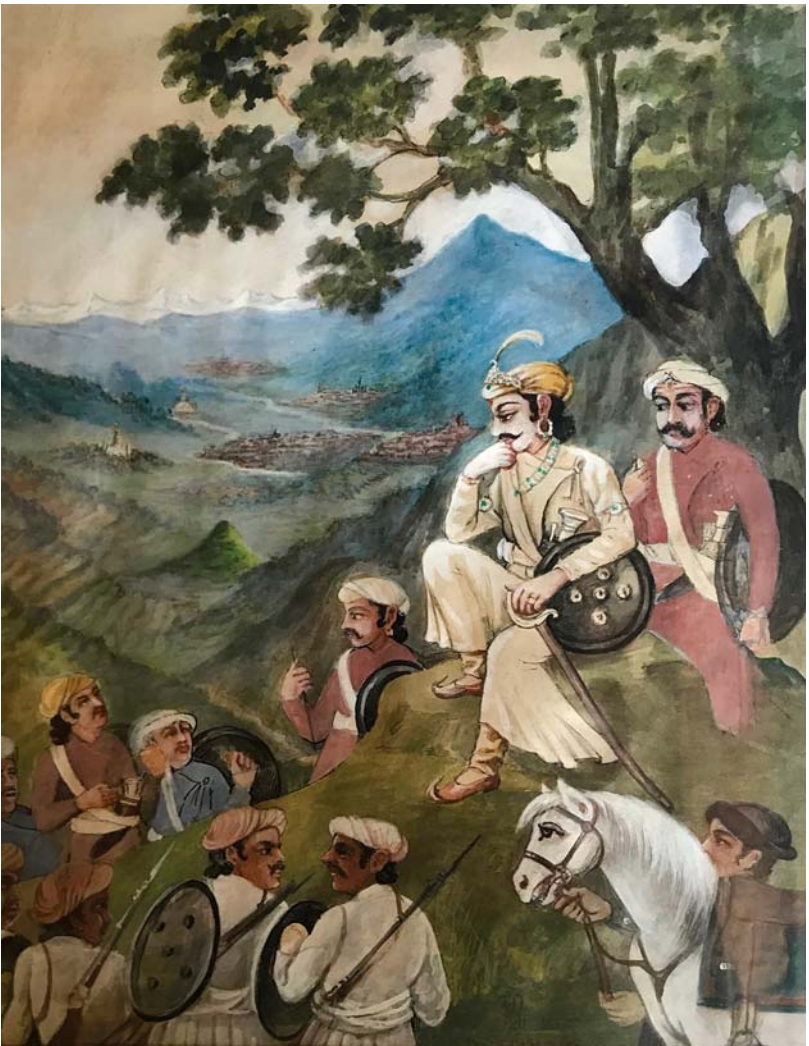
Rajman Singh was part of the extensive Chitrakar clan (meaning 'painter' in Nepali) whose successive generations since the Malla reign had recorded royal and Rana court activities, firstly in the form of paintings and drawings, and then in a vast collection of photographs, many engraved onto delicate glass plates.

This wide array of images includes diplomatic missions, cultural events, portraiture of the elite and everyday ordinary life, capturing an era of extravagant autocratic Rana rule whose state policy of 'implacable xenophobia' prevented foreign penetration and influence. As a direct descendent, Cristeena Chitrakar explains: "My ancestors' images explore visual narratives and historical accounts. The photographs create memories and preserve the past."

Kanak Mani Dixit writes: 'It was Hodgson who provided Rajman with the graphite pencil, probably also coaching him on the novel techniques required to realistically illustrate landscapes, architecture and objects of natural history... If it were not for Rajman, we would have had to rely only on the arriving Westerners who happened to paint, including the doctor in the British Residency, Henry Ambrose Oldfield, whose watercolours have been useful in reconstructing several lost structures.'

Referring to him as 'my Bauddha citrakar', British Resident Brian Hodgson drafted Rajman Singh and his kinsmen to illustrate the broad range of disciplines which absorbed him. On departure he bequeathed Rajman and his team to work on drawings for his successor Henry Lawrence, then to Dr H A Oldfield, the Residency surgeon who lived in Kathmandu from 1850 until 1863.

Like his predecessors in their isolated outpost beyond the empire and forbidden to venture outside the Valley rim, Dr Oldfield developed an interest in all things Nepali, spending his time on Buddhism, Nepali history, ethnography and the caste



Chandra Man Maskey watercolour of Prithvi Narayan Shah and his forces contemplating his invasion of the Kathmandu Valley.

system. He and his wife Margaret were accomplished amateur artists in their own right, their valuable contribution consisting of hundreds of watercolours that shed light in meticulous detail on the architecture, landscape and people of the Kathmandu Valley at that time.

These pictures chronicle the comparatively dilapidated state of historic buildings, temples and stupas in the nineteenth century Valley, and the surrounding hills are startlingly naked and denuded in comparison to the thick cover on today's reforested slopes.

Dr Mark Watson, Himalayan botanical historian, writes: 'Henry Oldfield is well-known to students of Nepali history for his 1880 posthumously published, richly illustrated, two-volume classic: *Sketches from Nipal*. Oldfield got on well with Maharaja Jung Bahadur, so much so that in 1855 he was allowed to accompany the Nepali army to the northern Rasuwa Gadhi frontier when Nepal declared war on Tibet – a remarkable privilege for a foreigner. The British Library and Royal Geographical Society hold

significant collections of their work, including pictures by Nepali master artist Rajman Singh Chitrakar who worked closely with them.'

The dazzling November weather accentuated the scarlet poinsettia and orange marigolds in the British Cemetery when I visited last year with a red poppy in my lapel, wandering amongst the headstones on immaculately manicured grass beneath an Oldfield-blue sky. One of their six children is buried here, and I found the small, square column with a white marble plaque marking the grave of Philip Henry Oldfield, toddler son aged only 17 months when he died in August 1861.

The site is protected within a low, rectangular, stone wall along with an identical monument for Alice Irwin, the new-born baby daughter of the British Commandant of the Escort who in 1859 had lasted only 13 days. It is said that the Maharaja Jung Bahadur Rana himself was so touched by the tragic loss of life so young that he requested the surrounding walls be built to provide shelter for the babies' graves. 🇳🇵



religious teachings, and their makers deserve more recognition.

Contemporary art, on the other hand, gives expression to creativity, crying out with suppressed emotions, opinions, aggressions and love. Thapa is one of Nepal's most disciplined adherents of traditional art forms, and his works in the genre are some of the most prolific.

However, he is also a contemporary artist who stays within the bounds of traditional iconography to unleash human emotions, desires and deliberations, providing a searing commentary on modern human existence.

This Mukti Singh Thapa masterpiece at MoNA is titled 'NARI' (Female) and is an exposé of present-day Nepali society. Provocative and perceptive, it consists of 47 figures of deities and humans in distinctive forms that express various aspects of female characteristics.

The 54cm x 104cm canvas brims with activity, there are so many things happening here. But one is instinctively drawn by the central singular female figure. Red-bodied, eyes wide-opened, five pairs of hands holding attributes ranging from a book to a gun, and

everything in between.

Miss World Beauty Pageant sash in particular stands out. No matter how resilient, determined and dedicated a woman may be, is society always judging her only by her physical attributes? Despite the inner strength and vigour of womanhood, a patriarchal world still judges and appraises women through their exterior appearance and youthfulness.

Thapa is known for his aggressive and free-flowing use of nudity in both his traditional and contemporary artwork, even though he is skilfully subtle in this one. His representation of raw phantasmagoria stands out among today's artists.

The five-headed central character brushed with explosive colours denotes the vivid and varied expressions of a woman. We see her physically subduing underfoot a man, who is strangely content. Could this be an interpretation that patriarchy is just a pretentious mirage of male consciousness, and ultimately men are the suppressed gender? A pictorial dichotomy between male physical domination and female emotional domination.

As we delve deeper into the artwork, the background can be divvied into upper and lower levels. The top part seems to consist of all the female deities, in their original form, shape and colour with traits of traditional iconography.

However, the lower half is disillusioned, chaotic and frenzied. The images of people worshipping lifeless and colourless statues, blindly attributing faith and beliefs onto objects seem to indicate a society blinded by hypocrisy. The artist has captured both Hinduism and Buddhism in this work to also depict the inter-religious and interdependent culture of Nepal.

'NARI' can have various subjective connotations for different people from different walks of life. To decipher a specific interpretation is impossible, which is what masterpieces do to you. Every time you look at her you discover yourself, and a different you. 🇳🇵

**Rajan Sakya** is the founder of the Museum of Nepali Art at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel and contributes this monthly column For Art's Sake in Nepal Times.



EVENTS

Art exhibition

A collaborative effort between MoNA and Tulika’s four-month-long Pancha Tattva will feature exhibitions from artists representing the five elements of the Cosmos.  
*Until December*

Sundarijal Hike

Spend the Saturday with nature by hiking along the trails of Sundarijal, Nagmati River, and Jarsingh Pauwa. Find payment details on Hike for Nepal’s Facebook page.  
*14 August, 6:40am from Bhrikutimandap*



Le Sherpa Market

Support small and local businesses. Shop for fresh and organic vegetables, fruit, cheese, bread, meat products, honey, and much more.  
*Saturdays, 8am-12:30pm, Le Sherpa Maharajgunj*

Photo Kathmandu Workshops

Nepal-based high school and undergraduate students can apply to three workshops for the Kathmandu Valley Urban History Project initiative from the Nepal Picture Library. Details are on Nepal Picture Library’s Facebook page.  
*Application deadline: 21 August*

Short Story contest

Writers aged 18 and above can send short stories under 4,000 words for online literary Twist & Twain’s second short story contest. Winners will be awarded. Details on Twist & Twain’s website.  
*Deadline: 15 August, Entry fee: \$9*

DINING



Little Tibet

Indulge in piping hot bowls of noodles, da-pao and mouth-watering Tibetan, Bhutanese and Nepali food. Get the Lowa Khatsa, Mustang Aloo, Sha Phale and more. Find the menu on Bhojideals.  
*(01) 5342656*

ONLINE GAMES



GeoGuesr

This web-based geographic discovery game uses Mapillary to generate street views from around the world. Paying members can use semi-randomised Google Street View to guess places from around the planet. Find on the GeoGuesr website.

Arkadium

Arkadium is a veritable treasure trove of free games, no sign-up required. Browse through an online arcade of all types of games, from puzzle-based to numbers to memory-based. Go to the Arkadium website to get started.

Kahoot!

A game-based learning platform, Kahoot! is used as educational technology in schools and learning institutions. Its learning games, ‘Kahoots’, are user-generated multiple-choice quizzes that can be accessed via a web browser or the Kahoot app. Play with kids.

Boardgame Arena

Brush up on those familiar board games skills or learn new ones by choosing from among thousands of new games available in Boardgame Arena. Head to the website to start.



Night in the woods

Explore frozen forests, gather round the campfire, and trace the constellations in Lost Constellation and Longest Night, two games within the Night In The Woods game series by Infinite fall.

GETAWAY

Chandragiri Hills

Chandragiri Resort sits atop lush green hills overlooking Kathmandu Valley. Catch glimpses of the Himalayas, marvel at stunning sunsets, and take a dip in the infinity pool to beat the heat.  
*Thankot, (01) 4314400*



Baber Mahal Vilas

A neoclassical architectural marvel, the historic Baber Mahal Vilas is now a quaint boutique hotel with Newa accents, Mustang designs and Tarai influences.  
*Tanka Prasad Ghumti Sadak, (01) 4257655*

Dhulikhel Lodge Resort

The Lodge Resort is nestled amidst the beautiful terraced hills of Dhulikhel. Services offered include the Stupa restaurant, spa, excursion, and lounge and bar.  
*Dhulikhel (011) 490114, 9801002102*

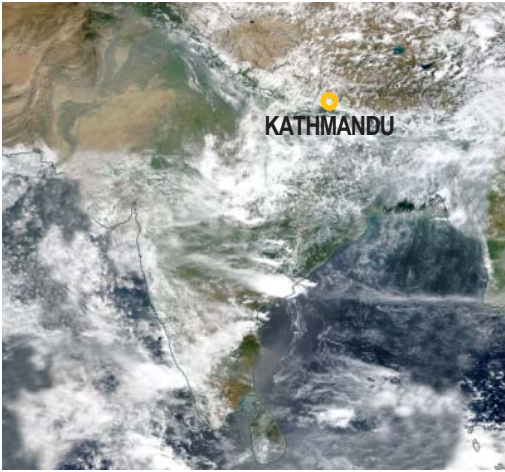


Shivapuri Heights

Enjoy home-cooked meals, meandering walks, and get pampered at the outdoor spa at the Shivapuri Heights cottages. Go to their Facebook for more information .  
*Shivapuri Hills, Budanilkantha, 9851088928*

The Last Resort

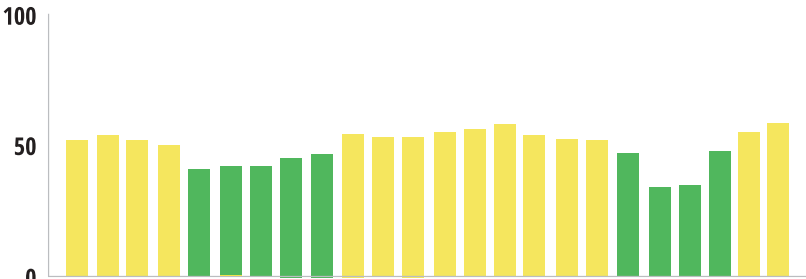
Let that thrill-seeking side out on the weekend and try bungee jumping or canon swinging at The Last Resort. Find details on the offer on Bungy Nepal’s Facebook page.  
*BhoteKoshi, Sindhupalchok, (01) 4701247*



Just as the climate modellers predicted, Nepal is getting above average precipitation this monsoon. Like June, most parts of the country saw up to 30% higher rainfall for July. We are not done yet, though. There is a major monsoon pulse arriving from the Bay of Bengal, and the trough will dump moderate to heavy rain right through Saturday and Sunday. This is bad news for Melamchi and other rivers. Things will start brightening up early next week, when the rains will be replaced by high humidity.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
27° 19°	27° 19°	27° 19°

AIR QUALITY INDEX



10AM 11 August to 9AM 12 August measured at US Embassy, Phora Darbar

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is getting some respite from the fact that extended Covid restrictions are keeping people at home. The ban on vehicles at night might have some positive impact, but it will not improve air quality much. A more important factor in AQI improvement in the coming days will be continuing heavy monsoon squalls that will wash down the pollutants from the air.



OUR PICK

Director Christopher MacBride’s *Flashback*, the Canadian thriller that premiered in the 2020 Sitges Film Festival, follows office worker Fredrick Fitzell as he begins to have flashbacks of Cindy, a former high school classmate who went missing years ago. Trying to uncover the mystery behind her disappearance, he literally and metaphorically journeys into his past after uncovering the ties of the drug called Mercury with the flashbacks. As the visions take a toll, Fred must piece together what they are leading him to. Stars Dylan O’Brien, Maika Monroe, and Hannah Gross.

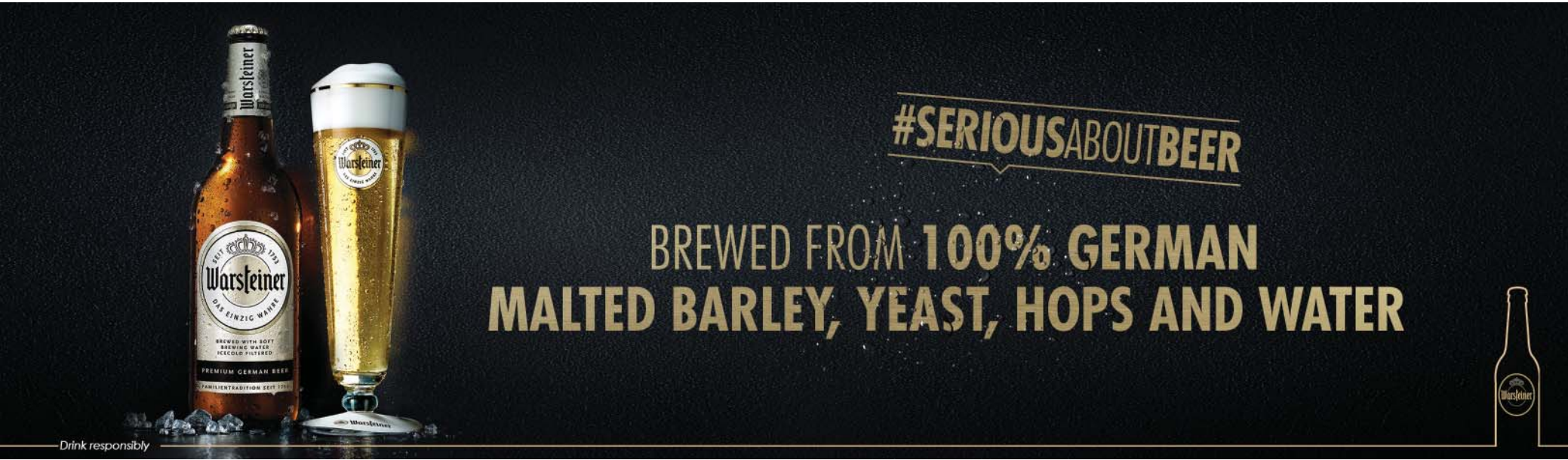
कोभिड—१९ को संक्रमणबाट बचौ र बचाऔं

सेवा प्रवाह गर्दा निम्न कुरामा ध्यान दिऔं :

- अनिवार्य रूपमा मास्क लगाऔं ।
- सेवा प्रवाहमा भौतिक दुरी कायम गरौं ।
- साबुन पानीले मिचीमिची हात धुने गरौं वा सेनिटाइजरको प्रयोग गरौं ।
- संक्रमणको शंका लागेमा नजिकैको स्वास्थ्य संस्थामा तुरन्त सम्पर्क गरौं ।



नेपाल सरकार  
विज्ञापन बोर्ड





# Nepalis go bug-hunting on the web

● Sajana Baral

**L**ucrative financial rewards and the expansion of Internet services are driving a 'bug-hunting' bonanza among Nepali youth who have time in their hands during the pandemic lockdowns.

Once the exclusive domain of IT whizzes, coders and programmers, bug-hunting has now become an open field for talented Nepali students who offer their services to find potential security gaps in computer systems or websites of companies like Facebook, Google, and Amazon.

"Bug solving is logical and can be done without much technical background, needing only a knowledge of companies' guidelines and how sites work," says Ashok Chapagain, 22, a bug-hunter himself. "Senior expert coders handle advanced-level bug hunting, while we find simpler problems and report them."

Bug-hunting is a form of 'white hat' ethical hacking in which researchers can be hired to look for and report bugs on company websites and applications. The trend began in 2002 when NetScape offered rewards for researchers, and it gained popularity as companies found it cheaper and more effective to crowd-source finding vulnerabilities to third parties.

Many companies across the world offer rewards to those who find security risks or programming mistakes, sometimes running into many thousands of dollars. This has made bug-hunting a full-time profession for many Nepalis.

"Social media networks have spread the appeal of bug-hunting



SAJANA BARAL

among youngsters, many of whom have time on their hands during lockdowns," says cyber security expert Bijay Limbu.

Social media giants such as Facebook and Twitter and large websites have sections that are too vast and difficult for employees to keep track of, so the task is outsourced to independent researchers. Bug-hunters look into the sites, produce reports with video evidence, and send them to the companies.

After deciding whether the report is valid, 'duplicate' (already reported before), or 'informative' (harmless but helpful reports), the company rewards the bug-hunter appropriately via bounty platforms like Bugcrowd and HackerOne. These companies act as brokers between researchers and the companies. Facebook's own bug bounty platform WhiteHat is the most popular among

Nepali hunters, swelling in ranks especially after the pandemic.

Despite differing in magnitude, all bugs have the potential to create privacy breaches and data leaks for companies. As a result, bug hunters are rewarded handsomely for finding faults, with Facebook's minimum prize starting at \$500 and Apple awarding anywhere up to \$1 million.

Many Nepali bug hunters have struck gold digging for bugs, with one of the researchers earning over \$100,000 in cash rewards for finding various bugs across one-and-half years of intense research.

Saugat Pokharel recently earned his 16th and largest payment, pocketing \$13,125 when he reported a bug that violated privacy policies and erroneously displayed Instagram users' dates of birth and email addresses.

Pokharel and another bug-hunter Naresh Lamgade have

now joined forces to launch bugv.io, their own vulnerability coordination and bug bounty platform.

"The bank suspected I was laundering money when I received the large cash sum through SWIFT Money Transfer," says Pokharel. "It was only once I reached out to Facebook and they wrote a letter verifying the source of funds that I could claim the money."

Inspired by Pokharel's bounties, management student 24-year-old Prabha Basnet, has also decided to become a bug hunter.

"Initially, I had many reports rejected, but then two bugs I reported were accepted together, and I earned \$3,000," says Basnet who reported Instagram and Facebook stories clashing, and potentially revealing sensitive information about users.

Bug hunting has also changed the landscape of cyber security. Increased vigilance from a growing army of spotters means potential bugs causing privacy or security breaches can be caught before they cause major damage.

Nepal's patchy cyber security state is particularly boosted by this external research boom, as thousands of government sites often go down for hours. Private sites like Foodmandu, Vianet and Prabhu Bank were also recently hacked. In response, some young Nepali bug hunters have developed a local bounty reward program to find breaches and fight hackers.

Bug hunting and ethical hacking can also be a firewall against 'black hat' illegal hacking. Earlier, hackers with malicious intent would steal, leak or sell data obtained via bugs, explains Pokharel.

"With bug-hunting, even those previously involved in black hat work have switched to just as lucrative legal white hacking," he says.

Bug-hunting has its natural downside. The monetary rewards mean it sometimes becomes a competitive cyber-stampede, placing considerable strain on the mental health of researchers.

Santosh Bhandari was an accomplished bug-hunter, featuring regularly on Facebook's list of External Security Researchers and even finishing 15th out of 404 worldwide participants in a live hacking tournament organised by Google and Facebook.

However, he switched tracks and pursued other cyber security activities after suffering mental trauma from the competition and stress. He says: "Bug bounty and mental health are connected. You compile a bug, report with so much of your effort and wait so many days for a reply. If the report is not accepted, your hard work and time are completely wasted and that can disturb you."

Prakash Pant from Chitwan has also featured on Facebook's list, after finding three bugs at once on Facebook in February. Before that, however, he had more than 50 reports rejected as 'duplicates' or 'informatives'.

Bijay Limbu also warns that the competitive nature of bug-hunting may make youngsters money minded, and some are tempted to demand ransom for bugs they have uncovered. In any case, arbitrarily searching websites and apps for bugs without company invitation could spell legal trouble. ■

Hero

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# Spike in suicides during

Death by suicide has soared in Nepal during the pandemic, but treatment of mental health disorders can save lives

● **Sonia Awale**

Two years ago after going through a bad relationship, a 36-year-old Kathmandu-based doctor started getting suicidal thoughts. During the long months of lockdown, he would be on the rooftop and imagine jumping off to end it all. But before long he realised that he was causing self-harm, and sought help. He was diagnosed with depression, eight months into treatment he is rid of suicidal thoughts and is back to his outgoing ways.

The bubbly young woman used to be the life of every party, but few of her friends and relatives realised what was going on inside her mind. As the pandemic hit, she started having violent thoughts about harming others and herself. The 22-year-old tried to deal with it herself, but two months ago she sought help from a mental health doctor. She was diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and started treatment. Looking back, she advises others to also seek professional help in time.

The young woman felt worthless, lacked confidence, avoided crowds and had self-inflicted cuts on her arm. Her inability to come in terms with her sexuality aggravated her sense of insecurity. When the pandemic foiled her plans, she blamed everything on herself, she felt irritated and uncertain, stopped attending virtual classes and her eating habits changed. She finally sought help for her depression and she is now under regular psychiatric counselling and medications. Grounding exercises in particular have helped her overcome self-harm and feelings of inadequacy. "I am okay now," she says.

As the pandemic turns lives upside down, there has also been a global outbreak of mental health disorders, and Nepal has reported a rise in suicides. However, as these cases show, professional counselling and medication can save lives.

Recoveries rarely make news, only suicides do.

"Most of my patients who attempted suicide have gone on to lead normal lives after they get

treatment, and oftentimes they look back to their mental health crisis as nothing more than a lapse of judgment," says psychiatrist and researcher Rishav Koirala.

There has been a sharp rise in suicides in Nepal since the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 and subsequent lockdowns. Nepal Police data shows that in the last 12 months, there have been 7,141 reported deaths due to suicides nationwide, up from 6,252 the

year before.

In a survey last year, Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO) Nepal which works with mental health compared five years of suicide data for March-July to see if there was any change during the lockdown in 2020.

The results are revealing: suicides have been increasing steadily at an average rate of 8.5% every year, but it spurted to 19.4% in the first four months of

the lockdown. Researchers also conducted key informant interviews across Nepal, who reported witnessing an increase in suicidal behaviours in the community as well as health facilities.

"We now have both quantitative and qualitative evidence that mental health problems have increased following the pandemic," says TPO Nepal's Kamal Gautam. "And given that the majority of suicides are caused by psychological problems, we can say that Covid-19 has significantly contributed to its increase."

Mental health professionals have long been warning of an epidemic of psychological disorders following the Covid-19 crisis. They have reported an increase in anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), hypochondria, obsessive disorders and psychotic symptoms among the general population in the last two years.

Economic collapse, job loss and slashed income due to the pandemic as well as increased domestic and sexual violence and added workload during the lockdowns have all acted as contributing factors. In addition, those afflicted do not have normal social interactions that used to be a safety valve during more normal times.

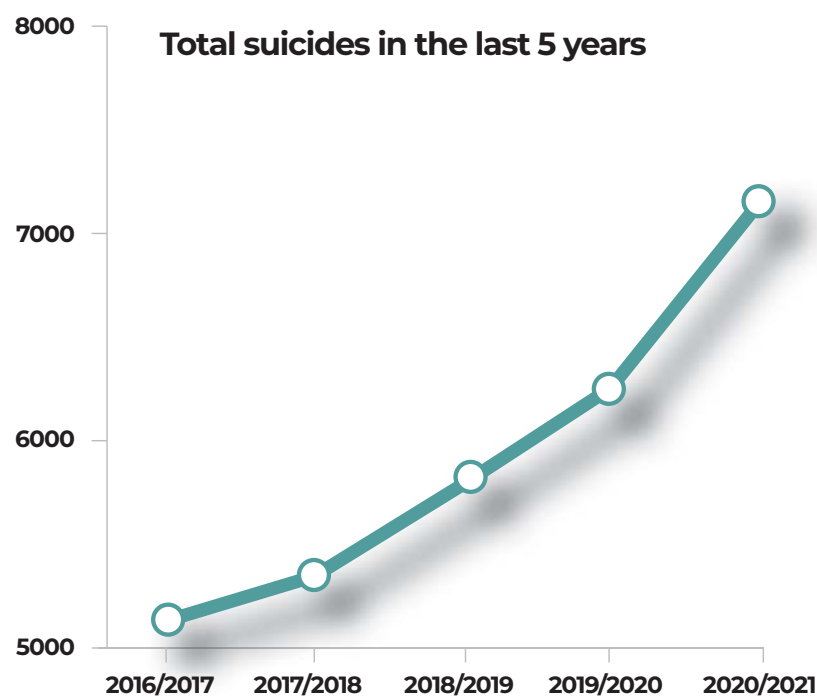
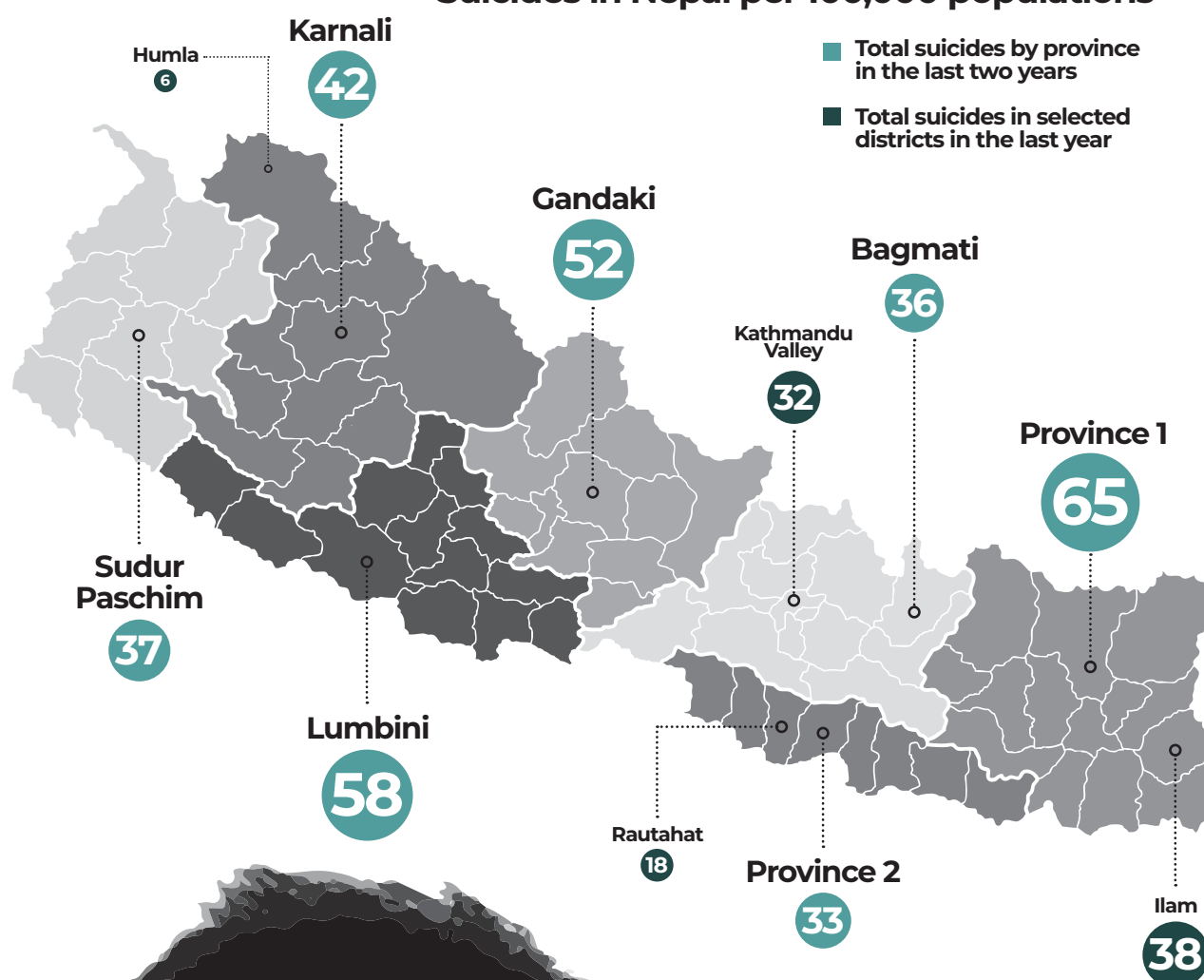
Moreover, many patients on treatment and medication have relapsed due to the limited access to health services, counselling and psychotropic drugs during the pandemic, and in many cases because of Covid phobia.

Up to 80% of suicides have mental health disorders as an underlying cause. A significant portion of cases are also a result of impulsive behaviour.

Experts agree that the official numbers on suicides are vastly underestimated due to a lack of suicide registry. Official figures are based solely on police data and post-mortems, and because of stigma associated with mental health, many families also often refrain from revealing the actual cause of death.

Official records also do not take into account suicides of Nepali migrant workers overseas, mainly Malaysia and South Korea. Similarly, suicides among those in the LGBTIQ community who have lost their limited sources of

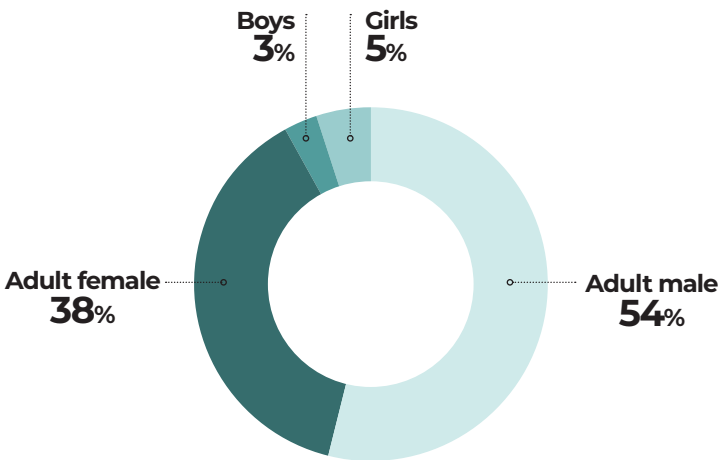
## Suicides in Nepal per 100,000 populations



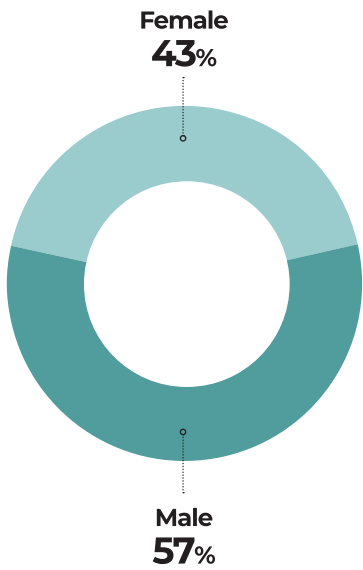


# pandemic

Total suicides in the last 5 years age group wise



Total suicides in the last 5 years male-female



livelihood during the pandemic have been largely neglected. “Reported cases alone are not conclusive, but given that we now have a year and a half long trend and data, we have seen a significant increase in mental health disorders, and can assume that pandemic has played a crucial part in the rise in the number of suicides,” adds Rishav Koirala.

More than 700,000 people die by suicide every year around the world, that is one in every 100 deaths — more than HIV, malaria, breast cancer, or war and homicide. And for every suicide, there are many more who make attempts to end their lives.

Nepal is among the countries with the highest suicide rates in the world and consistently ranks within the WHO’s top 10 list. The Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC)’s National Mental Health Survey published earlier this year found the prevalence of suicidality (current suicidal thoughts, lifetime suicidal attempt and future likelihood of suicidal thoughts) to be high at 7.2% among Nepalis.

The first of its kind survey in Nepal interviewed 15,088 participants and was carried out before the pandemic from January 2019 to January 2020. The study revealed that 10% of Nepal’s adult population had mental health problems in their lifetime with 4.3% experiencing some disorders at present.

Mood disorders and neurotic

and stress-related disorders were among the most common psychological problems among Nepalis. The prevalence of lifetime disorders was found the highest in Province 1 (13.9%), in the age group 40-49 years (13.3%) and among males (12.4%). As for current disorders, Bagmati scored the highest (5.9%) as well as those in the age group 40-49 years (6.3%) and females (5.1%).

These figures correlate with Nepal’s suicide data of the past five years. Despite fewer attempts, men accounted for 57% of total suicides, against 43% of women. Among minors, however, more girls died by suicide, which experts ascribe to possible victimisation and a higher prevalence of borderline personality disorder among younger females.

Suicide deaths are also disproportionately distributed across Nepal with Province 1 recording 65 deaths per 100,000 populations. Lumbini and Gandaki follow closely with 58 and 52 per 100,000 respectively. Traditionally neglected by the state and economically disadvantaged Karnali, Far West and Province 2 regions have lower suicide rates.

More people are dying of suicides in urban centres such as Kathmandu Valley and Ilam district, which reported 32 and 38 suicide deaths respectively per 100,000 populations last year against Rautahat’s 18 and

Humla’s 6. This is in direct contrast with the global trends where 77% of suicides occur in low and middle-income countries. Unemployment and poor economic condition have long been associated with a high risk of suicides, but only up to a certain point, as proven by recent data. Japan, South Korea and Hungary with their higher per capita GDPs have some of the highest suicide rates in the world.

“Poorer nations have weaker education and health systems, which translates into delayed or even lack of diagnosis but poverty is not a sole factor for suicides,” says Kamal Gautam. “Suicide is complex and there are multiple factors at play which means a linear approach to prevention would be incomplete, it needs an integrated approach.”

Addressing underlying mental health disorders is the most effective way to prevent suicides. This means increased awareness and education about psychological disorders, which in turn can help reduce societal stigma. An introduction to and discussion on mental health in the school curriculum can further sensitise the public.

In addition to medication and counselling, societal structure and family dynamics is an important support system for individuals suffering from psychosis, trauma and

depression. Telemedicine in particular has been essential in preventing self-harm during the pandemic-induced restrictions but mental health services need to be scaled up across the country.

On the other hand, a strict regulation must be implemented on the availability of pesticides, an easy means of suicide for many. Access to alcoholic products must also be supervised with Nepalis known to self-medicate to cope with stress and trauma, in turn increasing the risk of self-harm and suicide.

But most of all, analysing suicide attempts can be a powerful tool for prevention. On average, there are six attempts behind every suicide. Up to 80% of people with suicidal ideation reveal their intention to either a family member, friends or their doctors within a month before their attempt.

“We forget that even before the pandemic suicide rates were very high in Nepal and while the pandemic might have added to the problem, the figures alone don’t mean anything if we fail to also study suicide attempts to find a stronger link between the prevalence and the contributing factors,” says Rabi Shakya, psychiatrist and director of Patan Academy of Health Sciences.

He adds: “Historically, there have been more suicides after than during the crisis due to the long-term socioeconomic impacts. So we must start preparing for the pandemic of mental health problems including suicides post-Covid. Our health care workers must be trained and fanned out across the country.”

Nepalis are not new to mental health problems induced by a crisis. The 10-year-long Maoist insurgency killed 17,000 people but many more continue to suffer from PTSD, depression, anxiety and distress. A 2017 report published in the journal *Lancet* found that as high as 37.5% of the general public had some form of psychological disorder.

The 2015 earthquake further added to Nepal’s epidemic of mental disorders. Survivors who had narrow escapes or lost family members reported increased panic attacks, anxiety and trauma.

But conflicts, disasters and pandemics have shined a light on mental health with an increased national and foreign investment in prevention and management. With larger chunks of the population impacted, there is now more acceptance and the field is starting to get the priority it warrants.

Says Rishav Koirala, WHO focal person for mental health post-2015 earthquake: “The best way to prevent suicides is to address underlying psychological disorders, and crises, despite adding to the burden has helped normalise them because many more people can now relate and understand that they are treatable.” 🇳🇵

**Do not shy away from seeking help. If you, or anyone you know, would like to speak to a trained mental health professional, please contact:**

**TUTH Suicide Hotline:**  
9840021600

**Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation-Nepal Crisis Hotline:**  
1660 0102005

**Mental Health Helpline Nepal:**  
1660 0133666

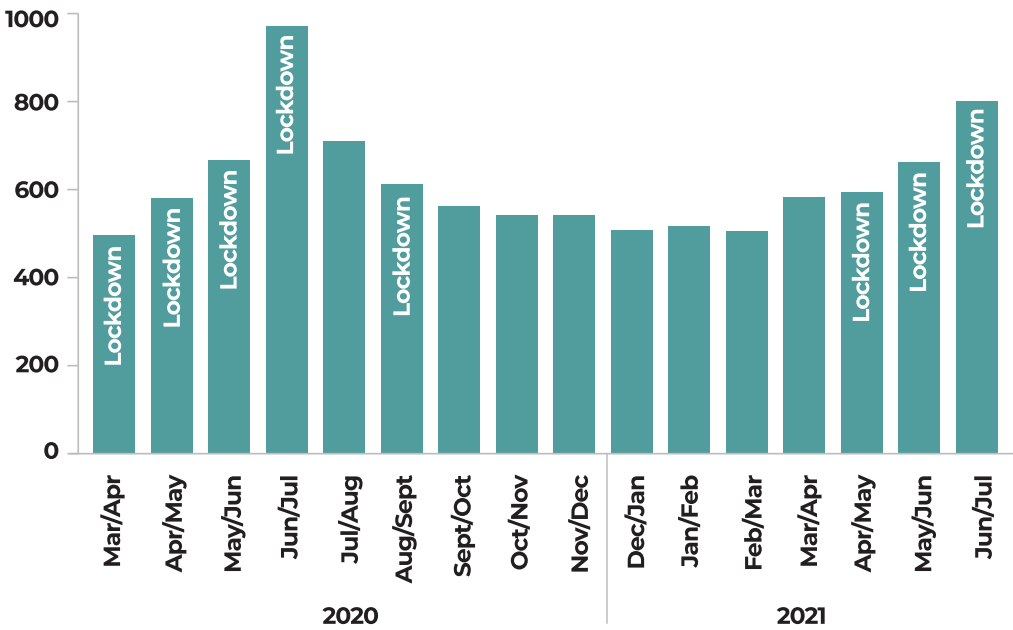
**Centre for Mental Health and Counselling Nepal Toll-free:**  
16600185080, Hotline: 1145

**Koshish Toll-free helpline:**  
166001-22322 (Bagmati Province)

**Patan Hospital Helpline:**  
9813476123

**National Suicide Prevention helpline operated by Mental Hospital Lagankhel and TPO:** 1166

Monthly suicides since Covid-19 outbreak



SOURCE: NEPAL POLICE

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# Men’s fashion trends

Many of us are reluctant to shed cosy illusions and want to go on pretending that everything is hunky dory in the Dramatic Cellular Femoral Republic of Nepal. This is why it has become important for us in the 4th Estate of Province 3 to use this window of opportunity while we still have freedom of expression and before draconian new laws come into effect, curbing our right to troll whomsoever we like.

Freedom is not a luxury, we in the media must use it to hold power to account and play the adversarial role. This is exactly why the Ass is pushing the boundaries of press freedom by analysing trends in male fashion and what that means for our democratic way of life.

Many of you must be wondering why contemporary kids think it is mandatory under Nepal’s new Constitution to wear trousers that look like they have been designed for people who don’t have any buttocks. I haven’t. Just wondered if you had. Because my preliminary inspection has revealed what I suspected all along: today’s teenagers aren’t endowed with the formidable cheeks our generation was proud to call its own.

Ever since our Neanderthal ancestors started greeting each other with the phrase, “How’s it hanging, bro?” human beings have been acutely aware of the various physical accessories in their possession and the need to keep them a closely guarded secret. In those early days, men went undercover by using whatever was lying around the cave to hide their crown jewels: a strip of dried woolly mammoth bladder, antelope skin, or sabre-toothed tiger fur. And that, ladies and/or gentlemen, was how the world of men’s fashion was born.

But even back then it was already clear that men’s fashion was ephemeral. Fads came and went. Early wildebeest hide dungarees, for instance, were tied with rope belts at the chest. But the very next year, it went out of fashion.

Due to Newton’s Law of Universal Gravitation, trousers have been drifting downwards ever since, and by the early Elizabethan Era had arrived at the proximity of the belly button. Today, if the latest fashion trend I have spotted in Darbar Morgue is any indication, baggy draw-string trousers must be tied just below the cleavage in a gravity-defying feat of brinkmanship. At this rate, by the time Nepal attains Middle Income Status in 2025, we can safely predict that boys’ trousers will be tied at the ankles, and mankind will have come a full circle to our underwear-less Neanderthal forebears.

But how can the ordinary man on the street keep track of the latest fashion trends, especially if they do not have a TikTok account? As a public service, the Ass presents below a table with can-wear and can’t-wear tips. Warning: fashion trends can change suddenly and without warning, making you look like a dork.

### WHAT’S OUT

- Ritual Bhairav mask
- Jeans faded at crotch
- Thongs
- Baburam Bhattarai golf cap
- Ear ring

### WHAT’S IN

- N95 masks
- Lowrise half-mast pants
- Camo underwear
- Fair Trade hemp cap
- Nipple ring



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