

RABINDRA MANANDHAR

#### ● Shristi Karki

Although Nepal's established parties battled it out among themselves in local elections, independent candidates won the mayor races in critical cities: Kathmandu, Dharan, Janakpur and Dhangadi.

This seismic shift signified disillusionment with cynical coalition politics that fielded common candidates, and a rejection of traditional parties who have failed to deliver better living conditions, as evidenced by independent candidate Balen Shah, 32, and UML candidate Sunita Dangol, 29, who have secured enough lead to be elected mayor and deputy mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City.

"This election has shown that Nepal now has a critical mass of middle-class, especially in the cities, and that this collective is beginning to reject conventional politics,"

explains political analyst Punranjan Acharya.

In the NC stronghold of Bharatpur, the party's voters helped Renu Dahal of its coalition partner the Maoists to her second victory. Similarly in Pokhara, Dhanaraj Acharya of the CPN (Unified Socialists), who ran on a coalition ticket against rebel Nepali Congress and UML candidates, was elected mayor.

Vote counting has been delayed by archaic procedures, but with most now counted, the NC has won 327 chair and 300 deputy positions in municipalities.

Acharya notes that while the NC won in numbers, the results proved that the electoral alliance among members of the governing coalition was not really necessary for the party. Instead, it sacrificed sure wins for its mayoral and deputy candidates in Bharatpur, Pokhara and other important cities.

Analysts add that Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal capitalised on PM Deuba's fear that his party would lose to the UML, and

persuaded him into forming an alliance using the prime ministership as a bargaining chip.

However, it did give the Maoists much-needed political space which stands it in good stead for the November provincial and federal elections. It also legitimised newly-minted Madhav Nepal's Unified Socialists with wins in Pokhara and Hetauda, despite not faring well elsewhere.

The opposition UML has won 205 chief positions and 237 deputy positions despite having to battle five other parties single-handedly. Acharya notes that the UML, scoring a respectable performance, has largely maintained its popular vote.

In contrast, Bibeksheel Sajha's poor performance has shown that voters punished the party for deviating from its social-liberal platform to a pro-monarchy, anti-federal one.

Across Nepal's 6 metropolitan and 11 sub-metropolitan cities, four independent candidates have been elected mayors: Harka Raj Rai in Dharan, Manoj Kumar Shah Sudi

in Janakpur, Balen Shah in Kathmandu, and Gopal Hamal in Dhangadi. 12 independent candidates have emerged victorious overall in 2022, twice as many as in last election.

But the biggest losers in these local elections have been women. The three biggest parties combined nominated 128 women for mayors and village chairpersons, but only 25 - 13 mayors and 12 chairs - have been elected.

Nepal's Local Level Election Act requires every party to nominate one male and one female to the position of chiefs and deputy chiefs. But as election alliances are not bound by the same rules, Acharya points out: "The fact that the electoral alliance gave an excuse for fewer women to be nominated to office is against the Constitution."

But there are also some things to be optimistic about.

Rukum West's Chaurajhari Municipality elected Pushpa Badi as municipality chief, making him the first mayor from Nepal's Badi community.

In Jumla's Kanaka Sundari - 8, a panel of leaders from the Dalit community ran as independents — out of which Dhan Bahadur Kami was elected chief, and Gol Damai, Kar Jit Sarki and Chanaki Kulala were elected ward members.

Yet, political analyst Indra Adhikari does not see these wins as a positive trend: "Independent candidates running on activist platforms will not be able to tackle problems from outside the political system."

Also, Acharya warns that we should not read too much into local election results as a

win for one party or the other. He says, "Local elections are not meant to be politicised, they are meant to develop social capital." 🇳🇵

Counting every vote  
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 **HYUNDAI**



# Counting every vote

Journalists and academics coming to Kathmandu for conferences often remark how unrestricted and open it is. But they also have a warning: how easy it is to lose it all through populism, exclusion and a flawed electoral process.

Even as the results of the 13 May local government elections trickle in, we are reminded just how precarious our democracy still is. Even though the nationwide average for voter turnout this time was a respectable 64%, this was lower than the 2017 local election which was nearly 75%.

This could be because it was the first local polls in 20 years, but the blame for this year's poor show can be placed squarely on voter apathy, disillusionment and a feckless electoral mechanism.

The 52% turnout in Kathmandu can be due to the very low expectations of the capital's citizens towards the mainstream parties that have mis-ruled Nepal for the past 30 years.

The protest vote for Balen Shah is a rejection of the UML's Bidya Sundar Shrestha who failed spectacularly.

But the Election Commission and the political parties have not exactly made it easy for citizens to exercise their mandate. Nearly 4 million Nepalis living and working abroad were not allowed to vote because, despite a 2018 Supreme Court ruling, there is no voting by mail.

This represents a serious democratic deficit and a blot on our electoral system. The excuse is that mail voting could open up avenues for fraud, but their real fear is that since most young Nepalis abroad have left because they see no future here, their votes would be against the mainstream candidates.

There is also reluctance to introduce electronic voting machines (EVMs). Parties worrying about rivals cheating (or, being unable to cheat themselves) could be a reason. Countries at the same socio-economic status as Nepal have electronic voting, there is no reason why we cannot.

This is the third week after the elections, but only 89% of the 200,000 or so ballot papers in Kathmandu have been counted. This is a shame. In Bharatpur, the memory is still fresh of attacks by Maoists at the counting centre in 2017, tearing up ballot papers. Fortunately, Pushpa Kamal Dahal's

daughter Renu is ahead in the polls this time, otherwise there is no guarantee that the 2017 performance would not be repeated.

Asked about the slow counting, the Chief Election Commissioner passed the buck saying his job was to conduct elections and someone else was responsible for counting. That is a cop-out. But as much to blame are political parties who have blocked every effort to introduce electronic voting.

There had been similar delays five years ago, and the Election Commission should have learnt its lesson. This being Nepal, EVMs were not even tested in selected urban areas, and it is doubtful if there is the political will, competence, or the wherewithal to introduce electronic voting in the November provincial and federal elections.

To be sure, it is the not all the Election Commission's fault that the 5-party coalition and its common candidates for municipalities

and metros made the ballot papers so complicated. In some areas you had to be a rocket scientist to figure out where to wield the swastika.

This is the reason more ballot papers were disqualified in this election than in any previous one since

1992. In some voting centres of Kathmandu the proportion of rejected ballots is said to be as high as 40%. Shocking revelations like this force us to question the entire outcome of elections themselves.

What the Commission could have easily done is divide up the ballot papers

between mayoral and ward candidates, or add tellers in centres where it knew there would be bottlenecks. How come Bhaktapur was able to count all its ballots in a few days and the other municipalities in the Valley are so far behind?

These delays increase the temptation for trailing candidates and parties to disrupt the counting process, cheat, or resort to violence. Voters and the entire nation have been paralysed for two weeks now because the results are slowly trickling in from one municipality and ward at a time.

Even then, we do not see any sense of urgency or realisation that the voting process needs to be fairer and faster. It does not behoove a modern democracy to have such an obsolete and archaic system of casting and counting.

**It does not behoove a modern democracy to have such an obsolete and archaic voting system.**



AMIT MACHAMASI

## ONLINE PACKAGES



Watch returnee Nepali migrants who suffered directly at the hands of Qatari officials behind World Cup stadium construction and some of their widows from Siraha district in Nepal's southern plains as they explain their situation in this video by Human Rights Watch. Read story on [page 9](#).

### SRI LANKA

All Nepalis should read "Animal Farm" and see how a communist dream of equality for all is used to hoodwink the common man ('How not to be a Sri Lanka, Editorial', #1112)!

**Stewie McLean**

• Also in Bangladesh and Pakistan, the common reason for all of it.

**Manoj Mallick**

• And also, borrow loads from a well known Asian country.

**Jehudi Blom**

• So true. Sri Lanka is now just a tropical basket-case.

**Judy Smith**

• Politicians, bankers and economists are not going to fix this ('Election Economy', Rabin Giri, #1112). They will continue to loot for as long as they are able — then abandon the sinking ship they created. Anyone remember #nepleaks?

**Aleksandr Verkovsyn**

### NEPAL ECONOMY

Fifty years of squandered aid and loans has run Nepal into the ground ('Economy in trouble but no need to panic yet', #1112). Functioning and responsible government is needed, not more begging and 'blaming' others.

**David Durkan**

• Panic does not solve issues — rational, professional leadership does and prevents future difficulties.

**Marcus Cotton**

• When Nepal Oil Corporation's debt crosses Nepal's annual budget, then he'll advise everyone to panic!

**Salman Khan Gurung**

• Very Nepali point of view.

**Renate Schwarz**

### DEAF COMMUNITY

Great news for the deaf community in Nepal ('The eyes hear and the hands speak', Ashish Dhakal, #1112). So proud of you, Arjun Shrestha.

**Akriti Neupane**

• When we work together, we move forward together. Great story, thanks!

**Living Successfully With Disabilities**

• Nice article. We sign for our rights.

**Paribartan Koirala**

### ELEPHANTS

We need to figure out how to coexist together ('The elephant whisperer of Nepal', Biraj Adhikari, [www.nepalitimes.com](#)). The first order of business is to manage human-animal conflicts. Then how can technology — particularly AI — help? Most importantly, don't you think we should leave this planet for our future generations?

**Bal K Joshi**

### #PAYUPFIFA

Great coverage in Nepali Times of the coalition call ('#PayUpFIFA campaign launched', [www.nepalitimes.com](#)) including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, FairSquare Projects, Equidem and others to demand FIFA provide remedy, including compensation for abuses.

**Michael Page**

• World Cup of shame.

**Ashutosh Bhusal**

### LOCAL ELECTIONS

These elections (Local poll, national impact, [www.nepalitimes.com](#)) are about nothing more than Fat, Greedy, Corrupt Gundas getting/keeping their snouts in the trough of the public purse. Same as it ever was. To the ruling elite - Nepali citizens only matter for their votes. #Kleptocracy

**Alex Ferguson**

• Interesting, unpredictable Nepal (Kathmandu's Balen phenomenon, Sarala Gautam, [www.nepalitimes.com](#)). And Kathmandu has always been unique.

**Akku Chowdhury**

• In the coming general elections, the old hands who are in power must be targeted one by one.

**Mahendra Sakya**

• Great read. Our mainstream media is as corrupt as our mainstream politics.

**Koyasthik Paudel**

**Times.com**

## WHAT'S TRENDING



### The eyes hear and the hands speak

by Ashish Dhakal

Arjun Shrestha, Nepal's first PhD candidate from the deaf community is campaigning to promote Sign language. Shrestha's current PhD linguistics research focuses on the morphology of Nepali Sign language. Read full story at [www.nepalitimes.com](#).

**f Most reached and shared on Facebook**

### “Economy in trouble, but no need to panic yet”

Nepal is not Sri Lanka but the economic and political crisis in the island nation has lessons for us, says Madhu Marasini, Secretary at the Ministry of Finance in an attempt to dispel doubts as Nepalis raise questions about the state of the economy. Interview on our website.

**t Most popular on Twitter**



### How not to be a Sri Lanka

Editorial

Crises like the one in Sri Lanka are the results of decades of mal-governance by leaders who neglect the needs of citizens. It has sent warning bells ringing in Nepal where the disease may not be as severe, yet, but the symptoms are the same. Join the discussion online.

**Most commented**



### #PayUpFIFA campaign launched

In the six months lead-up to the tournament in Qatar, human rights groups are blowing the whistle on World Cup fouls against migrant workers, and say it is time to pay up for abuses and provide an adequate remedy. Follow our social media platforms for the latest developments.

**Most visited online page**

## QUOTE TWEETS



**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**  
SAPANA is the result of this meditation, an explosive mix of strangeness and calm, like the notion of cosmological singularity or the Big Bang. Ashish Dhakal (@ashishvki) reviews:



**Samridhi Rai @samridhirai13**  
One of the most inspiring and moving art series I have been in the presence of in recent times.



**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**  
#PayUpFIFAcampaign launched  
Six months ahead of the World Cup in Qatar, rights groups call for remedy for abused migrant workers.



**elijahmarkelcrane @ElijahCranel**  
Provide equal pay, and equal protection.



**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**  
#editorialCounting every #vote  
It does not behoove a modern #democracy to have such an obsolete and archaic voting #system.



**ART @AmulyaSir**  
Unbelievably archaic and nobody in the State: Election Commission to Political Party leadership and Government Home Ministry even feels apologetic or embarrassed??



**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**  
The elephant whisperer of #Nepal  
Saluting a citizen scientist protecting wild elephants on 20 May, the #InternationalDayofBiologicalDiversity.



**Sushmita Kunwar @SushmitaKunwar3**  
Celebrating the idea of coexistence with the theme 'Building a shared future for all life' may seem romantic and farfetched, but it is possible because of an unsung hero like Luitel. A great read!

## 20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

### Free Our Speech

Nepal today is supposed to have the freest media in the region. But that could change as quickly as it has in India, the world's largest democracy.

In fact, governments over the years have tried to constrict the free press by introducing regulations and acts targeted at print, broadcast and digital media despite the Constitutional right to freedom of speech/press.

This Nepali Times report from 2002 looks into such attempts. Excerpts from issue #95 24-30 May 2002, 20 years ago this week:

In January 2001, the Ministry of Information and Communication issued a notice to all private radio stations saying that it was illegal for them to broadcast independent news and current affairs. The notice claimed that the stations had been circumventing this clause of the FM license by reading a selection of daily papers without checking the facts.

The full text of a July 2001 Supreme Court decision, released last month, rules that the government has no right to restrict news and information flow on independent radio stations, and media activists say this could change the way the private television stations that have been issued licenses this month will handle news when they come on air.



A three-member team of Supreme Court judges came to the decision while looking into a lawsuit filed by lawyer Madhav Kumar Basnet challenging the legality of the January 2001 directive from the Ministry of Information and Communication. The government notice claimed that FM radio stations were “undermining democracy” through their broadcasts, and directed them to seek news only from “official” sources and retransmit only materials from the state-run broadcaster. The directive also maintained that the government would

have the final say over whether or not certain material could go on air.

The decision says that the constitutional guarantees to the press are also applicable to other forms of media, radio in particular, although the government continues to interpret them as being applicable only to the print media. The same decision also questions an established government practice of appointing an official as director of the board of any private radio station, saying this was a form of censorship, as the government appointee could single-handedly overturn or alter any decision.

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

**Times**

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# Who will pay for climate disasters?

Adapting to extreme weather events alone will not save Nepal, it needs to push for loss and damage compensation

● **Ngamindra Dahal** and **Hemant Ojha**

The Melamchi flood of 15 June last year and several hours of a historical hailstorm on 20 February earlier this year in Pokhara are just the two latest examples of climate-related loss and damage in Nepal.

The Melamchi flood almost exactly a year ago went beyond lives lost and infrastructure damaged. The entire stretch of the scenic river valley lost its base of ecosystem services and aesthetic value that was a draw for visitors. There are several theories concerning the origin of the flood and what exactly triggered it, but there is no doubt that it is a combination of climate change-related trends.

The other freak weather event, an off-season heavy rainfall coupled with hailstorm during the dry season meant that much of the ready-to-harvest paddy in Pokhara valley was laid to waste. The intensity and the subsequent damage was unprecedented.

But is Nepal, one of the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of the climate emergency, ready to cope with loss and damage on such scales?

Nepal's existing two-pillar climate policy — adaptation and mitigation — does not have provisions to compensate for the losses and damages. This policy is therefore grossly inadequate and ineffective in saving lives, livelihoods and ecosystems.

In fact, with climate change impact now crossing the adaptation threshold, loss and damage have become unavoidable across vulnerable countries. This requires the third pillar for a climate solution, namely Loss and Damage

(L&D), a concept which gained momentum during the COP26 in Glasgow last year.

But the L&D mechanism is moving at a much slower pace during global climate negotiations, with some fundamental disagreements remaining unresolved, especially as the developed nations intend to limit response measures within the scope of the adaptation and mitigation pillars, and have not accepted L&D for fear of additional economic burden.

One of the reasons behind this is that, while the global discourses on L&D are helpful to inform theoretical debates, they rarely offer practical solutions. A growing body of anticipatory research advocates L&D as the third way to counter multi-dimensional climate change impact, but falls short of clarifying an approach and an actionable framework to measure and respond to the loss and damage events.

In a notable progression of the agenda, the 2013 Conference of Parties (COP) adopted the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage. This first international policy document paved the way to address the issue. Since then, the focus of global advocacy has been on securing climate finance to support the most affected countries with weak economies.

In recent years, Nepal has been pursuing the agenda at international fora by sharing anecdotal cases of recurrent climate-induced loss and damage. But, despite being a 'hotspot' for climate change extremities and subsequent impact, progress on L&D remains extremely slow with climate policies lacking robust framework to guide action.

Weather 'surprises' have become the new normal, and Nepal is on an uncharted path of climate crises



AMIT MACHAMASI

bearing immense losses. But what is worrying is that the intensified climate impact is pushing many communities and ecosystems beyond adaptation thresholds.

Reports of loss and damage start pouring in from early monsoon and continue for the next 100 days during which 80% of the country's annual rainfall occurs. The predictable pattern of rhythmic monsoon rains has now become more erratic with short, intense and localised rainfall, often followed by a period of longer breaks or droughts.

Rainfall events in Nepal are still recorded at weather stations with 24-hourly manually operated rain gauge. Thus the 'mean' and 'average' climate data of the past could not measure instant fluctuations and extreme weather incidents, rendering them quite useless when it comes to determining trends like cloudbursts.

The good news is that record-keeping has largely improved over the years even though these are not easily accessible to the public. Linking local incidents of loss and damage to instant data of extreme weather and climate phenomena (intensity, frequency and volume) may help to identify and articulate

the L&D issues more clearly in the days ahead.

Like many developing countries, Nepal's early responses to climate change were framed largely based on global scenarios as there was no scientific database at local levels. While these shortcomings persist, the rapid emergence of medium and large scale climate extremes is already taking a toll on the national economy and livelihoods.

With the recently launched 'National Framework on Climate Change-induced Loss and Damage, 2021', Nepal has positioned itself among the countries in the frontline to articulate the loss and damage component, redefining it in the national context with a focus on the urgent need of saving the diverse natural ecosystems and development infrastructure, including cultural heritage.

The definition itself reflects the underlying ideas but it hardly helps with identifying and categorising the recurrent events in the country. As the Least Developed Countries advocate for compensation payments based on assessments of economic and non-economic losses, the focus should be on assessing, categorising and prioritising the changing climate and weather events. Nepal now must address

L&D through a three-pronged strategy. First, by recognising it as a critical component of climate response at home, and a key strategy for policy negotiation.

Second, by mapping adaptation thresholds and the unavoidable risks to lives and livelihood, accommodating underlying economic and ecosystem vulnerabilities of localities to create a scientific analysis and database.

Third, by making our development plan climate-resilient through the use of scientific data and transparent governance so that we can avoid or minimise risks and losses, such as the Melamchi flood at the start of the monsoon exactly a year ago.

All of this means conceiving a multifront response mechanism to save lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable at local levels while strengthening the national database of climate-induced losses and damages by overcoming the existing barriers. 🇳🇵

*Ngamindra Dahal is the chair of Nepal Water Conservation Foundation for Academic Research (NWCFA) and a Senior Research Fellow at Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies. Hemant Ojha is a Senior Policy Adviser with the Institute for Study and Development Worldwide (ISDW) and an Associate Professor at the University of Canberra.*

## prabhu BANK

### Darnal Award 2022

The Darnal Award for Social Justice, organised by the Sarita Pariyar Trust Fund, will be awarded to Karnali Arts Centre, a community based art organization, and Equality labs, a US based Dalit civil rights organization. The award committee will also award two Dalit artists and social justice activists Dhruba Satya Pariyar, a writer and journalist, and Karuna Trikhatri, an anti-human trafficking activist.

### Himalaya Airlines

Himalaya Airlines Mount Everest Expedition team comprising of Omnika Dangol, the flight attendant of Himalaya Airlines, summited Mount Everest this week with the expedition team



of Thamserku Treks and Expeditions. Dangol has also climbed Mera, Island and Lobuche peaks. The airlines to promote tourism had initiated its 'Himalaya Airlines Everest Expedition by Flight Attendant' project.

### Kabeli Hydroelectric

NMB Bank has completed the financial closure of the Kabeli-3 Hydroelectric project of 21.93MW capacity. NEA has started construction of the project which will cost Rs4,285 million, out of which NMB Bank and Century commercial bank will be financing Rs3,213million.



### Tata New Zone

Sipradi Trading, the official dealer of Tata Motors, has started a new experience zone in Chitwan. The experience zone, located at CG landmark, is the second experience zone after the first in Labim Mall in Lalitpur. Tata has also opened a new showroom at Satdobato which will display the recent BS6 series and also offer test drives.

### SF Spirit Competition

Yeti Distillery won gold and double gold medals with the 8848 Vodka and Old Durbar Black Chimney reserve whisky at the San Francisco Worlds Spirit Competition. 70 judges from all over the world reviewed 5,000 spirits at the competition.

### SCT CellPay

SCT and CellPay have agreed to operate QR payments where users of Cellpay can scan the Smart QR for payment.

### Worldlink plan

Worldlink has released an internet package of 200Mbps at Rs3,300 for its customers. Customers with this plan will receive free internet access, cable and a dual-band router.

### Yamaha R15 M

MAW enterprises, the official distributor for Yamaha, has launched the R15M bike this week. The bike is part of the M1 and R racing bike series and comes with features like the Assist and Slipper Clutch, VVA, two riding modes, and is priced at Rs5,79,900.

### Golf Championship

Niraj Tamang reached the top rank in the Surya Nepal Premier Golf Championship. Following him is Wangchen Dhondup and Sukra Bahadur Rai. After them is Sadbhav Acharya, Bhuwan Nagarkoti, Purna



Sharma, Bhuwan Kumar Rokka, Dhana Bahadur Thapa and Aarav D Shah, Rame Magar and Mahendra Pagami at fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth position. 54 players are taking part in the championship and the winner will receive Rs250,000 cash prize.



### IME growth award

IME Motors, the authorised dealer of Ashok Leyland in Nepal, was awarded the Highest Business Growth award this week. The award was handed to Chandra Prasad Dhakal, Chairman of IME Motors.

### Japan honours Himalaya Rana

The Embassy of Japan in Nepal honoured Himalaya Rana, the founding governor of the Nepal Rastra Bank and former Finance Secretary, in an official commemorative event celebrating the 2021 Autumn Conferment, the 120th Anniversary of International Student Exchanges, and the achievement of Tabei Junko, the first female mountaineer to reach the summit of Mount Everest. Ambassador Kikuta conveyed the decoration The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star to Rana, who opened the first foreign central bank account in the Bank of Japan in the 1960s.





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EDUCATION AND MENSTRUAL CUPS



# Celebrating menstruation in Nepal

Nepalis from all walks of life advocate for dignified menstruation, without danger

● Sara Parker and Madhusudan Subedi

If you Google the words ‘menstruation’ and ‘Nepal’, one will come across articles upon articles about tragic deaths in menstrual *chhau* huts from smoke inhalation and snake bites. Much of the media attention is focused on extreme cases in the Far West. But largely left is how many women and girls across Nepal lack the basic right to dignified menstruation. Exclusionary practices, stigma and taboos around menstruation, underpinned by traditional religious and cultural beliefs, prevent them from fully participating in economic and social life with consequences on schooling, employment and physical and mental health.

New research entitled ‘Dignity Without Danger’ funded by the British Academy Global Challenge Research Fund has brought together researchers from Liverpool John Moores University, the School of Oriental and African Studies in the United Kingdom, and Tribhuvan University to identify and celebrate menstrual activists in Nepal. They have made re-washable and biodegradable pads, developed educational toolkits on periods, and advocated for menstrual rights through art and media.

This research is focused on the menstrual dignity of Nepali women and girls, and their rights to sexual and reproductive health to enable them to challenge exclusionary

practices that still exist despite being outlawed. The project worked with existing local partners and trained local researchers in rapid ethnography, who then visited all seven provinces to explore and analyse the complexity of menstrual knowledge.

To reduce the suffering, discrimination and violence against menstruating women and girls, and to promote partnership for sustainable human development, it identified key areas where collaborative work with local actors and communities is crucial, and developed creative outputs, policy recommendations and strategies to support the work being done in Nepal.

The project collaborated with groups including the Menstrual Health and Hygiene Partnership Alliance (MHM PA) and creative artists such as Kaalo.101 and Jay Poudyal from Stories of Nepal to engage a wide audience to help break the stigma and create spaces for people to discuss their own beliefs and practices and challenge stereotypical views.

The MHM PA has worked with relevant ministries to develop a Dignified Menstruation Policy that has yet to be ratified and the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation was founded by the Nepali NGO the Radha Paudel Foundation.

Global Action Nepal has also worked with MHM PA and GiZ, as well as educational experts and relevant ministries to develop and

pilot a ‘menstrual education toolkit’ to help collate, develop and promote quality educational resources which can be used in schools and community settings. These will also be on display during the events to celebrate Menstrual Hygiene Day this week under the global theme of menstrual education.

We will also be launching a book with stories of our 34 activists in September this year to inspire others to share their own stories so we can learn more about what is happening on the ground. These individuals come from different backgrounds, but together for a cause, to challenge negative attitudes, educate people about menstruation, advocate for policies and support initiatives to help people to manage their menstruation.

Many are part of MHM PA Nepal while others are more grounded in the local level, all collectively making Nepal a leader in menstrual activism.

This forthcoming book will be available online and along with the exhibition on 27 May at Dhokaima Café in Patan a bike tour organised by X-pose Nepal will take place on 28 May, World Menstrual Hygiene Day, to celebrate the activism in Nepal, all the while helping to break the stigma and silence that surrounds menstruation. 🇳🇵

To share your own stories: @dignitywithoutdanger, @DWDNepal

Sara Parker is a lecturer at the Liverpool John Moores University in the UK and Madhusudan Subedi is a Professor of Sociology at Tribhuvan University in Nepal.

BONITA  
SHARMA

MENSTRUAL HEALTH ADVOCATE



ANJU  
ACHARYA

POLICY AND AWARENESS ADVOCATE



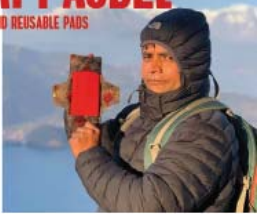
MENUKA  
DHUNGANA

AWARENESS THROUGH JOURNALISM



KRISHNA  
HARI PAUDEL

PRODUCTS AND REUSABLE PADS



JESSELINA RANA  
AND SHUBHANGI  
RANA

MENSTRUAL ENTREPRENEURS



DURGA  
GIRI

EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY



PASHUPATI  
KUNWAR

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS



PEMA  
LHAKI

COMMUNITY HEALTH CAMPAIGNER



BABU KAJI  
SHRESTHA

EDUCATION AND POLICY



REKHA  
SHRESTHA

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS



SABITRI  
BHANDARI

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS



TSERING  
WANGMO

MENSTRUAL HEALTH ACTIVIST



KOPILA  
BASNET

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS



ASHMINA  
RANJITKAR

CREATIVE ART ACTIVISM



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EDUCATION AND REUSABLE PADS



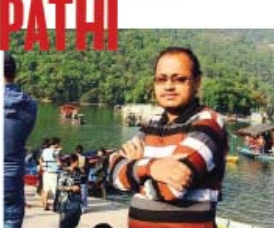
SARITA  
LAMICHHANE

DISABILITY AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY



SHAIENDRA  
TRIPATHI

AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY







ALL PHOTOS: EELUM DIXIT



## Letters from Everest Base Camp 2

# EBC

● **Eelum Dixit**

Everest Base Camp is ever-changing. The weather, the comings and goings, new world records, and the ice beneath.

The night is punctuated by the sharp crack of avalanches as the hanging seracs calve off on Nuptse. After a week or two, the floor of the tent tilts, and my head is lower than my feet. Base Camp itself is on the move.

After Ang Tsering sets off for his summit push, other climbers arrive. Purnima Shrestha, a photojournalist for *Karobar* relates how after her first summit, it just became one peak after another.

She is at EBC after having climbed Kanchenjunga earlier in the week, and was now going for Lhotse. Last year she climbed Mt Everest, Dhaulagiri, Manaslu and Annapurna. Everyone expects her to do 14 peaks à la Nims Purja, but she has not made up her mind yet.

“I don’t know, I want to keep K2 for when I’m in my 50s or 60s,” she laughs. “There’s some poetry in leaving something unfinished, a challenge for me to pick up later on in life.”

Kristin Harilla has a much more immediate ambition. The Norwegian climber, sponsored by a watch brand, is taking the help of

Lakpa Sherpa and 8K Expeditions to fulfil her dream of conquering all 14 eight thousanders in record time. Not only will she be the fastest woman to do it, but she might even be the fastest human being to climb all 14 true peaks in record time.

She adds, “I am completely beholden to the 8K Sherpas. They are the backbone, without them I would not be able to even dream of doing what I am setting out to do.”

She continues: “Nowadays individuals get too much credit, and make too much of their achievements. The real story is that it is a collaborative effort from fixing ropes to carrying oxygen, and making sure survival is possible at such altitudes.”



Dawa Sherpa has come out of retirement to help Kristin beat the record of 14 peaks. They had a tough time in April on Annapurna 1 when they got lost in a complete whiteout with fierce winds. “It was the first time that I was in that situation. Annapurna 1 is truly the most difficult mountain in my experience,” he says.

All activity at EBC also revolves around the weather. Nature has to be an ally for any progress from Kathmandu to the high camps, and the summit.

Purnima leaves for her Lhotse ascent, and we head up to Pumori High Camp to get a better perspective on things. It is the day of Ang Tsering’s summit, maybe it will be possible for our lens to capture him on the southeast ridge more than 4,000m above us.

These mountains are taller than anything else in the world, and even here we are already higher than all mountains in Europe. Be humble, these mighty mountains silently implore.

Far off to the south, Ama Dablam is a swirl of vanilla ice cream, gleaming gold in the sun’s first rays. A shroud of fog blankets the Khumbu Glacier, drifting up the valley. The Icefall swooshes down from the Western Cwm and veers off to the right, like the bridal train

in a white wedding. Little dots of yellow and orange of Base Camp glint on the moraine below us, but even these soon disappear as the fog turns into cloud.

There are rockfalls off Pumori as we descend, and we get word that Ang Tsering did summit Mt Everest that morning.

But getting to the top is only half the battle: getting down safely is even more difficult.

Back at EBC, we learn that a client has thrown off shades, and is walking aimlessly on the South Col. Another’s ripped off the oxygen mask, and told his guides he will come on his own but headed off the wrong way. A team of unroped guides have to quickly help him back.

“This happens,” says Lakpa, “there is lack of oxygen, a feeling of accomplishment, and some people hallucinate. This is when the Sherpa’s job is critical. Sometimes we have to force them to come down. They are angry up there, but once they get to Camp 2 they are grateful that we took control.”

Rescue helicopters are able to land at Camp 2, and can even sling lift wounded off Camp 3. Without these daredevil pilots there would be many more casualties on Everest every season.

We run into Khimlal Gautam, the Nepali civil servant and surveyor who scaled Mt Everest 11 years ago. He went up again in 2019 as part of the expedition to calculate the exact elevation of Mt Everest at 8848.86m.

He is now worried about the impact of all the people at EBC. “Think of all the waste we generate by just being here on the glacier for three months,” he says, “maybe Base Camp should be shifted to Kala Pattar.”

Over the next couple of days, the climbers return to EBC. Ang Tsering arrives as well, having lost weight and still nursing that cough. Purnima also gets down after bagging Lhotse. Kristin was among the few still waiting to go up. That night there is a party at EBC.

Purnima says, “Now that I’m just one peak short of completing Nepal’s 8K peaks, the idea of Pakistan and China are more appealing. Especially K2. I might just go for it.” Kristin Harilla later completes the double summit of Everest and Lhotse, beating her own record and thereby also climbing five eight thousanders in 24 days - another record.

She and Purnima are off to Makalu now, where Kristin is aiming to set another record for the fastest completion of the First Phase. Once she does that, she will just need the weather to be on her side, and perhaps a little political clout to get to Xixapangma. 🇳🇵

*The final instalment of Eelum Dixit’s Letters from Base Camp will appear next week in Nepali Times.*

# Mt Everest Business

Austrian climber talks about flash mountaineering, and

● **Shankar Dahal**

Growing up among the Alps at home in Austria, Lukas Furtenbach often dreamt of one day being three times higher on the summit of Mt Everest.

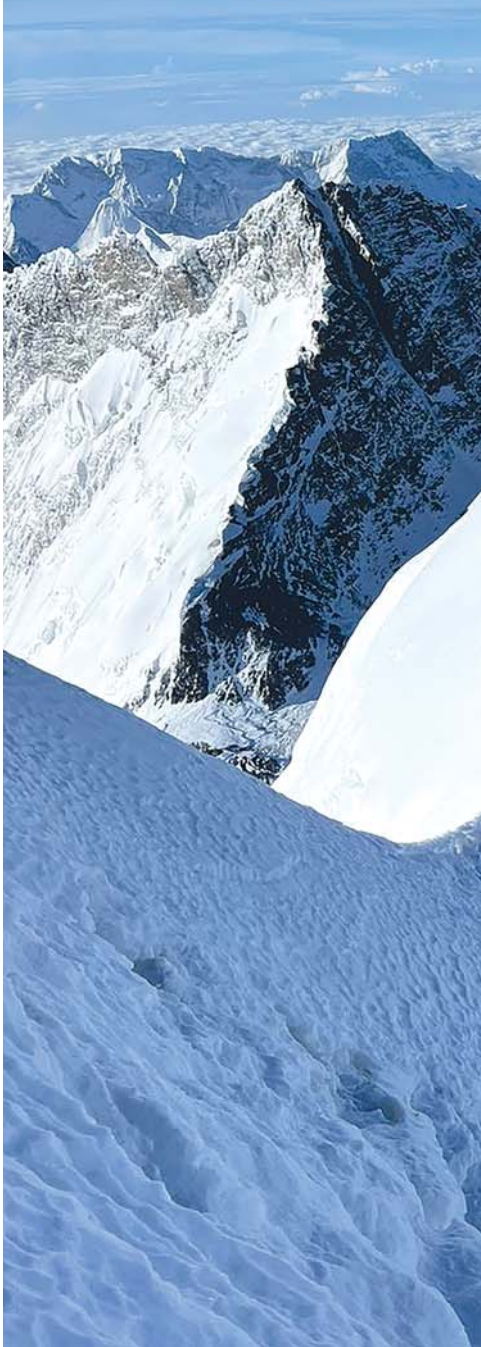
He came to Nepal as a teenager in 1999 and made his first climbs in the Himalaya, learning about acclimatisation and technical climbing at high altitude.

Since then, after climbing all major peaks himself, Furtenbach now helps others climb. His company Furtenbach Adventures claims a 100% success rate on Mt Everest with a zero accident record. He has also pioneered ‘flash mountaineering’ that uses hypoxic tents to help acclimatisation and make quick climbs of Mt Everest possible.

“Having the highest mountain in the world makes Nepal the best tourism destination,” Furtenbach told us in Kathmandu after returning from Base Camp this week. “But it is the connection with raw nature that gives me a high. Then there are the people, partners and the organic beauty of Nepal.”

But the Austrian has seen Mt Everest change a lot since he started climbing two decades ago, mostly due to anthropogenic causes like overcrowding, littering and climate change.

Noticing the blue ice shrink more and more every year even at 8,000m on the South Col worries him. Despite all the clean-up expeditions, the saddle





# rest in ss Class

about the climate crisis,  
and reviving Nepal's tourism



**GRAND ASCENT:** Dawn from the summit, with Makalu in the background, and Kangchenjunga in the far distance (*above*). The Southeast Ridge of Mt Everest looking back at the South Summit and Lhotse (*below*).

below Everest still has expedition detritus.

“Unless environmental protection is prioritised by all, and backed up with government regulations, it will be difficult for Everest to maintain its pristine image,” he warned.

Furtenbach’s expeditions ensure ‘sustainable climbing’ with garbage management, removal of human waste, reducing carbon emission with solar panels, and waste water treatment at Base Camp.

But he has gained a reputation (and quite a lot of criticism) for his ‘flash’ mountaineering style. This season he bested his own record by taking 17 clients from all over the world up the mountain in just 16 days after acclimatising in the Alps in special hypoxic tents with depleted oxygen before even arriving in Nepal.

He denies dragging clients with little experience up the mountain on fixed ropes, and providing them high flow bottled oxygen. Furtenbach admits his climbers use up to 8 litres of oxygen per minute, but only on technical sections at higher altitudes so as to avoid bottlenecks.

Besides Mt Everest, Furtenbach also works with Nepali guides on Dhaulagiri, Manaslu and Annapurna, among others. As a foreign expedition operator, he said having good local partners has been the key to his success.

“I am still working with my Sherpa partners from 22 years ago, connection with good people is really important,” said Furtenbach, but added that the bureaucracy and over-regulation by the government was discouraging foreign expeditions.

Furtenbach charges a steep €95,000 to get his clients to the top of Everest, and has also been criticised for the lavish accommodations. But he says he is just making sure that those who pay him to get them to the summit are safe and taken care of.

He is full of praise for Nepal’s high altitude guides, and is a strong advocate for them to be treated right and paid well.

“Without Sherpas or high-altitude workers, no expedition above 8,000m is successful in the Himalaya,” he said. “Their support during my expeditions has been a blessing. I have faith in them and their hard work.”

Nepal’s mountaineering community, families of guides and tourism suffered heavily in the last two years during the pandemic. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their livelihoods. Furtenbach’s company also took a hit.

But with things returning to normal, the Austrian is excited to see climbing restarting. He is already planning expeditions in September on Ama Dablam, Manaslu and Dhaulagiri.

Added Furtenbach: “At the end of the day, understanding Nepal and its tourists are what will keep entrepreneurs like us afloat.” 🇳🇵



PHOTOS: PEDRO QUEIRÓS

## Scaling the mountain of humanity

The first non-Nepali summiteer to Mt Everest this season is giving back to Nepal through adventure

### ● Aria Shree Parasai

On 8 May 2022, Pedro Queirós gazed up from the South Summit of Mt Everest and spotted the top of the world, a short distance along a wind-swept ridge.

For the past 12 days, he had been in Camps 2 and 3, at 6,500-7,500m elevation, to avoid summit traffic and the deadly, fragile Khumbu Icefall they would have to cross on their return.

Queirós (*pictured above*) and Mingma Sherpa of 14summit set out with ropes to the top after calculating an optimal 48-hour window. At 9:39AM on 9 May, Queirós became the first non-Nepali climber this season and the sixth Portuguese overall to summit the world’s highest peak.

Queirós, 42, grew up near the sea, playing football with his friends and exploring forests. Unlike many climbers, he was not exposed to the mountains, but wanted to explore the world, which ultimately brought him to faraway Nepal.

The climb was brutal. Queirós had set out with an unshakable iron will, but the hunger, numbness in hands and legs, the 100mph winds, -40°C, loneliness up in the mountains, and the dead bodies

on the slopes took their toll. It made him question his decision to climb Everest, and fear for his life.

“Everything stayed the same, and yet, everything changed,” reflects Queirós. “I was reborn with Everest. There, you find out who you really are.”

It took them about ten hours from the South Col to reach the Hillary Step. But each new struggle pushed him to continue, recounts Queirós, as the peak ahead was juxtaposed against the harrowing frozen body of an Indian climber who had died there last year. Queirós wanted to live, and he would.

Everest was not just to satisfy Queirós’s passion for adventure, but also to fundraise for the education of 25 children in Nepal that he supports.

He had previously come to Nepal in 2015 to trek to the Everest Base Camp, after backpacking through Vietnam, only to experience the 7.8M earthquake. He then spent a year providing food, building houses and running Camp Hope, a refugee camp, for more than 350 people.

“It was a life-changing event for me,” he says. “After living through the earthquake, seeing all the destruction, my life was never the same. Since then, I have been helping Nepal, my second home. It has given a lot to me, and I want to give back.”

This was the beginning of Dreams of Kathmandu to help children and those in need of education, housing, nutrition and health. Under his #nohunger initiative, Queirós has also helped provide food to 100 families in Sindhupalchok and continues to feed 200 meals a day to children and adults in the slum areas of Mulpani.

Through Dreams of Kathmandu, Queirós raises funds for building homes, providing meals or scholarships through adventures such as climbing, running and walking.

On 10 January 2017, he walked from Taj Mahal to Kathmandu to raise €17,000 for earthquake victims and in April 2018 climbed Island Peak to raise funds to build the Sharadas orphanage in Kathmandu.

Further, with the Dwarika’s Foundation, he has built 96 houses in Sindhupalchok and 25 in Chapagaun, provided 100 scholarships, sponsored more than 50,000 meals after the earthquake, and fed over 3,000 families across Nepal.

The climber has also been able to raise funds for dental appointments, financially assisted surgeries, ophthalmology appointments, and clothing and blankets for families.

The 2022 Everest expedition was part of Project X, a humanitarian adventure initiative. With them Queirós has climbed Ama Dablam and run a marathon to build a house for the family of a young Nepali boy. The team has also raised €10,000 to support the education of 25 children.

All of the proceeds go directly to charity. “Every cent,” adds Queirós. “The travelling costs, hotel costs and food expenses come from my own pocket.”

Now, after the expedition, Queirós looks forward to some rest to recover from his injuries and spend time with family. “But in the future, perhaps I will swim the English Channel from France to England,” he says “or go to Antarctica to summit Vinson Massif.”

It is nevertheless difficult to raise funds these days, he laments, and to convince foreigners to donate for people of another country.

“A lot has to be done to get resources,” he says. “But the first time I saw Everest, I thought it would be impossible to climb it. Like every dream, if you believe it, you can do it. I want to continue helping, and I am not stopping.” 🇳🇵



**CLIMB FOR A CAUSE:** Queirós unfurls the Portuguese flag on the summit of Mt Everest. (*above, left*)

Queirós (*far left*) and his wife Ghazal (*far right*) with the children he has helped with Dreams of Kathmandu. (*left*)

PHOTOS: LUKAS FURTENBACH

DREAMS OF KATHMANDU



EVENTS



Champadevi Hike

Invigorate yourself by hiking this weekend to Champadevi. Book the tickets now.  
2 June, Ticket: Rs1200, 9851233942

Mental Health Program

Participate in the program by AISEC Nepal and engage in topics regarding mental health with other local educators and panel.  
27-28 May, Lalitpur

Robotics exhibition

Enjoy the exhibition of robotics and learn about cool mechanisms and designs.  
27 June, 1pm onwards, Thapathali Campus

Japanese Gift Wrapping

Learn Japanese and Korean techniques of elegant and beautiful gift wrapping from The Vesture.  
3 June, 2.45pm-6.15pm, Online Class  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/519366563246367>



Dog Adoption Fest

Thinking of getting a new pet? Head on to the first ever adoption festival in Nepal this week.  
29 June, 11am onwards, KAT Center, Budhanilkantha

DINING



Anatolia

Anatolia's Indian and Turkish dishes are packed with spices and an unforgettable assortment of flavours. From the Mutton Kofta Curry to the Baklava, the dishes will keep one wanting more. All the food is halal.  
Thamel (01) 4258757

MUSIC

Himalayan flavor III

Himalayan flavor III is launching the 3rd CD compilation album of Nepali artists and band Kaal Nude Terror and Chainov dogs at Purple Haze.  
28 May, 2pm-5pm, Ticket: Rs300-500, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel, 9817197022



Mariana BO

Enjoy the performance of well-known DJ, Musician and producer from Mexico, Mariana BO, that combines electronic music with violin and other soundtracks.  
27 May, 9pm onwards, Lord of the Drinks, Thamel

Live music

Enjoy a ladies day out this Friday at Highland Bar with live music and special performance from Collab Inc.  
27 May, 6pm-9pm, Highland Bar and Grill, Pulchowk



Rockgene

Cool respite from the hump day: Rockgene and live music at Beers N' Cheers.  
1 June, 7pm onwards, Beers N' Cheers

Bob Dylan Tribute

This one is for the Bob Dylan fans out there: Dylan Villans pays a tribute to the exceptional artist and Nobel laureate this Friday.  
27 May, 7pm onwards, Jatra Café and Bar, Thamel

Belgian Waffles

Get mouthwatering waffles delivered to your doorstep from the Belgian Waffles Co. Call them, or order through Foodmandu.  
9843108194

Dhokaima

You don't need a special occasion to treat yourself! Head to Dhokaima for tender chicken breast marinated with herbs and grilled, served with spinach sauce, corns and salad on the side, or its signature chocolate cake.  
Patan Dhoka, (01) 5522113

Baker's Den

Is a loved one's birthday coming up, or need a just-because cake? Order from Baker's Den. Or get freshly baked doughnut, muffins and bread.  
(01) 4416560 (01) 4411886

About Town

GETAWAY



Kasara Resort

Immerse yourself in the lush greenery at the heart of Chitwan National Park. From cycling to wildlife viewing, Kasara Resort is a fantastic getaway for families.  
Patihani, Chitwan National Park, Chitwan, (01)4437571

Milla Guesthouse

If one prefers the quiet and admires a mix of the old and the new, Milla is the perfect place. Not too far, yet it's like you have stepped into a whole new world.  
Bhaktapur, 9851024137

Dwarika's Resort

Feel the city is too crowded, loud and concrete? Head to Dwarika's in Dhulikhel. This exquisite resort draws on ancient Himalayan philosophy of care for nature and for oneself.  
Dhulikhel, (11) 490612



HeranyaYala

Get a genuine feel of the authentic Newa heritage right in the middle of Mahaboudha and the Hiranya monastery. The hotel provides a complete tour package to open yourself to the rich cultural heritage of Patan.  
Gujibahal, Patan, (01) 5523168, 9851067168

Shangri-La Village Resort

Want to spend some time with yourself for a couple days? Head to the idyllic Shangri-La Village Resort. Meditate in the outdoor Yoga Pergola, indulge in a massage in Phewa Spa and soak up the sun in the Sanctuary Garden.  
Gharipatan, Pokhara (61) 462222



Everest Arirang

Enjoy a variety of Korean dishes seen in K-dramas from Tteok-bokki, Gimbaap to Samgyeopsal at Everest Arirang.  
Jhamsikhel (01) 5438548

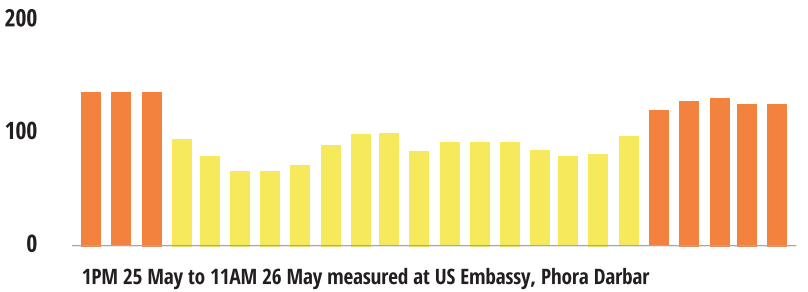
WEEKEND WEATHER



As we approach the arrival of the southwest monsoon (which actually enters Nepal from the east because it curls in from the Bay of Bengal) we will see increasingly turbulent weather activity. The westerlies are still holding sway, pushing convection systems up the mountains. The searing heat of the plains helps the storm cells to develop. But in the week ahead, the jetstream will make its seasonal move north of the Himalaya, allowing moisture-laden monsoon winds to arrive. Forecast is that it will hit eastern Nepal one week ahead of schedule on 7 June.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
27° 17°	27° 18°	27° 18°

AIR QUALITY INDEX



The Air Quality Index (AQI) is getting better on average, as regular showers wash down suspended particulates. The AQI will improve further as rains become more regular with the arrival of the monsoon in two week's time. However, do not be fooled by this, AQI levels are still at hazardous levels and would be a worry for those who live along major intersections and have prolonged exposure to bad air.

OUR PICK



Directors Dan Kwan and Daniel Scheinert give Marvel a run for its money with their 2022 indie absurdist dramedy *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, the story of a Chinese-American woman being audited by the IRS who discovers that she must connect with parallel universe versions of herself to prevent a powerful being from causing the destruction of the multiverse. Yes, you read that right: this is yet another multiverse film – but, really, there is so much more to see and experience here. It is truly an expert assault on the senses that will leave you clamouring for more, in a swirl of genre-bending filmmaking that brings together sci-fi, animation, martial arts action flick, fantasy, with loads of black comedy. Yet, *EEAAO* is, at its heart, the story of family, freedom and love – and the real multiverse of madness, mayhem and motherhood. Stars Michelle Yeoh, Stephanie Hsu, Ke Huy Quan, Jenny Slate, Harry Shum Jr., James Hong and Jamie Lee Curtis.

### कोभिड-१९ विरुद्धको खोप सरकारले निःशुल्क लगाइरहेको छ ।

अबैध रुपमा खोप बेच्ने र किनेर लगाउने दुवैलाई प्रचलित कानुन बमोजिम कडा कारवाही हुनेछ । कोरोना विरुद्धको खोप बेचबिखन भएको थाहा पाउने जो कोहीले स्थानीय प्रशासन, प्रहरी कार्यालय, पालिका वा स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयमा यथार्थ जानकारी गराउनु हुन अनुरोध छ ।

बजारमा लुकिछिपी बेच्न राखिएका खोपहरु नक्कली हुन सक्छन् ।

खोप खान्ने

खोप छुने खान्ने नै

खोपको साथमा आएको छान्ने



नेपाल सरकार  
विज्ञापन बोर्ड

# #SERIOUSABOUTBEER

## BREWED FROM 100% GERMAN Malted BARLEY, YEAST, HOPS AND WATER

Drink responsibly



Six months from now, the world will be glued to the media watching the kick-off game of the World Cup live from Qatar. Nepalis will be among the estimated 3 billion people across the globe tuning in.

This year's World Cup in Qatar, however, is different. For Nepalis, it is not just love for the beautiful game. It is much more personal.

Nepalis have played an important role in transforming Qatar ever since it was awarded the World Cup hosting rights in 2010. The eight stadiums in Qatar where the games will be held are built on the blood, sweat and tears of tens of thousands of migrant workers from Asia and Africa, including from Nepal.

Ram is a Nepali engaged in the construction of the Lusail stadium, where the final World Cup match will be played this year. He told us: "It seems these structures have come up virtually overnight, it is unbelievable. But I have come to realise it is all about money."

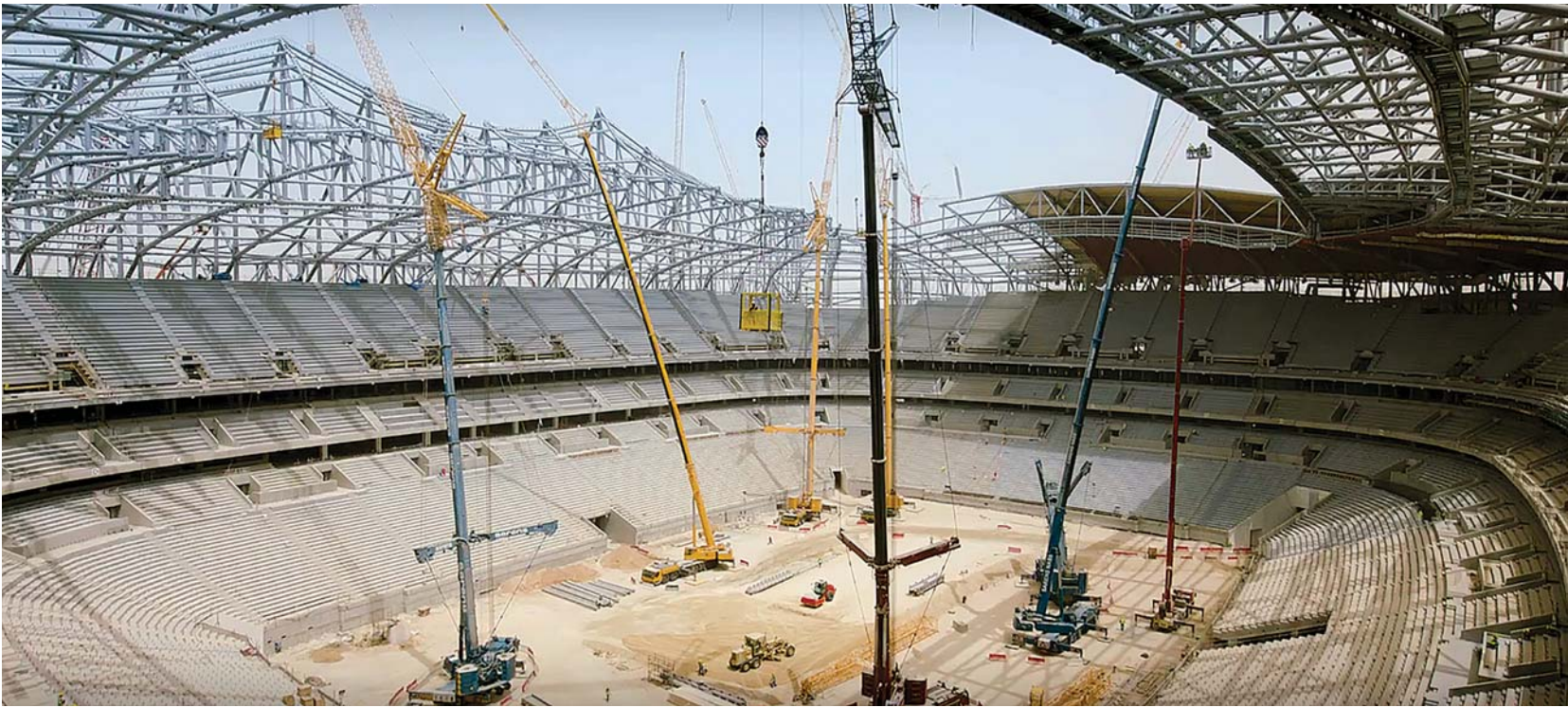
Between 2012/13 and 2017/18, the number of labour approvals issued to Nepalis seeking jobs in Qatar exceeded 100,000 annually, peaking at 128,550 in 2013/14. While remittances the workers send help support their families back home, it also comes at a cost.

Most workers who went to Qatar paid high recruitment costs borrowed informally at exorbitant interest rates. Others returned home empty handed as wage theft victims. And many lost their lives, mostly to unexplained causes.

In the six months leading to the tournament in Qatar, human rights groups are blowing the whistle on World Cup fouls, and say it is time to pay up for the abuses.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International (AI) along with other human rights groups, labour unions and international football fan groups have launched a global coalition and campaign called #PayUpFIFA demanding that FIFA and the Qatar government provide remedy for the abuses suffered by migrant workers and avoid the legacy of what they call a 'World Cup of Shame'.

They say that FIFA also shares responsibility for the price migrant workers have had to pay to make the World Cup 2022 possible. A joint letter sent to Gianni Infantino, President of FIFA when



# #PayUpFIFA campaign launched

Six months ahead of the World Cup in Qatar, rights groups call for remedy for abused migrant workers



the governing body awarded the tournament to Qatar, says it knew or should have known the risks this would pose to migrant workers welfare given the country's poor human rights record and the ban on trade unions. And yet, it did so without placing on Qatar any condition for the protection of labour rights, they say.

To be sure, after international media spotlight, Qatar has introduced labour reforms including removing requirements for exit permits to leave the country. But the rights groups say that these reforms were introduced too late, and were too little to address abuses, and too lax in their enforcement. Similarly, it was only a decade after being awarded the hosting rights that Qatar last year introduced strong heat stress regulations.

During the launch, Human Rights Watch screened a video capturing the stories of Nepalis who

could be potential beneficiaries of such a remedy fund.

This includes Mairul Khaitun and Manju Devi, widows of migrant workers struggling to make ends meet and continuing to repay loans that their husbands took for the jobs in Qatar that killed them.

"If someone helps me, I will be able to eat properly, live decently. Without help, how can I educate my children?" she asks.

Devi, another widow, says: "You ask how it is going. Well, it's just going. We eat whatever we can find and get."

FIFA or Qatar cannot do much to undo the emotional and financial toll, but rights activists say the remedy fund would provide some respite to the struggling families.

Michael Page, deputy Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch, said: "FIFA should work with Qatar and others to set aside at least \$440 million, the same amount as the

prize money provided to World Cup teams, that can be used to compensate abused workers."

A recently launched report *Predictable and Preventable* by Amnesty International says the remediation program should be governed in a participatory way following consultation with stakeholders including migrant workers, surviving family members, and trade unions.

FIFA says that it is currently 'evaluating the proposal' for the remedy fund. But rights groups say there is need for those with leverage over FIFA, including football associations, fans and sponsors, to ensure victims of abuse are provided adequate reparations.

Had Qatar followed through on its promises for reform and granted workers their basic rights, the World Cup would be viewed much differently — national pride at having helped enable the tournament that unites the world.

Instead, there is a bitter aftertaste about the last decade when scores of workers tied to the World Cup suffered due to the complacency of their own governments, the Qataris and FIFA. Many citizens of Nepal and other countries paid a high price for making the World Cup 2022 possible. 🇳🇵



Watch returnee Nepali migrants who suffered directly at the hands of Qatari officials behind World Cup stadium construction and some of their widows from Siraha district in Nepal's southern plains as they explain their situation in this video by Human Rights Watch.

TATA MOTORS  
Connecting Aspirations

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THRILL OF 170 PS POWER. COMFORT OF AUTOMATIC.

PANORAMIC SUNROOF

6 SPEED AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION

ESP TERRAIN RESPONSE MODES

BASED ON LAND ROVER'S LEGENDARY D8 PLATFORM

TATA





# Nepal's interface with information

New survey shows that as mobile ownership spreads, the social web is far ahead of the mainstream press

● Kunda Dixit

A new survey of media trends in Nepal conducted nationwide earlier this year shows that the use of social media networks has left radio, tv and the print press trailing further behind. But even though they interact with and share social media content, most citizens have little trust in it.

Sharecast Initiative Nepal conducted the survey among 5,582 respondents above 18 years in face-to-face interviews. They were selected from 351 local wards, rural municipalities, municipalities, sub-metropolitan cities and metropolitan city proportional to the population size from 77 districts. The sampling of the survey is based on the 2021 census results.

The 2022 results are useful for tracking media consumption trends by comparing them to previous surveys and seeing the changing popularity patterns among various groups.

Most dramatic changes have been in the decline in the audience for national and international news on radio, television and print in just two years. Compared to 2020, the percentage of respondents

saying they watched television news fell from 47% to 31%. Newspaper and magazine readership for national news, already small, decreased further from 8% to 4%.

Radio, which was once the main source of local news for Nepalis, especially in rural areas, has now fallen from 44% to 26%.

Users seem to have migrated en masse to the internet. When asked about which medium they relied on for local news and information, respondents saying YouTube increased from 4% to 15% in two years – signifying the proliferation of channels on that platform that have usually sensationalised news and current affairs content.

The percentage of respondents saying they got their information from Facebook rose from 21% to 41%, although the caveat here is that they may be clicking on links to the Facebook accounts of the mainstream media.

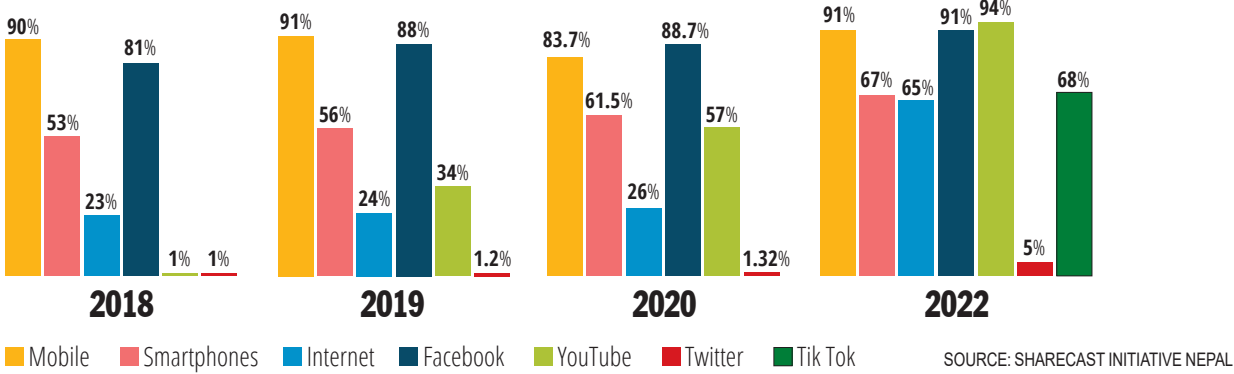
Despite this surge in users of social networking sites, there appears to be a trust deficit. Radio, tv and print media still top the ranking for credibility, with



AMIT MACHAMASI

## DIGITAL MULTIPLY

Sharecast Initiative Nepal surveys tracked the use of devices and platforms. The dominance of Facebook and rise of YouTube is dramatic, but TikTok has been snapping at their heels since 2020. All this is due to the steady rise in smartphone usage.



only 3% of respondents saying they trust content on social media. Interestingly, trust in online portals is also a low 8%.

In answer to another survey question, most respondents who said they do not read print media

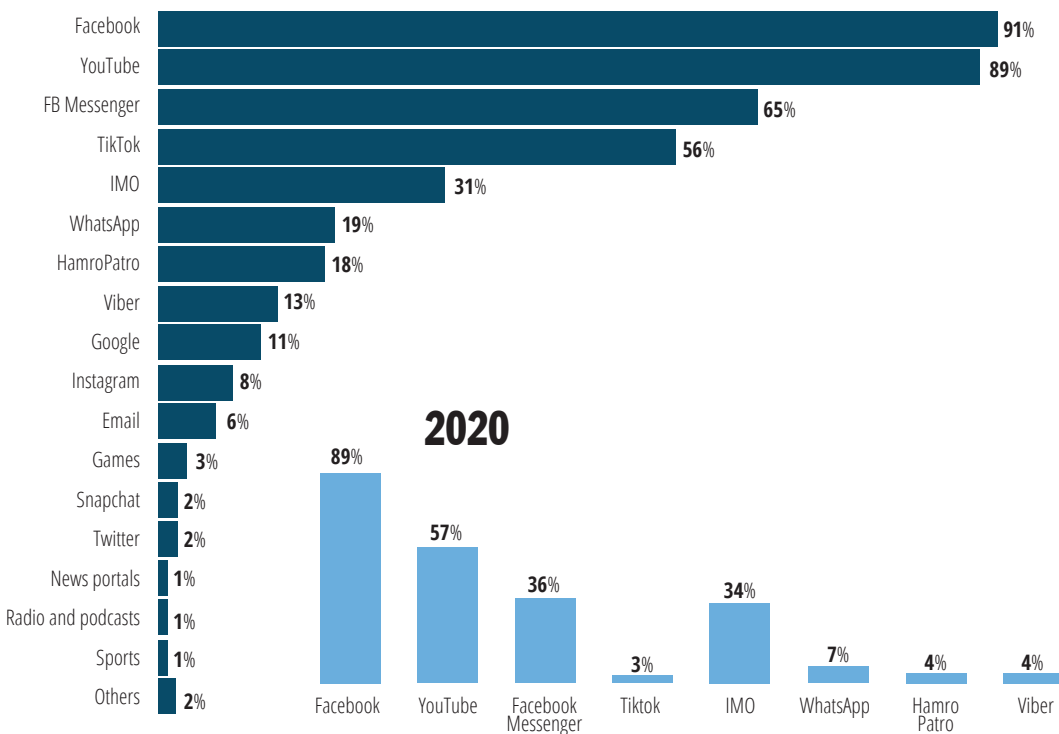
(85%) said they did not read newspapers and magazines because they were not available in the area or delivered at home. Other reasons for not reading were: stale content, boring, or they have other sources of news.

On the other hand, while nationwide use of Twitter is very low, the number of print media readers who say they are also on Twitter is much higher (42%) than on Facebook (20%) or YouTube (20%). 🇳🇵



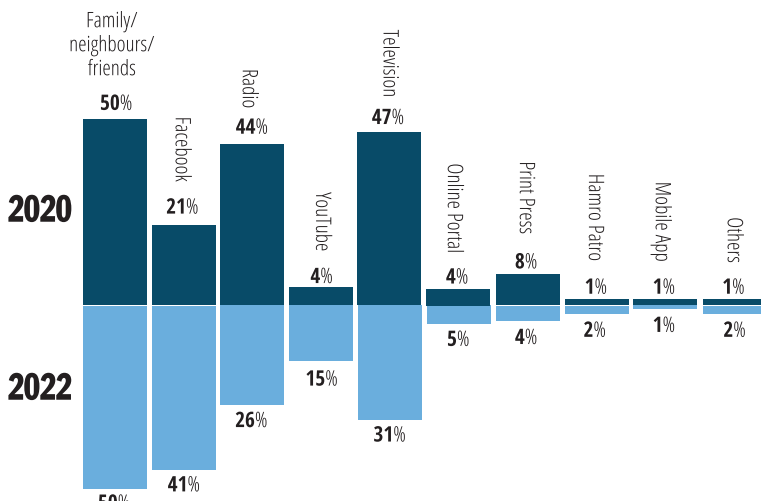
## SOCIAL NETWORKS

Most frequently used apps among adult Nepalis who use the internet in 2022.



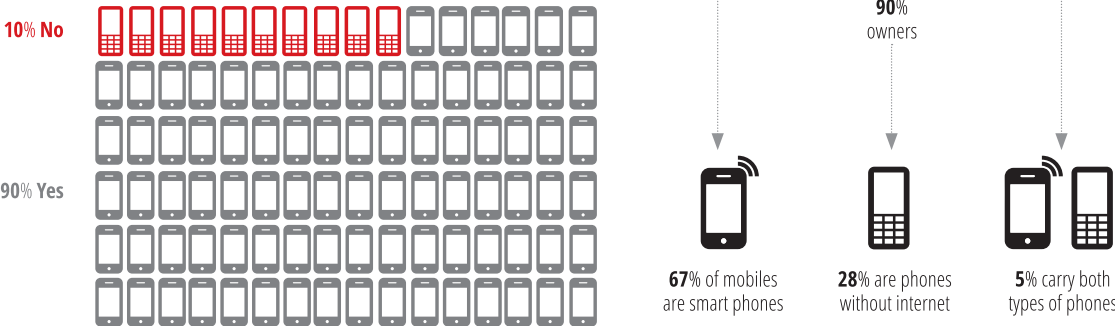
## NOT GOOD NEWS

% of Nepali adults who access news and current affairs in 2022 compared to 2020 survey.



## HELLO NEPAL

% of Nepalis who have phones



## Left to their own devices

The changing pattern of consumption of media content is determined by access to new information technology. Just as radio surged with Nepal's rural radio revolution in the 1990s, and television took audiences away from print, the legacy media are now all in the same boat – competing with the internet for eyeballs and, therefore, revenue.

Nepal's mobile penetration rate is now reaching saturation, with 90% of individuals above 18 years in the survey saying they owned a hand phone. Of these, 67% were smartphones and can access data internet. Although this proportion has gone up sharply since previous Sharecast surveys, it shows there is still potential for growth if 4G access spreads and mobile data package costs come down.



# An increasingly online nation

More than one-third of respondents above 18 years in a nationwide survey conducted by Sharecast Initiative Nepal said they do not have access to the internet.

When asked why they are not using the internet, 62% of the respondents said it was because they did not own a device, and 29% lacked the confidence or skill to go online. Of the other responses, 19% said they feel too old to learn, 14% had neither the interest nor the need of the internet, and 7% were too busy doing other things. 7% said that although they would have liked to have access to the internet, there is no connectivity where they are.

These results show that there are still a substantial number of adult Nepalis who are not online (6.4 million), and most of them do not own a device. Although, in answer to another survey question, nearly 90% of adult Nepalis say they have mobile phones (and 67% of them are smartphones), showing that internet penetration in Nepal is lagging behind phone use and has not yet reached saturation.

Disaggregating data for internet use, Gandaki Province appears to have the widest internet use, with only half the respondents (46%) saying they did not have online access because they do not have a device. However, 50% of them said they were not using the internet because they did not have the skill — much higher than other provinces.

Surprisingly, only 12% of respondents in Karnali Province said they did not have the confidence to use the internet. Overall, few respondents without access to the internet said they were interested in using it.

More than 5,500 respondents took part in the nationwide survey and they were asked if their children between 6-12 years used the internet. Nearly half (47%) said their children did, 39% said they did not, and 13% did not have children in that age group.

Again, the proportion of children with access to the internet is highest in Gandaki (69%). Karnali and Madhes trailed in children not using the net (66%) and (61%), respectively. Despite Kathmandu Valley being situated in Bagmati Province, it is behind Gandaki and Province 1 in internet use among adults and children.

The 62.5% of respondents who have access to the internet were asked unprompted which apps they used the most. Facebook is still scoring highest with 91%, with YouTube (89%) and TikTok (56%). Buried in the long tail is Twitter with only 2% — surprising given how Twitter seems to shape the national discourse on everything from elections to gender-based violence — proving that Twitter users are from the more influential class of urban-based movers and shakers.

Comparing the responses with results from the 2020 survey, Sharecast Initiative found a dramatic increase in the number of TikTok and YouTube users. These results show that social networking platforms are increasingly displacing the mainstream press where people have access to information and entertainment.

As expected, TikTok is most popular among the young, its usage dipping with the older population. Twitter has a slightly larger following among the 16-24 age group (8%) but trails far behind other social networking platforms. But what it seems to lack in popularity, it more than makes up for its socio-economic demographics.

A sample of the estimated 12.2 million Nepalis who have access to the internet was asked if they regularly visited online news portals. Only 30% said yes (3.7 million). This is a surprisingly low result, which seems to indicate that most internet use could be for entertainment or family engagement.

Disaggregating this data by province shows that Bagmati has the highest proportion of internet users accessing news portals, with Karnali and Province 1 following close behind. Madhes Province has the lowest number (13%) accessing digital news sites.

Despite having the highest internet use, Gandaki Province has the lowest proportion of respondents saying they accessed news portals which can only mean they use the internet for other purposes than as a source of news and information.

The 30% of respondents who said they visited online news portals were asked what made them access those sites. Nearly half (48%) said they received push notifications to do so, while others just found the sites by browsing portals. But a majority (57%) clicked on links shared by friends on social media to visit news portals.

The 62.5% of respondents who said they use the internet were asked if they thought the spread of disinformation was a problem in Nepal. More than 90% of them partially or fully agreed it was an issue. Only 7% of respondents think it is not a problem. Bagmati Province where Kathmandu Valley is located has the highest proportion (27%) of respondents who agreed fully that disinformation and misinformation was a problem.

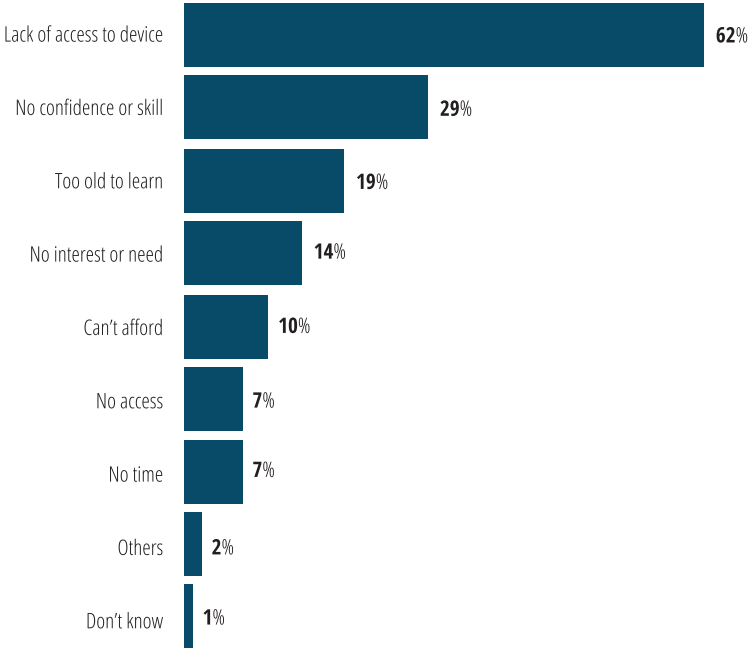
This would tally with previous surveys that indicate that although there is heavy use of social media platforms, the credibility of information they contain is considered low among most Nepalis.

*Nepal Media Survey 2022 covers consumption patterns of radio, tv, newspapers and internet platforms. Nepal Media Survey Report available from [NMS2022@sharecast.org.np](https://nms2022@sharecast.org.np)*



## INTEREST IN INTERNET

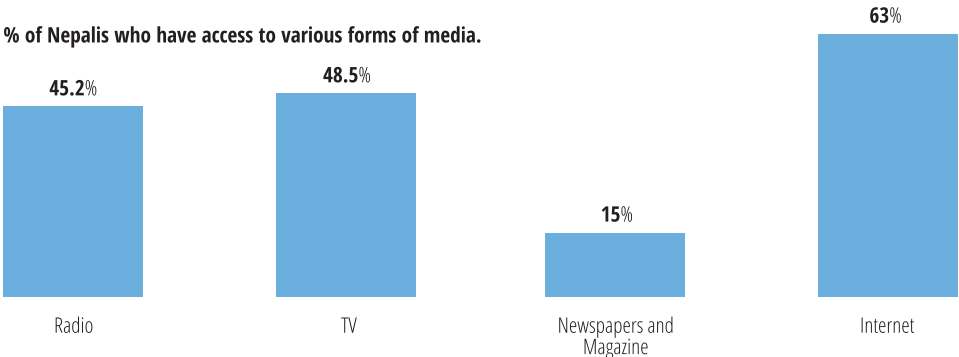
One-third of Nepalis do not have internet. They were asked why not.



## DIGITAL DIVIDE

The new gap is not between those with internet and those without, but between those who get news from the internet and those who get it from the mainstream press.

% of Nepalis who have access to various forms of media.



SOURCE OF ALL DATA: SHARECAST INITIATIVE NEPAL



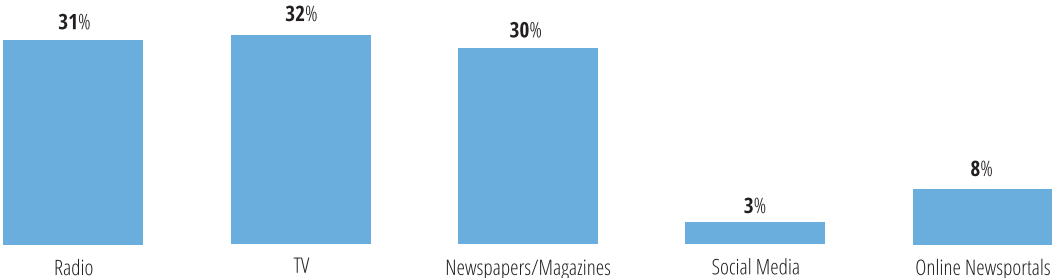
## FAKE NEWS

Is the spread of misinformation and disinformation through the internet a problem in Nepal?



## IN MEDIA WE TRUST

Despite the spread of social media platforms, trust in the mainstream press is still considerably high.



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The Great Yawn

To make a country great again, one prerequisite is that citizens must respect their leader.

The Chinese people hold President Xi Jinping in high regard, and his country is now a super-duper power. Or take Prime Minister Shree Modi - it is because of the veneration of his citizens that he has been able to completely modify India.

And then, the esteem which the DPRK people have for their Dear Leader Marshall Kim Jong-un is what has allowed North Korea to attain the pinnacle of progress and test its own hypersonic intercontinental missile.

Butt here in Nepal, how do we treat our leader? We shower disrespect on our prime minister, and run him down every chance we get. Like it or not, he is our Shree 5-time Prime Minister, so show uncle some respect even if he is not a rapper.

Take the Modi-Deuba get together on the occasion of Buddha Jayanti on 16 May. On social media, Nepalis poured scorn at their own prime minister, poking fun at the way he sat, his enunciation, his gait, how he watered plastic flowers, and the way he yawned.

What most people do not know (and the following is a closely guarded military secret because of its vital importance to Nepal's national security, so don't go blurting it out to everyone in public) is that this was all an elaborate ruse. Prime Minister Deuba deserves the highest medal of valour in the land, if not the Oscars in the Best Supporting Actor Category.

It was pre-planned that Arzoo was the decoy and Nepal's Prime Minister would look bored with the entire proceeding so as to upstage Modi with a better photo-op. It was a masterstroke in planning and execution on Deuba's part, and we have to thank the PMO for briefing him so carefully to just be himself.

Modi had planned his optics meticulously, and he sat cross-legged at Maya Devi Temple with hands folded in a reverent namaskar, eyes closed, and deep in meditation. Not to be outdone, Deuba's posture was a hybrid between the sukhasana cross-legged yoga sitting position and a latrine squat. This was a well-calculated move on Deuba's part to steal the spotlight from Modi, and make his Indian counterpart look like a grumpy old man. Which he did.

In other photographs of the event, Deuba is on the verge of dozing off, eyes glazed over and his mind probably on how to make Renu win again, if she loses once more. This is a deliberate defence tactic that a much smaller country uses to throw off the leader of a larger neighbour: by not giving Him the attention He thinks He deserves.

Body language is important in international relations, and passive-aggressive Deuba's message was: "Who cares?"

But the coup de grâce (not to be mistaken for coup d'état) was The Great Yawn. With that one eloquent gesture, Deuba achieved the equivalent of the Gorkha conquest of Kumaon and Garhwal, and allowed Nepalis to hold their heads high once more showing the world at large that we will not be pushed around.



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