



## FUELLING THE CRISIS

● Sonia Awale

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was forced to sack Janardan Sharma this week, but only after his finance minister became a political liability because of scandals.

Instead of trying to resolve Nepal's economic crisis, Sharma inducted yes-men with no finance background into the ministry, and ousted the Rastra Bank governor for blocking a money-laundering scam. He then involved an unauthorised 'expert' at a late-night budget drafting meeting to change tax rates, and later allegedly deleted CCTV footage implicating him.

Deuba coddled his finance minister till the end despite growing criticism from within his Nepali Congress, as well as pressure from Sharma's Maoist Centre party. All this meant that the prime minister and his finance minister took their eyes off the ball as Nepal's economy went into free-fall.

Nepal's officials have said the country is not in the same debt trap as Sri Lanka, but there are indications that the crisis is deepening: Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) asked the government this week to implement 10 measures to cut fuel use.

Last week, the government reduced the tax on petroleum imports to reduce petroleum prices, but the NOC warned of "dire consequences" because it was running out of money.

"Reducing gas prices by reducing taxes was absolutely of no use in the long run. They could have instead used tax money to promote and invest in sustainable energy," says climate negotiator Manjeet Dhakal.

He adds: "By reducing the tax the government is essentially abusing democracy, by claiming to reduce the burden on the people in the guise of improving its chances in elections."

It is because of such short-sightedness



BHANU BHATTARAI/HIMALARCHIVE

that Nepal's economy was in trouble long before Covid and Ukraine. The banking sector had a liquidity crunch because it had over-extended loans to real estate speculators. Stagnant overseas remittance, falling exports and a jump in imports had led to a growing trade deficit, and depleted foreign exchange reserves.

Some experts say the fuel crisis provides Nepal with the perfect

opportunity to accelerate use of electricity for transport, industry and households. Nepal needs to wean itself off petroleum not just to reduce its per capita carbon footprint, but to narrow its trade gap.

In the last nine months, Nepal spent Rs218 billion importing petroleum products, which is 82% higher compared to the same period last year. This is nearly 20% of the country's total imports, and is worth nearly

**GHOST WRITER:** As scandal-ridden finance minister resigns, Nepal is trapped in an economic-energy crunch.

double the income from all exports.

"At this rate, we are fast approaching the fate of Sri Lanka and the only way ahead is maximising the use of domestically generated electricity, primarily in the public transport sector," says Bhushan Tuladhar, board member of Sajha Yatayat which is starting electric buses in Kathmandu from this week.

"We have policies in place, but crucial details are missing, such as how to incentivise electric buses, dedicated charging stations and coordinated management of public transport," Tuladhar adds.

Industry experts are reworking Nepal's Nationally Determined Contribution target submitted to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2021 with a particular focus on electric public transport.

They have proposed an increase in sales of electric public transport to 60% by 2030, reduction in custom and excise duties for electric buses, grants and soft loans to procure them, and ensuring at least three provinces operate electric public transport by 2025.

The other low-hanging fruit is a shift from LPG to electricity in households and restaurants, but transmission lines and distribution need to be upgraded so the grid can handle the load.

All of this will also help Nepal meet its global climate targets set at Glasgow during the COP26 last year to achieve net-zero by 2040.

Nepal therefore needs to do its bit to reduce its petroleum imports to save both the economy and ecology. But that needs political will, which is sorely lacking in this election year.

Says Bhushan Tuladhar: "If we don't act even now, it will be too late. We need to work on energy, economy and environment simultaneously by involving both the government and the private sector." 🇳🇵

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# Flight of fancy

Three days after the Supreme Court released the full text of its verdict ordering the government to halt all plans to build a new international airport at Nijgad Forest, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba flew down to the site in an Army helicopter. His Communist coalition partners Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Madhav Kumar Nepal went along for the ride.

In defiance of the Supreme Court, Deuba vowed to challenge the ruling. Sitting in a semicircle of sofas with other Cabinet ministers, he declared: "The government is committed to completing the construction of both the Nijgad airport and the Kathmandu-Tarai Expressway linking it to the capital."

Deuba interpreted the 3-2 ruling by the justices to mean that the high court had not actually rejected building the airport, but just to ensure adherence to environmental safeguards.

Why such a show of force and thumbing of noses on the part of the executive against the judiciary?

Tagging along with Deuba on the Nijgad flyby were the entire cabinet and coalition partners. Not only is the unity of the coalition hanging by a thread as individual members weigh their chances in November's federal and provincial elections, but member parties are also rife with internal tension.

The real estate mafia with close ties to the leadership of all political parties has reportedly invested heavily in land surrounding the proposed \$3.6 billion airport. Contractors will also benefit from political patronage and are rubbing their palms at felling an entire forest of hardwood timber.

But the more immediate reason for government partners and the entire cabinet to airlift itself to Nijgad on Saturday was to show that the coalition is strong and united.

The trip also came the day after the dissident Nepali Congress leader Shekhar Koirala accused Deuba of no longer being the president of his own party, but president of the coalition.

Koirala's faction includes deputy president Dhanaraj Gurung and general secretary Gagan Thapa, and threatened to launch a "constructive opposition" against its own party leadership. It also accused Deuba of tolerating lack of transparency in the Finance Ministry, and of his inability to take action to protect the economy from further shock.

Bagmati Province Chief Minister Rajendra Pandey was also in the group. Nijgad falls within Madhes Province, and its Chief Minister Lal Babu Raut also wants the airport project to go ahead to spur economic growth.

Rajendra Pandey's inclusion in the trip added significance because he has refused to step down as chief minister of Bagmati Province as agreed earlier with the coalition partners. In fact, Nepali Congress leaders in Hetauda had started a signature campaign against Pandey and a decision was to be taken at a parliamentary party meeting of the Unified Socialists on Saturday itself.

The other reason for the trip was for Deuba to send an indirect message of defiance to the Supreme Court that it had no business interfering with decisions of the government. It was a signal that the executive does not feel compelled to follow word for word any decision of the judiciary.

In fact, the Supreme Court's decision has taken the proposal to build an international airport in Nijgad to its pre-1995 date. From now on, we should no longer refer to Nijgad as a proposed international airport, but as the last remaining native tropical forest in the eastern Tarai that it is.

The Court's final text says: 'We do not see any logical argument to prove that there is no other alternative to building an airport at Nijgad.'

An exhaustive and lengthy sentence in the verdict goes on to state: 'In addition to the economic and technical feasibility of the airport, there needs to be an objective,

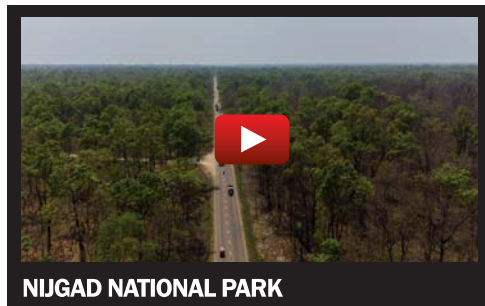
neutral and competent assessment by economists, social scientists, administration experts, of the impact on the environment, forest ecosystem, wildlife of the region, and an investigation into alternative sites where actual and realistic ways to minimise the environment impact are examined so that a legally acceptable environmental risk assessment report can be made that takes into account expert advice, to conclude what capacity airport should be built, where and in what area, and the court orders that these factors are then taken into account to decide on the location of an airport that has the smallest ecological footprint.'

Translated, these 119 pages of legalese means that the Supreme Court has decided that destroying the Nijgad Forest to build an airport is not worth the damage. The issue now is: will the government dare to go against this verdict?



**The coalition's show of force in flying to Nijgad was to show unity, and thumb its nose at the Supreme Court**

## ONLINE PACKAGES



**NIJGAD NATIONAL PARK**

Despite the Supreme Court ordering the government to halt all plans to build a new international airport at Nijgad Forest, various groups with vested interest are still pushing for the project. Just this week Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and his coalition partners also flew down to the site. Rewatch this video which argues for a national park in the native forest where the airport would have been built. Read editorial, *Page 2*.



**ICE INTO ELECTRICITY**

Join us on a trip to Langtang and get up close to the Hungung Microhydro Project, the first scheme to lower the water level of a glacial lake formed because of global warming, and at the same time generate electricity for a tourism-dependent valley. Subscribe to our YouTube channel for exclusive videos.

### RICE

The Nepal government have finally woken up to what's going on in the world ('Nepal sets ambitious target for food sufficiency', Ramesh Kumar, #1118). They should have seen this coming a year ago, at least.

**Aleksandr Verkovsyn**

● Vertical wind — if there are open walls and flat roofs — can add a percentage to grow pots. Well-built greenhouses can be used higher up on hills if there are thermal mass walls. Water harvesting is necessary, as is mulching over new soil.

**Nathan Hagen**

● Insightful reporting. Investigation is necessary on two more fundamental questions: 1) What is the margin of error in these estimates and 2) Missing component of soil health. There is steady decline of soil health due to extractive mining of organic matter with minimal or no replacement.

**Namindra Dahal**

● The video about the challenges of food and agriculture in Nepal shows how the plant varieties have been affected in Pokhara in particular due to climate change and other reasons ('Climate change hits himalayan rice', Erica Wu, #1118). Now, the question is, is what we have been taught still applicable to the topography of Nepal? When will Nepal show its worth and capability if we continue to import even basic food grains and other daily items?

**Luniva Twayana**

● Pollution and climate change are the major side effects of modernisation and poor development. Sustainable development isn't taken seriously — they are only on the papers for education and teaching.

**Roc Hak**

● Now they need to do the same with potatoes and apples. There are hundreds of varieties, but only two or three are grown.

**Shirini Barakzai**

### CAPTIVE ELEPHANTS

Thank you, Nepali Times, for covering the important work of the National Trust for Nature Conservation — Biodiversity Conservation Center and veterinarians for captive elephants in Nepal including Kajalkali. ('Making the life of Nepal's captive elephants easier', Babu Ram Lamichhane, www.nepalitimes.com) The author provides the reality of Kajalkali and some insights for managing privately owned captive elephants in Nepal.

**NTNC – Biodiversity Conservation Center**

### ASS

When you pay three times, at least you get the tickets to fly ('Feedback questionnaire', Ass, #1118). To me, a mere Nepali, they won't sell tickets to Lukla. Nepali fares to those destinations are just an illusion - they seem to exist but they don't!

**Santosh Aryal**

● While understanding that Nepal is should be discounted on their own airlines, the difference that a tourist/regular visitor pays is basically a rip-off! I would fly a lot more internally if prices were not so extortionate!

**Alan Roadnight**

### JOURNALISM AWARD

The eye for fresh angles ('Journalism of courage and impact', www.nepalitimes.com) — the heart to narrate stories untold! An inspiration.

**Sahana Vajracharya**

### KATHMANDU CEMETARY

Was there last month ('Buried in history', Lisa Choegyal, www.nepalitimes.com). It is less well cared for now!

**Roy Francis**

**Times.com**

## WHAT'S TRENDING



### TERRACES

by Abhushan Gautam Shakya

This paddy planting season, sculpted contours of rice terraces in Kathmandu mirrored the monsoon clouds above as farmers waded into the submerged fields — even as the urban sprawl and infrastructure encroach on the Valley's last remaining rice fields. See the photo feature on our website.

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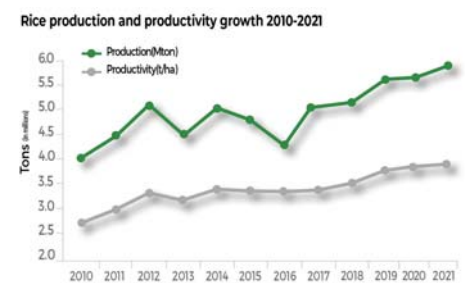


### Climate change hits himalayan rice

by Erica Wu

Erratic monsoon leading to little or too much water due to the climate crisis has farmers confused on when to plant paddy. But local farmers in Kaski are preserving the indigenous varieties of rice even as they confront head-on the climate-induced crop failures.

**t Most popular on Twitter**



### Nepal sets ambitious target for food sufficiency

by Ramesh Kumar

Nepal's budget unveiled a plan to increase domestic agricultural production by one-third. While it sounds good on paper, the decision is too ambitious and unrealistic. It is near impossible to improve agriculture productivity after decades of state neglect. Join the discussion online.

**Most commented**



### Nepal's new generation of alternative artists

by Ashish Dhakal

'Monsoon Hymns', the latest pop-up at Bikalpa Art Centre, explores themes of mental health, loss, grief and body autonomy from emerging artists through photographs, paintings and poetry. Read the review at www.nepalitimes.com.

**Most visited online page**

## QUOTE TWEETS

**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**  
"When much of the cultivable land in the Tarai districts are being turned into housing, how can we expect the paddy production to grow?"

**ART @AmulyaSir**  
Productivity growth is too slow and too little

**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**  
"#Healthinsurance delivers the right of citizens to proper #healthcare. As soon as it is implemented through a for-profit company, the social security aspect will be forgotten and serve purely as a business."

**Sanjaya Lanky @Lankysanjaya**  
Healthcare must be accessible, affordable and equitable to all.

## 20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

### The east is red

This report from 2002 was a firsthand account of the insurgency from Sankhuwasabha district ahead of general elections in November which was eventually boycotted by all parties with the Maoist insurgency at its peak.

Two decades down the road, we have come a long way. The local election in May was celebrated and successfully held and we now have a second local government under the federal system. Even so, many of the structural problems remain the same whereas public dissatisfaction with the mainstream political parties and their leaders is at its height. Excerpts from the field report from issue #101, 5-11 July 2002, 20 years ago this week:

The usual bustle of Khandbari's bazar is gone. Small groups huddle in the teashops, whispering and warily scanning the streets outside. The town has been under a dusk to dawn curfew since 26 November.

"You might be an informer, or even a Maoist, why should I talk to you?" asks a young man at the local inn, his eyes averted. Four months ago, Maoists beat and threatened to kill him. The boy fled his Barabise home and came to Khandbari. "He still hasn't gotten over it," his lodge owner explained. "His wounds have healed, but his mental scars



are deeper."

Lonely party flags flutter over the roofs of political party offices here in the district headquarters of Sankhuwasabha. But the offices are deserted. Everyone we spoke to last week is just trying to get by: survive from day to day, maybe catch up on the World Cup. An election is the last thing on people's minds.

"I don't think we can hold elections if the Maoists oppose them," DDC chairman Tulsi Prasad Neupane told us bluntly. "Even if the military guards

voting centres, I don't think people will come out and vote."

Most local members of the Nepali Congress and the RPP have already been killed or have fled. Now, the elections will make the UML a target of the Maoists, many of whom are ex-UML themselves, and will have scores to settle.

Maoists come at night and threaten to kill villagers if they don't feed and lodge them, says the UML's Damabr Karki. The next day, security officials visit those who were forced to give shelter. Karki cuts us short, and refuses to say any more: "Let's leave it at that."

**From archive material of Nepali Times of the past 20 years, site search: www.nepalitimes.com**

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# Nabil plans sustainable banking for Nepal

Nabil Bank chair on why the banking sector should prioritise sustainability over profits



**N**abil Bank is celebrating a week-long Green Week to mark one year of sustainable banking it launched last year to ensure financial literacy in rural areas, commercialise the agricultural sector, promote entrepreneurship, and support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has provided Rs527 billion to 491 farmers and entrepreneurs. The bank is also a member of the Partnership for Carbon Accounting Financials (PCAF) and measures greenhouse gas emissions related to its loan portfolio and investment.

Chair Upendra Poudyal has been pushing this priority for financial investment in Nepal, and Nabil was the first bank in Nepal to start a program supporting agro-based rural entrepreneurs. Poudyal who is also the Asia Pacific Regional representative of the Global Alliance for Banking on Values recently spoke with us about sustainable banking in Nepal.

Excerpts from the conversation:

**Nepali Times: What is a sustainable banking initiative program?**

**Upended Poudyal:** Sustainable financial investment looks at three aspects – people, planet and prospects. Nepal's banking sector is focused on size expansion and reaping profits, and we forget about human beings and the Earth. Instead of orienting itself toward profit and size, banking sector needs to look at the impact its investments create, and if they will adversely affect the environment, public health and the very livelihood of the people. Which is why we launched the sustainable

banking program that prioritises agro-based entrepreneurship.

**And the impetus for this?**

The 2015 Paris Accord where countries agreed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees changed the priorities of many businesses around the world. But I, like most bankers, used to be driven by just profit and expansion. After I joined

the Global Alliance for Banking Values, I met bankers who talked about sustainable banking instead of profits. It was the start of a new journey for me.

The 2008 financial crisis is in many ways a lesson for us all. It was proof that when banks invest in unproductive areas, it puts the overall economy of a country at risk. We need to make sustainable

investments and this starts with cooperation in every sector and shifting the investment priority of financial institutions.

**Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) already prioritises hydropower and agriculture. How is what you are doing different?**

The banking sector has invested in hydropower and agriculture, but we have made environmentally risky investments. If the central bank had not instructed banks to invest a certain percentage in these sectors, then they would not have done so voluntarily. In 2018, NRB issued a directive for environmental impact assessments to be mandatory for projects that banks invest in. It is rarely practised, however. But with the current climate scenario, we have no choice but to be environmentally conscious.

**But will banks invest in sustainable projects instead of highly profitable ones?**

Now is the time to think about credit and value creation. What can we do with profits made at the risk of humanity itself? If we just pursue profits, the future generation will not survive and the blame will fall on us. I remember that my first loan was to the cigarette industry. That would not happen now.

**In the past 30 years, banks and financial institutions have increased loans by 20% but Nepal's economy has expanded by only 4.5%.**

Bankers have started to realise that our sector has not uplifted our economy. But I believe the NRB should be guiding the banks towards investing in productive sectors. It is only natural for investors to seek profit but they should not expect a high-level return. Otherwise, the economy will collapse. Investments without a positive impact on the society, citizens, environment and the country will benefit no one.

Banks have also invested in productive sectors like the expansion of hotels and cement industries. We now need to look

at the energy consumed by these projects, their environmental impacts and carbon emissions.

**But banks investing in imports and real estate sectors have negatively impacted the economy and the environment.**

The government and the banking sector both should shift their priorities. Nepal should be self-reliant in manufacturing, and create employment opportunities. Banks should invest in building such a system. High imports and unproductive investment can push the country into an economic crisis.

The finance sector has played a strong role in energy generation by investing in hydropower. And Nepal is now nearly self-sufficient in electricity and as a banker, I'm proud of this. This now should be replicated in food and agricultural production. We also have a huge potential for pilgrimage tourism.

If we do not prioritise the real economy we will likely crash, this is what recent events in South Asia have taught us. By producing essential commodities including agricultural goods, exporting electricity and promoting electric transport, we can reverse the balance of payments deficit.

**How will Nabil itself put these values into practice?**

We set up a sustainable banking department last year. We are also training youth in entrepreneurship and leadership. We are giving loans to up-and-coming businesses in remote Nepal to start local agricultural enterprises but we also educate them about their responsibility towards the environment.

Nepal needs to prepare a roadmap in various areas of sustainable development, finance and green economy. It also needs to implement its commitments including the Paris Agreement. Nabil Bank is moving in that direction, other banks should too. The past experience, present needs and future goals should all align when we invest in financial sectors.

## prabhu BANK



### Nabil's new CEO

Nabil Bank appointed Gyanendra Prasad Dhungana as the new CEO last week. Dhungana has more than 25 years of experience in management and leadership roles. He was also the CEO of Nepal Bangladesh Bank for 10 years, and president of Nepal Bankers Association in 2018.



### Driver training

Siprati Trading organised a national training program for 895 drivers. The participants were introduced to the BSIV technology, safe and economical driving, and techniques to increase the efficiency and life of a vehicle.

### Thai Smile Bangkok

Thai Smile Airways has started its Kathmandu-Bangkok flights with Airbus 320 aircraft with onward connections to Phuket and Pattaya, and internationally to Australia, Japan and Kuala Lumpur.



"Thai Smile team is very proud to announce the embarkment of KTM-BKK route. It definitely strengthens our increasing connectivity between Bangkok and other major cities in Asia," says Viset Sontichai, acting CEO of Thai Smile Airways. "We are also confident that Nepal will eventually become an even more effective gateway to other South-Central Asia and Asian countries as their preferred destination for tourism."

### Radisson CSR

Radisson Hotel, as a part of its CSR initiative, and its employees distributed food and funds to Nishaya Sewa Sadan, an old age home in Kathmandu last week. The hotel also organised a blood donation campaign with the Red Cross Society.

### Global IME expansion

Global IME bank opened its 298th branch office in Dolpa, thus becoming the first private bank to deliver banking services through its branch offices in all 77 districts of Nepal.

### Ncell Ring Road

Ncell under its corporate social responsibility has taken up building and maintaining the Koteswor-Kalanki Ring road stretch with the Department of



Forest and Soil Conservation with landscaping and building the green belt area for the project across 10.2km and will look after the belt till 2024. Says Andy Chong, CEO of Ncell: "We are delighted to contribute towards a healthy environment for people and community in line with the government's objectives linked with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and our Axiata Group's aspiration of Net-zero carbon."

### IME smart QR

IME Pay and Smart QR have come up with a scheme to provide 15% discount or Rs300 discount in Bigmart outlets when customers use IME Pay and scan the smart QR code.



BHUSHAN TULADHAR

### Women drivers

Sajha Yatayat is launching its electric buses on the roads of Kathmandu this week, and some of them will be driven by women drivers newly-trained by theeGo sustainability and innovation group. The drivers took a test drive across the capital this week as part of the training.





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Bhesh Rag Dahal's soup with dried mushrooms he collected.

PHOTOS: THOMAS ROEHL



*Lecanum aurantiacum*, a very popular and edible species of mushroom found in Nepal.

# Mushroom trekking in the Himalaya

A first of its kind expedition in Nepal identifies rare species of mushroom below Mt Everest

- Sarah Watson in Solukhumbu

For 25 years, Ang Jangmu Sherpa collected mushrooms in forests near her lodge in Tengboche. Just one local mushroom, known locally as *petak*, provides enough for one meal.

Bhesh Rag Dahal collects and dries mushrooms for the winter months in his restaurant in Tashingma. Since mushroom keep so well, he still has a store of mushroom that was not



first ecological tourism trek of its kind. In addition to mycologists, citizen scientists with interest in mushrooms joined the trek, guided by Phu Chiri Sherpa and Tenzing Tashi Sherpa.

“There is this amazing biodiversity in Nepal — uniquely true because of the extraordinary altitude gradient — within a short band the terrain that goes from 6,000ft to the highest point on earth,” Silber says.

The Solukhumbu’s altitude variation creates the niches for hundreds of unique tree species, making it a rich environment for fungi to grow in relationship with the vegetation. Until now, the region’s mushrooms had never been systematically cataloged.

Devkota, who holds a PhD in mushroom research, says: “To make conservation and management plans, first we should explore what kind of mushroom species we have. I realised there was a gap and an opportunity.”

Now there is a push for scientists all over to document things before the precious mushrooms are gone. Says Bunyard: “The forest here is covered with life, but this is one of the most understudied parts of the world. There are no books here, it’s kind of a black box.”

Fungi do not exist in isolation, but are critical to ecosystems. They enrich the diversity of life in the biosphere. “They are partners for pretty much all plants,” adds Bunyard. Mushrooms form immense underground networks with plant species, cycling nutrients, ensuring plant survival, and contributing to the carbon and phosphorus cycles.

“If you killed all the fungi on the planet, all the trees would die. So fungi are basically responsible for the life of everyone on the surface of the world,” adds Thomas Roehl.

When an environment is damaged by human activity, fungi can still thrive, and in some cases, help jumpstart new life. They also signify ecosystem health. Fungi can be used to indicate air pollution levels, as they struggle to survive in areas with heavy emissions.

## Mushrooms on Everest

Even before entering Sagarmatha National Park, the expedition had already identified over 60 types of mushroom, including sightings of rarely viewed species.

The team found *Tremella salmonea*, first described in 1919, and documented *Amanita tullossiana*, a new species found in 2019 in the Indian Himalaya.

The researchers believe they identified *Amanita innatifibrilla*, a species with

In addition to adding to Nepal’s mushroom database, Silber hopes this mushroom-focused trek is a model for future ecological tourism. In other parts of Nepal, tourists join treks for bird, crocodile, or tiger watching, and the Everest region’s botany, geology and biodiversity could offer similar opportunities for tourism during the climbing off-season.

Bhumiraj Upadhyaya, Chief Conservation Officer at Sagarmatha National Park, has worked in the national park system for over 30 years, but this is the first mushroom-focused trek he has seen.

“Almost all the tourists come here just to see mountains,” says Upadhyaya. “There is so much more here than just the mountains.”

He explains that major research gaps still remain for snow leopards, musk deer and pollution nearby the Gokyo lakes.

Scientific research in the region, however, is limited, due to irregular flights, high costs and poor road conditions.

Researchers are far more likely to go to the more accessible Annapurna or Chitwan regions.

Solukhumbu’s residents could benefit from more extensive mushroom knowledge. People have lived in the Khumbu before the establishment of the national park, so unlike visitors, local communities do not need park permission to forage for mushrooms.

In fact, local mushroom species offer a source of protein and fiber during winter months, where fresh vegetables are unavailable.

“Here they do not have sufficient vegetables and have to depend on planes and jeeps to bring vegetables from Kathmandu. Having knowledge of mushrooms might be helpful for the people for food source and security,” he adds.

Locals grow their own mushrooms, or more often forage in nearby forests. Mushrooms can be dried, stored and rehydrated for future use, which benefits the lodges who are overwhelmed with tourists in the spring and fall.

Further scientific analysis of the region’s mushrooms could benefit those that rely on the food group. “Perhaps in the future, more people can know about edible mushrooms,” Jangbu Sherpa says. “During the winter there are no vegetables, so we can collect and dry them for the winter.”

Another mushroom tour is already being planned for 2023, and Silber hopes that scientific activity in the Solukhumbu can become accessible and community-based.

“Of course it is hard to do science in remote areas. If you want to get up here and do this kind of work, it’s a big and an

# Shrooms can kill

The work of a mycologist is critical in establishing mushrooms that are highly poisonous. Every year, dozens of Nepalis, mainly children and from poorer families, die from eating toxic mushrooms because the edible and poisonous varieties look the same.

“Most of the people living near the forest, or low income people who depend more on the forest, are the ones getting poisoned,” explains mycologist Shiva Devkota.

Mushrooms, which grow out of the ground only for up to three months in a year in the forest, are discovered, collected and shared with family and neighbours. If one of them happens to be toxic, it can kill an entire household or impact the whole community.

In 2019, six people in the same family died in Paipa from toxic mushrooms. In 2016, eight people died in Panchthar district from eating poisonous mushrooms.

Devkota was leading a mushroom expedition to the Everest region last month (see main feature left) when he got news of 19 mushroom-related casualties from Butwal. Most mushroom illnesses and deaths, however, are unreported as they occur in remote rural areas.



*Amanita tullossiana*, a highly poisonous mushroom.

“There has previously been a communication gap, but now we know that mushroom poisonings are happening, and we hear about the deaths,” adds Devkota.

In the Everest region, most toxic mushrooms are found below Lukla and the ones at higher altitudes are generally safe.

“Just like there are no poisonous snakes the higher you go, there are no poisonous mushrooms here,” says Ang Jangmu Sherpa who has a lodge in Tengboche.

The differences between an edible and a deadly mushroom may be imperceptible, “if





SARAH WATSON

mushroom keep so well, the sun has a store of mushroom that was not consumed when tourism collapsed during the pandemic.

He can sell the mushroom on the market for Rs10,000 a kg. Otherwise, he gives them away as prized gifts to relatives and lamas at Tengboche and other monasteries.

In the Solukhumbu district at the lap of Mt Everest, edible mushrooms are an integral part of diet and an immense, overlooked part of the biodiversity of the Himalaya.

Now, a group of Nepali and American mycologists, scientists who study fungi, are identifying mushrooms on a first ever

eco-tourism trek to Everest Base Camp.

The three-week expedition that started out in mid-June was organised by International Mountain Trekking (IMT), and included an international team from Nepal, US and Mexico. Nepali mycologist and botanist Shiva Devkota and US mycologists Britt Bunyard and Thomas Roehl identified over 150 species of mushroom.

Thousands of trekkers and mountaineers make the journey to Everest

Base Camp annually, but few notice the hundreds of species of mushrooms growing alongside the trail.

“I had always seen mushrooms, but I was always in too big a hurry,” says IMT’s Richard Silber who hopes eco-tourism treks will allow the Everest region to be recognised for its biodiversity and the rich fungi populations beyond its mountains.

Silber worked with Devkota and Sonam Jangbu Sherpa also of IMT to construct the

The researchers believe they reidentified *Amanita innatifibrilla*, a species with limited data and unknown range, but once documented in southern China. The team identified the highest mushroom ever found at an altitude at 5,193m.

The researchers worked as they walked, identifying new mushrooms and explaining their discoveries to citizen-scientists.

“This is unlike what you see in any academic institution,” explained Silber during the trek, describing the way the mycologists worked in the field. “They are drawn to the mushrooms like a magnet. They glom onto it. It’s inspiring, really, it’s cool as hell.”

remote areas. If you want to get up here and do this kind of work, it’s a big and an important commitment,” he says.

For future projects and research, IMT hopes to work with local populations, including building a science centre with a donated house in Phortse. The main goal of the research is to help local communities benefit from the knowledge.

“We know through history that western scientists come in, do their work, and leave,” says Silber. “They do not engage or train locals, that’s not part of the research protocol. And it is a big missed opportunity in any community.” 🇳🇵

*Alak Tuladhar and Shiva Devkota helped with this report.*

The differences between an edible and deadly mushroom may be imperceptible. “If you don’t know what you are doing, stay away from *amonita*,” says American researcher Britt Bunyard. *Amonita* has an iconic white cap, red dots, and veil.

In 2021, Devkota and the Himalayan Climate and Science Institute partnered to create educational material for villagers, government agencies and clinics in Gandaki Province when mushroom foraging was more common during the pandemic.

In the Khumbu, mushroom poisoning is not so serious. Locals only collect ones that they know are safe, and even then slice it to see if it has a green or purplish tint, indicating toxins.

“Nepalis have been using mushrooms for a long time for medicinal purposes and for food. They are closely attached with folklore and taboos,” says Devkota who wants to step up awareness so more Nepalis can rely on this important and easily-stored food source.

**Sarah Watson**



An *Entoloma* sp. mushroom identified by researchers during the trek.

SARAH WATSON



EVENTS



**Labim Bazaar**  
Shop local at the Saturday Labim Bazaar and buy baked goods, meals, handicrafts and clothes from a variety of vendors.  
*9 July, 10am-8pm, Labim Mall, Pulchok, 9861119954*

**Comedy night**  
Join a special stand up comedy night and support Shree Nepal Rastriya Basic School in Mugu.  
*9 July, Utpala Café, Ticket: Rs1000, 9810700763*

**Art Exhibition**  
The 'Art | Tea | Nature Exhibition' showcases teaware ceramics by Gopal Kalapremi Shrestha. Read review on *Page 9*.  
*8-10 July, 5pm-8pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited*

**Healthcare Hackathon**  
Participate in the hackathon and discuss common health problems to come up with practical solutions.  
*30-31 July, The Entrance Café, 9852062403*



**Beginners yoga**  
Learn the fundamentals of yoga, with focus on asana and body alignments, in detail.  
*17-22 July, Sooriya Wellness and Yoga Centre, Lazimpat, 9818481972*

DINING



**Utpala Café**  
Located within a Buddhist monastery in Boudha, Utpala Café offers an all-vegetarian menu. They feature locally grown produce and their mushroom dishes are simply scrumptious.  
*Boudha, 9801978106*

MUSIC

**The Reckoning**  
Fasten your seatbelt, for the Reckoning is this weekend, with band performances from Screaming Marionette, Strangle, and many more.  
*9 July, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel (01) 5910126*



**Aadesh Poudel**  
Head over to The Interval for live music with Aadesh Poudel. Call for tickets.  
*9 July, The Interval, Darbar Marg, 9820107999*

**Simma Rai**  
Simma Rai and the Moonflowers, with special guest Sushant Ghimire, will be live at Beers N' Cheers this weekend. Call for tickets.  
*9 July, Tickets: Rs300-500, Beers N' Cheers, Jhamsikhel, (01) 5524860*



**Music classes**  
Sign up to learn Bansuri, Madal, Tabla and Western instruments like Piano, Guitar, Drum, Bass, Saxophone and Violin at Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory.  
*Jhamsikhel, (01)5443554, 9813556945*

**Tasty Trio**  
End the weekend with fun and music with the Tasty Trio. Call for event details.  
*10 July, Beers N' Cheers, Jhamsikhel, (01) 5524860*



**Kyubi's Kitchen**  
For customisable bowls of noodles, platters filled to the brim with dumplings, spicy noodles, kimbap, corn dogs, da-pow, and rooms paying homage to popular anime like *Tokyo Ghoul*, Kyubi's Kitchen is the place.  
*Jhamsikhel, 9810298050*

**Lhakpa's Chulo**  
Nepali *dal bhat*, Newari *khaja*, Swiss Rösti, Italian Risotto and Thai green curry — Lakpa's Chulo has you covered. Garlic chilli prawn at this cosy restaurant is to die for.  
*Jhamsikhel, (01) 5542986*

About Town

GETAWAY



**The Old Inn**  
This bed and breakfast place offers a cozy stay with a scenic view of Annapurna, and Langtang. Its traditional Newa architecture, the timber and brick design are reminiscent of the old Nepal Mandala history and traditions.  
*Bandipur, Tanahu, (065)520110*

**Shangri-La Village Resort**  
Perfect getaway 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*

**Heranya Yala**  
Get the feel of the authentic Newa heritage right in the middle of Maha Boudha and the Hiranya monastery. The hotel provides a complete tour package to immerse in the rich cultural heritage of Patan.  
*Gujibahal, Patan, (01) 5523168, 9851067168*

**Mystic Mountain**  
Situating amidst the forest of Nagarkot, the resort is exquisitely built using ultra modern designs and world-class comfort.  
*Nagarkot, (01) 6200646*



**Kasara Resort**  
Immerse yourself in the lush greenery at the heart of Chitwan's National Park. With activities for everyone, from cycling to wildlife viewing, Kasara Resort is fantastic for families.  
*Patihani, Chitwan National Park, Chitwan, (01)4437571*

**Avocado restaurant**  
Avocado restaurant provides all types of meals from vegetarian to non-vegetarian. Don't forget to try their fruits and nuts salad, and veg platters.  
*Baluwatar, next to the Chinese Embassy, (01) 4426130*



**Hankook Sarang**  
Enjoy a variety of Korean dishes like Tteokbokki, Gimban and Bibimbap. You can also try various Banchan (Korean side-dishes) with Korean BBQ.  
*10am-10pm, Tangal, Naxal (01)4421711*

WEEKEND WEATHER



**Monsoon Interval**  
After earlier than usual vigorous activity, the monsoon is now taking a breather as the main trough moves on into Pakistan, leaving a relatively drier area over Nepal. However, a new pulse is re-amassing itself over Odisha, and will make its presence felt over the Himalayan foothills next week, moving steadily westwards. There will be some convection cells manifesting themselves over the mountains, bringing short sharp showers to Kathmandu Valley on Saturday.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
28° 20°	27° 20°	28° 21°

AIR QUALITY INDEX



Kathmandu's Air Quality Index (AQI) as measured at the US Embassy monitoring station at Phora Darbar shows just how hazardous the air quality is at the city centre even in the monsoon. Although AQI levels on average are much better than in winter, there are pockets of concentrated pollutants in major street intersections. We have to remember that AQI is mainly a measurement of suspended particles and does not include toxic gases. As this map from @DisasterNepal shows, AQI in the mornings is worst around Bhaktapur because of the brick kilns there.



Imagine you suddenly inherit a large country house from a distant relative (an absolute blessing, am I right, especially as one tries to navigate the ghastly, unaffordable cost of accommodation?) — but then it is also a haunted house. On top of that, these are the numerous squabbling ghosts from the past, invisible and intangible to the living, who died on its grounds and want you out. Frankly, Allison and her husband Mike have no idea what they are about to be served when they move into the vast, crumbling house and decide to renovate it. But it sure does make for a delightfully daft comedy for all ages. Created by the minds behind the hit *Horrible Histories*, each episode of BBC's *Ghosts* is a romp: infectiously joyous, smart, and even life-affirming. Perfect for a weekend binge to drive the blues away. Stars Charlotte Ritchie, Kiell Smith-Bynoe, Martha Howe-Douglas, Mathew Baynton, Simon Farnaby, Lolly Adefope, Laurence Rickard, Ben Willbond, Katy Wix, Jim Howick and Yani Xander.

### 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 ।

कोभिड संक्रमणबाट बच्नका लागि खोपको प्रयोग गर्नु आवश्यक छ ।

कोभिड-१९ खोप

कोभिड-१९ खोप

Drink responsibly

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# EVERYONE'S CUP OF TEA

Gopal Kalapremi Shrestha's latest exhibition connects tea culture with the Nepali way of life



PHOTOS COURTESY: JUSTIN ZHAO



## ● Ashish Dhakal

More than a beverage, tea in Nepal is a greeting, an expression of care, a brew that binds society and ideologies. Not offering someone tea can be taken as a sign of indifference. Even hours of a day are counted in the number of cups of tea, mostly with milk and sugar.

The exhibition 'Art | Tea | Nature' by Gopal Kalapremi Shrestha at Siddhartha Art Gallery offers a artistic immersion into this चिया culture of Nepal.

There is a breeze of serenity welcoming you at the entrance to the exhibition meticulously curated by Hong Mei Liao, co-founder, tea specialist and the creator of Suiro Teas. The gallery itself is stripped to reveal



a carefully constructed boutique with walls lined with tall wooden shelves. In the middle is a large table with two benches on either side. The real centre of the exhibition is the collection of ceramics that decorate this little teashop. Visitors are transported away from the busy streets of Kathmandu into a garden with bonsai in each corner. Come, take a seat, relax and have a cup of tea.

Kalapremi Shrestha created the 251 pieces in collaboration with Suiro Teas. The unique sculptures reflect a long-standing tradition of ceramics in the region, and are categorised into four groups: Carbon, Melting, Concord and Feminine series, each distinguishable by its texture and story.

The Carbon series stands out with the black surface of the bowls and the pots. Shrestha was inspired by the Northern Black

Polish Ware (NBPW) — one of the oldest forms of pottery in Nepal from the Vedic period.

The dark, almost metallic sheen comes entirely from the firing technique and is not an added glaze. The labourious process which includes intense smoothening of the surface gives the bowls an otherworldly look, inviting the viewers to travel back in time — even to the life of the Buddha who Shrestha says most likely also held one of the NBPW bowls while meditating.

The nearby Melting series has teaware that resemble glaciers and the northern lights, with surfaces that are caught in a continuous running-down. Made with the Melting Glaze technique that requires about 8 layers of glazing, the flowing effects produced by the many layers jostle with one another as they flow down like lava. The effect gives the cups a brilliant glassy look, at once delicate and sharp.

The Feminine Series is perhaps the most spiritual among the pieces, with its roots in the phases of the moon, particularly the New Moon which signifies a cosmic occasion for change and rebirth. Inspired by the divine femininity, Shrestha turns clay into bold, interpretive shapes that represent the unbound strength and contrarian nature of womanhood — fluid, subtle, reflective.

The Concord Series, meanwhile, leads us to the rocks and minerals found in nature, to which clay itself is closely related. Concord — literally 'hearts together' from Latin *concoro* — is best found in the sweeping harmony between beauty and force in these ceramicware.

One is reminded of the mountains, large masses of rocks, and their vast lifespans. Almost petrified, the viewer stands before these works, compelled to confront the insignificance of the human ego and thoughtless drive for destruction in the grand scheme of nature.

Art | Tea | Nature is a transposition of that *concordia* to a larger scale, and an invitation to look at tea and drinking tea as part of a larger cultural expression to connect with ourselves, our minds and our hearts.

In ancient China, ceramics and the tea culture evolved in harmony, and even today tea drinking is accompanied by aesthetically dazzling *chawan*, as much meaningful totems as they are practical pieces of pottery.

There has not been such a steady correlation in Nepal. And, as Shrishya Pradhananga, co-founder of Suiro, says, despite the Nepali passion for tea, corresponding teawares have not been made in Nepal — but Shrestha and Suiro Teas want to change that.

The pieces at this poetic and occasionally dramatic exhibit are fully functional and on sale. Visitors find a successful meld of tradition and contemporary, among the colours and the clouds, with focus on place and history. After all, art is not just an idea but a process through which people can sip and drink from the vast beauty of life.

Ask any Nepali and they will echo Uncle Iroh from *Avatar: The Last Airbender*: "Sick of tea! That's like being sick of breathing." The exhibition attests to that. 🇳🇵

Art | Tea | Nature Exhibition  
By Gopal Kalapremi Shrestha  
Siddhartha Art Gallery  
Baber Mahal Revisited  
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# State-sponsored economic crisis

Nepal's politicians lack the focus and will to bring down inflation

● Ramesh Kumar

Urmila Kapali works as a seamstress in Kathmandu. She has seen her household expenses double in the past six months. Kapali's son has a job, but his earnings go towards his own family. This joint family of five in Kathmandu is struggling to survive from one day to the next.

Modnath Dhakal from Gorkha has been delivering newspapers door-to-door in Kathmandu for three decades. The rising cost of basic food items, combined with soaring monthly rent for his room, has become unaffordable.

"How are we going to survive?" asks the 70 years old.

Urmila Kapali has to borrow money daily to buy food. She says: "If this continues, I don't know how much longer we will stay afloat."

As the world emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a global crisis in the supply chain. Just as economies around the world were getting back to normal, Russia invaded Ukraine — setting off a chain reaction of food and fuel price inflation that has affected vulnerable countries the most.

In South Asia, Sri Lanka has officially declared bankruptcy and no longer has the foreign currency to buy any more petroleum. Elsewhere, Pakistan's foreign currency reserves have dwindled to cover only one month of imports.

India has been relatively unscathed, but even there the inflation rate rose to 7.8%, the highest in eight years. This is directly affecting the price of goods in Nepal.

Two-thirds of Nepal's imports are from India, most of which are petroleum products. Nepal and

India have a fixed exchange rate, which puts Nepal at a disadvantage every time the Indian rupee weakens against the US dollar, as it is happening now.

Nepali consumers are therefore bearing the brunt of rising prices for imported goods and services. Some experts argue that Nepal's monetary policies have been unable to rein in inflation because of the fixed INR-NPR exchange rate.

Nepal used to import corn, coriander, soybean oil and sunflower oil from Ukraine. The disruption of supply of these goods, along with the shortage of wheat and the global rise in fuel prices and transportation cost, has affected Nepal's own manufacturing sector.

Nepal's inflation rate had been increasing at an average of 4.6% for the last five years, but it nearly doubled to 8% in April. Average annual consumer prices are

expected to exceed that by the end of this year.

Experts predict that this year's budget will actually make matters worse. Says economist Keshav Acharya: "This year's expansionary budget as well as salary increases for government employees will put more pressure on the market and on consumers."

Nepal's 15<sup>th</sup> Five-year Plan had put 18.7% of the population below poverty line, a steady decline in the past 20 years. But now, the progress of the past decades is likely to be reversed.

The World Bank estimates that about 45% of Nepal's high-risk low-income groups live just above the poverty line. The rising cost of basic food and fuel once again puts them at risk of falling below.

According to the Household Survey of 2017, Nepal's poorest 10% spends more than two-thirds of the total expenditure on food, while the richest 10% only spends a quarter. A 2019 study by Min Bahadur Shrestha, former deputy chairman of the National Planning Commission, and Shashikant Chaudhary concluded that a 10% increase in the price of food will lead to a 4% increase in poverty.

Inflation has also affected middle-income families, reducing the value of savings as inflation rates soar higher than bank interest rates. Costs of goods from food items and construction material have shot up. Many of Nepal's ongoing infrastructure projects

have been hit by cost overruns and breached contracts.

This is not new. The cycle of high inflation has been going on for decades in Nepal, with an average of 8% increase over the last 40 years. The main reason for this is the 20% annual increase in credit to the private sector by banks and financial institutions over the past decades, which has led to a boost in imports and an increase in real estate prices rather than economic expansion and job creation.

Meanwhile, profits generated by the bank's credit flows have helped to enrich the wealthiest by increasing the value of their assets.

With few exceptions, inflation has overtaken monetary policy targets every year. This indicates that Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has failed in its responsibility to maintain price stability and curb lending to unproductive sectors.

Moreover, the central bank has increased the supply of money by printing new notes, which automatically increases the cost of goods and services, and decreases the value of money.

Although about two-thirds of Nepal's population is dependent on agriculture, farm yield is not sufficient for farmers to even feed themselves, let alone sell their produce to the market. The government's chronic failure to import chemical fertiliser means that harvest has declined.

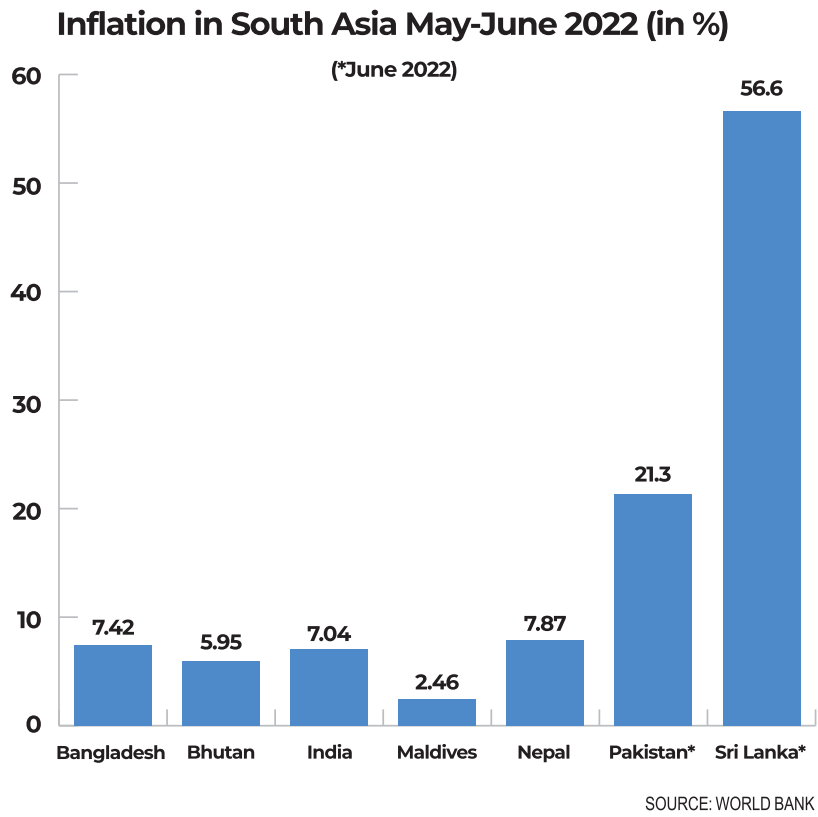
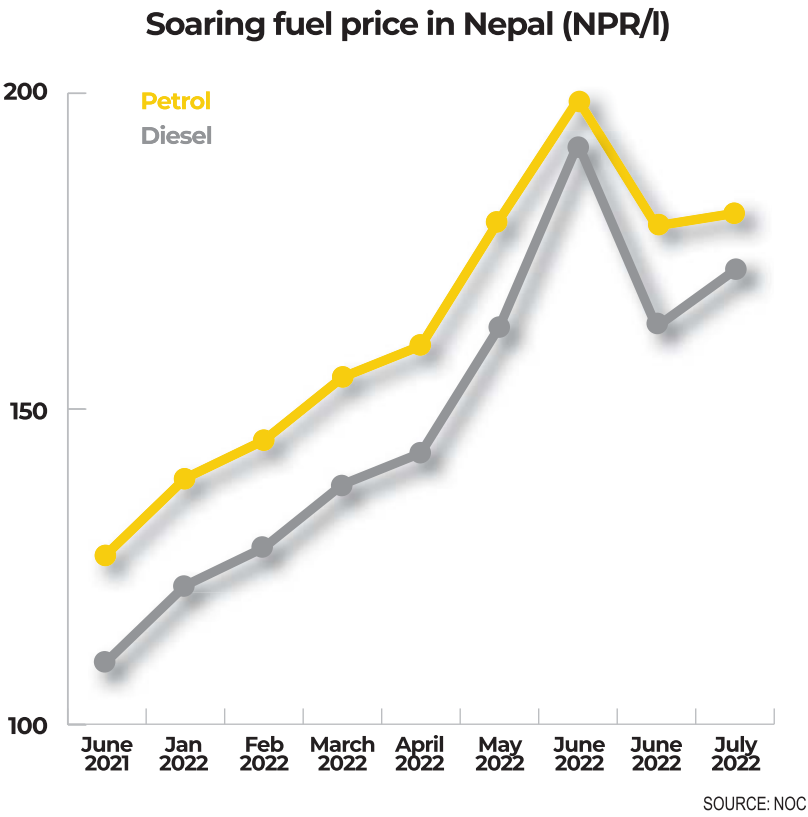
India has begun to control its export of wheat and sugar, and is



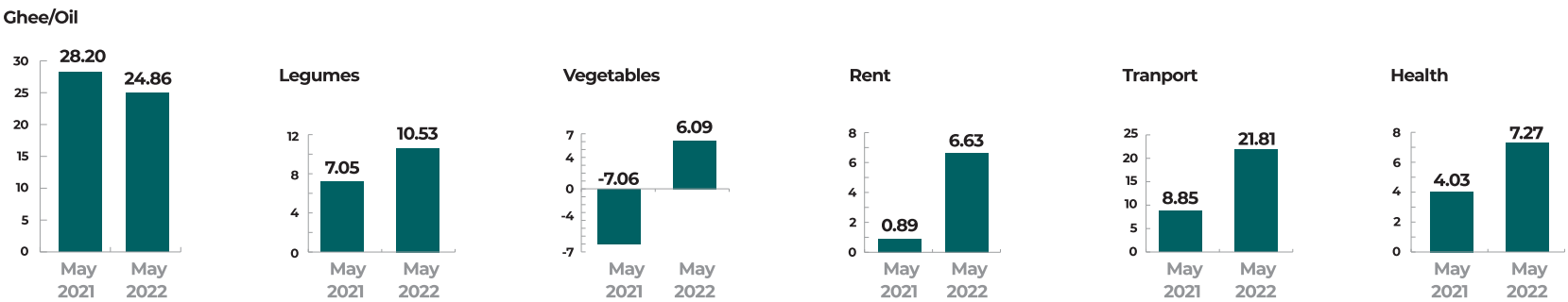


PHOTOS: MONIKA DEUPALA

said to be moving to control rice exports next. As of April 2022, Nepal imported rice worth Rs42 billion, sugar worth Rs4.7 billion, and wheat worth Rs6.32 billion from India. So far, New Delhi has spared Nepal from grain export bans, but that could easily change and spell disaster for Nepal. Indeed, the disruption of the supply chain has raised fears of a global food crisis, with the worst



### % increase in price of commodities over previous year



case scenario being famine in parts of Africa and Asia. The Global Hunger Index 2021 ranked Nepal 76<sup>th</sup> out of 116 countries in terms of food insecurity. UNICEF figures show that even before this crisis, 43% of children under the age of five in Nepal are undernourished. Meanwhile, Biswash Gauchan, executive director of the Center for Comprehensive Development Studies, argues that further inflation is inevitable because of the deteriorating international economic situation as Russia's war on Ukraine drags on and keeps fuel prices high. "It is normal for inflation rates to be higher in developing countries than in developed ones," explains

Siddharth Bhatt, deputy director of the NRB's Economic Research Department. "Inflation does not have to always be detrimental if it is in the 2-4% range." An NRB study concluded that an annual inflation rate of up to 6.5% will help boost Nepal's economy. Numbers beyond that would be harmful, says Nara Bahadur Thapa, a former NRB executive. Political intervention could help ease inflationary pressure, but Nepal's leaders and corporates have a patronage relationship as shown by the influence of some business leaders in drafting recently sacked Finance Minister Janardan Sharma's budget.

Indeed, the ministry has paid no attention to monitoring the supply and distribution of goods, and existing protocols are ineffective to right what is wrong in the Nepali market. So far, overseas remittances have saved Nepal from going the Sri Lanka way, but with imports soaring and shrinking foreign exchange reserves the signs are not good. Economist Keshav Acharya says that the government must immediately set up adequate stocks of food grains and essential food items across all provinces. "Making these necessary arrangements can save Nepalis not only from food price inflation in the

event of a shortage, but also from falling victims to black marketeers and food cartels," says Acharya. Amul Kaji Tuladhar of the Nepal Retailers' Association blames big producers and importers for the inflation because they have been hoarding food items. "If the government had a proper monitoring mechanism to curb speculation of wholesalers, consumers would not have suffered so much," he says. Says Keshav Acharya: "Nepal's poor are bearing the brunt of rising inflation, and things are spiraling out of control, all the while, the government and the opposition, are too distracted with their power games to take decisive action." 🇳🇵

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BARAHSINGHE

# Un-resident Nepalis

So, it seems Non-Resident Nepalis will now get the same facilities as Nepalis-in-residence. Which begs the question: if Nepalihood was such a sought after commodity, why did they leave Nepal in the first place?

But it is a rare and clever move by GONe to tap diaspora dollars by allowing ex-Nepalis to avail of the same privileges as citizens, as per the ancient pre-Vedic saying: "NRN is God". (We checked with the Gods, and they have no objections to the slogan.)

The Department of Immigration will open a special fast-track NRN Desk at Kathmandu Airport so that foreigners of Nepali origin don't have to queue up like real Nepalis just returning from four years of blood, sweat and tears in the Gulf.

If all goes according to plan, overseas Nepalis will now be able to buy property, pay the same air fares as locals, and violate traffic rules in Kathmandu that they would never dream of breaking in their adopted countries. We should now also allow alien Nepalis to vote, and declare their candidacies for the November federal elections. We should allow anyone to run for office, since Nepalis in Nepal have made such a mess of things. And if they win, NRNs can run Nepal on a Build Own Operate Transfer (BOOT) scheme for 25 years, provided they pay the requisite bribes.

Given the desire of un-resident Nepalis to return to Nepal, and the rate at which resident Nepalis are migrating to Australia, pretty soon there will be only two types of Nepalis in the world:

1. Non-resident Nepalis who want to permanently reside inside Nepal
2. Nepalis who want to permanently reside outside Nepal

That will balance things out, and why it makes perfect sense to remove distinctions and restrictions so that all Nepalis, whatever their country of domicile, will henceforth be treated as natives. And once they get elected to office, they can turn the Motherland around, and hand it back to us in an as-where-was condition.

NRN investors will also bring much-needed foreigner currencies to help Nepal's economy. However, there are certain sensitive sectors which GONe must exclude from outside investors to protect domestic industry: Defence, Aerospace, Breweries, Instant Noodles, Brick Kilns, Party Palaces, and Palm Oil import-export. These are industries where residing Nepalis have already staked their claim, and any further competition would benefit consumers and therefore cannot be permitted.

But certain exceptions can be made, and the government is now set to approve NRN applications to set up the following industries, and will assist in lining up venture capital soft-credit financing for them:

- White Elephant Technical University for Overseas Overseers  
"Make others drool by learning to build your own white elephant"
- Bow-Wow! Dog Yak Chew  
"It's my treat."
- Kinky Cheese Curl Industries  
"Nepal's Most-Nutritious Junk Food"
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