



Forgetting to remember

● Sahina Shrestha

Eighteen years after the end of Nepal's Maoist conflict, and eight years after the Supreme Court ruled that a law on transitional justice was inadequate, the coalition government last month finally registered a bill to amend it.

But human rights experts say the draft fulfilled neither the aspirations of victims nor international law. The proposed amendment still provides amnesty to perpetrators. "The draft bill fails to address their demands for truth and justice," says Raju Prasad Chapagai, a constitutional and human rights lawyer.

In its 2015 ruling, the Supreme Court ordered a revision to the Act to ensure that heinous crimes like rape, extrajudicial killings, torture and enforced disappearances could not be pardoned.

The draft bill does include the right to reparations and interim relief for victims, but activists say

it makes an absurd distinction between murder and brutal murder, and does not allow appeals to verdicts of the Special Court.

"War crimes cannot be selectively categorised to bypass criminal accountability," states Chapagai. "Also, the right to appeal is one of the minimum standards of human rights norms."

The draft bill requires the transitional justice commissions to make recommendations to the Attorney General's office to start prosecution, which will then forward the cases to a Special Court to come to a decision within six months. Legal experts say the six month interval is too short. Activists were also surprised that it was Minister for Law and Constitutional Affairs Govinda Sharma Bandi who registered the bill on 15 July. Bandi was a transitional justice activist who supported the cause of victims.

"It was wrong of the minister to hurriedly register the bill in the

middle of the night," says Lily Thapa of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). "Violations cannot be categorised, and heinous crimes must be investigated and tried."

Families also worry that with the Maoists now in the governing coalition with their erstwhile enemies the Nepali Congress, justice may never be served.

Former NHRC head Sushil Pyakurel says current coalition politics ahead of elections determined the timing of the draft bill. "Ever since entering politics in 2006, the Maoists have never had to admit to any wrongdoing or express remorse for their crimes. They have always thought of themselves as the victors," Pyakurel says.

In 2001, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba declared an emergency and mobilised the Royal Nepal Army to fight the underground Maoists led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

Today, Deuba is

prime minister again and his close coalition ally is Dahal. "Both Dahal and Deuba are trying to brush war crimes under the carpet, and that is what brings the two former enemies together," explains Pyakurel. "Neither wants to express remorse and admit that atrocities were committed."

Nepal's transitional justice process was supported by the Europeans and Americans, but with the weakening of the West and the rise of next door India and China, there is less pressure to follow through on transitional justice.

Says Pyakurel, "Having two powerful countries as neighbours is both a blessing and a curse. Neither are strong proponents of human rights, but Nepali victims of conflict need justice and closure."

 nepalitimes.com

Go online for Kanak Mani Dixit's detailed analysis of the draft amendment, *Transitional Injustice in Nepal*.

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FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT REVIVAL
EDITORIAL
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Foreign employment revival

The Covid pandemic had a major impact on Nepal's economic mainstay, overseas employment. Those stuck abroad in 2020 were unable to return to Nepal, even when they lost their jobs. Migrant workers in Nepal could not resume or start overseas employment. Many chose to stay on and hold on to jobs, even when wages and work hours were not ideal.

Laid-off workers did return home *en masse*, only to find that lofty promises of reintegration were just that: promises. Despite all this, remittances defied predictions.

In 2021, jobs abroad started reopening, even though migrants faced complicated, costly and confusing requirements related to vaccines and quarantines.

A year on, foreign employment has not just recovered but surpassed pre-pandemic levels. More than 630,000 Nepalis left for overseas jobs in the last fiscal year — a huge jump in labour approvals from 166,698 in 2021 and 368,433 in 2020.

Nearly 78% of the permits so far this year were for just three countries: Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE. And only 8% of them were obtained by female workers. The revival of overseas labour also brings relief to recruitment agencies whose business had been adversely impacted over the last two years.

Under the Korea Employment Permit Scheme and Israel caregiver G2G, workers underwent gruelling test and selection processes, but were unable to leave and were stranded for years. But by now, an estimated 6,000 of the 10,000 Nepalis have started EPS related employment in South Korea.

Demand for jobs in Malaysia has also rebounded, and recruiters say it is difficult to find seats on flights out and that fares are expensive.

A majority of Nepali workers continue to pay high fees for placements, but there are a few ethical recruitment initiatives that do not charge any fees. Recruiters attribute this to some multinationals in Malaysia that have come under global scrutiny and faced export bans due to evidence of forced labour conditions, including high recruitment fees.

With the World Cup in Qatar set to start in November, there are also some employers in the hospitality industry hiring workers at zero fees. High profile projects overseas with reputational and financial risks have created a demand for ethical sourcing.

Nepal has also announced that it will

allow recruitment of workers for short-term contracts in Qatar provided that the employer bears all the costs of recruitment. The labour approval process in Nepal requires that workers have a contract of at least 2 years, but given the surge in demand for hospitality workers in Qatar for the World Cup, the government has made an exception.

Other countries like the UK have also been spotlighted for high recruitment fees paid by Nepali workers in seasonal agriculture jobs. Despite that, employment in Britain is highly prized by Nepali workers.

Even with the revival of foreign employment after the pandemic, there is poor implementation of Nepal's policy on reintegration of returning workers due to government apathy. The newly issued reintegration guideline prioritises economic reintegration support in both wage- and self-employment while also prioritising a range of social reintegration support, including psychosocial counselling for those who need it.

Despite delays, the directive is a much needed step in the right direction. But as we have stressed before in this space, the real test lies in its implementation.

The most tragic cases of returning workers are those who die overseas, and are flown back to Kathmandu airport in coffins on the very flights that are taking more migrants abroad. There were 1,242 deaths of migrant workers overseas in the last fiscal year. The actual number

of deaths is probably higher given that this is only a tally of the families that received financial compensation for which valid labour approvals are required. The highest fatalities of Nepali workers in the past year were in Saudi Arabia (362), Malaysia (280), Qatar (239) and the UAE (208).

According to government records, the most common causes of death were chronic disease (427), suicide (140), traffic accidents (119), cardiac arrest (104) and 'natural' deaths (171). Many of these deaths go uncompensated by foreign employers, and many unexplained fatalities are seldom properly investigated.

This remains a dark reality of Nepal's overseas employment story, and many of these deaths were probably preventable. But as we have previously reported, Nepalis are dying abroad but also dying to work abroad. And therein lies our conundrum.



Remittances rebound after the pandemic, offering Nepal some respite from an economic crisis.

ONLINE PACKAGES



Join us on a video trek to two of Nepal's remotest districts. The West Seti gorge is Nepal's natural heritage and should be protected from future road-building. And trekking can help the local economy and promote social justice on the Gurja Himal trail. On *pages 6-7*, read the story of Mangal Krishna Lama who cycled across the great Himalayan Trail and of Pasang Lama Sherpa who has dedicated his life to building safer trails in the Everest.

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

People suffered a lot during the ten-year conflict ('Transitional injustice in Nepal', Kanak Mani Dixit, nepalitimes.com). The victims and their families are still suffering from the impact of atrocities and crimes committed by both the state and rebels. If proper transitional justice is not delivered, Nepal will never come out of this spiral of violence. Transitional justice may not be comfortable for PKD, Baburam and some generals, but Nepal strongly needs it for peace.

Pradeep Bhandari

- A must-read article for all Nepal-based diplomats, UN officials and NGOs who might feel TJ-fatigued. Reminds me of how their predecessors were lulled by the Maoists' progressive-sounding rhetoric and overlooked their use of extreme violence for political ends as elaborated in a chapter entitled "Deception & Delusion of the International Community" in my book *Lost in Transition*.

Kul Gautam

- What did you expect? Ex-Maoists presiding over the decision to cover up!

Stewie McLean

- A must read piece on transitional justice betrayal.

Keshab Sigdel

- With this faulty and manipulative Bill for its own citizens, how will Nepal stand to argue human rights for other countries in the human right council?

Bishow Parajuli

- We have not forgotten and will not forgive. We want justice for Nepal's conflict victims. We want accountability.

Raja Rajendra Timilsina

- Shameful for democracy. Brutality should be condemned and the perpetrator jailed by rule of law. I will keep my voice always with families like that of Suman Adhikari who have suffered for so long.

Ananda Poudel

- An important piece.

Sushant Singh

- A must read.

Omair Ahmad

WIDE HONEY

It is poisonous ('To bee or not to bee', Nabin Baral, #1123). There have been new cases of seizures.

Subodh Rana

- One of my uncles ended up in hospital not too many years ago.

Ashok Pokharel

- I've been eating Juas Cliff honey for a while. Never got sick (or high).

Maya_42

- An interesting update to the traditional collection of honey in Nepal.

Richard E Domis

- Control and set policies to protect this environment for sustainability.

Bhumi Limbu

NEPAL EXPORTS

Re-exporting commodities is not necessarily bad, just look at Singapore for example ('Nepal doesn't produce its 2 biggest export items', Ramesh Kumar, *page 12*). The questions to ask in Nepal's case are: is the export in convertible FX (like it is for the import leg), are prescribed duties being paid to the government on both sides, and is the income from the trade fairly taxed?

Krishna Joshi

- We need to check the quality of imported raw soybean and palm oil to conclude this. Small value addition and export are not necessarily harmful.

Samnibdev

NEPAL HYDROPOWER

It's all corruption and favouritism ('The politics of Nepal's water and hydroelectricity', Ramesh Kumar, #1122).

Naran Klyphree

MYANMAR EXECUTIONS

Immunity? For murder! Every example needs to be investigated before immunity ('Nepal activists protest Burma executions', #1123).

Alan Roadnight

- Where are these people when it comes to Dalit rights?

Shiriri Barakzai

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING



Off-road signs

by *The Ass*

Driving in rural Nepal is not for the fainthearted. So, to assist drivers, The Ass in the Backside weekly column introduces some new road signs and their explanations. If you missed them, check them out on nepalitimes.com

f Most reached and shared on Facebook

Morally bankrupt

Editorial

Janardan Sharma's triumphant return to the finance ministry may have looked like a victory to him, but it was a defeat for the rule of law in Nepal, and underscored just how entrenched impunity has become. Join the discussion online.

t Most popular on Twitter



To bee or not to bee

by *Nabin Baral*

In the past villagers in Lamjung's Naiche used to harvest up to 15 litres of wild honey from bee hives. Today, there is just a trickle. Read how a rise in demand for wild honey internationally has led to a steep decline in Himalayan giant honeybees, and questions about its toxicity. Full photo feature online.

66 Most commented



An anchor to Cambodia's past

by *Ashish Dhakal*

Like Kathmandu, Angkor Wat and other shrines in Cambodia, where Buddhist and Hindu iconographies co-exist, represent a faith moulded by a millennia of cultural history. Read more on our website.

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Collusion in the coalition to deny #justice to Nepal's conflict victims and let off perpetrators. Transitional injustice in #Nepal, @KanakManiDixit writes:



Shirley Blair @himlayanchilrdrn
Everyone in Nepal should read this.



Semanta Dahal @the3rdrbranch
Must read for you @UNHumanRights



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Monetary #policy needed to be tighter and #inflation reined in. To do that we need a #financeminister who is competent and transparent, not someone who has been whitewashed out of political expediency.



TrendAnalyst @NepseStock
We got a forest minister in the name of finance minister. Sad reality.



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
In case you had not noticed, driving in rural #Nepal is not for the fainthearted. So, to assist drivers, here are some new road signs and their explanations.#satire



Joe Niemczura, RN @ccnepal2013
I think I have been on every one of these roads.



WildYak @WildYak11
Excellent, very helpful.

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Unfriendly Fire

In February 2002, 17 young men from Jogimara in Dhading district working on an airport runway at Kalikot in western Nepal were killed by the Royal Nepal Army after being mistaken for Maoists.

This was just one of the many war atrocities committed by both the rebels and the state. Which is why the amendment to the Transitional Justice Bill is so hurtful and disrespectful to the families of victims for attempting to grant immunity to the perpetrators (more on page 1).

Excerpts from the report published 20 years ago this week in issue #105, 9-15 August 2002:

In late November, just when the Maoists broke the truce and attacked the army in Dang, Jogimara's poorest of the poor were getting ready to go to Kalikot. They went because they trusted the sub-contractor, Kumar Thapa. They knew him, he had never cheated them, and he was even willing to pay an advance. And they needed the money.

A month later, the Maoists attacked Mangalsen and Sanfegabar, killing 137 soldiers and policemen. The security forces went on a three-pronged hot pursuit northwards.



The fleeing Maoists infiltrated the construction workers in Kalikot, and fired on an army helicopter flying overhead.

On 24 February, an army attack force stormed the quarters, thinking the workers were Maoists. According to eye-witnesses, 17 workers from Dhading, seven from Sindhupalchok, and 11 local villagers were killed. Among the villagers were the ward chairman from the Nepali Congress, two Shermas from Solukhumbu who were working in Kalikot and two minors. All the Maoists had fled by the time the soldiers arrived.

The fact that the Maoists shot at the helicopter using the workers as human shields does not hide the fact that the attack in Kalikot was a colossal blunder. For the families of the dead in Dhading and Sindhupalchok, the wounds haven't healed with time. This is mainly because they never got the bodies of their loved ones. No one ever came to apologise or tell them that it was a mistake. And to make matters even worse, as far as the government is concerned, their sons and fathers were all "terrorists".

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

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Painting a bright future

A Nepali migrant in Bahrain finds a kind employer who encourages him to pursue his passion for art

I left for Bahrain to work as a caregiver in 2007, and it was only five years later that I revisited my passion for art.

Ever since I was a young boy in Nepal, I used to love drawing. I did not go to a school that encouraged arts and craft, but I would often find myself doodling pictures of flowers, or doing calligraphy whenever I got the chance.

It made me feel good to make these drawings, and as I grew up my passion for art increased. But I was not able to give it the time I wanted because life and responsibilities took over.

For the first five years after arriving in Bahrain, I was not able to devote much time to painting because I did not have time and my work was demanding. But once I started getting comfortable with my job and my employer, I could start taking out time for it.

Now in retrospect, it is as if the stars aligned to make sure the artist that was always in me was allowed to blossom, even though I had to leave Nepal for a job overseas.

As fate would have it, my employer happened to be an accomplished artist. What were the odds? It was providence. I admire his paintings a lot, and he is a genius who inspired me deeply. Having lived with him for over 15 years now, I have greatly benefited from his mentorship.

From the very outset, when my employer noticed I had a talent for drawing, he encouraged me and was generous with his time and guidance. He continues to give me constructive feedback and even buys me art supplies.

I stick to pencil drawings because my work does not lend



itself to oil. I have to take care of my employer all the time, and oil painting can be messy. The colour mixes can dry up in the palette if I leave it around for too long, and I would not feel good wasting paint. So I stick to pencil art which I quite enjoy. After 300-400 portraits, I think I have got better at it.

The nature of my work also allowed me to spend endless hours drawing. My employer had a stroke that has paralysed him, so needs assistance through day and night. But there are long hours when he is resting or sleeping and I have to be nearby looking after him but without any

real work to do.

And that is the time I spend making portraits of loved ones and of strangers I admire. Each portrait can take anywhere between 5 to 15 hours, and I lose myself in the work during that time. It is therapeutic, to just forget the world and disappear in my own creative space.

When I eventually return to Nepal, I want to take up art professionally as a full time engagement, and am grateful for the years in Bahrain where I was given the space to hone my skills, and have a mentor who encourages me to keep at it.

Taking care of the same person



DIASPORA
DIARIES 13

for years, especially when the family treats me like their own, has meant I have become rather fond of my employer. He is now 81. We tell each other stories of our vastly different backgrounds. He talks fondly of his childhood. He used to be a football player when he was young and loves to show me the scars on his knee from the time he hurt himself playing.

But he is not always cheerful, especially when he has to come to terms with his current reality. For someone as accomplished as he who has lived a successful life with a loving family, an artist who has made phenomenal oil paintings but can no longer paint, an engineer who is stuck in his wheelchair, he is often

despondent.

When he is especially down, he talks about how this is the end for him, how things will only get worse from here on, and that he is just waiting to die.


Over the past 15 years, I have grown attached to my employer. When I refer to myself as his servant, he scolds me and calls me his “son”. We have our disagreements, of course, and days when things do not go too well.

But that is the nature of all jobs: we all have our grievances and things could always be better. But I know that I have it fairly easy compared to many other Nepali workers, especially when they have to work in families that are not very nice to them.

Besides, my pay is fairly good and this has enabled me to build a house back in Nepal and improve my family's living standard. But most importantly, I have grown as an artist. On his 80th birthday, I drew a portrait of my employer (*pictured, left, inset*). It took me 15 hours to do it, and it was a surprise gift. I asked his wife to help me frame it. When I gifted it to him, he beamed with happiness and hugged me.

I am flying back to Bahrain after a two-month leave in Nepal. I think this will be the last time I renew my contract. But I say that every time, and I extend my contract for two more years. Whenever I have thought of returning home for good he asks me to stay on, and I oblige.

There are of course practical reasons, including having this stable job with a good employer who is almost a father figure, that make me want to continue working in Bahrain. There is also the attachment and the sense of responsibility I feel towards him having taken care of him for so many years.

I cannot just quit and leave when he is so fragile and dependent on me. How could I? 

Translated from a conversation in Nepali. Diaspora Diaries is a regular column in Nepali Times providing a platform for Nepalis to share their experiences of living, working, studying abroad. Authentic and original entries can be sent to editors@nepalitimes.com with 'Diaspora Diaries' in the subject line.

prabhu BANK

Arshiya Women's Golf

Rekha Ghimire has become the winner of the First Open Women's Golf tournament in the senior category and was awarded with a free roundtrip ticket to Istanbul, Türkiye sponsored by Turkish Airlines. The prize was handed over



by Turkish Airlines Kathmandu General Manager, Abdullah Tuncer Kececi. The tournament held at the Royal Nepal Golf Club on 2 July 2022 was organised by captain Arshiya Banu, Nepal's number one Golfer Pratima Sherpa and event coordinator Sareeta Shri Gyawali. There were 50 competitors in senior and junior categories with the former playing 18 holes and latter 9.

German-Nepal Ties

Barbara Schaefer, Head of Division Policy Issues of Cooperation with Asia, South Asia at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), was on a three-day visit to Nepal last week. Schaefer had consultations with high-level representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, Ministry of Health and Population, Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation, Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, and Ministry of Finance on strengthening bilateral development cooperation between Germany and Nepal.

Ncell Youth SIM

Ncell has relaunched its 'Sahi Yol Power SIM' targeting the youth, which comes with Rs20 main balance, 200MB bonus data, 20 minutes of net talk time for 7 days for Rs97. Customers can enjoy free access to Instagram, Mero School, Ramailo Games and Hungama Music for 30 days after activation.

Super Dancer

DishHome Fibernet is the Internet partner for the show 'Super Dancers Nepal', a franchise product from India. Children from 4-14 will be participating in the dance reality show from Kathmandu, Pokhara, Hetauda, Butwal and Nepalganj.

Lectro E-cycle

Lectro E-cycles manufactured by Hero has been launched in Nepal. The cycle comes with a



brushless DC electric motor, Li-ion battery, IP rating and two-year warranty. 11 models of these Indian bikes are available all over Nepal.



Wingle in Nepal

GWN Nepal has launched the pick-up Wingle 5 in Nepal. The Chinese truck comes with a 2.0L turbo diesel engine, low fuel consumption feature and rear differential lock in three different colours.

IME Scholarships

Global IME bank under its CSR initiative has provided scholarships to 35 female students from community



and government schools. The scholarship intends to help the students to complete their 12th grade.

Nabil in Kankai

Nabil Bank conducted digital banking and financial access enhancement program in Kankai Municipality that saw participation of 150 young and women entrepreneurs.

Nexon EV is 1

Tata Motors and Sipradi are celebrating the first anniversary of the launch of the Tata Nexon EV, Nepal's best-selling battery-operated car with more than 2,000 bookings. The Nexon EV comes with both fast and slow charging modes, has low operational costs, and features ZIPTRON technology. The company has also set up more than 120 charging points in various public areas. Sipradi Trading has also launched 'Loconav' in Nepal, an India-based startup that helps drivers and fleet owners run their vehicles more efficiently and save money.



Tourists return

Nepal saw a total of 282,122 tourists in the first seven months of 2022. However, the last three months has seen a steady decline with 44,462 new visitors in July, of which 17,299 were from India and 1,593 from China. April saw the highest number of tourists at 58,348.

Hitachi New In

Hitachi has released four new household items in Nepal: a front load washing machine, cordless stick vacuum cleaner, microwave and French bottom refrigerator.

Migration not a wish, but necessity for Nepalis

New empirical study on how overseas employment has affected workers, returnees and their families

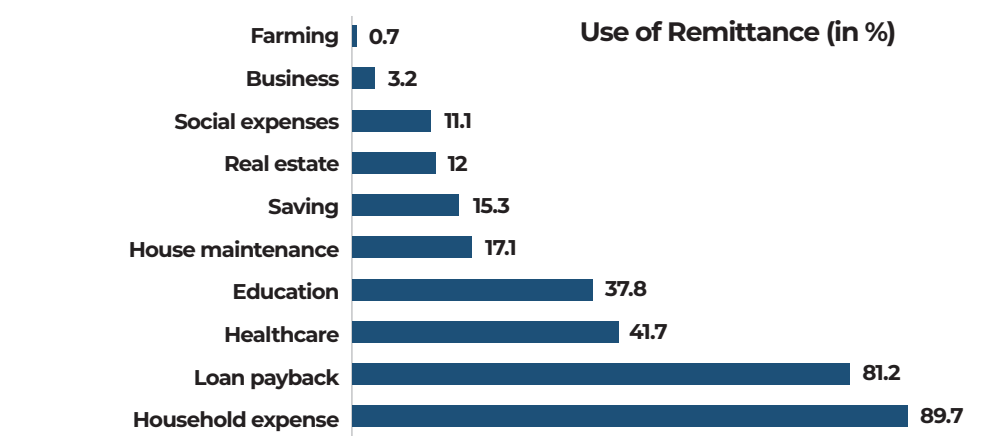
● Shristi Karki

- In January 2020, a 28-year-old Nepali man left home to work in Sharjah. Five months later, his family would learn through their son's coworker that he was dead from an apparent suicide. The family suspected foul play, but there were no answers.
- A man from Kanchanpur returned after working for four years in Malaysia to set up a jaggery factory and livestock farm. He stood for local elections in 2017 and won.
- In Malaysia, a worker died by suicide, leaving behind family in Nepal that included a two-year-old daughter. His family waited two months to get his body back.
- A woman in Kalaiya lost contact with her husband who went to Malaysia. She has heard he now lives with another woman.
- In Gulmi, a 47-year-old woman who worked as a caretaker for a family in Dubai for 10 years now runs a successful meat and poultry shop back home.

These testimonies from migrant workers are contained in a new report *Research Studies on Labour Migration in Nepal 2022* by Blitz Media and Humanity United.

The report explores the socio-economic impact of labour migration, and the key role that the Local Governance Operation Act 2017 needs to perform for Nepal's migrant labourers. The study surveyed more than 4,000 migrants from 21 districts, three from each province, across Nepal. It interviewed families and communities left behind as well as local leaders.

Since 2008, the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) has issued labour permits to more than 4 million Nepali migrant workers, excluding those working in India.



Nor does it include workers who travel overseas through backchannels. But the 2021 census puts the overseas Nepali population at only 2.1 million. Malaysia, Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia are primary destinations for workers.

Respondents said they had little to no idea on how to ensure safe foreign employment, and there were few policies and guidelines to direct them. On average they paid Rs103,888 in processing fees to recruiters and went on to earn little more than Rs25,000 monthly.

For most respondents, the first-time destination was Malaysia and average overseas stay for both men and women was about three years. Regular work hours per day for most was eight hours, while some said they had worked for up to 16 hours daily.

The survey has also looked at the impact on families of overseas workers. "Many problems arose after my husband left," a female respondent from Baitadi said. "It became difficult for us to understand each other's situations. I couldn't see my husband's pain, and he couldn't see mine."

Many female spouses developed mental health issues triggered by abuse from in-laws and the community, and in some cases were sexually assaulted by family members. "My neighbour lives with her in-laws, but the house isn't safe for her," a female participant says. "Six years since her husband left many unpleasant things have happened to her. Her brother-in-law raped her, but no one has spoken out or helped her."

In cases where women migrated for work, household chores like cooking, cleaning and caretaking were found to have been deferred to other women in the household, although some men said that they had assumed those responsibilities after their wives left.

Nearly 90% of families used remittance for household expenses, 81.2% to pay off loans, and only 15.3% responded they put some money aside as savings.

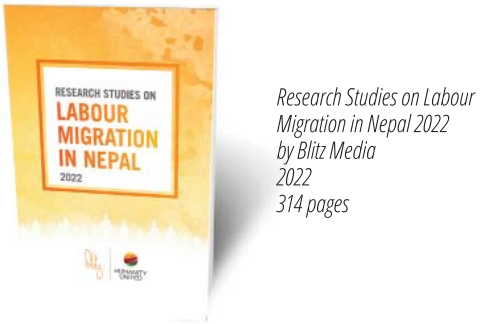
The report has recommendations for the local governments: local-level record collection of people going for foreign employment, financial literacy and skills training for the foreign labour force, social

reintegration of migrant returnees and the use of knowledge, skills and entrepreneurship gained from foreign employment.

Most local governments maintained information on migrants overseas, but the data collection process was neither uniform nor standardised. "Unfortunately, we do not know a whole lot about current migrants," the chief of Jhapa's Gauriganj Rural Municipality said. "We want to get details regarding where migrants want to go, what skills they gain before migrating, and which recruitment agencies they use and why. If we can collect such data ... we can ensure safer migration."

The report highlights struggles that returnees face in Nepal in the absence of proper opportunities, incentives or infrastructure to engage in the workforce which is why many have re-migrated. Respondents cited 'discrepancies in salary payment' (61.5%), 'unable to do anything after returning' (41.3%), 'skill acquired is not useful in the returning country' (39.4%) and the 'need to start from zero' (37.4%) as reasons to re-migrate.

The report concludes on a solemn note: 'For most Nepalis, foreign employment is a compulsion rather than a desire... to meet the financial requirements but also the improvement in the overall livelihood.'







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Peddling the Great Himalayan Trail

Mountain racer becomes the first to solo cycle Nepal's mountains from east to west

● Sarah Watson

The Great Himalayan Trail (GHT) is the most epic hiking route in the world. It is challenging enough to trek the 1,700km from Kanchenjunga to Humla, but an intrepid Nepali has done it on a mountain bicycle.

Mangal Lama started out on 1 April, and took 88 days to solo cycle the Nepal section of the GHT, a part of the larger trans-Himalayan arc extending right across China, Bhutan, Nepal, India to Pakistan.

Ten years after famous Everesteer Apa Sherpa and his team did the Climate Smart Celebrity Trek, Lama wanted to show that it could also be done by mountain bike. "I wanted to test myself physically and mentally," says Lama. "The GHT is in itself very challenging, but I wanted an extra element of excitement."

The main hurdles were sections that were not suitable for bicycles. For example in eastern Nepal, Lama carried his bike for up to seven hours at a time. He got sick and had fever in the Everest region, had to change his route because the monsoon caught up with him, and he lost his way in the wilderness



several times.

The biggest challenge was crossing the 6,190m West Col in the Makalu-Barun National Park where Lama had to carry the wheels on his back and the frame on his shoulders. "That was really hard, because I also had full climbing gear, crampons, harness, rope, everything," Lama says.

While crossing the Tashi Labtsa pass into Rolwaling, a porter slipped. He was uninjured, but a bag with his tent, sleeping bag, food, gas, shoes, and spare parts fell into a crevasse. "I lost everything and I still had a long way to go," recalls Lama. "I had some thoughts about why am I doing all this hard work if people will not even



appreciate it."

Lama's venture, titled GHT on Wheels, came with a larger aim — to improve education and showcase under-appreciated areas of Nepal for domestic and foreign tourists both for trekking and mountain biking to raise local incomes. "I want to promote trails other than Everest," Lama says. "Nepal has so many little known places, cultures, and so many of them spiritual."

Lama was born to a farming family in Kakani and as a child, did not know how to cycle. But having worked for 17 years in a cycle repair shop in Kathmandu he got interested in mountain biking. He took part in several races, and now works as an expert guide on Nepal's



ALL PHOTOS: MANGAL LAMA

plentiful singletracks in Manang, Mustang, Jumla, and Dolpo. The tourism collapse due to the pandemic got Lama thinking about the GHT adventure.

The Trail passes through some of the remotest and most under-served districts in Nepal, and Lama believes that promoting the route for mountain bikers will increase their income and improve livelihoods. Lama's venture, titled GHT on Wheels, partnered with Vision Dolpo to raise funds for Early Childhood Development Centres. He organised all the logistics, including food and supplies, himself. He relied on GoFundMe crowdsourcing, support from friends, and

equipment company sponsors.

Even as he encourages more mountain biking tourism in Nepal, however, he warns international travellers to find well-recommended guides. Unlike trekking, mountain biking requires more logistical planning, safety considerations, gear, and understanding of appropriate singletrack trails.

"For the GHT, you have to have a combination of time, money, and passion. If you have the time, but don't have the money, you can't. You need all three," Lama explains.

Many people in Nepal and around the world followed Mangal Lama's adventures on social media with thousands tracking his progress on the GHT on Wheels website and Instagram.

Lama is also working on a book and documentary film about his groundbreaking journey that includes spiritual lessons he learnt as he rode past some of the most tranquil and scenic places in the world. On his trip, Lama also discovered that Nepal is neither small, nor poor as he had been led to believe. After three months traversing the country, he says Nepal is vast. And except for some materially poor regions, living standards are improving and the people are rich in hospitality.

"Nepalis themselves say Nepal is a poor country, and it is true that our people are not rich in the conventional sense, but they offered me food even when they had little for themselves," he says. "Spiritually and culturally Nepalis are very rich. Go to the mountains, feel free, and come back with new ways of looking at life and the world." 🇳🇵



PHOTOS: DUSTYNEP

▲ Pasang Lama Sherpa with his donation box on the Everest Trail.

The trail builder of Everest

A life dedicated to constructing safer paths for locals and tourists below the world's highest mountain

The name Sherpa has become synonymous all over the world with mountaineering guides, but here in the villages below Mt Everest Pasang Lama Sherpa is better known as someone who has dedicated his life not for fixing ropes on Mt Everest, but for maintaining the walking trails.

The 78-year-old Khumjung native is no engineer, but his lifelong work has made the Everest trail safer for thousands of trekkers and villagers below the world's highest mountain.

Pasang Lama is a familiar face as he sits by the trail every day with a blue box for donations from trekkers, and a register to note down names and amounts. It is like a voluntary toll booth, and the money goes to the trail's upkeep.

People here affectionately call him Lama Seru, and the man with the wizened face and glasses, began his career in the trekking industry at age 18. He was appalled by the dismal condition of the trails, and was determined to make them less dangerous for porters like himself.

He quit portering and in the 1960s started maintaining trails with his wife Lakpa Yangji around Dingboche village which is situated at an altitude of 4,410m. Eventually, he rallied a team to widen other paths along the steep slopes to connect villages in Upper Khumbu for the benefit of locals.

As trekking and mountaineering took off, footfalls on the trails grew, and with it the need to maintain and repair the dangerous sections. For Pasang Lama and his wife, the only reward is a sense of personal fulfillment that comes from providing a public service.

"I have revived trails in two wards here," says Pasang Lama with pride. "Everyone is happy to walk along these paths because we have cleared all the bushes and thorns."

After the Sagarmatha National Park was established in 1976, Pasang Lama worked

with it to streamline the paths. Finally in 2012, the Himalayan Trust set up by Edmund Hillary, recognised the couple for their years of service to the community.

The trail from Namche to Tengboche is now a wide two-way path easily navigable for trekkers and yak trains, despite dangerous cliff drops. During the pandemic lockdown, locals also laid down steps and railings along the steeper sections.

For now, Pasang Lama sits by the trail with his donation box and a sign (*pictured, above*) that reads: 'Dear visitors, this man Pasang Lama Sherpa has been doing a social work to build, mend & maintain the main trail to Everest Base Camp with high spirit and solemn determination... Visitors are requested to make a small donation to support and encourage this devoted man to continue his sacred work, so that all the inhabitants and visitors in this area will be benefited on the days ahead.'

North of the airfield at Lukla, most supplies reach the higher villages by porters carrying heavy loads, or on mule and yak trains. Namche is the largest town on the trekking route, but above the popular tourist hub there are only smaller seasonal settlements.

There are plans to extend the roadway from Phaplu to Lukla, which is currently only accessible through the Tenzing-Hillary Airport or on foot. While there is some support for the road, others have argued that the road might disrupt the local environment if it connects the national park.

The lack of a motorable road means that local people have to pay more for basic items. A Rs1,800 cooking gas cylinder in Kathmandu may cost up to Rs15,000 in Upper Khumbu due to the additional transport cost. Helicopters can reach the higher villages above Namche, but that makes the items even costlier.

In 2017, the construction of a new bridge over the Dudh Kosi River at Orlang Ghat raised hopes for easier vehicle access to the Solukhumbu.

The road is being extended to Chaurikharka, a village at 2,800m in altitude, near Lukla, and a day's walk down from Namche. For now, most locals including Pasang Lama Sherpa are in favour of the better connectivity that the motorable road will bring, and he sometimes walks down to watch the excavators in action.

He says, "With the new road, my family members from the city can visit me whenever they want." 🇳🇵

Sarah Watson in Solukhumbu



EVENTS



Le Sherpa Market
Shop local at the Saturday Le Sherpa Market and buy baked goods, meals, handicrafts and clothes.
30 July, 8am-12.30pm, Le Sherpa, Maharajgunj

Ghintang Ghisi Twak
Head over to witness the Ghintang Ghisi Twak dance that is performed only once a year in Bhaktapur.
19 august, 1pm onwards, Bhaktapur Optical, Bhaktapur



Wheat straw art workshop
A two-day workshop to learn how to make art from wheat and straw. Call for more details.
12-13 August, Mitra Park Chabahil, 9849729584

Pride Gaijatra celebration
The 19th Pride and Gai Jatra celebration by the Blue Diamond Society is taking place this Friday with a parade and open concert.
12 August, Karmachari Sanchayakosh, 1pm onwards

Durga devi
Watch the engaging play 'Durga Devi' about a mother fighting against the injustice done to her daughter.
12-15 August, 5pm onwards, Shilpee Theatre, Battisputali

DINING



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. Place orders online.
(01) 4416560 (01) 4411886

MUSIC

Dandylions
Join the band Dandylions for a fun musical Friday night.
12 August, 7pm onwards, Bikalpa Art Center



Jhikey and the Company
This weekend listen to the punk rock band Jhikey and the Company, with special guest performance by Spit Strings.
13 August, Beers N' Cheers, Jhamsikhel

The Axe Band
Enjoy a fun stand-up comedy show and live performance by the Axe Band.
13 August, 4pm onwards, The Urban Hub, Pulchowk

Karaoke night
Enjoy live music, or sing and perform your own jams at the karaoke night in Vintage de Home.
12 August, 6pm-9pm, Vintage De Home, Jawalakhel



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

Doko Deli
Look at the menu on Facebook and take a pick from a variety of appetisers, pizzas and pasta. The Mustang ko Piro Aloo is a must-try.
9869188070, 9848997461



Akari & Koko
Vivanta Hotel's Asian-inspired fusion restaurant and bar serves an impressive assortment of East Asian dishes with modern twists. Don't forget their sushi and pad thai.
Jhamsikhel (01) 5525002

About Town

GETAWAY



Raniban Retreat
Located on a hillock of Raniban forest, this environment-friendly boutique hotel offers a spectacular view of the mountains and the green around.
Pokhara (01) 5185435

Barahi Jungle Lodge
The first eco-jungle lodge in Chitwan directly overlooks Chitwan National Park. Enjoy the relaxing spa, the boutique guest rooms, individual and two-in-one private villas, including a suite with a private swimming pool.
Megauli, Chitwan (01) 4429820



Gokarna Forest Resort
The resort is a paradise, thick with centuries-old trees rustling to the tunes of nature, and great restaurants for fine dining. Golf, anyone?
Gokarna (01) 4450002

Milla Guesthouse
If you prefer the quiet and admire a mix of the old and new, This place has you covered: not too far from the city, yet worlds apart.
Bhaktapur, 9851024137

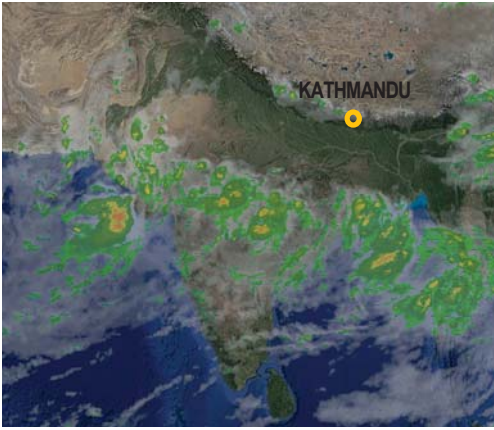
Soaltee Westend Premier
Located in the green plains of Nepalganj, this lovely resort is one of Nepal's more energy efficient and eco-friendly getaways.
Nepalganj (081) 551145



Fire and Ice
One of the first pizzerias in Kathmandu, Fire and Ice offers genuine Napolitana pizza and dozens of specialty dishes to choose from. Try the paesane, a combination of mozzarella, spinach, courgette and bacon.
Thamel (01) 4250210

Mitraan Da Dhaba
In the mood for Indian? Head over to Mitraan and try their delicious harabhara kebab, chicken Qorma and a menu of Punjabi dishes.
Harihar bhawan (01) 5539845

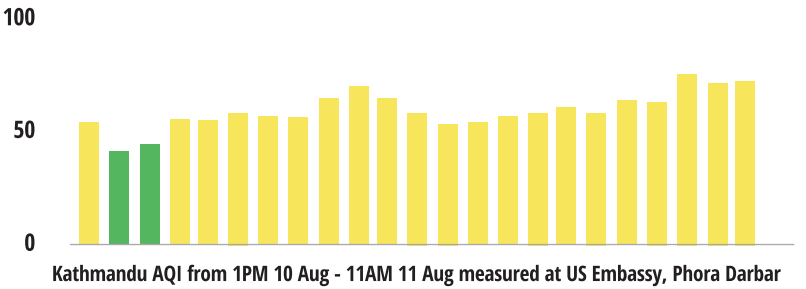
WEEKEND WEATHER



Another Monsoon Pause
We are between pulses in the monsoon, and almost the entire country experienced a lull in the rains this week. The rain that will fall Friday and Saturday will be from localised convection, but a trough currently over the Bay of Bengal will have arrived with moisture-laden clouds over central and eastern Nepal by Sunday, bringing yet more heavy rainfall that will persist into next week.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
29° 20°	28° 21°	28° 21°

AIR QUALITY INDEX



As expected, the Air Quality Index (AQI) in Kathmandu Valley worsened as the rains flagged this week. The wind this time of year is from the east, which means the dirty air from brick kilns on the eastern edge of the Valley ultimately blows over the city core, adding to the suspended particles. The first step in cleaning up the Valley air before winter is relocation of the brick factories, then strict enforcement of green emission stickers on cars. In the longer term, reliable and clean public transport. Next time, we will talk about the other kind of air pollution: stink from uncollected garbage.

OUR PICK

Dreams do not die, and after almost two decades of development hell, Neil Gaiman's comic book classic *The Sandman* is finally on screen. The show brings to life the story of Dream of the Endless, Morpheus, who is captured in an occult ritual in 1916. After being held captive for 106 years, he escapes and sets out to restore order to his realm, The Dreaming, without which all humanity will cease to exist. In what is perhaps one of the most faithful small-screen comic book adaptations ever, the 10-episode series is a transportive and thrilling ride, playful at times, full of magic, horror and exceptional storytelling. The all-star cast is led by Tom Sturridge, Boyd Holbrook, Vivienne Acheampong, Patton Oswalt, Gwendoline Christie, Kirby Howell-Baptiste, Sanjeev Bhaskar, Asim Chaudhry, Stephen Fry and David Thewlis.



गर्मी एवं वर्षात्को समयमा लामखुट्टेबाट सर्ने रोगबाट बचौं

औलो (मलेरिया), डेंगी ज्वरो, कालाजार, जापानिज इन्सेफलाइटिस जस्ता संक्रामक रोग लामखुट्टेको टोकाइबाट हुने गर्दछ ।

यसबाट बच्न:

- झुल लगाएर सुत्ने,
- पूरा शरीर ढाक्ने गरी लुगा लगाउने,
- शरीरका खुला अङ्गमा लामखुट्टेको टोकाइबाट बच्ने मलम लगाउने,
- घरको झयाल तथा ढोकामा जाली राख्ने,
- घर वरिपरि, बगैँचा र सार्वजनिक स्थानमा पानी जम्न नदिने र खाल्डाखुल्डी पुर्ने,
- ढल, नाला खुला नराख्ने,
- पोखरी, दह तथा नालाहरूमा लामखुट्टेको लार्वा खाने माछा पाल्ने,
- सुँगुर, बँगुर, हाँस, घोडा जस्ता पशुपक्षीहरू व्यवस्थित ढंगले पाल्ने,
- मानिस बस्ने घरभन्दा पशुपक्षीको खोर टाढा राख्ने ।



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड



Echoes of myth and monument

Exhibition at Taragaon Museum recounts the origin of next door Boudhanath in a symbolic reprise

- **Ashish Dhakal**

Among the many legends about the Boudhanath Stupa, one involves a poor poultry keeper Jhazima and buffalo skin.

Boudhanatha is in fact the Sanskritised Panchayat-era renaming of the *chaitya* which was originally called Khasti Mahachaitya ('great stupa of the dew drops'). However, the *chaitya* had another name too according to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition — the Great Jarung Kashor ('Let it be done, Slip of the tongue') Stupa.

Many years before the birth of the Shakyamuni Buddha, Jhazima lived with her four sons in the village where Boudha sits today. After the demise of the Kasyapa Buddha, she petitioned the king to grant her land the size of a buffalo's skin to build a stupa and inter the Buddha's remains. The king, thinking it would be a measly piece of land, gave her permission.

However, Jhazima carefully cut the buffalo skin in a long strip, like a rope, and circumscribed a larger area for her construction project.

This symbol of devotion quickly took on a political significance, as the wealthy people of the country were humbled by Jhazima's faithful act.

If a poor woman like her can build a stupa of such magnificence, they thought, they would have to build shrines equal to the mountains.

“Stop the building,” they



ROSHAN MISHRA

implored the king: "If this construction continues, then each and every one of us will be harshly criticised."

But the king would not hear of it. "This poor, single poultry-woman, established her four sons born of four fathers as respectable householders. Not only that, with her remaining wealth she builds a stupa such as this. I thought this to be truly amazing, and so the words 'Let it be done' (*jarung*) slipped from my tongue (*kashor*). Kings speak but once!" he said in response.

This charming and extraordinary story is the subject of *Object in Focus #5: Invocation* at the Taragano Museum, next door to Boudhnath itself, by contemporary visual artists Koka Vashakidze from Georgia and Alicia Junissaliyeva from Kazakhstan and curated by Roshan Mishra.

At the centre of the room is a dark-coloured rope-like object spiraling – almost like a dizzying solar system, with what looks like a vague triangle standing in for the Sun – and surrounded by a rectangle of red ropes.

But as one walks around, observes the work with an unfaltering gaze, the circle of the base quickly stands out. Then, with a little change in the angle, one can imagine a dome rising from it, followed by the ever-watching eyes and the tall finial.

Here is the Boudhanath Stupa, translated, stripped down to its backbone – like a cosmic bridge, bringing together the myth and the monument.

This may not be entirely conspicuous at first, but when one realises that the whorl is in fact real buffalo skin, the pieces fall in place.

The artists spent several weeks in Boudhanath, measuring the circumference of the stupa. Since animal skin is not permitted inside, they used the red rope for the purpose. People would come and watch them at work, wondering what they were up to.


Jhazima defied expectation, says Vashakidze. And instead of just putting the skin on the ground, she cut it in narrow strips to cover more area, demonstrating her boundless imagination. "And the king in the end has to say, 'No, she has to continue making the stupa'," he adds.

Vashakidze, whose extensive contemporary body of work ranges from site-specific pieces to media installations, sees this as the moment when the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, are equal – because one woman

stood up against the system and
built an unprecedented monument.

The artwork, in this sense, is an invocation to memory, to history and to Jhazima. Along with Junissaliyeva's experience in energy exploration, the trio of the artists and curator Mishra has created a poignant piece that is contemplative and dramatic, reminding us that despite the overwhelming restrictions – political, social, professional – and widespread spiritual lethargy around us, we can still create what we want to.

Says Mishra: "I think it is a brilliant notion to sit with one object, one narrative." This has much to do with the fact that the viewers can spend time with this echo from the past under an extended spell.

Leaving the exhibition, one is filled with a striking desire to visit the Boudhanath Stupa, to compare, to recall. There too, prayers and invocations bounce off the white dome and fill the air with sweet music, the voices of good will promising to echo into the future – in the same way that the exhibition is an echo itself, of the enduring legacy of Jhazima. 

The artwork will also travel to the Tbilisi Triennial in Georgia in October 2022.

Object in focus #5: Invocation
By Koka Vashakidze and Alicia Junissaliyeva
Curated by Roshan Mishra
Taragaon Museum,
Boudha
Open 10:00am – 5:00pm
Till 12 August 2022.

KTM UNCORKED

Fall 2022

Sugar KTM
Thamel
12th August

Tamarind Restro & Bar
Jhamsikhel
16th August

Barc
Tripureshwor
19th August

BLACKBIRD
Black Bird
Thamel
26th August

Nomad Hotel
Lazimpat
26th August

Vivi Kathmandu
Thamel
26th August

Kyampa - The Social Hub
Sanepa
27th August

Roadhouse Cafe
Naxal
27th August

Sky Park
Bhaisepati
2nd September

Evoke
Jhamsikhel
2nd September

Pauline's Rooftop
Pani Pokhari
3rd September

Ambassador Hotel
Lazimpat
3rd September

Supper Club
Thamel
9th September

Cabana by Sky High
Lazimpat
10th September

Calm
Naxal
10th September

Oskar
Lazimpat
20th September

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SHIVA BASKOTA

Climate-smarter Himalayan infrastructure

Nepal risks losing billions in investment in hydropower unless projects plan for climate risk

● Sonia Awale

In June 2021, a massive debris flow on the Melamchi River killed at least 30 people, submerged settlements, and nearly destroyed Nepal's biggest infrastructure project to supply water to Kathmandu.

Scientists blamed the climate crisis. A wall of mud raced down the river after unprecedented rainfall at the beginning of the monsoon on glacial deposits left by melted ice.

Boulders and mud paste buried the headworks of Melamchi Water Supply Project under 20m of debris, resulting in damage worth more than Rs2 billion. Timely closure of the gate saved the project's 26km tunnel to Kathmandu from irreversible damage.

"Melamchi project cost \$800 million and nearly 25 years to complete, but it took just one weather event to render it nearly useless," says water expert Madhukar Upadhyay. "It only goes on to prove that our landscape is not suitable for large infrastructure projects. And now we have climate change in the mix."

Nepal's only reservoir project on the Kulekhani was commissioned in 1982 and was supposed to have a lifespan of 100 years. But a cloudburst in the catchment area in 1993 deposited so much debris into its lake that the cascade project that generates 106MW of electricity will now function for only another 30 years.

The Himalayan mountains are warming between 0.3 to 0.7°C faster than the global average, and a report by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) predicted that even in



Aerial drone view of the Melamchi headwork area at 1:00pm (left) and 1:52pm (right) on 16 June.

GEOVATION NEPAL

the best-case scenario, more than one-third of the remaining ice will melt during this century. If current global heating trends continue, two-thirds of the ice will be gone.

Meltwater from Himalayan glaciers collect behind fragile moraine dams, increasing the threat of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) that can wash away infrastructure: hydropower plants, highways, bridges and canals.

As it is, many of these projects have either ignored or falsified their Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). They are built along rivers that have not been properly assessed for extreme weather.

A paper last month in the journal *Nature Geoscience* titled 'High Mountain Asia hydropower systems threatened by climate-driven landscape instability' has a checklist to minimise climate-driven hazards on Himalayan infrastructure.

'Maps of the distribution of paraglacial zones, sediment yield and hazard susceptibility that better delineate current and future unstable landscapes and erosion-prone regions should be

produced,' states the paper. 'Policy development regarding maintaining existing and planning of new hydropower projects should be guided by such hazard and risk maps.'

Researchers point out that storage capacity design should consider potential storage losses associated with increasing sediment loads due to climate change, and provide additional storage, sediment bypassing, sluicing, dredging and drawdown flushing to minimise sedimentation and increase reservoir lifespans.

Catchment management can reduce slope instability and erosion rates with reforestation and check dams. 'For existing reservoirs, a reassessment of sediment management solutions aimed at enhancing sustainable sediment management is recommended,' the *Nature Geoscience* paper states.

Upadhyay agrees: "The first thing is to study and assess the area before the start of the project. In case they are already functioning, we have to monitor how they are affected, which will give us insights into future weather patterns.

But most importantly, we need localised forecasts."

Indeed, the paper also recommends monitoring, forecasting and early-warning systems to be developed and implemented. 'Strategically oriented monitoring networks that measure high-altitude climate, glacial and permafrost dynamics, glacial lakes, unstable slopes and water and sediment fluxes should be expanded for high-risk areas,' it adds. Nepal has either too much or too little water. Seasonal floods and the weather extremes here predate climate change. Other disasters not related to climate, such as earthquakes, multiply the risk for infrastructure.

And yet, there is no proper mechanism even to assess loss and damage post-disaster which is ironic given Nepal's strong stance on climate justice at international climate conferences.

"Loss and damage as an issue has been highly politicised, but it is also rooted in climate justice, and what we are experiencing today is a cumulative impact of the last 150 years," explains climate scientist

The damage to the channel diverting water from the Melamchi to the tunnel at the project headwork. The debris here was 20m deep.

Ajaya Dixit. "Nepal must continue to be a part of this discourse, but we must also do our bit. We must not just lobby for funds but also for support and partnerships to actively address changes due to the climate."

Nepal's current response to climate disasters is limited to search, rescue and relief. Mitigating and adapting to risk, for example by reducing the level of glacial lakes such as Imja and Two Rolpa, are dependent on funding.

Nepal now has better standardised data through the BIPAD portal under the National Disaster Risk Reduction And Management Authority (NDRRMA). The next step is to map hazards, prioritise infrastructure and people most at risk through local first responders.

Adds Dixit: "We need a large-scale systemic change to adapt to the climate crisis but for now we can start with developing and implementing a robust assessing mechanism. And it is unacceptable that our infrastructure still follows designs, methods and metrics from the time when climate change was not even in our vocabulary."

Such is Nepal's hydropower potential that it has provided it geopolitical leverage. India is increasingly expanding its investment on Nepal's rivers, and building large reservoir projects. Chinese companies are building hydropower projects directly downstream from high-risk glacial lakes in Tibet.

Climate disasters raise the issue of a cross-border risk, since many of Nepal's start in China, where there are many glacial lakes that are at bursting point. GLOFs originating in China have in the past destroyed highways and hydropower projects on the Bhote Kosi.

Research by Chinese scientists on the Nyainqentanglha mountains on the Tibetan Plateau even five years ago showed that the frequency of destructive GLOFs were increasing, and they proposed urgent mitigation measures.

'Potential damage from GLOF disasters is significant,' wrote Shijin Wang and Lanyue Zhou in the *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science*, 'There is an urgent need for (Chinese) government departments to implement engineering measures on all potentially dangerous glacial lakes.'

Nepal is increasingly reliant on selling its surplus electricity to India. Power generation in the monsoon exceeds 2,100MW even as average domestic demand stands at just 1,550 MW. Another 2,500MW of electricity will be added to the grid in the next two years, while 3,000MW of new projects are in the pipeline.

But these projections are at the mercy of future climate-induced risk. Says Upadhyay: "If hydropower is indeed our future, we must treat it with that kind of seriousness and commitment. We must bring in experts who think not only in monetary terms, but holistically at how the climate crisis is changing the Himalayan landscape." 🇳🇵



MELAMCHI REVISITED

Watch video of heavily sediment-laden flood waters at the headworks of the Melamchi Water Supply Project on 16 June 2021 taken by a GeoVation Nepal drone that recorded images to capture hourly flows.

Nepal’s citizen scientists track climate change

Sherpas trained to monitor high-altitude weather stations below Mt Everest to predict climate disasters

● Erica Wu

The village of Phortse below Mt Everest has the highest number of high altitude guides who have died climbing in the Himalaya, but its Sherpas inhabitants are now being recruited to also become citizen scientists.

Some 350 Sherpas, many of them high altitude guides, have joined an initiative to monitor melting glaciers, receding snow lines, changes in vegetation and record temperature and precipitation among the world’s highest mountains.

This is an initiative of the Himalayan Climate and Science Institute (HCSI), and a local has also donated his home to be developed as a media and training centre in Phortse, situated at an altitude of 3,850m.

“We hope to provide the local community with scientific training to support analysis, data collection and longitudinal field studies,” says Sonam Jangbu Sherpa, co-founder of HCSI who has climbed Mt Everest several times and is with International Mountain Trekking Inc.

Sonam Jangbu’s forebears regularly crossed the 5,800m high Nangpa La between Nepal and Tibet to trade, they also herded yak and grew potato and buckwheat. When the Tibet trade ended with Chinese annexation 60 years ago, most Sherpas became professional mountain guides.

As climbers, the Sherpa have also seen the mountains melt before their eyes, and their crops have been affected by extreme weather, flash floods and landslides.

“We depend on rain to grow crops, as soon as there is some imbalance, we make fewer potatoes which in turn means we will have to buy it from others,” says Sonam Jangbu.

With a scientific advisory board composed of experts in earth science, wildlife biology, climate science, geography and more, HCSI provides the local community scientific training to support analysis, data collection, and longitudinal field studies.

For instance, scientific board members Baker Perry and Tom Matthews are currently training Arbindra Khadka, a Nepali PhD student, to work with automatic weather stations below Mt Everest and lead HCSI’s upcoming Phortse Weather Station Academy.

These opportunities build local scientific capacity as well as empower the community’s climate change adaptation through scientific findings.

“It is critical to have a high-altitude weather station with continuous data,” explains Khadka, adding that the current data gap is primarily due to lack of regular



The outflow from the Khumbu Glacier near Pheriche.

ALTON C BYERS

maintenance which in turn is caused by experts not being able to access existing weather stations at high altitude.

Which is why it is important to train citizen scientists who do not necessarily need to have university degrees. The academy will also teach locals the basics of climate data, changing weather patterns and climate extremes, as well as the importance of forecasts and preparedness.

“We will effectively bridge the gap between research results and the community,” says Khadka who is currently studying atmospheric science and glaciology in France. “Once I am back in Nepal, I plan to build local capacity and share what is happening to the mountains, especially the glaciers, climbing safety and the future of water in the region.”

But the most challenging aspect of the initiative is to draw the people into climate science. HCSI has a step-by-step strategy which includes first targeting and motivating young high altitude guides who can then spread awareness about adapting to the climate crisis among peers and in their community.

Says Khadka: “Most people have now heard enough about climate change, it is now time to go beyond that and actively participate in ways to secure our future and that of our resources by preparing for future extremes.”

Trekking and mountaineering is just reviving after the pandemic, but extreme weather caused by the climate crisis has devastated traditional crops of the Khumbu, like potato and buckwheat.

Rick Silber, the executive director and co-founder of the HCSI with Sonam Jangbu says the best way to gather scientific data is through participation of local people who know the area and who are most affected by the climate crisis.

“If you’re doing climate science, you can’t just go in there and take a snapshot and

think you have an understanding because it requires long-term documentation and data collection,” Silber explains. “And who better to make the measurements than the immediate stakeholders, the Sherpa community?”

Sonam Jangbu is himself from Phortse and his family farms potatoes and buckwheat. In recent years, he has noticed an increased impact of the climate crisis in erratic weather, melting glaciers and increased landslides.

“But both quality and quantity of our produce have declined a lot since the time of our parents, affecting food availability and income,” he says.

The climate crisis is thus forcing Sherpas to find new sources of food, which is already very expensive in Khumbu. Apart from the climate crisis, the Sherpas have also realised that their over-reliance on tourism made them vulnerable to global calamities like the pandemic. 🇳🇵

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Re-exporting imported vegetable oil to India unnaturally inflates Nepal's trade figures, and kills domestic industry

Posh Raj Pandey sums up the malaise: "Businessmen are colluding with politicians to award themselves tariff rebates paid for by tax payers. This is slowly killing Nepal's industrial and manufacturing potential." 






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Amendments to Commandments

The fact that Nepal's lack self-esteem should not be seen as a liability. The Ass sees it as an asset.

We don't have to wait for others to bad-mouth Nepal, we can do it ourselves. Imagine how dishonest of us it would be to have to extoll our country's virtues when there aren't many.

But sometimes, Nepal does not seem to be such a bad place after all. The weather is salubrious, there are tons of holidays, and Nepal is posting 4% growth this year — which means everything will grow: the deficit, the concentration of particles below ten microns at Tin Kunay, and the Minister of Animal Husbandry and Midwifery's announcement that Nepal will be self-sufficient in bovine semen.

Why single out Comrade Janardan for refusing to divulge CCTV footage of

a corporate fixer entering his office? The budget-making process is a secret, after all: so he has kept the video clip a secret too.

The FinMin was just emulating the January 6 hearings in the world's most powerful democracy. Pentagon officials had deleted all incriminating text messages from eye witnesses to the insurrection at the Capitol from their phones.

For decades, Western powers have invested millions trying to strengthen the county's democratic institutions, rule of law and accountability. That was money well spent because Nepal's democracy has now attained the same degree of maturity as the UK and US.

The Brits now take months to find a new prime minister after a vote of no confidence, just like us. Kathmandu Airport's luggage area is now as chaotic as Heathrow Terminal

5. And parts of the Tarai are now as hot as London.

Our political leadership is economical with the truth and peddles alternative facts just as much as their US counterparts. In fact, they put the American Bozo-in-Chief to shame.

Arriving in Tokyo uninvited by the Japanese government, Comrade Awesome expressed profound sorrow that he could not meet Shinzo Abe and re-establish his acquaintance with the former prime minister whom he had met twice in Kathmandu. He mixed it up with a dream he had.

In 2008, PKD boasted in a public meeting about hoodwinking the UN with inflated militia numbers. This man has shown how to get away with murder (as long as the victim is not tortured first).

Comrade Awesome often compares

himself to the Buddha and Gandhi, both 'peaceful revolutionaries' like himself. We will let the Lord Buddha decide what PKD can do to attain nirvana, but the Great Leader is unquestionably a "Gun-dhi".

As imbibers of Holy Wine, the leaders of the CPN (Moonie) strictly follow the Ten Commandments, some of which they have amended to read:

- Thou shalt not steal, unless it's a bribe.
- Thou canst commit adultery if thou art a Speaker of the August House.
- Thou shalt kill as thou pleases, and retroactively amend the Transitional Justice Act by giving thyself full immunity from prosecution for war crimes.
- Remember the Sabbath, and cancel the Sunday holiday.
- Honour thy father and mother, and appoint thy brother-in-law ambassador to Australia.



The Ass

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