

**THE CLOUDS PART:** A Vistara flight to New Delhi takes off from Kathmandu past Mt Urkinmang on 8 October, as Nepal's tourism revives to near pre-pandemic levels.

2020 was supposed to be a landmark year for tourism. Nepal spent \$2 million to attract 2 million tourists during Visit Nepal Year. But Covid-19 put a stop to everything.

2021 was the worst year for tourism since 1977. Visitor numbers dropped from 1.2 million in 2019 to 150,962.

But after three years, tourists are returning for the autumn peak season. The number of visitors from January-August reached nearly 330,000 – almost half of them from India, and the rest from US, UK and Australia.

“Pre-pandemic figures were certainly much higher for that period, but we are getting there. Nepal has bounced back,” says Mani Raj Lamichhane at the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB). Tourists from Bangladesh, China, France, Germany and Turkey are seeing significant increases.

Despite the global economic crisis, after-effects of the pandemic, rainy monsoon, and a dengue outbreak in Kathmandu, September arrivals reached almost 80,000, with October and November expected to be even higher.

“We have a very steady flow of visitors staying at the hotel this season and occupancies have gone up since 2021,” says Vikram Singh at Aloft Kathmandu. “The fact that visitors were not deterred by the rains or dengue has made us even more optimistic about bookings for November and December.”

Hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara were running at near-full occupancy either with international or domestic tourists this Dasain. Trekkers, mountaineers, sightseeing tourists and pilgrims thronged restaurants.

Sonia Miyahara of Hotel Everest View in Syangboche is encouraged by the footfall this trekking season, but says there were challenges. She adds: “Erratic weather throughout this year in the region affected logistics, and itineraries had to be changed at the last minute.”

Miyahara cautions that we are not quite back to pre-Covid levels, and moving Lukla flights from Kathmandu to Ramechhap have not helped. “Even so, we are booked through the end of November,” she says.

Nepal's tourism sector makes up 8% of GDP and directly employs at least 1 million people, with many more depending on it. The pandemic had all but ruined the industry, with porters and guides losing incomes for nearly three years.

For Nepal's tourism planners, this has been a lesson to diversify, promote visitors from neighbouring countries and push religious tourism as buffer from international upheavals and growing climate consciousness.

This is why NTB is launching a strong digital marketing drive highlighting Buddhist and Hindu pilgrimage, adventure sports, wildlife and mountains.

“We will be resuming promotions at international travel fairs to increase Nepal’s visibility as a centre of culture and adventure tourism,” adds Lamichhane.

A lot of the publicity for Nepal in the past three years has been free: through Netflix series like *14 Peaks*, and traveler vlogs.

Nepal's tourism hit rock bottom, now it seems there is nowhere to go but up. 

**Ashish Dhakal**



# WORLD'S BEST PIZZA OVEN



**FOR BOOKING & INQUIRIES**  
**+977 9848775343**



**Outsource your  
Non-Core Staff through  
Suvridha Staffing**

**- licensed company by DoL, MoLESS  
- 100% Labour Law Compliant**

+977-9851247213  
[www.suvridhasewa.com.np](http://www.suvridhasewa.com.np)

**18 YEARS**

**Suvridha  
Sewa**



Skullcandy

# FESTIVAL SALE

UP TO 60% OFF

Available at  
 Sherpa Mall- 0142619179 | Patan- 0154006003

© skullcandy.com



**#1**  
RATING BY  
DIGITAL  
WORLD

**eScan**  
Anti-Virus

**eScan**  
Anti-Virus  
eScan  
Anti-Virus  
eScan  
Anti-Virus

**TOTAL PROTECTION**  
for Computers, Mobiles & Tablets

An ISO 27001 Certified Company

**Contact no.: 01-4330980**

[www.escanav.com](http://www.escanav.com)

**Ligo**  
Orange

**Ligo**  
Apple

**LIGO JUICE**

**SalesBerry**

# VISIT NEPAL AGAIN

KUNDA DIXIT



Sheer Driving Pleasure

 THE X1

**Laxmi Premium Motors**  
(an entity of Laxmi Group)

**Address**  
Tinkune, Kathmandu, Nepal

**Email** [info@bmw-laxmi.com.np](mailto:info@bmw-laxmi.com.np)  
**Tel** +977 1 4111776, 4111628





# 3-party dictatorship

On Sunday in Gorkha, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, flanked by Narayan Kaji Shrestha and former comrade-in-arms Baburam Bhattarai, led a procession of supporters to file his candidacy for federal election on 20 November.

There was pomp and fanfare as Bhattarai, who currently represents the constituency in the House, swapped it for Maoist support for his daughter's candidacy in Kathmandu.

Bhattarai had earlier announced he would not contest elections, saying he was taking a break from being "a lifetime parliamentarian". So it was ironic that he handed over to another serial parliamentarian whom he had fallen out big time: Dahal.

The Maoist leader had previously contested from Kathmandu and Rolpa in 2008, Kathmandu and Siraha in 2013, and Chitwan in 2017. This time, he wanted an ironclad constituency to fulfil his dream of

Nepal has been a three-party dictatorship since 2013. Smaller parties aspire to be king-makers too, and want to strike deals with the Nepali Congress, Maoist Centre or the opposition UML.

There are no party primaries while selecting election candidates, and the process of selecting tickets is at the arbitrary personal discretion of the three honchos. So, the NC's Minendra Rijal and the UML's Bhim Rawal of the UML were refused tickets because their party leaders treat them as greater threats than candidates from other parties. Swarnim Wagle of the NC was reportedly refused a ticket because the First Lady doesn't like him.

The Proportional Representation system was designed to include the excluded and marginalised. But the list is made up of close allies who needed to be accommodated, cronies and relatives. Only 9% of the candidates for direct elections are women,



becoming prime minister a third time — and proved once more that there are no permanent friends nor enemies in politics.

The 2022 election has made partners out of once archenemies Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, splintered powerful communist parties, and brought Dahal and Bhattarai back together. And it has led to Nepal's two primary Madhes-based parties switching allegiances between the coalition government and the opposition a day before the deadline for FPTP registration.

This is the end of ideology. It is all about power and how to get there. Nepali politics was always and is a revolving door of same handful of tried, tested and failed elderly men waiting for another stint at prime ministership— party credo, election agenda, or principles be damned. (See page 4)

It is a sign of the times that once-progressive alternative politician Rabindra Mishra now has a leadership position within the royalist right RPP, while Kamal Thapa of the Hindu-right RPP-N is set to contest the election in alliance with Communists, under the UML's election symbol no less.

## Nepal's break-up and make-up electoral politics undermines democracy

despite a Constitutional provision that parties have to field 33% females. The proportion of indigenous communities and Dalits is even lower.

Nepal's richest men seem to have decided it is better

to use the money that they used to donate to parties to run for elections themselves. The candidate list also included jailed individuals, which the Election Commission eventually rejected, as well as figures tainted with corruption. In all this, there is a silver lining. First-time voters and young Nepalis have begun to take an interest in the political process, mainly because of the rise of the independents. They seem to think that the only way to clean up Nepali politics is from the inside. But vote banks, block votes by ethnicity and caste still count because the mainstream parties have the organisational structure.

An ageing and unprincipled establishment unwilling to hand over to a new generation has made it abundantly clear once more that any attempt to transform Nepal's political mechanism from inside will be fiercely resisted. But something's got to give.

**Shristi Karki**

## ONLINE PACKAGES



COVID ORPHANS

Over 12,000 Nepalis have lost their lives to Covid-19 since the outbreak began in January 2020 in the country, most of them in the age group 20-50, but there are also children under 18. Hundreds of children have become orphans in the wake of the pandemic. Watch this video of one such family in Kavre and read our analysis of the last three years of the coronavirus crisis on [pages 10-11](#).



OFF THE BEATEN TREK

Post monsoon October-November is the best time to visit Nepal and after nearly three years of lull, tourists are back. Join us on a video trek of two of Nepal's remotest districts. The West Seti gorge is Nepal's natural heritage and should be protected from future road-building. Trekking can help the local economy and promote social justice on the Gurja Himal trail. Subscribe to our YouTube channel for more original multimedia content.

### HYDROGEN ENERGY

First, this will be nothing new if our politicians didn't screw it up. If not, our "neighbour" will surely throw a spanner in the works as always ('Can Nepal go from hydro to hydrogen?', Kunda Dixit, [page 5](#)).

**Hemanta Arjyal**

● We already have hydropower energy and converting that into another form of energy and losing a significant chunk of energy in the process is not wise. Also, not to mention this is still an unproven technology.

**Sunil Mhj**

● It is not just financing; 're-engineering the supporting infrastructure to overcome technological lock-ins' excessive, 'storage technology a long way off', most proposed solutions get arrested by entropy police for violating the 2<sup>nd</sup> Law of Thermodynamics.

**Dipak Gyawali**

### ELECTIONS

The constitution sponsored by foreign powers, and endorsed by our leaders to make foreign powers comfortable, does not allow for any ideology except socialism ('The end of ideology', Shristi Karki, [page 4](#)). And our leaders have interpreted socialism to mean federating with the mafia to loot the country and its people

**Lal Bahadur**

### ELECTRIC FUTURE

I have already seen the transition to EV in Nepal ('Potheoles on the highway to Nepal's EV future', Shreesha Nankhwa, [nepalitimes.com](#)). It is happening, and very quickly. Like every transition that is an opportunity, Nepal needs a system that functions and Nepalis need to learn to take responsibility. EV is the way to go. Nepal will save billions of dollars annually in imports. We will live a clean, healthy and financially rewarding life.

**Gyurme Dondup**

### AGRICULTURE

Government support to farmers requires an appreciation of the complex realities of farming today and should not be based on assumptions about the benefits of commercialisation ('Nepal's 'spray and pray' approach to agriculture', Jayant Basnet, [nepalitimes.com](#)).

**David Seddon**

### STOLEN ARTEFACT

I love the Art Institute, but this is wrong ('How Nepali antiquities got to Chicago museum', Alisha Sijapati, [nepalitimes.com](#)). The necklace should go back where it belongs.

**Lenora Pohlman**

### SANDEEP LAMICHHANE

He usually gets a warm welcome with garland, but this time it is a cold one with handcuffs.

**Bijay Punmagar**

### NEPALI CUISINE

I believe the variety of recipes -- anywhere -- depends on the ingredients available and the imagination and genius of the preparers of the meals ('Flavours from Nepal', Prashanta Khanal, [nepalitimes.com](#)).

**Suzan Appel Causey**

### CLIMATE

The climate crisis will affect trekking from now on ('More rain and snow forecast for Nepal', [nepalitimes.com](#)).

### KUMARI

All Living Goddesses should go to school and get to see their families.

**Michele Ann Jenkins**

### HILAREE NELSON

I'm glad Jim Morrison could find Hilaree and carry her. What a heartbreak for him, but an honour, and all he had left to give her.

**Lynn Barton**

## Times.com WHAT'S TRENDING

### Dasain is postponed

by Ass

All concerned should watch this space for new Dasain dates, but it will most probably be next April, when it will be held in conjunction with New Year 2080 in order to reduce Nepal's petroleum import bill and the country's carbon footprint. Backside column.



Most reached and shared on Facebook



### Nepali New Wave Cinema

by Nepali Times

From *Kagbeni* to *Ainaa Jhyal ko Putali*, the new wave of cinema has changed the Nepali film industry. Check out our picks and join the discussion online.



Most popular on Twitter



### "Nepal should decide for Nepal's good"

by Nepali Times

Out-going US Ambassador to Nepal Randy Berry spoke to *Nepali Times* about his tenure marked by Covid-19, the MCC debate, and American support for human rights, press and democracy. Read the interview at [nepalitimes.com](#).



Most commented



### Saving to save my sister

Diaspora Diaries

In this heartwarming Dasain installment of *Diaspora Diaries*, a Nepali driver in Saudi Arabia recounts his struggle to care for a sister back home. Read the full story only on our website.



Most visited online page

## QUOTE TWEETS



**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**

"#Nepal should be making decisions for the good of Nepal — not for the good of any other country." Out-going @USAmbNepal Randy Berry speaks about his tenure marked by #COVID19, #MCC debate, and American support for #HumanRights, #press and #democracy.



**U.S. Ambassador to Nepal @USAmbNepal**

Reflecting on my time in Nepal fills me with happiness at all that we've accomplished to deepen US-Nepal ties. Thank you @NepaliTimes for the chance to discuss my tenure.



**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**

"I am now trying to go overseas again to recoup my savings. I am still relatively young, and have another few years in me to work hard once more in the desert heat. It is the only way to break out of the poverty that has trapped me."



**marty Logan @martydlogan**

Thanks to Nepali Times for giving migrant workers a forum for telling their stories



**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**

Nepali New Wave Cinema: From *Kagbeni* to *Ainaa Jhyal ko Putali*, here are our picks of movies that have changed Nepali cinema.



**Lo Nepal @Lo\_Nepal**

And many more: Soongava, Bulbul... #nepalcinema#nepalimovie

## 20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

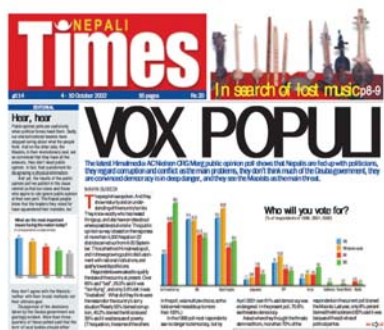
### Vox Populi

In a Himalmedia public opinion poll conducted in 2002, most respondents said they were fed up with politicians and poor governance. They cited corruption and conflict as the main problems. They were worried about the state of democracy and saw Maoists as the main threat.

Two decades later, public perception is the same, if not worse. In fact, people take the lack of governance and accountability as a given. The key players are the same, their *modus operandi* is the same. Even 20 years ago, 37% felt Prime Minister Deuba was a threat to democracy.

It is even more prevalent as seen by constant party infighting, breakups and mergers ahead of the November polls. Excerpts from the 3rd Himalmedia opinion poll analysis published 20 years ago this week on issue #114 4-10 October 2002:

The people have spoken. And they show maturity and an understanding of the country's crisis. They know exactly who has messed things up, and also have an idea about where possible solutions lie. Respondents were asked to qualify the



state of the country at present. Over 65% said "bad", 26.5% said it was "horrible", and only 3.6% felt it was "like before". What did they think were the reasons for the country's sorry situation? Nearly 55% blamed corruption, 40.2% blamed the Maoists and 35% said it was because of poverty.

In the 1999 poll most respondents saw no danger to democracy, but by April 2001 over 61% said democracy was

endangered. In the present poll, 70.6% see threats to democracy. Asked where they thought the threats stemmed from, more than 70% of the respondents in the current poll blamed the Maoists. This time, a surprising 37% cited Prime Minister Deuba as a threat to democracy while 35.4% blamed the Nepali Congress-the party that has been struggling for democracy for the past 50 years. Nearly 25% said Nepali democracy was threatened by "outside powers" while 17.6 % saw the royal palace as a threat.

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



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

Editor Online: Sahina Shrestha Executive Editor: Sonia Awale Layout: Kiran Maharjan  
Publisher: Kunda Dixit, Himalmedia Pvt Ltd | Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu  
editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | www.himalmedia.com | Tel: +977 1 5005601-08 Fax: +977 1 5005518





# FLY WITH THE BEST



BEST AIRLINE  
IN EUROPE



WORLD'S BEST BUSINESS  
CLASS CATERING



BEST AIRLINE IN  
SOUTHERN EUROPE

Thanks for honouring us on three categories  
at **Skytrax Passengers Choice Awards.**



TURKISH AIRLINES

ktmsales@thy.com | 01-4438363 | 4438436



# The end of ideology

Seat sharing deals for elections indicate that there is no difference between the main parties

● **Shristi Karki**

The once extreme left Maoists are allies of the centre-right Nepali Congress. The Unified Marxist-Leninists (UML) have suddenly found friends in the Hindu-right RPP, and has partnered with the Madhes-based JSP. Top Maoists who had fallen out big time, are comrades again.

Shifting alliances ahead of the November polls prove that ideology does not separate political parties anymore — it is all about finding a partnership that is most likely to propel them to power.

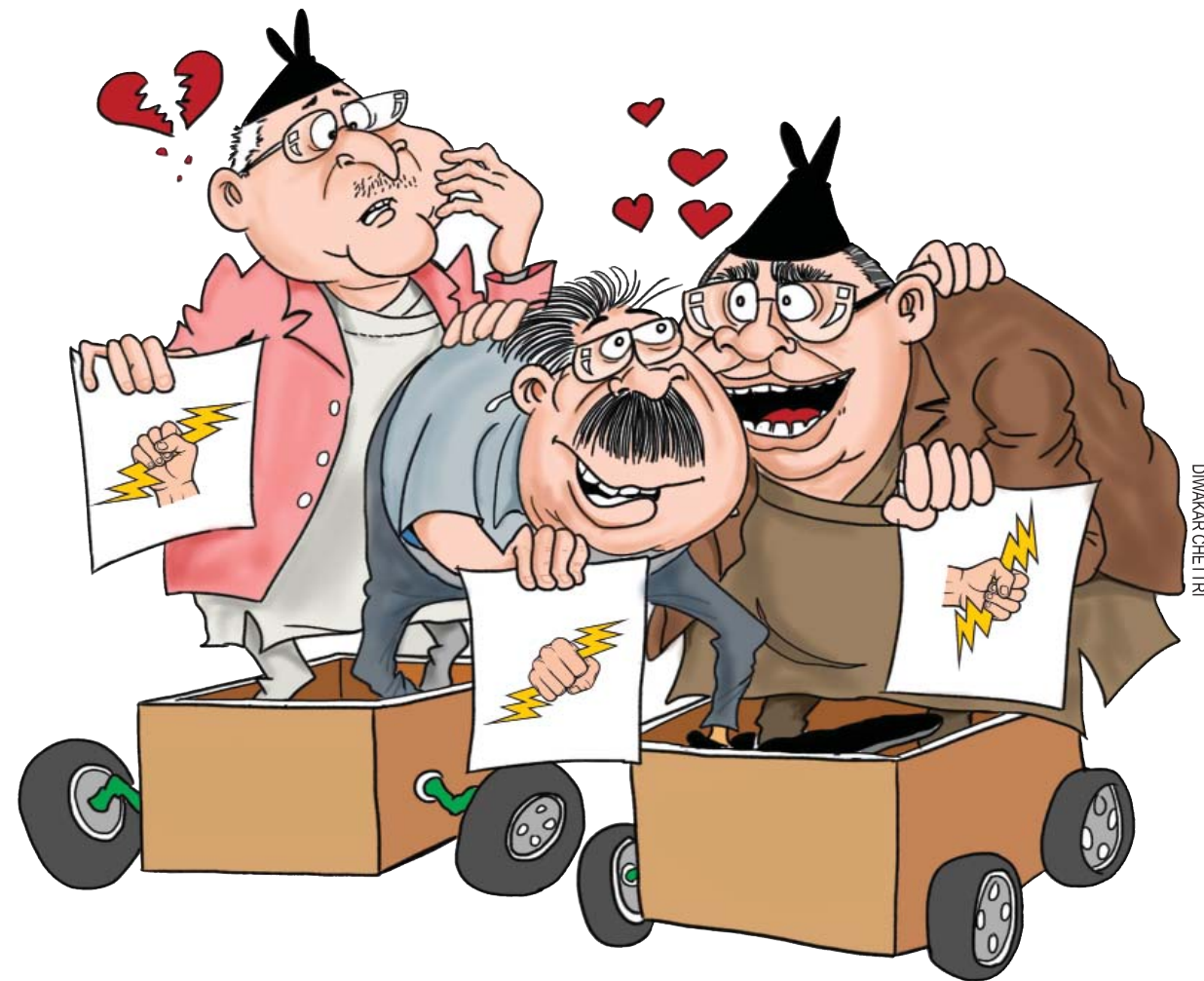
This is going to be a battle of the coalitions with the NC-Maoist-CPN(US)-LSP vs the UML-JSP-RPP. They have ensured that candidates from their group will not compete against each other. The top leaders of all parties have made it doubly sure they will not lose. Be prepared for the same old men ruling Nepal for the next five years.

Unless we have a surprise from the independent candidates, who are trying to tap into public disillusionment, especially among the young, to the senile parties.

Nepal's recent political history has been defined by petty party infighting, splits, unlikely mergers and lots of horse-trading. Maoist chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal may still join hands with his nemesis K P Oli if election results make the NC strong, or the UML weak.

Madhes Province politics has now bifurcated down the middle. The JSP quit the five-party electoral partnership after failing to reach a seat sharing agreement, and switched allegiance to the UML. Mahanta Thakur's LSP, which itself split from JSP in 2021, then joined the Deuba-led electoral alliance.

After negotiations, coalition leader NC is to contest 89 parliamentary seats, the Maoists secured 45 seats, while Madhav Kumar Nepal's CPN (Unified



DIMKAR CHETTRI

Socialists) will get to fight 19 seats and the smaller Rastriya Janamorchha Party 2 seats. The new ally LSP will contest 8 federal parliament seats.

Meanwhile, the UML and JSP have reached an agreement for 17 federal parliament seats for Upendra Yadav's party. Baburam Bhattarai has relinquished his Gorkha constituency for erstwhile Maoist party rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal, in return for the Maoists backing his daughter Manushi in Kathmandu.

Most glaring example of the end of ideology is the Hindu-right Kamal Thapa contesting elections under the Communist UML election symbol.

NC leaders Shekhar Koirala and

Gagan Thapa who have been vocal about Deuba's decision on tickets, are finally contesting from Morang and Kathmandu respectively.

Other dissidents were so fed up for not being given tickets, they are contesting as independents.

Rabindra Mishra, who exited the Bibeksheel Sajha Party to join the Rajendra Lingden's Rastriya Prajatantra Party as vice-president, will contest the election from Kathmandu-1. Lingden has registered his candidacy from Jhapa-3. Former tv presenter Rabi Lamichhane, who founded the Rastriya Swatantra Party after announcing his intention to run for Parliament, has registered

his candidacy from Chitwan-2. Meanwhile, atmospheric scientist Arnico Panday withdrew citing long-Covid complications.

Ek Nath Dhakal of the South Korean Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and leader of the Nepal Family Party who once served in K P Oli's cabinet as Minister of Peace and Reconstruction has also got nominated for a PR slot. The Family Party is considered to be supported by South Korea's Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon (the 'Moonies').

Binod Chaudhary who is standing from Nawalparasi-1, has oscillated back and forth between the NC and UML. At least seven

other industrialists and billionaires have got tickets from the NC.

Umesh Shrestha, education and hydropower tycoon and a close adviser to the Deubas, is standing from Chitwan, his first time contesting elections. Medical education businessman Sunil Shrestha is contesting from Morang-3. Another hydropower investor, Dipak Khadka is standing from Sankhuwasabha.

Meanwhile, notable leaders like Minendra Rijal of the Nepali Congress and Bhim Rawal of the UML, as well as figures like Swarnim Wagle of the NC, were refused tickets by their parties.

As the excitement of the election took over, Nepal's political figures including serving ministers, were found to have violated the election code of conduct while registering their candidacies.

There are now 2,526 candidates for the elections, out of which 1,583 candidates are from 57 political parties, and 943 are independents. Another 3,477 aspirants registered their candidacies for the provincial assemblies.

However, only 9.3% of the candidates for federal parliament are women, even though Nepal's Constitution requires 33% of MPs to be women. Nepal's ageing political leadership want to hold on to power and have once again sidelined women, indigenous groups, and marginalised communities.

Activist and commentator Ashutosh Tiwari likened Nepal's political leadership to the 'feuding Mafia' whose politics has been defined by inter-and intra-family intrigues and conspiracies for three decades. He posted on his Facebook: 'Nepali politics, as it exists today, is structurally damaged and rotten to the core. One or two supermen are not going to change it for the better.' 🇳🇵

## prabhu BANK



### Rome for Expo 2030

Italian Ambassador to Nepal Vincenzo De Luca presented Rome's candidature to host Expo 2030, highlighting the history and culture of the 'eternal city', drawing parallels with Kathmandu. Nepal and Italy also signed an agreement to establish a permanent bilateral consultation mechanism. If chosen, Rome aims to focus on the past, present and future, stimulate international engagement, and identifying joint solutions through collaborative projects and initiatives. An exhibition of photographs of Rome by Giancarlo Cammerini will be on at Aloft for two weeks.

### Mahanagar Tata

Mahanagar Yatayat has added 10 Tata Ultra buses to its fleet with 140 hp powered engine, parabolic leaf spring suspension and other features.



### Turkish goes green

Turkish Airlines, the carrier with one of the world's largest route networks has signed the Global Sustainable Aviation Fuels Declaration, the collaboration between aviation, aerospace and fuel partners to completely decarbonise aviation fuels. Turkish Airlines plans to increase biofuels usage in line with the technical, regulatory, safety and financial feasibility. "Reducing emissions significantly with the inclusion of new generation aircraft to its fleet, operational optimizations and



high-level fuel saving applications," Levent Konukcu of Turkish Airlines said. The carrier also increased seat capacity by 15.9% compared to same period in 2019, and carried a total of 7.3 million passenger while reaching 85.4% load factor for international flights and 90.2% on domestic ones. Total passengers from January-September, 2022 was 53.9 million. Turkish now has a total of 390 aircraft in its fleet



### Buddha Air is 25

Nepal's biggest domestic airline with 16 aircraft fleet marked 25 years of operations on 11 October, and carried more than 18 million passengers. It set a record with 8,835 passengers on a single day on 8 October. Buddha serves 15 destinations in Nepal and also flies to Varanasi.

### Ncell data pack



Ncell has launched the 'home and away' data pack. Customers can get 60GB data at Rs599. The pack is valid for 28 days from 29 September.

### Hyundai FIFA

Laxmi Intercontinental has announced the winner of its Hyundai test drive campaign. Two winners were chosen by a lucky draw on 11 October. Sher Bahadur G C and Hasta Maya Gurung have won free trips for two to Qatar to watch the World Cup.



### Norvic certification

Norvic hospital's laboratory is now ISO certified by the national accreditation board. The lab carries out 5 specialised tests in haematology, biochemistry, hormone, microbiology, clinical pathology, histo and psycho pathology.

### Help desk

Sipradi has launched help desks for travellers in Kathmandu, Pokhara and 19 other locations to help



and protect those travelling to and from their homes this festival season.



# From hydro to hydrogen

Green hydrogen can be an energy game changer for Nepal if financing issues are fixed

● Kunda Dixit

Green hydrogen has suddenly become the holy grail for resource economists because of a confluence of factors: the need to decarbonise due to the climate crisis, Nepal's growing hydropower surplus, its burgeoning petroleum import bill, and a chronic shortage of fertiliser.

The Nepal Green Hydrogen Summit 2022 on 10-11 October in Kathmandu brought together 100 officials and experts from Nepal and abroad to discuss the feasibility and necessity of using hydropower to produce hydrogen fuel and fertiliser. This could be a win-win for Nepal if it started planning early for a hydrogen transition.

The technology is not new, water molecules can be split by electrolysis into hydrogen and oxygen. The hydrogen is compressed for use in fuel cells to heat homes, power cars, trucks, ships and even planes.

The hydrogen can also be combined with nitrogen from the air to synthesise ammonia, which can then be combined with carbon dioxide to manufacture urea (right).

"Because of Nepal's hydropower surplus, green hydrogen can be a game-changer," explains Kushal Gurung of Windpower Nepal, a co-organiser of the summit. "There are technical and financial challenges, but they can be overcome."

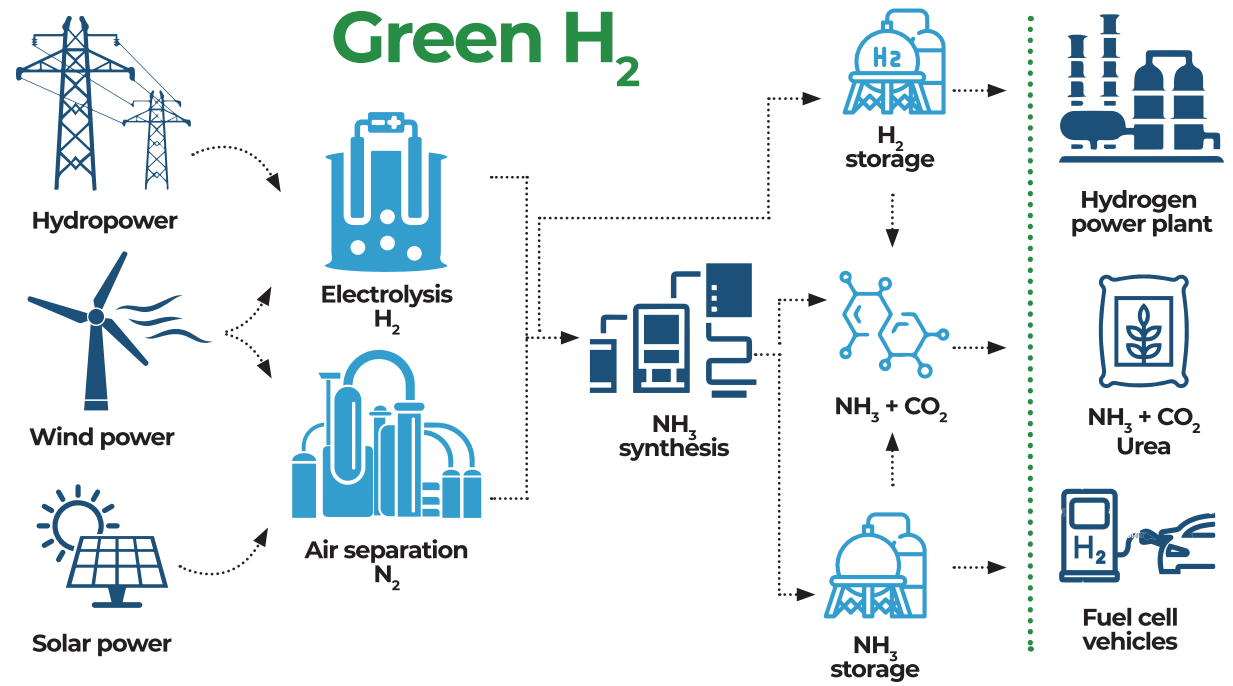
For now, the most feasible application of green hydrogen in Nepal is to produce ammonia and urea by using renewable hydropower.

The Nepal Army imports Rs13 billion worth of ammonia annually for explosives. Additionally, Nepal requires 700,000 tonnes of urea for fertiliser, worth Rs20 billion and heavily subsidised, every year. A chronic shortage of chemical fertiliser at harvest time has been affecting Nepal's crop yields.

To make urea, ammonia has to be synthesised with carbon capture from cement or other industries.

If Nepal starts planning now, it will be possible to have a urea plant operational within 4-6 years. But it may take another 10 years to be able to use hydrogen fuel cells for cars.

Energy Minister Pampha Bhusal and Kulman Ghising of the



Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) attended the summit and pledged 50MW of subsidised power for future green hydrogen startups.

Investment Board Nepal (IBN) has done a feasibility study for a chemical fertiliser plant in Nepal powered by either natural gas or electricity. It showed that if electricity is available at Rs3 per unit, urea can be manufactured for \$436/tonne. Current international price for urea is \$750/tonne.

Besides subsidised electricity, a urea factory would also need carbon capture technology and a tie-up with a cement plant.

"We are willing to provide electricity at a competitive rate to any future green hydrogen industry, and would encourage such investment to consume Nepal's surplus electricity," NEA's Kulman Ghising told the summit.

Nepal's installed capacity is now 2,200MW, while peak national demand is 1,800MW. But India's refusal to buy power from plants that were built by Chinese contractors has meant that Nepal can only export 364MW.

NEA was negotiating with India to sell another 200MW, but without success. Up to 800MW of electricity

went to waste over Dasain because of low demand during the holidays and heavy rain allowed hydropower plants to run at full capacity.

Ghising said NEA lost Rs20 million in revenue from 'spilled' electricity over the Dasain week. Such excess capacity could be used to produce green hydrogen and manufacture urea in the country.

Nepal earned nearly Rs8 billion by selling 1 billion units of electricity to the Indian Energy Exchange Ltd from 2 May to 11 October this year, but this amount would have been higher if more of the surplus could have been

**HYDROCRATS:** German Ambassador Thomas Prinz (centre) with Kushal Gurung of Windpower Nepal at the Green Hydrogen Summit in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

exported to reduce Nepal's trade deficit with India. Also, Nepal will need to import electricity this winter from India when generation goes down and demand rises.

At present, industrialised countries are producing hydrogen using fossil fuels to power cars and make fertiliser. This is called 'grey' or 'black' hydrogen because the process is so carbon-intensive.

In 'blue' hydrogen technology up to 80% of the carbon produced in the process is captured. But high gas prices have affected this pathway.

"Electrolysis for green hydrogen production is capital intensive, and needs scale-up and reduced cost," Emanuele Taibi of the Abu Dhabi-based International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) told the World Economic Forum. "But green hydrogen might witness a similar story to that of solar photovoltaics ... with decreasing cost."

Indeed, cost and not technology will be the main factor for Nepal's green hydrogen future. Speakers at the summit proposed private-public partnerships, grants and a strategic national decarbonisation policy.

Jamuna Gurung of MIT Group Foundation, another summit co-sponsor, stressed that green hydrogen technology may not be immediately feasible for Nepal.

However, she added: "For climate mitigation and to reduce import dependence, we have to go for green hydrogen production from renewable energy. For this, Nepal will need blended financing, with grants and concessionary loans, and private-public partnership investment."

Windpower Nepal's Kushal Gurung agreed that green hydrogen will not be feasible at present through the private sector alone.

But, he added: "If the government makes this a priority sector for investment and concessional financing, green hydrogen can be a game changer for Nepal by helping reduce both our carbon footprint and our import bill for fuel and fertiliser." 🇳🇵

Hard Rock CAFE

KATHMANDU

GET READY TO EXPERIENCE

ROLLER COASTER OF FLAVOURS AT HARD ROCK CAFE KATHMANDU

📍 SHERPA MALL, DURBAR MARG

📞 FOR MORE INFO, CALL +977-9801986771

SCAN HERE FOR THE MENU



# Diary of a Nepali soldier in France

Writings and khukri of an unknown World War I Gurkha soldier surface in Germany after 107 years

● Shree Bhakta Khanal

Books have been written about the legendary valour and sacrifice of Nepal's Gurkha soldiers. Officers have extolled their obedience and cheerfulness despite hardships and danger. The world has an image of Nepali soldiers in the battlefield: fierce, but always smiling.

But historians have pored through letters and diaries written by Gurkha soldiers from the two World Wars to paint a very different picture — Nepalis in the trenches in Belgium or cliffs at Gallipoli were homesick, terrified, cold and miserable. Many of these letters home were held by military censors, and archived.

Now, a diary written by a Gurkha sergeant in the British Army during the battle of La Bassée in northern France during World War I in 1914 and retrieved by a German officer has revealed a whole new side to the Gurkha legend: one that confirms the traditional bravery, but also reveals their humanity.

Lieutenant Alexander Pfeiffer was with the Kurhessische Jäger-Bataillon Nr. 11 and found the diary of a Nepali soldier in La Bassée on 20 December 1914 after a fierce battle against the British and French Armies. The battle was fought from 12 October till the end of December. The name of the Nepali soldier, and whether he died in the battlefield or as a prisoner of war, are not known.

Lt Pfeiffer's great-grandson Philip Cross found the documents and the khukri while going through his family effects. He is translating his great grandfather's diary into English, and also the Gurkha sergeant's diary.

Lt Pfeiffer writes about the fearsome reputation of the Gurkhas: 'I found quite a few letters written in Indian script. They are fierce warriors. We are afraid of them. They use their knives to cut up the enemy.'

It appears that Lt Pfeiffer's job was to go through the bodies of dead enemy soldiers to find intelligence of Allied forces. That appears to be how he got hold of the diary, photographs and even the khukri.

The first page of the diary of the unknown Nepali soldier (above, right) is in verse with numbered lines. It lists the names of his young friends who were killed or taken prisoner, describing the hardships they endured. From the penmanship, vocabulary and the use of numbered verse, the soldier likely learnt his Nepali from a village priest who used to be the only literate person in rural Nepal in those days.

यो कठै बरा...जोबन सबै शत्रुका हातबाट गयो ॥२०॥ पल्टनको माया मोह नेपालमै रह्यो जिउँदै मरी कैलाशमा गयो। सुवेदार भीमसिं भँडारी भयो ॥२१॥ हर्क थापा जसराजा धर्म खत्री कम्यान्डर प्रजीतन नैनसिं खत्री सरुप कुँवर प्रतिमान थापा

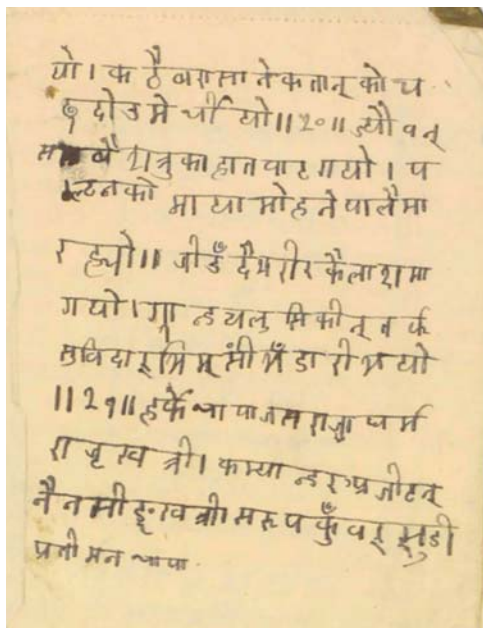
Translated, the lines read:

*'Poor fellows, their youth was taken away by the enemy's hands (20)*

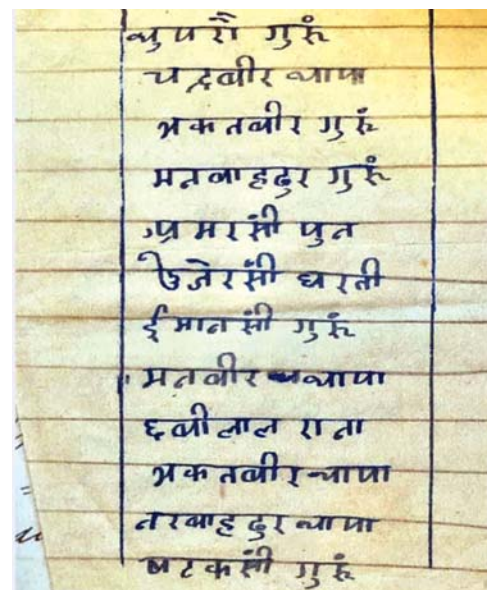
*The love of the military was left behind in Nepal*

*We are the living dead who have gone to heaven*

*Subedar Bhimsi Bhandari (21) Harke Thapa Jasraja Dharma Khatri Commander Pasitan Nainsingh Khatri Swarup Kunwar Pratiman Thapa'*



The second page of the Nepali soldier's diary (below) has the names of Gurkhas, which, interestingly, are the same names found in the same order in the papers of Lt Pfeiffer in which he lists the names of Gurkhas taken prisoner. The German phonetics also closely resemble the way the unknown soldier has written the names in Nepali, for example, by spelling Gurung as गुरु (Gurun).



Lt Pfeiffer's note in his own diary entry (right) reads as follows:

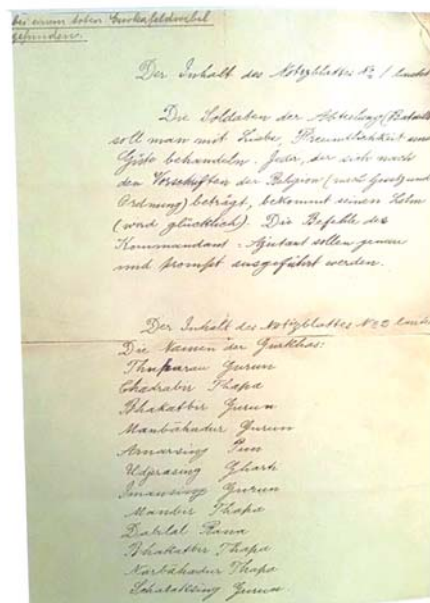
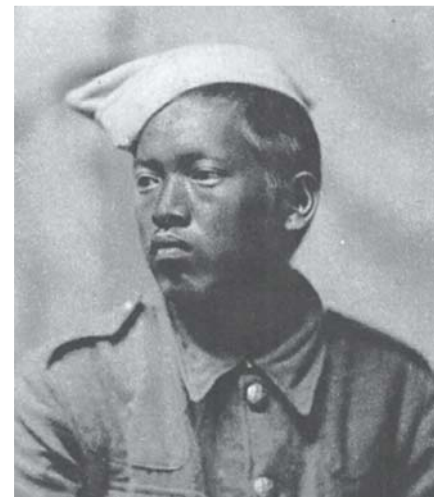
Found with a Gurkha sergeant major. The content of the notice page no. 1 says: The soldiers of the section (Battalion) should be treated with love, friendliness and kindness. Every person, who carries out the rules of his religion, according to law and order, receives his payment (will be happy). The orders of the commanding officer should be carried out precisely and immediately. The content of the notice paper no.2 is as follows. Names of the Gurkhas:



Gurkhas in the trenches of France during World War I. More than 20,000 Nepali soldiers were killed fighting for the Allied Forces between 1914-1918.



Two unnamed Gurkha prisoners of war in a German camp in Münster in 1916.



Thuparau Gurun  
Chandrabir Thapa  
Akalbir Gurun  
Manbahadur Gurun  
Amarsing Gurun  
Udjersingh Gharti  
Imansing Gurun  
Manbir Thapa  
Chhabilal Rana  
Akatbir Thapa  
Narbahadur Thapa  
Schatasin Gurun

On investigating some of these names, British Army records show that Chandrabir Thapa was a rifleman in the Second King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (Sirmur Rifles). Manbir Thapa was a sergeant in the First Battalion of the First King George V's Own Gurkha Rifles (Malaun Regiment) and his service number was 1896. He was killed in action on 20 December 1914 in La Bassée. We even know Manbir's father's name was Parasram Thapa and that he lived in Dohadi village in western Nepal.

Chhabilal Rana's service number was 2114 and he was a rifleman with the Second King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles Second Battalion. He was also killed in action on 20 December.

Records at La Bassée show that there were other Gurkha soldiers killed in the battlefield or taken prisoner who are not on Lt Pfeiffer's diary list. One of them is Haribal Thapa who, according to the Sir Kukri & Co blog, was a rifleman in the First King George V's Own Gurkha Rifles (First Gurkha Regiment).

His service number was 2952 and he died on 24 January 1915 while he was a prisoner of war in a German camp after being captured at La Bassée. His grave can still be found at a military cemetery outside Berlin. Haribal Thapa's documents show that his father was Dal Kishore who lived in Perung in today's Majhkot of Tanahu district.





IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM



Contemporary map of La Bassée in France, which was captured by the Germans during 1914.



COURTESY: SIR KUKRI & CO

Gurkha prisoners of war in a German camp. Some of their voices recorded in song and stories are now in the Humboldt Museum archives.

Lieutenant Alexander Pfeiffer’s diary, as translated by his great-grandson, has many references to the Gurkhas who were their enemies and served in the British Army. Among them are entries dated 20 December 1914, the day of the fierce battle during which the 12 Gurkhas listed above by the unknown Nepali soldier were probably taken prisoner:

I was woken up at 5:30am on 20 December 1914 by the sound of cannons and gunfire. Someone opened the door to the room where I was sleeping. He was the uberjäger from our machine-gun company. He was so frightened he could not even speak properly. Our machine-gun company had been over-run by the enemy. He said they (the Gurkhas) used their curved knife to cut the throats of our comrades, and killed everyone they could find. I woke up the others and relayed this news to them.

After the end of the battle, I witnessed a horrific sight. The dead and wounded covered the ground. There were some British and Indian (Gurkha) soldiers, who were in eternal sleep next to our artillery position. Some were headless, others did not have limbs. We took what we could from the dead. I got one of those curved knives, tobacco, food in tiffin boxes.

We were fighting these Indians (Gurkhas) who had their heads shaven. They were short and stocky, and very agile. One of them who was a prisoner of war said that the Gurkhas

were terrified of the cold. They were afraid of the snow and freezing weather. They will soon bite the dust.

The Gurkhas have a reputation for being brutal, aggressive and fearless, but in their hearts they are kind, peace-loving and spiritual people.

The Nepali soldier’s diary, written by hand 107 years ago, says a lot about the war and the warriors from Nepal. The soldier wrote about fellow Nepalis in his own, and possibly other, units, carefully listing the names of the dead and those taken prisoner. The names in the poem are probably of those who were killed in battle, but we cannot be certain. The other list, because of its similarity to the list in Lt Pfeiffer’s list in German, could be of those who were taken prisoner on 20 December.

But that opens up a puzzle. How come the list of dead soldiers in the Nepali soldier’s diary is in the same order as the list of prisoners in Lt Pfeiffer’s German diary? Nepali writer Satis Shroff who lives in the southwest German town of Freiburg has read Lt Pfeiffer’s notes and believes that the commanding officer used the list of Gurkha POWs to instruct his subordinates to treat the soldiers well and to allow them to practice their religious rites as they are used to. Shroff infers that the Gurkha who wrote the list of names is dead because there is no mention of a handing-over of the diary.

It is not clear if Lt Pfeiffer is just translating the Nepali soldier’s diary, or if those are his own instructions. The German officer’s own diary was found more than a century later by his great-grandson. We do not know what the Gurkha’s name was, where in Nepal he was from, and what happened to him.

To add to the puzzle, Manbir Thapa, whose name is among the 12 listed in the German and Nepali soldiers’ diaries, is also on the FindGrave.com list of those killed in action on 20 December 1914 in the battle of La Bassée and buried at the Indian Cemetery in La Rochelle in France. Here is a partial reproduction of the list of those killed from the First King George V’s Gurkha Rifles (Malaun Regiment) on that day with their father’s name and hometown:

- Rifleman Buddhiman Thapa**  
Father’s name and address: Sukhbhar Thapa, Lamjung
- Lance Corporal Kharak Bahadur Gurung**  
Father’s name and address: Jasbir Thapa, Lamjung
- Rifleman Bahadur Gurung**  
Father’s name and address: Asu Bahadur Gurung, Lamjung
- Rifleman Rana Bahadur Rana**  
Father’s name and address: Kulman Singh, Serung

- Rifleman Pritman Thapa**  
Father’s name and address: Sarbajit Thapa, Graham
- Rifleman Ransur Thapa**  
Father’s name and address: Purnabir Thapa, Bhirkot
- Rifleman Haribaran Thapa**  
Father’s name and address: Pratiman Thapa, Bhirkot

- Lance Corporal Lal Bahadur Gurung**  
Father’s name and address: Sriman Gurung, Gorkha

Besides the uncertainty of war, the Gurkhas who sailed across the oceans to a completely new country, climate and food must have suffered greatly from extreme cold because they did not have enough warm clothes while in the wet trenches.

Many wore military trousers on top of their *suruwal*.

The Nepalis had never been trained in trench warfare, and did not know how to dig them. They were not used to fighting in such cold. The Germans found out from the Gurkha prisoners of war that the Nepalis feared the cold more than the enemy, according to Alexander Pfeiffer’s diary.

Most of the fighting men from Nepal could not read or write, and no one ever wrote their stories, so there is very little written documentation of what they went through. There must be many more tales of unknown soldiers that we will never hear about. Yet, they are a part of our people’s history, and a forgotten chapter in the history of Nepal.

Those who returned alive from the front docked in Bombay and took the train via Banaras, where they all bought copies of the Nepali *Ramayana* translated by Bhanubhakta Acharya. One of the major ways in which the holy book got to the far corners of Nepal was through these demobilised Gurkhas returning home.

The Battle of La Bassée lasted three months with the Germans first gaining the upper hand, and then being repulsed by British Army reinforcements from the Lahore Division and Gurkhas. The British suffered more than 20,000 casualties, of which 1,600 were from the Indian Corps, including Gurkhas. The Germans recorded 6,000 killed.

Captured Gurkhas were transported to prisoner of war camps in Germany. There, some of the prisoners had their voices and songs preserved in early recording machines. Nepali professor Alaka Atreya Chudal of the University of Vienna has been translating from Nepali into German the testimonies recorded between 1914-1918 in a prisoner of war camp at Halbmondlager in Wünsdorf, 40km from Berlin.

The 100 or so recordings contain Nepali folk tales, songs, poetry and folk riddles that have immense linguistic and cultural value because they are preserved in audio from more than a century ago. The recordings are now in the archives of Humboldt-Universität in Berlin.

Says Prof Atreya: “These folk material bring out the sorrow, prayers, suffering, longing for home and family of the Gurkha prisoners from long ago.” 🇳🇵

*Shree Bhakta Khanal* is an investigative journalist and author of *An Arduous Path*.



EVENTS



Bunga Mahotsav

Enjoy the weekend at the festival celebrating the unique history, culture, rituals, art and crafts of Bungamati. Free shuttle services available from Jawalakhel. Call for details. 15 October, 9am-7pm, Bungamati, Lalitpur (01) 5345999

Blood Donation

Blood donation and health camp by RSTCA foundation this weekend. 29 October, 12pm onwards, Nil Saraswati Temple, Lazimpat

Sustainable festival

Take a step towards sustainability, donate wearable, good-conditioned clothes for the underprivileged. 18 October, 10pm onwards, Sukhawati Store Foundation, Banasthali, 9808031991

Cancer walkathon

Walkathon organised by CancerCare Nepal for breast cancer awareness month of October. 15 October, 8pm onwards, Hard Rock Café, Darbarmarg



Le Sherpa Market

Shop local at the Saturday Le Sherpa Market and buy baked goods, meals, handicrafts and clothes. 15 October, 8am-12.30pm, Le Sherpa, Maharajgunj

DINING



Hankook Sarang

Enjoy Kimchi pancakes, Samgyeopsal, Gimbap and Bibimbap, and satisfy your Korean tastebuds. 10am-10pm, Tangal, Naxal (01) 4421711

JAZZMANDU 2022

Valley Jams

Friday, 14 October, 7:00pm – 9:00pm  
**Venues:** Jazz Upstairs, Lazimpat – Jamie Baum Sextet (USA)  
Electric Pagoda, Thamel – Jin Jim (Germany)  
Evoke, Jhamsikhel – Catia Werneck (Brazil / France)  
Maitri Marg – Yumi Ito (Switzerland)  
Gates open at 6:30pm and close at 7:00pm. Rs700.  
*Visiting acts perform intimate sets at venues across the Kathmandu Valley.*

Jazz Bazaar

Saturday, 15 October, 3:00pm – 10:00pm  
**Venue:** Gokarna Forest Resort  
Gates open at 2:00pm and close at 7:00pm. Rs1500.  
*A day and night of incredible music under an open sky at the lush Gokarna Forest Resort.*



Sounds of Brazilian Jazz & Nepali Afro-Funk

Monday, 17 October, 7:00pm – 9:00pm  
**Venue:** Aloft, Thamel  
Gates open at 6:00pm and close at 8:00pm. Rs1700.  
*A classy evening in Thamel with music spanning Brazil, West Africa and Nepal.*

Jazz at Patan

Tuesday, 18 October, 7:00pm – 9:00pm  
**Venue:** Yalamaya Kendra, Patan Dhoka  
Gates open at 6:30pm and close at 8:00pm. Please be seated by 6:45pm. Rs1700.  
*Nepali classical music fuses with jazz on a magical night in the old city of Patan.*

Jazzmandu Finale

Wednesday, 19 October, 5:30pm – 10:00pm  
**Venue:** Hotel Yak & Yeti, Durbar Marg  
Gates open at 4:30pm and close at 8:00pm. Rs1500.  
*The full festival line-up comes together for one last jam to close out Surya Nepal Jazzmandu 2022.*



Achaar Ghar

Home-cooked meals along with the various choices of pickles prepared using recipes passed down generations. Jhamsikhel, Pulchok, (01) 5541952

Belgian Waffles

Whether strawberry cream-cheese or butterscotch crunch, drop by the nearest outlet or just order online for these delights. 9849636013

GETAWAY



Temple Tree Resort

Temple Tree promises best services and perfect atmosphere to wind down. Enjoy Nepali architecture and design at the famous Pokhareli Lakeside. Lakeside, Pokhara, (61) 465819

The Old Inn

Old Inn offers view of Annapurna range from its cozy Newa houses. The bed and breakfast is situated in one of the most beautiful places: Bandipur. Book a room now! Bandipur, Tanahu, (065) 520110

Peacock Guest House

Peacock guest house is housed in a 700-year-old UNESCO heritage building. Guests can enjoy the true Newa architecture and engage with the heart of the old city of Bhaktapur. Tachupol Tole, Dattatreya Square, Bhaktapur, (01) 6611829



Meghauli Serai

Detox at Meghauli with great food, cozy ambiance, and enjoy safaris touring the rich biodiversity of Chitwan. Chitwan National Park, 9851218500

Mystic Mountain

The resort standing amidst the lush forest of Nagarkot offers the peaceful and silent getaway. The ultramodern designs offer guests top services and comfort. Nagarkot, (01) 6200646

Honacha

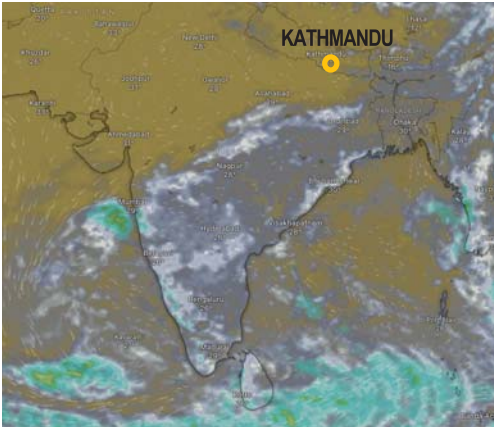
Serving authentic Newari food since 1934, this family owned restaurant welcomes anyone hankering for delectable and truly Newa delicacies. 9am-7.30pm, Patan Durbar Square



Bajeko Sekuwa

Authentic Nepali cuisine, with sekuwa, tash and Nepali khana set. You don't want to miss their homey atmosphere. 9.30am-9.30pm, (01) 4492130

WEEKEND WEATHER

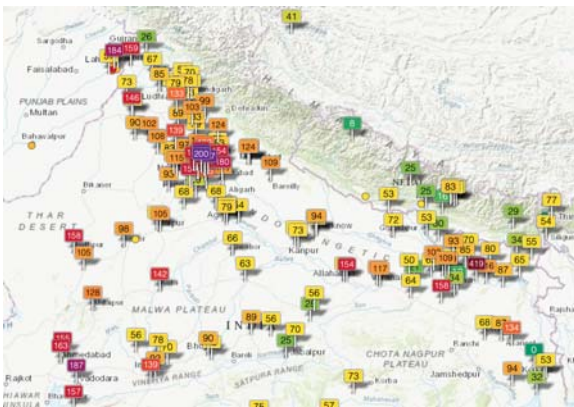


Monsoon Retreat

A westerly jetstream established itself south of the Himalaya just as the monsoon produced one last trough over northern India and Nepal. This blocking action stopped the low pressure on its tracks, forcing it to dump as much as 250mm of rain in 12 hours in some places. The loss of life and damage has been big. The monsoon is now in full retreat and there is just some mopping up operations with residual moisture creating localised showers. Days will still be hot, but the minimum temperature will go down to 12 degrees in Kathmandu on the weekend.



AIR QUALITY INDEX



Kathmandu's air quality is still good because of lower vehicular traffic after the rain from a waning monsoon. However, there is trouble on the horizon. NASA infrared satellite sensors show that post-harvest crop residue burning has started in Pakistan, and is spreading to Indian Punjab. The result can already be seen in this Air Quality Index map of northern India. Expect the westerlies to now start blowing this smoke towards Nepal by the end of next week.

OUR PICK

From the diabolically sweet mind behind classics like *Oldboy*, *The Handmaiden* and *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* comes a romantic thriller set off by a murder but that takes you to all kinds of strange places. At a mountain peak in South Korea, a man plummets to his death. Did he jump or was he pushed? When detective Hae-joon arrives on the scene, he begins to suspect the dead man's wife Seorae. But as he digs deeper, he gets entangled in a web of deception and desire. Winner of Best Director at the 2022 Cannes Film Festival, *Decision to Leave* is a lyrical story of tidal waves crashing on the dangerous and delectable shores of desperation and dalliance. Stars Tang Wei, Park Hae-il, Jung-hyun, Go Kyung-pyo, Park Yong-woo and Jung Yi-seo.



सम्पत्ति विवरण समयमै बुझाऔं, जरिवानाबाट बचौं

- सार्वजनिक पद धारण गरेको व्यक्ति तथा राष्ट्रसेवकले आफ्नो व्यक्तिगत विवरण अद्यावधिक गरौं ।
- आर्थिक वर्ष शुरू भएको साठी दिनभित्र आफ्नो सम्पत्ति विवरण तोकिएको निकायमा पेश गरौं ।
- भ्रष्टाचारमा शून्य सहनशीलता अपनाऔं ।



नेपाल सरकार  
विज्ञापन बोर्ड







# Good housekeeping

Nepali expat gets regional award for outstanding work during the pandemic in Oman

● Suresh Khadka

Receptionists, guest-relations officers, the concierge, restaurant staff are the visible aspects of fancy hotels. But behind the luxurious façade is the housekeeping department, and not much of its nitty-gritty work is apparent to the guests.

At the end of the day, housekeeping is about cleaning, cleaning and cleaning. But there is so much more that goes behind it. Guests, especially in five-star hotels have high expectations about sanitation and hygiene standards, and even more so after Covid.

I am currently an Executive Housekeeper at the InterContinental in Muscat, Oman. My career in housekeeping and laundry operations spans 20 years in multiple luxury hotels in Nepal, India and Oman. And like with everything else, my career can be divided into two parts: pre- and post-Covid.

In the 17 years before the pandemic it felt like the housekeeping department was mostly undervalued. But the three years after Covid, hygiene and cleanliness have become paramount in the hospitality sector, and especially with the housekeeping department.

The pandemic was a scary time. First of all, guest numbers fell. And it became risky because our hotels were used by Covid-19 patients or those who had to quarantine. There was heightened anxiety among staff to clean rooms or do laundry due to fear of exposure, especially in the beginning when it was not clear just how lethal the virus was. None of us wanted to die on the job, of course.

As the head of my department, I had to lead by example and work alongside my staff, motivate them and look for the safest ways to get our work done. Protocols by the hotel and the Oman government were strictly adhered to. We dressed like astronauts and sanitised the hotel, dropped off essentials like food to rooms, packed off infected laundry, and we were constantly paranoid about being infected.

I felt this work was recognised when I was recently awarded the Best Hotel Housekeeper (Regional) in the Middle East Cleaning and Hygiene Awards in Dubai. I had not expected it, but felt proud to receive my regional award in my *daura-suruwal* and *topi*, representing Nepal and my employer at the ceremony.

Even while we devised internal housekeeping strategies in our hotel during the pandemic, I was also equally worried about other Nepalis

in Oman and the situation back home in Nepal. As a member of The Non-resident Nepalese Social Club of Oman, we tried to come up with ideas about how we could help our motherland.

In 2021, with the Delta variant sweeping Nepal, it was evident that lack of oxygen was going to be a crisis back home. We had initially planned to send funds to China so that the Non-Resident Nepalese Association (NRNA) chapter there could buy oxygen cylinders and ship them to Kathmandu. But we found out that it could be done from Oman itself with support from the Nepal Embassy and the NRN Social Club.

The budget was going to be Rs10 million, and the central NRNA head told us that we should go ahead with the purchase and, in case we ran out of money, they would make up for the shortfall. The outpouring of support and love from Nepalis across the Gulf region for our crowd-funding campaign was heart-warming.

In Oman, there were many Nepalis with hard, low-paying jobs who wanted to contribute, but did not know the bank transfer process. I remember going personally to their camps or, in case of domestic workers, to the homes of employers to pick up the money. The spirit of solidarity was immensely encouraging.

I have come a long way since I joined Soaltee Crowne Plaza in Kathmandu in 2003, and moved to India. And there, when I applied for an internal vacancy, I did not even know where Oman was. When I got to Salalah, I was surprised by the greenery – different from what I had heard about the Gulf.

I realised that switching jobs also gave me more bargaining power and helped with career growth and learning. Here in Oman, most colleagues in my position or above are locals or Europeans. Initially, I felt lucky to be in meetings with them, but I was also acutely aware of my language limitations. It is by overcoming such challenges that I have been able to grow.

I am aware that my work and experience is different from other Nepali migrant workers in the region. Around 60% of the employees in my hotel are locals who work in various departments. This is not what I hear from colleagues elsewhere in the Gulf where there are very few residents working, and most are expatriates.

This trend is expected to grow with the Oman government's policy to prioritise local hires. This uncertainty is one of the reasons I sent my family back to Nepal, so that the children's education would not be affected should something happen. It was nice to have my



family around, though. My son was born in Oman.

It is good to see that Nepalis are increasingly taking up more supervisory roles in the Gulf. There is more skilled migration in the medical field, engineering and management of the retail sector. However, it is very difficult for companies that want to directly hire Nepalis to do so because of the Nepal government's restrictive and bureaucratic policies.

Employers like mine therefore are reluctant to hire directly for non-bulk hire positions like chefs from Nepal because it is not worth the effort and headache when the same position can be filled much easily by Indians and Filipinos. The Nepali authorities must seriously reconsider this.

But my most important advice to Nepalis who want to

go for foreign employment is to refrain from applying for a while, but to do proper research on the available opportunity. The type of company determines the migration experience. Fraudulent recruiters who make false promises, and lack of research by migrants who are in a rush to just leave Nepal can put them in difficult positions.

What makes it worse is the inadequate pre-departure orientation, which means many workers are simply unprepared and uninformed when they arrive in Oman.

I am not sure when I will return to Nepal for good. It crosses my mind often but there is always one reason or another to postpone homecoming. It is in particular the fear of whether I will be able to work and do well in the country after being away for so long.

Nothing happens in Nepal without access and networking ability.

We also are not very familiar with market contexts in Nepal, leading to the possibility of making wrong investments of our hard-earned savings. I am talking to fellow diaspora friends about eventually starting a resort in Nepal since this is what I have expertise in. How and when that happens is a different question. Till then I will be a frequent short-term visitor to my own country before returning to the job of head of housekeeping. 🇳🇵

*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.*



DIASPORA  
DIARIES 15

SURYA NEPAL  
PRIVATE LIMITED

# JAZZMANDU

18th kathmandu jazz festival 2022

## TONIGHT VALLEY JAMS

7 PM TO 9 PM  
NRS 700  
FEATURING  
CATIA WERNECK (BRAZIL / FRANCE)  
LIVE AT EVOKE, JHAMSIKHEL  
JAMIE BAUM (USA)  
LIVE AT JAZZ UPSTAIRS, LAZIMPAT  
YUMI ITO (SWITZERLAND)  
LIVE AT MUSICOLOGY, MAITRI MARG  
JIN JIM (GERMANY)  
LIVE AT ELECTRIC PAGODA, THAMEL

## TOMORROW JAZZ BAZAAR

3 PM - 10 PM  
GOKARNA FOREST RESORT  
NRS 1500  
FREE SHUTTLE BUS AVAILABLE

MUSIC FOR UNITY. PEACE & COMPASSION

13-19 OCT

JAMIE BAUM SEXTET USA  
YUMI ITO SWITZERLAND  
CATIA WERNECK BRAZIL / FRANCE  
JIN JIM GERMANY  
CADENZA COLLECTIVE NEPAL  
SAMUNDRA NEPAL  
JONISHA POUDEL NEPAL

www.jazzmandu.com

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT RESPECTIVE VENUES: JAZZ UPSTAIRS, LAZIMPAT | ELECTRIC PAGODA, THAMEL | EVOKE, JHAMSIKHEL | MUSICOLOGY, MAITRI MARG | YALAMAYA KENDRA, PATAN DHOKA | FOR INQUIRIES : 9803001592





The Covid-19 pandemic should have prepared us for more future outbreaks. It hasn't.

● Sonia Awale

For the first time since it was first detected almost three years ago and ravaged Nepal, the SARS-CoV-2 virus has been overtaken by another public health emergency: the dengue epidemic. Covid-19 is not gone (even President Bidya Devi Bhandari just had it), and new strains are comingling with various serotypes of dengue that have officially claimed 39 lives and infected over 30,000 people across Nepal this monsoon. But like the numbers for Covid-19, those are gross under-estimations. As we speak, a new Omicron sub-variant BF.7 which is better equipped to escape antibodies from earlier infections or vaccinations has already spread from the United States to China. Masks, bivalent boosters and avoiding crowds are the most effective prevention methods which only a few follow. Yale University researchers have found considerable growth in excess deaths (total deaths in a population in a given period which is above what is normally expected) among anti-vaxers in Ohio and Florida. In fact, the fatality rate seems to have a direct correlation with political belief. The paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research this month showed that excess death rates for



SUMAN NEPALI

# THREE YEARS OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY

American republicans increased from nearly 0% pre-pandemic to 35% by end-2021. The increase for Democrats was only 10%. Similarly, another study published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* last month revealed that Covid hospitalisations in 13 US states was 10.5 times higher among the unvaccinated and 2.5 times higher in vaccinated persons with no booster shots. Closer home, Hong Kong saw a disproportionate number of

Omicron deaths earlier this year among the unvaccinated elderly. While highly transmissible, the strain was much less fatal among the vaccinated elsewhere. Even in Nepal, which has a full vaccination rate close to 80%, one of the highest in the world, those still being hospitalised with Covid were mostly unvaccinated. "I recently had a girl patient who had lost her parents and a brother to Covid who had not been vaccinated," recalls Sher Bahadur Pun, a virologist at Teku Hospital in

Kathmandu. "There have been one too many unvaccinated patients in my ICU who believed rumours on social media." Pun suspects that since many of his patients are testing negative for dengue, the mosquitoes that bit them could have been carrying another virus like Zika or Chikungunya which have been detected in India. "The symptoms are very similar and transmitted by the same mosquito," he adds. In Nepal, as elsewhere, the early days of the pandemic were

marked by rampant misinformation, first about the novel coronavirus itself, stigmatisation of patients and healthcare providers alike. The general public was slow to adopt safety protocols, which contributed to over 1 million cases and 12,000 deaths in Nepal. Worldwide, there have been over 630 million cases and at least 6.5 million deaths from Covid so far. The pandemic did reinforce hand washing, hygiene and mask-wearing in Nepal, which in turn also helped reduce incidences of

Shineदर घर  
वर्षौ वर्ष...

10  
YEARS  
WARRANTY

asianpaints

Asian Paints Ultima Protek Shyne, यसमा भएको UV Hybrid Technology ले घाम, पानी, धुलो बाट दिन्छ वर्षौ वर्ष सुरक्षा र घर रहन्छ सधै shineदार...

# ULTIMA PROTEK SHYNE

FOR MORE INFORMATION: TYPE <UPS> AND SMS TO 36677

\*Conditions Apply



tuberculosis, typhoid, flu and other infectious diseases.

But the biggest disruption was caused by repeated lockdowns which led to an economic crisis in Nepal, lately worsened by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. All this has slowed improvements in nutrition levels as well as maternal and infant health.

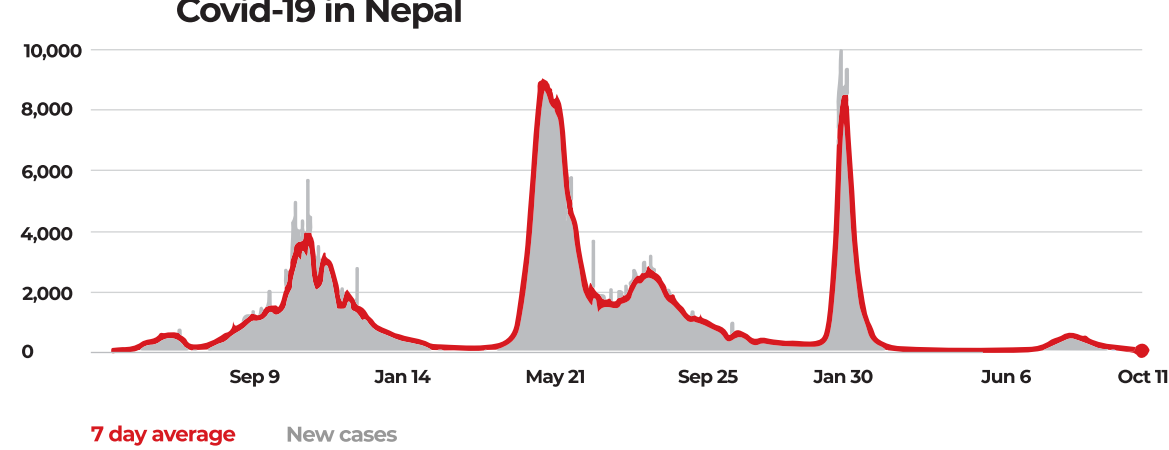
During the pandemic, Nepal had an early warning of what was to come just by following trends in neighbouring India (*see book review, right*). But lack of adequate preparation at the border meant ineffective quarantine and testing, and a rapid spread of the virus to the remotest corners of the country. As hospitals in India ran out of beds and oxygen, so did Nepal.

The second wave in 2021 saw India register the highest daily Covid-19 deaths, but the death rate proportional to population was probably higher in Nepal. Better-equipped hospitals with trained staff and adequate oxygen and ICU facilities across the country would have saved many of those lives.

“Countries like Nepal will have to prepare for not just new emerging diseases but also re-emerging and existing infections. And the only way to do that is by strengthening our health system,” adds Pun “We must start training our medical personnel and upgrade health infrastructure. That is the biggest takeaway from the pandemic.”

Nepal was one of the first countries to volunteer for Oxford University’s Recovery Trial which studied the efficacy of various drugs, yet there is rampant over-prescription and over-the-counter availability of antibiotics.

“We are still using antibiotics like Azithromycin to treat viral infections such as Covid and dengue which is adding to the problem of antimicrobial resistance,” says Buddha Basnyat, a



physician at the Patan Academy of Health Sciences.

Covid-19 is just one of many pandemics. But it won’t be the last. As humans interact with a deteriorating natural habitat and wildlife, they are exposed to zoonotic diseases — viruses that can jump from animals to humans. The growth in instantaneous international travel means infections can spread rapidly across the world.

At the peak of the second wave with the Delta strain more than 250 Nepalis were dying every day, but governments in Kathmandu and the provinces were preoccupied with a nasty power struggle. Political infighting delayed response, and led to many more unnecessary deaths.

As Nepal and India prepare to mark the third year of the Covid-19 outbreak, the worst seems to be over. It took a global crisis and millions of deaths to remind us to be prepared for the next pandemic.

Says Buddha Basnyat: “We now have to make the best use of our capacity and build on it. Let’s not be complacent, there are many other infections that afflict this part of the world.”

## Pandemic unmasked the real disease: governance failure

On 24 March 2020, the Narendra Modi government in India imposed the first lockdown with just four hours of warning. WHO praised this ‘timely and tough action’ to stop Covid, and the University of Oxford at the time called it the strictest lockdown in the world. With China’s zero-Covid policy that is probably not true anymore.

Still, India’s sudden lockdown unleashed the greatest movement of people in the Subcontinent after the 1947 Partition, which had a cascading effect on Nepal.

“For a country with zero social security, which did not even have an authentic count of the number of people left without an income due to the lockdown, and where fractiousness and social fault lines make the poor and the backward easy preys of the systematic corruption, a measure like this would need weeks of planning. Even then it could still go wrong. So the repercussions of such a move without any preparation were unimaginable.”

In her book *Billions Under Lockdown* Indian journalist Abantika Ghosh chronicles the impact of lockdowns on her country. In

a smaller scale, the upheavals caused by the lockdowns impacted Nepali migrant workers in India and Indians in Nepal who had to undertake arduous treks home.

In her book, Ghosh tells the story of 38-year-old Ranveer trying to make the 400km journey on foot from Delhi to his village in Madhya Pradesh. He died along the way, 100m short of reaching his destination. Nepali migrant workers, prevented from entering their own country at the border, swam across the Mahakali river in Darchula. Some drowned.

Once quarantined, often without proper testing and contact tracing, Covid refugees were housed in crowded shelters which themselves became super-spreaders for the virus. The outbreak snowballed as migrants took the virus home to families, leading to community transmission.

As hospitals were overwhelmed with cases, several treatment therapies were introduced. From a combination of HIV drugs and convalescent plasma therapy to malaria drug hydroxychloroquine, a typhoid antibiotic Azithromycin and Remdesivir, all of which were later proven to be ineffective, and

sometimes even harmful. What saved lives was the timely supply of oxygen, and the cheap steroid Dexamethasone.

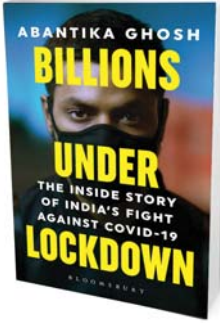
Ghosh writes about India: ‘The biggest lesson of all was how politics became the most insurmountable impediment in the control of the disease.’ Ditto for Nepal.

The pandemic unmasked the real disease: state neglect, corruption, governance failure leading to ad-hoc restrictions, lack of testing and surveillance, an overwhelmed health system that left hundreds of millions of hapless citizens to fend for themselves.

It also showed what worked: empowered local health institutions which responded quickly with testing, tracing and quarantining. No surprise that the Indian state with the lowest Covid fatality rate despite high exposure was Kerala.

Abantika Ghosh’s lessons learnt could just as well be written for Nepal: ‘A matured health system is also decentralized, transparent, and, on occasion, self-sustaining ... If you don’t treat diseases early, you only treat them when they are complex, and because complex interventions are more expensive, you do not have the resources left to bolster primary care. The more hospitals you build without investments in primary care, the more hospitals you will need to build.’

**Sonia Awale**



*Billions Under Lockdown: The Inside Story of India's Fight Against Covid-19*  
By Abantika Ghosh  
2021 Bloomsbury  
1RS699  
393 pages

TATA MOTORS

Connecting Aspirations

EVOLVE TO ELECTRIC

PRESENTING THE NEW TIGOR EV

POWERED BY

ZIPTRON

Advanced Electric Drive Experience

SAFE AND RELIABLE

- Waterproof IP67 rated battery pack and motor
- 8-year battery and motor warranty\*
- Driven and proven for over 35 mn. kms.

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

- Liquid-cooled lithium-ion battery pack
- 60# minutes fast charging time

UNMATCHED PERFORMANCE

- 0-60 km/h in under 6^ seconds
- Instant torque at 0 rpm
- Permanent Magnet Synchronous Motor

Price starts at NRs. 31,49,000/-

GLOBAL NCAP

★★★★ 4 STAR RATING

SIPRADI TRADING PVT. LTD., An ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 45001:2018 Certified Company

Thapathali 01-4250610, 4222150, 4222152

For inquiry, give us a call at 9802333164

For online booking

SIPRADI





Saleways

SalesBerry

SalesBerry EXPRESS

Ashoj 8<sup>th</sup> to Kartik 30<sup>th</sup>, 2079

SalesBerry

FESTIVE

Dhamaka

हरेक दिन : ५८ जना

हरेक हप्ता : १६ जना

Bumper बिजेता : ५ जना

Surprise बिजेता : ८ जना

SCAN TO WIN

YEAR 2079 WINNERS

“जति किन्यो ;  
त्यति नै जित्यो”

fone pay

यो योजनामा Fonepay QR मार्फत भुक्तानी गर्नुहुने ग्राहकहरूबाट ५८ दिन सम्म दैनिक एकजना, साप्ताहिक १६ तथा सराईज ८ जना ग्राहक महानुभावहरूले आफुले शपिङ्ग गरेको रकम बराबरको निःशुल्क शपिङ्ग गर्न पाउनु हुनेछ । साथै ५ जना माध्यशालि ग्राहकहरूले १ लाखको निःशुल्क शपिङ्ग गर्ने बम्पर पुरस्कार प्राप्त गर्नुहुनेछ ।

CASH BACK 10%

NIC ASIA

UPTO RS. 300

UPTO 17% OFF LG

UPTO 30% OFF SAMSUNG

UPTO 25% OFF HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Offer Valid Till 22<sup>nd</sup> Ashoj

10% CASH BACK

NIC ASIA

UPTO RS. 300

UPTO 17% OFF LG

UPTO 30% OFF SAMSUNG

UPTO 25% OFF HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

# Nepalis in India’s arsenal

Many of you pulled me aside at a recent diplomatic soiree to ask if it is a coincidence that on the week that Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) announced his candidacy for elections from Gorkha district, the Indian Air Force also unveiled its brand new Light Combat Helicopter ‘Prachand’. My answer to all of you has been a decisive and definitive: “Umm. Maybe.”

There is a precedent for the Indians naming their flying machines after Nepali objects. In the 1960s Air India’s Boeing 707s were named after Himalayan mountains like Nanda Devi, Kamet and Trishul. But soon, they ran out of mountains and christened the rest of the 707s after peaks in Nepal: Lhotse, Gauri Shankar, Dhaulagiri, Makalu, Everest and Annapurna.

We don’t know if MoFA at the time issued a *note verbale* (Latin: Diplomatic aide-memoire filled with expletives) but we suppose not, since there are no historical records of a war breaking out between the two countries at that time.

While naming its new indigenously designed chopper, the Indian Air Force did not, strictly speaking, infringe on the Maoist Supremo’s intellectual property because it cleverly dropped the ‘a’ from Prachanda.

But it obviously wanted to piggy-back on the formidable, fearsome reputation of The Fierce One. They may also have felt ownership of the name ‘Prachanda’ since they had given Comrade Awesome a safe house in Noida for most of the war years.

Be that as it may, this is an opportune moment for MoFA to fire off another *note verbale* in a generally southerly direction to show that we will not take this blatant plagiarism lying down. We will take it straight in the chin.



It also means no one is safe anymore. The *nom de guerre* of other Nepali guerrilla commanders could similarly be purloined by DRDO.

Comrade Ram Bahadur Thapa must be extra vigilant, since his war name, Badal, could be the next to be taken to name India’s new ICBM.

The name Prachand is quite appropriate for the IAF’s new LCH since, like the protagonist it is named after, the new attack helicopter has a rotor that makes revolutions. It has stealth properties with reduced visual, aural, radar and infrared signatures, which means it can conceal its true intentions, be anywhere and everywhere at the same time, and it is armed to the teeth with misguided missiles.

If the Indian military has hit a writer’s block with nomenclature for its future arsenal, Nepal, could unilaterally offer the following names as a gesture of goodwill for India’s new weapons systems:

- Indian Army’s new Main Battle Tank: **Balen**
- Indian Air Force’s new Combat Drone: **Laldhoj**
- Indian Navy’s new Submarine: **INS Arzoo**



The Ass

# THE ALL-NEW TOYOTA RAIZE

## RAIZE THE GAME

Uplift your spirit with the striking new urban SUV- the all-new Raize. Turn Heads at every corner with its colorful and distinctive design while enjoying complete comfort within the amazingly spacious cabin.



Move your world