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SMOKE SCREEN

One year after the Glasgow conference, world governments are meeting again in Sharm El-Sheikh in Egypt next week to decide on urgent measures to avert a global climate catastrophe.

A lot has happened in that one year. Record heat waves have baked North America, Europe, South Asia and China. Wildfires have raged across the tundra, there have been unprecedented floods in Pakistan, storms have ravaged coastlines. Weather extremes that scientists had said would happen in the 2040s are already taking place.


The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Sharm El-Sheikh is happening even as smoke from crop residue burning shrouds north India and blows up towards Himalayan glaciers, accelerating their melt. Nepal saw unseasonal post-monsoon rains that killed as many as 100 people in landslides and debris flows.

There have been a slew of scientific reports in the run-up to COP27, each more alarmist than others (pages 4-5). Despite climate denialism, we are already in a climate emergency. To limit average global temperatures to within 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by 2050, steps should have been taken yesterday.

**WHICH
LOSS AND
DAMAGE?**
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2

This week's Emissions Gap Report 2022 by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) calls itself 'a testimony to inadequate action on the global climate crisis' and calls for a credible pathway to 1.5°C which would require annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to be reduced by 45% in the next eight years, and continue to decline after that.

In the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report scientists have even more apocalyptic predictions. Even if the 1.5°C cap is reached between 2041-2100, up to 14% of terrestrial species in nature will be extinct.

In its mountain chapter, the IPCC warns of biodiversity loss and glacial retreat. This is not a prediction – it is already happening. 
Sonia Awale

FULL STORY PAGE 4-5

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HYUNDAI

Which loss and damage?

World leaders, including from Nepal, will gather again at Sharm El-Sheikh in Egypt this month to assess the climate emergency and agree on urgent measures to avert irreversible damage to the ecosphere.

At COP27, we need to expose the hypocrisy, grandstanding, victim-playing and victim-blaming that occurs every year at these summits. Governments have met 27 times since 1994 to find ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The atmosphere would be a lot warmer if nothing had been done, but would be much cooler if more had been done.

The summit in Egypt from 6-18 November 2022 takes place in a year during which the world suffered unprecedented back-to-back climate-induced disasters like record-breaking heat waves, forest fires, storms, glacial retreat and floods. Scientists say the intensity and frequency of these calamities are happening decades earlier than forecast.

With the pandemic and the Ukraine conflict, it does not look likely that rich countries will put their money where their mouth is at COP27.

Which is why demands by some countries, including Nepal, for 'loss and damage' is probably dead in the water. The argument is that the impact of the climate crisis is causing so much loss of life, livelihoods and property that just adapting to the change is no longer adequate.

The floods in Pakistan this year, prolonged heat waves in India and China, and landslides in Nepal show that developing countries are unjustly paying the price for a crisis not of their making.

Even so, in Nepal the climate crisis is just the tip of a pyramid of problems that pre-date climate change. For example, politicians in Kathmandu cannot blame the chronic food insecurity in western Nepal on the climate crisis. Inability to provide hill-irrigation to lessen farmers' dependence on rain-fed subsistence agriculture is the main reason.

Migration every month of 80,000 Nepalis for overseas employment is not due to the climate crisis. For centuries, Nepalis have been driven out by joblessness, poverty,

indebtedness and discrimination.

A jumbo Nepali delegation is flying to Sharm El-Sheikh with a Forest Minister who knows next to nothing about climate, is intent on logging 4,000 hectares of forest to build a new airport, and allow cronies to build safari hotels inside national parks.

He will demand compensation for 'loss and damage' in Melamchi affected by last year's flood. The real loss in Melamchi was caused by chronic corruption, mismanagement, political interference and incompetence spanning decades.

The destructive landslides due to rampaging roads built by rogue politicians is far more serious than loss and damage caused by global climate change.

No doubt, extreme weather events will be more frequent right across the Himalaya in coming years. There may be catastrophic co-seismic multiple glacial lake outburst floods. We have to prepare with clever planning, not go COP-hopping every year with a begging bowl.

At COP26 in Glasgow last year, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur

Deuba pledged to increase forest cover to 45% by 2030, ensure climate resilience for all vulnerable Nepalis, and reduce emission to become carbon negative after 2045.

Nepal already has 44.74% forest cover, we just have to make sure we do not destroy what is left. The

second commitment is so unmeasurable as to make it meaningless. And we do not see any far-reaching incentives for battery vehicles or household electricity use.

Nepal's 'enhanced' Nationally Determined Contribution aimed to hit net-zero by 2050. At the rate petroleum imports are rising, the country will be bankrupt by then. (Page 4-5)

Nepal has to reduce fossil fuel use not so much to save the planet, but to slash our petroleum import bill and improve urban air quality.

Nepal has to stop playing victim and invoke 'loss and damage' all the time. We should instead put our minds (and money) to implementing domestic low-carbon policies. We do not lack money, we lack competence, commitment and political will.

airfield allowed soldiers under his command to fight on.

Captain Thapa was single, and the son of veteran army colonel, Nar Bahadur Thapa. He was a born soldier, often leading his units deep into the surrounding mountains, where they had their ears close to the ground. In an interview in the control tower of Rumjatar airport just ten days before his death, he told us: "Our army is capable and well-trained, and we can put down the Maoists. But our numbers are small. Unemployed youth would have jobs, stability would return, and the economy would pick up if the war ended," he had said.

"You can't fight this war with 20,000 soldiers in such terrain," he added, gesturing at the mountains towering over the airstrip. In the interview, Thapa was surprisingly critical of higher officers in the army who he said didn't visit the frontlines often enough. "This affects the morale of the boys," he said. "I go to the field very chance I get, why can't they come down from Kathmandu?" Ironically, Chief of Army Staff Pyar Jung Thapa visited Rumjatar a day after the attack to pay tribute to the bravery of Captain Thapa and his men.

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



RSS

Nepal's politicians must stop invoking climate change to cover up past failures, instead launch an all-out shift to renewables.

ONLINE PACKAGES



Read our climate special package ahead of the COP27 starting next week in Sharm El-Sheikh on *pages 1, 2 and 4-5*. Also watch national and international figures weigh in why the Himalayas are important and their accelerated melt a threat to the entire world in this video only on our YouTube channel. Subscribe for more original multimedia content.

MACHAPUCHRE

Is nothing going to stay sacred ('To open Machapuchhre for mountaineering, or not?', Juddha Bahadur Gurung, *nepalitimes.com*)? I need Machapuchhre to stay out of bounds for humans.

Elif Ledrön

• I agree, leave Machapuchhre alone. There are only a few unspoiled places left. Look at all the rubbish that's left on the mountains that are climbed at the moment.

Victoria

• I would question the motivation of tourists who even want to consider climbing Machapuchhre. Surely tourism should be about protecting the local culture, not trashing it!

Christine MacDonald

• No, in Australia we banned climbing Uluru (The red rock in central Australia) because it is offensive to the traditional custodians. Same for this mountain. There are many others to climb.

Shir Een

• Definitely no. It will turn Machapuchhre into just-another-mountain-to-climb. It will be a trendy mountain for a year or so, and after that the "new mountain" hype will fade. I visited Pokhara in 2008. Machapuchhre looked beautiful, glorious and untouched, let it be.

Veljko Flego

• Whoever is behind opening Machapuchhre for commercial expeditions should be ashamed and exposed for their motive to cash on it. The local people should take every measure to protest it.

Desh Ratna

NEPALI NURSES

Many hospitals outside Kathmandu are understaffed and nurses are overworked ('Nepali nurses now Britain-bound', Radha Adhikari, *page 11*). The nurse-patient ratio is so low and many health facilities are completely run by nurses where there are no doctors. And most nursing staff don't even have permanent staff position, and are hired as 'karar sewa' basis.

Nash J Ne

• The article is informative and balanced overall. But Nepal doesn't have a surplus of nurses. The problem for Nepal is there aren't enough hospitals or jobs for nurses to provide healthcare for the whole population.

Manohar Budhathoki

STREET DOGS

It's ironic and sad that Nepalis reject their own free street dogs that badly need homes in favour of expensive pedigree dogs that often need the conditions and care that they are unable to provide ('Kathmandu's street-smart dogs', Sonia Awale, #1133).

Lesley Junlakan

• There are many Nepali people who have adopted Nepali dogs, take care of them on the streets, work to care for them without fail.

Shristi Singh Shrestha

• Her dedication is so commendable ('Every day is dog day', *Nepali Times* YouTube). I do what I can as an individual helping strays in my area and all of my dogs are rescues as well. I understand your struggle but kudos to your undying spirit. Thank you for your kindness and dedication Srijana didi and your team!

Karishma Chand Thakur

VULTURES

Wouldn't like their job - but they are key players in the eco system ('Reviving Himalayan vulture and culture', *nepalitimes.com*). They are, however, sadly under threat.

David Durkan

• In upper Mustang sky burials are still practiced. Not long ago a local person posted a video in YouTube where we can see how this ritual is done.

Moon Miracle

MANUSHI YAMI BHATTARAI

A person who in principle (at least) fought against the hereditary monarchy is now abdicating a political reign to his own daughter ('A daughter also rises', *nepalitimes.com*). Communist hypocrisy has no boundary.

Sushil Koirala

IDEOLOGY

Excellent and comprehensive article on the same old, same old and some new politicians who put their personal power consolidation above any 'ideas/ideology' for helping the masses of Nepalis ('The end of ideology in Nepal', Santa Gaha Magar, *nepalitimes.com*). Even if the leaders have ideas they seem to have no core values, except power acquisition. Nepal's government seems to consist of never ending musical chairs of old fart power brokers, PMs, etc. When will the people of Nepal finally stand up and boot these corrupt incompetents out?

Roger Ray

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING



Kathmandu's street-smart dogs

by *Sonia Awale*

Nepalis might prefer pure breeds, but Westerners have recognised the value of often unloved street dogs in Nepal and there is an increasing demand for them to be adopted abroad. Full story only at nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook



Faith Stolen: Lost in Nepal, found in America

by *Lost Arts of Nepal*

Read how Lost Arts of Nepal, an anonymously-run social media campaign dedicated to locating and assisting in repatriation of stolen gods of Nepal, traced gods looted half-a-century ago from a 15th century monastery in Kathmandu to American museums.

Most popular on Twitter

To open Machapuchhre for mountaineering, or not?

by *Juddha Bahadur Gurung*

Cultural historians say Machapuchhre expeditions shouldn't be allowed as it holds religious significance for the Gurung people. But some want ban lifted on the iconic Himalayan peak that has been out of bounds. Join the discussion online.

Most commented

Pigs fly and fish climb trees

by *Sahina Shrestha*

Karna Maya Pun could have been anything in her life: a landowner, a migrant worker in Korea or an emigrant to the UK. Perhaps even a nurse or a teacher. Instead, she is a farmer in Nepal with her husband and has no regrets. Read her awe-inspiring tale on our website.

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

"#Nepal is extremely prone to climate-related disasters, and reliable forecasts offers a new and effective way of supporting communities not only to cope with, but also adapt to the impact of the #ClimateCrisis."



pigreen @pigreen1

Forecasting is important; more important still is having an effective emergency strategy in place and adequately resourced



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

The 27th annual UN #climate summit is taking place in November. Will it be worth all the time and effort? Or are they a waste of time? Felix Dodds and Chris Spence who have attended many of COPs share what they've learned for @ipnews.



ART @AmulyaSir

Almost, but there is nothing as effective as @nepalitimes.



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

"A large part of the public is concerned with image rather than agenda, choosing to pay attention to how female candidates present themselves over what their election platform is."



Akhilesh Upadhyay @akhileshU

To me, Manushi is young, intelligent & a well read woman - the kind Nepal needs to *change the grammar* of our politics. Like Dr Swarnim Wagle. But many of her Kathmandu-7 voters (in my conversations) also see her parents, BRB & Hisila, as a political liability to her candidacy.



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

At least a dozen of #Nepal's richest men and businessmen are standing for direct elections. More than one-third of the mayors and municipality chairs elected in local #elections in May were contractors, most of them have not even bothered to divest.



Mahendra Shrestha @sbshrestha60

Don't see the light at the end of the tunnel... it's more problems than prospects.



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Right climate for Nepal to

Nepal must not wait for rich countries to pledge funds for climate action, we can do a lot on our own

● Sonia Awale

This month’s COP27 UN Climate Summit in Egypt will be immediately followed in Nepal by federal and provincial elections on 20 November.

The election manifestos of the political parties once more make grandiose promises, but a shift to renewable energy is not their main priority. Reducing fossil fuel use is not an election slogan for any of the populist platforms.

Even so, environmentalists and energy experts say the polls are an opportunity to elect leaders who make genuine and realistic pledges to switch to renewables, protecting public health by reducing air pollution, managing solid waste.

“Our stance on the climate crisis has been limited to making lofty commitments at international platforms, back home there is not much to show implementation-wise,” says climate activist Shilshila Acharya of the Avni Center for Sustainability in Kathmandu.

She adds: “For climate to take a front seat in our politics, we need leaders who have understood and internalised the importance of slow-moving disasters. But they are only looking at personal gain. It is up to

us citizens to vote for candidates who will implement solutions.”

Indeed, while the climate crisis is global, the solutions are local. Nepal’s transition to electric mass transport and household electrification to replace LPG are two low-hanging fruits for which Nepal just needs political will, and not much international funding.

To be sure the Nepali Congress (NC) has committed to increasing the use of electric vehicles to 50% in the next five years. Prime Minister Deuba promised at COP26 in Glasgow last year to make Nepal carbon neutral by 2045, but that is not going to happen with the current policies and priorities.

Switching to battery power just 10% of vehicles in Nepal would save at least Rs21 billion a year in petroleum imports. It is clear that reducing Nepal’s carbon footprint is necessary to save the country’s economy, and the climate contribution would be a bonus.

Nepal has seen substantial growth in the sales of electric vehicles (EVs) despite a ban on imports of luxury cars. In the last three months alone, 705 new EV units were sold -- a five-fold increase compared to the same period last year.

But most of these were private vehicles. Electric public buses still cost three times more than similar sized diesel ones, and do not enjoy the tax rebates given to private electric cars and two-wheelers. This is in direct contrast with a stated government policy to make a quarter of all private vehicles and 20% of buses in the country electric by 2025.

“Electric mass transport is the solution to our problems, it will clean up the air, reduce carbon emission and use up surplus electricity,” states Bhushan Tuladhar of Sajha Yatayat which has already rolled out three of its 40 electric buses.

But there are headwinds. Because electric buses are initially so expensive, financing and tax

rebates are needed. Charging infrastructure is also critical. Tuladhar adds: “We just need to translate our commitments into concrete action.”

For every litre of petrol or diesel sold in Nepal, the government has been collecting Rs1.5 pollution tax since 2008. The accumulated Rs10 billion could be used to subsidise electric vehicles and clean energy.

Similarly, the electric trolley bus depot in Tikune rusting away with old vehicles could have easily been a charging station for Sajha’s new electric buses.

On paper, Nepal has some forward-looking policies, but as the World Bank notes in its recent Country Climate and Development Report for Nepal: ‘Implementation of this reform agenda and

prioritization of investments is incipient. Moreover, enhanced prioritization and efficiency of public expenditure are required to maximize climate and development benefits.’

Nepal’s average temperature is expected to increase by 0.9°C between 2016 and 2045 under a global medium-range emissions pathway. This means winters could



 **prabhu BANK**

Nepal imports

Nepal has imported good worth Rs400 billion in the past three months, 16.2% less than the same period last year. Exports



have also decreased by 35.7% to Rs41.8 billion. This has resulted in a decline in trade deficit to Rs359 billion. Of the goods imported, petroleum

Turkish APEX award



accounted for Rs75 billion, agricultural products Rs74 billion, edible oil Rs34 billion, food grains Rs9 billion, fruits Rs5 billion and vegetables Rs8 billion. Meanwhile, Nepal exported electricity worth Rs10 billion in the past year.

Turkish Airlines has received the APEX World Class award, and for the sixth time in a row, the 2023 Five Star Global Airline award. Only eight airlines were awarded by the end of the event. Says Ahmet Bolat, chair of the airlines: “We are proud to receive APEX World Class Award on the APEX

Nepal-German Mart

Official Airline Ratings for the second time this year. We will continue to shape and enrich our services in accordance with the expectations and satisfaction of our guests in the framework of safety and sustainability.”



Kuwait Airways to Lumbini

Germand Ambassador Thomas Prinz inaugurated the Nepal-German Mart last week which showcased products centric to each country’s culture and aimed to promote business between the two. The event, organised by the Nepal German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NGCCI) with the German embassy, had 40 companies participating. Also this week, a team led by the parliamentary State Secretary of federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, Barbel Kofler met Finance Minister Janardan Sharma to discuss cooperation in renewal energy and health.



Cable wire hazard

The Nepal Electricity Authority has given a 45-day deadline to service providers to manage cable wires on electric poles following complaints of increased electrical accidents. Minimum distance between bare and insulated wires need to be maintained. Additionally, cables must be 2.4m and 5.5m above ground surface, routers must be securely connected and unnecessary wires removed. Cable tags are need on each pole, and cables cannot be pulled across roads.



Hero Lo-Manthang

Nepal General Marketing has begun the Hero ‘Explore with XPulse200’ event where motorcyclists will be riding 900kms from Kathmandu to Lo Manthang and back.

IME dividend

Global IME bank is putting forth a 13.6% dividend this year. The bank has also opened two new branches in Pokhara taking the total of them across the country to 292.



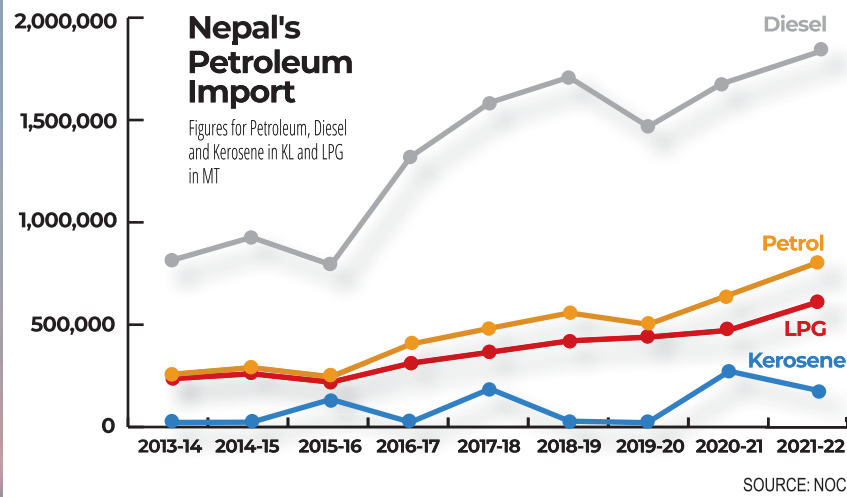
Tata Protect

Sipradi trading has launched additional services and features under Tata Protect. Customers can now access eight types of services and facilities including servicing a vehicle under 4 hours, repairs under 48 hours and warranties of 6 months for spare parts.

reduce petroleum imports



KUNDA DIXIT



HAZY FUTURE: Trans-border smog from industrial emissions and crop residue burning combined with Kathmandu Valley's own pollution blanket Central Nepal, as seen in this aerial photo taken in November 2021. Himalayan glaciers, already melting because of climate change, thaw faster because of soot particles deposited on them.

be drier and monsoons wetter, with up to a threefold increase in rainfall. In fact, this is already happening across the Himalaya.

The World Bank report forecasts that the number of people in Nepal annually affected by flooding could double to 350,000 in the next eight years. Nepal's economy is also expected to shrink by 7% due to climate impact.

"All of our targets for emission reduction hinge on proactive implementation locally. We could

have committed to net zero in the next five years if we were really serious about it, why wait till 2045?" asks environmentalist Acharya. "At this rate with our business as usual attitude, we are unlikely to be carbon neutral even if we had committed to 2060."

This year's climate conference at Sharm El-Sheikh has been dubbed the 'implementation COP'. One of the priorities at the discussion this year would be designing a mitigation program given that the combined climate pledges of 194 Parties under the Paris Agreement could put the world on track for at most around 2.4°C of warming by 2100, far from limiting it to 1.5°C and prevent further catastrophic consequences.

Other priorities for Nepal at this conference include lobbying for the G20 nations to loss and

damage fund as well as adaptation support, says Manjeet Dhakal, adviser to the Least Developed Countries (LDC) support group at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (see Editorial, page 2).

"With the Ukraine crisis and the pandemic there is reluctance to climate funding, it is even more clear we cannot wait for the international community and must do our bit to adapt immediately and save lives as well as prepare for slow-moving disasters," Dhakal told *Nepali Times* on the phone from Sharm El-Sheikh.

"We are nowhere near achieving our targets but for the first time we are now beginning to see a reduction in emission, however small that might be and that makes all these lobbying and climate conferences worth it," he added. Global lobbying at the international climate platform is crucial for a country as vulnerable to the climate crisis as Nepal. But implementation has to be local. It is once the delegates are back the real work begins.

Reducing Nepal's notorious urban pollution this winter could be a start. Says Bhushan Tuladhar: "If Kathmandu's mayor wanted to, he can mobilise his people and at the very least stop open garbage burning this winter through awareness campaigns and proper waste collection services. The only thing missing is the political will." 🇳🇵

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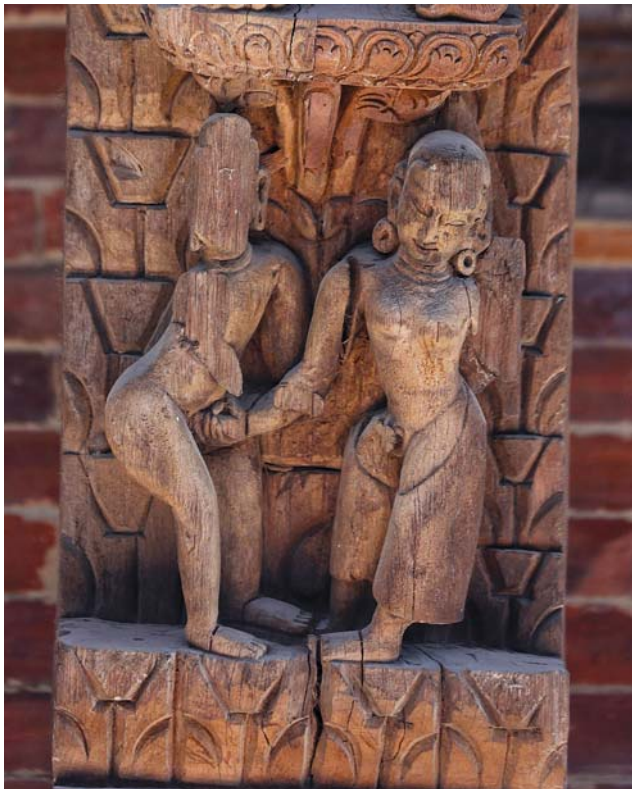
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MIMESIS OF LOVE

Erotic carvings on Kathmandu's temples are crude and explicit, and their meaning just as elusive

● Ashish Dhakal

In 1294 the crown princess of Banepa donated a *shiva linga* to the nearby principality of Panauti. A temple was built to enshrine the sacred stone phallus, and in later years a third tier was added to the Indreswar Mahadev temple.

Until then the struts supporting temple roofs in Nepal largely featured the *Salabhanjika* motif: standing, full breasted, slender figures, with wide hips and crossed legs, holding a tree branch with one hand.

However, craftsmen nearly 1,000 years ago in Panauti, broke from tradition and besides carving the figures of various deities, including characters from the *Mahabharat* and *Ramayana* along 16 of the lower-level struts, added at their bases men and women joined in amorous positions.

Himalayan art scholar Mary Slusser called these revolutionary inclusions 'blatant erotica'. These were precursors to the erotic art on temple struts (*maithuna*) which flourished in the 16th Century, depicting couples interlocked and entwined in bold acrobatic positions that are immediately arresting to witness. Many struts had groups, sometimes with even animals participating.

The Char Narayan Temple at the Patan Darbar Square was built in 1566, and the two-storey temple beside Krishna Mandir houses within its red brick walls the four principal forms of Vishnu: Vasudev, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Sankarshan.

But on the struts that support its roof is a rich assortment of erotic art (*pictured left*). One shows two people in bed as a third figure holds to the hair of the woman. Another has a woman penetrated from behind by a horse. In one bracket, two leonine figures are frozen in missionary position.

Just around the corner from the temple, through a narrow alleyway, is the Laxmi-Narayan temple, whose original stolen deity was repatriated from the United States in December 2021. All eight struts of the temple show a diverse range of sexual acts involving couples. Animals are another favourite motif, just as it is on the struts of Patan's South Taleju temple that almost exclusively depict copulating horses, cattle, deer and lions.

Scholars Wolfgang Korn and Shukra Sagar Shrestha in their 2019 book *Erotic Carvings of the Kathmandu Valley Found on the Struts of Newar Temples* list around 60 temples, *falcha* and secular buildings with erotic carvings in Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur and the neighbouring towns of Lubhu, Chobhar, Banepa, Panauti, or Thankot. But monuments in other places also have erotica.

Korn recalls that in 1968, when he first came to Nepal as a German volunteer he found four farmers looking up at the struts of the Jagannath Temple in Kathmandu and talking about them. Above them, angled at 45°, men and women were engaged in all kinds of positions and combinations, sometimes joined by attendees and a third or fourth partner.

Later in 1975, while working on the restoration of the Hanuman Dhoka he pointed at a picture of a carving of a man with his tongue on a woman's vulva, and jokingly asked a young worker if he had done something like that, too.

"The man was shocked and flustered, Korn recalls, "and immediately said, 'Sir, with my mouth I eat rice!'"

He found fascinating the way Nepali people interact with the erotic carvings found in temples daily frequented by devotees. Visitors from outside the valley thought the carvings depicted the sexual lives of the kings and the local residents of Kathmandu, not their own.

But this coyness may be a more recent influence of colonisation and changing attitudes in gender and sexuality. Birat Raj Bajracharya, translator of Tibetan texts and tutor at Lumbini University, notes that the carvings give a unique window into Nepal's past.

"Various forms of sexual and sensual arts were in practice then," he explains. "At some point in time, we came to limit sexual relations only between a husband and a wife, but the carvings depict fluidity, more than just domestic relations, in groups too."

Shivaji Das in his book *Sacred Love: Erotic art in the temples of Nepal* also suggests a sexually liberal Kathmandu Valley prior to frequent Mughal invasions, and later influences of British India. This is echoed by Éric Chazot, author of *Tantra: Théologie de l'Amour et de la Liberté*, who remarks that erotic temple art predate religious and Victorian morals in Nepal.

The imaginations of the wood carvers of the past have no limit. They are bold, unfettered and expansive, and nothing is profane or strange. One popular motif found in the carvings in the Valley is a bowl or a jug, often carried by an attendant or a monkey. These vessels are strategically placed under the sex organs as if to collect the fluids. Chazot explains that this could be to signify the importance of sexual fluids, which would be ritual offerings.

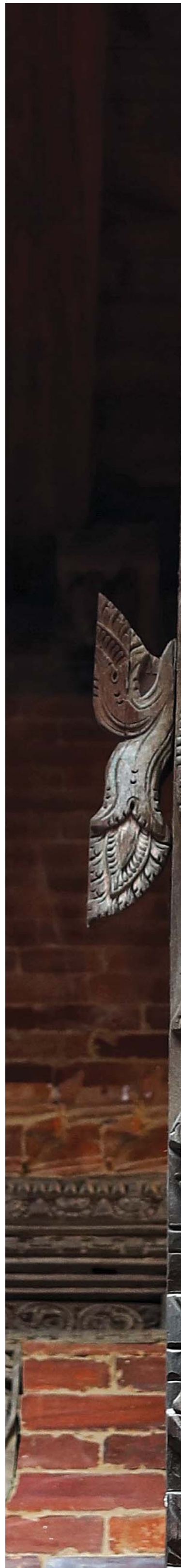
As for the many depictions of bestiality, all women with an animal, Chazot remarks it could be another symbolism. "Sex organs in ancient texts are often described in animal terms, such as elephant, dog, horse," he says. "And these could be to make a comment on compatibility and harmony."

Noteworthy is the fact that women appear in more carvings than men. Tantrism, which positioned men in the role of actors, was also historically reserved for males, utilising the female image as the receiver, or a vessel. As such, this calls into question the role of male gaze in depictions of pleasure.

Sociologist Dinesh Saru in Das's *Sacred Love* draws attention to the systemic oppression of women in society, in line with the idea of zoologist Desmond Morris that the heterosexual act is by nature invasive, and a male tool of dominance.

Queer representation is negligible, with only one carving of two women found in Patan's Char Narayan Temple. But this could also be attributed to the difficulty in definitively assessing the features of the figures, many of which are weathered or damaged in earthquakes.

Bajracharya cautions, however, that calling these figures simply male and female by the binary definition of gender is restrictive. "We can't say that the figures are not male or female," he says, "But the symbolism of gender in this context is manifold. These also relate to the masculine and feminine energies, and point to another level of spiritual meaning." 🇳🇵





ALL PHOTOS: SUMAN NEPALI

WHY TEMPLE EROTICA?

Despite their ubiquity, there is no consensus as to why erotic carvings adorn Kathmandu's monuments at all. One popular belief is that since lightning is a virgin goddess, she shies away from striking temples with erotic carvings. Another is that gods inside would not be inclined to leave the temples, as they would feel embarrassed to see the explicit carvings on their way out.

Among the more plausible explanations are that the carvings are meant to encourage procreation, repopulation after wars and plagues, sex education, and Tantric influences. Almost all erotic temple art are from the Malla-period when Tantric practices from India were incorporated into the already vibrant Hinduism and Buddhism of the Valley, where it took a distinct cultural root and flourishing in the 15th Century.

Tantra (from Sanskrit 'to weave') expounded the mystic philosophy and principles of action leading to enlightenment and total independence from material bonds. Ancient in origin, it opposed the orthodox Hindu-Buddhist rituals without rejecting them, setting out that everything in life should be employed to achieving *nirvana*, or *ananda*, including sex.

But to call the Tantric element of erotic art as just depicting 'sex' may be limiting, as it does not immediately indicate the innate, cosmic urge for symbiosis, divine energy, towards philosophical and spiritual fulfilment that is essential to Tantrism. It is not just a crude carnal desire for copulation, but symbolises the unity of mind and body, akin to the concept of *kama*, or Plato's *eros*.

"It is a science of expansion, and there is no good or evil," explains Éric Chazot. "And it can be done for many purposes: knowledge, power ... there is no limit."

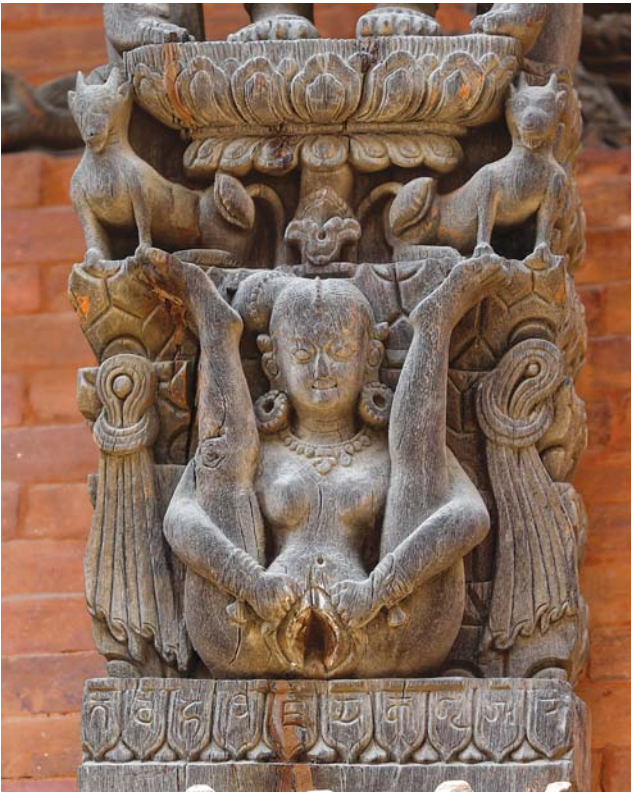
But Tantra, by definition is esoteric, incomprehensible to the public, with only a handful of individuals initiated into its practices. If the erotic carvings are products of these practices, then perhaps it is fitting that they should be as elusive in their meaning.

"It's all very symbolic. What we see is not what is said, there is a secret language behind these carvings and only an initiate gets their meaning," says Chazot. "They could also be used to make fun of those who do not understand them, like private jokes among those who do." Some of the best examples of the symbolism and the many layers of meanings can be found in the Nautale Darbar in Kathmandu (*pictured right*). There are indoor scenes as well as out in nature, where the figures seem to imitate the shapes of the trees around them: such as in the case of a woman washing her hair and joined by a man from behind, or a man and a woman flanked by branches blowing in the wind.



In shocking, and often comic, details the carvings depict people melting around each other in impossible forms and expressions. A nightamrish sequence shows a ginormous penis riding a chariot. Concentrating on the figures, the bodies taken together soon begin to make other shapes: an elephant in one case (*pictured above*), a horse in another. Next bracket looks like a monkey, a tortoise.

Bajracharya suggests that the animal shapes could be like a pun: "Sort of like a depiction of riding as a position during intercourse."



EVENTS

Food festival

Enjoy a delicious meal at the food festival celebrating Nepal's food heritage and multi-ethnic cuisines. Taste dishes like the sweet Phalgi, fresh Aruwa, Yanben Faksa and Thekuwa.
4-5 November, Hyatt Place Kathmandu (01) 5381234

Art exhibition

An exhibition of oil and acrylic paintings by Japanese artists Hideo Iida and Izumi Tanabe opens on Friday at 5pm at MCube.
Until 13 November, 11am-8pm onwards, Gallery Mcube, Mitra Road, Chakupat



Nepathya

Don't miss the month-long Nepathya tour for the 'Humanity Promotion Campaign'. Shows in Biratnagar, Birgunj, Hetauda, Narayanghat, Nepalgunj, Dhangadi, Surkhet, Butwal, Pokhara and Kathmandu.
2-31 December

Raniban Trail Race

Runners, ready? The once-a-year Raniban Trail Race will take place near Raniban Forest. Call for details.
6 November, 8am-11.30am, Raniban 9808594623

Le Sherpa Market

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

DINING



Momotarou Restaurant

Enjoy a hearty Japanese meal at Momotarou restaurant. Don't miss out on the soft tofu, pork cutlets, don varieties, and the mouthwatering bento box.
Sanepa Chowk (01) 5537385

MUSIC



Defiant Nepal Tour

Mark the dates and find out what happens when the Himalayas and the Nordic cool collide, because Defiant is on a tour to Nepal this November. Call for details.
5 November, 12pm, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel (01) 5910126

Ecstatic Dance

Dust off those dancing shoes and head over to the Ecstatic Dance, where participants can enjoy gentle yoga and beats with DJ Max. Call for details.
12 November, 4pm-7pm, Utpala Café, Bouddha 9810700763

Mitraz

Mitraz, one of India's trending Pop/Dance duos, will be performing live in Nepal. Get tickets now on e-sewa.
5 November, 8pm, Prive Nepal, Casino Mahjong 9851253139

Sick Fest

Liven the weekend with a various bands from India and Nepal at the Sick Fest. Tickets available now.
12 November, 8pm, Beers N' Cheers, Jawalakhel



Music classes

Sign up to learn Bansuri, Madal, Tabla and Western interments like Piano, Guitar, Drum, Bass, Saxophone and Violin at Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory. Call to sign up.
(01) 5443554 / 9813556945

Gangnam Galbi Barbeque

Try some Korean barbecue—grilled and stick food, a.k.a. galbi—roasted in charcoal at high heat. The roasting adds more softness, a different flavour and scent to the food.
Lal Colony Marg, Naxal (01) 4434780



Anatolia

Anatolia's Indian and Turkish dishes are packed with an assortment of spices and flavours. From the mutton curry to the Baklava, the dishes are delectable and leave patrons wanting more.
Thamel (01) 4258757

About Town

GETAWAY

Milla Guesthouse

A quaint stay that combines both the old and the new, Milla Guesthouse is the perfect getaway for people who don't want to go too far from the city on the weekend.
Bhaktapur 9851024137



Heranya Yala

Heranya Yala provides a complete tour package for visitors to immerse in the rich cultural heritage of Patan. Get a genuine feel of authentic Newa heritage by living right in the middle of Maha Boudha and the Hiranya monastery.
Gujibahal, Patan (01) 5523168 / 9851067168

Mirabel Resort

Perfect for families, Mirabel Resort offers comfort, continental cuisines and views of Kathmandu Valley. Take a walk around Dhulikhel before Nepali lunch or some mouth-watering barbeque.
Dhulikhel (01) 490972



The Old Inn

This bed and breakfast place offers a cosy getaway with a scenic view of Annapurna, Langtang and beyond. With its traditional architecture, the timber and brick design is reminiscent of old Newa houses.
Bandipur (065) 520110

Shangri-La Village Resort

Get away for a couple of days this winter and head to the idyllic Shangri-La Village Resort. Meditate in the outdoor Yoga Pergola, indulge in a massage at the Phewa Spa, and soak up the sun in the Sanctuary Garden.
Gharipatan, Pokhara (61) 462222



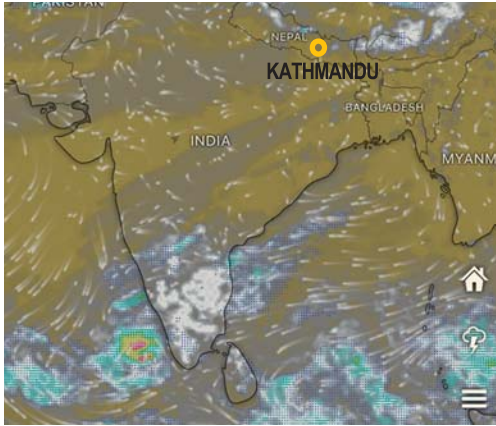
Bungalow Bar and Kitchen

Bungalow Bar and Kitchen is a kid-friendly restaurant offering Thai and other Asian cuisines. The Pad Koa Pao, and fusion dishes like fried Calamari are a must-try.
Naxal Bhatbhateni, 9801068630

Achaar Ghar

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

WEEKEND WEATHER

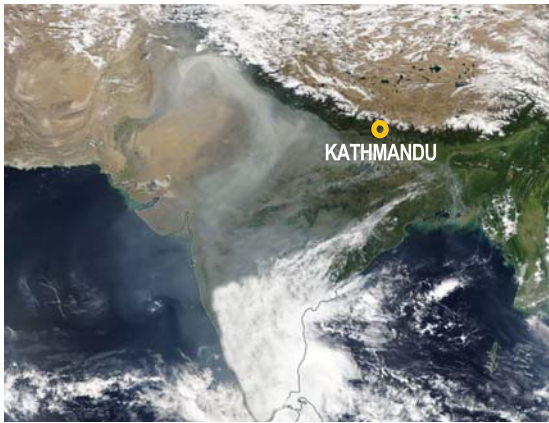


Clear Skys

A high pressure system prevails over northern India with no major westerly disturbance on the horizon. This means clear sunny days with a hint of winter, although the maximum temperature will remain in the mid-20's for now. Nights are already chilly and it will go down to 12°C in the city, with the higher outskirts even registering 9°C. Kathmandu's characteristic mist, now extinct because of the urban heat bubble, will be thick along the Bagmati Valley and along the Trisuli up to Mugling. There are some high fast-moving alto-stratus clouds riding the Jetstream moving across Nepal in a northeasterly direction on the weekend that will dim the sun from time to time.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
24° 12°	24° 12°	23° 11°

AIR QUALITY INDEX



A satellite heat map and weather images of South Asia this week show widespread crop fires in the Indian states of Haryana and Punjab that has resulted in a thick buildup of smoke over northern India. Fortunately for us, a circulation associated with a depression over the southern Bay of Bengal has blocked the smoke from reaching us, and turned it towards Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. But this is a temporary respite, as this satellite image on Thursday shows (left). The smoke will bring down air quality along the Nepal Tarai, the lower Himalayan valleys by the weekend, adding to local urban emissions.

OUR PICK

The Black Phone, the 2021 supernatural coming-of-age horror film adapted from the short story by Joe Hill, is set in the suburbs of 1970's Denver where siblings Finney and Gwen Blake live with their abusive father. The area is terrorised by a child-abductor nicknamed 'The Grabber', of whom Finney becomes a victim. While the young boy is trapped in a basement with nothing but an out-of-work black phone, Gwen assists the two detectives assigned to her brother's case. In his prison, Finney discovers he is also not quite alone, as the phone begins to ring—with The Grabber's previous victims on the other end helping him plan his escape. Stars Mason Thames, Madeleine McGraw, Jeremy Davies, James Ransone, with Ethan Hawke.

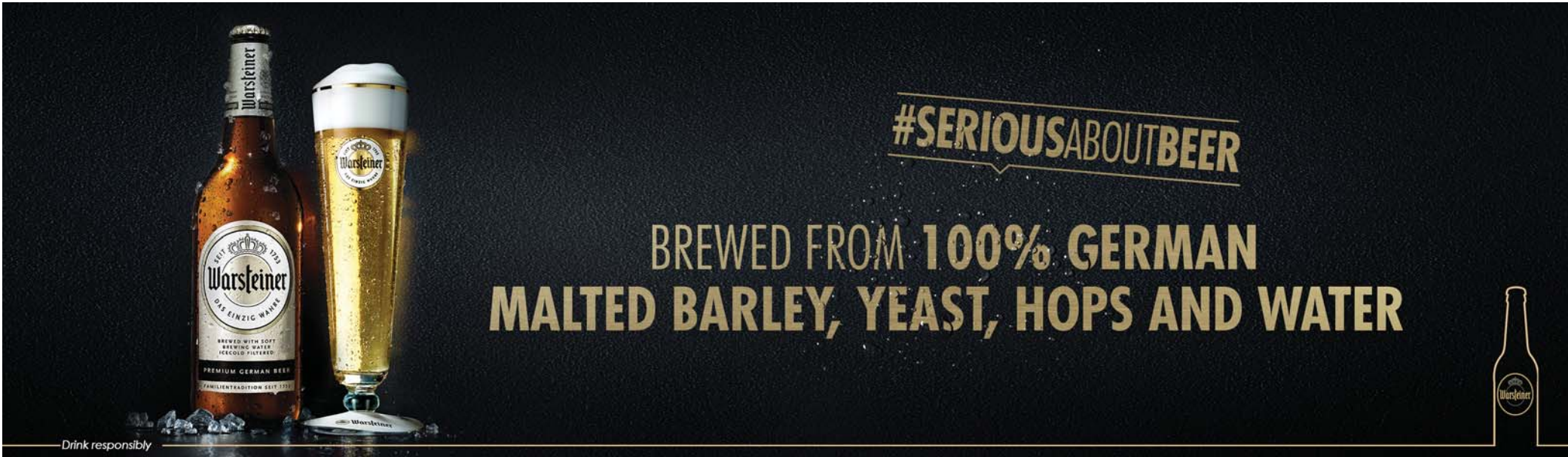


सम्पत्ति विवरण समयमै बुझाऔं, जरिवानाबाट बचौं

- 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



Nepalis say No, Not Again

Voters urge each other to replace elderly established politicians with competent new leadership

● Shristi Karki

In July, a new Facebook page uploaded a poster of six of Nepal’s top political leaders — Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and former Prime Ministers K P Oli, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Baburam Bhattarai, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhulanath Khanal — with an accompanying text that said in English: NO NOT AGAIN.

Since then, #NoNotAgain has taken off on social media with Nepalis urging other Nepalis to vote out the older leaders in elections to federal and provincial assemblies on 20 November. Collectively, they have been prime minister 13 times, with Deuba of the Nepali Congress (NC) alone holding the post five times.

The UML’s Oli has been PM thrice, Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal twice, former Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai and former UML leaders Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhulanath Khanal having assumed the role once each. Although the president cannot hold more than two consecutive terms in office, Nepal has no term limits for prime ministers.

The No Not Again Facebook page has amassed 39,000 followers and 32,000 likes since its inception. With open campaigning allowed from Thursday, the leaders have been on the counterattack on social media as well, some with slick videos.

The collective was formed after voters in local elections in May shunned the established parties and voted for independent candidates like Balen Shah and Harka Sampang as mayors of Kathmandu and Dharan.

This reflected the disenchantment of especially urban voters with mainstream politics and career politicians, which has prompted more independent candidates to stand in November as well. The online campaign has been putting the spotlight not only on the top leaders but other political figures as well: from pandemic-era health ministers who manhandled the Covid-19 crisis, MPs who have misused state resources, or those who have been photographed dozing off in Parliament. Also being crossed out are businessmen



Political parties, candidates, and party workers began open campaigning from Thursday, and they will be allowed to do so till 17 November. The main parties have released their election manifestos, and these too have been lampooned on social media and by cartoonists as being full of tall promises.

In their own speeches at the hustings, some mainstream candidates appear to be taking the challenge of the independents and rebel candidates from their own parties seriously. Others in both coalition collectives appear sanguine that they control the block votes of their traditional bases.

What is different this time compared to previous elections is that the ruling coalition and the opposition alliance have swapped seats to bolster their chances of winning. This has also meant that many NC supporters will be voting for Maoist candidates and vice-versa. Such electoral alliances ultimately undermine democracy, political observers say, because coalitions are supposed to be formed after polls results are out, not before voting. 🇳🇵

and high profile politicians who have been included in the list of proportional representation (PR) candidates supposed to be reserved for women and minority communities.

But as the campaign’s online pages amassed more following in the past week, public discourse around the movement grew, and so did attention from Nepal’s political leadership as well as the Election Commission (EC).

On 25 October, the Election Commission put out a statement accusing ‘false Facebook groups’ such as No Not Again of ‘spreading negative propaganda and hate speech — defamatory expressions

and misleading and hateful audiovisual content— about political parties, leaders and election candidates.’ The statement said that the page had violated Nepal’s Electronic Transaction Act 2008, Election Act 2017 and the Election Code of Conduct.

The Commission stated that continued operation of such pages to put out audiovisual material would result in a fine of Rs100,000, or imprisonment for up to five years or both. Reaction in the public sphere and even from political leaders was savage and swift.

UML dissident leader Bhim Rawal, who did not receive a ticket from his party to contest

the election, called the Election Commission’s move contrary to the right to freedom of thought and expression and that it violated the Constitution. ‘If one is not allowed to express who to vote for, or who not vote for, why doesn’t the Election Commission already declare Nepal’s top leaders as winners,’ Rawal wrote on Twitter.

The NC’s Minendra Rijal, who likewise was not given a ticket by his party, said: “The idea behind No Not Again is completely in line with our democratic values. The Election Commission’s decision, in this case, is irrational, and must be reconsidered.”

Former Election Commissioner



CURRY

CURRY

HOVR

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- Stephen Curry, 4x NBA Champion



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Proud to give back to Nepal

“If there is one thing I have learnt, it is that hard work eventually pays off.”



● Prakash Katuwal

My earliest memory from childhood is doing household chores at my father’s friend’s house in Jhapa while studying on the side. I had to wake up at 4AM, finish cleaning and washing, and take the livestock out. I used to fall asleep in the grass as the goats grazed.

I went back to stay with my parents later. My father, a policeman, was posted in different parts of the country. This was pre-mobile, pre-internet days, so the only way to keep in touch was by mail. Many of my handwritten letters got lost because my father would have been transferred by the time the letters reached him.

There was no wire transfer, so it was only when he came home on leave that my father brought money, sometimes after a year. There were times when we did not have any cash, and my mother had to do odd jobs while I took care of my younger siblings. She worked hard to raise us.

I came to Darjeeling after my SLC exams, and was working as a security guard when I found out I had passed. I then came to Kathmandu for higher studies.

Living in poverty takes a toll, especially when you are at an



COOKING THINGS UP: After working hard in a restaurnt in Guangzhou for six years, chef Prakash Katuwal (above) has returned to Kathmandu to start a popular Turkish restaurant, Alev Kebab Sultanate (left).

impressionable age and see better-off classmates. Sometimes, we had no food and had to eat wild roots. All that is now a distant memory.

In Kathmandu, I trained as a cook after a friend convinced me that there was a secure future in it. I started working at China and World (CW) restaurant in Kathmandu and the trajectory of my life finally began to change. For six months as a trainee, I worked 18 hours a day without any pay. My boss noticed my effort, and I got a paid position. This experience helped me secure a job in Guangzhou, China where I worked for six years.

I toiled so hard in China that I often had bloodshot eyes from stress and over-exhaustion. There

were two other Nepalis in the restaurant along with Chinese employees. I did not speak or understand Cantonese, so it was challenging. I also learnt how strong work ethics and sincerity could be conveyed despite the language barrier. Within a few months, my manager and colleagues started warming up to me and we had good rapport. I taught myself Cantonese, often relying on Nepali agents in China who were our customers at the restaurant. At 24, I returned to Nepal to work in a few hotels as a chef. I did apply for jobs in the Gulf and passed two interviews for Dubai-based positions, but turned them down as I was not satisfied with the salaries. In China, I was

making up to Rs200,000 a month.

With Covid, I lost my job at a hotel in Bara in Nepal. But I had skills and savings, so I started a home delivery service called Home Food. I cooked and delivered items myself to customers. Business picked up with 40 orders a day.

Then, one of my mentors Krishna Poudel, with whom I had previously worked, expressed an interest in starting a Turkish restaurant in Kathmandu. I am now one of the shareholders of Alev Kebab Sultanate and also its chief chef. It has filled a niche, and is doing well. The appeal of Turkish food goes beyond just its taste, there is art in the presentation.

For someone from my

background, this is a huge platform. The restaurant is exceptionally busy during evenings. Mornings are slower, which gives me time to think about what we can do better.

The two Nepali colleagues I had worked with in Guangzhou saw their future in China, so they had a different set of priorities. Nepalis who start as cooks there transition to becoming agents catering to the needs of the businessmen who come from all over the world who do not have language skills to navigate the Chinese market. The earnings of agents are much better. But I did not want to stay abroad, and the experience there has opened up many opportunities for me back here in Nepal.

Nepali nail salon workers in New York v

New legislation went into effect this month and will ensure ventilation in nail salons

● Amir Khafagy in New York

When 38-year-old nail salon worker Pabitra Dash from Nepal recalls the physical pain she felt the first time she miscarried, she says that the emotional and mental anguish she felt hurt much more.

“After the miscarriage, no one comes back to support and give reassurance,” she said.

The joy she felt the second time she got pregnant was quickly quashed when she began to feel familiar abdominal pain.

“I knew it was going to be a miscarriage again,” Dash said.

Throughout her brief third pregnancy, Dash was consumed by anxiety. Since moving with her husband to New York from Nepal, they wanted to start a family. The thought of miscarrying again was too much to bear. Dash’s fears rang true when yet again she had to rush to the hospital in pain.

In total, Dash suffered seven miscarriages in the span of eight years, and they coincided with her time as a nail technician, which she quit in 2018. Initially, she was reluctant to talk openly about it to others in the Nepali community for fear of stigma.

Some Nepali women believe bad luck would rub off on them, and cause them to miscarry as well. Still, she began to hear similar stories from her coworkers at the nail salon.

As it turns out the chemicals that were in nail polishes, glues and other chemicals



WIKIMEDIA

that they were exposed to at the salon daily, may have caused miscarriages and other reproductive health issues, according to advocates.

“I started to talk with other friends who had similar issues,” she said. “Some of them also had no children. From that, I learned it was related to our work.”

Last week, six years after it was first announced, New York State implemented long-awaited ventilation regulations in nail

salons. The new regulations require owners to protect workers and clients by providing proper ventilation to filter out toxic particles and fumes.

The roughly 7,000 nail salons across the state, many of which have Nepali workers, will be required to install a mechanical ventilation system or risk losing their license to operate. The regulations come as workers, supporters and a growing number of experts have sounded the alarm about

the reproductive health hazards women nail salon workers are exposed to daily.

“All these chemical smells make you depressed,” she said. “When I go outside I feel so relaxed but when I go inside the salon I feel like I want to cry, I want to be alone.”

In 2016, after nail salon workers organised to expose the rampant abuse in the nail salon industry, the state implemented a series of new regulations that would force nail salons to provide adequate ventilation as a way to

For those of us who have struggled, when one of us makes it so do others in our network. My younger brother and sister had it much easier because I was around to take care of them. I am now building a house for my parents. We have come a long way. Being able to give back to my family and to Nepal is a privilege that makes me proud.

At the end of the day, those of us who go for foreign employment eventually come back.

In China, things were systematic, but all I did was hustle to earn as much as I could. Even though there were Nepalis in Guangzhou, I did not open up about my personal struggle or rely on them for support even when there were times when I was in tears in the kitchen.

The 18-hour workdays limited any real socialising. But here in Nepal you can feel the strength of the support system from family and friends. That matters a lot, as does the familiar surroundings. Having missed these things abroad, makes me value them even more.

The struggle continues, but its nature has changed. I feel proud to grapple with the challenges of co-owning a restaurant where I also work as chef. It is not easy, of course. There are opportunities in Nepal, but you need a lot of patience to work the system.

Sometimes, when people return from abroad with some capital, they want instant results. Sadly, it does not work that way in Nepal.

If there is one thing that I have learnt, it is that sooner or later, hard work eventually pays off. 🇳🇵

Translated from a conversation with the author. 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.

● Radha Adhikari in Edinburgh

Nepal’s agreement in August to supply an initial 100 nurses to Britain with an option for several thousand more in future was followed by debate in both countries about the pros and cons of the deal.

Public health experts have warned that the deal will divert nurses from greater need back home. But there is support for Britain’s international recruitment of healthcare professionals from nursing colleges in Nepal and global aspirations of nurses themselves.

Presently, the UK faces a considerable shortfall in the hiring and retention of student nurses. Scotland alone will be short of 700 nurses in three years’ time, when the current intake of students graduates. Furthermore, the nursing student dropout rate is around 25%. By the time the current cohort graduates, there will not be enough nurses in the UK labour market even without the accumulated shortfall. There are vacancies for 50,000 health professionals in the NHS after the post-Brexit departure of East European staffers.

Britain has very little choice but to cast its net wide for nurses from other countries. In the past, nurses have been hired from English-speaking places with weaker economies like the Philippines or India.

British recruitment policy displays little concern now for source country’s workforce situations, and of World Health Organization (WHO) ethical recruitment guidelines which bars hiring medical workforce from ‘red list’ countries that do not have

sufficient nurses and doctors for their own populations.

But the staffing gap is so serious that countries like the UK, Japan, the United States, Canada, Israel, Australia and others are competing for health workers, disregarding the WHO guideline.

For its part, Nepal has no shortage of nursing students, and as a result of increased nursing education capacity there are more students graduating than Nepal’s hospitals can employ. Unlike the UK, student dropout rate is not a major concern in Nepal.

But low starting salaries for nurses make overseas work attractive. For many nursing graduates international jobs are the best option. In fact, a majority of nursing students in Nepal are pursuing their studies with the sole intention of emigrating.

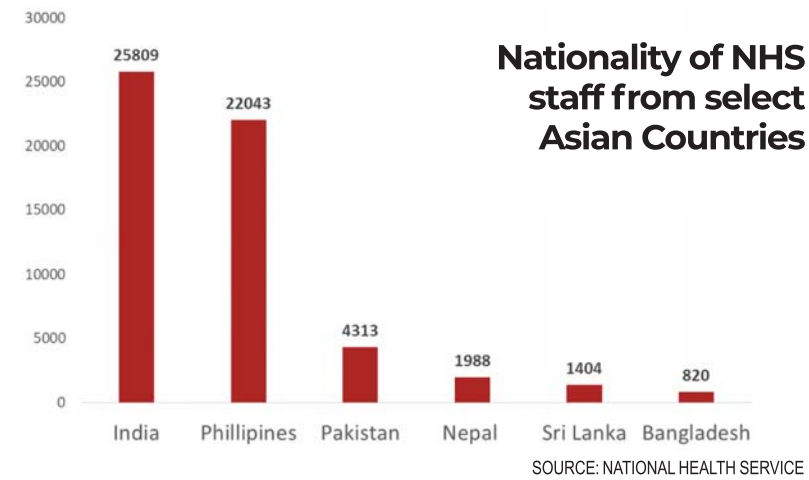
Given the lack of a clear and appropriate migration pathways to the international labour market, Nepali nurses are going abroad on student visas. The number of nurses taking this route is much higher than those going abroad directly as employees.

Because of the lack of safe and effective avenues for Nepali nurses to get jobs abroad, including in the UK, recruitment agencies in Kathmandu have found this a lucrative option. They are known to collude with international nurse recruiters to exploit nurses whose desperation to earn more makes them vulnerable.

To break this vicious cycle of exploitation, there is an urgent need to create transparent and fair employment options for Nepali nurses for the NHS in Britain. The UK should also improve working terms and conditions for all of its nurses, including retention of its

Nepali nurses now Britain-bound

The UK has a shortage of nurses, Nepal does not have jobs for them. Both need to ensure that recruitment is transparent and fair.



own nursing students.

Nepal must also have a proper workforce plan in place, and create gainful employment for its own graduate nurses at home. Indeed, improving the recruitment and retention of nursing workforces should be a top priority for all developing countries supplying health professionals to well-off ones.

Countries like Nepal need to improve investment in the

health sector if they are to provide Universal Health Coverage by 2030, which is a Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations, of which Nepal is a signatory. 🇳🇵

Radha Adhikari is a Lecturer in School of Health and Life Sciences, at the University of the West of Scotland. Her latest monograph, 'Migrant Health Professionals and the Global Labour Market: the Dreams and Traps of Nepali Nurses' was published in 2019, by Routledge.

work welcome ventilation legislation

mitigate the toxic effects of the chemicals often used by workers.

Existing nail salon businesses were initially given five years to comply, and regulations went into effect in October 2021. However, citing difficulties due to the pandemic, these requirements were delayed twice by Governor Hochul, giving businesses another year to come into compliance with the requirements. Meanwhile, many nail salon workers, like Dash, have suffered from debilitating reproductive health issues.

A recent report by the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH) found that 20% of nail salon workers reported having had issues with their reproductive health, compared to 11% in the general US population of women of reproductive age who have had health issues. The study, which surveyed 142 nail salon workers in New York, also found that 25% of nail techs had complications during pregnancy, compared to just 8% of all pregnancies in the US. In fact, the study found that nail salon workers were more than three times as likely to have babies born with birth defects than the general population.

“For decades, workers have spoken about reproductive damage as a result of their chemical exposure in nail salons,” said Charlene Obernauer, Executive Director of NYCOSH.

“The results of our survey show what workers have consistently said about their health and well-being. Ventilation regulations are essential to reducing this exposure and helping to create healthier nail salons for workers, customers and owners alike. This is not just a workers’ rights issue, it’s a reproductive justice issue.”

Aaron Lamplugh, a research scientist at the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences, University of

Colorado Boulder, has done extensive research into the level of toxins nail salon workers are exposed to and found the risks to the women workers are significant.

“There are a lot of chemicals in nail salons. It’s sort of a chemical soup,” he said. “We definitely measured unusually high levels of benzene, toluene and other chemicals, all sorts of chemicals well associated with nail products.”

Chemicals such as benzene, which is found in some nail polishes, are well-documented to cause significant birth defects when exposed to high dosages. Toluene, which also can be found in nail polish and fingernail glue, can cause kidney or liver damage as well as birth defects. Long-term exposure to Dibutyl phthalate, a common ingredient in nail polish, is known to cause miscarriages. Although the most toxic effects are only associated with high and persistent exposure, nail salon workers often work long hours in often tiny, unventilated storefronts day in and day out.

“The exposure that a lot of these workers are experiencing, there is a lot of potential for them to have adverse health consequences later in life,” Lamplugh said.

Like most of her coworkers, Dash was not aware of the prescient dangers she was exposed to on a daily basis. She didn’t realize that some of the nail polish bottles had warning labels written on them. At the time, she was not as proficient in English as she is now, and many of her coworkers didn’t understand what was written on the bottles either. Only after she began to be involved with Adhikaar, a women-led worker’s center that services the Nepali-speaking community, did she become aware of the danger.

“There is already written on the color [nail polish] that this color may be harmful

to you while you pregnant but we didn’t know that,” said Dash. “ Later I read this for myself and learned that formaldehyde is not good for reproductive health.”

Senator Jessica Ramos, Chair of the Senate Labor Committee and sponsor of the Nail Salon Minimum Standards Council Act is grateful that ventilation regulations have finally gone into effect but, wishes it had come sooner.


“In order to do their part in ensuring the small businesses that employ them made it through the pandemic, workers compromised on a delay of the implementation of these ventilation standards,” she said. The choice between their livelihood and their health is not one we should be asking workers to make.”

Since quitting the nail salon industry, Dash was finally able to have a son. She has taken on a leadership role in Adhikaar, where she has met so many other women who experienced miscarriages or gave birth to children with birth defects. It’s never easy. When she thinks back on what she was forced to experience it pains her. “Is this a human rights country, is this the way they treat women who have miscarriages?” she said. “It’s really hard and these are the things that make me depressed.”


Although there was a time when she wouldn’t talk about her miscarriages out of shame, she now feels that she has to so that other women don’t go through the same experience as she did.

“I really don’t want to go deeper and deeper but I have to because those are the things that happened in my life and this is not acceptable. 🇳🇵

The story was first published in Documented, a non-profit news site devoted solely to covering New York City’s immigrants and the policies that affect their lives.



अब
मासिक हिमाल
१ कात्तिकदेखि बजारमा ।



हिमालमिडिया प्रा. लि.
पाटनढोका, ललितपुर

Why Nepalis are so happy





ARTERIES OF DELIVERANCE
ROADS' CENTRAL ROLE IN
ERADICATING POVERTY, P3

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

CHINA WATCH

CHINA DAILY 中国日报



FROM DUST TO GLORY
SHATTERED PALACE BACK
TO ITS OLD SELF, P4



An employee checks welding robots at a manufacturer in Tangshan, Hebei province. MOU YU / XINHUA

Country leads drive for global recovery

By OUYANG SHIJIA

China's contribution to world economic growth has exceeded that made by G7 countries in the past 10 years, demonstrating the economy's strong resilience and great potential, experts said.

China is playing an increasingly crucial and influential role in driving global economic recovery amid a gloomy global outlook and a more complicated and grimmer international environment, they said, and the country's latest better-than-expected economic indicators suggest a steady rebound.

China's contribution to global economic growth averaged 38.6% from 2013 to 2021, making it the biggest contributor, the World Bank said.

The country's GDP grew by 6.6% a year from 2013 to 2021, compared with a global average of 2.6% and the 3.7% of average of other developing economies in the same period.

China accounted for 18.5% of the global economy in 2021, 7.2 percentage points higher than in 2012, and it remained the world's second-largest economy, official data showed.

Alessandro Teixeira, a professor in the School of Public Policy and Management at Tsinghua University in Beijing and former minister of tourism of Brazil, said China is important to the world, because it accounts for a large proportion of the world's GDP growth.

He said China is taking and preparing a lot of measures to expand consumption, fortify entrepreneurship and help companies gain momentum, offering huge growth opportunities for various stakeholders.

Looking ahead, he said he believed that China's economy will continue to improve, thanks to strong policy support.

Takehiko Nakao, a former president of the Asian Development Bank, said China still has huge economic growth potential in the next few years, despite short-term disruptions



Consumers choose products at a shopping mall in Yantai, Shandong province, in July. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

38.6%

China's average contribution to global economic growth from 2013 to 2021

resulting from the pandemic.

Against the challenges and downward pressures, he highlighted the strong resilience of China's economy with its large population and effective economic policies.

Notably, China's economy improved in the third quarter in a new sign of recovery amid pressures from renewed Covid-19 outbreaks and uncertainties both at home and abroad.

China's GDP grew 3.9% year-on-year in the third quarter, up from 0.4% in the second quarter, the National Bureau of Statistics said.

Value-added industrial output rose 6.3% in September, and fixed-asset investment rose 5.9% year-on-year in the first three quarters.

Lloyd Chan, an economist at the think tank Oxford Economics, noted that September's industrial production growth was at the fastest pace in eight months and retail sales also improved, providing strong support

for the growth rebound in the third quarter.

Retail sales grew 3.5% in the third quarter, the bureau said, after falling 4.6% in the second quarter.

Yang Jinghao, chief economist of Concat Data Technology (Hangzhou) Co, spoke highly of a series of government measures to stabilise the economy and ease the burden on companies, saying that China's economy is likely to continue to improve in the fourth quarter of the year as stimulus policy measures take effect.

China's economic rebound is still in a critical phase, and more effort should be made to consolidate the foundations for recovery, he said.

Zhou Maohua, an analyst at China Everbright Bank, said that to further stabilise growth, more effort needs to be made to implement existing policies on easing pressures on companies and ensuring stable supplies and prices.

The government needs to make better use of structural monetary policy tools to prop up the real economy, Zhou said, focusing on increasing financial support for manufacturing, green development and infrastructure construction.

Harmony hailed as key on path to modernisation

Ecological civilisation, green transition help achieve higher-quality development. **Hou Liqiang** reports

China has made great progress in promoting modernisation featuring harmony between humanity and nature, and more achievements can be expected in this field as the country forges ahead with its low-carbon transition, experts said.

The Chinese path to modernisation offers many developing countries a route towards prosperity other than just following the Western model, they said.

They made the remarks after Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, delivered a report on October 16 at the opening session of the 20th National Congress of the CPC, which concluded on October 22.

Xi said that China's modernisation features a huge population, common prosperity for all, material and cultural-ethical advancement, harmony between humanity and nature, and peaceful development.

"Respecting, adapting to and protecting nature is essential for building China into a modern socialist country in all respects ... we must remember to maintain harmony between humanity and nature when planning our development," Xi said.

This is not the first time Xi has emphasised modernisation featuring the harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature. In an article published in Qiushi Journal, the flagship magazine of the CPC Central Committee, in June he highlighted harmony as one of the vital characteristics of China's socialist modernisation.

What has happened proves that the construction of an ecological civilisation and green, low-carbon and circular development not only meet people's ever-growing demand for a beautiful environment, but also enable China to achieve higher-quality development that is more efficient, equitable, sustainable and secure, the article said.

Dimitri de Boer, chief representative for China and regional director for Asia of ClientEarth, an environmental law organisation, said that with China's "tremendous progress" in the past 10 years in its environmental

transition, it is "certainly moving in the right direction".

"I do believe China can achieve harmony between humanity and nature."

China has decoupled economic growth from emissions — carbon emissions per unit of GDP have fallen by 34.4% over the past 10 years, while its GDP has more than doubled, de Boer said.

China has achieved average annual economic growth of 6.6% in the past 10 years, with a yearly increase of 3% in energy consumption, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment said.

China has made remarkable progress in air and water pollution treatment. For example, Beijing saw its annual average density of PM2.5 particulate matter reached 33 micrograms per cubic metre in 2021, compared with 89.5 micrograms per cubic metre in 2013, the first year that the air pollutant was monitored in the capital.

The next 10 years will be even more important in promoting modernisation featuring the harmony of humanity and nature, de Boer said, as China strives to reach peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and realise carbon neutrality before 2060.

"China has all the resources, technologies and ingenuity to achieve robust economic growth and provide sufficient, secure, low-carbon power," he said.

He also stressed the global significance of China's transition.

China is now a very important global investor and trading partner. Sometimes, investment and trade can be associated with environmental problems in other countries. "I'm really encouraged to see that the government is actively working to reduce such problems," he said.

In a move to make the Belt and Road Initiative greener, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the Ministry of Commerce updated a 2013 guideline on environmental protection in overseas operations early this year, asking Chinese companies to adhere to environmentally friendly approaches for their projects from start to finish.

“Respecting, adapting to and protecting nature is essential for building China into a modern socialist country in all respects ... we must remember to maintain harmony between humanity and nature when planning our development.”

Xi Jinping,
general secretary of the
Communist Party of China
Central Committee

See **Path**, P2

Country shares public goods with world

Development experience and solutions to challenges provided to numerous countries. **Xu Wei** reports

In Kasane, northern Botswana, construction workers are racing against time to build a primary school that can provide access to education for 560 children.

It will be the fourth primary school built in the country with aid from the Chinese government.

In Fiji, Chinese experts have trained 1,704 locals, including female farmers, disabled people and even tour managers who lost their jobs due to the pandemic, to cultivate mushrooms.

In Ecuador, 58 farmers have recently completed an online training session offered by Chinese experts on designing and making furniture and lamps from bamboo, one of the South American nation's richest resources.

Over the past decade China has emerged as one of the top providers of global public goods, sharing its experience on development and offering solutions to challenges with much of the developing world.

As the Communist Party of China held its 20th National Congress from October 16 to 22, analysts and observers highlighted the significance of the country's international development collaboration in enabling a better response to various challenges worldwide, including underdeveloped infrastructure, food security and climate change.

Wang Luo, director of the Institute of International Development Cooperation at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, hailed action the country has taken.

"From the Belt and Road Initiative and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, to the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative, we can clearly see that China, led by the CPC, is responding to global development challenges in a more proactive manner.

"This has to do with the fact that the CPC strives for both the well-being of the Chinese people and human progress. The Party has made its mission to make new and greater contributions for mankind."

With the lingering pandemic posing challenges to global development and the crisis in Ukraine resulting in new risks and challenges, China has done its best to present its own solutions, especially the Global Development Initiative, or GDI, to bridge the worldwide development gap, Wang said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping pro-

posed the GDI during a session of the UN General Assembly in September last year. He named eight priority areas for the global community to step up cooperation: poverty alleviation, food security, Covid-19 response and vaccines, development financing, climate change and green development, industrialisation, the digital economy, and connectivity.

Xi hosted the High-level Dialogue

on Global Development in June that brought together leaders from 18 developing countries, pledging to upgrade the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund to a Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund, and adding \$1 billion to the fund on top of the \$3 billion already committed.

Wang Huiyao, president of the Centre for China and Globalisation and a counsellor with the State Council, said

Xi has championed the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, a key concept that has been included in UN documents and which has won widespread recognition.

Guided by this concept, China has promoted multilateral collaboration and pushed the global economy in a more balanced, inclusive direction, he said.

Analysts have also highlighted the significance of the Belt and Road Initia-

tive, proposed by Xi in 2013, in advancing policy, infrastructure, trade, financial and people-to-people connectivity, and fostering new growth drivers for different countries.

Beijing had signed BRI collaboration documents with 149 countries and 32 international organisations, adopting more than 3,000 collaboration projects involving investment of nearly \$1 trillion. A report by the National Bureau of Statistics said the joint building of the BRI is expected to help 7.6 million people shake off extreme poverty, and 32 million people to escape from moderate poverty.

China has set up the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, or AIIB, and the Silk Road Fund, which, coupled with the BRI, have become the most extensive, inclusive and largest platforms for international co-operation.

Wang Huiyao, the counsellor, said a key factor contributing to the success of the BRI and the AIIB is that China, as the world's largest developing nation, has a keen understanding of the challenges facing less-developed countries.

"China is also facing problems of unbalanced growth between different regions. The nation shook off absolute poverty less than two years ago, and it has plenty of experience to share in improving public living standards," he said.

Wang Luo of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the CPC has always emphasised a people-centred development philosophy, and that global issues cannot be solved by one country alone.

"That is why China's global development co-operation has always sought to help other nations attain their sustainable development goals with the implementation of concrete projects and funding programmes."

Chea Munyirith, president of the Cambodian Chinese Evolution Researcher Association, said China has shared rural development expertise with Cambodia through the launch of various projects at village level.

"The pursuit of benefits is to seek benefits together. China is welcoming friends from all over the world through its continued growth, openness and improved business environment, and is gaining worldwide attention through the nation's vision of co-operation and win-win in the sense of providing endless momentum to the global economic recovery."



Path: Expertise helps put other nations in the picture

FROM PAGE 1

Last year, China announced that it will not build new coal-fired power projects abroad.

By rapidly controlling carbon emissions, protecting ecosystems, reducing pollution and mitigating environmental problems in overseas investments and trade, de Boer said that China can make unparalleled contributions to global environmental protection.

"And in this way, China can show developing countries a green pathway to achieving higher standards of living for their population," he said.

Wang Hongxin, dean of the Academy for Global Development at Beijing Normal University, said he believes the country's experiences in promoting modernisation can be instructive to other developing countries.

Modernisation featuring the harmony of humanity and nature can

effectively address the development problems in the Western model of industrialisation, which merely generates material wealth by plundering natural resources at the expense of the environment, he said.

China's endeavours will also give direct impetus to global climate governance and help accelerate the process to realise the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, he said.

Erik Solheim, former executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme, said there had been a significant worldwide drop in the cost of solar energy and that China's new energy vehicle industry had grown strongly, and he expressed his strong confidence in China's green transition.

Though China doesn't have a traditional automotive industry as strong as that of Germany, Japan and the Unit-



Electric cars seen on an assembly line at a manufacturing plant in Hefei, Anhui province, on August 28. XIE CHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

ed States, it is much easier for China to take the initiative and become a dominant player in the electric vehicle industry.

"Let's forget this old idea that we need to destroy the planet to have eco-

nomical progress," Solheim said. "The future is win-win, good for ecology and good for the economy at the same time."

Song Ping contributed to this story.

CONTACT US

China Daily

15 Huixin Dongjie, Chaoyang,
Beijing, China 100029
+86 (0) 10 64918366
chinawatch@chinadaily.com.cn
Advertisement:
+86 (0) 10 64918631;
ads@chinadaily.com.cn
Website: www.chinadaily.com.cn

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China Daily Asia Pacific

China Daily Hong Kong
Room 1818, Hing Wai Centre,
7 Tin Wan Praya Road,
Aberdeen, Hong Kong
+852 2518 5111
editor@chinadailyhk.com
editor@chinadailyasia.com

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The roads that led to lifting millions out of poverty

Veteran China observer says he has identified reasons for success of historic proportions.
Zhao Huanxin reports

It took two years for the World Bank and Chinese authorities to identify the drivers behind China's poverty alleviation over the past 40 years. It took Kenneth Quinn 40 years to conclude that building roads paved the country's way to prosperity.

Earlier this year the 189-member global lender and the Development Research Centre of China's State Council published a joint report, "Four Decades of Poverty Reduction in China: Drivers, Insights for the World, and the Way Ahead", looking at what is behind and beyond the "historically unprecedented" feat of lifting close to 800 million people out of poverty.

The report was a result of more than two years of field visits and workshops in which researchers said China's success derived from rapid economic growth, with broad-based economic transformation that opened opportunities and raised incomes of the poor.

The country's success was also built on effective governance that ensured implementation of both the growth strategy and targeted poverty-reduction policies, the report said.

For Quinn, president emeritus of the World Food Prize Foundation in Des Moines, the United States, China has been the most dramatically transformed country since 1978, mostly because it has virtually eliminated the lowest level of poverty for individuals.

Last year China declared that it had eradicated extreme poverty according to the national threshold, lifting 770 million people out of poverty since 1978 and accounting for nearly three-quarters of the global reduction in the number of people living in extreme poverty.

The eradication of absolute poverty in the world's most populous country just 42 years later is a "truly extraordinary" achievement, said Quinn, former US ambassador to Cambodia, who had chaired the World Food Prize Foundation for 20 years since 2000.

"The most essential lead element in China's poverty alleviation was the construction/improvement of farm-to-market roads that were repaired and rebuilt everywhere," Quinn said.

Over 40 years, Quinn said, he has visited China many times to observe the country's poverty-reduction processes and to talk with key participants and decision-makers.

On his first trip to China in October 1979 as part of a delegation of US state governors, Quinn said, he found widespread poverty.

He recalled meeting then-Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, who emphasised the importance of the two steps China had just taken: its new policy of "opening to the world" and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the US.

Quinn said he then had the "remarkable opportunity" in October 1979 to travel widely throughout the country, including to Shanghai, Guangdong province and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, to observe the economic situation firsthand.

About 750 million Chinese citizens



Abuluoha, a village in Liangshan Yi autonomous prefecture, Sichuan province, became the last village in China to connect to the country's paved road system in 2020. YIN GANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



A college graduate (second from right) from a village in Fu'an city, Fujian province, teaches fellow villagers to sell agricultural produce through livestreaming on August 10. JIANG KEHONG / XINHUA

The most essential lead element in China's poverty alleviation was the construction/improvement of farm-to-market roads that were repaired and rebuilt everywhere."

Kenneth Quinn,
president emeritus of the World Food Prize Foundation

were mired in poverty, and there were no signs of the modernisation that is now ubiquitous across the country, he said.

In the 1960s Quinn served as a rural development adviser in the Mekong Delta, where he found that "where the (improved) road ends, poverty, hunger, and malnutrition all begin".

In China's case it was where the road started that poverty began to recede.

"A comparison of 1980 Chinese highway maps with those of 2020 would demonstrate the clear linkage between the improvement and upgrading of rural roads and the reduction of poverty throughout the country," Quinn said.

For one thing, the upgrading of all-weather roads was the means by which new agricultural technologies, enhanced nutrition and expanded educational opportunities became available throughout the country, he said.

Sustained public investment in infrastructure, particularly in transport, was a catalyst for China's domestic market integration, providing the poor with improved access to markets to sell their produce and for their own consumption needs.

It also allowed the gains from China's export-led development and managed urbanisation to be shared with interior provinces and with rural areas, according to the joint study of the World Bank and China's State Council.

Just how heavily the country invested in intercity expressways can be gauged from the fact that the total length of expressways rose 44% annually from 147 kilometres in 1988 to 25,130 km in 2002. By 2021 that had stretched to 169,100 km, according to the Chinese Ministry of Transport.

In many areas, public investment in building rural roads or irrigation infrastructure was designed to benefit local low-skilled workers by incorporating local employment requirements in bidding documents, the joint study said.

The researchers estimated that in the mid-1990s every 10,000 yuan (\$1,392) of public spending on roads may have moved three people out of poverty, compared with two people for the same spending on access to electricity and telecommunications.

Compared with other parts of rural China, the effects were much larger in the less developed west of the country, where 10 people moved out of poverty for each 10,000 yuan spent on rural roads.

Other researchers also highlighted

the role played by building roads, which was supported by government policy.

"China's state is endowed with high administrative capacity, and the government used this to provide public goods and overcome collective action failures," Maria Ana Lugo, senior economist at the World Bank, wrote in a blog with two colleagues.

"This is most evident in the expansion of public infrastructure that helped integrate rural areas with urban economies, and in the co-ordination of stakeholders in the targeted poverty reduction," they said.

Quinn said other factors that have contributed to China's rapid rise out of poverty include widespread increased educational opportunities; the large-scale integration of women into the workforce; and the creation of a well-trained administrative, public service structure that successfully implements programmes throughout the country.

The challenge for China now will be how to maintain domestic economic growth while dealing with significant international issues, including animal, crop and human pandemic diseases, climate volatility, water insecurity and maintaining a peaceful regional and international environment to facilitate a stable global trading system.

Jorge Chediek, the UN secretary-general's former envoy on South-South co-operation, said China's policies to reach the most disadvantaged populations allowed for the targeting of resources and opportunities to those who are generally the most difficult to reach in the development process.

He was referring to when China's poverty headcount dropped below 10% of the rural population around 2012, and targeted poverty-alleviation and social-security systems started playing a more important role to "reach the last mile" of the remaining pockets of the poor.

China has set a powerful example for other developing countries, Chediek said.

"The first reason is that China has shown that strong development can happen, starting from a very low base. Secondly, that this process can be undertaken in a relatively short period of time. Third, that you do not need to follow some of the traditional prescriptions coming from the Global North."

Where today's wind is tamed to build a better future

By ZHENG XIN

The fierce gales in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region were once considered bad for business. Today, however, the gales have become big business itself, harvested by hundreds of giant turbines and transformed into electricity to power up the country.

Also thanks to the gales, Dabancheng of Urumqi, the region's capital, has been transformed from an arid plain into a pioneer in the Chinese wind industry.

Wu Gang, chairman of Xinjiang Goldwind Science and Technology Co, who was a delegate to the recent 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, helped make that happen.

Wu quit his job as a teacher in the late 1980s to help set up the Dabancheng wind farm, braving the cold and ferocious gales to measure the wind there.

Captivated by the idea that energy could be produced by wind, Wu joined Xinjiang Wind Energy, one of China's pioneering wind power companies, in 1987. Together, Wu and their team persisted in their vision of wind power and built the Dabancheng wind farm.

Wu and a group of colleagues founded Goldwind in 1998, the goal being "to establish Xinjiang as the birthplace of China's domestic wind energy industry".

Fast-forward to 2013, Wu's Goldwind had become China's largest manufacturer of wind turbines and the world's second largest, with more than 10% of the global market share.

Today, Goldwind ranks second only to Vestas of Denmark among global wind turbine makers, with its business covering 38 countries and regions.

Wu attributed the success and rapid rise of China's wind power industry to strong engineering skills, and an ability both to acquire technology from other companies and develop its own technology.

The rapid growth of the wind power industry at home and abroad has provided a critical boost, together with the backing of Chinese national policies, he said.

China's wind turbine output now accounts for two-thirds of the world's total because of its large-scale production and technological breakthroughs.

According to the Global Wind Energy Council's annual supply-side data, of the top 15 wind turbine suppliers in the world last year, 10 were in China, and two Chinese companies made the top five.

Wei Hanyang, a power market analyst at research firm BloombergNEF, said wind power has developed in leaps and bounds in China over recent years as it plays a crucial role in fulfilling the China's pledge to achieve peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060.



Wu Gang, chairman of Xinjiang Goldwind Science and Technology Co, talks with an engineer at a factory of the company in August. XINHUA

Standing on the top storey of Basantapur Palace in Nepal, Yuan Mengxi has a hard time relating today's reality with what she saw seven years ago.

The palace complex, in the middle of Durbar Square in Kathmandu, was badly damaged in a huge earthquake in April 2015. The nine-storey palace, a tourist landmark, was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1979.

The palace not only has great historical significance but is also an architectural feat.

"You can see the whole place from here, and everything is beautiful and in order," says Yuan, 33, originally from Zhengzhou, Henan province, who now works for the Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage in Beijing. She is in Nepal to oversee the restoration of the palace.

"Vendors are selling their goods and visitors are sipping coffee or going about their business, while the mountains stretch in the distance," Yuan says about the scene she sees from the palace.

She made her first work trip to Kathmandu in October 2015, six months after the earthquake.

She was in shock seeing the city after the quake at the time, she says. Heritage buildings in Durbar Square were reduced to rubble, with exquisite wooden statues buried and scattered over a wide area.

"Kathmandu Valley was still shrouded in the dust from the quake," she says.

In the aftermath of the tremors, both the Chinese and the Nepali governments agreed to launch a project aimed at restoring the nine-storey Basantapur Palace complex.

"We were there to conduct feasibility studies and discuss technical and restoration issues," says Yuan, who was the main language interpreter from the Chinese side during the trip that lasted about six weeks.

Work on the project began in August 2017. The Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage undertook the restoration work under the guidance of the National Cultural Heritage Administration of China. It is among China's largest cultural heritage restoration foreign aid projects that had been conducted in six countries by the end of 2020.

China offered technical and professional support to the project, which was a challenging job, because the top



From left: A member of the Chinese team does restoration work at the quake-hit nine-storey Basantapur Palace complex in Kathmandu in July. Nepali artisans of the Chinese team repair wooden doors and windows. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Heritage of collaboration

Restoration of the quake-hit Basantapur Palace has been completed following years of painstaking efforts. **Yang Feiyue** reports

three storeys of Basantapur Palace had collapsed.

About 80% of the complex walls suffered varying degrees of deformation and cracking, with more than 10,000 wooden components, both structural and decorative, undermined.

In addition, the complex remained open to visitors, so the Chinese team conducted risk assessment and built a safety passage for the public.

This put even further pressure on the Chinese team because it had to ensure the safety of visiting tourists as well as the progress and integrity of the project.

"We insisted on retaining as much historical information as possible during the restoration," Yuan says.

Chinese engineers meticulously saved the scattered bricks and tiles and tried to restore those that were damaged.

This entailed numbering each piece and studying its location before it was put back in place.

Many craftspeople with experience of restoring historical buildings were recruited for the palace project.

China's efforts in restoring the palace were recognised by Damodar Gautam, director general of Nepal's Department of Archaeology.

"They (Chinese experts) were very cautious about maintaining the authen-



Images carved on the struts were damaged in the earthquake but have been elaborately restored by the artisans.

ticity, integrity and value of the world heritage site."

Yuan has been interested in art history since she was a child, and that led her to work in this field.

"I loved going to museums and art galleries," she says.

After gaining a bachelor's degree in English at Capital Normal University

in Beijing in 2012, she took up postgraduate archaeological studies at the same university. During an academic exchange programme in London as part of her postgraduate study, Yuan learned more about Chinese archaeological experts helping restore cultural heritage sites in Angkor, Cambodia.

She grabbed the opportunity of a job at the Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage after university in 2015.

During her first trip to Nepal for the palace project she was impressed by how Nepali and Chinese experts emphasised the authenticity and integrity of the structure as they talked about the restoration plan, which sounded familiar yet ambiguous to Yuan then.

"It was clear, because many of the professional terms had been hammered into us by our teacher over and over again in our class," Yuan says.

"However, it would be difficult to have an in-depth understanding of them if one didn't work in the front line of cultural heritage protection."

A great deal of knowledge and concepts about historical heritage restoration was not available in books, she says.

Over the years Yuan has made about 10 trips to Nepal for the Basantapur Palace restoration project. She studied the cultural and artistic value of the palace,

took charge of research and recorded the restoration work through a camera.

At the beginning the Chinese restoration team had insufficient historical references to work with, especially for the collapsed parts of the complex.

"They had to visit veteran artisans and collect old photos in their efforts to restore the historical traces of the complex," Yuan says.

Based on research of the earthquake damage and the structural features of the palace, the team moved to reinforce the building.

This was done by adding material that aids the structure's ability to absorb shock. This material is put inside nodes placed at specific junctions around the building.

This enabled them to improve the complex's quake resistance with minimal intervention. The Chinese team also obtained a patent in China for the use of this advanced technology.

In addition, as the complex had numerous fine and exquisite wooden structures and sculptures, the team used as many original components as possible, and all the damaged carvings in the elaborate windows were restored.

About 85% of the old wooden components were repaired and assembled at the original location during the project, and about 3,700 pieces of wooden components were newly built as supplementary parts for the project. The more old wooden components were applied, the less historical information was lost.

Manhari Maharjan, a Nepali sculptor who worked on the project, says the Chinese team could identify the carvings of designs.

"If a window needed to be repaired, the Chinese team would examine the window and invite us to discuss whether something was missing."

Personnel on both sides then compared the existing windows with pictures of the original ones to find and develop missing parts before they "created a window like the original one", Maharjan says.

Yuan is now busy putting together a permanent exhibition displaying the restoration process of the Basantapur Palace complex.

"We hope it will help carry forward cultural heritage restoration concepts and technology among the public."

Xinhua contributed to this story.

The Basantapur Palace complex after it was restored.

