



WIRED UP: Cable and telephone lines on an electricity pole in Patan on full moon Yomari Punhi on 11 December.

POLITICAL TANGLE

GOPEN RAI

Coalition politics means principles do not matter any more. Nowhere is this truer than in Nepal where none of the main parties got a majority in the November elections, and are wooing fringe parties by freeing their cadre serving time in jail for crimes. Since Parliament has not convened yet, the main parties have taken this decision by ordinance so they get the total 138 seats in the House to form a government. The ordinance seeks to add a provision which will allow dismissal of pending court cases against parties or groups engaged in violent politics. If passed, the ordinance will facilitate the release of Nagarik Unmukti Party leader Resham Chaudhary to join the government and give the governing alliance the number it requires in Parliament. Chaudhary's wife Ranjita Shrestha is the chair of the party and one of three newly-elected MPs from the new party. Resham Chaudhary is serving a life sentence for his involvement in the 2015 Tikapur massacre of policemen. The ordinance will also benefit Janamat Party leader C K Raut, some

of whose party cadres are in prison. Janamat Party has six elected MPs. But more importantly, it sets a precedent for amnesty for Maoists, security forces and politicians who are accused of war crimes during the 1996-2006 conflict. Interestingly, the most vocal criticism of the ordinance came from within the Nepali Congress (NC) which leads the coalition. In a scathing rebuke, NC leader Gagan Thapa wrote on social media: 'The ordinance is legally, politically and morally unsound. It is unconstitutional and against the spirit of democracy and the parliamentary system.' Thapa is challenging Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba for leadership of the party. But Deuba appears to be more intent on striking deals with Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal over the next prime minister, president, house speaker, and other constitutional appointees. Resounding criticism also came from other NC leaders like Bishwa Prakash Sharma and Shekhar Koirala, as well as newly-elected young MP Pradip Paudel. Party leaders have said that the party was not consulted before the

ordinance was introduced. Deuba's decades-long grip over NC party leadership gives him a significant advantage over any other leader aspirant within the party, and he has tried to railroad the ordinance despite NC dissidents and the new independent RSP doing well in elections. The RSP's newly-elected MP from Lalitpur-3, Toshima Karki said: "That the caretaker government can stoop so low to free criminals from jail just to stay in power shows their greed for power. This is against the rule of law and will spell disaster for the country." Despite some support from within the NC and sympathy from the public, Gagan Thapa's chances of winning parliamentary party leadership and becoming Prime Minister remain slim. "I don't see the old leaders trusting the newer generation with the leadership and handing over the reins at this point in time," notes political analyst Indra Adhikari. She adds: "Our socio-political structure has historically favoured the elite which means that political access is limited, and power rarely changes hands."

The ordinance is proof that the caretaker government is determined to bend the Constitution any which way to keep the coalition intact despite some of its members suffering huge losses in elections. Nepal's traditional politicians, it seems, want to carry on doing what they have always done. **Shristi Karki**

Inside

18 DECEMBER
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2

INTERNATIONAL
MIGRANTS DAY
18 DECEMBER

Nepalis picking
berries in Scotland
PAGE 4-5

Labour migration
and football
PAGE 6-7

Hard working students
PAGE 10-11



18 YEARS

Outsource your
Non-Core Staff through
Suvidha Staffing

- licensed company by DoL, MoLESS

- 100% Labour Law Compliant

+977-9851247213

www.suvidhasewa.com.np

Suvidha
Sewa



MERRY
Christmas
HAPPY NEW YEAR
UP TO 50% OFF
SHOP NOW

Express love in the softest way possible,
gift warm cashmere this Christmas & New Year.

NATUREKNIT
CASHMERE REDEFINED

5354812 | Sanchaya Kosh Building, Thamel, KTM | Shop #205-206

fb.com/natureknit

@nature_knit

info@natureknit.com

www.natureknit.com

18 December

The organisers of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar must have thought that it was fitting that the final game on 18 December coincides with Qatar’s national day. But it is even more apposite because 18 December also happens to be International Migrants Day.

The irony is not lost. The final game (may the best team win) marks the end of a tournament built on widespread abuse on the day honouring migrant workers.

For Nepali workers who contributed to build World Cup infrastructure in the past decade, this should have been a moment of national pride. While rooting for Messi’s magic, we could also be celebrating football history being made in breathtaking infrastructure built by fellow Nepalis.

Instead, there are many Nepalis boycotting the games. Others have expressed frustration over campaigns seeking compensation for the abused. Many Nepalis watched the games with a bitter aftertaste — love for the beautiful game tainted by the blood, sweat and tears of compatriots.

The host country and the football governing body FIFA are both set to make billions in profits. But demands to compensate families for the deaths of relatives have been ignored. Financial support will not make up for their tragedies, but it would have provided some relief.

Neither FIFA nor Qatar are particularly low on resources. Yet they have blithely ignored reports of abuse of workers. They accuse critics of hypocrisy and engaged in whataboutery about historical atrocities committed by colonial powers.

The stories of mourning families in Nepal are happening here and now. They are grieving while the world is transfixed by the glamour and glare of the stadium lights.

Qatar is set to host other mega events, including the 2023 AFC and is vying for the Olympics. Saudi Arabia has its eyes on the 2030 World Cup and has started laying the foundations for its \$500 billion NEOM city project.

These will be built and delivered on the backs of migrant workers, including Nepalis. Restrictive regimes will continue to limit freedom of speech and punish any migrant worker who dares to speak up. Governments from countries like ours will

self-censor, and ignore their own citizens being unpaid, abused or left to die.

Workers will continue to leave Nepal in droves to transform deserts into cities. These jobs are important, even transformational, for some families. Landing a good employer is like winning the lottery.

Many families buy land, build houses, afford education for their children or medical bills for parents back home. So the exploitation is tolerated by families who depend on the money, or by the country whose economy depends on those remittances.

It is unfair to blame just the host countries as some of the gravest abuse begins in Nepal with workers drowning in debt by the time they land in Qatar. It is governance failure and corruption back home that is a major push factor, and ‘manpower’ agencies in Nepal also blatantly cheat workers eager for jobs overseas.

It does not matter how Qatar won the World Cup hosting rights, why in the world Saudi Arabia wants to build a fantasy city, or what steps Malaysia is taking to ramp up medical gloves production. It will not

matter that origin countries including Nepal are complacent and complicit in the abuses their citizens face abroad. Abject

poverty and the desire to provide for families back home overshadow all other concerns.

Jobs, even without safeguards, will always be a superior option to no jobs. This is the reality of a workforce that does not want to be limited by finding work back home, or the Nepal government’s own apathy

to push for stronger, tangible migration reforms.

After the 2022 Qatar World Cup is done, it is unlikely that the next mega project in the desert will be any different to maximise the gains of international migration and its abuses minimised.

More vanity projects, more jobs. More remittance. More uncompensated abuse. More silent boycott. More global events in which the poorest pay a steep price. More deafening silence from our government. More viral stories on coffins received at the airport by broken families.

The only difference is that the bodies will now arrive in more than one international airport in Nepal.



INTERNATIONAL
MIGRANTS DAY
18 DECEMBER

For many Nepalis,
love for the
beautiful game
was tainted by
the blood, sweat
and tears of
compatriots

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The Exodus

Humans have migrated throughout history: natural disasters, wars, better jobs and now climate change being the major push factors. Back in 2002 with the Maoist insurgency at its peak, the violence forced Nepalis from remotest corners of the country to flee to the cities or India.

Two decades later, Nepalis are still migrating, primarily to the Gulf including Qatar where the 2022 World Cup is being played. A huge chunk of Nepalis migrating are students going to Australia, the UK and Canada for higher studies – many of them never to return.

More on these on this week’s International Migrants Day special issue with stories on pages 2, 4-5, 6-7, 9 and 10-11. Twenty years ago, Nepali Times of #123 13-19 December 2002 also carried this report. Excerpt:

They come across the border by the thousands every day. Young, old, men and women fleeing the fighting in Nepal for safety and jobs in India. It is happening in most towns along Nepal’s 1,800 km frontier with India, but the exodus is most visible here on the Indian side of the border from Nepalganj.

They emerge from under Nepal’s welcome arch at the border, and head straight for the bus park or the railway

station in Rupediya. From here they will travel to cities across India to friends and relatives.

This is not new, Nepali hill farmers have been migrating for decades after their harvests to find seasonal work in India. But what is different this year is the sheer volume of displaced people, and the fact that they are not seasonal migrants-many are not going to return until Nepal returns to normal. It is obvious that added

up, there is a massive humanitarian crisis brewing here. The outflow of villagers from insurgency-hit mid-western districts has now reached a peak. Officials at the border police post at Nepalganj told us they counted more than 8,000 people passed through during the week 4-11 December, the highest weekly figure that they have ever recorded.

Those leaving Nepal range from three-month old children in the laps of mothers to 60-year-old villagers. Clad in torn jackets, dirty caps, slippers and jute sacks full of belongings, they have been travelling on foot and bus for days to reach this border. But here, their ordeal has just begun as they face an uncertain future in a foreign land.

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



ONLINE PACKAGES



Deputy Director General of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) Izabella Koziell recently won the UN Women Rise and Raise Others Award. Nepali Times spoke to her about the importance of women in the climate space by empowering women to meet the challenges to the Himalaya by the climate crisis. Subscribe to our YouTube channel for more original multimedia content.

NEW GOVERNMENT

It would be better for the Nepali Congress to forge an alliance with the UML (‘Seats of power’, Shristi Karki, #1139) and form a viable and stable government that will rule for five years.

Krishna Kumar Limboo

NEPAL’S MOUNTAINS

Excellent Editorial and a very informative piece for this Nepal neophyte (‘Knowing our mountains’, Editorial, #1139). Your message at the very end is sobering and a clarion call to those in power and influence.

Suzan Appel Causey

■ The Himalaya is not just mountains, it is the entire watershed from the plateau to the plains which makes it even more important.

Yayawar

■ This is a very interesting and important article.

Candace Kolb

■ The himal and beyond is Nepal! Good article for those interested in Nepal, which is not just the land of mountains but much more.

Akku Chowdhury

WATER CRISIS

The inconvenient truth is that Nepal’s seven major rivers are drying up (‘The climate crisis is a water crisis in the Himalaya’ Sonia Awale, #1139).

David Durkan

ARNICO PANDAY

This is some good English, but bad policy (‘Arnico Panday, the political scientist’, Nepali Times Studio/#1139). Cost-effective or not, the provincial system was a political decision made for the sake of peace and stability. And peace has no price.

Pratik Daa

■ There apparently is hope for Nepal to get on the right track gradually.

Netashwa Dixit

SNOW LEOPARDS

It takes tons of patience to get a glimpse of one of the most elusive creatures in the most remote part of the world (‘Snow leopard redux’, Tayama Rai, #1139).

Gyurme Dondup

QATAR MIGRANTS

I am not watching the games either (‘My uncle died in Qatar’, Ramu Kharel, nepalitimes.com) out of respect for the migrant workers treated like slaves.

Artic Traveler Eira

■ It is indeed tragic that so many Nepalis died there and worked in such arduous conditions.

Roger Ray

■ A deeply moving piece. Heartfelt tribute to your mama. Amnesty International Nepal

KAISER MAHAL

The photos shared in your social media show us how wasteful we have been with resources in the past, and perhaps this is the lesson learned here.

Jiggy Gaton

■ Dumping all those books is symbolic of the education system in our country.

Trader

SELF-DRIVING

Lol (‘Self-driving in Kathmandu’, Ass, #1138). Wonder if autonomous vehicles would make the city more or less chaotic!

Jon Petersen

SAND EXTRACTION

The karmic payback is going to be very heavy and very painful (‘A nation built on sand’, Ramesh Kumar, nepalitimes.com).

Maureen Drdak

WORLD CUP

Very right and strong message (‘Art as a call to action’, Ashish Dhakal, nepalitimes.com).

Colette Moreau

BUDDHA’S TEACHINGS

Most of us are being hypocrites. We say Buddha was born in Nepal but do not truly follow his teachings (‘Buddha’s birthday on his birthplace’, Saglo Samaj, nepalitimes.com). We have used Lumbini for its archaeological importance to lure the world but we must respect this site of much importance as well as the rest of the world.

Hari Dhakal

WHAT’S TRENDING



Snow leopard redux

by Tayama Rai
Tashi Ghale’s father taught him to fear the snow leopards which would often kill livestock. Today, rather than fear the animal, the photographer is in awe of them. Review of Ghale’s exhibition of the elusive cat in its melting Himalayan habitat.

Most reached and shared on Facebook



Knowing our mountains

Editorial
We need to know our mountains, our own survival depends on it. The Himalaya may exact revenge of we mistreat it. Editorial on International Mountain Day 11 December. Join the discussion online

Most commented



The climate crisis is a water crisis

by Sonia Awale
While melting mountains are more visible, many more people are affected across the Himalaya by springs going dry and reduced flow on rivers. Read more on our website.

Most popular on Twitter

Football for a better world

Nepali Times
Former German football star Thomas Hitzlsperger knows the significance of the World Cup to football players and the pressure to speak out on social issues. Hitzlsperger visited Qatar and Nepal to film his documentary Katar, warum nur? Read his interview at nepalitimes.com

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Almost every household in western Nepal has a family member working in India, and the 6.6 magnitude earthquake that shook the region last month has added to the exodus.
Read on, Earthquake vacates villages in Nepal:

madhukar upadhya @madhukaru
First, it was declining farm productivity followed by droughts + water shortage. The situation was further compounded by increasing landslides/debris flow; as if that wasn’t enough, now there are earthquakes. Reasons enough for many to leave home for good. Heartbreaking!

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
"I wanted to show why people from countries like #Nepal have to go to work in #Qatar even though some of the work is quite dangerous and has even led to many deaths."
Interview with German football star turned human rights activist Thomas Hitzlsperger

Jon Holmes @jonboy79
Really good Q&A here with @ThomasHitz on various #Qatar2022 talking points - recommended read

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
#Nepal’s excluded communities have been pushed out further in this #election. Glaringly, no mainstream party fielded Dalit candidates for direct elections this time.

ShreeZna SinGh @intoxicatedmice
Back to square one. It’s a disgrace. After our own struggle these old and new shameless people not being able to be inclusive.



BEST PART OF THE JOURNEY STOPOVER IN ISTANBUL



COMPLIMENTARY HOTEL STAY AND EASY VISA

1 night for Economy Class
2 nights for Business Class

You can extend your stay
with special prices starting from
49 USD per night



TURKISH AIRLINES

freehotelnepal@thy.com | 01-4438363 | 4438436
Terms and conditions apply, visit turkishairlines.com

Picking berries in Scotland

Opportunity to earn money as seasonal workers, and to learn new farming techniques

● **Manoj Bhusal**

I recently returned from the United Kingdom, where I worked as a seasonal agricultural worker (*pictured*) for a little over five months.

The idea of going to Britain to work was very appealing, of course, and when a friend made it successfully there, it gave me hope that this was actually a feasible pursuit.

I followed, but faced several bumps along the way that often made me lose all hope. There were lockdowns because of Covid-19, and Nepal being listed in the Red Zone in the UK. But despite the delays and uncertainty, it all worked out in the end.

As anticipated, my job in Scotland was to pick all kinds of berries: strawberries, blackberries, blueberries and raspberries, you name it. In the beginning I enjoyed eating them, but I quickly got sick of eating berries.

My days started at 6AM, but we did not have set work hours and were paid by the amount of fruit we picked and not by the time spent picking them. Picking berries from the ground is significantly harder than picking table-top berries, as I learnt quickly.

We found new ways to pick and sort the fruits faster. The work could get monotonous, of course, but the thought of earning in GBP encouraged us — the more we picked, the more the earnings. The most I earned in a single day was £143, but the average was more like £100 daily. Living costs and tax deductions reduced my savings a bit.

I stayed in a caravan on the farm with other Nepalis. We were from the far corners of Nepal, and all met up in Scotland and became good friends there. There were also Romanians, Ukrainians and Bulgarians on the farm who were more experienced berry pickers than us. Brexit and Russia's invasion of Ukraine has made British employers look elsewhere to countries like ours for farm hands.



I made Tiktok videos to record my experience, and organically started collecting followers who relied on me for information about the application process and life in the UK. The craze to work in Britain among Nepalis, the confusion around the application process with untrustworthy recruiters, and curiosity about farm life in the UK meant people had tons of questions.

I could not reply to people individually, but made these Tiktok videos to address common questions after extensive

research on the application process — especially in bypassing intermediaries after a couple of unsuccessful encounters. My experience was useful for other Nepalis who wanted to work in Britain.

I am happy that many benefited from the information I provided, and were able to avoid getting cheated by recruiters.

Work in the UK is a good opportunity for Nepalis if malpractices in the recruitment process as has been reported in the international media are addressed

so that it is more transparent. Nepalis are relatively new in this seasonal agriculture sector in Britain that has been dominated by Eastern Europeans, but there could be real benefits for us in the future.

My employer asked me to contact him again in February, so I plan to reapply. This is something that Nepalis need to understand: if we honour our contract and work hard it can increase the opportunity to be rehired in the UK. It could even increase the British quota for Nepali workers.

I got to travel around Britain, and managed to save £7,700. But we have to be both physically and mentally prepared to work as farm workers. Many Nepalis who go to the UK have never done physical labour before. Some may expect a glamorous life in *Belayat*, but agriculture is hard work. It is better if people know that so they don't have unrealistic expectations and are disappointed.

This was not the first time I have gone abroad to do physically taxing work, so I was both mentally and physically prepared for the UK experience.

Previously, I worked in South Korea under its Employment Permit System (EPS) in the manufacturing sector, first to make carton boxes and then to manufacture tapes.

I had to carry out different tasks as a packer, stitcher and eventually a machine operator. The South Korea *bhoot* got hold of me soon after I finished my 12th grade, and I was determined to follow many village *dais* to take that route.

I did not study as hard for the Korean exam as others, but even then I passed easily. I did not go to college and worked in Korea for four and a half years. I could have stayed longer, but chose to return to Nepal.

With my savings from Korea I bought some land, improved my living standard and the stint instilled in me strong work ethics. Until the UK opportunity came

along, I ran an electronic shop in Gongabu where I repaired mobile phones.

I had originally wanted to study IT but couldn't afford it given my family background. In Kathmandu, I took a three-month course in phone repairs. My Korean experience made me more mentally prepared for agricultural work in the UK than other first timers.

I did not pay much attention to learning the technical aspects of farming in Scotland. I was there just to pick berries and make some money. A lot of others there were like me. Nepalis who work on the farm back home will find the job on the farm easy. But they have to be given the opportunity and need support to navigate the complex recruitment system.

I focused only on picking berries, but if there are Nepalis curious and passionate about learning agriculture methods to apply them back home, they can learn a lot from the experience.

Given the demand for UK-based jobs in Nepal, and with the complicated recruitment process, and unethical behaviour of middlemen, the work is beyond the reach of most poor farmers in rural Nepal.

It requires contacts of recruitment agents, ability to use the internet, understanding English, among other things. But the kind of seasonal agriculture experience I got could be even more transformational for the poorest farmers of rural Nepal if there was a farm-to-farm transfer mechanism. They would be even more physically and mentally suited for the job. Furthermore, they would return with experience and exposure to new ideas they could apply back home. 🇳🇵

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.



**DIASPORA
DIARIES 18**



NMB BANK
एनएमबी बैंक

Crossborder pollution

The World Bank this week released an alarming report on how pollution is affecting the region.

Striving for Clean Air: Air Pollution and Public Health in South Asia says the concentration of fine particulate matter such as soot and small dust (PM_{2.5}) in some of the region's most densely populated and poor areas are up to 20 times higher than what WHO considers healthy (5 µg/m³). Several South Asian countries have adopted policies to help improve air quality, but their focus on mitigating air pollution generated



within cities is yielding insufficient results.

The report says current policies will only be partially successful in reducing PM_{2.5} even if fully implemented. To achieve greater progress, the report offers a three-phase roadmap, to focus on small manufacturing, agriculture, residential cooking, and waste management.

The most cost-effective scenario would cut the average exposure of soot and dust in South Asia to 30 µg/m³ at a cost of \$278 million per µg/m³ of reduced exposure, and save more than 750,000 lives annually.



Nepal India Projects

The Embassy of India is undertaking projects in education, healthcare and drinking water in Janata Belaka Secondary School Building in Udayapur, Ngonga Thenchowk Chholling Meditation Centre in Solukhumbu and Lisnekhola Tikasung Dangchet Jharlang Water Supply Project in Dhading.

Australian scholars

The Australian Government has awarded nine scholarships for postgraduate degrees in Australia. They include 6 individuals from the public sector, five women and two persons with disabilities.

Film Awards

Two Indian films 'Bad Blood' by Vide Media about rhino conservation in Assam and 'Water for Life' from Green Hub about rain water conservation in Cherrapunji won the Global Sustainability Film Awards 2022.

Ncell disturbance

Ncell experienced a disturbance in its network due to multiple optical fibre links breakage connecting Butwal-Bardaghat and Damauli-Abhukhaireni road.

Global IME

Global IME Bank Limited held its AGM and decided to merge with the Bank of Kathmandu at a share exchange ratio of 1:1. The authorised capital of the bank will be increased from Rs25 billion to 50 billion. Global IME and Bank of Kathmandu (BoK)



have also submitted an application for merger to the Nepal Rastra Bank. The new entity following the merger will be called Global IME BoK Limited with Ratna Raj Bajracharya, the current CEO of GIBL as the CEO.



NIU Showroom

NIU opened a new showroom in Boudha, Kathmandu, this week. The electric scooters have officially been distributed by Eco Infinity since 2017.

Standard Chartered

At its AGM, Standard Chartered Bank Nepal recorded an Operating Profit and Net Profit of respectively Rs3.24 billion and Rs2.26 billion with a 24.8% growth. The AGM also appointed the bank's new director, Avinash Agarwal.

Samsung Campus

Samsung has inaugurated its global CSR program Samsung Innovation Campus at Institute of Engineering in Pulchok. The electronics giant aims to train Nepali youth in-demand tech skills such as AI, Internet of Things, Big Data and Coding and Programming. Students will also have to present projects of social significance in which the technologies play a role.

Nepalis in the Garden of England

The UK's Seasonal Worker Scheme is a good opportunity for Nepali migrant workers, but they have to be careful about being cheated

● Joy Stephens

Growing up in Kent, the 'Garden of England', I've done more than my share of fruit picking. We used to live next door to a strawberry field, and that was my first paid job as a young teenager.

My fellow workers then were not Nepalis like Manoj Bhusal (*see adjoining story*) but were travellers of another kind – the Roma people. Every June, they parked their caravans in a corner of the farm and whole families, from small children to grandmothers, pitched in with picking berries.

Times have changed. The impact of Brexit and other factors have created a serious manpower shortage in the UK. Agriculture has always relied on seasonal migrants to help with harvest, so in 2019 the government piloted the Seasonal Worker Scheme (SWS).

Workers from specified countries are allowed to work in the UK for 6 months in any one year, mostly in horticulture. Since 2021, Nepal has been added to the list of eligible countries, and the quota increased to 38,000 workers from countries in eastern Europe and central Asia.

There has been no public fanfare about this policy. The first I learnt of it was when some Nepali friends contacted me this year to ask for my help to get a visa.

The UK government says workers only have to pay the £259 visa fee for the job, and work requires no special skills, no English, only the willingness to perform tedious manual labour. With daily earnings of £100 (Rs16,000), this opportunity could be transformational for many of Nepal's poorest farmers.

But there is a catch: the poorest and most marginalised Nepalis do not know how to navigate the application process. And even those who may be able to have come to rely on agents who charge exorbitant fees.

In August 2022, an article in *The Guardian* uncovered Indonesian workers being charged up to £5,000 to secure employment



THANET EARTH

under the SWS. My Nepali friends were also quoted hefty fees by employment brokers in Kathmandu. Is it compulsory to use such agents? I decided to find out.

The first page of the UK Government website describes how to apply for the SWS visa. Only after a detailed reading of subsequent pages did I learn that before applying I had to have a job offer and a 'Certificate of Sponsorship', but no list is provided. Finding them via the internet proved hard, even for me, a native English speaker.

So I picked up my mobile and phoned Thanet Earth to ask for a job. This is a massive suburb of greenhouses in East Kent where vegetables are grown on a massive scale: 400 million tomatoes, 30 million cucumbers, 24 million peppers annually.

They told me that although they are a licensed 'gangmaster', they are not an 'approved operator' for SWS. They use an agency called Pro-Force.

I found Pro-Force's website clear and easy to navigate, and very concerned about ethical practices. On their Homepage they stress: 'Pro-Force will never charge for work-finding services. If anyone asks you for money for work, report it to enquiries@pro-force.co.uk. Please do not make payments.'



They are members of Stronger Together, an NGO which protects migrant workers from exploitation, and even provide a link to the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) who are the official regulator of complaints.

Unfortunately, they are less clear about how to apply for a job. Their 'Search Jobs' showed zero vacancies currently. It is winter after all.

Pro-Force told me on the phone

that they use an intermediary called Poseidon Human Capital, but in the first instance candidates should contact Pro-Force and they will put them in touch with Poseidon.

Returning to the internet, I found a list of approved operators in a Research Briefing in the House of Commons library. I phoned another one called AG Recruitment. They told me candidates should apply directly to them by email or via their website, and they handle the interview process themselves. They do not charge any fees for recruitment.

But the application process is opaque and requires good website navigation and English skills, plus persistence. But it can be done without the intervention of a third party.

Hoping to encounter seasonal workers from Nepal, or their British supervisor, and get their viewpoint, I decided to pay a visit to Thanet Earth. Turning into their drive a sign announced 'Authorized Persons Only'.

Without much hope, I drove up to the barrier. It miraculously lifted. I drove past unending rows of greenhouses, some empty, some with plants sheltering under heat lamps. Pulling in to the Office building, the receptionist greeted me with suspicion:

"How did you get past security?"

"The barrier lifted"

"I'll have a word with the security guard. He's not doing his job."

"Can you confirm whether you have workers from Nepal?"

"I'm not allowed to reveal anything like that. That's upstairs information."

"Could I speak with someone upstairs?"

"You'll have to apply by email or online."

"Since I'm here, can I phone them? Perhaps a manager will come downstairs and talk with me?"

"Your phone call will be diverted to me, and I will say the same thing."

One would think they are growing nuclear bombs, not tomatoes. What are they hiding? I could think of only two reasons for the high security: either they are safe-guarding migrant workers from potential hostility from locals, or they fear the uproar if the public learns that one ministry is recruiting migrant workers, while the Home Secretary Suella Braverman continues to assert that Britain is being 'invaded' by 'economic migrants' posing as asylum seekers. They cannot have it both ways.

The SWS is a great opportunity, especially for impoverished rural farmers from Nepal, if they can get free assistance with the application.

But applicants should be well-informed and not have to pay extortionate fees to unauthorised agents. Once in the UK, they should be aware of their labour rights. There have been some reports of abuse, but there are many safeguards and ways to report complaints. 🇳🇵

Joy Stephens is a social researcher who worked in Nepal with a variety of rural empowerment projects between 1974 and 1998.

NEW MENU

MORE AFFORDABLE PRICES



Fried Shrimp Platter



Chicken Mo:Mo



Chicken Choila Burger



Chicken Tawa Wrap



Hard Rock CAFE

KATHMANDU

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
GM@HRCKATHMANDU.COM | +977 9801986771
SHERPA MALL , DURBAR MARG

ALL IS ONE

Football for a better world

Interview with German football star turned human rights activist Thomas Hitzlsperger

Former German football star Thomas Hitzlsperger played in the 2006 World Cup and knows the significance of the World Cup to football players as well as the pressure they face to use the platform to speak out on social issues. Hitzlsperger recently visited Qatar and Nepal to film his documentary *Katar, warum nur?* (Qatar, why?) in which he digs into why the World Cup is taking place in Qatar this year. A lot of money was spent to put Qatar in a positive light, but the deaths and abuse of workers have also tarnished its image. The documentary was aired in Germany in November and has been viewed around the world.

Hitzlsperger spoke to *Nepali Times* this week about his film.

Nepali Times: How did the documentary come about?
Thomas Hitzlsperger: I wanted to show why people from countries like Nepal have to go to work in Qatar even though some of the work is quite dangerous and has even led to many deaths. The German audience did not know what it is like to be a migrant worker both in Qatar and in Nepal. There is a huge difference in standards of living. People have very little money and no jobs. But whoever we spoke to in Nepal was incredibly friendly and kind to us. It is hard to see and acknowledge the reality that there is very little future hope for many people.

I met people like Saraswoti, the wife of a migrant worker who had died in Qatar, who shared her story and everything that had happened to her family. We also interviewed Mukesh Chaudhari who was a wage theft victim who had not been paid in full despite working in Qatar's extreme heat. Many viewers from Germany offered to help, so we have arranged for them to help families like Saraswoti to receive some financial support including for the education of her two boys.

Besides migrant rights issues, we have also covered LGBT and women's rights. Due to the World Cup, the situation for some has improved, however, being LGBT is still regarded as sodomy in Qatar and could send you to jail. Women often work in private households and depend on their employers.



Nick Golüke, Robert Grantner and Thomas Hitzlsperger in Kathmandu earlier this year.

The DFB (German Football Federation) has been active in human rights issues. Why is this?
Indeed. In the leadup to the World Cup, the DFB spent time to learn about Qatar, about human rights issues there. It showed solidarity by wearing t-shirts that read Human Rights, and wanted to wear one-love armbands during the tournament. But FIFA said at the very last moment that it was not allowed. This became very political. Players instead covered their mouths during the game as an act of protest against being silenced. But when Germany lost the game, they got criticised for it. It is very obvious that when you lose a game, people will use that as an excuse to say they focused too much on politics and thus lost. This is what football is like. There is no simple answer on when and

how to use the platform of big events to raise issues like human rights.

The German football players are also donating €1 million to a Nepali charity over the next five years which is very positive. None of the players I know of have been to Nepal so it was important for me to see Nepal through my own eyes and better understand what it is like here.

Indeed, how do you see a player balancing the pressure to perform in the field versus using the platform on human rights issues?
During my time as a player, activism wasn't as obvious and widespread as it is now. Now, players are more familiar with global issues and are being increasingly asked to take action and want to use their platform. FIFA, however, was very strict during the



PHOTOS: THOMAS HITZLSPERGER

World Cup and did not allow the players and football associations to raise their voices and wanted to stop players from doing anything, even to wear armbands against racism and homophobia. I see this as the core of the problem. FIFA was bent on using the World Cup for its own benefit, and pleasing the hosting nation.

What happened this World Cup was far from ideal. I don't have a solution to this problem. But FAs need to stick together and find a solution together for future tournaments so they can put football at the centre stage, but at the same time use their voices. Let's finish this tournament and then sit down and have a conversation. The last five-six weeks have seen different organisations and people committing many mistakes. How can we play football when



● Ramu Kharel

Growing up in Gulmi district, I was obsessed with football. Our village was perched on top of a staircase of terraced fields, none of them large enough for a football field.

We played improvised, barefoot games in vacant rice paddies every day after school, running after a deflated volleyball while modelling ourselves after our favourite international stars.

Mine, of course, was the Brazilian legend, Ronaldo. In 2002, I had watched the 2002 World Cup on a tiny colour television at home. The event gripped the country, and brought almost everything to a standstill.

Growing up, the pressures of life in an impoverished country began to set in. Many joined the workforce, or went to India. By a stroke of luck, my father, a high school teacher in the village, won a diversity visa lottery to the United States.

My family left Nepal when I was 13. When I was in medical college in Texas, most of my childhood friends back home were looking for jobs as menial labourers abroad.

Nepal's economy had stagnated during and after the decade-long insurgency, endemic corruption and political failure. Jobs were hard to find.

The Persian Gulf was hiring, but the work required long hours in the heat for a few hundred dollars a month to send home.

My uncle died in Qatar

US-based Nepali physician on why he is not watching the FIFA World Cup in Qatar this year



Others took less well-paying jobs in India, working as domestic help or in agriculture.

One of them was my uncle, Pitamber Bhattarai (*pictured, above*), whom I met after years in 2010 while on a study trip to Delhi. He was working in a restaurant, and travelled hours to find me.

We met in a sweet shop because he wanted me to try the famous Delhi confectionery. We spent hours reminiscing about my late mother, his older sister, whom we both missed dearly. I was seven years old when we had lost her to an unknown illness.

For those few hours with my ससुरा in the sweet shop my mother was alive again, and I felt profoundly moved. As we parted, my uncle told me about his plans to take a better-paying job in Qatar. He was the sole provider for his mother, wife and three young children back home.

Two years later, I learned that my uncle had died while working in Qatar, and his body was being repatriated to Nepal for the final rites. I was shaken to the core. It felt like I had lost my mother all over again.

His death made no sense to me. He was young and healthy, full of life. The death certificate provided by his employer in Qatar only listed 'cardiac arrest' as the cause.

I was just starting my medical studies, and I knew that cardiac arrest is not a cause of death but rather the end itself. Despite our family's efforts to find answers, there were none.

I started reading up on the conditions of migrant workers in *The Guardian* and other papers. It led me to wonder if my uncle's death was also due to working conditions.

I also learnt that on average one coffin was returned to Nepal with the remains of somebody's family member every single day from Qatar. It was not just Nepalis, workers from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and numerous African countries faced the same fate. As a physician, I travel to Nepal frequently to conduct global health work in emergency care. On a recent flight from Kathmandu to Qatar, I sat next to a 27-year-

old man from a remote village in eastern Nepal.

Nervous and excited, he told me how, through connections from relatives working in Qatar, he found an agent in Nepal who arranged a two-year contract to work for a company called Ipas.

They had promised to pay him \$275 a month with a \$82 food stipend. To arrange the job, he had already paid an agent in Nepal \$1,500 — more than four months' salary. His first job would be as a paint scraper, and he was promised 8-hour-day shifts with a day off every week.

His story was not unique. The flight, one of four from Kathmandu to Doha every day, was full of men like him. Many Nepalis died constructing infrastructure for the FIFA World Cup, but accurate statistics are impossible to find.

Some estimates put the number at more than 6,500. Every one of them leaves behind a bereaved, bereft and already destitute family, now with fewer options for survival than before. Meanwhile, FIFA is estimated to earn nearly \$6 billion from this year's World Cup. World Cup stadiums built in Brazil, Beijing and South Africa had raised similar concerns.

The Qatar experience has affected my family personally, but the issue of FIFA turning its back on human rights violations is not new. The football governing body must be held accountable.

When the world learnt in 2010 that Qatar had won the FIFA hosting bid, questions were raised about how a country with only three stadiums would host the globe's biggest sporting event. But Qatar had a plan. That plan included the blood, sweat and the lives of migrant workers.

Desperate workers plucked from South Asia and Africa were flown in, their passports taken, and they were put to work. So what if a few died? There would always be other desperate people trying to provide for their families.

In fact, young men have headed out to work

football should be played and also speak up on other issues to use the power of football for good causes? It must not be left to FIFA alone.

But some have described the activism as Western hypocrisy, and that all governments have committed abuses in their history. Of course, they will say we should not tell them how to run their country. I understand that. I accept it. It is not an easy conversation, but the football community must not pretend that this World Cup is the best event ever and look away from the real issues.

A part of the documentary was also filmed in Qatar. I got to meet an incredibly friendly Qatari lady who showed me bits of Doha. When I tried to confront her with some issues faced by migrant workers in her country, it became evident to me that there is a discrepancy in how Qataris view migrant worker issues versus how it is viewed in the western world. This confrontation can be tricky and isn't an easy matter to come to an agreement with. But there is no question that people who have worked in the Gulf have lost lives due to unbearable working conditions and this needs to stop. They have the resources and the responsibility to take better care of the migrant workers who work there.

What drives you to engage in social issues outside of your passion for football? It is not always easy having a platform because I receive criticism from those who think football should not be mixed with politics. I use the platform because things are not headed in the right direction, and make sure I can make a little contribution like supporting people in Nepal. Some may not like what I do but its part of being in the public eye. Sometimes I need a thick skin. But I think its worth it and there are many people who do support good causes. It is amazing to receive emails from strangers who offer support and give money to the charity we just started. I have seen people being discriminated against. I am in a privileged position so I do want to give something back. I cannot help everybody, of course, but I try to do what I can even if it is small. Sometimes I do receive nice emails, which is enough to give me the power to continue and overcome the criticism I receive.

Your impressions of Nepal? I am so happy I got to spend a few days in Nepal, which gave me a better understanding of what it is like here. I did not get to meet officials from the government, but I urge the Nepal government to invest in the education system. Only then can people really help themselves and dream of a better future.

in Qatar even after their own families have received dead bodies of their loved ones, or their uncles or fathers were sent back due to ill health caused by the heat and poor on-site conditions.

Nepal's economic instability has affected millions for decades. Successive governments in Nepal must be held accountable for allowing hundreds of thousands of workers to be exploited in these overseas worksites under false pretenses, and for not advocating more for the rights of its citizens abroad.

But employers in Qatar and FIFA must also be held to account, especially for the indignities and injustices wrought upon these workers after they landed in Qatar, and began toiling on infrastructure for the World Cup.

I am not watching the World Cup this year because cheering on games being played in buildings that so many of my people died constructing feels a bit like I have cheated them. And because memories of my uncle do not allow me to.

My personal boycott will not mean much, but I hope my uncle's story will provide perspective about the individual human tragedies involved.

Was there really a need in this day and age for the World Cup to rely on egregiously unsafe bonded labour? By placing profit over justice and decency, FIFA has undermined the positive values that give football its global appeal.

I love football. I want Messi to win. Football is a religion in Nepal. This year, however, the joy I once found in the beautiful game is haunted by the ghosts of workers. 🇳🇵



Ramu Kharel is an Assistant Professor at Brown University in the United States and an emergency medicine specialist.



RSS

Migrating to play football

The pressures and pleasures of an African football player building a career in Nepal

When I was first offered the opportunity to play in a Nepali club, I had no idea where Nepal was.

The deal that I was offered was lucrative. I had to play for two weeks to demonstrate my footballing skills, and if the club liked my performance, I could stay on with a work permit, and would be paid €5,000 a month.

After reading up on the country online and seeing the beautiful pictures of mountains, I was convinced that it was a good offer.

It was only after I arrived at Kathmandu airport in late 2015 that I realised I was duped by Nepali and African 'managers'. There was no one to pick me up at the airport, an early indication that I would deeply regret what I had signed up for.

I had to figure my way around, which was difficult especially because I did not even speak English back then. Relying on a kind taxi driver, I somehow managed to make it to a hotel.

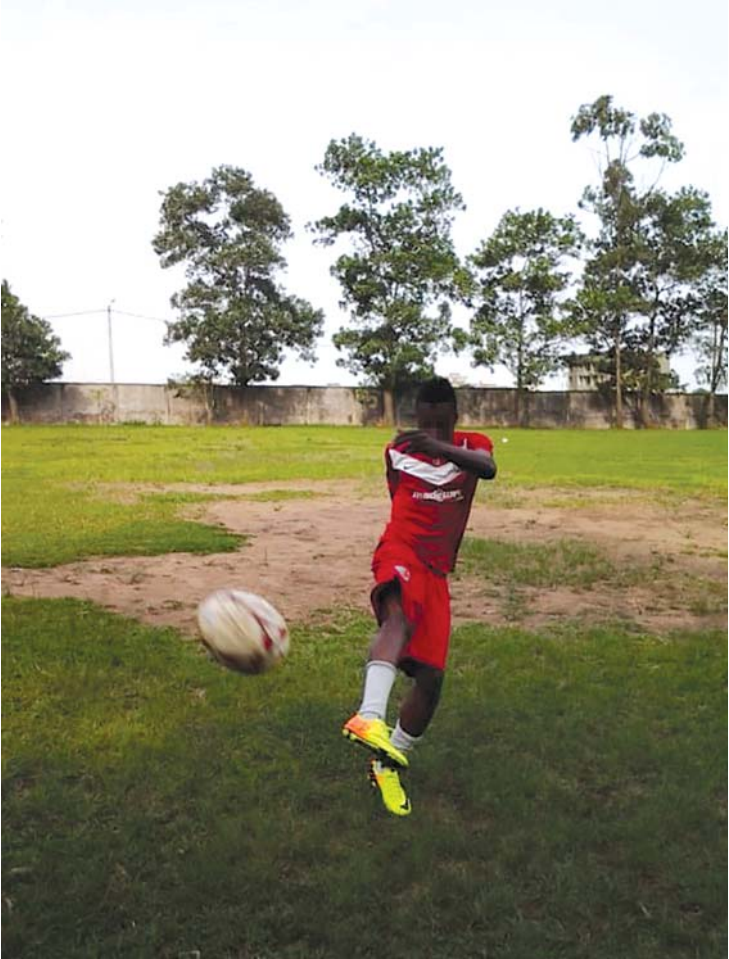
It was only on my third day here, after many follow up calls that the 'manager' showed up in person. The first thing he asked me was to pay him €1,000 in cash. This was absurd — why was I paying money to play when they should be the ones paying me?

I knew football is a lucrative business in which agents exaggerate and even lie about the attractiveness of the deals to draw young players who want to desperately make it big in football.

But I would soon learn from players from other African countries I met in Nepal that it is very common to pay agents exorbitant cuts, something I was unwilling to do. I also soon learnt that no one earns €5,000 a month here, not even the best national players.

Since the 2015 earthquake, there had apparently not been any league tournaments in Nepal. However, even though I refused to pay the agent, I managed to get some opportunities to play in tournaments with different teams here and there, mostly outside the capital.

The pay was only about Rs10,000 a



match and once people watch you score well, you get more calls to play for various teams in other tournaments. Sometimes, you can demand more pay when the managers are especially insistent.

Often I have to take public buses, journeying for hours outside the capital, and am expected to play the same day. Sometimes hotels are so low grade that I am unable to get a good night's sleep, affecting my performance on the field.

In these past few years, I have gone home several times and also played or coached in clubs in various European, Asian and Gulf countries. Even though my experience in Nepal to play football has been disappointing, I have found myself returning to the country frequently.

I keep coming back not for what I had originally dreamed of (playing football professionally in a club) but for the love of the friends I have made here and how Nepal has become a second home.

Of course, there are times when I am subject to racism when football spectators have chanted “हस्ती”, or insulted by strangers when I am just walking in the

streets. But overall, the Nepali people are very welcoming because of exposure via social media or their own migration experience when they have worked closely with Africans like myself.

I often get calls or social media messages from rural parts of Nepal where fans want me to come play in their areas again.

My experience in the Gulf was quite different. I was paid well and also had a sense of community as many players in my club were from African countries. There are large African communities, including from my own country, so it was easy to mingle socially.

It is very hot in the Gulf, so we only played in the evenings after 6PM, but I made close to \$3,000 a month without having to spend on food and accommodation. After I cross my football playing age, I am likely to try to go to one of the Gulf countries for a longer period, which is an increasing trend among many football players.

As someone who eats, breathes and sleeps football, this World Cup is of course a reminder of my own dreams, aspirations and journey as a footballer. Ever since I was a boy, I have dreamt of playing football professionally. I could not think

of anything else I would rather do. My ultimate, now broken, dream was to join the Juventus Football Club.

I supported Saudi Arabia strongly in the World Cup because I am a big fan of their coach Renard, who is a hero to many football players from African countries. He has been an epitome of good leadership and has contributed immensely to help African football teams in the past.

It was his leadership that helped countries like Zambia and Ivory Coast win the Africa Cup of Nations. For us African players who are aware of Renard's magic, Saudi Arabia's upset win over Argentina was not so surprising.

With the Saudis out, I rooted for Morocco but they lost the chance to make history in this World Cup as the first African country to be in the finals. 🇳🇵

The author is an African football player who has lived and played off and on in Nepal, but wishes to remain anonymous.

EVENTS



Christmas carnival

Holiday season is here. Check out the Christmas carnival and enjoy a day of fun games, food and music.
17 December, 11am onwards, Hyatt Place Kathmandu, Soalteemode

Next 50

The Next 50 Video Competition asks participants to submit a minute-long video on heritage, culture, temples or languages that are meaningful, and win exciting prizes. Contact International Youth Media Summit or UNESCO for more details.
(01) 5970112

Veg Fest

Enjoy a vegan food festival with delicious dishes prepared by the finest vegan restaurants in town. Also join a workshop with doctors, nutritionists and animal rights activists.
17 December, 10am-5pm, Utpala Café, Boudha, 9803800504



Sherpa delights

This Saturday immerse in the delicious Sherpa cuisine and enjoy the lesser-known *tuwa*, *phalgi*, *changul* and *rikikur*. Register now.
17 December, 5:30pm onwards, Hotel Sherwi Hyul, Boudha

DINING



Tasneem King's Kitchen

Tasneem's mouthwatering authentic Bohra Muslim cuisine is a must for anyone who loves flavorful, spicy, savoury dishes. From slow-cooked Dum Biryanis to traditional 10-course Bohra Thaals, Tasneem brings food-lovers together.
Jhamsikhel, 9801121212

MUSIC

Music Room

No better time like now to learn a new instrument. Join classes with musicians and educators at the Music Room started by Jazzmandu Music Education Initiative. Call for more details.
9818856982



Sabin Rai

Sabin Rai gives a soulful live performance at the opening of the Turtle Lounge. Don't miss it.
24 December, 6pm onwards, Turtle Lounge, Narsingh Chowk, Thamel

A pinch of jazz

Jazz, anyone? Hyatt Place has it covered this weekend with good music and good food.
16 December, 7pm onwards, Zing Sky Bar & Lounge, Hyatt Place, Soalteemode



Sound healing

Take a breather away from the humdrum and chaos of modern life and restore harmony and well-being to one's self through a sound healing session.
17 December, 6pm-7pm, Rs1000, Kundalini Ayurveda, Bakhundole, 9803436520

The Elements

The Elements will be performing live with an opening act by the Pasa Rockers. Book seats now.
16 December, 6pm onwards, Ai-La Lounge, Kumaripati

Dhokaima Bakery

There is a new place in town to cater to cravings of all things sweet. Drop by the new Dhokaima Bakery and get freshly baked goods, cakes, pastries, hot beverages, and more.
Sankhamul, New Baneswor



The Chocolate Room

Enter a world of delicious chocolate cupcakes, decadent brownies and chocolate of every size and shape imaginable. Complement them with the Peri Peri fries and milkshake.
Jhamsikhel, 9851056096

About Town

GETAWAY



Temple Tree

A peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour and sauna. It's hard to leave once one gets there.
Gaurighat, Lakeside, Pokhara (61) 465819

The Little House

A quaint stay in the middle of green rice fields is just what is needed to bid adieu to 2022. Enjoy the vista, relaxing walks and delicious food at The Little House.
Khokana, 9841370022

Royal Mustang

Set against the backdrop of shimmering white mountains, fields full of flowers and clear skies, the Royal Mustang Resort is a unique spot in Nepal's arid parts.
Lo Manthang, Mustang, 9746707045

Namo Buddha Resort

Traditional Newa style architecture surrounded by lush greenery, this resort is an oasis of peace and tranquility, offering spectacular views of the Himalayas on clear days.
Namo Buddha, Phulbari, 9851106802



Sapana Village Resort

Experience the rich Tharu and Chepang culture, marvel at the beauty of the lush national park, observe the elephants lumbering through the forests, all at the heart of the beautiful Sauraha.
Sauraha, Chitwan (56) 580308



Sam's One Tree Cafe

Famous for its murals that have decorated many a social media account, Sam's One Tree is raved for its lively atmosphere, tempting sizzlers and quick service.
Darbar Marg (01) 4222636

Buingal

Buingal is perfect for families. Try the vast menu of multi cuisine and enjoy a relaxing ambience this winter. The vegetable sekuwa is a must-try.
Maitidevi (01) 4521393

WEEKEND WEATHER

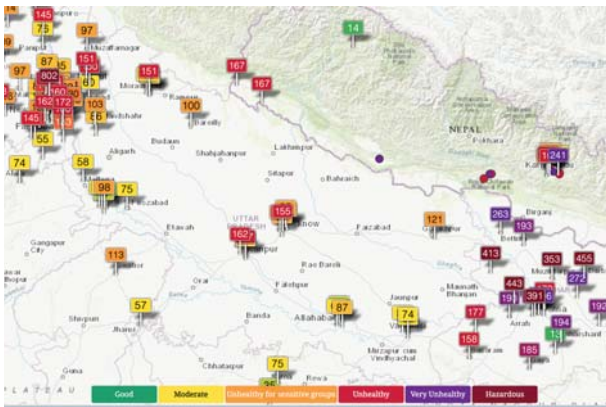


High, Fast Clouds

Cyclone Mandous battered and then traversed southern India, and over the weekend will be spinning in the central Arabian Sea, tracking northwest towards the Oman coast. Even though it is so far away, a plume of moisture from this system will be carried by the jetstream over the Nepal Himalaya, bringing fast-moving high stratus clouds which could accumulate over the mountains to dump some rain and snow, mainly over eastern Nepal. Another circulation will arrive over Sri Lanka early next week, but we do not yet know which way it will travel.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
19° 7°	19° 8°	19° 8°

AIR QUALITY INDEX



Usually, cyclonic storms over the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea change the wind direction and intensity, and keep Indo-Gangetic pollution and smoke away from Nepal so we just have to contend with our own Kathmandu Valley smog. This is what kept Kathmandu's air so crisp and clean this week, but all this could change over the weekend (pictured, AQI over north India and Nepal on Thursday morning). And with the colder air, the Valley's inversion will trap dirty air at surface level, and will mix with thick morning fog over the lower Valleys and some Tarai areas.

OUR PICK

Cozy up as winter whisks in. Todd Haynes's *Carol* may not intuitively appear warm, but this story of a forbidden affair between an aspiring female photographer and an older woman going through a difficult divorce is a moving, subversive and quietly electric experience. Based on the cult-classic novel by Patricia Highsmith (*The Talented Mr Ripley, et al*) and set in New York City during the early 1950s, the film lusciously moves through the seasons, from autumn to winter to spring, establishes a mood of extraordinary sweeping romance, half-nostalgic and half-ominous, and never lets go. *Carol* is delicate, deliberate and deceptively simple – equally engaging, a testament to the universal power of love against all odds and grain. Stars Cate Blanchett, Rooney Mara and Sarah Paulson.

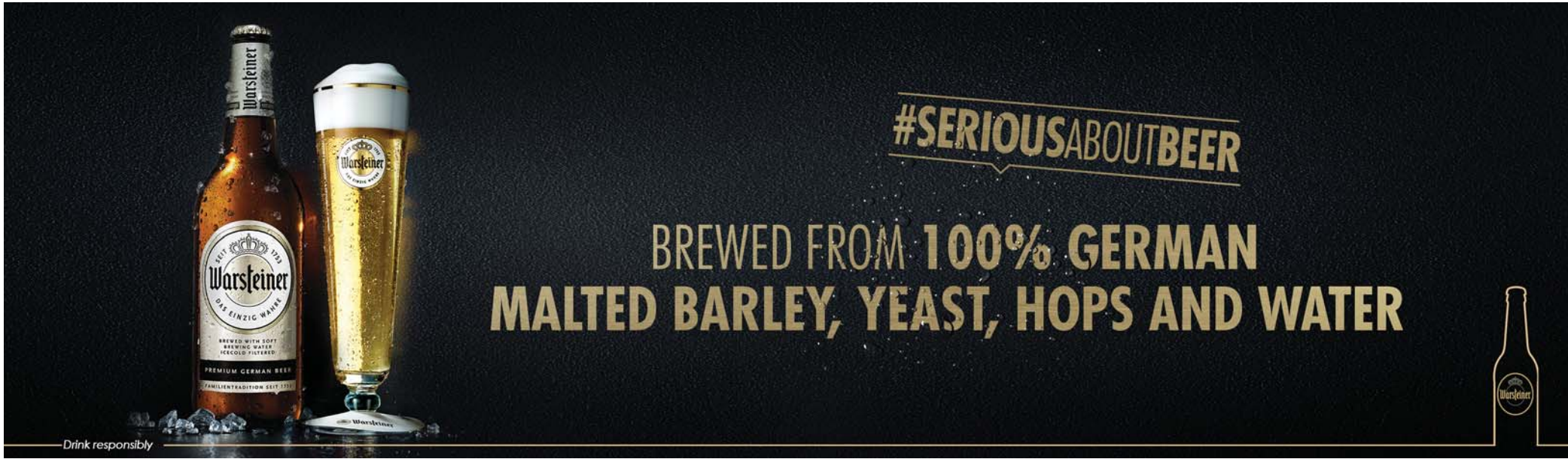


सम्पत्ति विवरण समयमै बुझाऔं, जरिवानाबाट बचौं

- 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



Earthquake vacates villages

Last month's disaster in west Nepal forced more people to migrate to afford house repairs

● Anita Bhetwal

Almost every household in western Nepal has a family member working in India, and the 6.6 magnitude earthquake that shook the region last month has added to the exodus.

Six people were killed, and there was widespread destruction. In Achham's Sanfebagar, 90% of homes were damaged. But even a month later, there has been no detailed assessment of the damage, and even more villagers have been forced to migrate to India to earn money for repairs.

Like many in this arid region, Dal Bahadur Bhool is a subsistence farmer. His house was destroyed, and he has no money for repairs and no option but to follow thousands of others from far-western Nepal to earn some money in India.

"His family has been under the tent for almost a month, his children are also sick with cold," says Gom Rawal, a neighbour. "There is no other income for the family or help, so he is going to India in a few days to try to make a living."

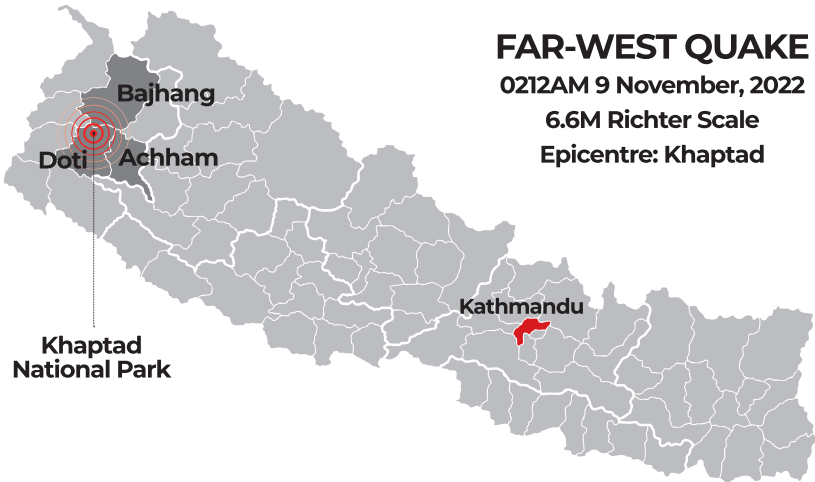
Five other families from the nearby Khaptad Valayanta and Putru villages in Achham are also preparing to migrate to the Tarai, where a few families have some land, or to India. "The number of people looking to leave is high among the families whose homes have been damaged," adds Rawal, who is also the member of the Achham District Committee of the CPN-Unified Socialist Party.

Pooja Kadayat of Sanfebagar-7 has already moved to Bangalore where her husband is employed after their home collapsed. Her uncle Dharma Kadayat says: "Many of us continue to live under tents in bad conditions, while some have gone south, there has been no proper survey of the exact numbers of how many have left."

The earthquake epicentre was at Khaptad National Park in Doti,



PHOTOS: DHAN BAHADUR THAPA AND DHARMA KATHYAT



and struck at 2:12AM local time, with over 300 aftershocks over the following days. Achham and Doti district suffered the worst damage. Six have died and 10 were injured in Purbichoki where 11,000 houses sustained cracks and 120 were levelled. Many families are now either living under tents or have migrated elsewhere.

"We had a sudden rush of trauma patients from Doti and Achham who needed surgery,

and we referred some of the more serious cases to Dhangadi," says Mandeep Pathak, an orthopaedic surgeon at Bayalpata Hospital, where the non-profit Nyaya Health Nepal provides free medical care to the people of surrounding districts. Many staff homes were damaged, although the hospital itself with its seismic resistant rammed earth architecture was unscathed.

Western Nepal has not seen a meda-quake for 500 years, and

continues to be at risk of a disaster of 8M or higher. Central Nepal also saw an uptick in out-migration of people in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake that was 7.8 on the Richter scale.

In Sanfebagar, 6,000 houses have sustained cracks with a few completely destroyed. "Nonetheless, there is considerable risk to live in the buildings that didn't come down," says deputy municipality chair Shiv Bahadur Kunwar.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) provides compensation only after the full assessment, which is still pending. The local government has therefore stepped in, collecting funds from its budget and community organisations. "But one tent and a couple days' worth of food is not enough," says Kunwar. As winter sets in, more people under the tents are getting sick and one three-month-old girl has died of exposure.

Dijan Bhattarai of the NDRMMA in Kathmandu blames the 20 November general elections for the

delayed response, but adds that reconstruction work will be done by July 2023. "But we are conducting a preliminary survey. Reconstruction will take place after we prepare the damage report to find long-term solutions," he says.

The Authority has been providing Rs500,000 for houses destroyed due to heavy rains, Rs400,000 in the hills, and Rs300,000 in Tarai. But there are no such provisions yet for earthquakes. Delays, poor management and lack of relief will only exacerbate the problem.

"With migration comes the problem of social dislocation, low production, increase in criminal activities, competition for opportunities and unbalanced population," says sociologist Ram Gurung. "Even if reconstruction or other jobs cannot be created quickly, it is necessary to properly counsel people affected."

Out-migration in Doti predates the latest earthquake. Sanju Thapa, ward chair of Patalkot in Sanfebagar, says many families have been concerned about increasing risk of landslides and other disasters. Over a hundred of the 566 families in Patalkot have relocated in the last few years, and 90 more are planning to leave following the quake.

A landslide in 2010 killed 10 people of the same family in Patalkot. Some hundred houses were at risk, but nothing was done due to a lack of proper research and evaluation, adds Thapa.

"Before, only men would go to India for work, leaving behind the women and the children," adds Min Bahadur Kunwar of Sanfebagar. "Now, whole families are leaving."

Most have moved to Kailali, Kanchanpur or Banke in the plains of Nepal, others have gone to Mumbai and other cities in India. Eight schools have shut down in Sanfebagar in recent years because there are no children left. In Bhagwati Basic School, where Kunwar is a teacher, the number of students dropped from 330 to 200 in just the past year, and he expects this to drop further.

Says Sanju Thapa: "This time, the earthquake has caused even more visible and invisible damage. People think the whole region is unsafe and are moving out, leaving behind the elderly, empty houses and barren slopes." 🇳🇵



हिमालको पुस अंक बजारमा



हिमालमिडिया प्रा. लि.
पाटनढोका, ललितपुर

Nepal’s hard working students

‘Abroad studies’ has become synonymous with emigration with no incentives for students to return home

● Sonia Awale

At a recent graduation ceremony of one Australian university, 300 students paraded across the stage to receive their diplomas. All were Nepalis, except one. The only white people there were faculty members.

A back-of-the-envelope calculation shows that at an average cost of USD30,000 per year for their undergraduate education Nepali students spent \$15 million in just that one university in Australia.

Just from January-June 2022, the Ministry of Education in Kathmandu approved 82,000 NOC (No Objection Certificates) for Nepali students going to Australia, Canada, UK, Japan and the US. This was more than double the figure for last year.

A conservative estimate shows that Nepalis spent a whopping \$3.3 billion for education overseas in just the first six months of this year. By comparison, Nepal’s



SUMAN NEPALI

annual petroleum import bill has risen to \$2.5 billion, and tourism brought in less than \$1 million in 2019.

Nepalis are essentially enriching first world countries with student out-migration now costing the country more than what it earns from all its exports combined.

Although some of the money students spend on fees and living

costs are from what they earn from part-time jobs, much of it is funded by families in Nepal who sell their land or borrow money to send their children away.

Since work and residence permits are difficult, getting a student visa is the easiest path to emigration for desperate Nepali youth. For host countries, this is a way to get cheap labour for low-skill jobs that their own nationals will not do.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported recently that the ‘Nepal market’ was worth \$2.6 billion to Australia in 2018-19, up from \$1.6 billion the previous year. Nepal is the third biggest source of international students in Australia accounting for 7% of them.

“My best guess is that a majority of Nepalese students in Australia are here simply

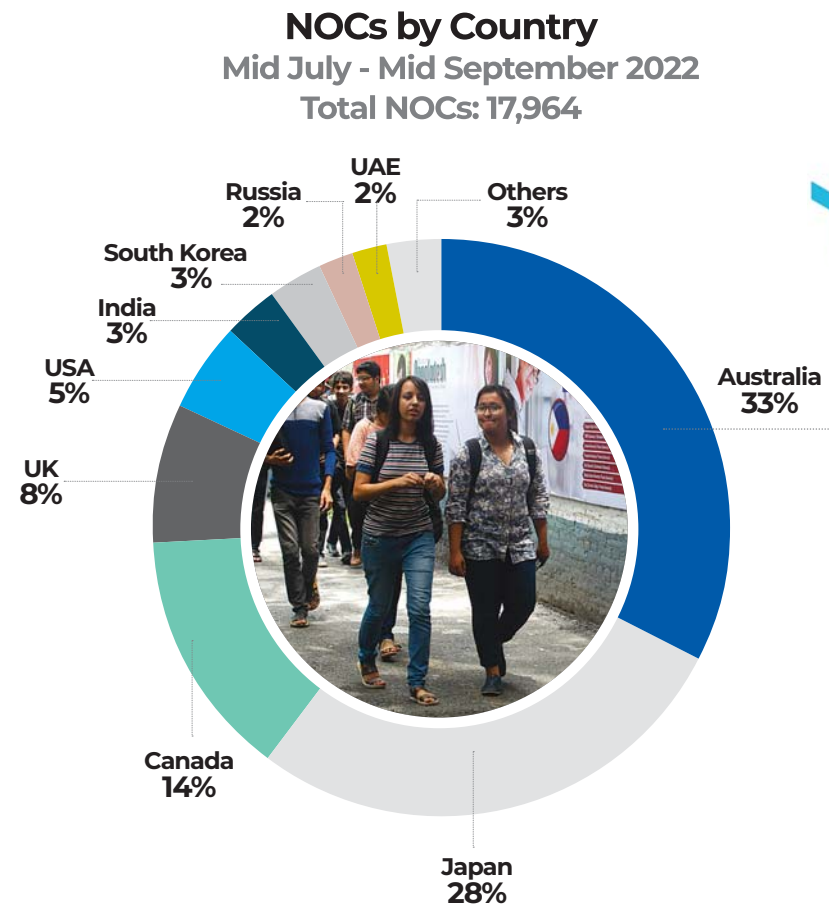
for work, hoping to make enough money in Australia both to pay off their tuition loans and return some extra to their families back in Nepal,” Salvatore Babones at the Centre for Independent Studies of the University of Sydney told the *Herald*.

Countries like Australia, Canada, Japan, and increasingly the UK have deliberately left their immigration door slightly ajar to address their temporary labour shortage by giving out student visas, without a drastic liberalisation of their strict immigration policies. A bonus is the income that they earn from student fees.

International students are an excellent business proposition. The Danish Society of Engineers in Copenhagen this week asked the government to drop the cap on foreign graduates and allow them to work after completing studies to fill a crippling shortage of engineers.

Many Nepali students interviewed for this report admitted that getting a student visa was a one-way ticket out of Nepal. Indeed, the push-factors are strong: erratic and low quality instruction in colleges, and the lack of job prospects.

Whereas abroad, students get better education and exposure, earn some money on the side because the host governments allow them to work a limited hours per week, and also because of the



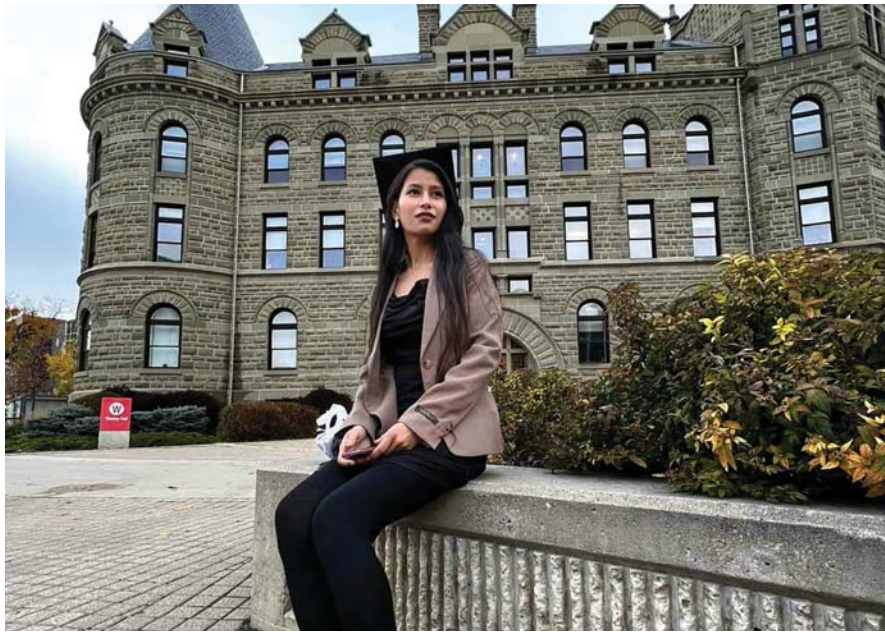
more practical knowledge and more exposure for better opportunities in future.

Here in Britain, universities have decades of experience in working with international students. My annual tuition fee was £14,250 a year but I got a partial scholarship. In addition, I paid £5,700 for my CAS letter as per university regulations plus expenses for medical, visa and biometric fees.

There are many international students in UWE-Bristol which also includes a lot of Nepalis. I have met some of them who took loans to be able to afford education here.

I have many friends who have settled down abroad. There are a lot of opportunities here, and that discourages them from returning. But I have also met students who are here for learning and exposure and are determined to return to apply it back home.

I haven’t thought much about my future plans yet. I will probably return to Nepal, but I’m not sure. I definitely want to contribute in some way for my country. But there must be jobs that pay well back home for me to return.



Samjhauta Rai, 26
Winnipeg, Canada

I am originally from a small town in Salyan district. I completed my bachelor’s degree in social work in a college in Kathmandu before moving to Canada for a diploma course after paying a lot of money in the hope that I would get a quality education and exposure to the outside world.

Since I arrived here in midst of the pandemic, I had to bear a lot of extra expenses from tuition fees to preparing additional documents, booking hotels for quarantine and so on. But the online classes were well planned, engaging and efficient. There was a stark difference with education in Nepal.

Taking a loan to afford abroad studies is a common practice in Nepal and I had to as well to build my career and secure a future. I see students dying to go aboard, risking everything to get a visa that they think would

open the doors to their imagined lifestyle.

Most students who come here tend to stay on permanently. But I do want to return to Nepal ultimately. Maybe a couple of years down the line, I will be back home and set up something using the skills I have learnt here.

Lack of jobs back home is the main reason for youth migration. It is the failure of the Nepal government that we are forced to leave. Even when they have a job on return, the salaries are low. The government should have a social safety net to help low income families.

Canada has taught me a great deal of things. I’m more patient, calm and composed. But personally, I think it is best to return to our own country at some point. I cannot wait to get back home and add value to my experience here.



Sima Gurung, 22
Bristol, UK

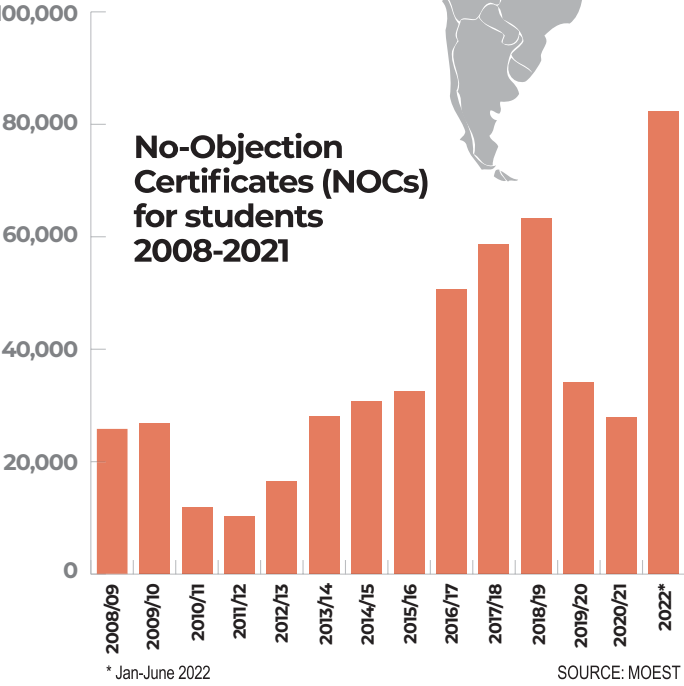
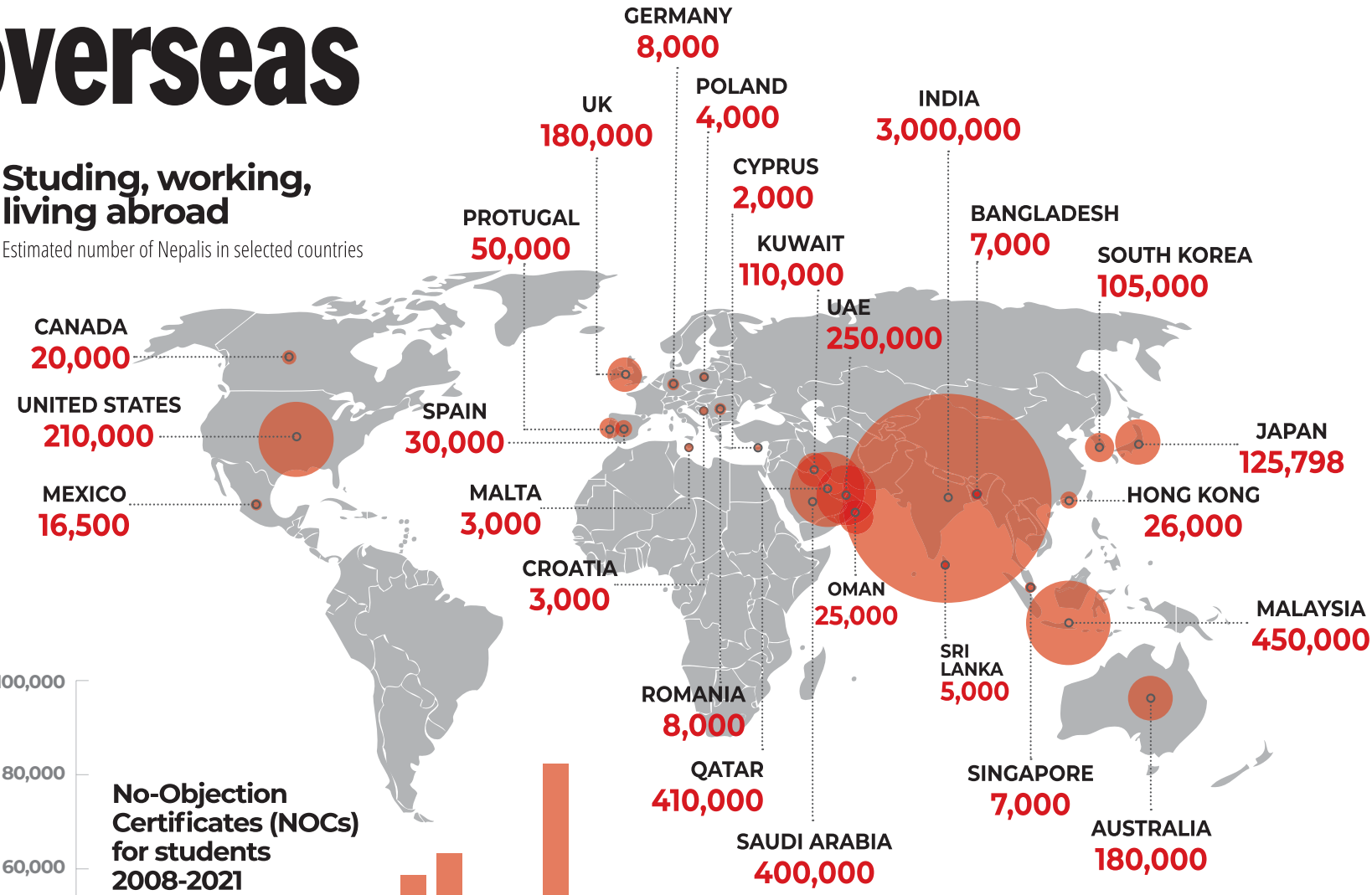
I am from Sindhuli and I went to college in Kathmandu. After graduating in 2019, I am now doing a three-year undergraduate course in UWE-Bristol. I also work part-time as a bartender in a Latin-American restaurant here.

It has only been three months since I left Nepal. The reason I left was that my college affiliated to Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu relied only on theoretical knowledge. I needed to have

overseas

Studing, working, living abroad

Estimated number of Nepalis in selected countries



possibility of staying on. Another push factor, especially for young Nepali women is that by going abroad they can escape family pressure for an arranged marriage. Nepali youth are also frustrated with Nepal's politics and leadership, and most voted for the Rastriya Swatantra Party in November elections. "Three thousand Nepali youth are leaving the country every

day either on work or student visas, but many of them will not be coming back," says Pukar Malla of the non-profit Dayitwa which supports returnees with entrepreneurship in Nepal. Making it easy for students to leave allows the government to get away with not improving the state of education in Nepal. This is similar to labour migration which lets the government off the hook

by not having to worry about job creation, and runs the country on the estimated \$10 billion in remittance that Nepalis send home every year. The disparity between public and private education systems in Nepal is stark. And while there have been some notable improvements including world-class education in business administration, economics and public policy, much of this is centred around Kathmandu and not on the scale required. "The fact that our education is still very much rote learning with curriculum not relevant to our context means we are producing graduates without actual skills required to meet challenges. Moreover, our education doesn't even guarantee them jobs," says educationist Narottam Aryal of King's College. Speaking to *Nepali Times* from Finland where he is attending a conference on education reform, Aryal added: "We must shift our focus to innovation and entrepreneurship, to evidence-based research and interdisciplinary learning. Unless our policies put students at the centre, we will continue to lose our brightest young minds." Some recommendations include reforming university law such that the focus is on quality instruction instead of infrastructure, and allowing autonomy in specific areas of study and their institutions. Says Pukar Malla: "Let's get going by empowering our youth and women who are still in Nepal, providing them with leadership roles. Once we truly start changing politics and work for the people, even those who have left will start returning home."

TATA MOTORS
Connecting Aspirations



INTRODUCING NEXON EV

Nepal's No. 1 EV now with exciting new intelligent features.

#BeNewForever

- Multi-Mode Regen
- Cruise Control
- i-TPMS

EVOLVE TO
ELECTRIC



For more details



SIPRADI TRADING PVT. LTD., An ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 45001:2018 Certified Company
Thapathali 01-4250610, 4222150, 4222152
For inquiry, give us a call at 9801013449

SIPRADI





छिटो मनेकै
WORLDLINK



Enjoy Free Internet
in **14000+** Wi-Fi Hotspots
all over Nepal.

अब 
life is
Always ON!



Connect to "myWorldLink" SSID

Connect now

Scan to Download
myWorldLink App

*Wi-Fi Mobility is now Wi-Fi Express.

For More Information
Dial: 01-5970050 | 9801523050 www.worldlink.com.np | facebook.com/wlink.np

Glad tidings

As the Earth attempts to complete its 2,022nd orbit around the Sun since the virgin birth of Baby Jesus, I have both good news and bad news.

First the bad news. The planet is on the verge of climate collapse with the mass extinction of species, including us hupersons. We are now four minutes closer to midnight in the nuclear doomsday clock. And if these two disasters were not enough to finish us all off once and for all, it looks like there is a 50-50 chance that an asteroid will hit the Earth in the next million years or so.

Now, the good news: the government will lift the ban on imported liquor in the new year. That is the kind of glad tidings we had hoped for this holiday season to lift up our spirits so we can see the goblet as half full.

But as if things were not already bleak enough, we are swamped with hate mail of late for all the gloom and doom in these pages. Here is one that just came in:

Dear Sir:
I don't know why I am addressing you as 'Sir' when I know for a fact that you are an Ass, and have never to my knowledge been knighted. You could also not be a Sir at all, but a Ladies, in which case, I beg your pardon. But let's presume for sake of argument, that you are indeed a knight of the male persuasion. So what? I am writing to take umbrage at all the negative stuff in your paper. How come you have nothing nice to say about us

in government? Do you always have to see the dark lining in every silver cloud? Do you know how difficult it is for us personally every time we pass an ordnance granting blanket amnesty to those accused of war crimes? You better stop censoring the good news about the great work of this Coalition Government with immediate effect, otherwise I am personally going to see to it that the President awards you a medal on New Year's Day.

- Department of Miscommunication

If you say so. Here is one item of good news that somehow didn't make it to the news lineup:

No Need To Panic: Govt
The outgoing government has assured citizens that despite the country's economy going down the tubes there is no need to panic because it is also the incoming government, and we have a head of government who has the most experience being prime minister.

"We have everything under control. We are lifting the ban on imported liquor," the Minister for Misinformation, who lost the election, told mediapersons. "There is no reason for alarm right now, we will let you know when it is time to panic."

Meanwhile, the UN has declared Nepal to be the most successful failed state in the world. The Minister was ecstatic: "This is a great honour, but we cannot rest on our laurels. We must rest on our sofas, and go back to sleep."



The Ass

Khukri
— XXX RUM —



PRODUCED IN NEPAL

Khukri
— XXX RUM —

THE ORIGINAL HIMALAYAN
RUM MATURED IN
SHOREA ROBUSTA CASKS

42.8% ALC 750ml e

SINCE 1959

**THE ORIGINAL
NEPALESE RUM**