



## FOSSIL FOOLS

■ Sonia Awale

With weather records being broken planetwide this year, the COP28 climate summit in Dubai is being ridiculed as a greenwash even before it begins. The UAE is the world's fifth biggest exporter of petroleum, and the president of the conference is the head of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC).

Even bigger irony: Expo City in Dubai was readied for the summit on 30 November-12 December by migrants from Nepal and other countries working outdoors in 42°C.

"It is greenwashing plain and simple," says Shilshila Acharya of Avni Center for Sustainability in Kathmandu. "We need emergency emission cuts, but oil barons are leading climate talks."

She adds: "COPs have become a necessary evil but having this one in the UAE sends the wrong message. The fossil fuel industry will obviously protect its own interests. We know the problems,

we have solutions but the right people are not in decision-making positions."

In September, the human rights group FairSquare found evidence of Asian and African migrants working outdoors in excessive heat and humidity.

Humans can handle wet-bulb temperatures up to 35°C for a limited time, but above that the body can no longer effectively cool itself via perspiration. Most Gulf countries have summer daytime work curfew hours, but FairSquare found migrants working at Expo City when the wet-bulb temperature reached 33°C.

Nepal and other South Asian nations hope that COP28 will help with the Loss and Damage Fund to cope with climate-induced disasters. But the Biden administration has rejected it, and other rich countries are not keen.

In July, COP28 president Sultan Al Jaber said the summit would fast-track phase out of fossil fuels, push climate finance, and allow climate activists access.

Bangladeshi climate scientist Saleemul Huq was a strong proponent of the Loss and Damage Fund, but passed away suddenly this week in Dhaka.

In a posthumous op-ed in the Guardian co-authored by Farhana Sultana of Syracuse University, he wrote: 'The fossil fuel industry continues to produce, maintain and benefit from greenhouse gas emissions, and must fundamentally change its business model.'

While there is not much hope from the Dubai jamboree, most climate action happens at the local level. Countries like Nepal do not have time to wait for outside help.

But besides paying lip service like during the visit by UN Secretary-General António Guterres this week, Nepal's leaders show little inclination to lower emissions and bolster climate resilience.

The draft Electricity Bill does not give enough priority to

increase domestic consumption of surplus hydropower, instead emphasising export to India.

In the past year, Nepal imported 2,000 electric four-wheelers and 700 two-wheelers, reducing petrol and diesel consumption by more than 20,000 litres daily. Cutting just 10% of fossil fuel imports would save Nepal \$260 million a year.

"Transportation, cooking, irrigation and industries are four clear pathways for a green transition in Nepal," explains environmentalist Anil Chitrakar.

He adds: "Subsidising rice cookers and electric stoves would reduce LPG use."

In the current climate, investing in expensive cascade hydropower projects on rivers like the Arun exposes them to glacial lake floods such as the Sikkim disaster. Energy experts propose diversifying Nepal's renewable energy mix to include solar, wind and biogas.

Adds Chitrakar. "Nepal has proven solutions. We just need the political will to push them."

**He came, he saw, he left**

EDITORIAL  
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# He came, he saw, he left

That UN Secretary General António Guterres invested four days to visit Nepal in the midst of a war in the Middle East was perhaps a deliberate attempt to draw attention to another calamity: climate breakdown.

He chose Nepal because it is a least-developed country that has itself come out of a ten-year conflict, and is one of the most vulnerable to the impact of global heating. In a video message he recorded on Monday from Syangboche with Mt Everest peeking over his shoulder, he said: “We can see the terrible impact of the climate crisis on the Himalayas ... climate action cannot wait. I am here to show Nepal to the world, and how dramatic climate change is.”



PRADEEP RAJ ONTA

Guterres highlighted the “climate injustice” that made a country that does not contribute much to climate breakdown one of the most vulnerable. The Secretary-General will be going to Antarctica ahead of the COP28 climate summit in Dubai to draw attention to melting of the polar ice caps.

The Guterres visit has helped spread awareness of anthropogenic greenhouse gas buildup in the atmosphere, and the urgent need for drastic emission cuts. He vowed to raise the issue of urgent support for the energy transition in developing countries, funds for adaptation, and to recover from destruction caused by weather extremes.

The fact that Guterres visited not just the Everest region but also the Annapurnas on Tuesday showed the emphasis he placed on the climate agenda during his Nepal visit. The Annapurna Conservation Area is a unique model developed in Nepal by Nepali social scientists to fund environmental protection through eco-tourism.

At a time when we hear nothing but bad news, Nepal's achievements in nature conservation despite its low economic development can be a model. The country has met its target of 45% forest cover, and although we could move faster on electric

public transport, there has been progress in the past two years. By next year, Nepal will have surplus hydropower even in the dry season and can more rapidly replace LPG and other petroleum imports. (Page 1)

Nepal has done all this without much help from the outside world. Indeed, while we highlight the need for climate justice and adaptation funds, Nepal has not waited for that support. But we can decarbonise much faster if green funds are more forthcoming.

At a time when historical records for the earth's energy balance, global average temperature, hurricane intensity, extreme rainfall and wildfires are being broken every other week, it is farcical that COP28 is being held in a country that is the world's 5<sup>th</sup>

## Visiting Nepal in the midst of the Gaza war and ahead of COP28, the UN Secretary General highlighted the twin dangers of climate and conflict.

largest exporter of refined petroleum products, and the summit chair heads the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC). The greenwashing in the run-up to the Summit gives us little hope that we will move beyond the hair-splitting in Dubai next month.

Nepal and most other South Asian countries which are themselves at high risk from climate impact have millions of workers in the Gulf states where it is already too hot to work in the daytime most of the year.

After addressing a joint session of Nepal's Parliament on Tuesday where he once more underlined climate action, the UN Secretary-General flew to Doha where he will resume fire-fighting the Israel-Hamas war.

Despite the lack of closure for survivors and families of victims of Nepal's own conflict, our peace process is in a lot of ways exemplary. The two former enemies are not just the state, but are coalition partners. The insurgents were demobilised, and a part of the militia was inducted into the national army – some of them are actually in UN peacekeeping forces around the world.

At Lumbini, Gueterres said: “Nepal is an example of a country that is not only able to make peace with itself but also contributes to peace in conflict regions around the world.”

## 20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

### Hydro Diplomacy

Indian state companies are being given contracts to build a slew of major hydropower projects in Nepal, driving out Chinese and other investors. India's strategic interest is to build storage dams upstream to regulate flow in the tributaries of the Ganges.

Things were no different two decades ago when Delhi tied to rope Nepal in on its gigantic river-linking project. Excerpts from a report published 20 years ago this week in issue #168 31 October – 6 November 2003:

The super-ambitious \$12 billion scheme will take 16 years to build and will link 36 of India's rivers, taking water from where there is a lot of it to areas where there is less for irrigation, power and human consumption.

But opposition to the project from environmentalists is growing within India, and murmurs of discontent are now being heard in Bangladesh and Nepal. So far, Nepali officialdom has been blissfully unaware of the plan, even though Nepali rivers would be critical for regulating lean season flow to the tributaries of the Ganga.



“Up to 60 percent of the water in the Ganga comes from Nepal, so the river-linking scheme will have to get Nepal involved,” says Sudhirendar Sharma, of The Ecological Foundation in New Delhi. Some Nepali activists suspect India is already working towards large reservoirs in Nepal that will dove-tail into the river-linking scheme by the time it comes into operation.

Nagma Mallick, First Secretary (Commerce) at the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu, denies this, saying: “There is no linkage between the recent India-Nepal talks on hydropower and India's river-linking project.”

Still, there is nervousness among Nepali water planners. Reservoirs would inundate large tracts of fertile valleys, store monsoon runoff and release the water in the lean season downstream to linked rivers in India. Logically any new project India gets involved in Nepal henceforth will be ones that will fit its river-linking blueprint.

For archived material of Nepali Times of the past 20 years, site search: nepalitimes.com

## ONLINE PACKAGES



DIALYSIS LIFE

Nepali migrants are working in regions where it is getting too hot to work. Workers from Nepal and other South Asian countries laboured outdoors in 42°C heat to get conference facilities ready for COP28 in Dubai. The heat in the Gulf is leading to an alarming increase in renal failures among migrants. Watch the video and read story on page 1.



FESTIVE INDULGENCE

Alcohol kills more than 3 million people every year around the world, and is a leading cause of injuries. Sale of alcohol shoots up during festivals like Dasain and Tihar, and people indulge in binge drinking. Watch a former alcoholic speak about his battle with addiction and hear expert suggestions. Subscribe to our YouTube channel for more original multimedia content.

### GUTERRES VISIT

Guterres could have highlighted climate change in Kathmandu instead of chartering a helicopter and flying to that altitude ('Below Mt Everest, António Guterres urges climate action,' nepalitimes.com)

Sigrid Rohrer

■ When will the victims of war crimes receive justice ('Justice delayed, justice denied', nepalitimes.com)?

David Seddon

### MOUNTAIN FLIGHTS

I have done the mountain flight three times, and will do it again if I get the opportunity ('Getting up close and personal with the mountains', #1184).

Ben-Erik Ness

### 15<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ARTISTS

It is disheartening to read that Nepali art has been wrongfully appropriated and are in private collections when they ought to be preserved as an integral part of our shared cultural heritage ('Unnamed masters of Nepal's art identified', Shaguni Singh Sakya, Page 10-11).

Nixon Dangol

### BUSINESS VS IMF

I for one am very happy when a commercial bank that owns the public's money is audited and its loans are scrutinised ('Business not happy with the IMF', Ramesh Kumar, #1184). Just saying Nepal is not different when it comes to banking trust.

Swatantra

### ECOTOURISM

This is a very good article on Bardia that will help people know about the Burhan Wilderness Camp, conservation tourism, as well as rural tourism ('Shrinking tourism's ecological footprint', Akanshya Shah, #1184).

Yadav Prasad Gautam

### NEPALI TURMERIC

Congratulations to Nepali scientists on this discovery ('New turmeric species in Nepal', Kamal Maden, nepalitimes.com).

Jhamak Karki

## WHAT'S TRENDING

### Wandering about Nepal

by Sahina Shrestha

Travel started as a hobby for Kanchan Rai, but his videos as Ghumante on YouTube have inspired a whole generation to explore their country. From Achham to Nawalpur, go online to read about the top 10 destinations recommended by Ghumante.



Most reached and shared on Facebook

### Do no harm

by Pema Norbu Lama

The sacred valley of Tsum has set an example for coexistence between human beings and nature. Its Shargya tradition, a communal edict for peace and harmony with nature, has withstood the test of time and evolved through different historical phases. Read full story on our website.



Most popular on Twitter



### Unnamed masters of Nepali art

by Shaguni Singh Sakya

Many artists worked anonymously behind the scenes for Kathmandu to flourish as a hub for devotional art in the Licchavi and Malla periods, but their works perished. Fortunately, a few names have now been found: Kesaraja Chitrakar, Jivaram, and Adyayaraja and Udayarama Pun of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Malla renaissance. Online story is also on page 10-11 in this edition.



Most commented

### The genetic roots of the Raute

by Aashish Jha

The Raute, Nepal's last remaining nomadic group, are elusive and mystical, divine yet destitute, enlightened albeit unschooled, appreciated and disliked by mainstream society. Studying them is critical to understanding how the Himalaya was first settled. More at nepalitimes.com



Most visited online page

## QUOTE TWEETS



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Many artists worked anonymously behind the scenes for #Kathmandu to flourish as a hub for devotional #art in the Licchavi and Malla periods. But they themselves lived and died without realising the worth of their talent and contribution. #History #heritage



Amish Mulmi @amish973

Fantastic piece by @ShaguniSS on identifying the unnamed medieval painters of Nepali art



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

#DiasporaDiaries A Nepali who miraculously survived the Hamas attack this week finds new Nepali family in Israel.



Mark Pickett @DrMarkPickett

Very moving account by a Nepali worker in Israel. Well done Nepali Times for giving a voice to the voiceless.

## 1,000 WORDS



Have you paid the new Rs500 Machapuchhre Rural Municipality trekking fee yet?

DILIP GURUNG / RSS

### CLIMATE SMART:

UN Secretary-General António Guterres during his visit to Annapurna Base Camp on 31 October as part of his four-day trip to Nepal. There was outrage from tourists over a new trekking fee by the local municipality.



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Publisher: Kunda Dixit, Himalmedia Pvt Ltd | Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu  
editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | www.himalmedia.com | Tel: +977 1 5005601-08 Fax: +977 1 5005518







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# Nepalis take backdoor to the

Every household in one remote district in western Nepal has at least one member in the US

■ **Janak Raj Sapkota**  
in Rukum East

This outlying district in the rugged mountains of central Nepal was where Maoist guerrillas launched their revolution in 1996 against the country's feudal monarchy and 'American imperialism'. Today, young men from almost every family in some villages here have smuggled themselves to America.

Since the end of the decade-long conflict in 2006, the first to go paid traffickers to take the land route across central America to seek asylum, saying they would be persecuted either by the guerrillas or the state if they stayed in Nepal. Hundreds of others have followed since then.

They call it "तल्लोबाटो" (the low road) here at Ward 10 of Putha Uttarganga Rural Municipality from where dozens of young men have left or are preparing to leave for the US after paying exorbitant amounts to human trafficking networks.

The preferred back-channel route to the southern border of the US currently is from Kathmandu airport to Dubai, Moscow, Bogota or Havana to La Paz, then on foot or by jeep through Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico.

Tak village in Rukum East was a Maoist stronghold during the insurgency. Some of the fading painted slogans on rock faces along the trail can still be deciphered: 'Down with American Imperialism and Indian Hegemony', or 'Free Comrade Gonzalo' referring to Abimael Guzman of Peru's Sendero Luminoso Maoist guerrillas who was captured in 1992.

Now, the descendants of those guerrillas, some of whom have also migrated to the US, want nothing more than to settle and work in America.

Not everyone makes it. Eight of those who left recently after paying traffickers Rs6 million each have been deported, and are back in Nepal. They are now trying to find other ways to get to America so they can repay the money they borrowed at up to 36% interest from local loan sharks to pay smugglers. Five of them have fled the village, unable to pay back the debt.

The 425 households in Tak traditionally reared sheep, gathering herbs to supplement the food they grew on steep terrace farms. At least one family member from half of the households is overseas, they first went to Bahrain, and now everyone wants to go to America.

"The real flood of people leaving for the US started six years ago," recalls Ward 10 Chair Bharat Buda, whose own son spent Rs3.2 million to get to America in 2017. "Everyone in this village would go to America if they could afford to pay traffickers."

Ram Buda worked in Malaysia and with his savings paid a people-smuggler to get him to America via Mexico. But he was deported after his asylum application was rejected. He has a loan of Rs6 million to pay back, and is hiding in Kathmandu.

Nandakala Gharti lives in a small stone house in Tak with her husband Dhanlal and four young children. Dhanlal used savings from working in the Gulf to pay smugglers Rs6 million to take him to the US via Mexico. He was caught by border patrol and was deported.

Back in Nepal he has no money to pay off loan sharks, and is raising more money to pay traffickers to take him now to Croatia.

Nandakala is distraught. Creditors are hounding the family. She points to her 10-year-old son, and says: "I am waiting for him to grow up and go abroad so he can pay off our debt."

Gangaram Khadka of neighbouring Sisme Rural Municipality returned to Nepal to raise bees and chicken after being deported from the US. He came back a broken man with mental health issues. He is one of the few who has managed to pay off some of the interest on his loans.

After that, Gangaram hopes to go abroad once more. He explains: "No job in Nepal will be enough to pay back the capital I owe."

In Musikot of Rukum West, almost every young man we spoke to from shopkeepers to school teachers say they are looking for ways to migrate to America.

Keshav KC, 33, is a contractor and earns a decent Rs60,000 a month. But he has watched his friends and relatives leave one by one, and paid a trafficker to take him too.

His journey took him and 11 other Nepalis to Dubai, Addis Ababa, Santiago in Chile, Sao



Paulo, and then by land to Brazil, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico then finally the US where he was promptly detained. His refugee application was rejected.

Only after being deported back, and recalling the convoluted 6 month journey and the Rs5.4 million he had to borrow did he realise how futile the whole attempt was to enter the US illegally.

But things are no better in Nepal. He says: "There are no jobs here, and there is constant peer pressure comparing us with those who have made it in America."

Tikaram Pun, 40, crossed 17 countries and spent Rs9.2 million to finally cross the Rio Grande only to be caught. He spent two years in immigration detention before being deported. He sold off the little land he had to pay off some of his loan, now he has nothing left to pay off the rest and his medical bills.

These are the stories of Nepalis who made it back alive. Many others have died in the process.

Rupak Bohara of Bafikot village was on a boat headed to Costa Rica with seven Nepalis and ten Bangladeshis when it capsized in the Caribbean Sea in 2018. Six of the seven Nepalis drowned.

Rupak's wife Gita learned of her husband's death six days later, and received his body a month later. Gita, 24, is struggling to raise her two children and pay off her husband's Rs5 million debt. Undeterred, Rupak's brothers and cousins are in touch with the same traffickers to take them to the US.

Angel Budhamagar was one of the other Nepalis who drowned on that boat. His father Rajendra received word that the trafficker who was paid to take the group to Costa Rica had overloaded the boat.

"My son lost his life all because they wanted to save \$200 by hiring a smaller boat," says Rajendra, who filed a complaint with the Anti-Human Trafficking Bureau.

The recruiter Top Bahadur



**NMB BANK**  
एनएमबी बैंक



## Nepal at Para Games

Ncell organised a special program to felicitate Palesha Govardhan's historic win for Nepal at the 4th Asian Para Games in Hangzhou. Govardhan won Bronze in Taekwondo, Category K44, Weight 57kg, making her the first para-athlete from Nepal to do so. Ncell awarded her a Rs100,000 cash prize.

As part of its 18th anniversary celebrations, Ncell also provided a Rs100 bonus balance to over 3,500 customers under the weekly surprise scheme. Daily sure prizes included digital service, balance, data, talk time, and SMS. Ncell will soon announce seven lucky customers who will win a scooter as the bumper prize.



## More tourists

Nepal received a record monthly total for incoming tourists in October with 117,306 visitors, a significant increase from 88,582 in October 2022, and a 103.07% recovery compared to the same month before the pandemic when the figure was 113,816. India was the largest contributor with 18,480 visitors while the United States factored in another 14,879. There were 8,217 tourists from the UK and 6,880 from China.

## ADB loan

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is providing Nepal a concessional loan of \$100 million for the implementation of the Rural Connectivity Project-Additional Financing, which looks to strengthen rural roads and enhance the capacity of infrastructure agencies and commuters. The project will focus on constructing all-weather roads and bridges across five out of the seven provinces in Nepal, totaling 324km.



## Electricity spill

The Nepal Electricity Authority has said Nepal was wasting about 500MW of power every day during Dasain because factories and industries were closed for the holidays. Meanwhile, India's Ministry of Power has fixed the minimum consumption share of renewable energy for the years 2024-25 to 2029-30 such that imported clean energy is also counted in the share. But it is unlikely to significantly influence Nepal's share of power exports to India.



## DishHome for cricket

DishHome has announced a range of cash prizes to national cricket players to motivate them at the ongoing ICC Men's T20 World Cup Cricket qualifiers. For a player scoring 100 runs and 5 wickets in a single game, the cash reward is Rs2 million, Rs1 million for a century, Rs500,000 for 5 wickets, Rs100,000 for every wicket, Rs50,000 each for 35 runs and for three catches or stumpings.

Also as part of its festive scheme, Parshuram Timilsina won Rs100,000. Customers need to get a new DishHome connection or recharge to be part of the scheme where one winner is selected via lucky draw every week while the bumper prize is Rs1 million.



# American dream



**LITTLE AMERICA:** Tak village where half of all households has someone who is in America.  
Gita Bohara of Bafikot (right) holds a photo of herself with her husband Rupak, who died when his boat capsized in the Caribbean Sea in 2018. Six of the seven other Nepalis died.  
Tikaram Pun, 40, (far right) paid traffickers to take him to the US. He was caught and spent 2 years in immigration detention before being deported. He is now deeply in debt.



law enforcement agencies for fear of repercussions from traffickers and loan sharks.

While the push factor is lack of jobs and opportunities in Nepal, the pull factor are the stories of many of the Nepalis who have made it to the US and are doing well despite their undocumented status.

Shri Kami returned to Nepal after working in the Gulf for 13 years and now runs a butcher's shop at Taksera in Rukum. His son got asylum in the US on his second attempt after spending nearly Rs10 million. Kami is proud that his son is in America, and earning enough to take care of his family.

For political scientist Bhaskar Gautam, these stories of desperate people being exploited by human traffickers is emblematic of the abject failure of Nepal's political system to deliver on promises made during the revolution.

He adds: "The peace process did not acknowledge and could not make up for the cost of the conflict in jobs and livelihoods, thus exacerbating the problems."

*Prepared for Centre for Investigative Journalism Nepal. Additional reporting by Mahesh KC in East Rukum East and Durgali KC in Dang.*

GC fled to Ukraine after the boat disaster, but returned after Interpol placed him on a Red Corner Notice. He was acquitted in April after the Kathmandu District Court ruled that the prosecution's case was not enough for a conviction.  
Rajendra is now left with a debt of Rs3.2 million. "I can earn that money back eventually, but my son

is gone forever," he says.  
As many as 178 Nepalis, 174 of them men, have been deported from the US since 2018, official records show. Of them, 49 are from Rukum while 37 are from Dang.  
Jivan Shrestha of the Anti-Human Trafficking Bureau says that many who are duped by traffickers rarely file complaints to

## Teenagers on the run

In Rukum and Dang, many parents have handed over their teenage children to human traffickers to send them to the US. They have been told that children below 19 cannot be detained at the border and would be able to get jobs right away.

In April 2020, two 18-year-olds from Bafikot in Rukum and Ghorahi in Dang paid smugglers to take them to the US via New Delhi, Singapore, Colombo, and Malawi where they were stranded due to the Covid-19 travel ban.

The brokers set the teenagers up in a hotel in Blantyre, which detained them because they had run up a bill they could not pay. They were finally rescued by police 11 months later. By the time they returned to Nepal, their families had spent another Rs3.5 million.

The Anti-Human Trafficking Bureau rejected the family's complaint saying the two had taken the journey of their own free will. Earlier this year, the two boys left for the US again, paying another Rs4 million each, and somehow made it this time.

A hotel owner in Rukumkot recently received news that his son finally made it to the Mexico-US border travelling through the UAE, Turkey, Algeria, Spain, Panama, Peru and Mexico. But his son is stuck there and thinks he needs to make it before he turns 20 to be eligible for refugee status.

"How could I have stopped my son from leaving when all his friends left?" says the young man's father. "It is easier now to count sons of those who remain than those who have left."





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**BUDDIES:** Bipin Joshi, Avash Bhattarai and Himanchal Kattel (above) at Kathmandu airport in September before flying to Israel. The three were inseparable in agriculture college in Tikapur. Birendra Chaudhary, Pramod KC and others in Israel just before the attack.

# Waiting for Bipin Joshi

Colleagues who survived Hamas attack appeal for fellow Nepali student still missing



*This is the 45<sup>th</sup> instalment of Diaspora Diaries, a regular series in Nepali Times with stories of Nepalis living and working abroad.*

## Pramod KC, Salyan

In Israel, we were advised during orientation to run to bunkers when the siren went off. It is a normal part of daily life there.

But for us 17 Nepalis at Kibbutz Alumim, it was the first time since we landed in Israel a month prior that we heard the siren go off that Saturday morning, and had to run to the bunker near our apartment.

It soon turned into a nightmare. We were hiding in the bunker, all 17 of us crammed together. Outside, there were gunshots, sirens blaring and explosions, we also heard increasingly loud and angry voices in Arabic. We did not understand what was being said, but it was evident that something was terribly wrong. Hamas had captured the area and armed men were coming near our bunker.

## Birendra Chaudhary, Kailali

The sounds of firing got closer. One of our friends who was close to the door got shot in the leg. Another friend went out trying to explain to the gunmen that we are Nepalis, hoping they would show some mercy, but he got shot as well. Both died on the spot.

The gunmen then threw two grenades inside our bunker. Bipin Joshi quickly hurled one of them out. But the second one exploded inside, injuring five of our friends, mostly below their waists. Their legs were shattered, there was blood everywhere, and they were in a lot of pain.

## Avash Bhattarai, Kailali

Bipin and Himanchal worked on a farm in a kibbutz 12km away from mine. The three of us have been inseparable since our undergrad years back in Nepal, and had gone to Israel together.

At my farm, Saturday was a

workday. We were packing onions and tomatoes from 7AM. Our friends had sent us group pictures from the bunker where they were hiding so we knew something was up, but we did not know how serious it was. The pictures were of happy selfies and them playing ludo on their phones in the bunker.

But after 8AM, the electricity went off even in our farm. Things were already getting tense with sounds of sirens and missiles, so our employer told us to stop working, and that we would resume when things normalised.

By now, the news was bad from where Himanchal and Bipin were. I called Himanchal, he did not pick up but sent me a message saying two of our friends had died after getting shot. We were shocked.

After that he went out of contact. We were terrified. Instead of the bunker, we hid in our apartment because we had already learnt that Hamas gunmen were coming inside bunkers. Bunkers no longer felt safe.

## Pramod KC

Of the 17 of us Nepalis in the bunker, five were injured and two were dead. How do I describe that scene, of watching our friends suffer, die in front of our eyes?

Three Israeli medical policemen finally arrived at our bunker, which gave us a little bit of hope. They attended to our injured friends. They took the remaining ten of us to another bunker nearby that had a kitchen. Bipin Joshi was with us till then.

We hid wherever we could in that crammed space, and the exact location we managed to squeeze ourselves in would later decide our fate. Also hiding in the second bunker were workers from Thailand.

We got calls from friends who had been injured in the grenade attack, the Israeli police apparently left them there and did not take them immediately to hospital. We called the embassy and other Nepalis but there was no help. Only two of those injured survived. We could do nothing to help.

## Himanchal Kattel, Tel Aviv

About 90 minutes after we sought shelter in the kitchen bunker, Hamas fighters broke down the door and started shooting at us. I was shot thrice – in my left chest, right chest, and in my finger.

Bipin Joshi was not hit. Instead, they took him and three Thai men outside. I do not know what happened there. I was rescued after six hours from the bunker by Israeli soldiers and taken to hospital where I am now recovering.



Nepali students in their bunker before they realised how serious the Hamas attack was.



## Birendra Chaudhary

The gunmen did not pick targets, they just shot mercilessly at whatever they saw and left. At various points I had thought I would die, and had tightly shut my eyes waiting for the end. But somehow, I survived.

One of the grenades had hurt my leg and it was bleeding. I tried to stay still for hours in the corner, and could not switch positions no matter how much it hurt. It was hard to breathe too because of the tear gas.

Everything else is a blur. The wounded were asking for water, but I was hiding in the corner trembling with fear and could not

help. I waited for hours.

Later, the Thais heard Hebrew being spoken and said Israeli soldiers had arrived. So they went out, and we followed them.

## Pramod KC

After we were rescued by soldiers, I was asked to identify bodies in the bunker. We did not see Bipin anywhere, and we presumed he was taken with the Thais as hostage.

The Nepal Prime Minister's office said this week that it had word from the Israelis that Bipin is indeed a hostage with Hamas in Gaza along with the Thais.

I am lucky to have come out of this unhurt. When I first saw the

Nepali flag on the plane that came to Tel Aviv to take us back, I felt I had already reached home. It was a bittersweet feeling to be safe, but I lost all those friends.

I went to visit my friend Prabesh Bhandari's mother, who is also from Salyan. He was her only son. She was in shock and told me that she had lost everything and just wanted her son's body ("सास त आएन लास त ल्याइदिनु नि, बाबु").

I cannot sleep properly. I wake up, replaying the trauma in the bunker in my mind, I hear the sound of sirens and voices of friends asking for water. These memories haunt me. The slightest sound frightens me. After a week at home and spending time with family and friends, it has got slightly better.

I feel this is my second birth. I stared death in the face twice in those bunkers.

## Avash Bhattarai

The first time I communicated with Himanchal after October 7, it was in the hospital where he is now recovering. We spent about an hour chatting before I headed to Nepal, and I call him every day.

I am of course happy to be with my family who really were under a lot of stress, but I still have mixed feelings about leaving my friends behind, and losing many.

Bipin is still nowhere to be found. I hope he is ok. The news of two American hostages being freed last week gave us a tiny flicker of hope. One can only hope and pray that he is safe, and will be returned soon.

But my mind also goes in different directions: between hope and fearing the worst. His parents and sister are in shock and are waiting for him.

Bipin and I had agreed to join forces for an agriculture startup after we returned from Israel. We had literally gone to Israel to 'learn and earn'. Look what happened.

## Birendra Chaudhary

It is still difficult to imagine how I survived when so many others died. I had my second session today with an Israeli counsellor. She has helped me relax a bit.

The night before this massacre, it was a Friday and we had cooked chicken together for dinner. Little did we know what lay in store for us the next day.

For Dasain, we had planned a full goat cookout, our first Dasain away from Nepal. 🇳🇵

*Translations compiled with help from Nischal Pandey now in Kailali and Ramesh Joshi in Tel Aviv. Diaspora Diaries provides a platform for Nepalis to share their experiences of living, working, studying abroad. Authentic and original entries can be sent to editors@nepalitimes.com.*



# NEPAL ON MY MIND

"We are not in the Gulf permanently, we send money home every month, and we will eventually return. We should have the right to vote."



DIASPORA  
DIARIES 46

■ Ishwar Chaulagain

*This is the 46<sup>th</sup> instalment of Diaspora Diaries, a regular series in Nepali Times with stories of Nepalis living and working abroad.*

During my first job in Qatar as a waiter it was clear that my lack of proper English would make it difficult for me to be promoted to front-office positions.

There were Filipino, East European and Indian colleagues across the Gulf who came from much better backgrounds, had more polished English and could present themselves much better.

So for my second stint overseas, this time in a luxury hotel in Kuwait, I opted for back-end jobs in food and safety hygiene. I figured my linguistic weakness would not hold me back.

I had learnt the English alphabet only in Grade 4 by the flickering light of an oil lamp in my village in Bhojpur. I dropped out of school so my siblings could study. I grew up helping my parents with household chores and farming, school was never a priority.

Later, I worked as a lab boy in the biology departments of high schools in Nepal. Like everyone else, I chose foreign employment to improve my family's living standard, Nepali wages were just not enough.

I had the grit, ability to work hard and knowledge of my field, but it would be lack of communication skills that would hold me back in the hospitality sector.

Now, many years later, I have reached managerial positions in luxury hotels overseas. As part of a support department for kitchen and service, we are responsible for inventory, cleaning, sanitisation, store organisation and calibration of all equipment and ensure that they meet the highest hygiene standards. I manage 40-45 staff from different countries. But I may not have achieved all this had I insisted on getting front-end jobs.

After working in Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Seychelles, I am once again headed back to Kuwait to work as a stewarding manager. I will be earning \$2,100 (KWD 650) a month with additional benefits.

My foreign employment did not start well, it must be said. I left Nepal in 2007, to work in Qatar as a busboy. My salary was just \$110 (QAR 400) then. I was cheated by the recruitment agent who made me sign a fake contract, but I could not go back to Nepal.

The supply company placed me in the catering section of a gas firm, and even though the salary was below what was promised it gave me a solid foundation in my area of work.

Since then, I have worked in luxury hotels in multiple countries, but the



hygiene standards in the oil and gas sector in Qatar were superior.

For us overseas migrant workers, it is important to manage our time and finances and think about the long term. Such planning requires constant reminders of why we are here, who we have left behind and that working abroad is temporary.

It is easy to splurge when there is cash without thinking of the future. Overlooking exercise or proper eating habits can affect our health in the long term.

One day, we will have to return, leaving all this behind with no social protection for future security.

My friends and I often wonder what we can do once we return to Nepal. One option that fits our background that might also have scope in Nepal's hospitality sector is to train and supply hotel workers.

But that means leaving a well-paying, stable job for an uncertain entrepreneurial journey in Nepal. We have been away so long that it does carry immense risks. It is this uncertainty that keeps us renewing our contracts, or looking for a better job in another country.

The new generation of Nepalis who come to the Gulf or elsewhere are not limited as we were. The youth migrating now have it easier, they are better educated and already have degrees in hospitality management. They also have better exposure and language skills, and this is an advantage. But ultimately, it does boil down to job performance.

One of my early memories of being overseas is being formally recognised as Colleague of the Year among a staff of 900. This was a turning point in my career that gave me the positivity and energy to work harder and dream bigger.

The perception overseas that Nepalis lack management and leadership skills that other

nationalities have is now being broken. There are Nepalis who are doing very well across the Gulf region.

It is important to have Nepalis in leadership positions, not just for our individual growth and finances, but also because it allows us to help other Nepalis to solve problems they encounter, especially as newcomers.

There is chain migration that allows us to pull fellow Nepalis overseas from our communities that has been going on for decades, but there is also upward mobility where those of us doing well in leadership positions can open the way for more Nepalis to climb the ladder.

Creating that positive perception of Nepalis in upper management positions is a priority. Leveraging networks to help others is an added bonus.

One of my proudest moments was seeing immense potential in one of the staff I was managing in my team who was from Bangladesh. I recommended a fellow chef to take him under his wing and vouched for him as his manager. Today, he is a successful chef.

I have learnt with time how important it is to be able to defend yourself at work or to be aware of the rules and policies in place. Often we fail to use existing rules that are in our favour because we are just unaware of them and are hesitant to speak up.

Labour laws in the Gulf countries are also changing, and have become more flexible. But how those changes affect us depends on our ability to make use of them. Of course, this also depends on what kind of employer we land.

In my job, I have witnessed the extreme luxury and wealth of our guests, and how easy they have it financially. I compare that

to Nepalis like me who have to struggle every step of the way.

I blame politics which has prevented Nepal from making the best use of our incredible natural and human resources. Yet, when I watch news from Nepal these days, there is little to be optimistic about.

I hope that we will soon be allowed to vote in elections from overseas, so we too have a say about who should lead Nepal. We are not in the Gulf region permanently, we send money home every month, and we will eventually return. We should have the right to vote.

We spend a good chunk of our lives overseas to toil in difficult circumstances, far away from home. But it is as much about our families we leave behind.

They give us the green signal to go abroad to work, while they take care of things at home in our absence. I believe families left behind do not get enough credit for the sacrifice they make. As for me, I owe it to my wife who has been a pillar of strength for me and someone who has supported my professional growth.

I keep reminding Nepalis overseas to stay connected with their families back home. It takes a lot of effort to make this journey of separation tolerable. It is easy to get lost in the daily grind.

The lack of communication and distance can take a toll on mental health as well. The need to make a better living seems possible only in a foreign land, and that makes physical separation unavoidable. It is up to us to remain connected emotionally and virtually — after all they are just a phone call away. 🇳🇵

*Translated from a conversation. Authentic and original entries can be sent to editors@nepalitimes.com with 'Diaspora Diaries' in the subject line.*



EVENTS



Weekend Hike

Be one with nature, and join others on Hike for Nepal's Chobhar-Sikali-Khokana hike this weekend.  
4 November 8pm, London PUB, Darbar Marg

Poetry Open Mic

For aspiring poets: Start To Tell, an open mic platform, organises the Poetry Open Mic once weekly. Join other poets and listen to each other's works.  
Wednesdays, Bravo Café and Bar, Mid Baneshor



Board Game night

Join Hostel Nextdoor's game night every Thursdays to play board games including Carcassonne, Keyflower, Citadel, Scrabble, Monopoly, as well as other games including Jenga and Uno.  
Thursdays, 5:30pm-9:30pm, Hostel Nextdoor, Kupondole

Tattoo Festival

The Nepal Inked Tattoo Festival will bring together and promoting Nepal's tattoo culture, artists, and other art forms.  
Until 9 November, Dhulikhel Mountain Resort



Boudha Market

Embrace the flavours of community and sustainability at the Boudha Farmers Market, where 'Think global, shop local' becomes a reality.  
Saturdays, 8am-2pm, Utpala Café

DINING



Ventures Café

Stop by for the best fusion menu and local favourites, and enjoy the breezy outdoor seating perfect for summer. A great venue for beer connoisseurs.  
Baluwatar, 9851228014

MUSIC

Friday night live

Grab some drinks and spend a musical evening with Anu ra Bimba and Nischal Gurung as they take the stage at London Pub this weekend.  
3 November 8pm, London PUB, Darbar Marg



Jazzmandu

Kathmandu's very own international jazz festival features a brand-new ensemble of musicians including Plurism, Under the Surface, Lucile Chriqui, Palouse Forro, Himalayan Highway, Samundra Band, Dhruvsh/Friends of Sukarma, Nick Aggs & Cadenza Collective and eastern classical musicians. Check the schedule online.  
2-8 November



Rock for visibility

Be part of the Rock for Visibility concert featuring Abhaya and The Steam Engines, Anabigya and Blind Rocks which will support the visually impaired community.  
4 November, 6pm onwards, Hard Rock Café, Darbar Marg



Psychedelic Night

Stop by Watering Hole for an evening of free shots on the pub's Queen of the Night Wednesdays. Food and drinks will be accompanied by live music from Cambodia-based Nepali band Samsaara.  
Wednesdays, Watering Hole, Naxal

Go Loco

Go Loco are on tour and their next stop is Nepal. Dance the night away with Matty Loco, Big Daz, Skylit and more taking the stage.  
4 November, Privé Nepal, The Soaltee Kathmandu



Casa Mexicana

Enjoy a taste of Mexico with an assortment of tacos, quesadillas and burritos. From vegetarian to meat options, try the variety of Mexican dishes.  
Gairidhara, 9840542082

Anatolia

Anatolia's Indian and Turkish dishes are packed with spices and an unforgettable assortment of flavours. All the food is halal.  
Chhetrapati (01) 4258757

GETAWAY



Gokarna Forest Resort

The resort is a paradise, thick with century old trees rustling out natural tunes, a great restaurant for fine dining, and an expansive golf course.  
Gokarna (01) 4451212

Retreat at Damaar

A humble stay within the forestry of Kavre, Retreat at Damaar is ideal for those seeking peace of mind and a home away from home.  
Bethanchowk, Kavre, 9851052442



Raniban Retreat

Located on a hillock of Raniban forest, this environmentally- friendly boutique hotel offers a spectacular view of the mountains.  
Pokhara, 9863776593

Hotel Baha

What better way to start the day than with a beautiful view of Bhaktapur Darbar Square and the Nyatapola Temple, and a homely meal of rice, lentils, vegetables, meat and pickles?  
Bhaktapur (01) 6616810



Maruni Sanctuary Lodge

Take a peek at the wandering wildlife and lush nature of the Chitwan National park From the comfort of the cabins and cottages of Maruni.  
Sauraha (01) 4700632

Hermann Helmers

Get a variety of cakes, pastries, muffins, pie, bread, and other baked goods at Hermann Helmers German Bakery.  
Jhamsikhel (01) 5424900



Haopin Hotpot

Hotpot is best served with a side of good and hungry company. Haopin offers a wide range of meats and vegetables, along with delicious sides to keep one satisfied while it cooks.  
Narayanchaur, 9808064999

WEEKEND WEATHER



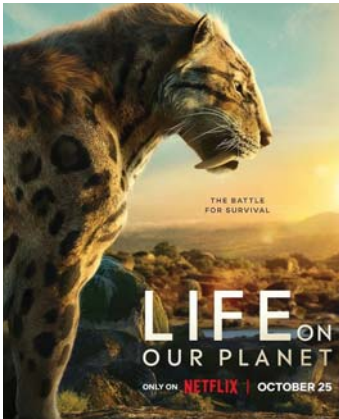
FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
24° 12°	23° 11°	24° 10°	24° 11°	24° 10°

Colder, smoggier

The minimum temperature in Kathmandu Valley will drop to 10 and even the single digits on the outskirts. Air quality is still at moderate levels because vehicular traffic is lighter than usual and the prevailing wind direction is from the northwest. This is also keeping the smoke from farm fires in India away from us for now. But as this NASA FIRMS infrared map on Thursday shows (left), there is a dense area of fires in both Punjab. A weak westerly system will pass through Nepal on Friday that will bring some snow flurries in the higher valleys towards afternoon.

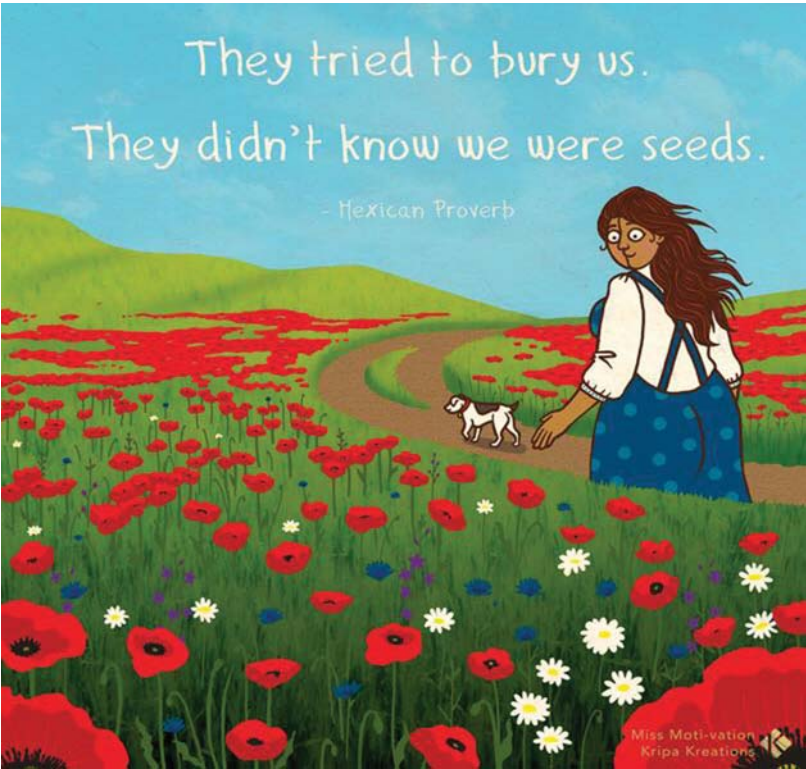
OUR PICK

Netflix's newest eight-part documentary series Life on Our Planet documents the history of earth, tracing the four-billion-year transformation of life on the planet. Executive-produced by Steven Spielberg and narrated by Morgan Freeman, the series has made use of both computer-generated imagery and live footage to illustrate the evolution of species, mass extinctions, habitat changes, as well as the evolution of glacial periods --- ultimately highlighting the diversity of life and lands on earth.



MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



गर्मी मौसममा संक्रामक रोगबाट बचाउँ र बचाऔँ

- गर्मी मौसममा मलेरिया, कालाजार, डेंगी, हैजालगायतका विभिन्न संक्रामक रोगहरू फैलिन सक्छन् ।
- संक्रामक रोग फैलाउने झिँगा, लामखुट्टे, भुसुना आदिको नियन्त्रण गरौं ।
- संक्रामक रोगबाट बच्न शुद्ध र उमालेको पानी पिऔं ।
- बासी तथा सडेगलेका खाना नखाऔं ।
- घरभित्र र वरपरको सरसफाइमा ध्यान दिऔं ।



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WIKIMEDIA

# INDIA’S QUIET RISE

The end of China’s four-decade-long economic boom has thrown into relief the emergence of Asia’s other demographic giant: India

■ **Brahma Chellaney** in New Delhi

China’s sharp economic slowdown has raised alarm bells around the world. But it has also thrown into relief the rise of another demographic powerhouse next door.

The Indian economy grew at an impressive 7.8% annual rate in the second quarter of 2023, and the country recently reached an important milestone by becoming the first to land a spacecraft on the Moon’s potentially water-rich south pole. India’s ascent, unlike China’s, has not been accompanied by an increasingly assertive foreign policy.

As India’s geopolitical, economic, and cultural clout grows, so does its global footprint. China’s ‘decline’, as some have begun to call the conclusion of the country’s four-decade-long economic boom, opens new opportunities for the Indian economy and other developing and emerging countries.

Earlier this year, India reached another milestone when its population officially surpassed that of China, which had been the world’s most populous country for more than 300 years. While China’s shrinking, rapidly aging population is likely to impede economic growth and may curtail its geopolitical ambitions, India – one of the world’s youngest countries, with a median age of 28.2 – is poised to reap a huge demographic dividend.

But the driving force behind India’s emergence as a major global power is its rapid

economic growth. While India’s GDP is still smaller than China’s, the country is currently the world’s fastest-growing major economy and is projected to account for 12.9% of global growth over the next five years, surpassing the United States’ 11.3% share.

In addition to fueling a consumption boom, India’s youthful population is also driving innovation, as evidenced by the country’s world-class information economy and its recent moon landing, which the country managed to achieve despite a national space budget equivalent to roughly 6% of what the US spends on space missions.

Having already surpassed the United Kingdom, its former colonial ruler, India’s GDP is poised to overtake that of Japan and Germany to become the world’s third-largest economy by 2030, behind the US and China.

Given its increasingly unstable neighbourhood, it should come as no surprise that India has the world’s third-largest defense budget. The deepening strategic alliance between China and Pakistan underscores India’s precarious position as the only country bordering two nuclear-armed revisionist states with expansionist ambitions. Moreover, for the past three years, India has been locked in a tense military standoff with China along its Himalayan border. Bilateral relations, marked by intermittent clashes in the disputed Tibet-Ladakh border region, are at their lowest point in decades.

By confronting China despite the risk of a full-scale war, India has challenged Chinese

power in a way no other country has done in this century. But despite leaning toward forging closer ties with the West, India remains hesitant to enter into formal military alliances with Western countries.

Western powers are partly to blame. US President Joe Biden’s reluctance to comment on the Sino-Indian military standoff, let alone openly support India, has sent a clear signal that India is responsible for its own defense. Given that the country’s future growth hinges on its ability to defend itself against external threats, India will likely step up its efforts to modernise its conventional armed forces and enhance its nuclear deterrence.

The escalating geopolitical rivalry between China and India could also impede efforts to unite the Global South and transform the BRICS group into a credible alternative to the G20 and G7. The BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) recently agreed to expand the group by adding six new members: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Ethiopia, Argentina, and Iran. Given the 11 members’ divergent interests, BRICS+ will likely find it even harder to reach consensus on any major issue.

Meanwhile, China’s economic slump could prompt President Xi Jinping to double down on his expansionist agenda. Biden recently characterised the stagnating Chinese economy as a “ticking time bomb,” warning that, “When bad folks have problems, they

do bad things.” China’s controversial new national map, which depicts vast areas of India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Bhutan (and even a bit of Russia) as Chinese territory, underscores the threat posed by China’s increasingly aggressive behaviour.

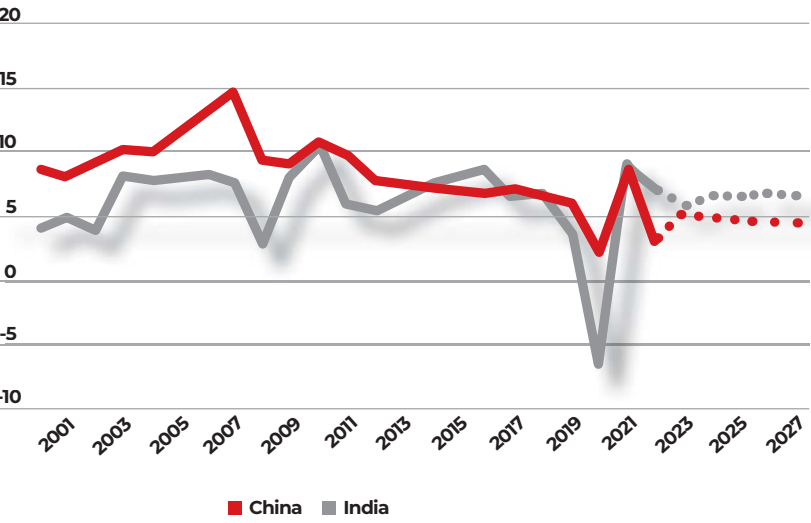
In addition to these external threats, India’s future will be shaped by its response to domestic economic challenges. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made great strides in modernising the notoriously outdated Indian bureaucracy and promoting e-governance to reduce red tape and attract foreign direct investment. His government has invested heavily in upgrading and expanding the country’s infrastructure, implemented regulatory reforms, and sought to boost domestic manufacturing through Modi’s “Make in India” initiative. But to transform itself into a global manufacturing hub, India must invest in human capital, particularly in education and training.

Moreover, India’s size and diversity also pose enormous challenges. India may be the first developing economy that, from the beginning, has pursued modernisation and prosperity through a democratic system. But as one of the world’s most culturally diverse countries, its seemingly never-ending election cycle has often fueled division and polarisation.

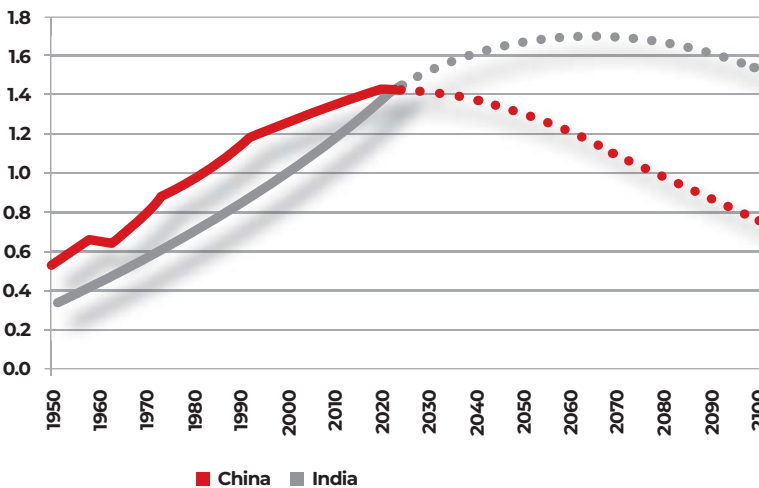
But, despite its US-style polarised politics, India’s democratic framework has served as a pillar of stability. By fostering open expression and dialogue, the Indian political system has empowered grassroots communities and individuals, enabling members of historically marginalised classes and castes to rise to the highest levels of policymaking. Whether India can maintain its current upward trajectory will depend on its ability to maintain political stability, rapid economic growth, domestic and external security, and a forward-looking foreign policy. Success would enhance India’s global standing and help advance US interests in the Indo-Pacific, the world’s new geopolitical fulcrum and home to its fastest-growing economies. ■

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India-China Annual Real GDP Growth in %



China and India Population Trends



Brahma Chellaney is Professor of Strategic Studies at the Center for Policy Research, New Delhi and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin. His book *Water: Asia's New Battleground* (Georgetown University Press, 2011) won the 2012 Asia Society Bernard Schwartz Book Award.



# Previously unknown masters of Nepali art



Mark these names: Kesaraja Chitrakar, Jivaram, and Adyayaraja and Udrayarama Pun. They are pioneers of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Malla renaissance.

■ **Shaguni Singh Sakya**

Many artists worked anonymously behind the scenes for Kathmandu to flourish as a hub for devotional art in the Licchavi and Malla periods. Many of their sculptures, temples, jewellery, paubhas, paintings vanished without a trace of their names. They themselves lived and died without realising the worth of their talent and contribution. A creation of rapturous devotion and dedication never withers with time or age. It is pure and invaluable. Many traditional Nepali artists even today feel that personal aggrandisement ruins the art of its integrity.

Such values were ingrained from ancient times when artists simply worked for the higher purpose of their craft and not personal identity. Ego and personal affirmation were qualities limited solely to the ruling class. The rest, however skilled, dared not have any sense of individuality. Their responsibility was solely to obey superiors, priests or donors. The artist's signature on paintings was, therefore, uncommon. The only ancient Nepali artist who has been posthumously known is Arniko, primarily because he went to China and earned international renown during the Kublai Khan reign. We did not know the others. Till now. Fortunately, by some stroke of luck, a few names were written.

◀ **Kesaraja Chitrakar  
Manjuvajra and Vajradhatishvari, 1409  
(The Jucker Collection)**  
Reference: Hugo E. Kreijger

The inscription of artist Kesaraja Chitrakar in this painting is a surprise. Was the donor generous enough to include the artist's name or was he so happy with the artwork that he felt compelled to credit Chitrakar? Was it the priest's random decision or could the artist have humbly asked for his name to what he felt was a masterpiece? Was he thinking about his legacy? We will never know, but are grateful we know his name. The priest's name is also written, Acharya Kulabha and the donors who commissioned the paubha are Hrasarama Chitrakar and his wife Raya. The backdrop with turquoise scrolling vines, the upper canopy peaks and the base exemplifies extraordinary talent. The paubha showcases the level of artistic accomplishment in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, and many continue to draw inspiration from Kesaraja's pioneering efforts till today. Post Arniko in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Kesaraja is arguably the most well-known artist.



◀ **Adyayaraja Pun and Udrayarama Pun  
Gagansim and his two wives, circa 1470  
(private collection)**  
Reference: Gautam V Vajracharya

This painting of Gagansim Bhara, a military governor of Dolakha and his two wives Ashayani Laxmi and Jivatana at 191.8 x 161.9 cm is monumental in many ways. It is the largest Nepali painting discovered so far. The inscription is in Sanskrit and Newari by a priest whose name surprisingly did not make it to the artwork even though it is claimed the concept for the painting was his idea. Artists Adyayaraja Pun from Yambu and Udrayarama Pun from Kisilagla are Kathmandu locals and their work is one of the few depicting personalised portraits and not a deity. The painting shows Gangansim and his wives in their chamber with luxurious bedroom items and traditional Newari toilette requisites. It is both traditional and contemporary in style. It has a deep red colour background as in most paubhas throughout history. The upper portion is flanked by Hindu deities – Shiva,

Parvati, Ganesh, Brahma, Vishnu and Kartikeya, giving it a religious touch. The lotus pedestal and stylised rocks at the bottom are other traditional elements. This piece is also unconventional in that it portrays a bedroom scene with amorous gestures, and is rather audacious for the period. The first wife offers a paan to her husband which is a gesture of passion as prescribed in the Kamasutra. This is also one of the first paintings where the donor and the family is the main focus. The two artists did something novel in placing the donors up front showing their glorious Newari lifestyle with a detailed focus on the facial features, attire and traditional bedroom paraphernalia. In many ways, the artists seem to have introduced a new genre of lifestyle art of the 15<sup>th</sup> century showing Jain, Indo-Persian, and Rajput influence.



# now identified



**Jivaram**  
**Rakta Ganesh (location unknown)**

Reference: Jivaram manuscripts, Suresh Neotia collection

Jivaram was a 15<sup>th</sup> century Newar artist who went to Tibet and taught Newari paubha art while learning artistic styles himself. Parts of his sketchbook that are now in the Suresh Neotia Collection in Calcutta has 39 remaining pages from an unknown number of the manuscript with records of iconography and artistic style that he learned in Tibet. He captured a variety of Chinese, Tibetan, and Kashmiri techniques.

Jivaram infused Yuan and Ming dynasty styles in Newar art and also mastered new expressive facial portrayals. Most facial expressions before his time were flat with hardly any emotions, they were one-dimensional or a Rajput-style side profile. It can be assumed that he introduced vibrant expressions and two-dimensional facial sketching to Nepali art.

Another accomplishment is the mastery of Kashmiri motifs which Jivaram levelled up from the previous artists. The vibrancy and intricacy of the vine scrolls are an extraordinary representation. The differences are clear to anyone comparing his work to Kesharaja's background scrolls.

Jivaram's masterpiece that remains today is the Maha Rakta Ganpati which inspired present-day artist Lok Chitrakar to do his version. The piece is an amalgamation of the various styles that Jivaram learned and which many artists henceforth have adopted.

After Arniko, Jivaram is the only known artist who can be credited with transmitting Newar and Buddhist art forms to Tibet and China. His notebook is dated 1435. This is even before the renaissance period started in Europe and before the birth of Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519) and Michelangelo (1475-1564).




16 Arhats (Buddha's first disciples) and Dharmatala (attendant of the 16 arhats) and also Fa Xiang (4<sup>th</sup> century Chinese traveler to Nepal). The earliest two-dimensional facial sketches from a Nepali artist, Jivaram.

These three ancient works of our art history lie in private collections or museums abroad. Paintings of Western Renaissance artists are displayed in all the famous museums all over, but we only get to read about ours in books, if at all.

Nepal's art schools should be teaching about Jivaram, Kesaraja Chitrakar, Adyayaraja Pun and Udrayama Pun. But in a country where the education system has overlooked much of our history,

the names of a few pioneer artists hardly seems to matter.

Hopefully, these and other past masters will be given stronger prominence to reinforce Nepal's historical and cultural identity. Artists also had a role in nationbuilding, not just kings and generals. 

*Shaguni Singh Sakya is the Director of the Museum of Nepali Arts (MoNA) at Kathmandu Guest House in Thamel.*



SURYA NEPAL  
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# JAZZMANDU

19th kathmandu jazz festival 2023

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# Restorative justice for peace-building

Colombian judge's advice to Nepal: a vengeful system that prioritises punishment is counterproductive

■ Marty Logan

Nepal must ensure that it maintains peace as it works through its transitional justice process, says an expert from Colombia, where violence has not stopped even though an entire legal system was created as part of the South American nation's 2016 peace agreement.

"The sad part of our story is that we still have war," judge Caterina Hayck said after speaking engagements in Kathmandu hosted by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ). "In Colombia we have a peace agreement, but we lack peace. In Nepal you are not lacking peace and for me that's really amazing."

Colombia suffered five decades of conflict with guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). As many as 220,000 people were killed, 25,000 disappeared and millions were displaced. But FARC splinter groups and other armed outfits still operate in rural areas, and current violence is tied to drug trafficking.

Colombia's peace agreement included the setting up of a complex court system, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP), where Hayck is one of the justices. It includes two paths for prosecution: acknowledgement and non-acknowledgement.

Those who admit their acts will receive a 'restorative sanction', such as helping to build a bridge or finding and removing landmines. Those who do not will receive an



Many are already in their 70s, in their 80s. Time is passing so fast, we must hurry."

Asked whether a transitional justice process is needed in a country like Nepal, where most people appear to have moved on after the conflict, Hayck says: "As a judge, as a lawyer, as a person who has worked for human rights, of course the answer would be yes. You cannot leave justice behind."

But she cautions: "It has to be another type of justice ... if after 60 years a former perpetrator who has been living peacefully is going to go to jail. That's quite crazy. Which is why I go for restorative justice, not for punitive justice. That is the kind of justice that will bring more peace, that will go farther in terms of reconciliation. Because sometimes justice can stoke hatred, and can re-open wounds. That is not advisable."

In Nepal, however, the former guerrilla commander Pushpa Kamal Dahal is now Prime Minister for the third time and has made insensitive public statements about victims.

The transitional justice process is also stuck. ■

'alternative' or 'ordinary' prison sentence, depending on whether they finally agree to cooperate.

The position of the perpetrator and the seriousness of the crimes committed are also factored into decision-making about sanctions.

"During peace talks the most difficult point was the design of the judicial system, because it was very obvious that (the top leaders of both the guerrillas and the military) were not going to sign the peace agreement if they were going to go to jail. It was as simple as that," says Hayck.

In Nepal, recent disputes over a transitional justice law have focused on possible amnesty for the Maoists and state-side perpetrators of conflict-era atrocities that are considered serious violations of human rights.

Hayck explains that Colombia complies with international law by banning amnesty but perpetrators just get a restorative sentence if they acknowledge the truth. She adds, "It's too early to say if we succeeded. The victims will say in the future if it was right or wrong."

Hayck had in-depth experience in international humanitarian law and working as a legal expert

with the Colombian government, including as a peace negotiator, when she was one of 38 judges chosen for the SJP.

She faced immense pressure as one of five justices who had to decide if a former FARC leader, Jesús Santrich, should be sent for trial in the United States or protected under Colombia's non-extradition law.

Today she feels like the wheels of justice are mired in a legal muck. She says: "We have nine years remaining... I know that it's too little. We cannot grant justice to the victims if the perpetrator dies.

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