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THE NEW NORMAL

The devastating storm that ravaged Bara and Parsa districts on Sunday night leaving at least 30 people dead and hundreds injured now looks certain to have been a tornado. Although not as common here as in the plains states of mid-western US, tornadoes have been known to occur during the pre-monsoon season in Bangladesh and parts of coastal India.

Meteorologists were initially reluctant to confirm that this week's disaster was caused by a tornado because they were almost unheard of in the Nepal Tarai. However, the fact that elderly people in the plains have in their Maithili and Hindi vocabulary a word for tornado (*chakrawaṭ*) means that they do occur.



KIRAN NEPAL

The Department of Hydrology and Meteorology has come under a lot of criticism this week for not being able to forecast this extreme weather event. While storms, rain, and high winds can be forecast, tornadoes are notoriously difficult to predict, and it is next to impossible to pinpoint where they will touch down.

Even in the United States, which is hit by more than 1,000 tornadoes a year, there are only general warnings about possibilities of these twisters, although computer modeling allows more accurate forecasting. Still, the only specific warning people get is when they can actually see a tornado approaching with its ominous funnel. Homes and businesses along America's 'Tornado Alley' in states like South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and parts of Texas and Colorado are mandatorily required to have shelters since wind speeds of up to 450 km/h inside a tornado can rip everything apart.

As survivors picked up the pieces of their lives this week in Pheta village of Bara, scientists from the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) saw the clear footprint of a tornado: a long and narrow path of destruction, houses and walls built with masonry lay demolished, trucks and buses had been thrown about, mighty trees were uprooted – but a few metres away palm trees still stood with fronds intact and thatch homes were unscathed.

Photographs taken by passengers on planes circling over Simara while waiting to

land at Kathmandu airport show continuous lightning flashes inside a supercell soaring above Central Nepal with the tops of the cumulonimbus reaching more than 10,000m. Right below these planes, the conditions were getting ripe for the twister to form.

Eyewitnesses describe a frightening storm that hit at dinner time, with the brunt of the damage confined to a 50m wide trail of destruction along a few kilometres towards Birganj. As our coverage of the disaster in this edition explains (*page 14-15*), the tornado would be difficult to predict even with the most sophisticated equipment.

Nowcasting is possible, but not for a specific locale or an exact time. The DHM has installed a Doppler radar in Surkhet, and two more are going to be set up in Palpa and Udaypur to cover the entire country. Data from these can be fed into modeling software that can detect rotating updrafts inside supercells, make predictions for rain and wind, and also gauge the possibility of twisters striking.

However, even if these radars had been operational and modeling software already available, it would have been impossible to forecast a tornado hitting a localised cluster of villages in the central plains of Nepal at a specific time. And even if the warning had gone out, there would not be enough time to respond, and in the absence of underground shelters, there would still have been high casualties.

For us in Nepal, therefore, there is only one thing to do: spread awareness and be prepared for more tornadoes in future as the intensity of storms increase with climate change. Extreme weather events like wind storms, flash floods, cloud bursts, glacial lake outburst floods, droughts and erratic monsoons are the new normal, and we have to improve forecasting and preparedness.

Even before the 2015 earthquake, the government had been working on a Disaster Management Act. It was delayed by geological and political earthquakes, but a bill to that effect is finally going to Parliament soon. The National Reconstruction Authority should be expanded into a Disaster Management Authority that can upgrade multi-disaster preparedness, and have systems in place for rapid search and rescue, relief and rehabilitation.

Bara was the first major disaster to hit Nepal since the federal constitution went into effect, and we could see that the first responders were from the Wards and Municipalities of Province 2 where the tornado struck. Central coordination local response would be the way forward in preparing for disasters to come. It is not a question of 'if', but 'when'.

With climate change, extreme weather events like the Bara tornado are going to be more common in the years ahead. Let's be ready with better forecasting and preparedness.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Why do these lines from an editorial in Nepali Times #445 of 3-9 April 2009 sound strangely familiar ten years later? We have the unenviable task of trying to wake up rulers pretending to be asleep.

It is now only a question of time before dashed hopes turn into spontaneous outbursts of frustration. There were high expectations, even euphoria, when the Maoists came to power seven months ago that their revolutionary zeal would bring a new style and efficiency to the government.

Most Nepalis expected that the constitution-drafting process would be messy and fraught with delays, but they were certain their lives would improve. Nobody expects miracles from Dahal and his fellow travellers. But they need to prove that they are doing more than just blaming everyone else, or at least once a week threaten to overthrow a government they themselves lead.



ONLINE PACKAGES



THE ROAD TO CONSERVATION

Go online to watch video on how economic growth can go hand in hand with ecological protection. Building infrastructure need not mean destruction of nature. There are proven models for the two to co-exist. *Story: page 8-9.*



OASIS WITHIN AN OASIS

Join our video team on a day-long tour of Patan Museum's gorgeous courtyards, and take breaks for meals and refreshments at the Museum Cafe, a relaxing oasis amidst Patan's hubbub. *Story: page 6-7.*



INTO THE STORM

Join our reporter at Ground Zero in Bara, and listen to the frightening tales of survivors. Many had built what they thought were stronger houses with money saved from working overseas. But these structures crumbled like matchsticks in the tornado. *Story: page 1 and 13.*

FIRE & ICE

I am Italian, I have been here and I can say that this place was representative or has real Italian spirit ('Napoli Nepali', Kunda Dixit, #953). Great place created by a great woman.

Giulia Rossi

■ Congratulations Annamarie. For 8 years, I visited your wonderful restaurant almost every week for breakfast after yoga. Now in Australia, we often remember fondly all the excellent meals and service from your loyal staff.

Carole Ross

TEJSHREE THAPA

Oh no! What a tragedy ('Tejshree Thapa, 52', Daniel Lak, #953). My heart goes out to the bereaved parents and surviving family members. Tej was a real treasure. Always will be.

Sabina Panth Schouten

■ Sorry to hear this. A loss indeed not only to the family but to the human rights community. Prayers.

Deep Ranjani Rai

■ Very sad news. She was our senior at St Mary's and contributed genuinely in the field of justice and human rights. Great lady! My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and prayers .

Sandhya Regmi

■ A big loss to the family and bigger loss to the country. May her soul rest in peace.

Dipak Gurung

WHAT'S TRENDING



Napoli Nepali

by Kunda Dixit

The most popular pizzeria in Kathmandu, Fire and Ice will soon mark 25 years, and is a model business that has stuck with Nepal through thick and thin. Meet the lady behind the much sought after pizzeria in town, Annamaria Forgiore in this popular profile.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook

Tejshree Thapa, 52

by Daniel Lak

A fierce advocate of justice, Tejshree Thapa passed away at 52 in New York last week. This tribute to Thapa and her extraordinary work in human rights was widely read and commented, as readers mourned the loss of a daughter of Nepal whose exemplary work changed the lives of many far beyond Nepal.

🔥 Most visited online page

🐦 Most popular on Twitter

💬 Most commented

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
#Editorial Nepal has untangled its politics, formed a Constitution, the war is over and there is political stability. Would that finally convince foreign investors that Nepal is an attractive place to do business? Or is something still missing?

Suresh Dhakal @suracedhakal
Corruption is what haunts investors most. An example is the recent hiatus in Melamchi. Governance matters, and we have not done sufficient in this front.

Prasiddhi @Prasiddhi_S
The Nepali government is hypocritical - even paradoxical - to its own nature. How can it claim to be the stepping stone of the nation's progress when it is the only one preventing the nation from exactly that. @NepaliTimes

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Tribute to Nepali human rights advocate Tejshree Thapa who died in New York on Tuesday. By @yeti2yeti #HumanRights #Nepal #obituary

Kevin Chang @KevinCChang
Remembering Tejshree Thapa. A daughter of Nepal who made outstanding contributions to international human rights and criminal justice. Gone too soon.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
KP Oli's recent moves may be authoritarian, but they reinforce the need to adhere to the rule of law, writes David Seddon. Read full piece here. @pigreen @PM_Nepal #Nepal #politics

Sanju Gurung @sanigurung
For Nepal, such moves are quite right (for the time being) to reinforce the need to adhere to the rule of law - otherwise, the chaotic political system doesn't let it happen. @pigreen

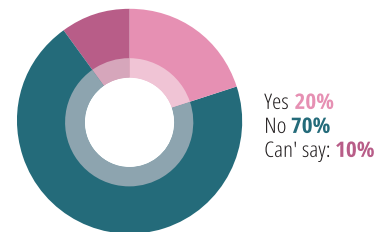
Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Despite conflicts, earthquakes and the Blockade, and additional challenges in the form of shutdowns and extortion, owner of Fire And Ice Pizzeria Annamaria Forgiore says she has never been fed up with Nepal, and will never leave. Profile by @kundadixit

Prakash Moktan @PRAMOK
When PM is inviting investors with lucrative offers in Nepal to invest, what an irony that Fire & Ice to be treated in such an unwarranted fashion. Would think twice before you invest.



Weekly Internet Poll #954

Q. Will the Investment Summit succeed in attracting Foreign Direct Investment to Nepal?



Weekly Internet Poll #955
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. How was the government response to the Bara disaster?



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Coming soon: two-way migration to Nepal

No more *afno manche* or *hamro party ko manche*, Nepal now needs *ramro manche* from all over the world

It was an ironic coincidence that the week Nepal hosted its Investment Summit, the country signed an MoU with Japan for the export of Nepali skilled workers. Also last week we saw photographs of thousands of young Nepali men sleeping out in the open as they



½ FULL
Anil Chitrakar

waited in line for Korean language tests, which they must pass in order to work in Korea. Nepal's long-awaited G2G deal with Malaysia that will remove labour middlemen will soon come into effect.

As Nepal woos investors to create employment at home, overseas countries are vying for our cheap labour. This trend will only increase as East Asian countries age, and as traditional labour-exporting countries like the Philippines and our South Asian neighbours attain higher standards of living.

If all the new energy, infrastructure and tourism FDI projects committed at the Nepal Investment Summit actually come through, we are surely going to need the workforce here at home.

Officials at the Summit vowed that no Nepali youth will now have to seek jobs abroad. That is a hyperbole. It is also duplicitous. A government that is promising huge employment opportunities at home is signing deals with Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Qatar to export our youth.



BIKRAM RAI

This is likely to go on for some time, as Nepal is already addicted to remittance revenue to sustain the economy, pay for imports of everything from vegetables to fruits. For now, about the only arena where remittance inflows have shown an impact is in driving up land prices in Kathmandu and urban centres.

If we want to see Nepal 'developed' in our lifetimes, we shall have to aggressively go out into the world and recruit. Many hotels, international non-profits, foreign-aided projects and bilateral and multilateral agencies already have foreigners as heads. To push this line of argument further, if

Nepalis can serve in the British and Indian armies and the Singapore Commandos, why not a Japanese or Korean heading an irrigation or hydropower project in Nepal?

We can already offer jobs to the Japanese and Koreans in Nepal. Proof of whether the Investment Summit was really successful to generate \$30 billion will be if Nepal finally turns into a country that offers employment to Koreans and Japanese. Workers from India and China already have jobs in Nepal, and in fact Nepal is the sixth largest source of remittances for India.

Given that the summit is organised every two years, and every day of the past two years at

least 1,500 Nepalis left for work overseas, we need to start thinking of reversing the flow. No more is it time for *afno manche* or *hamro party ko manche*, Nepal now needs *ramro manche* from all over the world.

When Nepal Airlines presses its new Airbus 330 flights to Incheon and Kansai, the seats should be booked both ways. Investment is also about technology transfer, and induction of skilled human resources -- Nepal needs trained and experienced human capital that helped build the modern Japanese and Korean economies.

This would be a perfect match, and one that Nepal can take full

advantage of. They benefit from the energy of the young Nepali, and we profit from their experience. Further, Nepal always seems to have money to hire more police and administrative staff but not the technical and managerial people who can build this country. Buying cars for the government and politicians is done in an instant, while we hem and haw about procuring the services of qualified managers and technicians.

Like many other countries, Nepal has embraced the idea of the free flow of goods and services. We have benefitted from the one-way free flow of human capital as well, now we need to reciprocate and relax our work visas. The real advantage of hiring globally will also be to get inside knowledge about how to do business in those countries. We would know, for example, what to grow, how to process and export value-added agricultural products from the Himalaya to Japan or Korea.

At social gatherings and in private communications, Nepalis who are likely to oppose the idea of reciprocity will tell you proudly how their children are now earning lots of money working abroad. Why should we deny this opportunity to those who are in the host countries? We need them now. We may not have this need in the future. Let us all watch carefully who gets hired to head FDI projects. We can go for Nepali *afno manche* first, but then let us do a global search. 🇳🇵

Anil Chitrakar is President of Siddharthinc

Going is tough for Chinese investor in Nepal



The Nepal government has hailed its two-day Investment Summit that ended on Saturday as a resounding success with the signing of 15 deals with foreign investors.

However, here in Nawalparasi the experience of a Chinese investor in a state-of-the-art cement plant does not bode well for the future of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the country.

China's Hongshi Cement had signed an FDI deal with the government during the first tenure of Prime Minister K P Oli during a similar summit in 2017. Inaugurating this year's summit on Saturday, Oli told investors that the government would help them in every possible way with permits, infrastructure, and repatriation of profit.

But faced with obstacles every step of the way, Hongshi tied up with Nepal's Shivam Cement hoping that the involvement of a local partner would remove bureaucratic hurdles along the way. But even though the government had assured Hongshi Cement factory of a road, transmission line and other infrastructure, it has not



kept its promise.

The plant is located 26km from the East-West Highway, and Hongshi opened a dirt track itself because it would have taken too long to wait for the government. However, the road has not yet been blacktopped, and none of the bridges have been built as per the agreement.

The Chinese have also built another 12km road to its limestone quarry from where it sources raw material. The company says it has spent Rs1.2 billion of its own money to build roads the government had promised.

Similarly, the Nepal Electricity Authority was supposed to extend its transmission line from the Bardaghat Substation with the installation of 21 pylons. But this has not happened either.

Hongshi would have bought 40MW of power from the NEA grid,

but since the transmission lines are not yet ready it has to generate its own expensive electricity from diesel-thermal captive plants.

The factory employs 520 Nepali engineers, managers and workers, and although Hongshi's agreement with the government allows it to produce 12,000 tons of cement a day, it only brings out 5,000 tons because of the lack of electricity supply, according to manager Liu Xuguwang.

China's Hongshi Cement owns 70% of the venture with Shivam having 30% of the shares in the \$330 million project. This is the largest foreign joint venture investment project in Nepal today, and although it is touted as a model, it is clear that unless Nepal can reduce red tape, and keep its side of the bargain, other investors at last weekend's Summit are likely to be reluctant.

Some 600 foreign delegates from 36 countries took part in the Nepal Investment Summit during which some 15 deals were signed in hydropower, solar energy, tourism, 5G telecommunication, and other projects. 🇳🇵

prabhu BANK

BIZ BRIEFS

Self Check In

Turkish Airlines' new home Istanbul airport will provide a novel travel experience with over 100 self check-in kiosks and 35 self



bag drop units. Passengers travelling from Kathmandu to Istanbul starting 6 April will be flown into the new airport for arrival and transit. Turkish is moving equipment to Istanbul Airport over the weekend.

Education Commitment

Qatar Airways is collaborating with McGill University's Institute of Air and Space Law and launched the inaugural Qatar Airways/



McGill Air Law Moot Court Competition and Air and Space Law Conference. Participants presented research on important topics such as the legal and regulatory regime for autonomous flying taxis in urban centers.

Italian Cuisine

Rox Restaurant at Hyatt Regency is introducing new Western and Continental Italian dishes in its a-la carte menu. Some highlights include Rox special salad, traditional tenderloin lasagna, Risotto alla Milanese, Rox special pizza, Wood-fried chicken. The dishes will be prepared by Chef Dhiraj Khadka who has worked for 16 years preparing Italian cuisine at multiple international hotels



Sanima's new branch

Sanima Bank Limited has inaugurated a branch in Putali Sadak, Kathmandu. Chairman Binaya Kumar Shrestha says the branch will provide all banking services and will also be an education hub. The bank provides services through 78 branches and 72 ATM networks through Nepal.

Golf Tournament

Ballantine is organising an open golf tournament on 6 April at Gokarna Golf Club where about 100 golfers will compete. Ballantine is a popular scotch whiskey across the world selling over 70 million bottles per year. The whiskey brand has been associated with golf since 1960 with a tournament in Wentworth golf course.

prabhu BANK

An investigation committee has been formed after a scheduled Dubai-bound Airbus 330 of Nepal Airlines was canceled on the night of 2 April after all 257 passengers had boarded because it was ready for takeoff four minutes after the airport closed at 10pm for the night to allow runway repairs. Kathmandu airport is closed between 10pm-8am every day for the first resurfacing of the runway in 35 years.

The plane, which was scheduled to fly to Dubai at 9:15pm, had sought permission to tow from the hangar to the apron at 7pm. But Air Traffic Control (ATC) only gave permission to tow at 8:35pm because all three bays for widebodies were occupied. Passengers boarded the plane at 9:35pm, and refuelling was finished at 9:37pm. The engineering team cleared the flight at 9:45pm, and the plane closed its doors two minutes later. The pilot asked the ATC for permission to taxi out to runway 20. ATC asked the plane to hold while a Dragon Air Airbus 330 taxied out for takeoff. The Hong Kong-bound flight

Chaos at airport due to runway repair



BIKRAM RAI

took off 3 minutes before the cutoff time of 10pm. The ATC then informed the Nepal Airlines flight that since the airport was closed, it would not have the clearance to take off.

Since 1 April, Kathmandu Airport has been closed for 10 hours daily for runway repairs. Airline staff were livid at the Tower for not even giving a leeway of 5 minutes when it was their fault for delaying the

towing in the first place.

According to Nepal Airlines, the plane requested permission to take off several times, but the airport officials ignored the pilot. ATC staff say they were busy discussing the request with higher officials, but did not get the requisite permission to extend the cutoff by 5 minutes. Miscommunication between airport officials and plane crew seems to be the cause of the confusion.

Nepal Airlines offered to put up all 257 passengers at hotels in Kathmandu, but 163 passengers refused to disembark from the plane, saying they would not budge until the plane took off. The Airline had to incur a loss of Rs1.5 million to pay for overnight hotel for passengers in Kathmandu and Dubai.

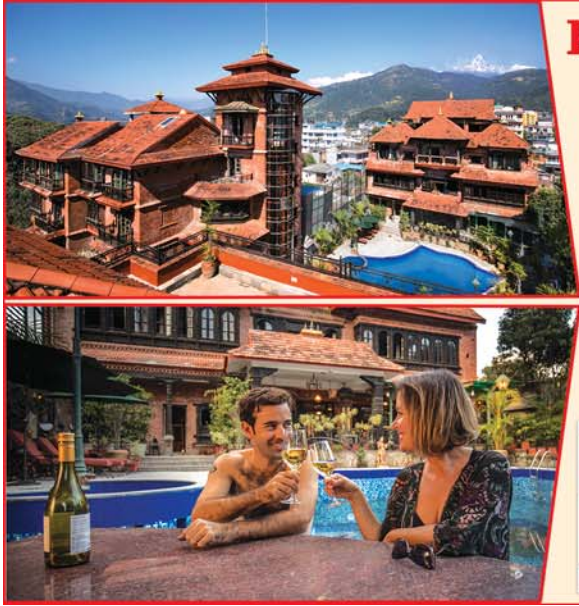
“More than the money lost, the passengers had to go through a lot of trouble because of the incident,” said Nepal Airlines spokesperson, Capt Vijay Lama. “It gave the carrier a bad name for no fault of its own. It also gave the impression the airport can treat the national flag carrier in any way it likes.”

The passengers stayed in the aircraft all night, and were finally forced out by police early in the morning of 3 April, and the plane took off for Dubai at 8:45am -- 11 hours behind schedule. It was the Home Secretary who is said to have issued the order to the Police to force the passengers out of the plane by any means possible.

According to an airport official, this is the first time in Nepal's aviation history that passengers spent an entire night in a plane at Kathmandu Airport to protest the delay.

Domestic and international flights have been badly hit by the airport closure at the height of the tourist season. The repairs are scheduled to end on 30 June.

Sharad Ojha



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Heritage gastronomy

Ever since it opened more than 20 years ago, Patan Museum has been a quiet sanctuary hidden away from the densely-packed city outside. And in a tranquil, leafy corner of the complex is an oasis within an oasis: the Patan Museum Café.

Under new management by Dwarika's Hotel, the restaurant offers a delectable selection of continental cuisine, as well as finessed pickings of Nepali and Asian dishes. The menu features healthy salads, brunch specialties, snacks and full-portioned meals, hinting at the *raison d'être* of the place: all-day dining, whether you choose to start, continue or end your day at the museum.

Lush greenery reaches up to rooflines of weathered *jhingati* tiles. Artfully contained shrubs spread against the geometric curves of patterned brick and into dining nooks and inviting enclosures. Low-slung pavilions reminiscent of Patan's many resting platforms (*pati*) provide shady private cubicles, as do cafe-style umbrellas dappled with shadowplay as the trees dance with the wind.

Austrian restoration architect Götz Hagmüller also transformed the Kaiser Café in the Garden of Dreams in Thamel into the popular destination it is today. It seems fitting, then, that both these treasured historic restorations now feature bars and cafés managed by Dwarika's Hotel whose revenues contribute to the upkeep of the sites. Patan Museum Café now has a menu and service that places quality and consistency foremost. 

Organic produce from Dwarika's own organic farm in Dhulikel features on the cafe menu.



Creamy buffalo mozzarella, organic tomatoes and torn holy basil, drizzled with rich, flavourful olive oil, and a selection of viscous balsamic or crisp white wine vinegar to liven the palate.



A sweet sticky sauce accentuates the mouthwatering caramelisation of a fried Jalkapur fillet, cooked to moist, breakaway softness. Soft quinoa and hearty vegetables complete the healthy ensemble.

A rich bisque, perfectly sweet and buttery, with pieces of cooked shrimp and a hint of cream, garnished with a sprig of micro herbs.

A generous double shot of espresso with a double scoop of vanilla ice cream, served in style in a martini glass.



KUNDA DIX

A luscious log of nutty chocolate cake, smothered in rich chocolate ganache, accompanied by an assortment of fresh fruits and slivered almonds.





MONIKA DEUPALA



This had been just an abnormal winter-spring. Now it has turned tragic with the tornado that touched down in Bara and Parsa on Sunday night. The topography of the Himalaya and climate change magnify the impact of updrafts caused by convection systems. Inject moisture into this, and it turns loud and violent. Expect more afternoon buildups into Friday and the weekend with storms right along the mountains and higher valleys. Short, sharp wind-blown precipitation, with downdrafts bringing the temperature down.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
 22° 13°	 23° 13°	 21° 11°



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Patan's museum piece



ALL PHOTOS: SHEILIN TEO

The Patan Museum is a must-visit among the draws of Kathmandu Valley: tastefully designed and informative, its curation is logical yet sensitive to the nuances of the richly-layered heritage and local traditions. Visitors can trace chronological lines in Nepal's cultural history, and are guided to recognise stylistic themes in the faces of gods and goddesses and the iconography that they pass on the streets of the Valley's old towns.

Visitors get an introduction to the symbiosis of Hinduism and Buddhism in the Nepa civilisation. Besides the artifacts on display, the corridors provide an unassuming serenity, places of repose and leisure of rulers past. We see courtyards where the public would gather to celebrate, debate or venerate, and sense a graciousness, a deep attention to detail. And most striking: these are living traditions that carry on to the present day.

There is the bathing well, (*tusha hiti*) of King Siddhi Narasimha Malla in Sundari Chok with its gilded garuda

spout. Or, a large display of a gilded pair of the Buddha's hands, 'calling the earth to witness', depicting the moment he attained enlightenment.

In these days of quick-fix concrete and steel, visitors sense a dwindling appreciation of lingering around a water well, resting on a courtyard ledge, or leaning in to admire the intricate carvings of a temple's eaves.

Which is why it is important to accept the invitation to spend a day at the museum, to explore, to rest, to compose one's impressions of the city, and even rekindle the divine spark with greenery, nourishing food and inspiring architecture.

Monuments are kept alive by their relevance to the community. In Nepal, they have been maintained by devotion: annual rites and festivals that ensure places of worship are regularly tended to and repaired by devotees. In cases where monuments are given into state care, they have often fallen into disrepair.

Luckily, the team led by Austrian architect Götz Hagmüller that was given the charge to restore Patan Durbar in the 1990s, took to the task with an intention to turn the palace complex into a self-sustaining cultural institution, capable of withstanding not just natural shakeups but also political instability.

In its modernisation into a world-class cultural treasure, the palace complex underwent a significant rearrangement to house not only artifacts, but a constant flow of people within what would once

have been quiet, private quarters of the royal court. Amid the mostly faithful restoration of the palace to its Malla heritage, the Patan Museum also features a clutch of modern elements: new materials and motifs seamlessly worked into the intricate historical fabric of the East Wing's Malla and Rana styles. As part of the rearrangement, a graceful timber staircase leads from a new foyer to a stunning display of iconic *tundaak*: intricately carved timber struts featuring deities in various poses.

The columns and capitals supporting the restored Rana-style wing are detailed in steel and timber, to clean modernist lines, and hold their own within the simple brick and white plastered detailing of the period. They also feature a postmodern take on the scrolls of old Newa capitals, reinterpreting the decorative art of traditions past, whilst acknowledging the architectural language of the restoration's own timeline. At the Museum Café, new metal-roofed pavilions also feature similar modern detailing in timber, a graceful reminder within the new construction of its heritage.

The restoration efforts that led to the establishment of Patan's Royal Palace as a public museum in 1997 features modern twists on traditional motifs, designed in timber and steel by Hagmüller's team. The clean lines and geometric postmodern interpretation of decorative Newa carving presents a nod to the architectural language of the restoration's own timeline. 🇳🇵

Sheilin Teo

Patan Museum

8am-6.30pm
Courtyards and access to the Museum Cafe are open 7am-6.30pm.

Entry fees to the Museum:
Foreigners: Rs1,000 (included in Patan entry fee)
SAARC: Rs250
Nepali Rs30
Nepali Students Rs5 (with ID)
<http://www.patanmuseum.gov.np/>



Join our video team on a day-long tour of Patan Museum's gorgeous courtyards, and take breaks for meal and refreshments at the Museum Cafe, a relaxing oasis amidst Patan's hubub.

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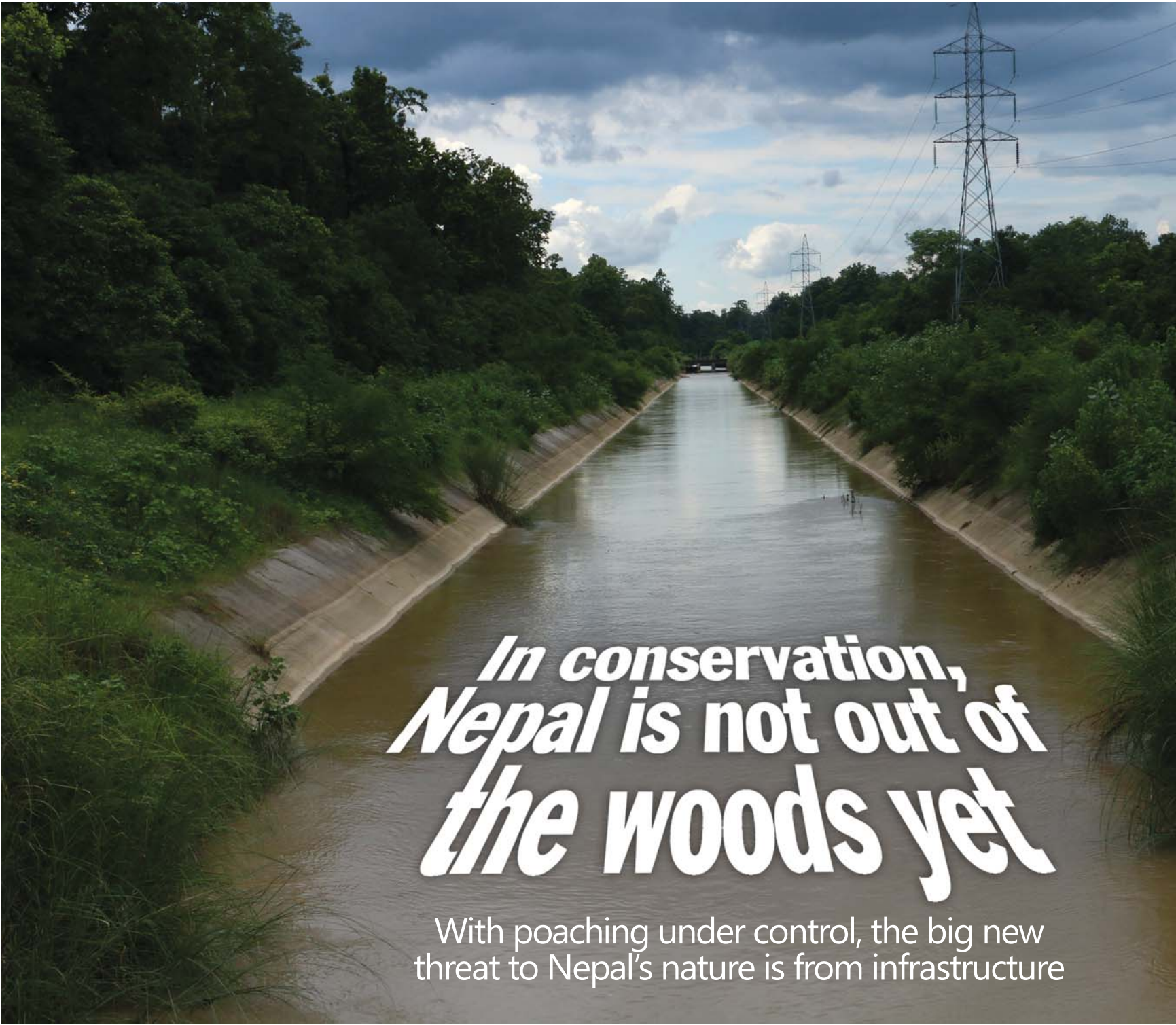
Nepal has notched notable successes in conserving nature: five years of zero poaching of rhinos and tigers in national parks, the doubling of the wild tiger population in 10 years and protection of plant species. However, roads, irrigation canals, transmission lines and even railways are now threatening to undermine these achievements.

Conservationists say that balancing the need for economic growth with ecological protection will be even more challenging than combatting poaching. As the country marks National Wildlife Week from 14-20 April, Nepal's planners need to find ways to build new infrastructure without irreversibly harming the country's biodiversity.

Now that Nepal has domestic poaching under control, it needs to focus on controlling the transit of wildlife smuggling. Nepal is a hub for trafficking of tiger, rhino and pangolin parts from India and Africa. Even live chimpanzees and birds have been found at Kathmandu airport.

Nepal is now a victim of its own success in conservation. With poaching controlled, protected areas are now getting overcrowded with wildlife, leading to the threat of disease and an increase in human-animal conflict.

In addition, climate change is leading to weather extremes that have aggravated the problems of water scarcity, flash floods and prey decline. Even though rhinos are no longer poached, for example, there has been a sharp increase in fatalities, with 41 dead in the last 9 months alone in Chitwan. Besides old age, most have died of disease, fights with other rhinos, or poisoning. Last month, a rhino died in Sauraha after falling into the septic tank of a hotel.



*In conservation,
Nepal is not out of
the woods yet*

With poaching under control, the big new threat to Nepal's nature is from infrastructure

There has also been an increase in wild elephants and tigers entering human settlements in search of food due to habitat encroachment in their migration corridors. Last year, flash floods in Chitwan washed away rhinos: 12 of them had to be rescued and brought back from India.

However, the biggest threat to Nepal's wildlife in the post-poaching era is new infrastructure crisscrossing nature reserves. Major transmission lines have been built

or are planned through national parks, the new postal highway slices through nature reserves, new irrigation canals such as Babai, Sikta and Ranijamara have bifurcated areas frequented by wildlife, and the new East-West railroad running parallel to the E-W Highway will fragment many national parks.

Nature reserves and national parks make up one-fourth of Nepal's area. With infrastructure building spree currently underway,

experts say the country will soon lose 200,000 hectares of forests. This will result in rampant habitat destruction, and increase in road kills and deaths of animal that fall into irrigation canals, which account for the highest number of wildlife fatalities. New roads have also brought haphazard urbanisation and pollution: a growing number of ungulates and carnivores have been found to have died after ingesting plastic or chemicals.

One of the biggest sources of habitat destruction will be the much talked about Nijgad airport near Parsa National Park, which will decimate one of the last remaining hardwood forests in the eastern Tarai, removing a major migratory corridor for wild elephants.

"The government has always prioritised infrastructure, which while essential for development, is a major threat to conservation," says Bishnu Prasad Shrestha of the Department of National Parks and

Protecting the last home of the

The habitat of this unique to Nepal bird and other rare species is threatened by a new road



Carol Inskipp and
Rupendra Karmacharya
in Chitwan

The ruined 250-year-old Gorkhali fortress of Upardang Gadi is located on the northern rim of Chitwan Valley. But that is not the only reason these forested mountains are special: this is also home to the Spiny Babbler, the rare bird found only in Nepal (*left*).

Bird Life International and Bird Conservation Nepal have concluded that the Gadi-Siraichuli Forest is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) of international value. There are only 37 other IBAs in Nepal, and this is one of the few not located within a protected area.

But now the forest is threatened by the construction of a new road that will be a short cut from Mathillo Kaule to Gadi (*map*). The alignment is along the steep forested slope, and locals are worried that it will destroy trees, disrupt water sources and threaten landslides. They





ALL PHOTOS: WWF NEPAL

Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC). “Our preoccupation therefore is with mitigation measures on the existing roads and finding out ways to make new infrastructure safer for wildlife. If we do not act now, it will be too late. Our tourism industry and economy depend on our conservation efforts.” DNPWC and WWF Nepal organised a regional workshop this month in Kathmandu to find ways to promote sustainable green infrastructure. Some of the key



ROADS AND ANIMAL KINGDOMS:
(Clockwise from left) Many wild animals fall into the Babai Irrigation Canal that crosses Banke National Park parallel to the highway and a national transmission line. A rhino wallows in a jungle pond in Bardiya National Park, where wild elephants regularly cross the E-W Highway. The Sikta Irrigation Canal has several overpasses for wild animals.

recommendations include the study of wildlife movement before mapping the alignment of linear infrastructure, like roads, railways, canals and transmission lines. The good news is that planners at the Department of Roads think the country does not need too many more roads, the existing strategic highways and feeder roads need to be upgraded. There have been initiatives like installing CCTV cameras to monitor vehicles, enforcing time cards on highways

that traverse national parks, as well as building over and under-passes so wildlife can cross highways, irrigation canals or train tracks. DNPWC is now planning five canopy bridges for arboreal species in Banke, and contractors have agreed to build new underpasses while widening the Daune-Narayangad section of the East-West Highway. The route for the proposed E-W Electric Railway that would have cut through Chitwan National Park has been changed after protests from activists. But these isolated cases will not be sufficient to minimise the nationwide threat to nature reserves

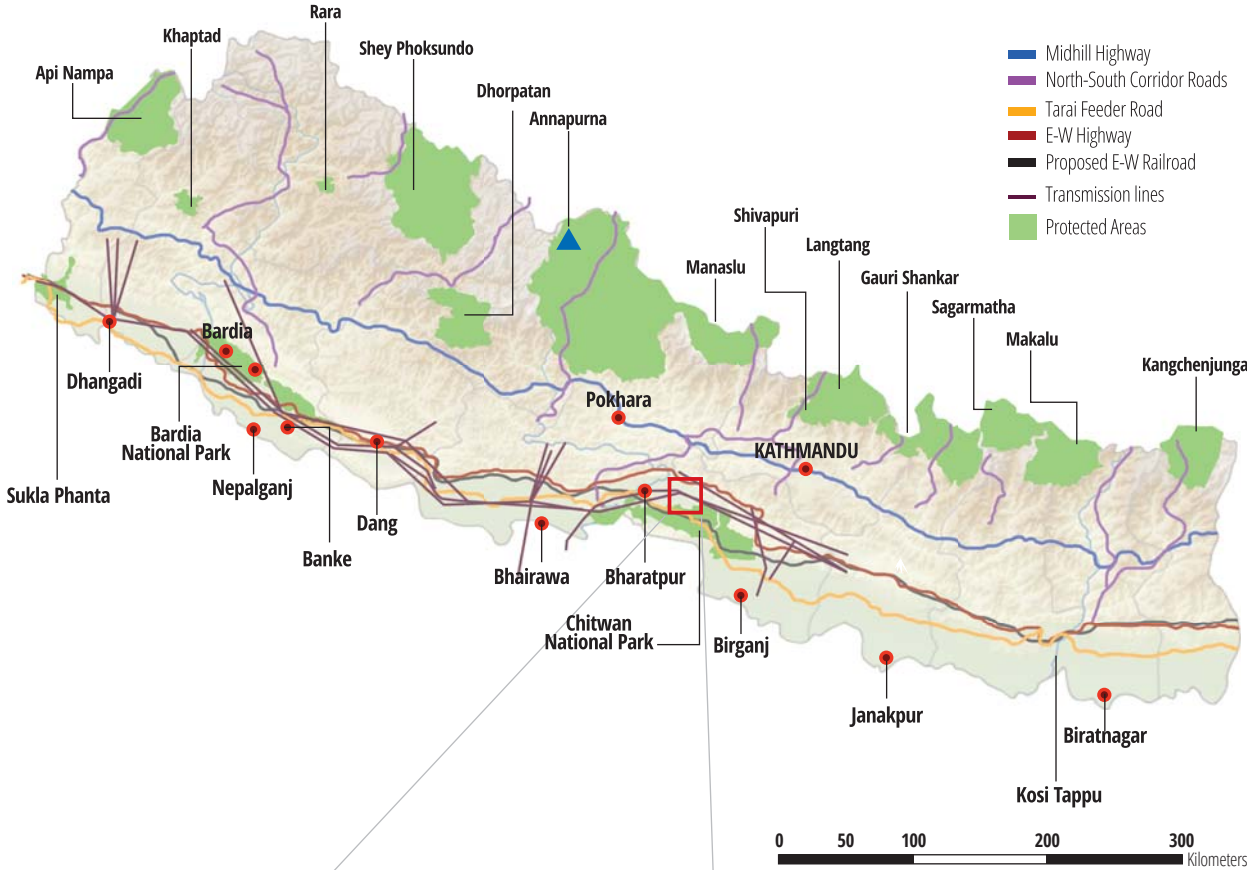


from infrastructure in the long run. Experts say wildlife friendly infrastructure based on biodiversity assessment and species movement is a must. Nabin Gopal Baidhya of the non-government Wildlife Conservation Nepal thinks there may be too much emphasis on the impact of roads on national parks. He says: “We have to go beyond the protected areas and study the condition of forests outside parks. How can villages and community forests work with road contractors to protect trees? Ultimately we have to find a way for humans and nature to safely co-exist.”

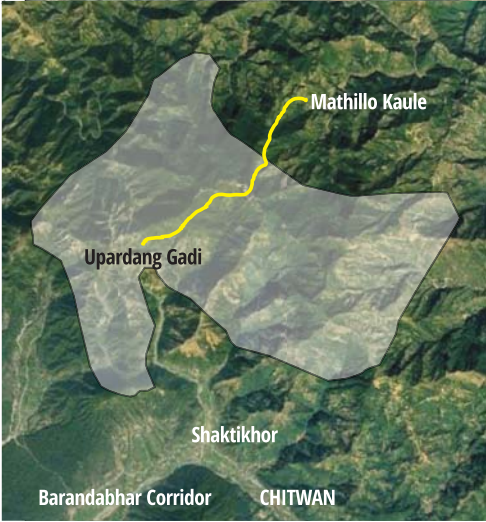


Go online to watch video on how economic growth can go hand in hand with ecological protection. Building infrastructure need not mean destruction of nature; there are proven models for the two to co-exist. nepalitimes.com

Nature and Infrastructure



Gadi-Siraichuli Forest



scarlet and brown bird that was thought to have become extinct in Nepal until it was re-sighted in 2016 after 178 years, by watchers from the Bird Education Society and the Nepalese Ornithological Union. Eight of these birds were found at 1,600m on Chisapanitar, close to the planned route of the road. The Red-faced Liocichla has not been found elsewhere in the country, and is listed as critically endangered in the national red list of the birds of Nepal. Twenty other threatened bird species have been sighted regularly in the forest, including the Little Spiderhunter (*Arachnothera longirostra*) which is dependent on wild bananas, and the Red-headed Trogon (*Harpactesery throcephalus*) a beautiful red bird that needs a habitat of trees with a thick growth of climbers and creepers.

Until recently, the indigenous Chepang people followed a nomadic lifestyle, living off the rich forests as hunter gatherers. As other ethnic groups migrated here, the Chepang started to take up a more settled life based on subsistence agriculture. But their terraces on the steep slopes do not produce enough food, and the Chepang still depend on wild food from the forest. The new road will run through the prime forest area for wildlife and destroy their homes, as well as disturb the terrace farms. There is an alternative route for the road from Mathillo Kaule to Gadi via Mayatar. It is a bit longer but would protect the forest and the village water supply. The subtropical broadleaf forests of the Gadhi-Siraichuli IBA are of high quality and are now a rare and declining habitat in Nepal. They support great biodiversity and are an invaluable resource to local Chepang communities. The forest lies at the northern end of the Barandabhar Corridor that links Chitwan National Park to the Mahabharat forests, and is important for the north-south movement of animals in the Chitwan-Annapurna Linkage (CHAL) and Terai Arc Landscape (TAL). Says conservationist Hem Sagar Baral: “Peoples’ livelihoods, including those of the Chepang, depend on the watershed and forests of this area. Development impacting wildlife here should not be tolerated as we have no other places like this one. What is left must be preserved in its full integrity.”

Carol Inskipp is a UK conservationist who has been coming to Nepal since 1977. Rupendra Karmacharya runs a lodge in Gadi village and works to preserve the local culture and biodiversity of the area.

Spiny Babbler



PHOTOS: CAROL INSKIPP

have been protesting at Ichyakamana Rural Municipality to stop the road being built on this route. Located at 1,150m, the Chepang village of Gadi lies at the foot of this forested slope that features a wide variety of shrubs, subtropical mixed broadleaf trees and wildlife. In fact, this is the largest and richest forest of this type remaining in Nepal, with 15 species of mammals, including the endangered Black Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa bicolor*). The Spiny Babbler (*Turdoides nipalensis*) lives on terraces built by the Chepang people at the edge of the forest. The Gadi-Siraichuli Forest has one of the highest populations of this rare endemic bird in the country. “The road will destroy the forest on the slope that is the main source of spring water for our villages. How can we live here without water?” asks Ganesh Thapa Magar, a farmer. Another Gadi villager, Suk Bahadur Chepang, agrees: “My home is just below the forested hill where the new road is planned. Landslides in the monsoon will make it too dangerous to live there anymore.” Besides these threats, the road will also put the 320 bird and 56 butterfly species found here at risk. Members of the Sauraha-based Bird Education Society have been visiting the area since the 1990s, and say it is a treasure trove for nature. Bird species also include the Red-faced Liocichla (*Liocichla phoenicea*) a beautiful

EVENTS

MUSIC

DINING

GETAWAY



Human Rights Film Festival

The seventh edition of the Nepal Human Rights International Film Festival (NHIFF) will screen over 80 films made globally about human rights issues. Screenings will be followed by discussions. The festival is organised by Nepal Human Rights Film Centre. 5-7 April, 3-6pm, Russian Centre of Science and Culture, Kamal Pokhari, (01) 4786486 (organisers)

Seduction of Print Making

Exhibition of pieces created in a print making workshop by the Print Making Nepal Artist's Collective. Works of over 20 print making artists will be showcased. Until 24 April, 11am-5pm (Weekdays), 12-5pm (Saturdays), Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, (01) 4218048, 4433930

Changes In Panauti

Alliance Française brings this photo exhibition about the evolution of the city of Panauti as part of celebrating 70 years of diplomatic relations between France and Nepal. 5 April-6 May (Except Saturdays and Sundays), 9am-5pm, Alliance Française, Pulchok, (01)5009221, 9808418422



Special Screenings

Amar Kanwar is well known for his films and multi-media works which explore the politics of power, violence and justice. Photo Kathmandu and Film Southasia bring a special screening of his works this weekend. 5 April, 1:30-7pm, 6 April, 5-7pm, 7 April, 5-6:15pm, Chhaya Centre, Thamel, (01) 5543501 (organisers)

Trash To Treasure

This workshop by Karkhana will help you upcycle e-waste. Students will work with Karkhana teachers and experts to learn how to recognise useful parts in electronic waste and use them to create a useful product. Register online. 10-15 April, 10am-3pm, for ages 11-15, Rs10,000, Karkhana Innovator's Club, Gyaneswor, 9802071621



Readers' Workshops

An independent, community driven workshop to build strategies for better reading. The topic this week is 'Identifying various genres and strategy for reading'. Every Saturday, 11am-5pm, Rotary AWON Library, Thapathali, (01) 4100540

Climbing Everest

Billi Bierling is an accomplished mountaineer who climbed five peaks above 8000m, including Everest. Join Bierling for the behind-the-scenes of scaling summits and fascinating mountaineering tales. 12 April, 6:30-8pm, HUB, Thamel, 9866273244



Maggie Doyme

CNN Hero Maggie Doyme will share her inspirational story about her work. Doyme co-founded the Kopila Valley Children's Home and School in Surkhet and received the CNN Hero Award in 2015. 10 April, 6:30-8pm, HUB, Thamel, 9866273244

Summer Pop Up Market

Shop for a variety of items including clothes, gift items, customised bedsheets, home decor, plants and more with exhibitors from Nepal and India. Enjoy some delicious food items and a fun day with family and friends. 5-6 April, 10am-6pm, Heritage Garden, Sanepa



KatJazz International Festival

An 18-member band from Germany and Switzerland, a classical orchestra from Spain, a classical piano duo from Germany and Mexico, and Harini, a classically trained Carnatic vocalist, are coming to Kathmandu this April. The classes and concerts by these artists are open to anyone. Interested candidates should register as soon as possible for workshops. 16-30 April, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel, (01) 5543554

Mazzika

Middle eastern music from Egypt combined with Nepali tunes. 6 April, 7-10pm, Electric Pagoda Bar, Thamel, (01) 4700123

Jazz Festival

Eight artists from Nepal, India and France will perform jazz music with guitar, violin, percussion and vocals. 5 April, 7 pm onwards, Los Escobar's, Gairidhara, 9851164380



Friday Night Music

Enjoy lively music with opening by The Aerials Nepal band from 7 pm, followed by Sabin Rai and The Pharoah at 10 pm. 5 April, 7pm onwards, Senate Club, J.P Road, (01) 5543554, 9868205185, 9860513069

Acoustic Night

Enjoy acoustic music by Rajesh Nepali and Prajwal Lama. 6 April, 8pm onwards, Shisha Lounge and Bar, Thamel Marg, (01) 4701104

OUR PICK



Opened in Kathmandu on 22 March

Two couples are desperate to go abroad and earn money. One divorces his wife and another willingly marries an older man, complete with a romantic photo-shoot, just to convince the authorities that they are a real couple. Meanwhile, what happens to the partners they left behind, only on paper? Watch to find out the predicament of thousands of Nepalis who leave the country every day. Directed by Apil Bisa, the movie stars Najir Husen, Shilpa Maskey, Bholaraj Sapkota and Sarita Giri.



Lhakpa's Chulo

Nepali dal bhat, Newari khaja, Swiss Rösti, Italian Risotto and Thai green curry. Lakpa's Chulo has a variety of cuisines to offer. The garlic chilli prawn at this cosy restaurant is to die for. Jhamsikhel, (01) 5542986

Buingal

A multi-cuisine restaurant and bar great for a casual get-together with relatives and friends. Vegetarian sekuwa is finger licking! Maitidevi, (01) 4421393

Hotel Kaze Darbar

Enjoy Japanese delicacies and more at this boutique hotel. Not to miss is their grilled pork in Miso paste. Kamalpokhari, (01) 4439303



Tangra Chinese Fest

The fest will highlight the Tangra Chinese specials at Bawarchi, with dishes that are fresh, skillfully designed, and delicious. Only a limited number of restaurants serve this cuisine, so the fest will be an interesting experience for guests. 7-16 April, 11am-10:30pm, Bawarchi, Baber Mahal Revisited, (01) 5526244

Arniko Room

Arniko Room's Quick Business Lunch is fast, delicious and reliable and caters to the busy individual who has little time to spare. 12-2pm, Sunday to Friday, Arniko Room, Hotel Annapurna, (01) 4221711



Jagatpur Lodge

Spend this New Year's eve under the stars. Enjoy live barbeque, pasta and the salad station as well as exciting activities included in the package like canoeing, jungle walk, Tharu costume photography and more. 12-14 April, Jagatpur, Chitwan, (01)4221711

Hotel Barahi

Enjoy a great view of Phewa Lake, cultural shows, or indulge in the scrumptious pastries from the German Bakery. Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)460617/463526



Mount Princess Hotel

The hotel offers magnificent views of the surrounding valley and mountains and is a peaceful retreat amidst nature for those wishing to escape the city's madness. You can book your stay at OYO 256 Mount Princess Hotel through the OYO app. Dhulikhel, (011) 490616

Hotel Annapurna View

The new boutique hotel situated at 1,600m in Sarangkot offers everything: sunrise, the Annapurnas, a view of Phewa Lake, serenity, and luxurious accommodation. Sarangkot, Pokhara, (01) 443566

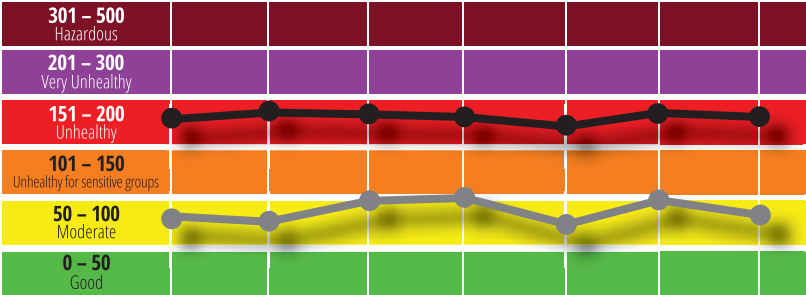


Hotel Baha

This traditionally built hotel is located in the heart of Bhaktapur and is surrounded by temples. Explore the cultural heritage of Bhaktapur while enjoying the peaceful ambience of the hotel. Bhaktapur, (01)6616810

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 29 March - 4 April



	FRIDAY March 29	SATURDAY March 30	SUNDAY March 31	MONDAY April 1	TUESDAY April 2	WEDNESDAY April 3	THURSDAY April 4
PM2.5							
Ozone							

The good news is that this week's daily average for Air Quality Index in Kathmandu did not reach the purple "Very Unhealthy" band. The bad news is that it stayed persistently in the "Unhealthy" red zone every day of the week. In fact, some days at rush hour the AQI did go into purple. Street-side dust is still a problem, although it seems to have gone down somewhat with the rain this week, but toxic emissions from vehicles are still a major health hazard. Ozone has been chronically bad despite the rains. <https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>

शिक्षालाई सीपसँग, सीपलाई उत्पादनसँग, उत्पादनलाई बजार तथा वजारलाई रोजगारीको अवसर र आर्थिक विकाससँग जोड्ने अभिप्रायले नेपाल सरकारद्वारा गठित कार्यदलले मानव संसाधनको आकलन तथा प्रक्षेपण कार्य गरिरहेको सन्दर्भमा नेपाल सरकार शिक्षा, विज्ञान तथा प्रविधि मन्त्रालय र सङ्घीय मामिला तथा सामान्य प्रशासन मन्त्रालयको वेबसाइट मार्फत वा www.hrp.gov.np मा रहेको online तथा सुझाव संकलन फारम यथाशीघ्र भरिदिई सहयोग गरिदिनुहुन अनुरोध गरिन्छ ।

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Finnish paper exposé on Nepali restaurants

Helsingin Sanomat investigates trafficking and tax evasion by Nepali restaurants in Finland

Namrata Sharma

A *Helsingin Sanomat* follow-up published on 30 March of a human trafficking ring operated by some Nepali restaurant owners in Helsinki has created an uproar in Finland, recently named the happiest country in the world. The investigative story by Pavvo Tittinen builds on an expose published in this newspaper in January in which a Nepali cook, who uses the pseudonym Maila, mustered up the courage to report injustices he faced to Finnish Police.

Maila is named Suman in the *Helsingin Sanomat* story and still wants his real identity concealed because of threats he received after the *Nepali Times* story came out. Finland's largest-circulation newspaper reveals just how widespread the exploitation of Nepalis by Nepali employers is in Finland.



Times FOLLOW UP

The story in this paper earlier this year named four Nepalis (Basanta Adhikari, Purna Adhikari, Srijana Ghimire and Ava Pokhrel) who had been found guilty by the North Sawo District Court in Finland and fined € 227,199. The main employer was sent to prison for one year and eight months and another for six months. They also had to compensate Maila, as well as workers Kancha and Saila, with back pay.

Helsingin Sanomat has now gone deeper into the story and exposed how a family of Nepali restaurant owners had established a closely-knit circle of employers who brought desperate Nepalis to Finland, and violated Finnish labour laws by under-paying them.

After the *Nepali Times* story was published in January, Maila was threatened and this journalist was cautioned by Nepalis in Finland that the restaurant owners named in the story were angry and could retaliate. In fact, this reporter had refrained from naming Devi Sharma and Hemraj Sharma, whom cooks and waiters said were culprits.

A Nepali woman who was taken to Finland to work as a maid and forced to work 24 hours a day in a house and in restaurants without proper salary complained to Finnish Police of physical and sexual abuse. Last year she asked this reporter not to mention her case since it was *sub judice*.

In its investigation published this week, *Helsingin Sanomat* writes that after an investigation lasting two years, Helsinki Police suspect the couple, Devi and Manju Sharma, of trafficking the Nepali worker. Both are from Gulmi, and were pioneers in setting up a Nepali restaurant, of which there are now



more than 70 across Finland. Most of these are owned by a handful of Nepalis settled there, mainly from Gulmi.

The first Nepali restaurant, Himalaya, was established in Helsinki in 1993 by Devi Sharma. He and his wife Manju now own Himalaya, Lali Gurans, Gurkha and Yeti restaurants, and Hemraj Sharma runs Mount Everest restaurant. Maila filed a case against Purna Adhikari of another restaurant, Mount Sherpa.

During a visit to Helsinki in 2018, most cooks and waiters complained of exploitation, threats and slave-like working conditions, but were fearful about giving their names because the restaurant owners were said to be powerful in the community and could have them fired, or even deported. Despite their meagre salaries, the workers said they needed their jobs to pay back loans and send money home to their families. There have been cases of cooks and waiters who suffered depression, and have even attempted suicide.

Helsingin Sanomat reports that 260 Nepalis have gone to Finland over the last seven years to work as cooks in Nepali restaurants, where many of them have been exploited. The paper says that besides flouting Finland's labour laws, some Nepali restaurateurs are also involved in money laundering and tax evasion.

Hemraj Sharma told this reporter during a visit to his Mount Everest restaurant in Helsinki in 2018 that Nepalis were doing well in Finland, and denied that he was involved in anything illegal. However, the *Helsingin Sanomat* quotes Devi Sharma's former maid as telling police that he under-reported earnings, evaded tax and stashed cash in the house, sending it regularly with Nepalis travelling to Kathmandu.

Juha Rekola, the International Ombudsman of the Union of Journalists in Finland, who has frequently visited Nepal to train journalists, says he has often dined at the Nepali restaurants mentioned in the *Helsingin*



Sanomat report but never saw signs of trafficking or tax evasion.

Said Rekola: "When I first read the piece in *Nepali Times* in January I thought that it was good that the problem had been uncovered and brought to court. But when *Helsingin Sanomat* exposed just how widespread it was, I thought, 'Oh no, it cannot be this bad, not in Finland'. It always hits you worse when you see it in your own language and morning paper."

Rekola considers himself a well-wisher of Nepal, and says the blame has to be shared with Finns

who ignore warnings that a cheap meal is a sign of a grey economy.

"Nepali lunches are relatively cheap compared to the quality and size, but people still go there to eat trusting that it is ok," Rekola adds. "Our government has not put enough safeguards in place, and tax evasion is easy. Tightened immigration laws also put many people in a vulnerable position to such blackmail."

As for Maila, he feels vindicated after Finland's most prestigious newspaper has printed the plight of workers like him. "The risk I took by reporting this case to the police has yielded results, and this will help me and other like me." Yet Maila still has not received the compensation that the court ordered the restaurant owners to give him.

The *Helsingin Sanomat* report has tarnished the image of Nepal, Nepalis and Nepali restaurants in Finland, and many Finns are said to be in a dilemma about whether to eat in Nepali-owned restaurants. On one hand they want to help Nepalis and do not want law-abiding Nepalis to suffer, and on the other they do not want to support traffickers.

The Non-Resident Nepali Association of Finland has been accused of protecting powerful restaurant owners, and not helping the exploited workers. In response, the association's national coordination council released a statement saying it had not protected anyone from wrongdoing.

Asked what is next, Rekola told *Nepali Times*: "I just hope the genuine Nepali restaurants do not suffer, and the customers return. There should also be closer contact between restaurant owners and their Finnish customers who love Nepali and Nepali food." 🇳🇵



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PRAKRITI KANDEL

Mithila art with a message

Artist Ranju Yadav grew up in a village of Rajbiraj of Saptari, and learned Mithila art from her mother, grandmother and aunts, who painted the walls and floors of their traditional mud houses. In her first solo exhibition,

Colours of Change, Yadav transfers her heritage from walls to paper, creating a collection which represents Mithila art pieces that are a commentary on society.

Yadav stays true to the techniques of Mithila art: her

human characters face sideways, have elongated almond eyes, and all wear traditional clothing — women in saris and men in kurtas. The paintings feature intricate borders, as well as animals and birds. “Peacock, fish, lotus, elephants, and the detailed borders are defining elements of Mithila art,” explains Yadav, who takes pains to represent the finest details. The borders and geometries have a consistency that soothes the viewer.

Yadav also presents a balanced variety in patterns that draws the viewer into the diverse intricacies of the painting. Her pieces are a burst of colour and the reds, greens, blues and yellows all combine harmoniously to convey the vibrancy of Mithila art.

But the artist is also conveying a message: women’s empowerment is a prominent theme. In *Education is Power*, Yadav has a woman at the centre, reading, and four sections fan out, each showing a woman at other tasks: flying a plane, typing on a laptop, peering through a telescope, and giving a speech. Via education, women can do anything, is the message. What makes this painting even more powerful is that the women are in traditional Mithila attire: they are empowered but simultaneously carrying on their traditions.

In *Equality*, Yadav shows a couple doing household work together, indicating what equality should look like. In another, Yadav shows a woman fighting a bull, one of many symbols of women’s inner strength. While her art highlights the problem, Yadav says her objective is to also provide solutions and her paintings successfully convey that.

Mokh Chitra and *Aripan* are tributes to her heritage, featuring intricate patterns. In *The World of Fish*, Yadav paints six fish with detailed work in design and colour, while in *Celebration of Beauty*, magnificent peacocks interact with women. *Disaster Tourism* is Yadav’s sarcastic portrayal of the government’s inability to efficiently handle citizens suffering in disaster, and is poignantly timely with this week’s tornado destruction in Bara.

Through her art, Yadav aims to raise awareness about issues of injustice. She says: “There are many themes I have yet to tackle, like the rape cases earlier this year. I hope to paint them all.”

Prakriti Kandel

Colours of Change
Until 5 April, 11am-5pm
Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal
ranju.painting@gmail.com



NEPALI TIMES

VISA RUN: Department of Immigration Director Ishwor Raj Paudel hands over first five-year, multiple-entry tourist visas to three American citizens in Kathmandu on Monday, establishing partial visa reciprocity with the United States.



BRITISH EMBASSY

ENDURANCE: Sportspeople Dame Katherine Grainger, Mira Rai and Lizzie Hawker meet at the British Embassy, in the presence of ambassador Richard Morris, to discuss sports and create change.



MOFA

NO TO NUKES: Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Gyawali welcomes the delegation of international Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War on Sunday, a Nobel Peace Prize winning organisation.



RSS

BLOOD RELATIONS: Youth in Bharatpur donate blood as the tornado-hit districts Bara and Parsa face scarcity of blood for the treatment of those injured in the disaster.



U S EMBASSY

MUCKRAKERS: Journalists take part in an investigative journalism training by the US Embassy this week in Pokhara.



Admissions Open for A Level

Rato Bangala School, a registered centre for Cambridge Assessment International Examinations in Nepal, is seeking keen students for its GCE A Level (Advanced Level) programme. Candidates will be selected through a competitive qualifying entrance examination.

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E-mail: aleveladmissions@ratobangala.edu.np

Unprecedented, but not unforeseen

Kiran Nepal
in Bara

It is a tragic irony that many who had invested in stronger houses perished in Bara on Sunday night. But poorer neighbours living in mud and thatch huts nearby survived.

The government says 1,895 huts and buildings went down in the storm, 955 structures were partially damaged and 940 collapsed completely -- homes, brick kilns, health posts and mosques. Of the 27 people killed, four were from India.

It was the first major disaster to hit Nepal post-local elections in 2017, and the presence of elected Municipality and Ward officials was reflected in the immediate rescue operation. Rapid response teams under local disaster management committees quickly mobilised Police and Nepal Army personnel which helped in timely rescue. However, the lack of proper equipment, and medical services were apparent.

The understaffed Kalaiya Hospital in Bara operated throughout the Sunday as more and more injured were rushed in. Most suffered from hypothermia and fractures. Of the 354 patients, two spinally injured were referred to Kathmandu and eight patients with head injury went to Birganj.

“We tried our best to provide immediate rescue and supplied electricity to the hospital despite a power cut,” said Bara CDO Rajesh Paudel. The lack of coordination between local, provincial and federal governments in information gathering had adverse effect on relief distribution. There were plenty of relief materials to go around but most essential items like tents, tarpaulins and medicines were in short supply. VIP visits did not help the situation and only added to gawkers from surrounding areas.

The tornado was not the first of its kind in Nepal. In fact, literature and folklore speak of twisters ravaging Tarai villages. But because these are localised disasters, they did not make it to the news.

The Bara-Parsa disaster should be taken as an opportunity to invest on weather forecasting equipment and training for climate modelers. Nepal needs customised weather modeling for its conditions, experts say.

We have learned some lessons from previous disasters and the presence of local government after 20 years helped search and rescue operations, but the Sunday’s tornado still reflects the dire need of disaster preparedness. 🇳🇵



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Join our reporter at Ground Zero in Bara, and listen to the frightening tales of survivors. Many had built what they thought were stronger houses from money saved from working overseas. But these structures crumbled like matchsticks in the tornado.

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Disastrous management

As the Bara tornado showed, vulnerability to calamities increases with the lack of preparedness

Sewa Bhattarai

The tornado that killed dozens of people on the night of 31 March highlighted Nepal’s vulnerability to disasters. It proved that Nepal has to be prepared not just for the deadly calamities we know about like earthquakes, floods and landslides, but also rare ones like tornadoes.

Nepal is a disaster-prone country, Kathmandu is number one among the top ten cities in the world most vulnerable to a catastrophic earthquake. The topography, high population density, vigorous monsoons, and underdevelopment make Nepal vulnerable to multiple disasters. All these dangers are exacerbated and can combine due to climate change – for example the next megaquake could cause glacial lakes swollen by global warming to burst simultaneously and unleash catastrophic floods downstream.

Nepal was preparing to be prepared for earthquakes, when 25 April 2015 happened. The National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) with its seismic resistant building had just been set up inside Singha Darbar, with the task of being a communication hub and relief coordination centre after a disaster. The Centre’s website now



lists real-time information of water levels in rivers, information that is vital during the monsoon. It is now setting up a comprehensive Disaster Information Management System (DIMS) for the 49 types of potential natural calamities that Nepal faces.

“Ideally, this system can analyse each disaster in terms of its nature, vulnerability, and exposure,” explains Prabin Khatiwada, founder of Youth Innovation Lab that is building the portal. “It will also have vital information about nearby resources, local capacities, availability of hospitals, which will be crucial in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.”

A beta version of the system is expected to be ready in mid-April, but detection and prediction of disasters will still be difficult. Though the river water level data can provide early warning of potential floods, and the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology uses social media to disseminate its forecasts of extreme weather events, there are still problems with accuracy and urgency. For example, a tornado of the type that devastated villages in Bara and Parsa this week is not even in the list of 49 potential disasters that Nepal should be prepared for.

“A tornado that occurred in such a short time over such a small area would have been difficult to predict anywhere in the world even with the most sophisticated equipment,” says Sushil Kumar Bhandari at the NEOC. “Detecting forest fires is also a problem because we do not have our own satellites, and real-time images are



KIRAN NEPAL

hard to source.”

A new Doppler weather radar has been installed in Surkhet and two more are planned, but while they can detect supercells and forecast cloudbursts, they would still not be able to accurately predict when and where a tornado would touch down. Briefing *Nepali Times* on Tuesday, the Director General of the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) Saraju K Vaidya admitted: “Yes, all signs in Bara point to it being a rare tornado, but with climate change these may become more frequent, and we have to be prepared by upgrading forecasting and computer modelling capacity.”

The Bara experience has also shown that Nepal is not prepared for the immediate aftermath of

disasters either. Manish Jha of Facts Research & Analytics who was involved in the emergency response this week says the priorities on the ground do not necessarily match the response.

Says Jha: “Local officials informed us that there were four immediate priorities: nutritious food, shelter, medical treatment, and children’s safety. But in the spontaneous scramble to rush help, many unnecessary items landed up at the site. People are eating instant noodles and biscuits, spending nights in the open, and children have nowhere to go, adding to their guardians’ responsibilities.”

The Bara tornado was the first major calamity to strike Nepal after federalism, and it has become a test case on how political devolution

can indeed be more prompt and responsive after a disaster strikes. Province 2 officials had mobilised local rescue at Ground Zero almost immediately, Chief Minister Lalbabu Raut relocated to Birganj to coordinate relief. Province 3 donated Rs10 million to Province 2.

However, locals were critical of VIPs rushing south in helicopters from Kathmandu with token relief and competing to upload selfies of handovers. There is a daily traffic jam on the Patlaiya-Birganj road because of the number of cars from all over the country bringing relief material to the worst-affected villages, already crowded with gawkers. Such activities have deprived local governments of the opportunity to develop their own response capacity, and raised



Types of disasters currently monitored by the National Emergency Operations Centre:

■ Sinkhole	■ <i>Tuin chudera</i>
■ Animal terror	■ Bridge collapse
■ Snakebite	■ Air crash
■ Flash flood	■ Avalanche
■ Leak	■ Cold wave
■ Sedimentation	■ Boat capsizing
■ Accident	■ High altitude
■ Biological	■ Heavy rainfall
■ Frost	■ Windstorm
■ Pollution	■ Hailstorm
■ Famine	■ Epidemic
■ Panic	■ Storm
■ Explosion	■ Bus accident
■ Drought	■ Lightning
■ Strong wind	■ Thunderbolt
■ Forest fire	■ Fire
■ Snowstorm	■ Landslide
■ Heat wave	■ Flood
■ Plague	■ Earthquake
■ Hail storm	■ Other
■ Structure collapse	

concerns of mismanagement of funds and resources.

Token relief measures take the focus away from long-term disaster management planning, necessary in a country going through rapid infrastructure development. Disasters may be natural, but much of its fatal impact is manmade.

For example, forests reduce the speed and impact of violent storms, boulder mining on rivers increases the chances of destructive

in Nepal



RSS

floods, poor construction methods make houses prone to collapse, and population density increases the numbers of people at risk. For example, Province 2 with 7% of Nepal’s land has 20% of its population.

“The link between land use policy and disaster management is not always obvious, but it needs to be integrated right from the planning phase,” says Santosh Gyawali, a USAID expert on disaster management. “For example, building roads has an effect downstream, it makes floods worse. We need long term vision and regulation of land use for a comprehensive disaster management plan.”

The experiences of other South Asian countries have shown that disasters may not be avoidable, but their impact can be reduced with planning and preparedness. With a history of violent typhoons, Bangladesh and the Indian state of Odisha have invested in shelters, reducing the death toll from cyclones by more than 90%.

Four years after the earthquake, Nepal appears not to have learnt any

Disaster Management Act

The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Act was passed in September 2017, replacing the Natural Calamity Relief Act of 1982. The new Act provides for a National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council to oversee the management of all kinds of disasters. In the absence of such an Act, the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) was formed in 2015 to oversee only the aftermath of that year’s earthquakes. However, more than one year after the DRRM Act was passed, the response to disasters like the recent tornado is still scattered, since the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council still does not exist.

“The Act provides for a multi-tier institution with a federal body and branches at the province, district, and local levels. It also provides for disaster management funds at every level. The sole authority for managing disasters lies with the local level, but higher levels can intervene if the local level does not have enough resources to manage it,” says Banshi Acharya, head of the Disaster Study and Research Section at the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The DRRM Act has a comprehensive approach to disaster, in that it addresses not just rescue and relief but also recovery and reconstruction. It also provides for risk reduction, preparedness, management, and mainstreaming of the DRRM in development. In other words, disaster management would not be limited to responding to disasters, but would include year-round actions to prevent them. All of these were missing in the Natural Calamity Relief Act.

As such, the Act provides opportunities for new ways to handle disasters in a federal system. “Local level authorities often have the best understanding of the needs on the ground, but they are also very quickly overwhelmed. A federal disaster management system needs to maximize local level knowledge while providing flexible layers of support and resources from higher levels of government,” says Santosh Gyawali, Senior Development Program Specialist at the Disaster Risk Reduction Reconstruction and Resilience Office of USAID Nepal.

lessons. Houses that ignore zoning and seismic guidelines have started coming up in Kathmandu and most urban areas. NEOC has identified only 83 remaining open spaces in Kathmandu safe for evacuation in a future earthquake.

Four years on, experts say the focus for earthquake preparedness should now shift nationwide and not just be limited to the 14 districts around Kathmandu affected in 2015. Public buildings need to be retrofitted, homes must require seismic resistant designs, there has to be pre-positioned digging equipment and shelter material in open spaces, and there has to be local response strategies.

“Some in the earthquake-hit areas in 2015 are building seismic-resistant structures, but the same cannot be said of the rest of Nepal,” says Jhappar Singh Biswokarma of the National Reconstruction Authority. “There has been no study to determine how seriously the rest of Nepal will be affected by another earthquake, but the risk factor is very high. The whole country has to be better prepared.”







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In a Feral Republic

Now that Nepal has turned from an Animal Kingdom into a Feral Republic, we need to be more politically correct and inclusive in addressing our feathered, four-legged and furry friends in a more polite and respectful way.

On World Wildlife Week we humans have to redress the historic wrongs we have perpetrated against fellow creatures great and small, including waging genocide, driving them to extinction, and incinerating their body parts at BBQ parties.

Ever since our cave-dwelling quadruped ancestors decided that their co-animals were tasty, we have decapitated them, amputated their limbs and sold them as McNuggets and Drumsticks. Man has also treated animals in a derogatory way in everyday language by attaching negative attributes to them.

In referring to the current political scenario as a ‘snake pit’ think of what an insult it is to snakes. By describing the Melamchi Tunnel dig as moving at a ‘snail’s pace’ we belittle the velocity of gastropod locomotion. We show a singular lack of sensitivity to the feelings of our equine friends when we wolf down *hors d’oeuvres* (pronounced: ‘horse devours’).

But as animals ourselves, and a species that has reached the pinnacle of evolution and civilisation, we have to learn to be less anthropocentric, and more sympathetic when referring to fellow animules in daily conversation. As we can

see from recent headlines in the papers, animals are retaliating by ‘Wreaking Havoc in Dhanusha’ and ‘Going on a Rampage in Jhapa’. In Chitwan, tigers have turned into person-eaters.

It is time to call for a ceasefire, and to make first amends we must replace speciest language with more politically correct formulations:

WRONG: The leader of the coalition partner is a son-of-a-bitch.
CORRECT: Most politicians in Nepal are proud to be scions of female dogs.

WRONG: You cannot teach an old dog new tricks.
CORRECT: Kathmandu’s canines yowled in celebration when they were told that the country was going to the dogs again.

WRONG: The only fly in the oinkment was that the Minister made a fool of himself at the Investment Summit.
CORRECT: At the Cocktail Reception she mustered the courage to inform the Minister that his fly was open.

WRONG: The Prime Minister has kept a lion’s share of the ministerial portfolios.
CORRECT: The PM is the Lion King incarnate of Singha Darbar.

WRONG: Reporters at the press conference behaved like vultures tearing into the carcass of a dead water buffalo.
CORRECT: Famished raptors nibbled at the mortal remains of a deceased gnu like a gang of journalists ambushing government officials.

WRONG: It is quite acceptable in politics to be a sycophant and lick ass.
CORRECT: The Ass has been a visionary statesman for donkey’s years.



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