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# Borderline disorder

When Nepal signed the Sugauli Treaty with British India in 1816, parts of the demarcated border followed the courses of rivers. Since then, the sediment-heavy rivers flowing down from the mountains have changed course many times. The Kosi itself now flows 120km west of where it was in Bihar when the treaty was signed two centuries ago.

Since 1994, India and Nepal have decided to follow the Fixed Boundary Doctrine, meaning the border line does not change even if the river alters course. Though

survey teams from the two sides are supposed to work together to keep track of the border, it is a difficult task during the monsoon flood season.

This year has been no different. Many pillars along the 1,880km Indo-Nepal border have either been washed away or are submerged. Of the 8,554 border pillars, 2,105 are actually located within rivers, and more are along floodplains that are submerged in the monsoon. Among them, 452 pillars have either been removed or lost – half of them because of floods.

The big flood of 13 July washed

away many of the remaining pillars. Among them were four that were reinstalled just last year in Bijaynagar of Kapilvastu district (one of them, pictured below).

Survey Department staff themselves admit that the design of pillars located on riverbeds must be changed from cement to steel structures bolted to concrete foundations to withstand floods.

Nepal has deployed 15,000 Armed Police along the Indian border, with outposts every 20-30 km. These bases are supposed to keep track of the state of the pillars and keep the Home Ministry

updated on their condition.

However, experts say that increased sedimentation in Tarai streams due to deforestation and quarrying in the Chure Range, as well as poorly-designed roads and embankments, will make floods worse in coming years.

“The solution is for India and Nepal to work jointly not just to repair border pillars, but also to stop blaming each other for floods every monsoon and forget about it after the rains,” Birganj-based writer Chandra Kishore says. “Nationalism is not going to prevent future disasters.”

Meanwhile, all along the India-Nepal border this rainy season the state of the border pillars are a stark reminder of the inability of the two countries to work together to reduce their mutual risk from floods.

**Ramu Sapkota**  
with **Gopal Bhandari** in Kapilvastu



buzz

Girl  
Gurkhas

PAGE 8-9



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# EDIFICE COMPLEX

This monsoon, precipitation has not been particularly heavy over Nepal. In fact, total rainfall so far has been below the seasonal average in most places. Yet, floods have ravaged the Central Tarai, landslides and rockfalls have blocked most major highways, bridges have been wrecked, nearly 100 people have been killed, and hundreds of thousands of people forced to live in higher ground.

Floods may be natural, but the destruction they cause is manmade. Inundation is mostly the result of flood control levees themselves trapping water, embankments blocking drainage paths, and built-up floodplains constricting the flow of rivers. The good news is that Nepal's decision-makers seem to have belatedly understood this cause-effect. The bad news is: they are doing absolutely nothing about it.

In fact, instead of arresting the building spree, all three levels of government allow riverbeds to be gouged out for sand and boulders, increasing the velocity of the water. Elected local leaders we thought would be more accountable turned out to be middlemen hurriedly awarding contracts to themselves a few days before the end of the fiscal year so their excavators could claw away fragile slopes to build ruinous roads no one needs. Most of these have been already washed away in the past two weeks, causing damage to terrace farms and endangering settlements.

If all this was not bad enough, megalomaniacs in federal, provincial and local governments are wasting hard-earned tax payer's money erecting utterly useless view towers on any mountain top they can find. Their slogan 'One Hill Station, One View Tower' would be hilarious if it was not such a tragic waste of money.

Limchubung Municipality in Udaypur district, with a population of just 12,000, is building a view tower costing Rs10 million for no other reason than to spend the cash. Province 2 has allotted Rs10 million to build a view tower in Sarlahi, where thousands of people are still living on roof terraces because of submergence. And the Far-Western Province is building a tower in Kailali district because everyone else is doing it.

But Province 3 is way ahead of the others, earmarking Rs180 million to build towers on 12 mountain tops. Not to be outdone, Province 1 has plans to erect view towers costing Rs80 million along mountain

tops in Ilam. The example has been set by Kathmandu itself, which five years ago decided to turn the old bus park in Tundikhel into a 27-floor 'view tower-cum-business complex'. The bus terminal was relocated, but construction of the Rs5 billion tower never got off the ground. The entire project appears to have been kickback driven, and an elaborate ruse by tycoons in collusion with corrupt officials to usurp the prime real estate.

Nepal's mountains are already the highest in the world. The view from their summits is naturally stunning. Adding another 20m to the view does not make any sense. Instead, why not build proper facilities, public toilets, comfortable guest houses, and a waste-disposal system on these mountain tops?

Biratnagar Municipality got Province 2 Federal Minister Lalbabu Pandit to lay the foundation stone for a 110m commercial tower in ward 3, but after much criticism the height of the edifice was reduced to 45m.

None other than Prime Minister Oli himself launched a pet project to build a view tower in his native district of Jhapa for Rs2.5 billion. Oli has also commanded that a 150m high statue of the Buddha be put up in Damak. The local government in Morang is installing the world's biggest statue of a cow.

Why such erections are even necessary when the roads leading to them are decrepit, bridges have been washed away and cities wallow in squalour, no one can explain.

There is more: a 20m statue of 'Mother Nepal' is being built in Mahendranagar. Tanahu plans a 30m figure of the saint, Vyas. Province 5 is putting up huge statues of Kanakmuni and Kakasanda Buddhas in Kapilbastu. But for the most meaningless project so far, the grand prize goes to Mayor Nima Gyalzen Sherpa of Helambu, who is starting on a 60km 'Great Wall' inspired by one he saw in China. He thinks it will be a tourist attraction, and will bring more visitors to his district. Someone please tell him tourists do not come to Nepal to look at concrete towers, statues of mythical figures or stone walls.

What we really need are more health posts, better equipped rural hospitals, affordable health care and quality schools that are accessible to the poor. It is much more necessary to control corruption and improve accountability. Wish we had leaders with more common sense and integrity.



**We need more health posts, affordable medical care and quality schools. Not more statues of mythical figures, and view towers.**

## 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Nepali Times issue #461 of 24-30 July 2009 looked at geo-politics and why Nepal's foreign policy needed to be deft and agile to deal with regional powers. Ten years later, not much has changed. In fact, China is seen as even more of a threat than a decade ago, and the US itself is headed into decline under President Trump. Excerpt from Editorial:

*'Prithvi Narayan Shah described Nepal as a yam between two boulders, Pushpa Kamal Dahal modified that during the war and described us as more like a dynamite stick between two stones. Either way, it's inevitable that we'll get squeezed as these titanic nations jostle for leadership as economic and political powerhouses of the future. Nepal's foreign policy strategy should be to minimise the danger of getting pulverised, to take economic advantage of our location, and not to play these two giants against each other.'*

*Our message to the mandarins in Beijing and Delhi should be: look here, we don't have oil, we are not all that strategic and we are ungovernable. Just leave us alone, Nepal is not worth fighting over. If the Americans and Europeans want to fight the Chinese over Tibet, they should do it in Beijing, not in Kathmandu.'*



## ONLINE PACKAGES



MARTIAL BLISS

A passion for the military and the dream of becoming soldiers in the British Army's Brigade of the Gurkhas is pushing many young Nepali women to train. But after working out for months, the Girl Gurkhas hit a snag. Story: *page 8-9.*



REVISITING THE WAR

Sangita Khadka used to be an underground journalist broadcasting for the Maoists' clandestine radio in the mountains. She revisits that past in her memoir, *Yuddhaka Ti Din*. Listen to her evaluate the outcomes of the Maoist movement, and find out why she thinks it is important to document them. Story: *page 7.*

### BUSINESS UNFRIENDLY

The rules for doing business in Nepal are not friendly at all. ('So you'd like to do business in Nepal', by Ritu Pradhan Malla, #969) The government barely provides any support to new companies; it taxes and fines them for everything. There are never-ending bureaucratic hassles to register new businesses, and the government also employs high import tax on consumer goods as well as on manufactured products.

Gaurav Bista

Finally an article talks about the Doing Business Index. The primary job of the government is to reform policies and ease financial flows to support SMEs. Bringing down our ranking in the index below 100 would be a positive, measurable target.

Khem Lakai

### SIR ED

Such a well written article. ('Hillary Centenary', Lisa Choegyal, #969). Thank you for reminding all of us and future generations of how much Sir Ed has given back. It is time to give back to the mountain.

Wendy Lama

### DEFORESTATION

Innovative planning and design, procurement transparency and post-award accountability, and zoning regulations are just a few ways to preclude losing Nepal's forests forever. ('The cost of peace in post-conflict countries: forest cover', Dilrukshi Handunnetti, #969) Cutting forests for housing and development is exactly the opposite of what Nepal should be doing.

Jennifer Anderson

This analysis is weak, conflating superficial coincidences with ascription of causality. Deforestation is a complex process with a lot of factors in different scales of process and just taking a couple of remote sensing and conflict variables is simplistic.

Amoolya Tuladhar

### CLIMATE CRISIS

Being fatalistic is no way to go about addressing the climate crisis ('Weather warning for climate meeting', Sonia Awale, #969). What viable alternative energy sources are there? How will a country manage its energy requirements? We can't depend on handouts for ever.

Kyu Yeti

## WHAT'S TRENDING



### Hillary Centenary

by Lisa Choegyal  
He coined the phrase 'The highest rubbish dump in the world' to describe Mt Everest, and would have hated the recent image of an Everest summit queue, which went viral around the world. Our columnist remembers Edmund Hillary, who would have turned 100 last week. Visit nepalitimes.com for special coverage on the occasion of Sir Ed's centenary.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

### Weather warning for climate meeting

by Sonia Awale  
More than 260 scientists from 60 countries were in Kathmandu last week to start work on the 6th IPCC Assessment Report. And as they arrived, they got a front row seat to the impact of climate change in the Himalaya — a freak monsoon. Go to our online archive for in-depth coverage of the impact on Nepal of the climate crisis.

Most popular on Twitter

### So you'd like to do business in Nepal?

by Ritu Pradhan Malla  
90% of companies registered in Nepal are small and medium enterprises, yet we restrict foreign direct investment under Rs50 million. Nepal needs a stronger support ecosystem for FDI, which enables enterprises, instead of derailing them with new rules and red tape.

Most commented

### Nepal risks being blacklisted on money laundering

by Sharad Ojha  
Nepal will be evaluated for international money laundering activities by the Asia Pacific Group of the Financial Action Task Force in 2019, and may be blacklisted if the government does not adequately crack down on illegal, cross-border money transfers. Go online for a detailed report.

Most visited online page

## QUOTE TWEETS

**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes  
He coined the phrase 'The highest rubbish dump in the world' for Everest, and he would have hated the recent image of Everest summit queues that went viral around the world. @lisachoegyal remembers Sir Edmund Hillary, who would have been 100 on Saturday.

**Ramesh** @RameshBhushal  
Really enjoyed reading @lisachoegyal on Edmund Hillary's Centenary.

**Bronwyn Hayward** @BMHayward  
Edmund Hillary's 100th is celebrated in a feature in @NepaliTimes & because 'Ed' didn't just climb a mountain but built a lasting, meaningful relationship, NZ gets the benefits of ongoing linkages & an exchange of ideas, students & expertise between #nzpol & Nepal #legacy

**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes  
After a prolonged tug-o-war that polarised the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) to the point where it looked like it was headed for a split, a three-way truce this week has defused the crisis for now. Read full report by @kirannepal. #Nepal #Politics

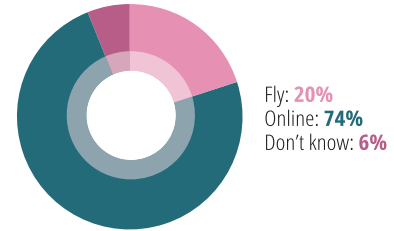
**Gus Ferguson** @xander\_fero  
Marriage of Convenience becomes Ménage à trois.



Weekly Internet Poll #969

Q. Should the IPCC working group on climate change fly to meetings or hold discussions online?

Total votes: 130



Weekly Internet Poll #970  
To vote go to: [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)

Q. Do you feed your children junk food?



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# Nepal must keep water on its land

Our ancestors knew how to store monsoon runoff for year-round use, we must learn from them

Kathmandu Valley used to be a lake. When the water drained out, it left ponds, lakes, wetlands and, later, flooded paddy fields and irrigation canals. Seeing water on the land then would have been the most natural sight.



**½ FULL**  
Anil Chitrakar

The Newa Civilisation maintained ponds for lotus flowers, ducks and fish, which recharged groundwater, allowing the soil to filter the water that could then be extracted from wells. Rainwater washed the streets of waste, which flowed down to terraced fields, fertilising them.

Along ridges and mountain saddles across Nepal, there are still some ponds left in which buffalos wallow. These store monsoon runoff, allowing it to slowly seep into the topsoil and keep the slopes below moist.

The best examples of the Valley's ponds were in Lagankhel and Pulchok. They took in all the rain and stored it underground for use year-round in Patan's ancient wells. Today, both have been encroached upon and filled over to make way for a concrete municipality building, an army base, a petrol pump, schools, shopping mall and a tourist bus park.

Now, when the monsoon rain falls, as it did last week in buckets,



RICH PFAU



PS JOSHI

**CHANGING TIMES:** (left to right) Lagankhel in the mid 1920s from top of the Ashoka South Stupa, the road in the foreground goes to where Sat Dobato is today (left). A view of Ashok Stupa and the surrounding area in a picture taken in 1968 (centre) and a photo of the same location today (right) showing constricted pond.

the water has nowhere to go but down the streets, turning them into muddy torrents that carry away children and motorcycles.

Deprived of rainwater recharging, the town's wells and ponds run dry shortly after the monsoon. The ancient water spouts are reduced to a trickle. Open fields that allowed water to seep into the soil are now covered by asphalt roads, cement terraces and tin roofs. The water rushes down into rivers already constricted by embankments, where water velocity increases, causing destruction downstream.

Gravity is Nepal's great source of energy. Falling water is a renewable source Nepal has in abundance, but it needs to be husbanded properly. Once water has flowed downriver, we need pumps to get it up again. Our ancestors understood this well, and

stored water at high points: the shrinking lotus ponds in Chhauni and historical ponds like Rani Pokhari, Eekha Pokhari and Kicha Pokhari.

Fortunately, there is now a belated realisation about the importance of ponds. Bhaktapur, Kirtipur and Bungmati are reviving their ancient water storage and recharge systems. Citizens have risen up against land-grabbers who try to usurp ponds. It is stupid to think that land will be worth anything without water.

The Himalaya is not just Asia's water tower, it is a gigantic sponge. We must keep the sponge wet by allowing indigenous tree species to allow seepage through their roots. Roads should be designed so they do not destroy natural recharge systems.

Pulchoki and the holy Nau

Dhara, and Panch Dhara at its base, in Godavari have year-round flow because of the well preserved watershed. After it was protected, Shivapuri National Park gives the valley residents 30 million liters of fresh water every day.

Such ecosystem services are not available elsewhere in the Valley. In the Mahabharat and Chure mid-mountains, springs have gone dry because of indiscriminate road construction, sand mining, quarrying and logging. This is why Tarai towns are either flooded during monsoon or face acute drought the rest of the year.

Last week, the Supreme Court ruled that the ancient pond around the South Stupa of Ashok at Lagankhel should be restored. This will bring a huge change to the lives of the people of Patan, by preventing annual flooding

and recharging the ground water year round. Every urban and rural municipality across Nepal should be mandated by law to similarly protect one major watershed and dig lakes and ponds on high ground. Given our love for earth movers, this should be an attractive proposition for mayors.

It is one thing to attend conferences on climate change and spout words like 'vulnerability' and 'resilience', but another to act. Visit the community around Pimbaha in Patan to learn how local action can restore ancient water storage systems, while contributing to tourism and local wellbeing.

Our goal should be to ensure that as much water as possible is harvested and stored in Kathmandu Valley and across Nepal. Let's keep the water on our land. 🇳🇵

**Anil Chitrakar** is President of Siddharthinc

## Cycle challenge and click to win



PHOTO: KUNDA DIXIT

More than 3,000 riders took part in the Kathmandu Kora Cycling Challenge on Saturday 20 July, riding 50km, 75km or 100km routes around the Valley. The rally raised money for various education,

reconstruction and youth training causes, with participants earning a suggested Rs100 per km from family and friends. In conjunction with the rides, airline partner Turkish Airlines organised the Click2Win contest for photo enthusiasts, with



**FLAG OFF:** The Kathmandu Kora 2019 being flagged off at Patan Darbar Square by Lalitpur Mayor Chiri Babu Maharjan (left), and Abdullah Tuncer Kececi Nepal manager of Turkish Airlines with rider Samridhi Rai, singer and former *Nepali Times* travel columnist. (above).

the winner getting a return ticket to any destination in Europe.

The shortest of the three rides was designed for amateurs but offered challenges including brisk climbs and narrow alleys. The Good to Expert 75km circuit involved more adventurous cycling, with steeper climbs and mountain en route to Boudhanath and Chobhar.

The most challenging Expert To Pro 100-km circuit occupied an entire day of cycling along hills on the Valley rim.

Participants in the Click2Win contest have till 28 July to submit their photos. A set of finalists will be selected and the one whose photo earns the most likes on social media will win a free roundtrip ticket to a destination in Europe. 🇳🇵

**Reeti KC**

Email photo submissions to: [click2win@kathmandukora.net](mailto:click2win@kathmandukora.net)

prabhu BANK

BIZ BRIEFS

### NRB targets 8.5% growth

The economic growth target for 2019-2020 is 8.5%, according to the monetary policy released by the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) on Wednesday. The policy focuses on promoting credit growth and addressing liquidity problems in the private sector. Domestic credit growth is projected to be 24%. Bank mergers will be optional, says the policy, which offered two incentives for banks: extended deadlines for loans in the agriculture, energy and tourism sectors and no approval required before adding new branches.

### Cathay Pacific lounge

Cathay Pacific reopened its newly renovated Shanghai Pudong Cathay Pacific Lounge on 18 July, marking the



introduction of the airline's lounge design to mainland China for the first time. Cathay also announced the completion of its acquisition of Hong Kong Express Airways (HK Express), which is now a wholly owned subsidiary of Cathay Pacific.

### NMB Bank campaign

NMB Bank has launched its new corporate campaign with the theme 'We see endless opportunities'. The campaign seeks to translate the bank's



values and beliefs and to assure all Nepalis that opportunities exist in the country and that NMB is there to help make them happen, and succeed.

### Nepal in world debate

The Nepal national schools debate team is representing the country in the World Schools Debate Championship in Bangkok. The team of five debaters, a team manager and two judges left Nepal for Thailand on 24 July. Team members were announced by national debate organisation Debate Network Nepal recently. This was followed by intense preparatory camps for the event, which includes 63 nations.

### Seat selection by Thai

Thai Airways is increasing preferred seat selection on all international flights. Economy Class and Royal Silk Class passengers can now take advantage of the service, for travel 27 July onwards. The preferred seats fee varies based on actual flight distance flown.

prabhu BANK



# Finding the nexus between water, food and energy

New book delves into why silo-ed thinking has stymied development in Nepal and elsewhere



KUNDA DIXIT

**N**exus' has become a word with a negative connotation in Nepal, used in conjunction with collusion or complicity: 'government-business nexus', or 'nexus of politicians with the medical mafia'.

Nexus has a nefarious nuance because of the corrupt conspiracies that are hatched in the corridors of power between the political leadership and the captains of industry, giving democracy itself a bad

ed thinking, turf tussles and narrow departmental horizons embedded in our political structures. How to come out of the confines of such flawed development planning is the theme of this book, and thankfully there are examples of where things have gone wrong, and how they could have been set right.

Chapters by former Minister of Water Resources and energy economist Dipak

Given this example, one could say that nexus thinking is alive and kicking in Nepal – but only when it comes to corruption, extortion and inter-departmental plunder. The authors argue that inter-sectoral planning needs the vision and political will of rulers to look at water-food-energy from diverse viewpoints. This is even more important now because the structural problems Nepal has had to grapple with are made more urgent

**SILO-ED THINKING:** The Melamchi Project is given by authors as an example of non-nexus thinking. By planning it only as a drinking water project, Kathmandu's residents will have to pay for expensive water. If it was designed as a multipurpose energy-urban water supply-irrigation scheme, it would have been much more cost-effective and sustainable.

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**एनएमबि बैंक**

समृद्ध नेपालको लागि

name. An increasing number of Nepalis are disillusioned not just with politicians, but the system of government itself.

Multi-disciplinary social scientists Jeremy Allouche, Carl Middleton and Dipak Gyawali in their new book, *The Water-Food-Energy Nexus: Power, Politics and Justice*, try to reinstate the respect that the word 'nexus' has lost. They lay out the necessity of a multi-purpose nexus in designing and implementing development. For too long, we have maintained a tunnel vision in which hydropower was seen as only energy, drinking water only as a utility, or water only for urban supply.

The authors trace the history of the global nexus narrative through the standpoint of water – the substance which by its very nature has multi-pronged uses in household consumption, farming, urban utility, energy generation or ecosystem services. Although 'nexus' is now the theme in many academic papers and conferences, the need to take a holistic look at development outcomes has not 'trickled up' to decision-making levels of governments and multilateral agencies.

The reason for this is simple: silo-

Gyawali are especially interesting for us in Nepal. How we goofed on Kulekhani and Melamchi by looking at them solely as energy or drinking water schemes respectively. Gyawali provides the example of how nexus-thinking could have turned Melamchi into a multipurpose project. He writes: 'Silo-ed, de-nexused thinking is not only the bane of developing countries, but also international development agencies.'

Widening the diameter of the tunnel to 5m, and sourcing waters from Yangri, Larke and Balephi could have augmented the dry season flow of the Bagmati to irrigate 30,000 hectares in Sarlahi and Rautahat and generate 190MW of electricity, while supplying adequate drinking water for Kathmandu Valley. But successive governments and donor officials designed a project that has been delayed by decades so that by the time it is completed it will not even meet present water demand.

The latest scandal in which a government secretary tried to extort Rs50 million from the Italian contractors will delay the project by at least more four years, and possibly cost the nation Rs5 billion in compensation.

because of the climate crisis.

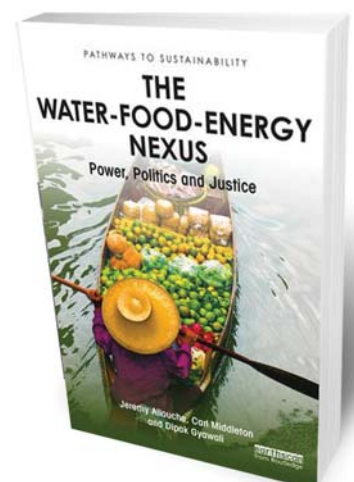
'Integrating water security with agriculture, energy production and climate concern... provide a better transition toward greener economies and the wider goal of sustainable development,' write the authors.

Nature conservation has dispossessed the marginalised, worsening inequality in Nepal. Policies that cross-cut socio-ecological concerns, biodiversity, community action, and forestry science would allow us to address the second-generation problems that Nepal's conservation efforts are undergoing.

Much of the book sounds dry and turgid. For instance, only inter-disciplinary scientists could come up with a sentence like 'A multi-dimensional means of scientific enquiry which seeks to describe the complex and non-linear interactions between water, energy, food, with the climate, and further understand wider societal implications'.

Translation: 'Look at things holistically.' And that could be the most important take-away for decision-makers and donor agencies involved in Nepal's development. ❏

**Kunda Dixit**



*The Water-Food-Energy Nexus: Power, Politics and Justice*

by Jeremy Allouche, Carl Middleton and Dipak Gyawali  
 Earthscan, 2018  
 150 pages, Paperback: £25.49, Hardback: £93.50  
 ISBN: 978-0-415-33283-5



# Dreams and nightmares of the Nepal conflict

One book eulogises a Maoist ideologue and another tells the story of a family he destroyed

## Ramesh Khattry

The Greek word 'hagios' means 'holy'. A hagiography is therefore an admiring book about people who are praised for being much better than they are in real life.

*Abiram Baburam* (Non-stop Baburam) by journalist Anil Thapa fits the definition of a hagiography perfectly. It follows the tradition of heroic Panchayat-era portrayals of the Sri 5, praising them to high heaven.

Thapa begins with this brilliant PhD graduate who chose the 'hard' life of politics while he led a Nepali students' union in India. Baburam Bhattarai says he was inspired to enter politics after he saw Nepalis washing dishes in India, and wanted to start an armed class struggle back home for their salvation.

When he returned to Nepal he adopted a mixture of Marxism and BP Koirala socialism as a means towards that end, joining various communist parties, even contesting elections, and ending up with the Maoists.

As chief ideologue he was the architect of the revolution with Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Mohan Baidya that was to rage for 10 years. After the ceasefire, and after serving as an elected prime minister (2011-2013) Bhattarai set up his own Naya Shakti party, which won only one seat in Parliament (his own). This year he joined former comrade Upendra Yadav to form the Nepal Socialist Party.

Most of Thapa's book dwells on the ups and downs of the Maoist party, recounting how it persecuted Bhattarai, accusing him of being an Indian agent and putting him and his wife Hisila Yami under house arrest in Rolpa for several months.

The last chapter of Thapa's book lays out Bhattarai's blueprint for a prosperous Nepal

in which he thinks a new era has dawned after the 2015 Constitution.

Now 65, Bhattarai dreams of abolishing poverty and unemployment within a decade. He still does not think he has done anything wrong, and has nothing to repent. But Bhattarai does concede that he is 'not a god' and may have some weaknesses. It does not look like Thapa talked to any victims of Maoist violence or their families. It is also clear that neither he nor his relatives suffered from violence during the conflict. His conclusion is that Bhattarai cannot be called a 'terrorist'.

To hear about the horror of war, we need to turn to another book: *Nyayako Abasaan* (The End of Justice) written and edited by *Kantipur* journalist Ghanashyam Khadka in collaboration with Gangamaya Adhikari, who with her husband Nanda Prasad, embarked upon multiple fast-unto-death campaigns to pressure the government to punish the Maoists who tortured and murdered their younger son, Krishna, in 2004.

After the ceasefire, the Adhikaris came to Kathmandu to meet politicians, only to be told to wait till after the elections in April 2008. When Pushpa Kamal Dahal was elected prime minister, he was naturally not going to listen to the Adhikari couple, nor other victims of the conflict. The next PM, Madhav Kumar Nepal, was no better.


Meanwhile, Maoist cadres kept threatening the Adhikari couple to give up their campaign for justice. Bhattarai and his wife Hisila Yami asked the couple's landlords to expel them, Khadka writes, and after some harrowing events the Adhikaris end up at the old-age home run by social worker Dilshova Shrestha. The

author recounts how Yami did not leave the Adhikaris alone even there.

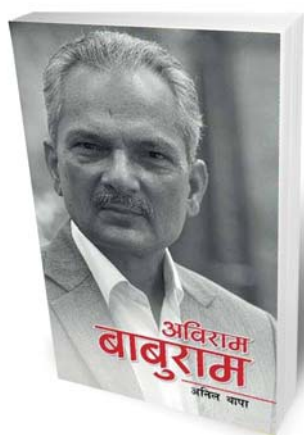
Bhattarai could not have not known of the cruelty, and when he became prime minister in 2013 he had police arrest the couple from the gates of Baluwater. On hunger strike, they were taken to Bir Hospital, where they broke their fast upon government assurances — promises that were repeatedly broken. Bhattarai added salt to their wounds by sarcastically claiming that he himself had killed their son, and the government should arrest him if it could. Nanda Prasad died in 2014, and his body is still in the Bir Hospital mortuary.

The Maoist war took 17,000 lives in battles, executions and retaliatory state violence, pushing Nepal's progress back by at least a decade. The movement spawned the Biplav faction, which is now hell bent on taking the country back to war.

There has been no closure for relatives of the disappeared and victims. War crimes went unpunished, and the culture of violence and impunity continues to plague Nepali society to this day.

Thapa's book does not address that side of the story, and is likely to have little historical value. Khadka's book is searing in the description of pain and suffering of the innocent, and an indictment of those culpable. 

**Ramesh Khattry** teaches theology in colleges in Nepal.



**Abiram Baburam**  
by Anil Thapa  
Shangrila Books, 2016



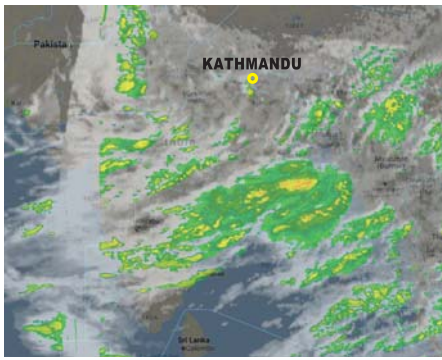
***Nyayako Abasan***  
by Ghanashyam Khadka  
Book Hill Publications, 2018



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**Times.com**





This monsoon pulse (*left*) will still have a lingering effect throughout Nepal over the weekend, although its epicentre will have moved off by Friday night. This was a slow-moving system with multiple cells nearly the size of Nepal, with the tops soaring up to 50,000ft. There will be a short let-up in the showers, but the rains will resume by evening and night. Beware of landslides and rockfalls along highways. Domestic flights will remain disrupted, although trunk routes should be normal.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
 24° 19°	 26° 19°	 26° 19°



Former clandestine Maoist radio journalist documents war before it is forgotten

Sewa Bhattarai

Sangita Khadka was so stirred by the Maoist ideal of social change that she joined the party while still in school at 15.

Good at writing, she felt she could help the cause by communicating the need for armed struggle and documenting the sacrifices of her comrades through the party's underground newspapers and clandestine radio stations.

Today, 13 years after the war ended, Khadka is still committed to the cause, and thinks recounting the history of the conflict is important at a time when the public, and even Maoist leaders, have forgotten what it was they fought for.

In her recently published book, *Yuddhaka Ti Din: Ek Patrakarko Bhogai* (Those War Days: A Journalist's Experience) Khadka traces her life in the movement.

Born and brought up in Kathmandu, she started out as a naive teenager, and travelled all over the country with the Maoists, hiding from the security forces, broadcasting from secret portable radio stations high on mountains. Life was hard, she and her comrades struggled to light fires in the monsoon, resorted to eating contaminated food, all the while trying to evade army patrols.

Khadka was captured, and spent 10 months in detention, where she was physically abused by soldiers and police. Her mouth bled from kicks, her body swelled up from beatings, and she often had fever from sleeping on cold floors. Along the way, she met fellow Maoists who suffered similar torture, and throughout it all she says it was the ideal of a more just Nepal that kept her going.

"I wanted to write the book because I did not want people to forget," says Khadka, who is back to doing journalism in peacetime. "Our leaders forgot the human toll of the war, the dedication of the rank and file. Some minimise the sacrifices we made, pretend it did not happen. This book tells it like it was, so future generations know the truth."



**NOM DE GUERRE:** Sangita Khadka, author of a book that recounts her war experience as a Maoist journalist (*above*), and in a camp showing photos she took to female guerrillas. (*at centre, right*).

Khadka recounts how the radio stations were rudimentary backpack transmitters, her motley group had no security, operated with limited resources and had to change location often to avoid detection.

The book records acts of kindness amidst the violence of conflict, like a police guard who risked punishment to give her biscuits, villagers who voluntarily warned her group of the movement of security patrols. The book records how it was ordinary Nepalis who showed extraordinary courage to deal with war, not the leaders who started it.

"I am glad I was able to contribute to a movement that brought so many positive changes to the country," Khadka says. "But I don't think the party stayed true to its ideals. It has been afflicted by the same greed and craze for power as every other party in Nepal."

The disillusionment shows in the book, even though Khadka does not dwell on the years after the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006. She also avoids the atrocities committed by her party, even while documenting heinous crimes committed by state security. She defends this, saying that as an underground



**Yuddhaka Ti Din**  
by Sangita Khadka  
Shangrila Books, 2019  
Rs384, 248 pages



MONIKA DEUPALA

journalist she had limited access to information.

"Now that it is all over, there are grievances on both sides that need to be addressed," admits Khadka, who also omits from the book her parents' attempts to talk her out of joining the revolution. It was more difficult for them than for her, as the Army and police constantly harassed Khadka's parents about her whereabouts, while neighbours shunned them.

Says Khadka: "I don't regret what I did, but I do regret what happened to my family. I can never make up for what they went through because of me." 🇳🇵



Sangita Khadka, an underground journalist broadcasting for the Maoists' clandestine radio out of jungles, revisits that past in her memoir, *Yuddhaka Ti Din*. Find out why she thinks it is important to document those experiences for posterity, and discover how she evaluates the outcomes of the Maoist movement.

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

## War Literature

After the Maoist war ended in 2006, several books have come out in Nepali that deal with the period. They are either fictionalised accounts of what happened or testimonies of war experiences. Some authors have published novels and collections of short stories, while others have written memoirs. A selection:

### Ambushma 6 Barsa

by Damodar Nyaupane (*Six Years in Ambush*)  
Journalist Nyaupane records his war-time experience, weaving dramatic stories and chilling encounters in Gorkha and Lamjung into a reportage.

### Chhapamarko Chhoro

by Mahesh Bikram Shah (*The Guerrilla's Son*)  
A collection of 18 stories set during the conflict, Shah's notable work of fiction won the Madan Puraskar in 2006.

### Khalangama Hamala

by Radha Poudel (*The Attack on Khalanga*)  
Health worker Radha Poudel recounts the terrifying night when the Maoists attacked the district headquarters. Her book won the 2013 Madan Puraskar.

### Banda Parkhal Dekhi Khula Akash Aamma

by Uma Bhujel (*From within Walls to Open Sky*)  
Uma Bhujel was among the six women who broke out of the Gorkha jail in 2001. Bhujel is now with the Biplav faction of the Maoists.

### Chhapamar Yuwatiko Diary

by Tara Rai (*Diary of a Female Guerrilla*)  
Tara Rai penned her experience of joining the Maoists as a teenager, and the socio-political context of the times.



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# Girl Gurkhas

Recruitment of women into the British Gurkha Brigade is on hold, but women who trained remain hopeful

Photographs **Narendra Shrestha**  
and text **Monika Deupala**

**D**eepa Ghising remembers being fascinated by how smoothly soldiers of the Nepal Army handled clashes during the 2017 elections, and defused the situation. She decided there and then on a military career.

“Their uniforms, bearing and the way they conducted themselves was so impressive I decided that I would also become a soldier one day,” the 20-year-old recalls.

So, when the UK Defence Ministry announced in 2018 that the Gurkha Brigade would start recruiting Nepali women for the first time, Ghising was among the 500 young women across Nepal who started training in private centres.

Nepali men have been serving in the elite Gurkhas since 1815, earning an unparalleled reputation for bravery in battle. Every year, thousands of young Nepali men still sign up for arduous physical tests to join the legendary force, in hopes of embarking on an adventurous career that includes a solid income, pension and the possibility of settling in the UK.

It is only natural that young women would also

Nepali Gurkha veterans have long been demanding that they receive the same compensation as their British counterparts, both during active duty and after retirement. Britain recently increased Gurkha pensions 10-34%, but some veterans continue advocating for an even better deal.

The British Gurkha base in Kathmandu says it continues to discuss the treatment of veterans with the Nepal Government, along with future recruitment, of both men and women.

Retired British Gurkha soldier Prem Kumar Rai believes that all recruitment under current conditions should end. “If the UK government is treating British Gurkhas unequally, and the Nepal Government accepts that, then this is colonialism in a new form,” he said. “Recruitment of Nepalis by a foreign army is not a solution for unemployment. Even male recruitment must be stopped.”

Prime Minister Oli proposed to the UK government during his visit to London last month to replace the trilateral treaty between India Britain and Nepal on Gurkha recruitment with a bilateral







be attracted to the Gurkhas, as was Ghising. “It was freezing cold but I enjoyed every bit of the hard winter training sessions, including running, push-ups and sit-ups,” she recalls.

Swostika Ranamagar, 19, joined a training centre after the news that the Gurkha Brigade would take 800 female soldiers. “I was in high school and had to skip morning classes for the training,” she said.

Boxing champion Alisha Tamang, 19, started training more than a year ago, and remembers how bad she felt when a Parliament Committee in March decided not to allow Nepali women to be recruited by the British Army.

“The news of cancellation made us all feel really low, but the training was not in vain. We have built up our self-confidence, we now know what army training is like, and we can now take the tests for the Nepal Army too,” Tamang said.

Among the private companies specialising in preparing recruits is Salute Gorkha Training Centre in Kathmandu, which warned the women that it was not yet confirmed that the British Army would be recruiting Nepali women.

“After Parliament cancelled it, we saw many young girls in tears, but at the same time most of them were determined to be in the Army. They were physically and mentally capable to handle the news,” recalls Ramesh Pandey, a trainer at Salute.

Parliament’s International Relations Committee announced the cancellation in a press release in March. Committee Chairman Pabitra Niraula told *Nepali Times* this week: “The timing was not right. Both governments are still working on resolving the issues of ex-Gurkhas.”

Niraula added: “We still are addressing former Gurkha soldiers’ demands for justice and equality, and to solve their problems first. At such a critical period we can’t just send off females and let them face the same problems.”

one. Nepal’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also firm on not discussing female recruitment into the Brigade of Gurkhas until the pension issue has been satisfactorily settled. Spokesman Suresh Adhikary told us: “There is very little chance that the women’s recruitment issue will be resolved until the other broader issues have been sorted out.”

However, that position is obviously not supported by the thousands of young Nepali men and women who continue to throng training centres to prepare for the gruelling annual physical tests and interviews to be among the chosen few in the British Army.

The British Government had in the past recruited Nepali women for the Gurkhas Brigade: in the 1960s a small number were taken in as nurses, and in 2007 it was announced that the Brigade would recruit women soldiers, but that did not materialise.

Ghising, Ranamagar and Tamang have not given up hope. They are still waiting for the Nepal government to lift the ban on Nepali women joining the British Army in 2021. 



A passion for the military and the dream of becoming a soldier in the British Army’s Brigade of the Gurkhas is pushing many young Nepali women to train. But there is a snag

 [nepalitimes.com](https://nepalitimes.com)





EVENTS



Urban Sketching

Join Annelisa Leinbach, an American artist, for a 3-day urban sketching workshop in Patan Darbar Square. Learn how to choose colours, perspectives, composition and motion styles to create the perfect urban scene.  
Rs1,500, 26 July-28 July, 3pm-6pm, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel, (01) 5521812

Bagmati Promenade

Bagmati Promenade, a part of the Dream City campaign established by the British Council and the Dream Cycle, is a heritage walk designed to experience life along the Bagmati River. Self-guided digital and offline “tourist trail” maps of the area are available to guide your walk.  
27 July, 8am onwards, Thapathali Chess Park, 9818943901

Open Mic Drop

Enjoy a night of light-hearted comedy as a stand-up artist or a spectator.  
30 July, 7pm onwards, The Buffet Restaurant and Bar, Lalitpur, 015527350



BCN Fundraiser

BCN, an advocate for bird conservation in Nepal, presents a fundraiser requesting support for their work. Contributors have a chance to win prizes like a birding tour to South Asian countries, binoculars and special gift hampers.  
Bird Conservation Nepal, Lazimpat, (01) 4417805

History Presentation

Discover the rich history of France and Nepal. From Bhimsen Thapa to Napoleon and the Eiffel Tower to Narayanhiti, compare political leaders, iconic monuments and more of the two nations.  
29 July, 10:30am onwards, Alliance Française de Katmandou, Jhamsikhel, 015009221



Butterfly Watching

Biodiversity Research and Conservation Society presents a butterfly watching program. Marvel at the beautiful creatures as you study their intricate features and colourful wings.  
27 July, 8am onwards, Godawari, Lalitpur

Haamro Prithvi

The Peoples Alliance for Nature Nepal presents Haamro Prithvi, a youth-centered event that advocates for nature conservation, sustainability and youth leadership. There will be vendours, artists, theatre performances and more.  
27 July, 3pm onwards, Evoke Bistro and Cafe, Jhamsikhel, 9851111051



Pizza Making Session

Learn the art of making a pizza with your friends and family this weekend. Eat anything you make and experiment as much as you want with the toppings.  
Rs1,200, 27 July, 12pm onwards, Marcapolo Restaurant, Thamel, 015252282

Umbrella Painting

Make the dreary monsoon fun for kids as they paint and decorate their own umbrellas. All art supplies will be provided. For kids aged 5-10.  
Rs1,200, 28 July, 3pm-5pm, Giggles, Naxal, 9810580333

MUSIC



Resonance of Roots

Pin Drop Violins presents Volume 7 – Resonance of Roots, a Nepali band that blends Nepali tunes and western sounds.  
27 July, Beers N’ Cheers, Lalitpur, 01-5524860

Anuprastha

Enjoy Rock & Roll Night-VII with Anuprastha tonight! Listen to a fusion of Nepali folk tunes and rock music.  
26 July, 7pm onwards, Bento Lounge & Bar, Bishal Bazaar, 9869163339

Legend Band

Los Escobar’s presents Legends with Legend Band featuring Sanjaya Shrestha, Babin Pradhan, Bhim Tuladhar and more.  
26 July, Los Escobar’s, Gairidhara, 985-1164380



Acoustic Duo

Join Nirita Yakthumba and Sahil Uprety this Friday evening for some mellow music and amazing voices.  
26 July, 7pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, 015528362

Whiskey and Blues

Indulge in BBQ, malt whiskey and a cigar while you listen to a collection of Blues music.  
26 July, 5pm onwards, The Collectors Cafe and Bar, Gairidhara

DINING



The Workshop Eatery

Forget about calories as you indulge in an assortment of doughnuts, fries and burgers. The Nutella Doughnut and the Workshop BBQ Chicken Burger are a must.  
11am-7:30pm (Except Saturday), Bakhundole, 9860431504

Food Festival

Celebrate women and the tried and tested recipes that have been passed down through generations, with Chef Tasneem Sahani.  
24 July-5 August, Kakori, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 01 4273999



Captain Egg

Egg lovers can rejoice at this egg-themed restaurant. Have a savoury Amritsari Egg Chole, Potato Egg Rosti or even an Egg Sizzler.  
12pm-10pm, Gahanapokhari, 014445330

Everfresh

Perfect for brunch and breakfast lovers, Everfresh offers the best elevated avocado toast, fluffy pancakes, brioche french toast and buckwheat crepes.  
7am-6pm, Lazimpat



Rain Restaurant

With a great view of Patan and Jawalakhel, grab a Thakali set, braised pork belly and an assortment of tacos at this newly opened restaurant.  
Jawalakhel (01)5548508

GETAWAY



Maya Manor

This Rana palace turned boutique hotel offers a Victorian Gazebo, manicured gardens, highly-rated restaurants and an exclusive rooftop garden overlooking the city.  
Darbar Marg,

Nirvana Resorts

This 18-hole course in Dharan offers an expansive opportunity for golf enthusiasts. After you play, relax in the bungalows, eat and enjoy a ride around the green fields.  
Ghopa Camp, Dharan (025) 525555



Mirabel Resort

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

Green Valley

Just beyond Budhanilkantha, enjoy a cool breeze as you take a stroll around the Tamang Valley. This place is perfect for those who want a taste of home without venturing far from the city.  
Shivapuri National Park (01) 5248091



Meghauri Serai

Leave your worries behind as you enter this luxurious safari lodge at the heart of Chitwan National Park. Overlooking the Rapti River, this lodge not only offers scenic views but accommodation that integrates local culture and art.  
Chitwan National Park, 9851218500



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OUR PICK

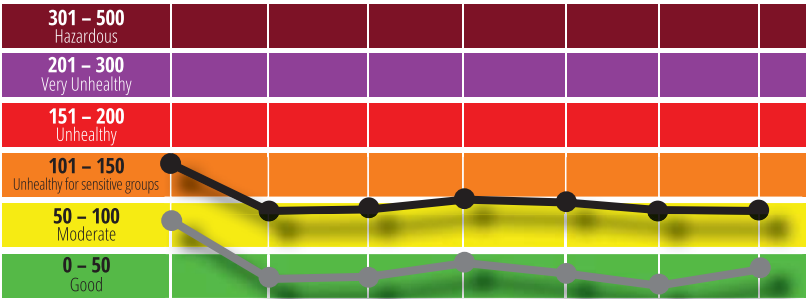


Opened in Kathmandu on 26 July

This quirky thriller starring Kangana Ranaut and Rajkumar Rao revolves around a murder mystery. Ranaut plays a weirdo who is taken with the seemingly normal Rao. But apparently Rao is not as normal as he seems, as his personality unravels after they are both involved in murder investigations. The movie is directed by Prakash Kovelamudi.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 19 - 25 July



PM2.5  
Ozone  
FRIDAY July 19  
SATURDAY July 20  
SUNDAY July 21  
MONDAY July 22  
TUESDAY July 23  
WEDNESDAY July 24  
THURSDAY July 25

Kathmandu's Air Quality Index (AQI) average remained in the breathable range most days, although as daytime traffic built up there were occasional surges up to AQI 100, when pollution levels climbed to the orange 'Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups' range. Even though the daily average looks better than most other times of year, the hourly live AQI (available on [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)) shows unhealthy spikes during rush hours when it is advisable not to venture out unless absolutely necessary.  
<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>





MARTY LOGAN

# Could junk food be making Nepali children shorter?

Surprisingly, study found infants raised on biscuits and noodles were shorter, not fatter

Marty Logan

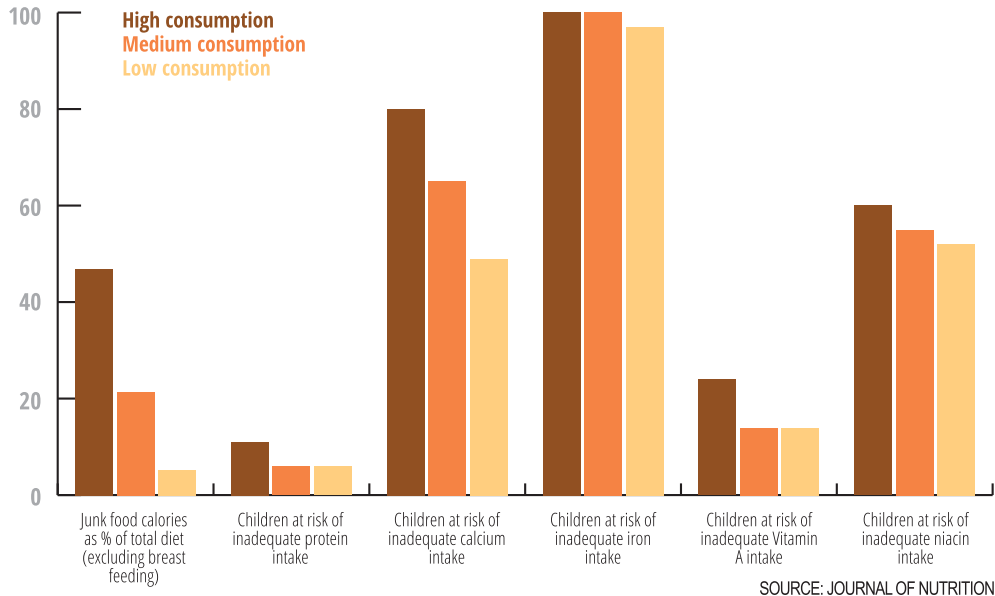
The publication of a paper last week in *The Journal of Nutrition* that infants in Kathmandu were getting 25% of their calories from junk food shocked many. But what is also worrying is that instead of being fat, those who consumed the most junk food were shorter than average, or stunted.

Stunting is a vital measure of malnutrition. It is also one of the indicators used to track a country's path to development. Infants who are short for their age can have impaired brain development and increase the risk of developing nutrition-related chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity. Its causes include poor access to nutrient-dense foods and lack of dietary diversity.

Nepal has done well at reducing stunting in recent years, cutting it from 57% in 1996 to 36% in 2016. However, the country is still not on track to reach the World Health Assembly stunting target of 24% by 2025, or the Sustainable Development Goal target of 15%.

'The current average annual rate of reduction of stunting needs to accelerate to meet these targets,' points out a 2018 report of Nepal's National Planning Commission, *Towards Zero Hunger*. 'Addressing inadequate maternal, infant and young child feeding practices, untreated episodes of acute

## Junk food consumption and nutrient intake among infants in Kathmandu



malnutrition, infections, and deficiencies in micronutrients, all of which constitute immediate and underlying causes of stunting in Nepal, is of critical importance.'

Looking at the findings of the recent junk food study, carried out by researchers, from Helen Keller International and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, raises the question of whether growing junk

food consumption is contributing to the proportion of stunted children.

'Our results suggest that rapidly changing food environments and subsequent dietary patterns in LMICs (low and mid-income countries) might curtail recent achievements in the reduction of childhood stunting,' says the study.

However, the authors note that their

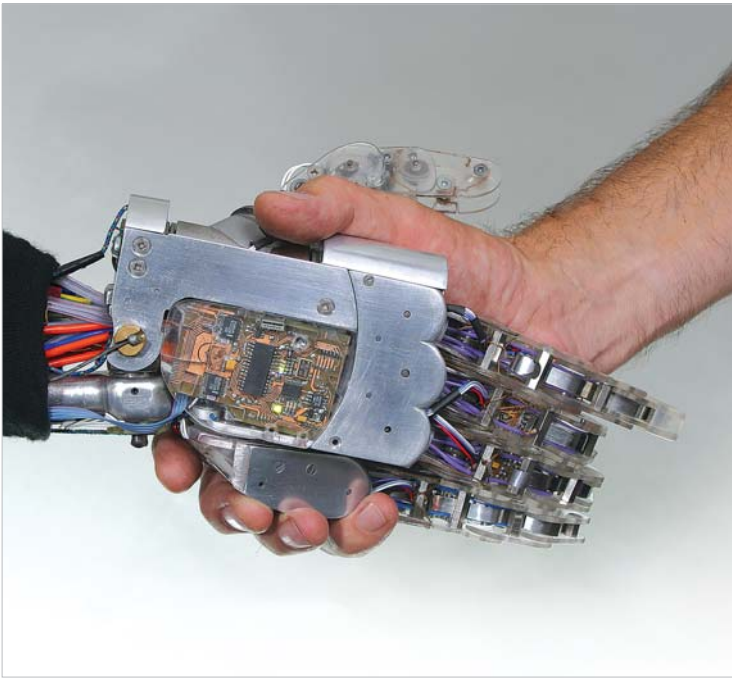
results do not prove a direct link between eating junk food and the children's growth but 'present a plausible biological pathway for this relationship'.

The survey, which set out to study links between junk food consumption and nutritional health, looked at 700+ children aged 12-23 months, in Kathmandu Valley. The group that consumed the most unhealthy food and beverages — excluding breast milk — got nearly half (46.9%) of their total calories from those items, compared to 5.2% for the group that ate the least.

Researchers found that those who ate most junk food were at risk of having inadequate levels of eight nutrients: calcium, zinc, vitamin A, thiamin, riboflavin, vitamin B-6, vitamin B-12, and folate. 'Our dietary results suggest that 1-2-year-old children living in the Kathmandu Valley are at high risk of multiple micronutrient deficiencies, which are further exacerbated by high intakes' of junk food,' the report concluded.

The study also warned about other long-term impacts of eating junk food: 'In Nepal, the prevalence of adult obesity and diabetes is increasing, which indicates that these unhealthy eating patterns in young urban Nepali children urgently need to be addressed.'

Researchers noted that although some of the junk foods had been fortified, the high amounts of sugar and sodium that were also added to the processed foods made them overall healthier. 🇳🇵



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PHOTO: HYATT REGENCY

# Family-friendly Hyatt brunch

When you think of brunch, you think of sizzling bacon, fluffy pancakes, steamy frittatas and even a live omelette station. But at Hyatt Regency's Weekend Brunch, the meal takes a new form, with boozy drinks, desserts galore, barbeque and a buffet that spans multiple continents.

Hyatt Regency offers a sanctuary away from the dust, mud and Kathmandu's monsoon blues every weekend till October. The Weekend Brunch includes an all-you-can-eat buffet and swimming package for just



Rs2,699 with children under 12 getting in for half.

The menu changes every week, and offers trans-continental Indian, Nepali, Italian and Mediterranean foods. With made-to-order pasta

and shawarma stations, the brunch offers both penne marinara and shredded rotisserie meat. The buffet also includes sweet and spicy Pav Bhaji, healthy salads, chatamari and quiches.

With vegetarian and non-vegetarian options, the barbeque offers grilled meats, seafood and veggies. This week, the Weekend Brunch offered Mongolian BBQ. The highlight: grilled chicken with hints of sweetness and spice, mingling with stir-fried noodles and vegetables.

Children can gobble up as much mini hotdogs, onion rings, French fries and chicken nuggets as they want. So while parents enjoy cocktails, the offspring can eat, run around, jump in the bouncy castle, swim in any one of the three kiddie pools and even get their faces painted.

The dessert selection will leave the parents feeling like kids in a candy store. They please the sweetest of teeth and tempt even the strongest dessert naysayers. From quirky hanging donut boards, a berry flambe with ice cream, profiteroles of every flavour and pies of various berries to cakes that satisfy your chocolate dreams, you just have to surrender. On Saturdays, you can both marvel at, and tuck into, a glorious flowing chocolate fountain into which both the young and the old can dive, with marshmallows, fruits and more.

Beyond the drinks, the food and the pool, the Hyatt has attentive waiters who make sure the plates are immediately cleared for more food. So why laze about at home when you can spend lazy weekend mornings at the Hyatt? 🇳🇵

**Sanghamitra Subba**



RATNA SHRESTHA/RSS

**VISIONARY:** WHO Country Representative for Nepal Jos Vandelaer presents Reeta Gurung of Tilganga Hospital with a certificate recognising the institute as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Ophthalmology in Kathmandu on Monday.



PRADEEP RAJ ONTA/RSS

**YEN FOR DEVELOPMENT:** Japanese Ambassador Masamichi Saigo and Ministry of Finance officials ink an agreement for Japan to provide grants worth Rs639.9 million and Rs305.7 million for human resource and school sector development.



FRENCH EMBASSY

**FRANCE-NEPAL SUMMIT:** Former Miss Nepal Shrinkhala Khatiwada and legendary alpinist Anselme Baud summit the highest peak in Western Europe, Mont Blanc, on Tuesday to mark the 70th anniversary of Nepal-France diplomatic relations.



ROSHAN SAKPOTAR/SS

**HAVE FAITH:** A female devotee worships Lord Shiva at Pashupatinath in Kathmandu on the auspicious first Monday of Srawan, the fourth month of the Nepali calendar.



REETI K.C.

**RIDING FOR A CAUSE:** Cancer survivors from the Richa Bajimaya Memorial Foundation raising money for cancer screening at the Kathmandu Kora Cycling Challenge on Saturday.

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# Banned pesticides are widely used in Nepal

Himal Khabarpatrika, 20-26 July

हिमाल

At a time when pesticides found in vegetables imported from India are causing a ruckus in Nepal, several recent reports have revealed that Nepali vegetables are also heavily laced with pesticide residue.

One survey by Wageningen University in The Netherlands, with the NGOs Phase Nepal and Progressive Sustainable Developers Nepal, found that pesticides were used excessively in vegetables produced in Gaindahawa rural municipality of Rupandehi district.

Conducted in December 2017, the study found toxic residue in 86 samples of tomatoes, chilis, and eggplants. While all of the tomatoes and chilis were contaminated, 93% of eggplants had pesticide residues of 14 different kinds. The concentration was four times higher than the threshold permitted by the European Union (EU) in eggplants, 17 times higher in tomatoes and an incredible 49 times in chilis. The chemicals included organophosphate, organochlorine, triazophos, omethoate, chlорpyrifos, and carbendazim, most of which are banned in Europe.

Govinda Bhandari of Wageningen University said farmers used the anti-fungal carbendazim 23 times on the same crop, which in Europe is allowed to be applied only twice. Triazophos and chlорpyrifos in vegetables damage humans' skin, nervous system, reproductive organs, eyes and kidneys, may cause cancer, and affect the foetus. The two pesticides are banned in



GOVINDA BHANDARI

Europe and the US, and they have added profenofos, quinalphos and carbendazim to the list.

Nepal banned dichlorvos and triazophos five months ago, but they continue to be used freely. Bibek Acharya of the Oncology Department at Bir Hospital says: "Such chemicals affect our nervous system and can lead to malignancy."

Out of 183 households surveyed

in Gaindahawa, researchers found that 44.3% used chlорpyrifos on vegetables while 76% used cypermethrin. Excessive use of cypermethrin harms not just human health but also kills useful insects, fish and life.

Even though the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development says Nepal's pesticide use is 396g per hectare, the

Wageningen University research shows that pesticide use is many times higher (2.9kg per hectare) in vegetable patches. Research by ICIMOD 10 years ago agrees with the latter finding, concluding that 2.37kg of anti-fungus chemicals and 1.96kg of pesticides were used per hectare in Lalitpur.

The government has not set limits for the use of pesticides on

various crops. Some farmers have been trained in IPM (Integrated Pest Management) which controls pests and other plant diseases by deploying their natural enemies, but the practice has not spread.

The research also found that farmers did not know about safety gear required while spraying, the safe period required after spraying and dosage. The study revealed that 90% of farmers knew nothing about the colour code for toxicity on pesticide containers.

Though Rapid Pesticide Residue Analysis Labs have been set up in seven places across the country, their data is inaccurate and not all of them are fully functional. Only the Food Technology and Quality Control Department has the equipment to test pesticide residue. But since the government has not set the maximum level, such tests are not done, says Keshav Naupane at the lab.

There are 132 types of pesticides registered for use in Nepal, most of which are among the 635 tons of active ingredients imported in 2018 alone.

On 17 June, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies ordered that vegetables and fruits imported from India should be tested at the border for pesticide residues, but the government withdrew the decision, claiming lack of infrastructure. Then on 10 July, the Supreme Court overturned that decision on a public interest litigation ruling, issuing a short-term interim order to not halt the testing of pesticide residues.

**Ramu Sapkota**

## Rs40 billion outflow by Nepali students

Naya Patrika, 23 July

नयाँ पत्रिका

Nepali students going abroad for higher studies spent 19.7% more in the past year than during the previous one, reaching Rs40.09 billion.

Australia was the destination for 60% of the 63,259 students who took no-objection letters from the Ministry of Education (MoE). Five years ago, only 25,025 Nepali students went abroad to study, spending Rs15.12 billion.



as Nepal. Some of the relatively obscure countries are Malta, Bosnia Herzegovina, Slovenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Costa Rica, Armenia and even Antigua & Barbuda.

"The reason more students are going abroad is that they know they can also work while enrolled," explained Maheswar Sharma of the MoE office that distributes no-objection certificates.

Even though Japan is still number 2, the number of students going to that country has dropped from 10,363 to 8,523. The US has also dropped from fourth position to the seventh most popular destination for Nepali students, receiving 1,491 students, 300 less than the previous year.

However, Cyprus has emerged as the number 3 destination for Nepali students, with its numbers growing three-fold in the past year to 2,302. MoE officials said the reason for the increase could be that it is relatively easier to get admission into colleges there, and students hold the hope of going from there to Europe. The UAE also saw

an increase and now ranks 10, with 849 students going there last year.

Ram Sharan Sapkota at the MoE lists some reasons why Nepali students are going abroad in ever-increasing numbers: "They want to earn money while studying, it is prestigious and there is peer pressure to go abroad, to come back to Nepal with better prospects, and because of the lack of quality higher education in Nepal."

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# Implant service providers take

If women can't come to contraceptives, then contraceptives go to women in Nepal's underserved villages

Rojita Adhikari  
in Baitadi

Two nurses visiting distant Maharudra Health Post in Baitadi had packed up, said goodbye to staff and started down the road when two local women waved down their jeep. “We want to have an implant,” they said. The nurses told the women they would be back next week, but they insisted: “We have walked three hours, leaving our breastfed babies to get our implants.” The nurses relented, the jeep turned around and returned to the health post. The local women were lucky. Only half of health facilities in Nepal provide all five major contraceptives as part of their regular services. Implants and long acting reversible contraceptives (LARC) are not easily available, mainly due to lack of trained staff. Filling that gap are visiting service providers at remote health posts like this one in Baitadi.

Only 43% of all married women of reproductive age in Nepal have access to modern contraceptives, according to the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) 2016 report. Although it was only 26% in 1996, there is still a huge unmet need for family planning.

Nepal's population clock will touch 30 million next month, but the country's falling fertility rate means that population will stop growing in three decades after it reaches 37 million. A Nepali woman on average had 6 babies in the 1960s, now she has 2, which is below the population replacement level.

The two women who stopped the nurses were Hasa Sarki, 23, and her sister Harina, 20 (*pictured, right*). Hasa already has four children, and Harina has two. The sisters live in the same house in Lakhulla village, about three hours walk from the health post.

“When we heard the implant nurses were here, we took off, leaving our food and shouting to my husband to take care of the baby,” said Harina.

The sisters are Dalits from a community of subsistence farmers. Hasa was married at 15 and already has three daughters and a son. The land does not provide food for the family, so Hasa's husband goes to India six months a year.

“My husband and I decided to have five years' pregnancy prevention as we can't afford to have any more children. I am so happy that after today I will be safe for five years,” added Hasa.

One of the nurses, Binda Saud, says the number of women requesting contraceptives even in these remote areas is growing, but the one medic trained in inserting implants was transferred and there is no one to do it in the health post. Which is why the government has mobilised 63 visiting service providers (VSP) in 14 districts across Nepal to promote implants and IUCDs, with support from the UN Population Fund and British agency DFID.

Lack of personnel trained in implants is just one barrier in remote villages, where many people still believe that birth control is against god's wishes. As a result, women give birth annually and many are anaemic, malnourished, and some die.

“One of the worst cases I have faced is that of a woman who had seven children who told me she wanted five years' protection, but when I started the process of putting an implant into her arm she started shaking and saying god will not forgive her; she changed her mind,” recalled the other auxiliary nursing midwife, Madhavi Bhatta.

There are families in these remote mountains where mothers and their daughters-in-law give birth together. Laxmi BK, 37, and



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# contraception to Nepal's poor



ALL PHOTOS: ROJITA ADHIKARI

**TIMELY ADVICE:** After providing implants at a remote health post in Baitadi recently, visiting service providers Madhavi Bhatta and Ashmita Bohora warn sisters Hasa and Harina Sarki (*seated, left*) of possible side effects.

The sisters live in Lakhulla village in Baitadi's rugged and roadless mountains (*below, left*). It is a three-hour walk to the health post, where the implant procedure is carried out.

her daughter-in-law Puja BK, 19, gave birth within months of each other. Laxmi was married when she was 14, and now has 8 children, including the youngest who is 18 months. Puja got married when she was 16, and gave birth to her first child a year ago.

"I don't know much about contraception, I used an injection once but it led to bleeding and I thought I would die, so I decided never to use it again," Laxmi said.

The VSP approach was piloted by the government in Ramechhap district in 2015, and after positive results was expanded in 2018.

"It is a cost-effective way to substantially increase the uptake of five modern family planning methods in areas of low use and high unmet demand for contraception," explained Amit Dhungel of UNFPA Nepal.

The government is also encouraged by the success of the initiative, especially for delivery of family planning. "VSPs travel to remote areas which are difficult for the government to reach," said Kabita Aryal at the Department of Health in Kathmandu. "That fills the gap in health facilities and health workers."

Getting the right contraception in the right place at the right time can change a Nepali woman's life. That hope could be seen in the smiles on the faces of Hasa and Harina Sarki last month as they hurried home to their families with their new implants. 🇳🇵



## Happier now

Kalawati Chand, 31, from Khaligad village in Baitadi, (*above*) received an implant at a VSP camp two years ago, and says it is a big relief not to be worried about getting pregnant.

"I already had two abortions, and I used to get pregnant every year, which means I was not able to focus on my children and even the farm. This had led to discord in the family," Kalawati said. "But now I have more time for my children, husband and to go to the fields. We are happier now."

Setu Mahata, 26, (*below*) was waiting at Udayadev Health Post in Baitadi, a 1.5 hour walk from her home recently. The mother of two had been taking pills, but she heard that a VSP was coming and wanted to get a 5-year protective implant.

"It is really convenient that the nurse comes here, otherwise I would have to spend two days going to another health post, and that would be expensive," she said.



## ISPs

Call them ISPs, (implant service providers) these nurses are at the frontlines of reducing Nepal's birth rate. The visiting service providers are female staff nurses or auxiliary nursing midwives (ANMs) trained to use long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) and provide family planning services, especially in hard to reach areas and for minority groups. They also coach and support existing health workers to deliver quality, comprehensive family planning services.

"I have been working as a VSP since the start and I have travelled to all 69 health facilities of Baitadi district. We have provided more than 2,100 IUCDs and implants in this district alone," says ANM Madhavi Bhatta.

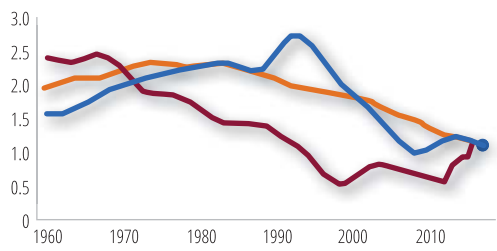
Travelling in one of Nepal's remotest and most rugged districts is not easy. Bhatta sometimes has to walk nine hours a day to reach health posts. What motivates her is the smile she sees on the faces of the women once they get their implants.

"I can see the happiness, relief and satisfaction on their faces. It makes me forget all the hardship of getting to them," says Bhatta.

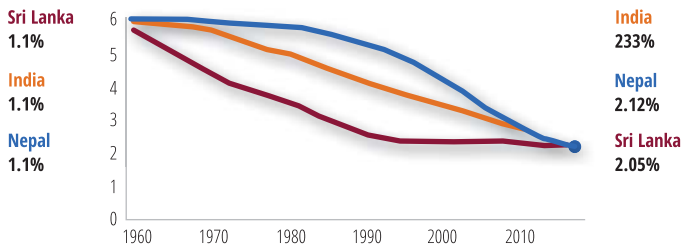
## DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

Nepal's population growth rate and total fertility rate (average number of babies per mother) has declined dramatically, but there is still a big unmet demand for contraceptives in remote rural areas among mothers on the margins.

Population Growth Rates



Total Fertility Rates



SOURCE: DEMOGRAPHIC HEALTH SURVEY 2016

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# Daru Pipeline

Some of you this week sent The Ass highly confidential email messages with both read ends encrypted asking:

- What is the Crown Prince of Venezuela doing in Kathmandu at this juncture in our nation’s history?
- Why the hush-hush meeting between Co-Supremo Lotus Flower and the newly-appointed Intelligent-in-Chief of Uncooked?
- How come Nepal and Georgia signed a no-visa agreement, and does this mean Nepalis can now land at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta and get visas on arrival?

These are all valid concerns, and my answer to the all of them has been: “Next question, please.”

This was also the week that India launched Chandrayan-2, the space probe that is lassoing itself in Earth orbit as we speak to gain escape velocity and land on the South Pole of the heavenly body.

Even though the moon is on our national flag, we in Nepal need not be overly concerned about the southern neighbour sending an unmanned lunar probe, since we have already installed manned lunatic space cadets in government.

In spite of poet laureate Laxmi Prasad Devkota’s exhortation that Nepal aim for the moon, we do not really need a lunar mission since the Baudha-Jorpati road already accurately simulates conditions on the lunar surface with more craters than on the moon’s far side. Similar to the moon, parts of Bhaisepati also never had water.

Speaking of water, although it recently declared itself dry, the Indian state of Bihar is all wet this monsoon. Ever since Nepal and Bihar established bilateral relations the two have shared cordial ties based on the age-old custom of not having customs. This has facilitated mutually beneficial two-way trade. Nepal conducts tariff-free export of gold biscuits to India, and imports Britannia Thin Arrowroot biscuits. Nepal exports oxen to West Bengal, and imports water buffaloes to meet our domestic demand for momos.

Now that the Barauni-Amlekhganj Oil Pipeline is in the pipeline, it can further enhance two-way trade. Diesel has now started being pumped to Nepal, and the pipes can be used to export the same diesel back to Bihar since there is a price differential between Nepal and India. Re-exporting imported petroleum to India can help Nepal balance its growing trade deficit, and the two-way pipeline would be much more efficient than the diesel currently being smuggled by bicycle across no-man’s land in jerkins.

Nepal can even have a trade surplus with India if we use the pipeline to send our best moonshine to bootleggers in Bihar. The beauty of it is that we don’t even need to pump the alcohol down — gravity will do it for us, thus reducing overheads.

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