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HOTSEAT: PM Oli being interviewed by Bhusan Dahal for his *Fireside* interview in Baluwatar on Monday, just 12 hours before being rushed to hospital for an appendectomy.



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State of health

Prime Minister KP Oli's new health emergency on Tuesday has thrown off his meticulously crafted plans, and added a sense of urgency to the question of his succession.

After doctors advised him to get a second kidney transplant earlier this month, Oli had put his house in order, appointing loyalists to the cabinet and changing advisers. He planned to leave for a transplant abroad as soon as a donor was identified. Sources said two female relatives were undergoing matching tests.

But on Tuesday he was rushed to hospital for an appendectomy.

His condition has improved, but doctors say a transplant is now out of the question for several months. He will need regular dialysis for the time being.

Since his decade in jail in the 1970s right up to the current prime ministership, Oli is known to ignore doctors' orders to rest. But close aides say it is also this strong personal drive that makes him ride out health emergencies. This time, the combination of kidney and other ailments may complicate recovery.

Oli recorded an interview at noon in Baluwatar for Bhusan Dahal's *Fireside* show on

Kantipur TV (pictured, above) 12 hours before he was hospitalised. Dahal said the prime minister looked alert: "In fact, I had expected him to be more frail, but he was jovial and perfectly fit."

About his health, Oli underplayed his kidney problems, telling Dahal: "Dialysis takes time, but I am right back to work. It is a normal process. I will be around for another 15-20 years."

In the interview he also took a dig at co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal, with whom he had agreed

K P Sharma Oli @kps Sharma Oli
बितेका दुई दिनयता म एपेन्डिसाइटिसको शल्यक्रिया गरी स्वास्थ्योपचार गराइरहेको छु । यतिबेला मेरो स्वास्थ्य तोब्र गतिमा सुधार भइरहेको छ । स्वास्थ्यस्थिति बारे चासो राख्नुहुने शुभ्रेच्छा प्रकट गर्नुहुने सम्पूर्ण दाजुभाइ तथा दिदीबहिनीहरूमा हार्दिक धन्यवाद व्यक्त गर्दछु ।

For the last two days I have been receiving medical treatment following my appendicitis surgery. I am recovering rapidly. My gratitude to all those concerned about my health who have wished me for my recovery.

to look after the government while Dahal headed the party. But Oli told *Fireside*: "We are both caretakers, but in seniority I am more senior, and he is the other chair."

On Thursday, the PM tweeted that he was 'recovering rapidly' and thanked well wishers (left).

Party insiders say the time may be near for Oli to step down, but it is the prospect of handing over the prime ministership to Dahal that is making him hold on. Former water resources minister Dipak Gyawali says the NCP never really unified, and that fissures have started to appear between the former UML and ex-Maoists.

He adds: "This is going to be a Stalinist type succession in which every contender has dirt on the other, so you either win or you are a dead loser." 🇳🇵



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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS

Politics is dirty. The manpower business is dirtier. Mixing the two can mean the difference of life or death for hundreds of thousands of desperate Nepalis seeking work overseas.

Labour Minister Gokarna Bista (*pictured*) was sacked last week in the cabinet reshuffle by Prime Minister KP Oli under pressure from the recruitment mafia — the cartel of unscrupulous middlemen who profit from the blood, sweat and tears of fellow Nepalis. The recruiters had been baying for his head ever since Bista started dismantling the corrupt system that profited from exploiting and abusing workers.

Immediately after the minister's removal, the Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies (NAFEA) published a press release warning the government's department of foreign employment to take decisions only after consultation with them. Is that a threat? You bet it is. And it shows just how powerful the mafia is that it can go about intimidating the state.

What is more, NAFEA's blatant warning was a not-so-subtle 'you are next' reminder to Bista's successor, Rameswar Rai Yadav, not to deign to obstruct their rent-seeking activities by pushing through Bista's reforms.

Prime Minister Oli ostensibly carried out his long-awaited reshuffle to address public disillusionment with his administration's failure of governance. Given that honest heads rolled, politicians with questionable reputation were inducted, and corrupt non-performers were retained, the intention was to consolidate Oli's position ahead of his prolonged absence for health reasons. It had nothing to do with rewarding integrity and effectiveness.

Bista represented a much-needed voice in the foreign employment industry, but his strong stance against unscrupulous recruiters cost him his job. Within weeks of assuming power, he stopped workers from going to Malaysia in order to break the syndicate that was overcharging workers. His ministry amended the Foreign Employment Act, reducing the number of manpower companies from over 1,200 to 850 by increasing their security deposit and facilitating mergers. This was to ensure that only professional and honest organisations remained in the industry, and to stop recruitment companies from cutting competition by engaging in visa trading.

Bista was aggressively pursuing bilateral agreements with countries including Malaysia, Japan, UAE and Mauritius, which included provisions on equal pay for equal work and zero-cost for migrant workers. To

minimise fraudulent job offers his ministry required that all demand letters for workers be verified at Nepali diplomatic missions abroad. The agreement with Japan barred recruitment agencies, given the record of aspirant workers paying more than Rs1 million each for opportunities in Japan. These pro-worker reforms cut the illegitimate profits of recruitment agencies, who had it easy in the past and consequently vociferously contested his position.

Bista was starting to get crossborder recognition for his initiatives. Following the signing of the Nepal-Malaysia MoU, a writ submitted at the Supreme Court in Dhaka against a recruitment syndicate in Bangladesh that sent workers to Malaysia referred to Bista's initiative as a model. He took a lead in the Colombo Process to bring labour-sending countries together.

Yet, his sacking was expected. A recent editorial in this paper warned about the many who wanted the Malaysia agreement to fail. In the last 20 months, the wave of rumours

about Bista's possible ousting had demoralised his ministry. The minister's comrades in the party were protecting the mafia, and were also jealous of his popularity as a can-do labour minister, and in his previous job as water resource minister.

Reshuffling politicians comes with consequences that are not immediately apparent. The

bureaucrats Bista inspired are despondent. The message this episode conveys is discouraging for any Nepali who wants to innovate, break the status quo, and does not want to be complacent. It is too early to judge the new labour minister's capacity or integrity. But Bista's unceremonious ouster sends the message to others in government to lie low

and play it safe.

Bista's zero-cost migration initiative would have been difficult to enforce not just for Nepal but for all labour-sending countries faced with this shared challenge. With his departure, the Oli administration has sent a clear message that predatory recruiters are free to swindle poor Nepali workers as much as they want, exploiting their desperation for jobs.

On 21 November, Bista walked out of Singha Darbar after his farewell event and took a taxi home. He looked undefeated, perhaps validated by the outpouring of support shown on social media. His last words to his despondent team and gathered media: "The post of a minister is temporary. Life itself is temporary. I am coming out of this with more inspiration and vigour to serve the country."



By sacking Gokarna Bista, the Oli administration has sent a clear message that predatory recruiters are free to swindle poor Nepali workers as much as they want, exploiting their desperation for jobs.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Ten years ago this week Nepali Times edition #478 (27 Nov 2009 - 03 Dec 2009) talked about how the prime minister was in Singapore for health treatment and the country was in disarray. Sound familiar? Excerpts from our editorial:

It is the curse of Nepali politics that a party boasts about its democratic credentials by 'allowing' parliament to function for three days'. The most inclusive house ever elected in Nepali history was blocked for five months, there is a logjam of legislation waiting for ratification, the budget delay deadlocked development, and important national issues were not debated.

Meanwhile, despite the drama of the NC and Maoist leaders meeting around a hospital bed in Singapore, there is no end in sight to the political deadlock. At this stage, it is difficult to say what NC Chairman Girija Prasad Koirala seeks to achieve by forming a 'high-level political mechanism' when grassroots politics bristles with antipathy and apathy towards the governing coalition.



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ONLINE PACKAGES



BACK TO THE LAND

Farmers in the Tarai are learning how to mitigate flood risk during the increasingly deadly monsoon months by planting new crops like sugarcane. This has the added benefit of providing families with additional income. Watch video of villagers adapting to climate change. Story: *page 14-15.*



RETURN OF THE GHARIAL

The nearly extinct Gharial has been found to be breeding in the wild for the first time in nearly four decades in Nepal's Bardia National Park, giving new hope for conservation of the critically endangered species. See photos and videos of the breeding site. Story: *page 8-9.*

ENERGY SOURCES

Government incentives to private business will mean this could really happen, instead of just having dreams as usual ('An energy windfall for Nepal?', Kushal Gurung, #985).

Alan Roadnight

■ I agree that solar is the way to go. You can't go wrong when you are investing in something so sustainable. We have huge potential in hydropower or at least that is what we were taught in school. I don't know if our potential in solar is as big or if it's being investigated.

Sajan Acharya

■ Complementing hydro with solar/wind is absolutely necessary to 'firm up' power given the portfolio of hydro will be/is run-of-the-river ('Making Nepal powerful', Editorial, #985). Whether we resort to solar or wind or both, the underlying technology therein is battery technology. We need to enter into this transition.

Arun Dhoj Adhikary

CABINET RESHUFFLE

This is protectionism of their own jobs and power ('Some honest heads roll in Nepal reshuffle', Ramu Sapkota, #985). It's really sad to see that the people of Nepal are being treated as second-class citizens — great country, great people... poor leadership.

Steve L Roberts

■ It is really disappointing to hear eminent leader Gokarna Bista has been detached from the Oli squad. He will be in the hearts of the people.

Hem Lal Gautam

LIVING HISTORY

Beautiful story, beautiful objects, beautiful country, compassionate people ('The art of living', Kunda Dixit, #985). This is Nepal. #visittherealneal2020

Gary Wornell

GRAMMY

Congratulations Manoseji ('First Nepali to be nominated for a Grammy Award', Sanghamitra Subba, nepalitimes.com/page 7). We are proud of you. All Nepali music lovers are eagerly awaiting a positive result in your favour on 27 January 2020, award announcement day.

Santosh Upadhyaya

WHAT'S TRENDING



Flog the flag

by *the Ass*

What makes Nepal really unique is not Mt Everest, Lumbini or even Pappu Construction. It is our double triangle. So why not flog our flag at prominent landmarks around the world for #VisitNepal2020? Go online to check out some of your favourite donkey's suggestions.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Blood, sweat and tears

by *Editorial*

By sacking Gokarna Bista, the Oli administration has sent a clear message that predatory recruiters are free to swindle poor Nepali workers as much as they want, exploiting their desperation for jobs. Visit nepalitimes.com for this widely circulated piece.

Most popular on Twitter

First Nepali to be nominated for a Grammy Award

Flautist Manose Newa has been nominated for a Grammy Award for his playing on musician Deva Premal's album, *Deva*, in the Best New Age Album category. Our story was read by thousands. Find out more about his music and his inspiration on page 7.

Most visited online page

Activists decry animal slaughter at Nepal temple

by *Sewa Bhattarai*

Mahagadimai Municipality in Bara is preparing for millions of visitors for a mass animal sacrifice that has tarnished Nepal's image as a peaceful and compassionate nation. The Nepal Supreme Court ruled against it in 2016, but will the ruling be effective?

Most commented

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Nepali household items are disappearing. So are words like चलेसि, मान्द्रो, दिक्की that described them. By preserving the objects, Judith Conant Chase has also saved the words from extinction. Read the book review in @NepaliTimes

Fraser Sugden @frasersugden
A tragic loss of cultural heritage but also emblematic of the comprador capitalism pursued by every regime over the last century. We have seen collapse of cottage industries, and dependence on cheap low-quality imported goods, now worsened further by road-building frenzy.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
A moving tribute to Takashi Miyahara, a Japanese who became a Nepali citizen, by @kundadixit. Read the full obituary here.

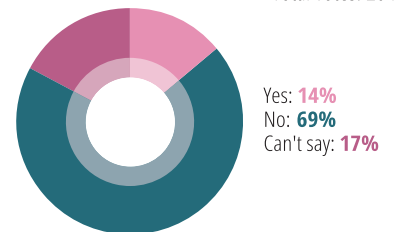
Swarup Pokhrel @argeniter
My grand dad, who partnered with the great Miyahara to set up Trans Himalayan Tours and the Everest View Hotel, broke the news to me earlier today. He spoke in great length about Miyahara's optimism. Fitting tribute.



Weekly Internet Poll #985

Q. Do you think this week's cabinet shuffle will have a positive impact?

Total votes: 204



Weekly Internet Poll #986
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Will Nepal shine at the South Asian Games being hosted in Kathmandu?

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Is the Nepal Tarai prepared for winter?

There is no excuse for Nepalis in this day and age to die from the cold

It is a common sight every day on the inner streets of Kathmandu to see four-wheeled push carts (*thela*) loaded with colourful fleece jackets and trousers, being sold door to door. A seller tells potential buyers that his business is really bad this year because it has not been as cold as in previous years.



½ FULL
Anil Chitrakar

He then looks up at the sky with a bit of cloud cover and utters a short prayer. If it rains, prevailing wisdom has it, winter will set in and his business will pick up.

Sooner or later winter will be upon us and people are getting ready: dry-cleaning down jackets, stacking firewood and charcoal, and sealing gaps in windows. Diets are also changing — momo soup is on the menu.

From Khumbu to the Kathmandu Valley, and all the way to Hilsa on Humla's border with China, people are hunkering down for the winter. And if the half-metre of snow in Himachal is any indication, this will be another frigid one.

The hills and mountains are prepared, but why is it that it's in the Tarai where people freeze to death? The person selling the jackets from the cart had a few insights. His first and immediate answer was: because they are poor.



GOPEN RAI

Those words are supposed to end all conversations — the Ultimate Truth. In a country that has witnessed 10 periodic plans and almost 7 decades of foreign aid, thousands of NGOs with glossy impact reports and PowerPoint presentations with bullet points, why are Nepalis still poor and dying of cold?

Where does the government's budget allocated for poverty alleviation go? How are our tax rupees spent? How is it that remittances do not seem to make

a dent in the problem? The Tarai districts have the highest proportion of young men working overseas, yet that is where deaths due to cold are highest.

Mountain farmers have been moving down to the Tarai for centuries because of the flat, fertile land and multiple crops. The Tarai has mango groves, rivers and wetlands, endless fields of rice, mustard and sugarcane, fish and duck breeding ponds, the East-West highway and a ready market across the border in India. So, why

are people poorer there?

The first news of death from cold this winter will prompt collection drives for warm clothes. Selfies on Facebook posts will prove that the country has no shortage of do-gooders. Yet, teachers are not preparing students with the knowledge of how to stay warm — home insulation, keeping classroom doors and windows closed — and about the dangers of indoor pollution.

The Tarai winter fog is getting worse every year because of a

combination of factors: industrial pollution and smog, the spread of winter irrigation that raises the concentration of water vapour in the air, climate change. The sun does not shine for weeks on end — a phenomenon that stretches right across the Indo-Gangetic plains.

It is time to find local, long-term solutions that are creative, based on indigenous knowledge, resourcefulness and the desire to lead healthy, prosperous lives.

The past prosperity of the Madhes can be seen in Mithila art: the plentiful clothes, jewellery, food, feasts, houses and livestock, which reveal a people who did not suffer from want and were definitely not dying from the cold.

These illustrations give us a vision for what was and what can be. Engineers and architects can train builders in environment-friendly indigenous designs using local materials like clay and tiles. People at the *palikas* need to be directed on what designs should be approved to keep people warm in winter, and in the searing heat of the Tarai summer.

The get-ready-for-winter awareness campaigns can start during Chaat, when measures to stave off the cold can be disseminated. There is no excuse in this day and age for any Nepali to die from the cold. So, let us stop looking for excuses. 🇳🇵

Anil Chitrakar is President of Siddharthinc.



Turkish marks 6 years serving Kathmandu

Turkish Airlines Kathmandu celebrated its 6th year of operations between Istanbul and Kathmandu on Saturday 24 November with a gala event at Gokarna Resort.

The only country spanning two continents, Turkey has long served as a bridge for people travelling from east to west and vice-versa. So it is appropriate that Turkish Airlines is the only European airline flying to and from Kathmandu, connecting Nepal to its 308 worldwide destinations via the Istanbul hub. It has been called 'The New Silk Road', and the airline is taking advantage of Turkey's location to become one of the world's largest carriers.

"For the past six years we have been bridging Nepal with the rest of the world, through our ever-expanding fleet and flight network. We will continue to be the main supporter for Nepal's tourism and trade," said Turkish Airlines General Manager for Nepal, Abdullah Tuncer Kecici (pictured, above) adding that the carrier hopes to contribute to making Visit Nepal 2020 a success.

Turkish Airlines was voted the best airline of Europe, and serves as an important link for Nepal-bound tourists, businessmen, Kathmandu-based expatriates and the Nepali diaspora because it is the only carrier that connects Nepal directly to Europe.

Istanbul's advantage is its location, which is ideal for short and long layovers for passengers travelling between Nepal and South America, Australia, North America and the Far East. It's just a one-stop hop from anywhere in the world.

Eight months after its overnight shift from Istanbul's old airport to its new one, known as the 'Great Move', Turkish passengers now have much more efficient transfers and connections. With three of the airport's six runways and four of the five concourses complete, the airport is well on its way to becoming the world's busiest. By 2025, Turkey's flag carrier will have a 500-aircraft fleet serving 400 cities around the world.

Most passengers flying Turkish Airlines to and from Kathmandu transit this 76 million sq m terminal with five

piers and 145 boarding gates, so the airline is promoting Nepal tourism in Turkey, encouraging Nepali visitors to visit the country or take advantage of stopovers en route to other destinations.

Transit passengers can get city tours or even layovers if the time between flights is more than 9 hours for business and 12 hours for economy. Those with roundtrip tickets and connection periods of over 20 hours can get a stopover privilege of a free 1-night stay in a 4-star hotel (economy class passengers) or 2 nights in a 5-star hotel (business class passengers) in Istanbul.

"At the new airport we are giving passengers to and from Nepal much more comfort and flexibility, with better connectivity during Visit Nepal 2020," Abdullah Tuncer Kecici said.

The Gokarna anniversary event was attended by members of the Kathmandu-based business and diplomatic community, travel trade executives and premium members of Turkish Airlines Miles&Smiles loyalty program.

A Turkish Airlines chef was on hand to add culinary delights like baklava and sarma to the afternoon, as guests enjoyed games, destination selfies, a treasure hunt and golf. Grand prizes included business class and economy roundtrip tickets to any Turkish Airlines destination, package tours to Baku/Turkey and dinner/lunch vouchers from various hotels in Kathmandu. 🇳🇵

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Qatar catering standard

Qatar Aircraft Catering Company (QACC) is the first organisation in the world to achieve ISO22000:2018 certification from



Bureau Veritas with UKAS accreditation. QACC has been working diligently with Bureau Veritas for the past 11 months to ensure compliance with the new standard, confirming that QACC's food safety management system meets the highest standards.

Ncell recharge offer

Rechargema Chamatkar offers a chance to all prepaid and post-paid Ncell customers recharging Rs100 or more in a week to win a weekly and monthly cash prize of Rs2 lakh and Rs10 lakh. The five winners of the first week (17-23 November) will be awarded their prizes by Friday, 29 November.



Hyatt chef

Hyatt Regency Kathmandu has appointed Debarya Chakraborty as Executive Chef. With more than 20 years of experience within the food and beverage (F&B)



fraternity, he has extensive knowledge in all aspects of F&B management and excellent leadership, multitasking, interpersonal and menu engineering skills.

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NIC Asia Capital Limited is the first merchant bank to get ISO 9001:2015 certification, ensuring fast and quality customer service. NIC Asia also operates the NIC Asia Growth Fund and NIC Asia Balanced Fund.

Soaltee cake mixing

Soaltee Crowne Plaza hosted its annual cake mixing ceremony for Christmas on 27 November 2019 to mark the beginning of the festive season. Guests joined in the fun-filled event, which included mixing of nuts and berries with various liquor.

prabhu BANK



KUNDA DIXIT

Nepal rises in Prosperity Index

Nepal has risen in this year’s overall prosperity rankings, but is still the 22nd poorest out of the 29 countries in Asia-Pacific.

The London-based Legatum Institute’s 2019 Prosperity Index released on Monday analyses 167 countries around the world on 12 different measures of prosperity, from economic metrics to safety and security, personal freedom, health, education and living conditions.

The index shows that Nepal is currently ranked 115th in the world for overall prosperity, a rise of 13 places since 2009.

“Over the last decade, Nepal has seen the biggest improvement in safety and security, in which it rose from 158th to 78th globally, but it has also seen improvements across the

other institutional pillars of personal freedom and social capital,” said Shaun Flanagan, Director of the Metrics Team at The Legatum Prosperity Index, which is issued every year.

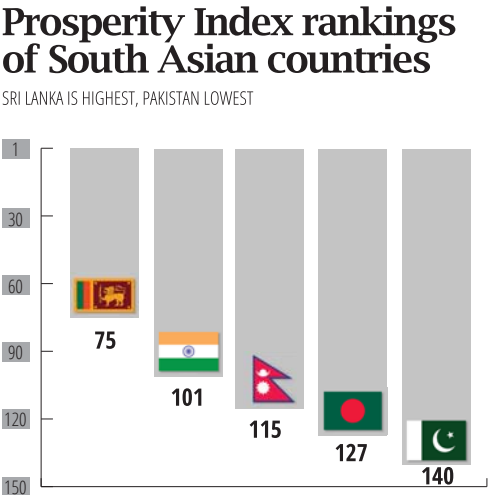
However, despite an improvement in Nepal’s economic quality, the openness of the economy has stagnated, and consequently the country has fallen from 117th to 130th in the world rankings in the last 10 years.

“Personal freedom is important for a country to be prosperous. The personal freedom pillar incorporates elements such as freedom of assembly and association, freedom of speech, absence of legal discrimination and social tolerance. This is Nepal’s strongest pillar, ranking 67th in the world. The country bucks the global trend of decline in personal freedom over the past decade, and its

improvement has resulted in it moving up 14 places in the rankings,” Flanagan told *Nepali Times*.

The 2019 index reveals that global prosperity is at its highest ever level, with 148 out of 167 countries experiencing greater prosperity than a decade ago — mostly in the Asia-Pacific. This increase has been driven by more open economies and better health, education, and living conditions around the world. However, weaker personal freedom and deteriorating governance are holding back further improvements in prosperity, finds the index.

Nepal’s peace process, and freedoms guaranteed in the new constitution are positive factors, but the country needs to work on improving its investment climate and



Rich man’s world

- Global prosperity continues to improve, but the gap between the strongest and weakest performing countries is still growing.
- Economies are more open due to improvement in the investment environment and digital connectivity, as well as a reduction in administrative burdens.
- Stagnating institutions are holding back further improvements to global prosperity.
- People are more tolerant, but there is less freedom to speak, associate and assemble.

protecting its environment, the Institute says.

Adds Flanagan: “With the strong improvement seen in safety and security, Nepal is well set to build upon this and strengthen other areas of prosperity. In particular, Nepal could improve its prosperity by strengthening its investment environment and enterprise conditions, as well as improving the quality of its natural environment, all of which have seen a decline over the past decade.”

Flanagan added that a nation is genuinely prosperous when it has effective institutions, an open economy, and empowered people — all three domains are important. However, safety and security is the foundation of any successful nation building, as it enables the other pillars of prosperity to follow. 🇳🇵

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Miyahara-san: a life devoted to Nepal



SONIYA MIYAHARA

Takashi Miyahara, who died on 24 November at age 85, first came to Nepal in 1962, and never left. He saw vast potential in this country, invested in many landmark hotels, married a Nepali woman, became a Nepali citizen, and when he saw politicians ruining the country he contested the 2008 elections to try to change things. He lost that election, but never lost hope. He was always brimming with ideas, and listening to this tenacious Nepali of Japanese descent one wished he would one day become prime minister of his adopted country. Miyahara’s office featured a map of

Nepal that was a blueprint for the country’s infrastructure-led development. An east-west electric railway artery linked to north-south feeder roads with tunnels, and cable-cars to hilltop tourist sites. He wanted to shift Nepal’s capital to Chitwan to reduce the pressure on the Kathmandu Valley. He had master plans for hydropower, tourism and water supply. These perfectly do-able plans were in the manifesto of the Nepal National Development Party that he founded. The party failed to win even a single seat in the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections, but Miyahara kept trying

to change Nepal’s fatalistic culture by setting an example with hard work and putting the national interest first. Over the course of his life, the jovial Japanese trekked across most of Nepal’s 77 districts, and got to know Nepal better than most Nepalis. He felt the country’s challenges were not insurmountable: with vision and hard work they could be overcome. He also believed that the older failed politicians should give way to younger blood, and he tried to mentor the next generation of politicians through his party. Miyahara set up Trans Himalayan Tours

IN THE LAP OF THE HIMALAYA: Takashi Miyahara is cremated below Everest on Wednesday, 27 November.

and built the iconic Hotel Everest View at 3,880m in 1975, even getting permission from the government to hew out an airstrip in Syangboche. He established the Himalaya Hotel in Patan, and was already bringing 1,000 high-end Japanese tourists to Nepal in the 1970s. He was working on his other dream project, Annapurna View Hotel in Sarangkot, till his last days. Miyahara always felt that tourism held the key to Nepal’s development, and told this paper once: “Tourism will not only increase national income but also help Nepal become self-reliant. This means using Nepal’s natural resources like rivers and forests and moulding them for tourism purposes, and also harnessing their potential through hydropower generation and transportation.” Miyahara dreamt big, and tried to get often apathetic Nepali officials excited about tourism, infrastructure, energy and nature conservation. He was met with disinterest, but that never deterred him. He told *Nepali Times* in another interview in 2015: “The public must be aware of the political failure that led to this. Bureaucrats don’t take decisions and just shift responsibility. There is greed, and society lacks a moral compass.” Takashi Miyahara’s attempt to change Nepal’s political culture remains unfinished. But there are many young Nepalis whom he inspired who will build the future of new Nepal. He is survived by his wife and daughter. Miyahara’s body will lie in state in a gumba in Chuchepati and will be cremated on Wednesday in Syangboche. Said his daughter Sonia Miyahara: “My father wanted to be cremated near Mt Everest. The Himalaya is where his heart is.” **Kunda Dixit**

Vinaya Kasajoo, 72



Right to Information activist and community media proponent Vinaya Kasajoo died on 26 November in Kathmandu at age 72. Kasajoo devoted his career to transparency and accountability in government through a free press. Starting his career in Madan Pokhara of Palpa, he was a pioneer of community radio and rural communications for development. It was in recognition of his contribution that the government appointed him founding chair of the National Information Commission, where he pushed for greater transparency in government via freedom of information. This set a historic precedent for others to use this provision. He also served for a time as director of the National News Agency (RSS). In later years, Kasajoo became known as a writer of children’s literature, both translating English works into Nepali and writing 50 of his own books. He was suffering from hypertension and diabetes when he died at Mediciti Hospital.

Binaya Gurubacharya, 82



Nepal correspondent of the US-based Associated Press news agency for nearly four decades, Binaya Gurubacharya died last week in Kathmandu. Gurubacharya covered most of the landmark events in recent Nepali history for the world through AP, from King Mahendra’s coup in 1960, the coronation of King Birendra, the 1980 referendum, the royal massacre of 2001 and the Maoist conflict. He was also on the frontlines of coverage of mountaineering expeditions in the Nepal Himalaya, and served as Kathmandu correspondent of the Japanese newspaper *Mainichi Shimbun*. Gurubacharya was a founding member, and president for a time, of the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ). NEFEJ used the freedoms after 1990 to not just push environmental activism over issues like the Chobar Cement Factory and Arun III, but also to open up space for media coverage of other political and economic matters. Gurubacharya was suffering from Parkinson’s disease.



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How many rhinos is enough rhinos?

Despite Nepal achieving zero rhino poaching for the past five years, conservationists say the country should not let its guard down given the official extinction of the Sumatran rhinoceros in Malaysia last week.

There has been a rise in rhino deaths in Nepal recent years, for various reasons such as natural death, overcrowding in protected areas and human-animal conflict due to habitat encroachment. But the biggest threat to rhino conservation in the post-poaching era is the growing infrastructure that crisscrosses nature reserves.

Conservationists interviewed for this article said sustaining rhino numbers will be even more challenging because the animal's floodplain habitat is affected by upstream infrastructure development, pollution and disease, as well as the impact of climate change.

In order to assess future priorities for wildlife conservation in general and rhino protection in particular, the department of national parks and wildlife conservation is currently conducting a baseline study of the carrying capacity of Chitwan National Park for rhinos. A census of the total rhino population will also be done next year.



KUNDA DIXIT

The population of the Greater One-horned Rhinoceros was estimated at 1,000 in Chitwan until the 1950s. But with hunting, poaching and transmigration of people from the mountains to the valley after the eradication of malaria in the 1960s, the number plummeted to less than 100.

This prompted the government to establish an armed Rhino Patrol Unit in 1961, and in 1973 it declared the remaining prime rhino habitats along the Rapti, Narayani and Reu rivers as Chitwan National Park.

Over the years, successful efforts by the government and conservation agencies translated into a gradual rise in the rhino population. Of the 645 rhinos counted in the last census in 2015, 605 individuals were found in Chitwan National Park alone, with the rest scattered in Parsa, Bardia and Shuklaphanta reserves.

Climate change is the latest threat to wildlife, with rhinos particularly affected because weather extremes have aggravated water scarcity, flash floods and prey decline. A major flood in 2017 washed away about a dozen rhinos to India, and only seven of them were rescued and returned to Chitwan. Changes in vegetation, due to both human and natural causes, is leading to loss of grasslands, a prime rhino habitat.

Next year's rhino census can determine the effectiveness of past conservation efforts and help to craft a future plan of action. The census is conducted every 4-5 years, but the 2019 census was postponed due to lack of funding.

The current carrying-capacity study is also expected to provide key information for park managers and the government that will feed into future rhino conservation initiatives. It will answer key questions like whether Chitwan has exceeded its carrying capacity for 600 rhinos and if so, if the animals can be moved to other national parks as they have been in the past.

Said Bishnu Prasad Shrestha of the department of national parks and wildlife conservation: "At the moment we are in the planning and coordinating stage for the census. Together with the ongoing carrying-capacity study, it will give us a future direction and help us formulate strategies moving forward for the conservation of rhinos in Nepal."

Sonia Awale

2020 wildlife film showcase

Leading wildlife, environment and development agencies are teaming up for a global film showcase that will highlight conservation efforts to reduce the risk of unprecedented extinction of species as a result of human overexploitation. The showcase will be among the global events that will anchor next year's UN World Wildlife Day (3 March) on the theme Sustaining All Life on Earth.

The winning and finalist films will be shown throughout 2020, which has been dubbed the global Biodiversity Super Year. Winners will be announced at a high-level event to coincide with the global celebration of UN World Wildlife Day at UN Headquarters in New York on 3 March 2020. The call for film entries closes on 4 January 2020 and finalists will be announced in early February 2020.

Gharial found breeding in the wild after 37 years



More than 100 gharial hatchlings were found in Bardia National Park

Conservationists from the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and Biodiversity Conservancy Nepal have discovered the first successful nesting and breeding site of gharial crocodiles in Nepal since 1982. More than 100 gharial hatchlings were found in Bardia National Park, giving new hope for the conservation of the critically endangered species.

The findings of ZSL's EDGE (Evolutionary Distinct and Globally Endangered) of Existence program were published by the IUCN SSC Crocodile Specialist Group last week. The only other population of gharial known to be breeding is in Chitwan National Park.

"Understanding whether gharials were breeding in Bardia National Park was considered to be a top priority for the species, as

World's rangers face

As many as 5 rangers may have been killed in Africa and Asia

Himali Dixit
in Chitwan

It is an indication of just how dangerous the job of a ranger is that during the 4 days of the 9th World Ranger Congress (WRC) in Nepal earlier this month, up to 5 rangers may have been killed around the world.

Opening the congress (right) in Chitwan National Park, outgoing International Ranger Federation President Sean Willmore asked for a minute's silence for the 1,038 colleagues who had fallen in the line of duty over the past 10 years — mostly in protected areas of Asia and Africa.

More than half of them were killed by armed poachers, so it's no surprise the congress looked at ways to make the job safer for those at the frontlines of protecting natural resources and biodiversity. Ranger welfare means safety, but also health, psychological well-being and job security.

A worldwide survey of rangers conducted by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) released recently reveals that inadequate training and lack of basic equipment like shelter, uniforms and communication devices, puts rangers at risk and makes them ill prepared for the dangers they face.

Willmore asked congress-goers: "Which would you like first,



upcoming plans to divert nearby river systems, which would likely have an impact on the habitat and quality of the river for gharial, are currently underway,” said Rikki Gumbs, a researcher at ZSL. “Given the species is limited to around five populations across its entire range, this is such a positive discovery, and a critical step for the long-term recovery of the species in Nepal.”

With fewer than 100 adults remaining in Nepal, several fragmented populations in India and being virtually extinct across the rest of their former range, gharials are among the world’s most endangered reptiles. The species has suffered a 98% decline since the 1940s, mostly due to destruction of its riverine habitat caused by construction of dams, irrigation canals, sand-mining, pollution and agriculture. Over-hunting for skins, egg collection, accidental bycatch and pollution in the form of toxic effluents dumped into rivers from factories upstream also led to the decline.

The discovery means experts can now prioritise this population for conservation action, including conducting feasibility studies into whether gharials can be translocated from the south in Chitwan, and researching survival rates of hatchlings. This will require strong commitment towards conservation and huge funds to support the work, stress conservationists.

Gharials travel large distances in search of suitable locations for feeding, breeding and nesting. This makes them susceptible to isolation from suitable habitat since they can be trapped on the wrong side of dams and barrages when monsoon floodwaters drop. They’re also highly susceptible to human disturbance, which is increasing due to urban sprawl in the Tarai.

Communities around protected areas in Nepal are heavily



RIKKI GUMBS/ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON



dependent on natural resources and rely on fishing for their livelihoods. ZSL has been working within local communities to set up ‘gharial guard groups’ outside of Chitwan National Park that can patrol and protect gharials from direct threats, such as unsustainable fishing.

Said Ashish Bashyal, Project Lead and National Geographic Photo Ark EDGE Fellow based in Nepal: “People generally have a great affinity for gharials — they don’t attack humans as they generally feed on fish. We want to try and harness that love for the animal into local community conservation action in order to help monitor how the hatchlings fair.” 📹

RETURN OF THE GHARIAL



The nearly extinct, Gharial crocodile was found to be breeding in the wild for the first time in nearly four decades in Nepal's Bardia National Park, giving new hope for conservation of the critically endangered species. See photos and videos of their breeding site.

nepalitimes.com 📺

PHOTOS: ASHISH BASHYAL/ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

ce wide-ranging challenges

While the World Ranger Congress was being held in Nepal



PHOTOS: RANJAN RAMCHANDANI



equipment and training, or drones? I’ll bet that most rangers would like a good pair of boots before they would like a drone.”

The threats facing protected areas around the world are immediate, and were illustrated by the Australian and Brazilian rangers in Chitwan who were constantly checking their phones for updates on wildfires destroying forests in their countries. By last week, 1.6 million hectares of land in New South Wales had been ravaged by fires that scientists have attributed to the climate crisis.

Brazilian ranger Felipe Avino said about his government’s policy

that is destroying the Amazon: “I just try not to think about it. Every day there is some new terrible news. If I thought about it I wouldn’t be able to function.”

A group created by his colleague Marcelo Segalerba trained 600 rangers for the Amazon in 2005, but now is training indigenous people to be rangers for the first time in Latin America, in order to protect the Brazilian savannah.

Nearly half the rangers attending the WRC were women, part of an effort to ensure that the ranger workforce, overwhelmingly male, is a more welcoming place for females. Putting women in

positions of responsibility radically improves conservation work.

In 2017, the Africa-based International Anti-Poaching Foundation (IAPF) trained the world’s first armed, all-female anti-poaching unit to work in Zimbabwe’s Lower Zambezi Valley. After training and giving the women positions of responsibility, ranger-community relations improved and cases of corruption decreased.

Conservation has become increasingly militarised, and IAPF’s Damien Mander says that ranger-poacher encounters often result in casualties on both sides. But in the two years since its creation, the armed, all-female, anti-poaching unit has conducted 130 arrests without a single bullet being fired.

Participants also emphasised the need for indigenous people to become rangers because their traditions and strong spiritual connection to the land are already protecting the earth.

Another theme was how people living close to national parks often rely on agriculture or livestock for their livelihoods, both of which can be threatened by the wildlife that rangers work to protect.

Krissie Clark, co-founder of the Tanzania-based PAMS Foundation, says communities need to be engaged in conservation: “Goodwill and trust needs to be built up. If we want conservation, we have to support communities with what

matters most to them. Then they will be better willing to tolerate the elephants.”

Clark added that having national parks contribute financially to poor people’s lives is more of a challenge in places that do not attract tourism.

Pakistani ranger Rizwana Aziz agreed that anti-poaching work becomes much easier once rangers have good relations with the surrounding community. “They can be our eyes and our ears. So we need to find ways to build these relations, for a better and safer world.”

This the first time the WRC is being held in Asia, and Chitwan was chosen in recognition of Nepal’s conservation success in nearly doubling its tiger population since 2010, and achieving zero poaching of rhinos.

Stuart Chapman of the WWF’s tiger conservation program told *Nepali Times* such gains are difficult to accomplish and require strong political commitment.

Nepal Communist Party Co-Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal extolled the conservation gains made by Chitwan National Park in his inaugural address to the congress, but he has also been pushing to expand the Kasara-Thori road that runs through the park into a four-lane highway. Conservationists say this would fragment the wildlife habitat, putting at risk both conservation and tourism. 🇳🇵

EVENTS

MUSIC

DINING

GETAWAY



Para Climbing

Para Climbing is rock climbing for people with physical impairments. This event invites those with physical disabilities to do indoor wall climbing, with full assistance. Pre-registration required.
30 November, 8am-4pm, Kathmandu Sport Climbing Centre, Paknajor (01) 4256505

Christmas Mart

Shop local handicrafts, clothes, toys and books to gift yourself or a loved one. Visit kid-friendly food stalls and games.
30 November, 10am-4pm, Ecole Française Internationale de Katmandou, Lazimpat (01) 4001673

Gharial Talk

Gharials are one of the most interesting and strangest looking animals in Nepal. Few remain, despite intense conservation efforts. Wildlife Conservationist Phoebe Griffith will discuss her efforts to save the gharial in Chitwan National Park, and why you should love the animal as much as she does. Hosted by the Cultural Studies Group of Nepal.
29 November, 10:30am onwards, Rs500 (non-members), Hotel Shanker, Lazimpat



Our Planet

Our Planet is not only a visual masterpiece that encapsulates the innovation of filmmaking technology in wildlife documentaries, but also a warning for human beings about endangered habitats, species and the environment.
1 December, 6pm-7:30pm, Yalamaya Kendra, Patan, 98851224784

Marina Vaptzarova

During the upcoming Christmas market, Marina Vaptzarova's beautifully designed and handcrafted stationery items and jewellery pieces will be available for purchase at clearance prices! The products are sustainable and curated for your needs.
8 December, Summit Hotel, Kupondole Height (01) 5522843



Appearance of Light

Appearance of Light is a 10-artist exhibition depicting the legacy of Padmasambhava, Buddhist master, through traditional and contemporary artistic styles.
Till 1 December, 11am-5pm, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal (01) 4220735

Christmas Bazaar

For some pre-Christmas merriment, come to HUB's Timro Christmas Bazaar. The mulled wine, gifts, decorations and carollers will get you in the holiday spirit.
30 November, 1pm-8pm, HUB, Thamel, 9866273244



Yin Workshop

Rejuvenate your mind and body at a Yin Yoga workshop. This is a slow-paced yoga that focuses on holding poses for a longer duration, breathing deeply and stretching out your muscles. Limited seats.
30 November, 3pm-6pm, Yoga Shala Patan, Jhamsikhel, 9818148030

Mary Poppins

SOLIS Performing Arts presents the timeless tale of Mary Poppins. Don't miss this dynamic music and dance performance!
14 December, 4pm, Tickets: Rs500 (adults)/Rs300 (children), Ullens School, Khumaltar, 9843142416



Mukti & Revival

Known for their fusion of blues and folk rock, Mukti & Revival has played all over the world, bagged many prestigious music awards and garnered a solid fan base of young and old alike.
30 November, 7pm onwards, La Villa Lounge & Club, Lazimpat, 9818104578

Funky Friday

Get in a weekend groove with Funky Friday featuring Deaf Panda. Their jazzy tunes and R&B undertones will have you unwinding in time for the weekend.
29 November, 7pm onwards, Electric Pagoda, Thamel (01) 4700123

Reggae Sundown

Enjoy an evening of skank guitar rhythms, offbeat tunes and Bob Marley nostalgia at Reggae Sundown, a family-friendly music event.
30 November, 3pm-8pm, Attic Restaurant, Gyaneswor (01) 4417843

Sugam Pokharel

Sugam Pokharel established himself as a beloved Nepali pop singer with his debut solo album *Mero Sansaar*. He will be performing alongside The Sign Band and Dj Shyank.
4 December, 7pm onwards, Aalishan Lounge & Club, Hattisar



Charlotte Jacobs

Brooklyn-based singer Charlotte Jacobs is performing songs from her latest album *Fishtale*. Her music's eastern classical tones, Scandinavian sound and Intelligent Dance Music are bound to mesmerise.
29 November, 6:30pm-9pm, Tickets: Rs300, Moksh, Jhamsikhel (01) 5528362



Garden Terrace

The Garden Terrace has a wide selection of international cuisine including Nepali, Indian, Continental, Oriental, Japanese and Italian. Relish delicacies from the hotel's lavish buffet spread or order a la carte from the elaborate menu.
6:30am-10:45pm, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal (01) 4273999

The Coffee Shop

For a good cup of coffee and freshly baked goods on white linen, The Coffee Shop is the place to be. Try their croissants on your next visit.
7am-10pm, Annapurna Hotel, Darbar Marg (01) 4221711



Lhakpa's Chulo

Lhakpa's Chulo has anything and everything you might be craving. From Nepali dai bhat and Newari khaja to Swiss Rösti and Italian Risotto, this eatery will not disappoint. Give their desserts a try and you will leave with a smile.
Jhamsikhel (01) 5542986

Carpe Friyay

Ladies can enjoy unlimited free cocktails and gentlemen can get two beers for the price of one. Grab a drink while you listen to live music.
Every Friday, Juneli Bar, Hotel Annapurna, Darbar Marg, 9801029549



Casa Mexicana

What's striking about this Mexican eatery is not just its fantastic authentic tacos, but the warm and welcoming service. The owners are more than happy to walk you through the menu and chat while you wait for nachos or the mouth-watering tres leches cake.
12pm-7pm (except Saturday), Gairidhara and Patan, 9840542082



Tuki Resort

With modern structures, dedicated service and comfortable rooms, Tuki Resort offers great accommodation at an affordable price.
Lakeside, Pokhara (61) 466036/466037

Hotel Barahi

Located just beyond the banks of Phewa Lake, Hotel Barahi offers stunning views and luxury rooms. The rooms are decorated with rustic pieces, earthy tones and a clean design that will leave you feeling relaxed.
Lakeside, Pokhara (61) 460617



Pavilions Himalayas

This resort has Nepal's first lakeside, tented, luxury eco-villas offering every amenity you could possibly need. Their spa also has some of the best treatments, guaranteeing rest and relaxation.
Chisapani, Pokhara (975) 600 8117

Himalayan Front Hotel

Sarangkot's Himalayan Front Hotel is located atop Sarangkot, overlooking the Annapurna range and Phewa Lake. With luxury rooms, breathtaking sunset views and one of the best restaurants in Pokhara — The Summit Restaurant — this is the ideal place to unwind.
Sarangkot, Pokhara, 9801166370



Royal Palm Resort

An expansive resort that rests at a view away from the mountains, it boasts "At Royal Palm Resort every guest has the luxury to enjoy the Annapurna range from the comfort of their beds."
Kundhara, Pokhara (61) 524701

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Opened in Kathmandu on 22 November

Matt Damon stars as Carroll Shelby, an automotive visionary, who has been enlisted to create a revolutionary racing car for Ford. Shelby, along with race car driver Ken Miles (played by Christian Bale) and a team of American engineers, set out to build a car that they hope will beat the undefeatable Ferrari at the 1966 Le Mans race in France.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 22-28 November

301 – 500 Hazardous							
201 – 300 Very Unhealthy							
151 – 200 Unhealthy							
101 – 150 Unhealthy for sensitive groups							
50 – 100 Moderate							
0 – 50 Good							

PM2.5

Ozone

FRIDAY
Nov 22

SATURDAY
Nov 23

SUNDAY
Nov 24

MONDAY
Nov 25

TUESDAY
Nov 26

WEDNESDAY
Nov 27

THURSDAY
Nov 28

With overnight winter inversion, Kathmandu Valley's Air Quality Index has remained consistently above 170 most mornings. Even the daily average (above) is above 170. By afternoon, the breeze blows away some of the harmful particles below 2.5 microns, but the AQI climbs again by evening rush hour. Luckily, Kathmandu's own pollution has not been exacerbated by crossborder smoke from northern India for the latter half of this week after a change in wind direction. Follow the hour-by-hour AQI readings from the US Embassy monitoring station at Phora Darbar at [www.nepalitimes.com](https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/).

<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>

Think locally, act locally

Local activists goad local governments to deliver services


Meghan Nalbo, Nepal Country Representative at The Asia Foundation and Bishnu Adhikari, governance project lead, in a joint email interview.

“The recent instances of citizen activism appear to be a sign of filling a gap that is not being effectively met by their local governments or any other higher authorities in the country. Citizens are now more aware of the performance, or lack thereof, by their federal, provincial, and local governments as a result of free media reporting and an increasing access to and use of social media,” they wrote.

Those information sources are also revealing “increasing collusion of political interests with local or national contractors”, say Adhikari and Nalbo.

In many cases local governments are not acting because there is confusion over which level of government is supposed to regulate such things as water and land, says Khem Raj Nepal, who was secretary in the former ministry of local development. The jurisdiction is shared among the three levels of government but there is a lack of clarity about the roles of each one, resulting in inertia and inaction.

"Governments commit to completing a particular project within a certain timeframe and budget, but when they do not deliver, and appear to be favouring other interests, people get frustrated," adds Nepal.

Adhikari and Nalbo note that residents in some municipalities have been effective in convincing local governments to stop some plans, such as hiking local taxes and service fees, a trend that should grow. “Local governments would need to be more accountable and responsive,” they added. 

Consider these events:

■ In May, residents and traders burned tyres to block the Chabahil-Jorpati road, signalling their frustration at long-delayed construction on the dusty, crater-filled stretch. They succeeded in sparking action, but after upgrading work stalled, protests erupted again last week in a bid to force the contractor to finish the job.



SOMEWHERE ELSE
Marty Logan

- The road-blocking trend morphed into poster protests, where the faces of delinquent road contractors were plastered to poles and vehicles. This included Nagarkot, where contractor Sharada Prasad Adhikari, also the landlord of Nepal Communist Party Co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal, was targeted. The tactic spread further, with Mayor Bhim Parajuli of Biratnagar being publicly shamed last week.
- Residents attempting to stop road-building in Baitadi in October were turned on by an excavator operator, whose shocking attack with the machine injured eight people. Attempted murder charges are pending.
- In Udaypur last week, locals clashed with police after seizing more than a dozen dump trucks



and an excavator that were being used to gouge sand and rocks out of a local river.

■ Residents of Charikot in Dolakha district took to the streets last week to protest the lack of progress in repairing the Jiri Highway. They blocked the main intersection to vehicular traffic for hours.

When local government elections were held in 2017 after a 20-year gap, hopes were high for improved service delivery at the community level. Anecdotally, at least here in the Kathmandu Valley, that hasn't happened. But asked in a survey last year about local service delivery, Nepalis in general were 'broadly favourable,

with cautious optimism' about infrastructure development.

The public opinion poll, done by Kathmandu University School of Arts, Interdisciplinary Analysts and The Asia Foundation, found that the number of people who believed that the new federal system improved the capacity of local government to deliver services like health, education, access to justice and information, and local infrastructure development rose to 45.20% in 2018 compared to 34.8% in 2017. More than 70% said they felt that their local government representatives 'strongly care' or 'care' about them.

No doubt, roads and bridges are being built, but these works,

long seen by many as the measure of the country's development, are proving controversial. During the recent monsoon, sloppily constructed local roads were said to be the cause of many landslides, destroying homes, temporarily obstructing access to commercial centres and in some cases killing people. Partially built bridges collapsed when flood waters swirled around their foundations.

Given the lack of action — or in some cases oversight — by elected governments, it appears that local people have stepped in to fill the gap. Or could it be that the process of electing local officials also emboldened residents themselves to get active?

Both factors play a part, said

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*Conditions Apply



Guru Rimpoche in a new light

An exhibition of contemporary art on Padmasambhava does not just revive the legend of the Buddhist guru, but also displays the wide variety of art practised in Nepal today. These artworks explore spiritual questions like the value of life, afterlife and a world beyond human experiences. Ten artists each bring their distinctive style to the personality of Padmasambhava, the Guru Rimpoche who meditated across the Himalaya, creating along the way what are now important pilgrimage sites. Known as the founder of Vajrayana Buddhism, Padmasambhava was a monk from India who travelled to Nepal to meditate among the mountains, and went on to Tibet. He is still highly revered by many Buddhist communities, including Newa and

Tibetan Buddhists of Nepal. “The teachings of Padmasambhava mark the third turning point in the evolution of Buddhism, and advocate the importance of a guru in attaining salvation. The exhibition wants to convey this particular message,” says art critic Madan Chitrakar. Many of the works in this Nepal Art Council exhibition depict the figure of the renowned Rimpoche, but it is the work of Dawa Omu Lama that stands out, with its Padmasambhava etched in bright white lines against a deep red and black background. Departing from traditional colour palettes, Lama chooses a minimalistic theme that gives the appearance of translucence and transcendence. Sahil Bhopal paints a monastery in another planet, in the theme

of past, present, and future. “In the past, I saw a monastery in Himachal Pradesh neglected and Padmasambhava’s sculptures were peeling off. Today, it is being restored. Tomorrow I see the guru’s teaching finding new followers,” explains the artist, whose work features aliens and modern technology in hologram. Other artists have also experimented with the thangka form. Sunil Babu Karki ‘Putu’ portrays himself awakening with surprise to Padmasambhava’s light, and Sundar Lama paints Padmasambhava in traditional poses but against neutral backgrounds, as a symbol of timelessness. Bijay Maharjan has depicted the guru, his vajra, and many other traditional items as an interplay between light and shadow and colour and form, which change as you gaze at them. Bijay Koirala presents Padmasambhava in a more angry form, via a faded painting. The exhibition includes sculptures and installation artwork. Sculptor Chandra Shyam Dangol provides a traditional interpretation of the guru, with simplified statues in beautiful, glowing black stone. He has also created abstract themes in stone and sand. Sushma Shakya has created an umbrella out of rudraksha beads. “An umbrella signifies protection, and is often used over gods. An umbrella of rudraksha beads is meant to give protection to people and devotees,” she says. Explains artist Saroj Bajracharya, who also curated the exhibition: “We want to explore Padmasambhava’s message of compassion, which is central to our spiritual life.”

Sewa Bhattarai

Appearance of light
Nepal Art Council
Until 1 December



US EMBASSY

OPEN HOUSE: US Ambassador Randy Berry and Minister for Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation Yogesh Bhattarai jointly open the recently restored Gaddi Baithak to the public for guided tours, in Kathmandu Darbar Square on Tuesday.



NABIN PAUDEL/RSS

DEAL SEALED: World Bank Country Manager Faris H. Hadad-Zervos signs an agreement with Rajan Khanal of the ministry of finance on Wednesday to support employment and education services for Nepal.



UN WOMEN

RALLYING FOR A CAUSE: Cyclists, including global traveller Pushkar Shah, kick off a rally to promote 16 days of activism against gender-based violence in Kathmandu last week.



INDIAN EMBASSY

TEMPLE TEMPOS: President of the Indian Women’s Association, Namrita Puri, hands over two 8-seater electric vehicles to Pradip Dhakal of the Pashupati Area Development Trust at Pashupatinath Temple on Wednesday.



ROSHAN SAKPOTA/RSS

TAKE THAT: The Nepali women’s volleyball team defeats its Bangladeshi rivals in set straights in Kathmandu on Wednesday during a match of the 13th South Asian Games being held in Nepal.

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Alarming rise in violence against women

Ajaya Anuragi in
Himal Khabarpatrika,
24-30 November

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

Brutality against women exists in families across Nepal, but nowhere more so than in Province 2, police figures show. What is not so clear is whether gender-based violence is becoming more common in this plains province, or if better educated women are now taking complaints to the police.

Complaints of violence against women in the eight districts of Province 2 surged dramatically, from 602 three years ago to 10,243 in the past year. Most of the complaints involved dowry-related violence, polygamy, physical domestic violence against women, trafficking, rape and attempted rape. There were 125 murders of women in the past three years, mostly by drunk husbands or in-laws.

Province 2 police statistics show women are more unsafe outside homes than inside. In the past five months, 50 women who were driven from their homes due to domestic violence sought refuge in a shelter run by the Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) in Janakpur.

"Women are unsafe everywhere, but the statistics for Province 2 look alarming," says Gyankumar Mahato of the provincial police office. However, DIG Pradyumna Karki, chief of Province 2 police, thinks the number of crimes has increased because more people are reporting them.

"Previously, people used to try and hush up crimes like rapes. But now more people are aware of the presence of the police, and we get all sorts of complaints," Karki says.

Advocate Rekha Jha agrees: "Women have tried to hide these incidents in the past but are now coming forward with their testimonies. That is the reason the numbers look higher."

Others, however, say that while there may be an increase in complaints, the number of incidents has also shot up because of new factors like the spread of social



media, unregulated sale of alcohol, drugs and entrenched patriarchy in the still largely conservative region.

"The misuse of social media is contributing to violence against women," says Rekha Dutt of the National Human Rights Commission, Janakpur office. "Weak implementation of laws further encourages criminal tendencies. When perpetrators go free because of political pressure, it raises the confidence of those who prey on women."

Yagya Prasad Acharya of the district court in Dhanusha has a different take on the problem: "Now, men also have the right to file for divorce. In the past when only women could file for divorce, men hesitated to commit violence. Now that fear is gone."

Court records show that abuse of social media was a cause in increasing cases of violence against women in the province. With the rise in female literacy, young women are now also more assertive, refusing to get married early, or if they do, brides are not

as submissive towards in-laws as in the past.

Another reason for the rise in violence against women is mismatched marriages, activists say. Poor families still try to marry their daughters into rich families by offering dowry, even by incurring large debts.

Dowry-related violence against young women is still a major cause of domestic violence — police records show that the number of incidents rose from 3,609 last year to 4,671 this year.

In the past three years the highest number of complaints about gender-based violence came from Bara and Parsa districts, and rape cases were most prevalent in Siraha, Saptari and Sarlahi.

Politicians at all three levels of government underline that ending violence against women and establishing gender equality is their priority. Province 2 Chief Minister Lalbabu Raut even announced the 'Chief Minister Educate Daughter, Save Daughter' campaign, amidst much fanfare.

Padam Prasad Pokharel, information officer in the province's cabinet office, says the campaign is mainly focused on education. "The campaign aims to end child marriage through education — it is also working on women's safety," he says.

The province's ministry of social development is imparting self-defence training to girl students of public schools, aiming to protect them from abuse, violence and rape. "The schools wrote to us saying the program was effective, so we are continuing it this year," Pokharel says.

In the past year the ministry spent Rs11 million on self-defence training at schools, but it has taken no other initiative to reduce violence and crimes against women. At the provincial level, the ministry of internal affairs and law is in charge of the issue. "We are drafting a bill about controlling domestic violence and violence against women," says Surendra Mahato of the ministry.

Province 2 women seek justice

■ Usha Devi Das of Janakpur has endured torture and abuse from her in-laws for not delivering enough dowry when she got married. She complained to the police twice, but they only forced the couple to sign a pledge and sent them home. The abuse did not stop. Das complained again, but her in-laws got a stay order from the district court.

■ Rita Devi Yadav of Bhangaha, Mahottari district, registered a complaint against her husband and his family at the district police office, Dhanusha on 4 September. She accused them of physical and mental torture and of throwing her out of the house. Yadav then started living with her parents. She accuses her father-in-law and brothers-in-law of mistreatment. Yadav's husband has gone into hiding after the complaint was filed. The couple has a 30-month-old son.

■ Shyam Mahara of Shahidnagar in Dhanusha beat his pregnant wife Rinadevi until she fainted, and then left her at the provincial hospital in Janakpur. Mahara filed a complaint against her husband 5 days later, on 8 September. Her father-in-law then took her home a week later. Mahara was again admitted to the hospital this month when her baby was due. The baby was delivered with a caesarean section, but was in poor health. Her in-laws disappeared after they admitted her, leaving her with Rs1,700 in hospital charges per day. She begs for food from other patients.

“लोभ, लालच र प्रलोभनमा नपरौ अब:
लैङ्गिक हिंसा विरुद्ध लागौ सब ।”

“समन्वय, सहकार्य र साझेदारी सरकार:
लैङ्गिक हिंसाको अन्त्य मानवअधिकार ।”

“सीप, सृजना र रोजगारी सहित अघि बढौ:
लैङ्गिक हिंसा र दुर्यवहार हामी नसहौ ।”



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“फुट्स लोकधम्मेहि - चित्तं यस्स न कम्पति ।
असोकं विरजं खेम - एतं मंगलमुत्तमं ॥”

“लाभ-हानी, यश-अपयश, निन्दा-प्रशंसा र सुख-दुःख यी आठ प्रकारका लोक धर्ममा
जसको चित्त काँप्दैन, शोक हुँदैन, भय हुँदैन - यी उत्तम मंगल हुन् ।”

- मंगल सुत्त, सुत्तनिपातपाली खुट्कनिकाय

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Nepal villages cope with climate

Sonia Awale
in Kanchanpur

Most research about climate impact in the Himalaya deals with receding snowlines and retreating glaciers. A lot less is known about how farmers are managing with too much — or too little — water due to the changing climate.

Irregular monsoons and extreme rainfall have made floods more destructive in recent years, and the Tarai plains where more than half of Nepalis live is the worst affected area. Rivers here are changing course more frequently, submerging paddy fields and washing away homes.

Disastrous floods in the districts of Sunsari (2008), Bardia and Surkhet (2014), Saptari and Rautahat (2017) and in eastern Nepal earlier this year killed hundreds of people and caused colossal destruction. Damage from floods caused by extreme weather is exacerbated by encroachment on floodplains, and road embankments that block natural drainage channels.

“Unlike in the past, when we used to have gentle showers every other day during monsoon, nowadays it does not rain for weeks and when it does, it comes down in destructive torrents,” says Bal Sugriv Rana of Shuklaphanta Municipality in Kanchanpur. He points above his head to indicate the level that water reached in the great flood 11 years ago that forced farmers to abandon the village.

Farmers have now returned and are not waiting for government help, but taking their own measures to reduce the threat of future floods.

With support from global humanitarian organisation Mercy Corps, farmers like Rana in Kailali and Kanchanpur have reduced the risk of floods by planting bamboo and napier grass on embankments and sugarcane on riverbanks. Not only are they now better protected from future floods, the new crops are earning them important



income.

Sugarcane is so resilient it can grow in sandy floodplains, where its stem and roots can reduce water's velocity and destructive force. The sugarcane plant can also survive for up to 10 days when flooding occurs.

“They said I was crazy when I planted sugarcane in the sand, but it has reduced the severity of floods, the riverbanks are not barren anymore and we earn money with relatively little investment from the sale of the cane to the sugar factory,” explains Mangal Prasad Chaudhary of the village disaster management committee.

In the nearby village of Tikili, villagers also plant pumpkin, watermelon, banana, squash and gourds after floods recede — taking advantage of nutrients deposited by flood waters — which adds to their income. This has discouraged open cattle grazing, which in turn helps the vegetation to grow back and provide an additional layer of protection from the floods.

Now that the river has been tamed by barriers of gabion walls, sugarcane, bamboo and elephant grass, the land is secure enough to plant paddy, vegetables and other cash crops.

“We earn an extra Rs50,000 per

year selling bananas, which has been quite helpful in running the household,” says Rajudevi Rana, 40, as she picks clusters of the ripening fruit from her family plot near the river.

Most of the rain in Nepal falls in the three monsoon months of July-September, and the rivers are dry the rest of the year. The climate crisis has exacerbated this phenomenon, but with the help of development organisations farmers have learnt to adapt to the new weather pattern.

“We did a lot of research to come up with the solution of combining flood risk reduction

with income generation,” explains Saroj Kumar Thakur of Mercy Corps Nepal in Kanchanpur. “This is now a working model that can be replicated in other parts of the Tarai suffering flood risk.”

Indeed, the Kanchanpur success story can easily be upscaled in flood-prone districts like Rautahat, Sarlahi and Mahottari, which faced devastating floods in the recent years.

The success of sugarcane, banana and vegetable plantations has even persuaded young farmers who had planned to go to the Gulf or Malaysia for work to change their minds. For Mayor Dil Bahadur Ayer



In Nepal's weather, erratic

So, green infrastructure would be the answer to managing stormwater in Kathmandu

Olivia Molden and
Tyler McMahon

The 2019 monsoon was an erratic one. Sadly, erratic seems to be the new normal.

There were storms in April, causing floods, and it seemed as if a large monsoon was on the way. This was followed by a couple of very dry months and delayed onset of the actual monsoon. From July it was as if the monsoon was playing catch up.

Heavy rainfall creates havoc in the Kathmandu Valley, as streets turn into flowing sewage. Across the country, landslides and floods claim more lives and livelihoods. Now, dengue outbreaks lengthen the list of monsoon dangers. The unjust and devastating impacts of flooding across the country have brought to the surface the failures of current development practices.

One area that is often overlooked is the management of stormwater infrastructure. Poor maintenance, encroachment along

riverbanks, improper waste disposal that clogs sewage outlets and rivers, and rampant enclosure of open land leave people vulnerable to threats that go beyond flooding. With its current wastewater infrastructure, even if the existing systems were fully functioning Kathmandu could handle less than 100 million litres per day of wastewater.

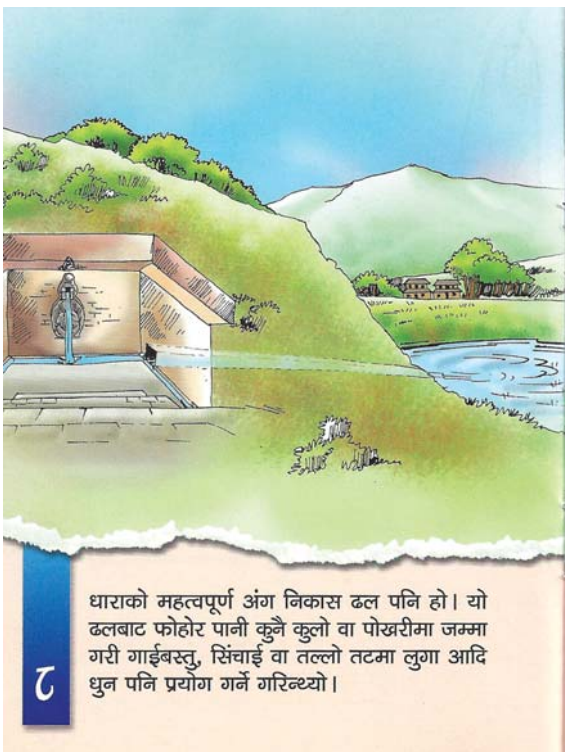
Treatment plants are inadequate. While development-as-usual tends to focus on building bigger and better pipes, drainage is often overlooked, especially of stormwater after major rainfall events. Conventional practice transports stormwater to wastewater treatment systems. Yet, these systems are often overburdened and difficult to maintain, which causes sewage system overflows.

Stormwater that overflows drains and runs down roads, streams and rivers carries with it more and more pollutants the farther it travels. Poorly managed stormwater is thus a major source of water pollution worldwide. Climate change projections are of more erratic and increased intensity storm events placing additional pressures on drainage infrastructure. Many cities are looking to overhaul this practice.

They have found that the costs of transforming drainage systems and building green infrastructure has significant benefits. Green infrastructure is a set of practices that utilise and revitalise ecosystems within and between watersheds, urban areas, neighbourhoods and households. Permeable pavement, rain gardens, bioswales, and household-level rainwater harvesting are common examples of green infrastructure solutions for stormwater.

As cities elsewhere have found, green infrastructure saves. Financially, green infrastructure reduces the capital investment and operational costs of urban infrastructure. For cities like Philadelphia in the US, the cost of implementation has been four times lower than conventional stormwater drainage and wastewater treatment system upgrades. New York will see significant savings over the lifespan of its project, both in capital and operational costs.

A review of over 400 green infrastructure initiatives by the American Society of Landscape Architects showed that three-quarters of these investments were as cost-effective, or more so, than alternatives.



-induced floods



MERCY CORPS



PHOTOS: SONIA AWALE

BETTER PREPARED: A farmer in Shuklaphanta in far west Nepal points to the level of the water in the 2008 flood (*right*). Erosion caused by that flood (*left*).

After abandoning the village, the farmers are now back, confident that the bamboo, napier grass and sugarcane they plant on embankments (*below*) will prevent flood damage, while the cash crops earn them income.

of Shuklaphanta, this is a success story that his municipality can be proud of.

“Motivated farmers with the help of experts have managed to reduce the risk of floods by themselves — they have achieved what the government could not,” he said. “Now we need to copy this elsewhere in Nepal by involving all three levels of government.”

Ayer is also committed to tightening restrictions on illegal sand mining upstream, which threatens to undermine the accomplishment of the villagers in reducing flood risk.

Bhesh Parajuli of Mercy Corps says local governments are not allocating required resources for disaster risk reduction, spending most of their budget on infrastructure. He adds: “But even infrastructure needs to be disaster-resistant. With federalism, we now have to develop skills at local levels to respond to the floods.”



Farmers in the Tarai are learning how to mitigate flood risk during the increasingly deadly monsoon months by planting new crops like sugarcane. This has the added benefit of providing families with additional income. Watch the video to see how it's done.

nepalitimes.com

Back to the land

Harvest time is a busy period in Lalitpur, a farming village at the Indian border in Kailali district. Women harvest paddy, men load sacks of rice for the market in Dhangadi, children on holiday from school tend ducks by the river, while goats and cows graze lazily on the stubble.

Looking at it today, it is hard to imagine that Lalitpur village was once completely abandoned. Families had to flee for their lives in 2008, abandoning their homes and farms when the river burst its banks. They did not return for 10 years.

“It was a like a sea. The flood started in the morning and continued until midnight and later — it rained all night. There was so much water. I went back and forth on a boat rescuing the children and women,” recalls Gayadin Chaudhari (*pictured*) who was 30 at the time.



The Tharu people here are used to floods, and have learnt to live with them. But the 2008 disaster was like nothing they had seen before. A wall of water nearly 2m high suddenly entered the settlement — many lost their loved ones. Homes were washed away, food destroyed, livestock drowned and water sources were contaminated. The farms were covered in sand and silt, forcing villagers to relocate.

Now, the farmers have returned and they are determined to prevent a similar incident in the future.

Supported by Mercy Corps Nepal and the Nepal Red Cross, they plant crops along the riverbanks that both help prevent flooding and have good commercial value, including bamboo, sugarcane and napier grass. Villagers are organised in a commune and plant and harvest sugarcane together, pooling the profits from the collectively-owned fields.

“There will be floods in future, but they will not be able to affect us as much as before because of the bio-engineering of the embankment,” says Chaudhary, whose family is among 22 that have returned to Lalitpur.

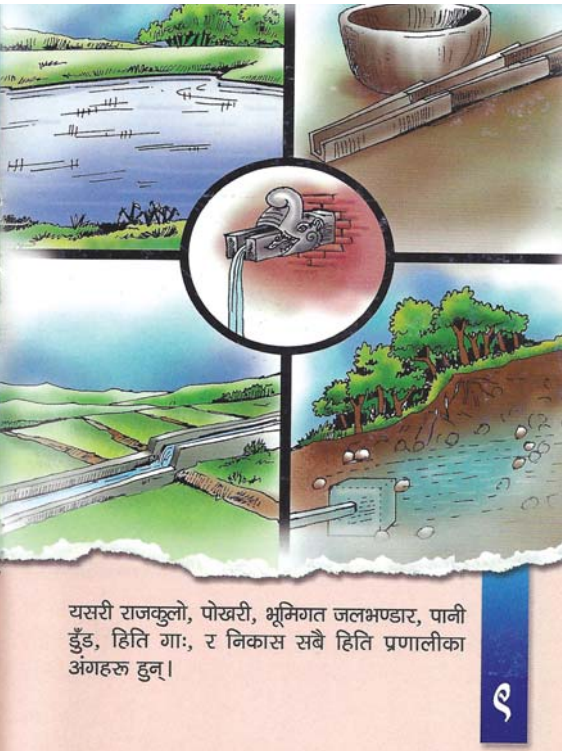
But just in case, the village has also installed an early warning system. A monitoring station upstream circulates an SMS warning when the river water crosses a danger mark.

Chaudhary’s share of the profits from the sugarcane and vegetables is now over Rs150,000 annually. Over the years the commune has used its profits to buy farm equipment, including a tractor, a power tiller, disc plough and a thresher.

“This is a community that has successfully bounced back from disaster. The farmers live here without fear,” says Saroj Kumar Thakur of Mercy Corps Nepal. “We now want to build the capacity of the villagers so that they can manage on their own after the project ends, not just with floods but also other risks like wild elephant attacks and disease.”

Sonia Awale in Kailali

is the new normal



LIEW YU WEI

Moreover, these examples were primarily on-site initiatives and not at the city-scale, which can be more cost-effective.

In Kathmandu, 150 billion litres of rain fall on rooftops and paved surfaces in one year. Spread over 365 days this would be 420 million litres daily, but during the monsoon rainfall is much more concentrated. A 50mm storm produces 5.5 billion litres of stormwater, more than 50 times what

wastewater treatment systems could handle if they were completely functional. The same storm would produce 5,000l of water on a normal household rooftop, 15 times their daily wastewater production.

If much of this water was retained and recharged on-site the cost reductions, additional groundwater supply available, and the reduced pollution of the Bagmati and its tributaries would be enormous.

Green infrastructure already exists in this growing city. Ancient water infrastructure and management systems continue to function in the Valley. Historians, archaeologists, engineers and architects have found that each area of the Valley has a water system that is not only suited to the local environment but that also integrates ecology with Newa social and cultural practices. These social and ecological interconnections between ponds, aquifers, porous brick surfaces, green space,

channels and stone spouts still help to move, store and treat stormwater.

Sustainable development means moving away from cement solutions to promote and integrate green infrastructure in ways that suit Kathmandu’s social and ecological landscape. This could include protecting the city’s few remaining green spaces or providing meaningful support of local efforts to revitalise ancient water systems. It could also include reimagining rainwater harvesting as more than an alternative water source for households, but a city-wide infrastructure for sustainable stormwater management.

It is time for the city and its residents to rethink stormwater management. It is time to look beyond dated development practices of more pipelines and channelised rivers towards those that are not only cost-effective and enhance local social and ecological systems, including restoring the Kathmandu Valley’s traditional water infrastructure.

Olivia Molden, PhD, has studied Kathmandu’s water infrastructure since 2013. Tyler McMahon is Co-Founder of SmartPaani Pvt Ltd and President of One Planet Solution LLC.



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New, improved TIA

Now that G Adventures has listed Nepal as Number 1 of the Top 12 Destinations Worldwide for 2020, we can all sit back, relax and give every tourist daring to visit Nepal an experience of a lifetime they will not forget in a hurry.

Even though Nepal is ranked as a most popular destination, Nepalis themselves do not seem to know what their destination is as a nation. For a country that doesn't know whether it is coming or going, we are sure getting there fast. One way the Ministry of Vermiculture, Tourism and Gymnastics can move ahead is by upgrading Kathmandu's boutique airport in preparation for Visit Nepal 2020 with these measures:

- 1 The Ministry has decreed that all international flights circle for at least 2 hours before landing in Kathmandu from January 1 onwards so passengers are given free mountain flights during #VNY2020.
- 2 The fleet of ramp buses that bring passengers from the aircraft to the terminal building have been replaced with a fleet of elephants. Passengers will disembark directly into howdahs, and be transported to the visa queue.
- 3 A replica of a rhino and calf have been installed at the arrival area. For #VNY2020, these will be replaced with a herd of real rhinoceri roaming around the apron in addition to monkeys, leopards and feral dogs that showcase Nepal's flora and fauna. Rodents have recently been added to promote Nepal as a MICE destination.

- 4 TIA has been officially reclassified as a 'Buttock Airport' with an open-defecation loo in the arrival area that acclimatises tourists by accurately replicating the aroma of the Bagmati.
- 5 After complaints that the visa process was too convoluted, the Department of Irritation has added a fast-track queue so that the average time passengers spend applying for an e-visa, paying for it, and having it stamped will be reduced to just 3 hours.
- 6 Arriving passengers will be x-rayed on arrival to check if they are metal free. If found carrying an excess of 50gm of gold, they will be strip-searched on the spot. However, those with more than 33kg of gold in their false bottoms can sneak out through a hidden side door.
- 7 Passengers are now allowed to bring only one 1-litre bottle of tax-free whiskey into the country. Anyone found bringing a second bottle will have to personally drink the extra bottle right there, stagger out into Nepal, and pass out.
- 8 Passengers now have a choice of extreme left-leaning or extreme right-leaning luggage trolleys depending on their personal political persuasion.
- 9 The Domestic Terminal just broke the Guinness World Record for packing the maximum number of passengers into a finite area without asphyxiation.
- 10 Don't come back in 2020, we don't want the world to get a bad impression about Kathmandu airport.



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