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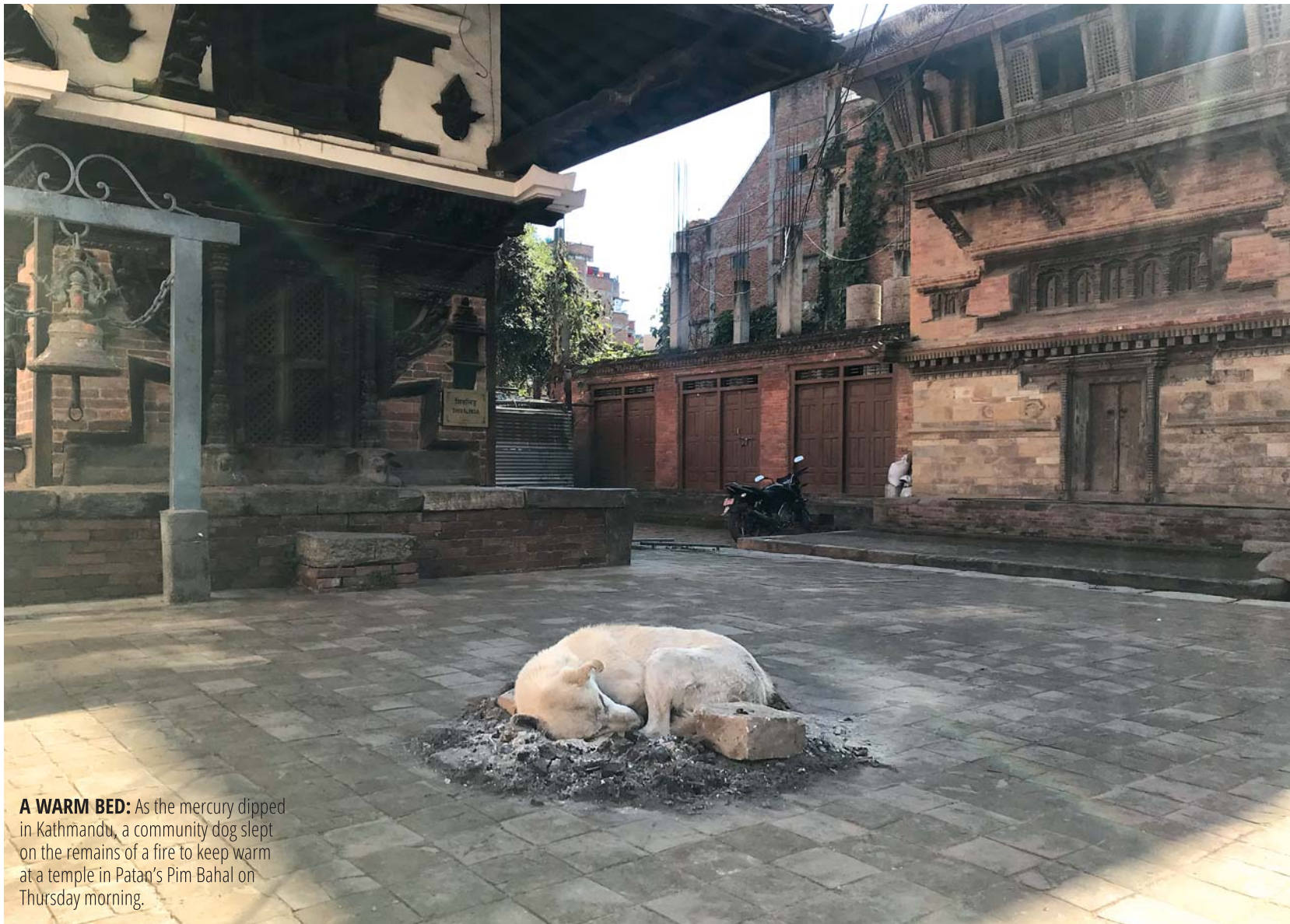
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A WARM BED: As the mercury dipped in Kathmandu, a community dog slept on the remains of a fire to keep warm at a temple in Patan's Pim Bahal on Thursday morning.

SHEILIN TEO

Towards 2030

At the cusp of a new year and a new decade, Nepalis must take stock of promises not kept and the opportunities lost to take the country forward in the last 10 years.

In 2010, there was optimism that with the war ended and a new constitution being drafted, the country could convert stability into prosperity. The vision was turned into a political slogan, but the decade was squandered.

The most spectacular failure has been in governance, and over the past two years. Despite local elections that promised accountability and a ruling party commanding a two-thirds majority, the country is still

drifting aimlessly without a coherent strategy for the future.

But Nepal never fails to surprise. We make incremental progress regardless of obstacles. This is the only low-income country with low growth that has more than halved its poverty rate in the past 10 years. Despite conflict and disasters, and despite government, Nepal took rapid strides in human development. Imagine how much further we would have gone if we had better leadership.

In this year-end edition of *Nepali Times* we look forward at what the coming decade may have in store for us. Planners, experts, and even astrologers, are

optimistic the country will take a great leap forward.

We would like to believe National Planning Commission Member Min Bahadur Shahi when he says: "The 2020s will be a progressive decade of sustainable and just development. There will be double-digit growth, increased investment from the government and the focus will be on quality, not quantity."

Nepalis have been let down before, and they will have a chance in 2022 to cast their verdict in the next elections. But the challenge is for Nepal to get out of the low-growth, high-migration trap so the country can graduate to middle-income status by 2030. 🇳🇵

HAPPY NEW DECADE



PAGE 8-9

ANOTHER DECADE TO GET IT RIGHT

EDITORIAL PAGE 2

What the planets have in store for us

PAGE 7

Nepal in the 2020s

How will Nepal develop in the next decade?

PAGE 14-15



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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

ANOTHER DECADE TO GET IT RIGHT

In the past decade, despite failed governance, Nepal's child mortality rate fell 20% and the maternal mortality rate, though still very high, decreased dramatically. Female literacy has shot up. Imagine how much more progress we would have made if there had been a stable political climate and a more accountable government committed to basic needs. If there had been political will to push projects for power, irrigation and infrastructure we could have met domestic demand and created jobs so Nepalis wouldn't have to migrate for work.

Let's hope that in the next decade we will live in less interesting times. That our coverage will be less obsessed with the political quarrel of the day and celebrate the ability of individual Nepalis to overcome adversity. We hope that by 2020 we will have made up for lost time.'

Those words were written in the New Year's issue of this newspaper (#487) in January 2010. But they may well have been written this week. The optimism is gone. It

2010-2019 The history of the past decade through the front pages of *Nepali Times*.



#633 DECEMBER 2012



#674 SEPTEMBER 2013



#796 FEBRUARY 2016



#866 JULY 2017



#521 SEPTEMBER 2010



#559 JUNE 2011



#718 AUGUST 2014



#756 APRIL 2015



#896 FEBRUARY 2018



#947 FEBRUARY 2019

has been another lost decade of squandered opportunities.

The most spectacular failure, and one that affects every sector of the state, has been in governance. Despite two elections, a new constitution and three tiers of elections under federalism, after which the ruling party commands a two-thirds majority, Nepal is still drifting aimlessly, without a coherent strategy for the future.

The progress the country has made is despite government, not because of it. Our athletes excelled at the South Asian Games not because of official support for training and equipment, but thanks to the determination and drive of the athletes. We are now headed towards self-sufficiency in hydropower despite every obstacle that national and local governments have thrown in the way of investors. Tourism is gearing itself up for 2020 because of Nepal's strong brand equity, which has luckily not been dented by state fecklessness and slapdash promotion.

The past two years since elections have been the most disappointing. After surviving the triple whammy of an earthquake,

2022. By that time we need electoral reform, introduce absentee babbloting, end impunity and force failed fogeys into retirement.

But the reason Nepal always surprises us is that we make progress regardless of these impediments. Nepal is the only low-income country with low growth that has halved its poverty rate in the past 10 years. Despite natural and manmade disasters, the country took rapid strides in human development.

However, poor governance and economic policy have stalled progress, increased inequality, widened the trade deficit and forced more Nepalis to migrate overseas. Remittances helped reduce poverty, but they have not raised investment and farm productivity, or improved service delivery.

In the coming 2020-2030 decade, Nepal must get out of the low-growth and high-migration trap. Otherwise, having also to shoulder the burdens of climate change, the country will not graduate into middle income status.

And we will be writing an editorial in January 2030 lamenting another lost decade.

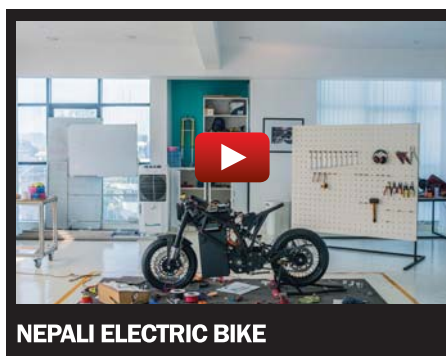
Blockade and the tyranny of a corrupt anti-corruption czar in 2015-2016, the unified left swept the election. There was finally hope that a strong popular mandate would usher in an era of stability. Elections to local governments after nearly 20 years were supposed to ensure accountability from the grassroots up. Sadly, the same old faces are still in the saddle, making the same old mistakes, and politics is as centralised as ever.

Corrupt contractors with political protection go scot free despite failing to complete roads, bridges, airports or irrigation projects. A government that cannot complete a 5km section of road in the capital in five years has no right to go about pushing a new \$6-billion airport. Bureaucrats delayed the Melamchi project, the upgrade of the Kathmandu airport and many other projects by scaring away investors with open extortion.

All of Nepal's woes stem from lack of transparency and failure of governance at every level. The only way to clean it up will be the next federal and local elections in

Times.com

ONLINE PACKAGES



NEPALI ELECTRIC BIKE

Watch a group of automobile engineers at Yatri Motorcycles as they work on designing and developing Nepal's own electric motorbike. Founder Asim Pandey, graduate of Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands and formerly with sports car developer Donkervoort, explains his bike. View the video on the *Nepali Times* YouTube channel.

WOOD CARVING

Tourism has a role to play to build appreciation and demand for these amazing arts ('Crafting a heritage', Shriluna Shrestha, #988).

Raj Gyawali

■ Traditional Newari wood carving is amazing. I am especially impressed by the window frames — there is nothing like them anywhere else in the world. These works of art play a major role in creating a unique, traditional atmosphere in parts of Kathmandu.

Tom Cox

LABOUR MIGRATION

Nepalis are going abroad driven by economic factors as a result of poor national leadership and management ('For Nepalis migrant workers, good news in small bites', Upasana Khadka, page 4-5). It is not an export. Foreign aid is a two-edged sword that most self-respecting national leaders won't seek. There's a price to pay for this dependency.

Gerald Fernando Heng

■ Interesting how Nepal exports its workers but does not welcome skilled foreigners... perhaps the vision of the future is to forever be reliant on aid from abroad or NGOs.

Steve L Roberts

BAYALPATA DESIGN AWARD

Congratulations. This hospital is great for Nepal and great for the earth-friendly builders ('Bayalpata Hospital in Nepal wins global design award', #988). Thankful for a place people can go to get help.

Betsy York

■ I was there several times during the violent conflict. Really good to know it is on the map.

Kishore Nepal

■ We need more articles like this in the mainstream media. Perhaps the architecture courses we teach in universities need to be reviewed.

Kalinga Seneviratne

■ Best wishes! Let us hope that the operation and maintenance of this award-winning hospital will be equally good.

Ramesh Shrestha

■ This is great news for Nepal. It's indeed a wonderful piece of architecture nestled in the hills of remote Achham!

Wonaw & Associates

POOR HEALTH

There are indeed inhumane conditions for people in western Nepal ('Federalism leaves medical sector ailing', Sewa Bhattarai, #988).

Gunnar Terje Lysemose

CLIMATE CRISIS

Climate change is real, we don't need money at the cost of the earth ('Global heating melts mountains', #988).

Pratibha Dangol

■ The time is now. We are the first generation to be affected by it and the last generation that can stop/slow the phenomenon.

Bijendra MS Basnyat

WHAT'S TRENDING

Federalism leaves Nepal's medical sector ailing

by Sewa Bhattarai

Federalism was supposed to bring the government closer to the people, decentralise medical care and improve public health at the grassroots. But the new structure threatens to undo Nepal's health gains. Read this field report from Bajura on our website and watch dramatic clips depicting the poor state of health services in remote, underserved regions.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook



Coming out of the woodwork

by Kunda Dixit

German cultural conservationist Heinrich Meyer came to Nepal in 1975 to help restore the glorious architectural heritage of the old town of Bhaktapur. His book *Kasthakala*, a pictorial record of the evolution of Kathmandu Valley's woodcarving tradition, will help preserve the craft.

t Most popular on Twitter

Bayalpata Hospital in Nepal wins global design award

The hospital in Achham district, built almost entirely using rammed-earth technology and locally available material, with an ambitious zero-carbon construction, has won an award for innovative climate design at the World Architecture Festival in Amsterdam. Go online to read the feedback.

66 Most commented

Prabal Gurung by Prabal Gurung

by Kunda Dixit

The book by and of Prabal Gurung allows us to understand his approach to life: tolerance, compassion, style, originality, activism and a kinship to the land of his forebears. Read the full review at nepalitimes.com

9 Most visited online page

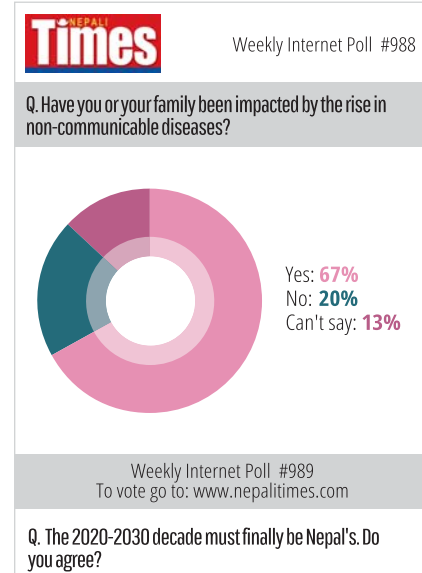
QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Federalism should have made healthcare more assessable for the people. But the government's 'adjustment policy' in the medical sector, which lets staff pick their preferred tier of work, has led many to choose the federal level. This has left provinces and municipalities underserved, resulting in poor health.

NirGhiSha@nirmalktm
The transition seems quite decent. So it is about the management; bad management ruins even the best democracies, Nepal isn't an exception.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Prabal Gurung by Prabal Gurung
New York-based fashion designer @prabalgurung expresses his innate feminism and femininity with a fresh style that combines the exotic east with the practical #couture of the west. Read the full review at nepalitimes.com

Prabal Gurung @prabalgurung
For this thoughtful review of the book, for taking time to read it and review it, I am so deeply appreciative @kundadixit thank you from the bottom of my heart. This means a lot to me xPG



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Publisher and Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit
Digital Producer: Sonia Awale, Design: Kiran Maharjan
Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd | Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu
editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | www.himalmedia.com | Tel: 01-5005601-08 Fax: +977-1-5005518
Marketing: Arjun Karki, Surendra Sharma rachanas@himalmedia.com | Subscriptions: Santosh Aryal santosh@himalmedia.com
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Good news in small bites

Migration is often portrayed as a doom and gloom story of desperation, exploitation and abuse. The only positive stories are about migrants-turned-millionaires, or returnees who started commercial farming.



LABOUR MOBILITY
Upasana Khadka

What rarely gets attention is the incremental improvement in the lives of workers. An average migrant worker is neither stranded, nor a millionaire — usually her or she is someone earning enough overseas to build a concrete house or afford better education for their children. We also expect policies on migration to be uprooted overnight, and entrenched business practices cleaned up. But change is rarely so dramatic — it is mostly incremental, which is perhaps why it does not grab the attention of most reporters. To mark International Migrants Day (18 December), we must reflect on these individual stories of small successes.

“Salaam Alaikum, bhai,” says Ramesh Thapa on IMO to a friend from Kerala he made while working for five years in a department store in Saudi Arabia. The two recall their time there, and update each other about their lives. Ramesh is trying to run a fancy clothing shop in Kathmandu.

His life has not dramatically changed, nor is it without struggles, but he credits his time in Saudi Arabia for bettering his life — giving him higher confidence, a stronger



GOPEN RAI

work ethic and business acumen. Ramesh notes that with what he saved he could start something on his own back home.

There are also small changes happening at the policy level: migrant workers can now renew paperwork in their provincial capitals, saving them time and money. Till recently, a family that experienced the death of a member working abroad had to travel to Kathmandu to access survival benefits from the foreign employment board. Now, these application can be done through local governments and compensation received through individual bank

accounts, saving families expensive travel to the capital.

There were no bilateral agreements signed between 2012-2017, but in the past two years Nepal has signed or renegotiated pacts with Jordan, Malaysia, Japan, UAE and Mauritius, including provisions for zero cost recruitment and equality of treatment. Many of these agreements include specific clauses like requiring a migrant worker to be received at the airport within six hours of arrival, or allowing workers to return home for personal emergencies regardless of whether or not they have accrued holidays.

To be sure, some of

these provisions are challenging to implement on a large scale, and have not gone into full effect yet. A lot more needs to be done by the government to ensure that the guarantees make a tangible impact. There are vested interests at play, receiving countries have lax laws for outsiders, workers have unequal bargaining power, and those who profit from workers have political protection.

Efforts by the department of foreign employment to ramp up unannounced investigations into recruitment agencies that are overcharging workers, or increasing intra-agency coordination with the police and department of immigration are promising. Yet, to expect overnight change in

current recruitment or employment practices would be unrealistic, as was seen in the attempt to reduce the cost burden on Malaysia-bound workers.

The ban on domestic workers migrating to the Gulf has been ineffective and removes agency from aspirants. This means stealing from a prospective worker her dreams of taking better care of her children or compelling her to use an unauthorised channel if she is desperate enough. Nepal has yet to find a champion who can uproot this well intentioned, but ineffective, policy.

However, it is also time to acknowledge that we have come a long way. The challenge of the last decade was to bring the topic of migrant workers into the spotlight, and the success so far has been noteworthy, as evidenced by the Global Compact for Migration. The challenge of the next decade will be to achieve the principles embodied in these documents.

Nepal has a lot working in its favour. Most of its destination countries have endorsed the Global Compact, and there is a common position as we advocate better treatment of workers. Countries are increasingly adopting mandatory supply chain, due-diligence laws that increase the pressure to ensure worker rights are respected.

Furthermore, as many destination countries are facing the brunt of demographic pressure and severe worker shortages, it has forced them to reconsider their policies on foreign worker management. There is a lot that can be done, and needs to be done, but the global climate is in favour of workers, and that in itself is worth celebrating on December 18. 🇳🇵

Upasana Khadka begins her monthly column Labour Mobility focusing on Nepal's outmigration from this issue.



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prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Turkish & Sunrise

On 17 December, Sunrise Bank and Turkish Airlines signed an agreement in which debit and credit card holders of the bank will receive up to 7% discount on economy class and up to 10% discount on business class (except employees) on any Turkish Airlines sector.



Qatar on the ball

Qatar Airways has partnered with the All Nepal Football Association for the Qatar Airways 'A' Division Martyr's Memorial League, the biggest annual football event in Nepal. The Qatar Airways logo will feature on all 14 league club shirts and on perimeter boards, stadium flags, LED screens and online digital content during the event, from 14 December 2019 to 15 February 2020.



Huawei Mate30 Pro

Huawei Nepal this week revealed its latest flagship phone, Huawei Mate30 Pro, which comes with the company's own intelligent ecosystem, HMS. Huawei also released wearables like the Watch GT2, Band 4, Band4e, Free buds 3 and FreeLace.



Toyota UHEEM

Vaidya's Organisation of Industries & Trading House officially launched Toyota's United Heavy Equipments and Earthmovers (UHEEM) in Nepal on 15 December. UHEEM imports excavators, graders and breakers.

Christmas at Hyatt

Hyatt Regency held its annual Christmas Tree Lighting event on 13 December, attended by in-house guests along with those from the corporate sector, spa members, media friends and management staff.



Russia–Nepal cooperation poised for growth: Ambassador

New Russian Ambassador to Nepal, Aleksei A Novikov, spoke to *Nepali Times* about the prospect of high-level visits by Russian leaders to Nepal in 2020, and the potential for reviving economic, cultural and political exchanges between the two countries. Excerpts:

Nepali Times: Nepal's Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali met Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in November and extended an invitation on behalf of President Bidya Devi Bhandari to President Vladimir Putin to visit Nepal. How likely is that visit?
Ambassador Novikov: During the talks with Sergey Lavrov, Foreign Minister Gyawali indeed availed himself of the opportunity to hand over an invitation from President Bidya Devi Bhandari to the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, and an invitation from Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to visit Nepal at any convenient time. Besides, he also handed to the Foreign Minister an invitation to take part in the first meeting of the international forum, Sagarmatha Dialogue, on 2-4 April 2020. Minister Lavrov assured Minister Gyawali that Russia would consider the invitations, and that visits would depend on schedules.

What else was discussed?
The negotiations were quite productive. This was the first official visit by Nepal's foreign minister to Russia since 2005. Both sides admitted that the potential for trade and economic relations between Russia and Nepal is not fully used. That is why, with the view of increasing bilateral turnover, they decided to widen the list of goods for mutual trade. Nepal also accepted Russia's proposal to renew meetings of the existing working group on energy cooperation, which was established in 2013.
Nepal is popular with Russian tourists, even though their number is relatively small, with 11,000 Russians visiting Nepal in 2018. But this is expected to grow next year as Russia fully supports the Visit Nepal 2020 campaign. The foreign ministers also agreed to foster the development of bilateral



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cooperation, especially in the areas of investment, trade, tourism, education, energy, culture and industrial and social infrastructure development.

How would you estimate the prospects for further development of bilateral cooperation after the ministerial meeting?
The foreign ministers of Russia and Nepal agreed to move forward on improving the legal basis of bilateral relations, migration, re-admission, emergency response and cooperation between television channels of Russia and Nepal. We specifically focused on the need to resolve issues of aligning the requirements for Russians in Nepal and Nepalis in Russia, especially in cases of mixed families.
The two sides also noted the progress in development of political dialogue between the two countries. Russia welcomes Nepal's interest in more active participation within the

framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Moscow considers that Nepal should make the most out of its status as a SCO dialogue partner.

What is your opinion about the future of bilateral military-technical cooperation?
Russian aircraft have a good track record in the mountains of Nepal. Previously delivered Mi-17 helicopters operate in Nepal, and there are further plans for cooperation in this area. We believe that bilateral military-technical cooperation has very good prospects, and the foreign ministers of our countries also agreed on the necessity of signing a mutual agreement in the future.

Are there any signs that bilateral ties will be revived to pre-1990 levels?
Russia attaches great importance to the development of

relations with Nepal. We have a rich history of cooperation in economic, cultural, educational and technical spheres. Although our countries are geographically separated, there has been a mutual affinity between Russia and Nepal ever since diplomatic relations were established. This year, we celebrated the 63rd anniversary of establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations, with the participation of Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali and other officials.
Cultural ties between our countries are age-old. From Lumbini the Buddha's teachings spread across the Himalaya to the Central Asian steppes to Buriyatia, Tuva and Kalmykia, contemporary Russian regions inhabited predominantly by followers of Buddhism.
The first visit to Nepal by a Russian was by the orientalist Ivan Pavlovich Minaev, in 1875. He studied local culture and even composed a dictionary of Newari language. Then, of course, there was the Russian expat Boris Lissanevich, who did so much to open Nepal to foreigners as a major global tourist destination in the 1950s.
King Mahendra visited Moscow in 1958, and there was a visit to Kathmandu in 1960 by the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, KE Voroshilov. These visits laid a solid ground for cooperation. In the 1960s and '80s our country constructed several facilities here, such as the Panauti hydropower station, the Kanti Children's Hospital, a sugar mill and an agricultural tools factory in Birganj, a 110km section of the East-West Highway, the Janakpur Cigarette Factory, etc.
Moscow also started providing Nepalis with opportunities for higher education in 1957, after which more than 100 scholarships a year were granted to young Nepalis, which were highly appreciated here. Our country continues to provide Nepali people with scholarships, although fewer than earlier, but their number is steadily rising to previous levels. Many alumni of Soviet and Russian universities hold important posts in state and private organisations and make significant contributions to the prosperity of Nepal.
Our country's contribution to the development of Nepal is a stable foundation for our bilateral relations. Starting from the 2000s, Russia-Nepal ties have been broadening and deepening. Now, after Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali's trip to Russia, we have every reason to count on gradual growth in the volume and quality of current cooperation between our friendly countries.

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Ghosts of Christmases past

Nepali, British and Indian aristocrats used to rub shoulders with ambassadors, writers, scientists and conservationists at Tiger Tops

Although it is no longer the case, for years Nepal was one of the few countries in the world that did not recognise 25 December as a religious holiday. The winter festival with ancient pre-Christian Yule solstice origins that celebrates the birth of Christ was simply forgotten amidst Nepal's panoply of colourful festivals and *jatra*.



SO FAR SO GOOD
Lisa Choegyal

The official calendar of the world's only Hindu kingdom may have overlooked the most important Christian religious celebration, but at Tiger Tops in Chitwan and Bardiya we enthusiastically marked the event, if only as an excuse to have a good party. Family and friends from Kathmandu and all over the world were invited by our boss Jim Edwards to promote Nepal tourism, to consolidate relationships, to garner support, to repay favours or just to have fun in the jungle lodges and camps.

With bookings habitually weak during the cold winter months, Jim's legendary Christmas and New Year parties of the 1970s and 1980s were an innovative way to fill the empty lodge rooms. Invited guests brought seasonal cheer and enjoyed chilly dawn safaris and leisurely afternoon boat rides. Morning mist wreathed the forest trees, hung over the dying brown grasslands and clung to the low-lying sandy riverbeds until burned away, often as late as midday, by the weak December sun.

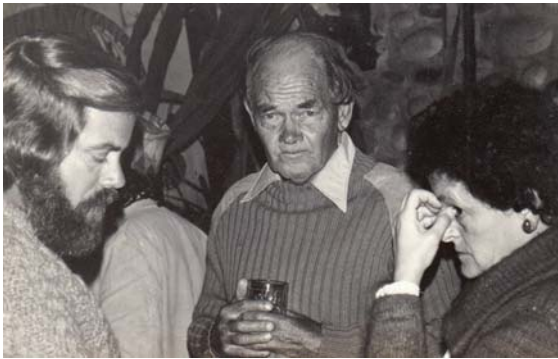
Quilt jackets, down vests and cashmere shawls were stripped off



for a few brief hours, basking in the afternoon warmth before the damp of evening sent everyone in the direction of the bar, festively clad in sequined sweaters, inappropriate ties and navy blazers. The carol singing may have been a bit ragged and tuneless, but the hot rum drinks helped. Tiger Tops Specials, formerly known as Root's Ruin after wildlife filmmaker Alan Root, were expertly mixed with lemon, honey,

cinnamon and nutmeg behind the stone-built bar, decorated with shelves of bottles glinting in the lamplight and a gallery of framed visiting celebrity images.

By necessity, the festivities had to be adapted to Nepali conditions. The turkeys found in the bazaar in those days more closely resembled vultures, with suspiciously hooked beaks and dark flesh. They were soon replaced by a specially-reared



YULETIDE GUESTS:
Rajmata Gayatri Devi of Jaipur (*far left*) was regarded as the most beautiful, and possibly the richest, woman in the world. She was a frequent visitor to Chitwan.

Al Read, Col Jimmy Roberts with Elizabeth Hawley in Tiger Tops in the 1970s.

pig, roasted for hours over a pit of coals, and accompanied by apples and sag instead of the customary cranberry and brussels sprouts.

Christmas trees were decked with handcrafted ornaments, crackers were dispensed with as a frivolous luxury, and mistletoe and ivy were substituted by jungle creepers and poinsettias from Kathmandu. Resources were raided to produce a semblance of Christmas pudding, blue-flamed with local brandy, delicious mince pies and elaborately iced cake, not the elephant dung variety popular with the boys' birthdays. Champagne, contributed by duty-free guests, brought a rare sparkle to the winter jungle.

Jim was a recklessly generous host, appreciating the benefits of barter and nurturing his networks, mingling convivial groups of diverse guests, often with unexpected results. Nepali, British and Indian aristocrats rubbed shoulders with ambassadors, writers, scientists and conservationists. Gurkha officers came tasselled in gold, and some years we danced on the front lawn to brass strains of the uniformed police band. Two veteran soldiers who had

not seen each other since a World War II battlefield were reunited around the copper-roofed fireplace in Chitwan. Winston Churchill, the parliamentary grandson of Sir Winston, came with his children and adopted Nepali daughter, and hotelier Biki Oberoi brought his entire family, including wife and favourite mistress, to Jim's palpable delight.

Anton Mosimann, the dapper Swiss chef whose most famous restaurant was in a Chelsea church, arrived from London. Disdaining the festivities, he asked me to show him around the staff kitchen behind the elephant camp so that he could sample real indigenous Nepali food at source.

Ayesha Jaipur was a regular favourite. More correctly known as Her Highness the Rajmata Gayatri Devi of Jaipur, she washed her own undies and served Indian whiskey instead of Scotch if she thought no one would notice. Famed in her heyday as the most beautiful and possibly one of the richest women in the world, she was also one of the funniest, and I loved her. One year she fixed me with her deep brown eyes, coyly adjusted her hair and rearranged her chiffon sari to reveal an elegant shoulder.

"I hear you have built the best house in Nepal and I'd like to bring my grandson to stay. Would Christmas in Kathmandu suit you?"

It was a royal command not to be denied, so plans were adjusted. Much to the consternation of her grand Rana relatives, who fussed that only they should have the honour of hosting her, Ayesha stuck to her plans. The morning flight was delayed and Christmas lunch on hold while the Edwards and Choegyal families dallied in the winter sunshine beneath the blazing orange *khorsani phul* until finally the Rajmata swept up our driveway.

It felt rather like entertaining the queen, but after all, that is what she was. On her bedside table in our spare room she carefully placed the silver framed photo of her late husband, the last ruler of Jaipur. Third and last wife of the flamboyant Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II, Ayesha and he were world celebrities until he died after a polo accident at Cirencester in 1970, and Mrs Gandhi put pressure on the former Indian princely families whose titles were supposed to have evaporated with Independence. Especially targeted were individuals such as Ayesha, who was born a Cooch Behar princess and had many powerful friends and an enthusiastic political following. She was much appreciated for her charitable works amongst the Rajasthan poor. Ayesha survived political persecution and prison, emerging more glamorous and admired than ever.

She was just one of the memorable cast of characters who crowded the Tiger Tops bar, thronged to the jungle lodges in response to the coveted invitation, clinked glasses in Christmas salute, and still jostle to be remembered as ghosts of Christmas past. 🇳🇵

FESTIVE SPECIAL

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

20 th - 31 st Dec	24 th Dec	25 th Dec	31 st Dec	1 st Jan 2020
<p>Christmas Delights NRS. 599-2,499 <small>Nett</small></p> <p>Caravanserai Restaurant</p>	<p>Christmas Eve Gala Dinner NRS. 2500 <small>Nett</small></p> <p>Caravanserai Restaurant</p>	<p>Christmas Day Brunch NRS. 2000 <small>Nett</small></p> <p>Caravanserai Restaurant</p>	<p>New Year Eve Party GALA EVENT NRS. 6000 <small>Nett couple</small></p> <p>The Black Rose Band NRS. 4000 <small>Nett pp</small></p> <p>Traders Hall</p>	<p>Happy New Year Brunch NRS. 2020 <small>Nett</small></p> <p>2020 HAPPY NEW YEAR</p> <p>Caravanserai Restaurant</p>

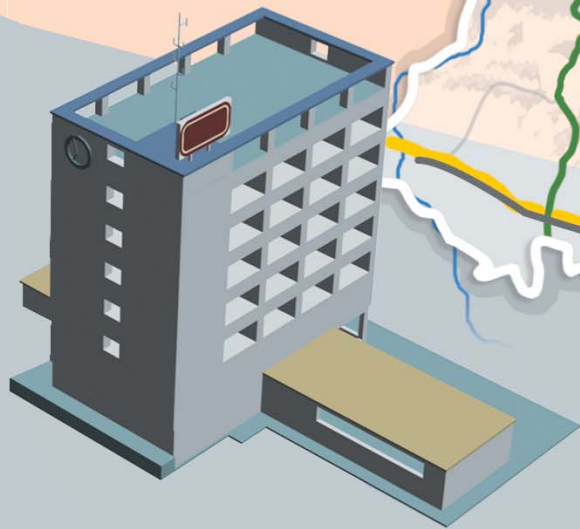
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Nepal in 2030

What does the next decade have in store for Nepal's infrastructure?



Sanghamitra Subba

Ten years ago, at the beginning of the last decade, Nepalis looked forward with optimism to a country with greater connectivity — at least a railway or two, smart cities, more energy sources and a great leap forward in infrastructure. The war had ended, a new constitution was being drafted and there was optimism about the future in 2010.

Fast forward 10 years and many of those projects have not materialised, while even the ones nearing completion, like Melamchi, Pokhara Airport, or the Kathmandu-Tarai Expressway, are delayed. The 2015 earthquake and Blockade, as well as endemic corruption, were blamed. But it was mainly failure of political leadership.

Yet, many of these projects and others planned for the coming decade are more ambitious than ever. The government hopes to start on a new international airport in Nijgad, upgrade Kathmandu airport, build two highway tunnels to Rasuwagadi, start a feasibility study on the Kerung-Kathmandu railway, expedite the East-West Railway, and add at least 10,000MW of hydropower to the grid in the next decade.

Nepalis have got used to delays and disappointment, and there is a 'we will believe it when we see it' attitude about the megaprojects in the pipeline. A government that cannot even upgrade the Nagarkot road or finish the 5km stretch from Chabahil to Gokarna, it is felt, has no right promising a \$6billion new airport by clearing native forest.

Earlier this year, Finance Minister Yubaraj Khatiwada promised that the government would complete the feasibility study of the Kerung-Kathmandu railway and begin construction by 2022. This came without a definite budget or financial modality, still the Nepali engineer

on the project, Paribesh Parajuli says it will happen within the coming decade.

"The detailed project report and feasibility study for the Kerung-Kathmandu Railway will take more than two years but we are hopeful that it will be done within the given timeframe," Parajuli told *Nepali Times*. "If everything goes as planned, the railway should be completed within nine years of the start of construction."

Another faraway project is the 945km East-West Railway. To span 24 Tarai districts from Mechi to Mahakali, it is expected to be completed by the middle of the coming decade. In fact, 30km of the track-bed from Bardibas to Nijgad is scheduled to be finished next year. This line will connect with the 69km Janakpur-Jayanagar-Kurtha line that will start operating in March 2020. Also being surveyed is the Raxaul-Kathmandu Railway.

Out of the 22 national pride projects, 17 are scheduled for completion in the next 5 years, according to the National Planning Commission's Approach Paper. Sushil Bhatta of the NPC says: "The government is focusing on giving priority to certain projects, making sure that resources are effectively and efficiently utilised in order to meet the targets that have been outlined."

In the next five-year periodic plan, the government is prioritising completion of projects that have already begun, allocating resources on the basis of the progress achieved and the significance of the projects to the economy.

Bhatta says: "We want to give priority to result-oriented national pride projects and those that help enhance economic growth."

The government is determined to complete Nijgad International Airport in the coming decade despite strong protests from environmental activists and criticism that it is too grandiose. Bhairawa and Pokhara airports will be operational in 2020 and 2021, but whether they will act as alternative airports and reduce congestion in Kathmandu is debatable.

During this year's Nepal Investment

Summit there were numerous proposals for smart cities in Hetauda — integrated urban development programs that were built on digital frameworks, improved technology, energy-efficient apartments, electric vehicle charging stations and bus rapid transit.

Between 2020-2030 there will also be explosive growth in the telecommunication sector with the introduction of 4G and 5G networks. Anand Khanal at the Nepal Telecommunications Authority says, "In the next decade, we will see blanket coverage of mobile broadband in the country. The infrastructure will be established so that 100% of the public will have access to the internet and broadband service."

Nepal hopes to become a middle-income country by 2030, and the country needs to invest more than \$1billion annually on infrastructure development to reach this goal.

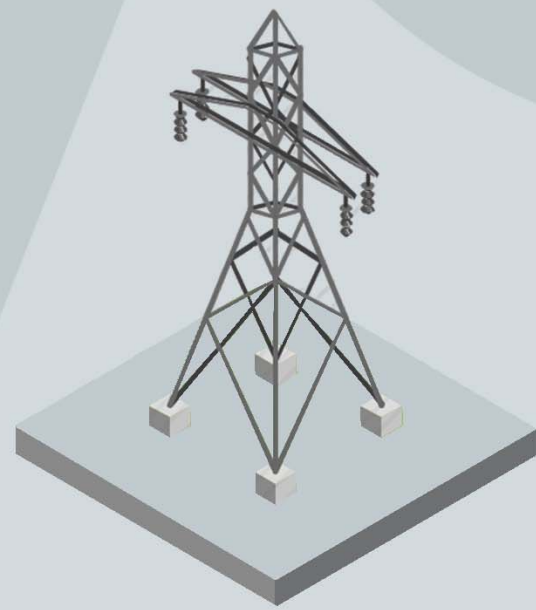
Bhatta says: "To achieve our 5-year goals and even 25-year goals, we need to streamline our projects, strategically invest in those projects and push for a paradigm shift in the way Nepal manages development." 🇳🇵



Hydropower

The following hydropower projects up to **10,000MW** are under construction and could be completed by 2030:

- Upper Tamakoshi (1)
- Upper Sanjen (2)
- Sanjen (3)
- Rasuwaagadi (4)
- Middle Bhoti Kosi (5)
- Upper Trisuli 3-A (6)
- Raghuganga (7)
- Marsyangdi 2 (8)
- Budi Gandaki (9)
- Tanahu (10)



Transit Line

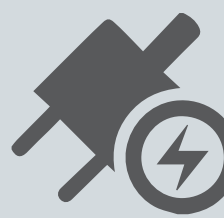
The Hetauda-Kathmandu line will span 100km.

The India-Nepal Project will cost \$1.1 billion and 1,000MW of power in Indian territory completed by 2030.



Smart Cities

At this year's Nepal Investment Summit, numerous smart city plans were proposed. A smart city would be designed to have modern hospitals, energy-efficient apartments, electric vehicle charging stations and bus rapid transit.



Energy

22,474.7 GWh (energy) 4,614.4 MW

Planned Generation Scenario

22,000 MW

Power

er projects totaling
nder construction
in 10 years:

Uttarganga (11)
Raghughat (12)
Nalsinggad (13)
Upper Karnali (14)
West Seti (15)
Chameliya (16)
Kulekhani 3 (17)
Arun 3 (18)
Lower Seti (19)
Upper Arun (20)
Ikhuwa Khola (21)

Highways

Mid-Hill Pushpalal Highway
North-South Kosi Corridor
North-South Kali Gandaki Corridor
North-South Karnali Corridor
All to be ready in next 4 years.



Total length of highways to be
completed in the next decade:

4,800 km



Fast Track

The Kathmandu-Tarai Expressway is projected to be completed by 2024. This fast-track connecting Kathmandu to the East-West Highway will be 72km long and have 7 bridges and 3 tunnels.

In the next decade, the government hopes to build

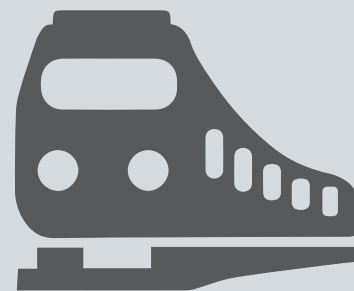
1,000 km of expressways.

4 International Airports

The \$6.7-billion Nijgad International Airport has been planned since 1994, but it is bogged down due to its high cost and opposition from environmentalists and activists.

Many say it is redundant because Pokhara International Airport will be ready in 2021 and Lumbini Airport will start operations in July 2020. The two airports will accommodate international flights, handle 2.5 million passengers a year and take some of the pressure off of congested Kathmandu airport.

Trains



The Nepal-China, Trans-Himalayan, Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network, one of China's BRI projects, is a 72km railway from Xigatse to Kathmandu. The track from Xigatse to Kerung is slated to be completed by 2025 and the Kerung to Kathmandu track-laying is planned to begin in 2022.

The 945km East-West railway will span 24 districts from Mechi to Mahakali. As of 2019, 30km of the track-bed had been laid and the Bardibas-Nijgad section has been completed.

The construction for the 69km Janakpur-Jayanagar-Kurtha Railway has been completed and is set to start operating in March 2020.

Pre-engineering and the traffic survey report for the Raxaul-Kathmandu Railway was completed around June 2019. It is undecided whether the railway will be of 140km or 190km.

The government aims to construct

4,000 km

of railway track in the next **20** years.



Transmission Lines

a-Dhalkebar-Duhabi 400 KV transmission
n 288.3km and have 792 towers.

epal Electricity Transmission and Trade
connect Butwal to Gorakhpur and carry
f energy. 120km of the 135km line will lie
ritory. The project was supposed to be
y 2018 but will now be finished in 2020.



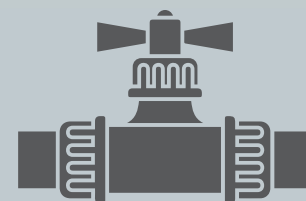
Telecommunication

100% of the population will be able to access broadband services.
4G and 5G networks will also be established.



Water

The Melamchi Water Supply Project was supposed to be completed 10 years ago, but the tunnel construction ground to a halt after the lead contractor, Cooperativa Muratori e Cementisti (CMC) di Ravenna abandoned it last year, citing official harassment. Chinese contractor Sinohydro has taken over.



Irrigation Projects

The Sikta and Babai Irrigation Projects are two 'national pride' schemes nearing completion. The Rani-Jamariya-Kularia and Bheri-Babai Diversion Multipurpose Projects are slated for completion by 2025.



- Existing Road
- New Highways
- New Expressways
- New Railway

EVENTS



Screenplay Workshop

This Screenplay and Direction Workshop will help struggling screenwriters flesh out their ideas and also appeal to anyone who wants to learn how to tell compelling stories through films. Pre-registration required: bit.ly/screenplaysattya
21-23 December, 10am-1pm, Rs2,000 per person, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Dhobighat (01) 5521812

Christmas Fest

Ever experienced Christmas the German way? Goethe Zentrum, a German language institute in Nepal, invites everyone who wants to celebrate Weihnachten to do so with music, food and merriment.
21 December, 2pm-8pm, Goethe Zentrum, Thapathali (01) 4250871

Royal Christmas

Nowhere to go for Christmas Eve? Then head to Royal Empire for an evening of musical performances by the Kathmandu Strings Ensemble, a barbeque and buffet, Christmas games for kids, a photo shoot with Santa Claus and return gifts for everyone!
24 December, 6pm onwards, Royal Empire Boutique Hotel, Gairidhara (01) 4000538



Kathmandu 360

Kathmandu 360 is a hike-walk-camp around Kathmandu Valley that encourages both visitors and locals to explore the nature of the valley. This 360 edition will take participants to the forests of Lakuri Baniyang for a full-day hike. Don't forget your hiking gear!
21 December, 7:30am-4pm, Rs555 per person, Lagankhel Chok (meeting point), 9841265165

ChokBazaar

Spend the late afternoon soaking up the sun in the bright courtyard of Babar Mahal, shopping for local goods and snacking on delicious hors d'oeuvre. In the evenings, you can paint and drink wine at the House of Palettes stall.
20 December, 2pm-7pm, Babar Mahal Revisited (01) 4248747



Christmas Market

The Park Bazaar is back with another sustainable and Christmas-themed night market. Browse stalls from Reena's Creatives, Simrik Design Studio, Oxa Creatives, KTM Organic Factory and more.
22 December, 4pm-8pm, The Park Bazaar, Astrek Park, Thamel (01) 4419265

Go Local

Go Local is a Nepali goods fair that aims to promote local businesses and crafts.
21 December, 2pm-8pm, Labim Mall, Pulchok (01) 5529924



Happiness Program

The Art of Living's Happiness Program invites you to learn *Sudarshan Kriya*, a controlled breathing practice, and overcome stress and anxiety, with Guruma Riya.
17-21 December, 6:30am-9:30am/ 2pm-5pm, Ananda Pashupati, Tilganga, 9869112542

Mithila Art

Mithila art refers to the colourful, intricately drawn paintings from the Maithili-speaking regions of Nepal and India. Learn how to create Mithila art with artists from Mithila House with fingers, twigs, brushes, nib-pens and matchsticks.
22 December, 3pm-5pm, Rs3,500 per person, Babar Mahal Revisited, 9801024997

MUSIC



Mukti & Revival

Jam along to Mukti & Revival, a blues and rock powerhouse in the Nepali music industry.
20 December, 7pm onwards, Tickets: Rs1,500, Prive Nepal, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 9801090111

Pahenlo Batti Muni

This five-member experimental rock band has been performing under the light of dim bulbs since the days of loadshedding. Almost five years since their inception, they've been playing sold-out shows, touring the nation and releasing hit songs.
24 December, 8pm onwards, Tickets: Rs500, Hotel Yellow Darbar, Sanepa (01) 5550939



Christmas Concert

Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory's annual Christmas concert presents an evening of live music featuring Latin Jazz, fusion music and singers Maria Fajardo, Alessio Cazzetta and more.
21 December, 7pm onwards, Tickets: Rs300, Moksh, Jhamsikhel (01) 5543554

Kutumba Band

This musical performance features the beloved Nepali folk instrumental band Kutumba, Lakhey dances, cultural shows and more.
21 December, 5pm onwards, Tickets: Rs2,000, Prive Nepal, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 9801090111

April Rush

Celebrate Christmas Eve with April Rush, an acoustic duo known for their hit song Tyo Hawa.
24 December, 6pm onwards, Attic, Gyaneswor (01) 4417843

DINING



Gala Dinner

Indulge in a Christmas Eve dinner that offers everything, from roast turkey to all the pies that you can imagine. Make sure to reserve a seat before you go!
24 December, 7:30pm-11:30pm, Rs2,500++ per person, Fairfield Marriott, Thamel (01) 4217999

Gokarna Christmas

Head to Gokarna Forest Resort for a Christmas Eve dinner with unlimited snacks, a lavish buffet and a glass of mulled wine all in the presence of great musical performances.
24 December, 6pm onwards, Rs2,500++ per person, Gokarna Forest Resort (01) 4450002



Winter BBQ

Ward off the winter chill with a lavish barbeque spread. From sauced meats to vegetables, Teppanyaki-style bbq to Cajun-style sausages, and shrimp kebabs to *zafrani til paneer*, this weekly barbeque offers delicious food hot off the grill.
Every Friday, 6pm onwards, 2,166++ per person, The Cafe, Hyatt Regency, Boudha

Christmas Buffet

Enjoy a Christmas brunch and dinner with seasonal delicacies and scrumptious dishes at Aloft Hotel's premiere restaurant, The Nook.
24 December (6:30pm onwards) 25 Dec. (12pm onwards), The Nook, Aloft Kathmandu, Thamel (01) 5252000



Junar Festival

With the arrival of winter comes the bountiful harvest of oranges. Enjoy the juice of fresh oranges straight from the groves of Sindhuli, along with healthy vegetarian dishes.
22 December, 2pm-6pm, Juice Mandala, Pulchok (01) 4112128

GETAWAY



Hotel Welcome

Head to the beautiful city of Janakpur to marvel at the history and culture etched into the walls of the Janaki Temple. And during your stay, Hotel Welcome promises architecture that resembles that of the temple, comfortable accommodations and attentive staff.
Shiva Chok, Janakpur (041) 590646

Sacred Valley Inn

A cup of hot tea at this humble inn will warm you this winter. If you're ever passing through Lakeside or in need of a place to stay, check out this rustic hotel.
Lakeside, 984605352



Shangri-La Village Resort

Get away for a couple days this winter and head to the idyllic Shangri-La Village Resort. Meditate in the outdoor Yoga Pergola, indulge in a massage in Phewa Spa and soak up the sun in the Sanctuary Garden.
Gharipatan, Pokhara (61) 462222

Bandipur Safari Lodge

While Bandipur is known mainly for its rich cultural heritage, it is home to a wide variety of wildlife. So go beyond the temples and explore the jungles of the town with the Bandipur Safari Lodge.
Bandipur, 9449597880



Hotel Fireside

Kalinchok, a quiet village in Dolakha, is covered with a blanket of snow in the winter that makes the town as picturesque as Swiss valleys. This hotel provides you a warm refuge after a day in the winter wonderland, with heated rooms, comfortable beds and soul-warming Nepali food.
Kuri Village, Kalinchok, 9841958694



Health at home is an organization which facilitates home based health care services. Health at home service promotes health care i.e., out of hospital setting to the clients. Being the first of its kind in the whole South Asia, Health at Home is here to cater to the needs of those who desire health care facilities to be delivered at their doorsteps.	
Doctor on call Visit by qualified and well experienced doctor generalist.	Nursing Care 24 hours nursing care at home by qualified and experienced professionals.
Lab on Call All kinds of lab related work by professional lab technician.	Physiotherapy on Call Physio/Electro/Acupuncture therapy by qualified and experienced physiotherapist.
Elderly Care Assistant Fine and professional care by our qualified and experienced care giver.	Travel Support for Sick Clients Travel support for sick clients are provided by professional.
Appointment Management Apoinment management with required doctors in different hospitals.	Equipment Rental & Drug Supply Drug supply at your doorstep and best quality medical equipments in rent.

OUR PICK

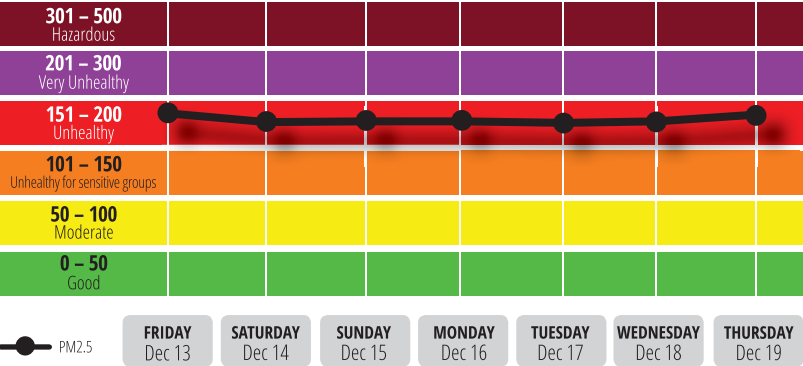


Opened in Kathmandu on 27 December

The Skywalker saga comes to an end with the final journey of the Resistance. Follow Rey, Finn and Poe Dameron as they gear up for their final battle and watch the much-anticipated standoff between the Jedi and the Sith. JJ Abrahams returns as director and Daisy Ridley, Adam Driver and John Boyega also star.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 13 - 19 December



The air may seem cleaner after the rains last week, and the mountains are visible, but that is deceptive. The Air Quality Index in Kathmandu's city centre is as bad as ever. The daily average for the past week shows it firmly in the red 'Unhealthy' zone. The concentration of harmful suspended particles smaller than 2.5 microns hovers between 150-180 every day of the week. Again, this is just the daily average, which means at rush hour the PM2.5 was closer to 200. The hourly update with live pollution readings online is not functioning because of cutting of overhead wires in the Thamel area. We regret the inconvenience, and are working to solve the problem.
<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>

Mount Everest has always held mythical status for me, like the Great Wall of China and the Pyramids of Giza. Growing up on the 'other side of the world' I knew about them from a very young age: their mystery was seeded in my imagination as a schoolboy in Canada.



SOMEWHERE ELSE
Marty Logan

I have not visited the Great Wall or the pyramids, but I remember the mountain flight that took me close to Everest about 12 years ago. It was cloudy when we left Kathmandu but clear enough that the rocky triangle above the Lhotse-Nuptse ridge could be pointed out as we flew past in our tiny plane.

Now Everest, like the entire Himalayan range that stretches from Pakistan to China, is a victim of global heating. The permanent ice on many of these mountains is melting and once snowy white peaks have become dark rock. Mountaineers have reported a thawing of the exposed ridges en route to the Everest summit, which is exposing the bodies of dead climbers. Below Everest, the Rongbuk, Khumbu and other glaciers are thinning and receding fast.

The startling thing about what is happening to the Himalaya is that it does not seem to really bother many people, or at least those who make decisions about what does and does not get done on Planet Earth. Certainly the news did not spur world leaders to take effective action on global heating at the unsuccessful Climate Summit (COP25) in Madrid that ended last week.

If they cannot be moved to save Mt Everest and the Roof of the World, will those leaders take action in the name of the 1.9 billion people who depend on these mountains and others like it worldwide?

A report released to coincide with COP25 details how the Indus water tower, which includes much of the Himalaya, and 77 other glacier-based water systems worldwide are diminishing faster than imagined. The result: the rivers fed by the water towers will shrink, and shrink some more, and soon the water sources that people rely upon to sustain their lives will become too small for everyone.

This is already happening in some places. A 2010 study found that rainfall has decreased 7.5% in South Asia from 1900 to 2005. At the start of 2019, nearly 3 million people were said to be affected by the worst drought to strike Pakistan in years.

Yet the increasingly precarious lives of people already existing in the margins, plus the threat to nearly one-quarter of the world's population who rely on the water towers, did not move world leaders into action at Madrid. Must we reduce this equation to something more basic, like self-interest? Have governments thought about where all those people who survive to escape the shrinking water systems will go? Climate migrants are already on the move in growing numbers.

To date, studies have focused on internal migration. For example, a recent World Bank



KUNDA DIXIT

report predicted that if current trends continue, up to 143 million people in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Central America could be displaced by 2050 because of climate change. Yet anecdotally, the environmental impacts of a heating planet are known to be a factor in migration from Latin America northward through Mexico toward the US, and from

Africa toward Europe.

So far the west has been able to engineer and/or spend its way out of the most drastic impacts of climate change. But given the growing number, and intensity, of extreme weather events, how long will that be the case?

Ideally, world leaders would act on climate change because they find it unacceptable to be watching

over the irreversible degradation of Planet Earth, or because they consider it immoral to watch the sources of water that sustain one-quarter of the world's people slowly go dry.

Unfortunately, it might just take the threat of a growing wave of climate migrants to provoke real policy change. The risk, of course, is that faced with growing numbers

knocking on their doors, countries start to lock down their borders, à la the United States.

Let us hope that others will be wise enough to see there is a better alternative — cutting CO2 emissions in order to slow global heating, so that those living the most precarious lives will not have to choose between moving or perishing. 📺

Celebrate A Joyful
Christmas
with Friends & Family !

Christmas Eve Set Dinner
Rox Restaurant **NPR 4,000**

Six course Italian set menu served with paired wine, unlimited soft drinks and live dessert counter.

From: 6:30 PM - 10:00 PM

Christmas Eve Buffet Dinner
The Cafe **NPR 3,300**

Enhanced International buffet spread with unlimited soft drinks & one premium selected alcoholic beverage.
* Enjoy unlimited premium selected beverages at additional NPR 1,600.

From: 6:30 PM - 10:00 PM

Christmas Day Brunch
The Cafe **NPR 2,900**

Enjoy spectacular Christmas Day Buffet Brunch , while you unwrap your Christmas presents with unlimited soft drinks, one premium selected alcoholic beverage, kids activities & live music.
* Enjoy unlimited premium selected beverages at additional NPR 1,600.

From: 12:30 PM - 04:00 PM

*Terms & Conditions Apply.

Get an opportunity to win attractive door prizes of stay on double occupancy inclusive of breakfast in Hyatt Hotels. Children below 12 years avail 50% discount on meal.

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LIVE FOR NOW !

Beverage Partner

LUCKY DAUGHTERS: Karnali Province Minister Bimala KC (*left*) cradles 4-month-old Janaki Pariyar in Kalikot on Thursday, the first girl child to get a bank account under the province's Daughter Protection Plan. Rs500 will be deposited monthly in girls' accounts until they reach 20.

नेपाल सरकार
सञ्चार तथा सूचना प्रविधि मन्त्रालय
सूचना तथा प्रसारण विभाग

Indian Nepalis alarmed by Citizenship Amendment Bill

Sanjay Pradhan
in Darjeeling

After India recently amended its laws regarding citizenship, Nepalis living in Northeast India are terrified. Both India's Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), which tightens laws regarding citizenship.

Assam's National Register of Citizens (NRC), published on 31 August 2019, generated protests all over India because it was missing 1.9 million residents. About 100,000 Nepalis, whose ancestors have been living in the northeast Indian state for up to 200 years, were among those excluded from the list for technical reasons like marriage, migration, differences in last name, mistakes or lost documents. They are now terrified that they will not be counted as Indian citizens. They are listed as 'D Voters' meaning 'Doubtful' Voters.

In November, Indian Home Minister Amit Shah declared in parliament that the list would be expanded over the entire country, and his ruling BJP appears determined to implement NRC countrywide. It has amended the constitution and having the CAB passed will make it easier to implement the NRC, which will ultimately affect the status of Indians of Nepali origin at present and in the future.

Since 1951, Assam has been the only Indian state to have created and updated its register of citizens. The NRC is said to be an attempt to discover 'foreigners' residing illegally in the state. The concept of the NRC came up in 1951, after India became independent and held its first census. Its purpose later was to differentiate between Assam natives and Bangladeshi refugees.

During British rule, many



people from Bihar, Bengal and Nepal migrated to Assam to work on its tea estates and settle on empty land. After Partition and the breakup of Pakistan there was a large influx of as many as 1 million refugees from Bangladesh, first due to the language struggle and crackdowns by the Pakistan Army in 1971. After Bangladesh became independent some returned home, but many stayed on in Assam.

The Citizenship Amendment Bill makes it easier to implement the NRC across the country. Opposition parties are protesting strongly against it, and a dozen people have been killed in violent demonstrations across the country. The Indian National Congress and the Mamata Banerjee-led All India Trinamool Congress and the Marxist Communist Party are spearheading the protests, but many of the student demonstrations in universities have been spontaneous.

Protestors claim the bill undermines India's democratic system and secularism. CAB has provisions to provide citizenship to Hindu, Christian, Sikh, Persian,

Jain and Buddhist refugees who have fled persecution in the neighbouring countries of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, but denies Muslims the same facility. Many also fear that the bill endangers the identity, language and culture of the natives of Assam and neighbouring state, Tripura.

Mamata Banerjee, chief minister of West Bengal, has already declared that she will not let the NRC be implemented in West Bengal. People in northeast states including Assam, Tripura, Sikkim and Darjeeling, have held many protests against the bill.

Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland in northeast India are exempted from the bill because they are restricted states, where even Indian visitors need permits to enter. That 'Innerline Permit' will also be implemented in Manipur eventually. But Sikkim falls under the new law, which has created confusion.

Sikkim was a sovereign country until 1975, becoming India's 22nd state after annexation in 1975. Sikkim Chief Minister PS Gole has



PHOTOS: DARJEELINGTIMES.COM

declared that the CAB and NRC will not be implemented in the state. Supported by Sikkim's opposition parties, he has requested the Indian government to also exempt Sikkim.

In Darjeeling, the Vinay Tamang and Anit Thapa-led Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM), and the Dr Harkabahadur Chhetri-led Jana Andolan party have opposed the CAB, but the Gorkha Rashtriya Mukti Morcha and another faction of the GJM support both CAB and NRC.

When he presented the CAB in parliament, Home Minister Shah claimed that all those who were excluded from Assam's NRC were infiltrators, not Indian citizens. The GJM's Tamang issued a press statement refuting that allegation, and demanded that before the NRC is implemented, Indian Nepalis should be included in the list of 'Original Inhabitants of India' and be a protected community.

Nepalis have been living in Indian states like Darjeeling and Assam for more than 200 years, working on tea estates and farms. In fact, Nepali speakers are better

settled in northeast India than many Bengali speakers, but many of the Nepalis do not yet have land deeds and it will be even more difficult for them to get the rights if the NRC is implemented.

The 1950 Nepal-India treaty gave Nepali and Indian citizens the right to freely come and go in each other's countries, although India requires visas from Bangladeshis and Pakistanis. The issue of the identity of Indians of Nepali origin has fuelled an agitation for autonomy in the Darjeeling hills for many years. Subhas Ghising proposed that they be called 'Gorkha' to differentiate them from Nepali citizens. But this is not legally, or widely, accepted. There are no Nepali refugees in India.

During the election campaign, Home Minister Shah assured people that the NRC would not affect 'Gorkhas'. But they are still confused regarding citizenship bill and register. The Nepalis of Assam, where the NRC has been implemented, are especially concerned about how to be counted as Indian citizens. 🇮🇳

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Nepal in the 2020s

The 2021 census will give us an idea of the kind of Nepal we will be in the next decade

Sewa Bhattarai

Nepal is stepping up preparations for its 10-year census in 2021, which is slated to be the most hitech in history and will go beyond simply counting the country’s population to surveying households in order to chart the country’s path in the coming decade. Enumerators from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) will be using tablets to enter data during a pilot census in 14 districts next month. The actual census in June 2021 is expected to give an accurate picture of Nepal’s demography and how it has progressed in health, education and development.

For the first time, data will be collected at the lowest administrative unit, the ward, and also include information on housing, migration, jobs and income. The census will cost Rs4.5 billion and employ 43,000 enumerators.

“Previous censuses only went down to the district level, and enumerators used two forms: a short form for every household, and a long form used on every eighth household,” says Bijay Thapa of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which is collaborating with the government on the census. “After federalism, local governments also want disaggregated data and we will have detailed information on every household.”

Next year’s exercise will also count the number of old and new buildings and note whether they are residential, official, commercial or unused. It will include a community survey, one of the first in the world, to assess availability of government services, disaster preparedness and access to natural resources.

“This will help us determine if people are making the best use of government services,” says CBS Director Dhundiraj Lamichhane. “Nepal has categorised 276 municipalities as urban, but we do not know if the resources available match the international criteria for urban municipalities. This survey will help us determine that. If successful, it will be a model for other countries.”

Lamichhane said the questions enumerators will ask have not yet been finalised, but there are demands from various communities to



SONIAAWALE

include ones on mother tongue, disabilities and sexual orientation. Activists say there are 9 million LGBTI people in Nepal, but the 2011 census showed only 1,500 so the figure was not included in the results.

“This time they want more detailed questions to reflect their diversity, but we think it is better to do a separate survey,” says Lamichhane. “Various castes and ethnicities are also demanding to be included, but we will only do so if recommended by relevant government bodies.”

Going by past trends and other sample surveys, experts have already projected results of the 2021. Nepal is expected to continue showing improvements on most indicators, including birth rate, population growth, health and education. However, they say some indicators, like the sex ratio and migration, may not show progress.

One of the reasons Nepal’s population

Previous censuses

What will the 2021 census show?

	2001	2011
Population	23 million	27 million
Crude Birth Rate (per 1,000 people)	33.5	21.8
Total Fertility Rate (per woman)	3.88	2.5
Population growth rate	2.25	1.35
Absentee population	0.7 million	1.92 million
Crude Death Rate (per 1,000)	10	7.3
Life expectancy in years	60.4	66.6

growth rate is low is because of the absentee population: 1.92 million according to the last census. And there is no reason to believe that the percentage of migrants will decrease or even stabilise in next year’s count. However, internal migration is expected to slow because of more education and employment opportunities at local levels.

Nepal’s current sex ratio is 94 males per 100 females, and the sex ratio at birth is 106 males per 100 females. This is considered normal, since there are usually slightly more male children born than females, but females tend to live longer.

“Female foeticide is growing even though it is illegal. The next census may show a greater ratio of male babies born to female ones, and we estimate the sex ratio at birth to rise to 110 males to 100 females. Additionally, the national average may hide greater discrepancies in certain districts or cities where female foeticide is more rampant, and we need to watch out for that,” explains Tirtha Tamang of UNFPA.

Demographic indicators like birth, fertility and death rates are all set to decrease, which means that Nepal’s population growth rate will continue to slow. The 2021 census is likely to show a wider ‘youth bulge’ in the population pyramid. Although this provides a ‘demographic dividend,’ with a bigger workforce that could lead to a development boom, Nepal must be able to cash in on this window of opportunity in the next 10 years. Given the current quality of governance, experts doubt it will happen.

Nepal’s youth advantage will last till 2047. After that, the country will be grappling with the complications of an ageing society. In fact, Nepal will start losing some of its youth power about 2028, when the population over 65 will be more than 7%. The next decade is key for Nepal to use its demographic dividend to provide jobs at home and boost economic growth.

Despite improvements in education, health, life expectancy and income, the country may not be in a position to make the best of its demographic dividend because of the skewed sex ratio caused by outmigration. According to a report by the National Planning Commission, the country sorely needs to invest in policies that make the best of the potential of youth.

Says Lamichhane at the CBS: “If young Nepalis at the peak of their abilities continue to leave the country, then Nepal will not make great strides in development. In the next decade we need policies to modernise agriculture and improve infrastrucuture if we want to retain our youth and have them contribute to the country.” 🇳🇵

How will Nepal develop in the

Can we achieve double-digit growth and middle-income status, attain the Sustainable Development Goals and have universal health coverage by 2030?

Sonia Awale

Nepal is recognised as the only low-income country to have made rapid progress cutting poverty and boosting public health and education in recent decades. But can these achievements be sustained in the 2020-2030 decade?

The country’s maternal mortality rate decreased from 539 deaths per 100,000 live births to 239 deaths between 1996 and 2016. The adult literacy rate rose from 20% in the 1980s to 67% in 2018, and the proportion of Nepalis living below the poverty line dropped from 42% to 21% in two decades.

Yet the poorest still do not have access to affordable healthcare. The school dropout rate is as high as the enrolment rate. In urban centres, people breathe some of the foulest



BIKRAM RAI

air in the world, reducing their life expectancy by up to four years. Many lack safe drinking water.

Local elections in 2017, after a gap of 20 years, were supposed to close these gaps by delivering accountable, elected leaders.

Two years later, the euphoria has evaporated. The state of the state remains stagnant.

“The elections helped us rebuild grassroots democracy and decentralise power, but the lack of accountability at all levels of

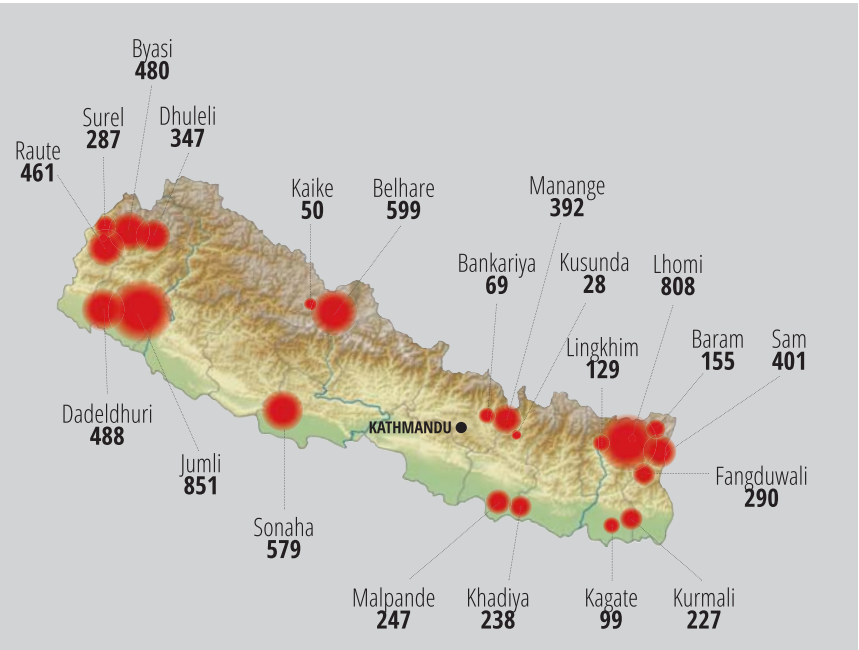
government continues to be a major challenge,” says Min Bahadur Shahi of the National Planning Commission (NPC). “This is why the primary agenda of the NPC’s 15th periodic plan is governance reform, controlling corruption and

promoting transparency.”

As we step into the new decade, there are questions about Nepal’s progress in human development, including whether we are on track to meet the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and achieve double-digit growth. Reaching these targets will require huge investments in healthcare, schools and nutrition. With the emergence of non-communicable diseases, Nepal now faces a double burden: rising rates of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer, which are expensive to treat, while the poor continue to die of easily curable infections.

Said Sanjib Sharma, doctor at the BP Koirala Institute for Health Sciences in Dharan: “Our efforts now should be on strengthening primary health care and prevention and early detection of diseases using existing tools, as well as new technologies such as artificial intelligence for virtual expert consultation and drug delivery.”

Despite poverty falling by half, one-third of Nepali children are still malnourished. Anaemia among women has actually increased in recent years. The government’s Multi-sectoral Nutrition Plan, developed in 2012, works to improve maternal and child health, vaccination rates and malnutrition.



21 of Nepal’s most endangered languages

When Nepal’s last census was published in 2011, language became one of the most hotly-debated indicators. Many doubted that the census accurately reflected the status of Nepal’s languages. This time, the Language Commission is working with the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) to make a more comprehensive tally.

The 2011 census counted 123 languages spoken in Nepal, including foreign languages like English, French, Spanish and Chinese. Also, there was a belief that many people who had forgotten their ancestral language nevertheless registered those languages as their mother tongue, leading to higher numbers of speakers of endangered languages registered than in reality. The Kusunda language, for example, has only two speakers left, but the census records 28.

“The languages should be categorised as foreign and native to Nepal, so that we don’t count European languages as our own,” says Bharat Tripathi of the Language Commission. “Also, the last time there were only two questions asked about language: mother tongue and second language. This time we want to change that to: mother tongue, second language and ancestral language.”

While the CBS is still debating these suggestions, it has agreed to include six more languages newly catalogued by the Language Commission, bringing the total to 129. “We investigated Rana Tharu, Narafu, Chum, Nubri/ Lharke, Poike and Serake languages in the past year. Through linguistic methodologies, we have established that they are distinct languages,” says Tripathi. “This year we have received claims from speakers of Marek Yakha and Walung languages in Taplejung — we are in the process of investigating them.”

These languages are usually spoken by very few people, and are added to the list of endangered languages. The commission has identified 37 languages spoken by fewer than 1,000 people, and placed 21 of them on that list, but there may be many more hidden among less populous communities. The commission is working to document these 21 languages by collecting their grammar, determining their alphabets, writing their language histories and documenting the available folklore.

It is doubtful if all of the 129 languages will survive even till the census in June 2021. But most certainly many will be gone by the 2031 census.

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next decade?

“Development in Nepal is still synonymous with roads, but investing in early childhood development is equally important, it is a component of development,” said Kiran Rupakheta of the NPC, which wants nutrition programs to reach the grassroots.

Even as literacy rates rise, gender disparity is expected to continue in the coming decade. As female literacy improves, for instance, child marriage and girls’ dropout rates will persist. Experts say improving the quality of instruction at community schools, encouraging female students in technical fields and promoting applied education should be priority areas in the 10 years ahead.

Nepal is expected to graduate from lower-middle-income country status by 2030, but that is unlikely if the SDGs goals are not met. For this, the government will need to spend \$1billion a year in infrastructure alone. Nepal is hoping to sustain double-digit growth of above 10% and achieve per capita income of \$1,595 by the end of the decade.

“I’m hopeful about our prospects but if we uplift the economic status of women, who make up more than half of the population, we will get there sooner,” said Saru Joshi, gender and development expert.

A 2017 World Bank report, however, stated that if present trends continue Nepal will not reach its middle-income target. It pointed out that despite rapid reduction in the poverty rate, the country’s development path has not led to economic growth but perpetuated a shortage of jobs at home, which in turn is fuelling further outmigration. And while remittance accounts for one-third of the national GDP, it is a symptom of deep-seated, chronic problems.

Planners say that a slew of new hydropower and large infrastructure projects planned for the next 10 years, a boom in tourism and the service sector, and better connectivity will create jobs at home, discouraging youth from seeking employment elsewhere.

“We know our targets are ambitious but we also have the most favourable environment to achieve it. There is finally stability, the present growth is already at 7%, some major hydropower projects are taking off and we have made huge investments in information technology,” said Rupakheta.

Shahi forecasts optimistically: “The 2020s will be a progressive decade of sustainable and just development. There will be prosperity along with social justice. There will be double-digit growth, increased investment from the government and the focus will be on quality, not quantity.”

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A Smuggler's Paradise

Thanks to the Grand Unification Party for rehabilitating 'smuggling' so it is no longer a bad word. This recognises the fact that Nepal's entire economic model has historically rested on smuggling gold, mobile phones, palm oil, onions and other precious cargo from across the northern border, and hauling it over the southern border.

The other item of illegal trade is oxen. (Always wondered about that one. Why not 'oxes'? We never ask: "Where do I put these boxen?") It is time we loosened border controls so our bullocks can stray into Indian territory without let or hindrance. Smugglers can even use the oxymorons as pack animals and conceal contraband vodka in their false bottoms.

Smuggling contributes more to Nepal's GDP than remittances and tourism combined. We should restore the trade's respectability so that the bandicoots of contraband will get the recognition they deserve.

At parties, it is encouraging to see well-known smugglers finally coming out of the closet (so to speak):

"Oh, have you met? He smuggles ball bearings."

"Pleasure. We smuggle motherboards."

"Hello. Gold biscuits."

"I am spiriting spirits into Bihar, cheers!"

At last GONe has mustered the political will to provide smuggling multistakeholder acknowledgement and allow FDI and joint ventures in the sector. The first signs of change are already visible at Kathmandu Airport. The arrival concourse now has Red Channel (Communists with

lots to declare), Green Channel (Environmental activists with nothing to declare) and the Back Channel (Pre-paid smugglers with prior arrangement for 33kg consignments of gold).

Ex-Royal Nepal Airlines used to serve Old Grouse in Shangrila Class. Now, moving with the times, there is blended Old Smuggler whiskey on the rocks, but offered only to card-carrying members and captains of industry from the All-Nepal Federation of Smugglers.

Comes great news that NAC has been voted The World's Most Popular Airline for introducing three classes: Economy Class, Chyangra Class and the new Premium Smuggler Class behind the cockpit. The airline's widebodies are equipped with specially concealed cargo holds set aside for contraband to expedite customs clearance.

Since smuggling has official legitimacy now, Nepal should now resist joining the World Trade Organisation. The greatest enemy of smuggling is global free trade, which is why the Ministry of Smuggling and Trafficking will accord due priority to this sector by announcing a one-window arrangement and incentive package that includes work visas and 5-year tax holidays for non-Nepali smugglers wanting to set up shop here.

Only by opening up smuggling to international competition will Nepal survive in the global market. Otherwise we may be forever stuck taking oxes across the border.



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