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Why invest in Nepal?



SUMAN NEPAL

even domestic businesses face obstacles and corruption. Nepal's internet service providers (ISPs) and the Nepal Telecommunication Authority are on the warpath.

ISPs have been unable to pay Indian firms that provide bandwidth after the government refused to provide them with INR, citing unpaid royalties and taxes.

Such stonewalling is present in just about every sector, dissuading investors in IT, banking and the service industry. Most investors are in natural resource extraction, which has little value added.

This time the government is giving investors a shopping list that includes 18 hydropower projects and 19 transport schemes.

"While hydropower may create short-term jobs, efficiency-seeking investment in the manufacturing, agricultural, and other sectors will create more long-term opportunities for Nepalis, and will be in our best interest," says Pandey.

Although the summit will have attendees from over 50 countries, most potential investors are from India and China.

"Current investment summits seem to be guided by India and China's vested interest in Nepal rather than the market and economic possibilities here," notes Bajracharya. However, Nepal can leverage its proximity to hitch its wagons to these two giant locomotives.

Adds Bajracharya "Our long-term prospects look good, because India and China are set to overtake the US as the world's biggest economies over the next few years, which will attract investors from elsewhere. Our immediate goal must be to first create a conducive investment climate. After that, investments will come." 🇳🇵

■ Shristi Karki

For Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal the past week has been eventful in more ways than one. His Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane's troubles is shaking the coalition, and there are rumours of the NC and the UML in talks. By-elections in Ilam and Bajhang are set to become a referendum on legacy parties.

In the midst of all this, there was the overnight state visit of the emir of Qatar which was so epic the government declared a national holiday. Qatar and Nepal signed a commerce agreement, and to sweeten the deal the emir was gifted two elephants.

The Qatari visit set the stage for the third Nepal Investment Summit on 28-29 April that will showcase 150 projects for potential investors, including schemes for hydropower, transport, tourism, and agriculture.

Previous investment summits in 2017 and 2019 pledged \$13.5 billion and \$17 billion respectively, of which not much ever materialised. This time, the investment climate is worse because of political instability, too few laws, and too much red tape.

"The state of Nepal's economy, combined with bureaucratic hurdles and the challenges faced by foreign investors in land and resource acquisition, has made attracting FDI difficult," says Pushkar Bajracharya, formerly of

the National Planning Commission.

The same woes from the last two investment summits persist. Nepal has had three coalition governments in the last two years, banks are flush with cash because no one is borrowing, and there is a mass exodus of skilled Nepalis.

"Lack of political stability results in policy instability," explains economist Posh Raj Pandey. "This is why Nepal's FDI has not lived up to commitments. Potential investors have decided that internal risk factors outweigh any business opportunities."

Everyone went to sleep after the last investment summit, and there was little preparation for this hurriedly planned one. Nepal's private sector has long urged the

government to amend laws to improve the investment climate. The government did amend nine out of dozens of laws, but through ordinance on Tuesday.

"What kind of message are we sending to internationals when we amend laws through ordinance rather than Parliament?" asks Pandey. "Amendment will not inspire confidence unless they are put into practice, which we historically have not done."

While some experts think ordinances speed things up, they admit most legal changes brought to address Nepal's investment environment have been ad hoc and limited to paper.

Forget foreign investors,

Nepal looks at alternative investments
PAGE 4
Changing climate for investment
PAGE 5




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War and warming

ISTANBUL — It is hard to imagine that only 200km away from here on Turkey's Black Sea coast there is a full-scale war going on which has killed 200,000 people in the past two years.

And to the south, the complete destruction of Gaza with unconscionable violence against Palestinian civilians has escalated into a direct Iran-Israel conflict.

In both wars, the protagonists have atomic weapons or are close to developing them. Russia has threatened to use tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine, while Israel and Iran both have targeted locations of each other's nuclear facilities in this week's drone and missile attacks.

Although there are indications Iran and Israel are exercising restraint, a slight miscalculation could result in a regional conflagration dragging in the Saudis and Emirates. If that happens, the US could also get involved.

A bipartisan vote in the US legislature sanctioning \$65 billion worth of weapon systems for Ukraine will prolong the war. Hawks on Russian tv talk shows now openly threaten to nuke not just Ukraine but also London and Paris.



AMIT MACHAMASINEPALI TIMES ARCHIVE



SUMAN NEPALI

comes to mind:

*Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favour fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.*

The way we are headed, the world could 'perish twice'. The two crises are linked, both have their origins in greed, ambition and ultra-nationalism. It is the result of tribalism and the decline of the multilateral approaches needed to address justice, fairness and co-existence.

The Doomsday Clock was moved to 7 minutes to midnight during the Cuban Missile Crisis. All-out nuclear war was so unthinkable then that most people blocked it from their minds. It is the same now with war and warming.

Here in Nepal, global affairs seem remote to people struggling just to get by from day to day. When news of the war in Ukraine and West Asia does reach

the public on mobile devices, it could as well be happening on another planet.

Yet, we in Nepal will be affected. The Ukraine war led to a spike in fuel and food prices worldwide, and Nepal's economy is still reeling from it. Hundreds of Nepalis are fighting in the Russian Army, and at least 33 have been killed in action with dozens out of contact.

Ten Nepali students were killed by Hamas in Israel, and one is still missing. A broader war in West Asia, aside from the impact on the world economy, would directly affect the estimated 2 million Nepalis working in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Kuwait, Israel and Lebanon. The country is just not prepared for their sudden mass return.

A nuclear war between Israel and Iran is not as unthinkable as it sounds. Hardliners in Israel are calling for nuclear hits on Iran's atomic research facilities before Tehran develops its own bombs. Prevailing winds would blow radioactive fallout from even a tactical nuclear strike to Pakistan, India and over Nepal.

We now live in a global village. War anywhere will affect Nepalis everywhere.

Kunda Dixit

It is a macabre choice about which is a bigger threat to the planet: nuclear winter or climate heating.

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has moved its 'Doomsday Clock' to 90 seconds before midnight because of what it called 'ominous trends that continue to point the world toward global catastrophe'. This is the closest the clock has ever been to nuclear Armageddon.

Besides Russia-Ukraine and Iran-Israel tensions, nuclear nation-states have also proliferated. Aside from the US, Russia, Britain and France, Israel has 90 warheads, India and Pakistan have about 170 each, China has more than 400 and North Korea has 30 with ballistic missiles to deliver them across the Pacific.

Although total warhead stockpiles have declined after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, there is now a new three-pronged US-Russia-China Cold War, and the number of nuclear weapons states has increased.

The threat of nuclear conflict is real enough for The New York Times to launch a series (titled: At the Brink) to look into the new nuclear arms race and 'what might be done to make the world safer'.

It is a macabre choice about which is a bigger threat to the Earth in the coming years: a planet cooked by global warming, or destroyed by all-out war leading to a nuclear winter. Robert Frost's poem Fire and Ice

ONLINE PACKAGES



Thanks to Mustang native Tashi Bista's film and extensive news coverage in Nepal and abroad, Dhe village in Mustang is one of the best-documented examples of climate migration. The immediate impact of climate change in the high altitude desert region limits livelihood options for its inhabitants. Watch this 2022 video on Nepali Times' YouTube channel and subscribe for more multimedia content.



Hari Chandra Prajapati was only 14 when he started learning how to mould a lump of clay into a work of art just like his forebears did. Today, he has a successful enterprise and is also training a new batch of artists. Watch the 2023 video on our YouTube channel.

JANABAHĀ DYŌ

The Koli state is the southern part of Nepal, near the Indian border ('Kathmandu's gravity-defying chariot festival', Alok Siddhi Tuladhar, #1208). Kolis left their state after its destruction by the King of Vaishali, who happened to be the nephew of Koli itself.

Padma Dhar Tuladhar

CROP BURNING

I have witnessed crop burning first-hand on several occasions, and it's quite something ('Going up in smoke', Chandra Kishore, #1208).

Kashish Das Shrestha

TUSA

What an example you guys have set with your Tusa restaurant. ('The return of the natives', Vishad Onta, #1208). Well done. I am proud of your team spirit and vision.

Nepali Bulson

EVS

In the context of Nepal, the promotion of EVs can bring a myriad of environmental benefits ('EV Year 2081', Sonia Awale, #1207). People adapting to EVs ensures mitigation of air pollution to an impactful extent, less dependency on fossil fuels, as well as savings in the long run. However, it is also necessary to address challenges such as limited charging infrastructure, high initial costs and still-limited awareness about electric transportation.

Suniva Hada

CLIMATE MIGRATION

While we often conclude that people migrate to the Tarai for 'Dhaan ko bhat', climate change is one of the reasons why depopulation is trending in the villages ('Climate crisis → drought → food deficit → migration', Mohan Mainali, nepalitimes.com). This is a wonderful article.

Hem Bishwakarma

LESS MOUNTAINEERS

The queues on the mountain last year probably put a lot of people off which is why there are fewer expeditions this spring. ('Where have all the mountaineers gone?', Vishad Onta, #1206).

Stephen Keeling

Maybe, like the highways of Nepal, the way to Everest is also too crummy. Also, maybe not everybody can afford the airfares and not every mountaineer can afford the fee to climb Everest.

Krishna Joshi

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING



Return of the natives

by Vishad Onta
Three global Nepali chefs have returned to take Nepali cuisine international at Tusa in Bhaktapur. Over the past five years, they have travelled across Nepal to research their menu, collecting ingredients and ideas from homestays, food carts, and nature. Read more at nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Rise of high-rises

by Sonia Awale
With no more space to spread horizontally, Kathmandu is going vertical. But structural engineers say most of the high rises do not take into account seismicity, soil condition, construction methods, quality of raw materials, fire hazard, and search and rescue in collapsed concrete structures. Join the online discussion.

Most popular on X

Gravity-defying chariot festival

by Alok Siddhi Tuladhar
For close to four centuries, the construction and operation of the Janabahā Dyo chariot has proven to be a phenomenal engineering feat, and the people's faith in divinity means the tradition is alive. Read about the chariot festival on our website.

Most commented

Going up in smoke

by Chandra Kishore
These past weeks, the sky over Nepal has been thick with haze from wildfires fanned by winds, burning out of control. But travelling along highways last week, another source of smoke was detected: acres upon acres of fields with wheat stalks set on fire after harvest. Details online.

Most visited online page

QUOTES

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
As more and more Nepalis, especially children and the elderly, suffer from respiratory infections due to increasing air pollution, the misuse and overuse of drugs by an over-commercialised medical and pharmaceutical sector is also increasing.

Nabin Pathak @nabin094
This is a very well written article on drug related problems in today's Nepali context. I often see patients not relying on proper pharmacist counselling or asking them for pertinent drug education. These all are important to prepare them from also any unprecedented events.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Saiha Yatayat formally inducted 40 new electric buses to its fleet and inaugurated Nepal's biggest simultaneous charging station for them in Patan on Tuesday.

ART @AmulyaSir
Which routes are these new electric buses running? Excited to try them all

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Banana Republic

20 years ago as the protests against the monarchy gained momentum, we wrote what it could mean for the institution and who were likely to benefit.

In a little less than a year, King Gyanendra once again dismissed Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and his cabinet, and assumed direct power. In April 2006, after two weeks of sustained protests, Gyanendra was forced to step aside, and the Maoists made it to mainstream politics. There was hope that democracy would change things, but political infighting and instability has continued for the past two decades as Nepal becomes a 'Banana Republic'.

Excerpt from the editorial published 20 years ago this week on issue #193 23-29 April 2004:

It is up to the king, as a first step in unlocking this stalemate, to make the move to set up an inclusive interim government. And it is up to the parties to offer solutions instead of creating more street mayhem. The king could be looking for a way to roll back October Fourth without losing face. For the sake of the country, the parties have to give him that option. It may also come to a point where it is smarter to risk



losing face than to let this drag on with all its unpredictable consequences. Admission of a mismove can be easily made to look like a royal, statesmanlike effort to remove obstacles on the path to democratic renewal.

The street agitation is essentially friendly fire. Have they forgotten who the real enemy is? Are they trying to provoke a mass uprising, and play right into Maoist hands?

The Maoists have filled the vacuum left behind by the absence of the political parties at the grassroots and the absence of parliament at the centre. Each day that passes by without a representative government will only strengthen their revolution. Democratic pluralism, with all its flaws, is the only bulwark against extremism and totalitarianism. It is the buffer the monarchy needs to return to its constitutional role. That is when the monarchy will again have continuity, be respected, and-like in Thailand-re-earn its role of being the final arbiter in times of deep national crisis.

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

1,000 WORDS



RATNA SHRESTHA/RSS

SHEIKH SHAKE:

President Ram Chandra Paudel receiving the Emir of Qatar at Shital Niwas on 23 April. The sheikh switched from the limousine provided by the Nepal government to a Qatar Embassy SUV on the drive from the airport to the city because of the lack of legroom. There are 400,000 Nepali workers in Qatar, and this is the first visit by a Qatari head of state to Nepal.



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Nepal looks at alternative investments

Ahead of the Nepal Investment Summit, some new ideas to attract FDI

In the run-up to the third Nepal Investment Summit next week, there have been seminars, conferences and workshops where the discourse has revolved around the economy and the investment climate.



COMMENT

Siddhant Raj Pandey

The consensus that Nepal needs foreign direct investments (FDI) to grow was repeated, and the familiar litany of reasons about why it has not been able to was discussed.

Policy advocates and regulators have understood that the lack of urgency is compounded by procedural inconsistencies, on top of the already deficient investment environment in the country.

It is a welcome change from what used to be flippantly accepting matters as given. There now seems to be a sense of urgency, with procedural inconsistencies and lack of harmonisation between various Acts and regulations openly discussed.

Government stakeholders also appear more willing to learn and attempt to be part of the solution. Whatever policy changes have been introduced in the past have been piecemeal and address the few rather than the entire industry. This left dual regulatory approaches aimed at similar players.

This time, unlike in the past two Summits, the government seems to be committed to amending nine Acts, a positive step towards showing commitment to change. However, the deadline to do so during the winter session of Parliament is over. The option mooted has been to have it passed through ordinance, a lesser appealing step; albeit, a positive

one moving forward.

To attract FDI in a competitive global market means that Nepal has to demonstrate that it is serious about bringing in investments with a more consultative and collaborative approach with investors. A departure from procedural to a result-oriented focus is needed.

To put issues in perspective, Nepal needs US\$20 billion in investments to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets by 2030. If net-zero decarbonisation targets are to be met by 2045, another US\$7 billion will be required annually.

Looking at our investment history and poor government capital expenditure, the gap is long and wide. In fiscal year 2022-23 Nepal booked a lamentable ~\$59 million in FDI (equity). Nepal is in fact the lowest market in South Asia for FDI with 0.3% of the regional average.

What is it that we can do to fill the gap?

First, we need to move away from the notion that Nepal only needs large investments. This has proven to be a mistake, and time series data have proven that smaller investments, in aggregate, make a larger impact on economies.

We talk about an 'enabling environment' but without the right tools. We place restrictions on interest on debt ceiling (SOFR +5.5), without risk premium adjustments, we do not have an active secondary market for bond trading, nor do we have a yield curve, an integral part of the bond market, which is inhibiting us from tapping into the trillion dollar green bond market.

In order to attract green financing, Nepal needs to develop its bond market. Sovereign risk rating has been mooted and was expected to be operationalised before the Investment Summit.

However, to be rated in an adverse economic environment could further deteriorate investment potential due to a lesser-than-expected rating.

Hedging is another instrument that needs further research on. A commercial bank last year showcased the first risk-hedging mechanism for an investment of \$8 million. This can be the beginning to expand on its modality.

Subordinated debt instruments have been introduced, but on a special nod basis, this now needs to be institutionalised as it is the most applicable form of investment after equity in a market that has volatile forex reserves.

Viability Gap Funding has been introduced by multilateral development agencies implemented in solar installations. It is a tool to incentivise the private sector to invest in projects that are not financially lucrative initially, but have potential for profitability in the long run. This needs to be scaled up and replicated in sectors like infrastructure, where returns may not be immediate.

Moving forward, to attract FDI, Nepal needs to tap into the funds that are available for the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and climate change. Alternative investments such as Private Equity Venture Capital (PEVC) have been around in a structured manner in Nepal for nearly a decade now.

These funds have blended finance components and have attracted climate funding as well. PEVC is a new asset class and can address the issues of penetrating into SME financing by incorporating environmental, social and governance issues into their investment process.

SMEs are the backbone of



any economy, PEVC comes with the ability not only to scale up the enterprise with risk capital, but with the ability to bring technical knowhow to enhance not only the enterprise but also the entrepreneur.

A differentiator from all other forms of financing available till date in Nepal. Blended finance is a way of de-risking investments, especially in frontier markets. Business Oxygen (BO2) is an example of blended finance with subordinated debt investments of IFC (World Bank Group) taking the lead and Climate Investment Funds along with FCDO as co-investors.

On a larger scale, the 216MW Upper Trisuli 1 is another example of blended finance with IFC, a Korean consortium and local investments. So far, we see that development finance Institutions have been taking the lead in Nepal as their risk appetite is greater than commercial investors and they are

eager to help develop the financial markets. In order to be sustainable, we need to step on this and attract commercial capital from all over the world. To do this there has to be political will to make that pivot.

Instead of being a means to an end, the two previous Investment Summits turned out to be intermittent and cosmetic, providing hardly any results. The third one's success will depend on how the event will be implemented as a platform for continuous marketing for the country and facilitation for investors in future.

Nepal has outdone many countries in its macro-economic indicators, with sound forex reserves and a stellar history of debt payments to its creditors. This story needs to be propagated along with the drive for change to attract potential investors. 🇳🇵

Siddhant Pandey is Chairman and CEO of Business Oxygen Pvt Ltd (BO2).

NMB BANK
एनएमबी बैंक

Fetisov Awards

A reportage by two Nepali journalists about widows of Nepali workers who died during the construction of facilities for the 2022 World Cup are runners up in the Civil Rights category of the Fetisov Journalism Award.

Roshan Sedhai and Samik Kharel won the CHF 10,000 prize for their story titled 'Nepalis Feel the Human Toll of Qatar's World Cup' at the award announcement ceremony in Istanbul on Monday.



KUNDA DIXIT

The award has an annual prize fund of 520,000 Swiss francs given across four categories—Outstanding Contribution to Peace; Contribution to Civil Rights; Outstanding Investigative Reporting; and Excellence in Environmental Journalism.

Another story on migrant workers, The Bitter Taste of Kiwi got the third prize for Outstanding Investigative Reporting about how Indian farmhands are exploited in Italy. The story was published in The Wire, Al Jazeera and El País.

The first prize for Outstanding Investigative Reporting went to Hannah Drier for her report on undocumented migrant children in the US working in factories. The second prize went to a team of British and Iraqi reporters for their story 'The Hidden Casualties of Britain's War'.

TATA MaxChange

Sipradi Trading is holding a 'Maxchange Mela,' in which customers can exchange any brand or make of car for the Tata Nexon Max EV. The deal comes with a fast charger, autoplus insurance and vehicle tax for a year. Car buyers can test drive a Nexon Max EV at the Tata showroom in Thapathali.

Anti-fossil NMB

NMB and an alliance of 17 other banks have endorsed the Fossil Fuel Non Proliferation Treaty, which aims to facilitate international cooperation to move away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy sources. This endorsement is in line with NMB's commitment to climate.



NMB Bank also held its 11th Heritage Walk from its Balkhu Branch to the Uma Maheshwar Temple in Kirtipur. The bank also gave the Nepal Heritage Society Rs500,000 to aid conservation efforts, and donated dustbins to Kirtipur municipality. Similar programs were held in all provinces.



Lakme campaign

The enigmatic #MeintheSun campaign in which models in yellow dresses and sunglasses paraded through Kathmandu carrying yellow umbrellas, has been revealed to be Lakme's promotion for two new Made in Nepal sunscreens 'Sun Expert Ultra Matte Lotion' at SPF30 and SPF50.

WLink 900,000

Internet provider WorldLink has marked reaching a customer base of 900,000 households. The company had reached 100,000 customers seven years ago. Since its operations began in 1995, WorldLink's services have expanded and adapted from dial-up to cable to wireless, to optic fibre connection at present. WorldLink currently operates in 73 districts across Nepal.

Toyota's Women Rally

Toyota held a women's rally on 20 April to encourage safe and responsible driving practices as well as to encourage more women to drive. The rally started from Dhumbarahi and ended at Gokarna Forest Resort. Drivers were judged on how well they kept appropriate speed and followed traffic rules.



FinMin-IFC

Finance Minister Barsaman Pun met International Finance Corporation (IFC) Vice President Riccardo Puliti to discuss Nepal's graduation from the Least Developed Country category by 2026. The IFC promised to continue to work with the Nepal government to increase opportunities for employment, sustainable infrastructure, and increase access to services.

Himalayan Hydro

The Himalayan Hydro Expo 2024 held from 24-26 April is aimed at Nepal's youth to inspire them to pursue careers in hydropower. The expo also enables businesses in the



energy sector to network. Hydropower demonstrations, a short video competition about green energy, hydro site visits on helicopters, and an EV rally are part of the event.

Changing climate for investment

Climate breakdown has added new risks to banks financing infrastructure in the Himalaya



SUMAN NEPALI

Govind Ghimire

Banks are now exposed to a complex risk environment due to the climate crisis.

They need proactive approaches to plan transitions to more resilient and sustainable futures, while analysing climate disasters.

Nepal's banks face both transitional and physical risks from climate change and must evaluate how hazards interact and intensify.

The direct impact of climate breakdown on a bank's assets and operations are referred to as physical risk like the possibility of property damage from extreme weather events.

Disruptions in the supply chain can also result in the scarcity of products and services, which is another kind of physical risk.

Physical risks can be acute or chronic. Typhoons and floods can be called acute risks, whereas the long-term shift in climate patterns are chronic physical risks.

Transitional risks, on the other hand, include the financial burden of shifting to a low-carbon economy with concurrent changes in consumer behaviour, market sentiment, regulatory changes, and technical breakthroughs.

New policies by governments and regulatory agencies to address climate change, carbon pricing, or

tighter environmental standards can impact the economy.

A few commonly used frameworks to reduce the climate risk of banks are:

- **The Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)** was articulated by the Switzerland-based Financial Stability Board. In 2017, TCFD released a report with 11 voluntary recommendations to disclose climate-related financial risks and opportunities with four pillars: governance, strategy, risk management, and metrics and targets.
- **Principles for Responsible Banking (PRB)** were developed by the United Nations Environment Program Finance Initiative. PRBs have been signed by over 300 banks from 60 countries since 2019 and aim to align the banking sector with the Paris Agreement and SDGs.
- **Equator Principles (EP)** are a voluntary risk management framework developed by the International Finance Corporation (IFC). Financial institutions adopt 10 EPs to determine, assess, and manage environmental and social risk in project finance transactions.
- **The Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition (CPLC)** was developed by the World Bank as a

voluntary initiative to bring leaders from governments, business, civil society, and academia together to enhance understanding of carbon pricing to finance climate action.

- **Climate Resilience Principles (CRP)** were developed by the Climate Bonds Initiative to integrate the criteria for climate adaptation and resilience into the climate bond standard. CRP guides financial institutions and other stakeholders on the potential range and type of climate resilience investments, ways to define and assess physical risks, and approaches to demonstrate climate resilience outcomes credibly.
- **The Joint Impact Model (JIM)** is a tool to navigate challenges in reduction of carbon footprints by quantification of emissions linked to loan portfolios. Institutions can obtain insight into their climate effect and find ways to support the circular economy.

Banks can also employ technical and financial tools to minimise both physical and transitional risks and these can help quantify potential impacts, allowing informed decision-making and risk management. Geospatial Risk Mapping can be used to assess hazardous zones. Hydrodynamic

modelling is a tool to simulate effects of flooding. Carbon Footprint Calculations can help banks assess lending portfolios.

Financial modelling by banks for climate risk mitigation is diverse, encompassing various aspects of physical risks and Transition Risk. Data Collection and assessment of historical weather patterns, and projections for property location, exposure to flood zones, and susceptibility to extreme weather events can help banks identify potential physical risks.

Scenario Analyses can be developed to simulate various climate change scenarios and their potential impacts on assets and borrowers. Insurance and Risk Transfer Instruments can be used to explore the use of insurance products and risk transfer instruments to mitigate the financial impact of climate-related physical risks.

Nepal's banking industry is already seeing climate impact on loan portfolios, and should adopt a consensus approach to deal with transition and physical risks.

Agriculture

Farms are affected by erratic rains. Floods destroy infrastructure and crops, lowering productivity and impacting the ability of borrowers to repay loans. The Kosi Flood in 2008 was one of the most destructive. In the past decade alone, some 300,000 hectares of farmland have been lost to floods. Last year, 325,258 tons of harvested paddy worth Rs8.26 billion were destroyed.

Banks must support smart irrigation systems that enable farmers to modify watering schedules based on real-time meteorological data to help conserve water and reduce the effects of shifting precipitation patterns and glacial melt.

EVs

Electric vehicles are becoming more popular among consumers. Banks need to adjust financing in response to this spike in demand for EVs and provide loans for charging stations. In the first 11 months of 2022-2023, EV imports totalled 3,070 valued at Rs 11.23 billion, a 122% increase over the same period the previous year. At this rate, EVs will fully

replace petrol cars.

Hydropower

Change in hydrology of rivers, reduced water availability during dry seasons and changes in precipitation patterns can all have an immediate effect on hydroelectric plants. The increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather have damaged hydropower schemes.

Floods on 16-17 June 2023 in eastern Nepal damaged 30 hydropower facilities with a combined capacity of 463 MW. The hydropower sector is also exposed to transition risks, including carbon pricing, emissions limits, and renewable energy.

Manufacturing

Changes in regulatory policies, such as carbon pricing, emissions limits, and renewable energy mandates, that aim to address climate change may also result in greater compliance and operational costs for manufacturing firms.

If clean energy and sustainable manufacturing practices render conventional manufacturing methods less competitive or obsolete, adoption and investment in new technologies and processes may become imperative. Infrastructure related to manufacturing projects could also be physically damaged by natural disasters.

As a first step toward mitigation, banks should assess the climate risk associated with manufacturing projects and their clients. They should finance investment specifically designed to support climate-resilient and sustainable manufacturing practices like green loans, which can be combined with advisory services, technical assistance, and capacity building project support to assist clients in identifying, evaluating, and putting into practice strategies for waste management, water conservation, renewable energy integration, and en-ergy efficiency. 🇳🇵



Govind Ghimire is the Deputy CEO of NMB Bank.

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■ **Bimbika Sijapati Basnett**
in Kaski

What sustainable tourism means in practice

An Annapurna trek is a vivid illustration of how tourism, if done well, transforms livelihoods

A 4-day family trek last month was a vivid proof of the truth in the old adage: it is the journey and the people that truly matter, not just the destination.

It was word-of-mouth recommendation that brought us to the sustainable tourism company Three Sisters, owned and run by women. The guides assured us our children would be well taken care of and our group of novice trekkers would not be rushed.

As we negotiated the uphill steps, passing gushing waterfalls and forests ablaze with rhododendron, we had plenty of time to get to know our two experienced guides and the eight support staff. Their life stories highlighted the transformative power of sustainable, ethical, and empowering tourism in shaping lives and journeys.

THE GUIDES

Yasudhara is literally a trailblazer. A mother of a 7-year-old, she has had to seamlessly blend her caring role at home with her professional

responsibilities as a guide in a male dominated and uncertain industry. Besides leading the pack, Yasudhara kept our children motivated and entertained, leaving an indelible mark on them.

By the journey's end, the little ones of our foreign friends soaked Nepali phrases. "जाम जाम" became their spirited rallying cry as we moved up and down the trails. Even as Yasudhara sometimes told them to slow down with "बिस्तारै बिस्तारै" it was the rhythmic chant of "जाम जाम" that followed.

When she first became a guide, Yasudhara recalled she had to defy her family's wishes. They were skeptical of her choice of career to lead foreigners through Nepal's remote, rural landscapes. The workplace was equally challenging. At that time, no one was accustomed to female guides, and accommodations were scarce.

Yasudhara slept in dining rooms and outdoors, keeping her distance from male guides who often drank and indulged in unwelcome behaviour. But times have changed. Female-led teams from Three Sisters now guide trekkers all over Nepal.

But now, Yasudhara grapples

with the guilt of leaving her child behind, even though she is shaping a future where her son will understand the power of gender equality and women's economic empowerment. "I want to earn my keep, without having to rely on my brothers and husband," Yasudhara tells us during a rest stop.

Tila is in her mid-30s, and thrived as a guide before the pandemic, navigating and overcoming many gender stereotypes and challenges in her profession. Starting as an assistant at the agency, she steadily climbed the ranks to become a permanent guide, earning a modest base salary and commissions.

She enjoys preferential access to trips involving foreign visitors. During peak seasons, work flows steadily, allowing her to hibernate during quieter times. She also seized learning opportunities provided by her employer. She participated in courses on the ecosystems of trekking regions, cultural sensitivity, first aid and emergency response, navigation and route knowledge, and sharpening her English proficiency.

Then, the pandemic struck. Trekkers vanished. Tila's



gratitude for finally returning to work is tempered by the reality that Nepal's trekking industry has not fully recovered. This was her fourth consecutive trek, leaving her cautiously optimistic. Yet the trail ahead remains uncertain.

THE ASSISTANTS

The eight assistants who accompanied us, three women and five men, were more than 'porters'. This was a group of eight remarkable individuals, distinct from traditional porters found on trekking trails and their significance extended far beyond carrying our gear.

Kusum, 19, harbours dreams of being the first in her family to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Commerce from a college in Pokhara. Her motivation for joining the trek was twofold: to earn enough to pay for her accommodation expenses, and eventually to earn the experience to be a guide herself one day. With every step she took, she carried not only her backpack but also her aspiration for a brighter future.

Sita, 36, is a single mother with three children. She is from a landless Dalit family, and lives in a rented house by the highway. Entrusting her 17-year-old to care for younger

siblings, she works for Three Sisters during peak trekking season and returns to her village to take up the odd agricultural work with meagre wages. Despite challenges, she finds solace in the decent work provided by the trekking company. For women like her from disadvantaged backgrounds, these opportunities are lifelines. "There is so little work in my village, and the money I earn on these treks helps educate and feed my children," she says.

Yogesh, like many young Nepali men, wants to migrate abroad. He is at the crossroads of his past and an unwritten future. "Our villages are empty, there are few young people left," he says. "All my friends have gone overseas for work. I am thinking of doing the same." For Yogesh, this trek symbolised a bridge between two worlds, a chance to bear the costs of recruitment fees for a job overseas instead of his family having to pay.

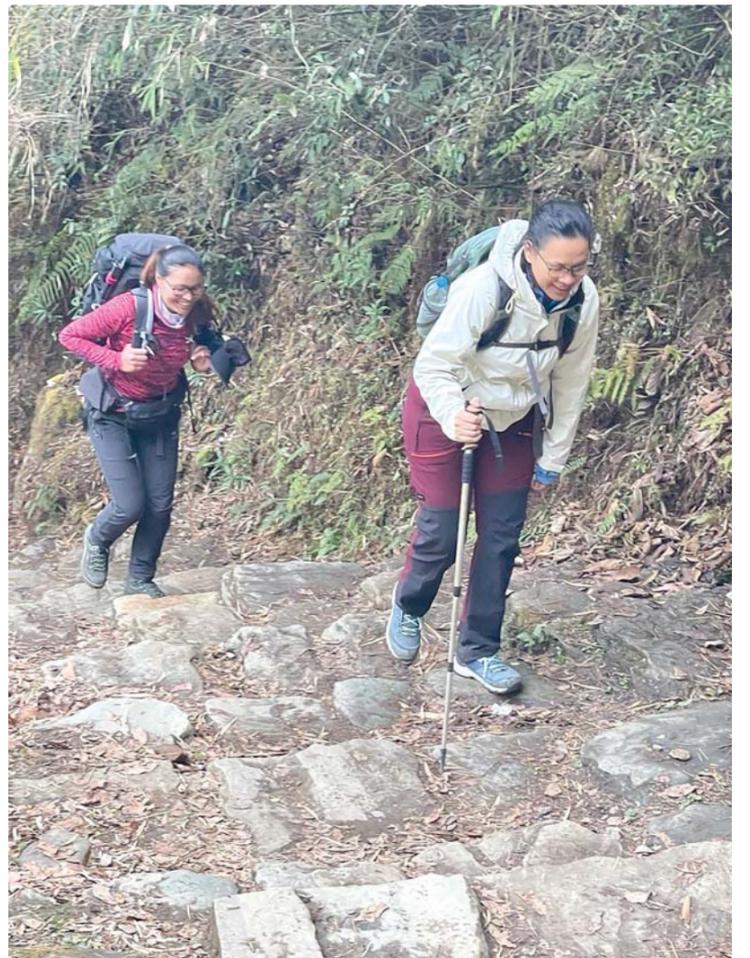
Khem is an older migrant returnee. His weathered hands bear the calluses of hard labour, each crease etched with memories from 15 years at a construction site in Dubai and two years in Qatar. He recounts how limited opportunities in Nepal drove him out, and his

experience in the Gulf: "It was backbreaking work, so far away from my loved ones."

Dhak Bahadur is in his late-40s and carries the weight of responsibility for his Dalit family back home. His two sons and daughter, on the cusp of adulthood, look up to him. "I want my children to have a better life, they should not endure the hardship I have known," he says. His broad shoulders carry not only our rucksack, but dreams of education, stability and dignity for the next generation.

Three Sisters upholds a strict rule: Assistants carry no more than 10-12kg each. As customers, we also left a small space in our own rucksacks for their belongings. However, this essential work practice remains far from universal. Despite laws against heavy loads, most 'porters' are made to carry 30kg or more of trekking gear. After decades of carrying heavy loads up and down mountains, many have chronic spinal problems and headaches.

At rest stops, the men conversed among themselves, and I glimpsed the value they embraced: women led the way. The Three Sisters are leaving a legacy. Dhak Bahadur



ALL PHOTOS: BIMBIKA SIJAPATI BASNETT

confides, "I want my daughter to be fluent in English and become part of a women-led tourism company too."

A Nepal trek gives visitors a glimpse of the impact of migration and remittance on rural areas. Nearly half of the households have at least one family member working abroad, or someone who has returned from overseas or India. They are predominantly men aged 20-44, and form the backbone of the country's most productive workforce.

Along the trail, we can see evidence of newfound prosperity from remittances, allowing many families to break free from poverty

and deprivation. Yet migration is far from being a seamless journey. It begins with the challenge of pooling resources to cover direct and indirect costs. Upon return, a lingering question returns, 'what next?' as migrant returnees grapple with reintegration.

Migrants, dreamers, carriers of hope shuffle along with silent footsteps along stone steps amidst a stunning backdrop of Annapurna and Machapuchre suffused in the golden light of sunrise. Each step is a promise that every ascent, every descent, is a collective endeavour towards a world where equality, opportunity and compassion bloom brightly like the rhododendron. 🇳🇵



Bimbika Sijapati Basnett (far left) with Three Sisters trekking guides. Sijapati Basnett is a researcher and practitioner working on gender and social development.

EVENTS

**Ghibli movie marathon**

Dive into the magical and mystical world of Studio Ghibli with fellow Ghibli admirers, and watch some of the studio's much-loved classics over the years.

27 April, 11am onwards, Rs300, Ivory, Thamel

Meaning within Meaning

Featuring Bhuwan Thapa's sculpture, the exhibition Meaning within Meaning will leave viewers want to soul-search and look for meaning in the smaller things.

Until 5 May, 11am-7pm, Takpa Galley, Lazimpat

**Pottery Training**

Use your creativity and get those hands dirty at The Pottery Training Centre to learn a new skill and create some clay pots.

10am-5pm, Pottery Square, Bhaktapur, 9849172187

ए. I.

Acro Theatre's latest play 'ए. I.' is an adventure that follows a curious bunch of animals as they embark on a quest fueled by their wildest dreams.

Until 4 May, 5:30pm (except Tuesdays), Fee: Rs200 (for students with ID)/Rs300 (normal), Shilpee Theatre, Battispur

**Beer Fest**

Go with friends to check out the brews at Kymapa's 3rd Beer Fest. The event will feature live performances from Gauley Bhai and Ranzen.

27 April, 3pm onwards, Kyampa, Sanepa

DINING

**4Stories**

At 4Stories, instagrammable aesthetics meet impeccable food. The Bang Bang Shrimp and Satay Chicken 450 are a must-have.

Thamel, 9808790813

MUSIC

KatJazz 2024

The sixth iteration of KatJazz features global music from a range of seasoned musicians across the world. Check the scheduler at nepalitimes.com for details.

Until 30 April, 7pm onwards, Rs800-1200

**Sarangi Bhela 2024**

Sarangi Bhela 2024 is the place to be for a lively exchange of folk music and diverse perspectives— for performers and music fans alike.

27 April, 11:30 onwards, Basecamp Outdoor, Jhamsikhel

**Didgeridoo**

Experience the sound of Didgeridoo, an ancient wind instrument of the aboriginal people of Australia, played by Nepali artist Salil Subedi.

3 May, 6:30-8:30pm, Rs300-500, Patan Museum Courtyard 9862790677

**Kanika Kapoor Live**

Grab the chance to experience the Bollywood singer perform live in Kathmandu and get ready to shake a leg.

27 April, 7pm onwards, Rs1,500-2,000, Club Platinum, Teendhara Marg 9802358740

Godawari Music Fest

Embrace the spirit of joy at the Godawari Music Fest. The Elements and comedian Aayush Shrestha are among the line-up of artists at the show.

28 April, 3pm onwards, Rs1,000-2,000, Sunrise Hall, Godawari

**NOOK**

Buy 2 buffets and get 1 free at Nook! Gather your crew for this offer and get ready for a night of good food, great company, and impeccable vibes.

Every Friday until 30 April, Rs 2200+ (per individual) 6:30pm-10:30pm, Nook, Aloft Kathmandu, Thamel

Full Moon Pizzeria

Peruse The Full Moon Pizzeria Cafe menu for all things pizza. A large supreme is perfect for the whole family.

Dhumburahi (01) 5917508

GETAWAYS

**The Famous Farm**

The three-storey boutique hotel in the subtropical Middle Hills west of Kathmandu is Nuwakot's best kept secret. This little traditional house has a lot of rich cultural heritage to share. Also check out the historical palace nearby.

Kuwapani, Nuwakot, 9808882270

Glacier Hotel & Spa

Also known as The Harbor, this boutique hotel is becoming a favourite of many frequent tourists to Pokhara. The boho-inspired rooms, luxury amenities and in-house restaurant keep guests coming back every time.

Lakeside (061) 463722

**Nana Jungle Resort**

A recent addition to Nawalparasi's resort industry, Nana Jungle Resort located near the Narayani River is an establishment that prioritises sustainable tourism. The fusion of serene wilderness and the comforts of the modern times awaits those who make the trip.

Chitwan National Park, 9802000916

Milla

A quaint stay that combines the old and the new, Milla Guesthouse is the perfect getaway for people who don't want to get away too far from the city.

Bhaktapur, 9851024137

**Dom Himalaya**

Dom Himalaya Hotel offers a space for visitors to indulge in traditional Nepali cuisine, relax with Tibetan singing bowls and bask in the vibrant chaos of Thamel.

Thamel (01) 5316813

House of Eggs

Egg lovers can rejoice at this egg-themed restaurant. Get an Amritsari Egg Chole, a Potato Egg Rosti or an Egg Sizzler.

Gahanapokhari (01) 4445330

**Coco Waffle Café**

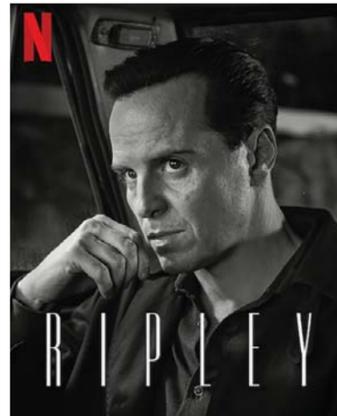
Craving something simultaneously savoury and sugary? Order freshly made waffles from the wide array of waffle menus available at Coco Waffle Cafe.

Bansbari, 9813048938

WEEKEND WEATHER

**Hot, hot, hot**

A heat wave is sweeping across the north Indian plains with West Bengal going over 40°C. Along with high humidity, the scorching 'wet-bulb' temperatures are serious enough for schools to close. Some of this hot air is rising along the mountains, and Kathmandu will see 32°C through the weekend and into next week. This level of heat is more characteristic of May. Hydrate, keep cool.



OUR PICK

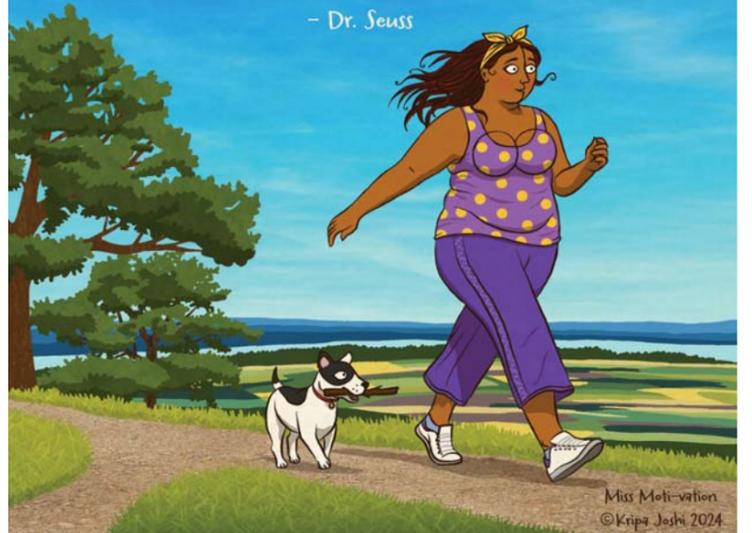
In writer-director Steven Zaillian's 2024 limited series Ripley, Andrew Scott plays Tom Ripley, a petty criminal trying to make his way in New York who is hired by a wealthy man to bring his wandering son back home from Italy. Over eight episodes, what had seemed like an easy—even luxurious—job sees Ripley fall headfirst into a world of deception and violence. The series is adapted from Patricia Highsmith's 1955 psychological thriller novel The Talented Mr. Ripley and also stars Dakota Fanning, Johnny Flynn, and Margherita Buy.

MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI

You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself any direction you choose.

— Dr. Seuss



Miss Moti-vation
© Kripa Joshi 2024

गर्मी मौसममा संक्रामक रोगबाट बचाउ र बचाऔं

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



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड

Painting a painter

Artwork by a pioneer of contemporary Nepali art that was sold to a Danish diplomat in the 1980s is bought back

■ Shristi Karki

The oil on canvas shows an artist painting an image of Lord Brahma on a clay pot. The One Who Creates a Creator is the work of Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, considered the pioneer of contemporary art in Nepal.

The painting was bought from a gallery in Darbar Marg by Danish diplomat and art collector Michael Vinding in 1986. It remained in Denmark until Rajan Shakya of the Museum of Nepali Art (MoNA) bought the painting and brought it back to Nepal this year.

Tej Bahadur, who died in 1971, was himself the son of artist Shiva Das Chitrakar. Tej's son Madan Chitrakar, who is also an artist and art historian, unveiled the painting at MoNA this week. Vinding, now in his seventies, was also present.

Vinding had contacted Madan after reading his books on the painting that he bought, and their mutual admiration for Nepali art kept them in touch.

"One of my very favourite paintings of my father's is right here after a long absence from Nepal," said an emotional Madan at the unveiling. "I have a special



FOR ART'S SAKE: Former Danish diplomat Michael Vinding (left) and Madan Chitrakar at the unveiling of Tej Bahadur Chitrakar's painting *The One Who Creates a Creator* at the Museum of Nepali Art on 18 April.

PHOTOS: MUSEUM OF NEPALI ART



The third painting in the Tej Bahadur Chitrakar series, *Ancestor at Work* (left) and *Tribute to My Forefather*, the first in the series documenting the heritage of the Chitrakar community.



FUKUOKA ASIAN ART MUSEUM

attachment with this series of paintings, which is a celebration of Nepal's art heritage and social life."

Madan was back home from college in Bombay in 1967, and his father was planning to work on a series depicting the lives and struggles of Nepal's mountain communities.

Madan felt it was important to document the heritage and the profession that the Chitrakar community had inherited. When he suggested this to his father, Tej Bahadur agreed to do it right away, and depicted pottery, paubha, and wooden strut paintings in his series.

But Tej Bahadur needed a reference for his work. So Madan sat his father down as a model and made various sketches of his face, as well as hand, eye, and sitting positions. Tej Bahadur did his paintings based on those sketches of himself, and this became a collaborative project between father and son.

The three paintings in this series, of which *The One Who Creates a Creator* is the second, took Tej Bahadur six months to complete. The first, titled *Tribute to My Forefather*, depicts a man working on a paubha, and is at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum.

The third, *Ancestor at Work*, shows an artist painting a temple strut was the only one in the series still with Madan Chitrakar. The second and third paintings are now reunited and are on display at MoNA.

"I was in tears when I saw the painting," Madan told *Nepali Times*, "I recalled sketching my father, and he creating these paintings all those years ago. It all flashed before my eyes."

Rajan Shakya got in touch with the Vinding family, who agreed to sell it to MoNA.

"Luckily it belonged to a collector who has deep roots in Nepal, and he had taken care of it," says Shakya. "This is the homecoming of a painting that started the contemporary art movement in Nepal." 🇳🇵

The house of Chitrakars

Their profession is their surname. Three generations of Chitrakars have devoted their lives to studying, practicing, and refining Nepali art.

At 78, Madan Chitrakar is still in his studio, brush in hand in front of canvases. Born into a family of artists, his swas tied to art even before his birth in 1945.

Madan was born a month after the death of his artist grandfather Shiva Das Chitrakar who painted images of gods and goddesses on paper, cloth, the walls and doors of temples, as well as on the wheels and legs of chariots during festivals.

Shiva Das' son Tej Bahadur grew up watching his father sketch and paint. And Tej Bahadur's son Madan says, "We are not artists just because we are Chitrakars. This profession needs dedication."

Tej Bahadur painted not only religious imagery but murals of animals, people, and nature at Singha Darbar, impressing Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher Rana, who sent him to the Government College of Fine Art in Calcutta.

While in India, Tej Bahadur sent oil and watercolour portraits back home, including those of Chandra Shumsher and King Tribhuvan. Before him, Nepal's aristocracy used to commission British artists to paint their portraits.

Tej Bahadur is the first Nepali graduate of modern art and is



credited with introducing Western academic fundamentals into Nepali art at a time when it was limited to traditional art forms. Upon his return, Tej Bahadur became an art teacher at Darbar High School and died in 1971, aged 73.

Madan Chitrakar got a degree from Bombay's JJ School of Art in 1963 and returned to Nepal to make cartoon-style illustrations in

textbooks. He retired in 1998 after 20 years at the Tourism Ministry.

He designed the logo for Visit Nepal 1999, and says: "What can be created quickly on InDesign now used to take many hours of measuring-by-hand and painstaking drawing back then."

Madan continues to make a living off of his art at 78. He has painted mountains and nature,



Artist Madan Chitrakar with a portrait of his father Tej Bahadur Chitrakar in the background (left) and Madan Chitrakar's painting of a Tamang couple he encountered during one of his travels (above).

PHOTOS: SUMAN NEPALI

villages that have become cities, and the history of Nepali society.

Some of his art is political. In 2002, he painted four empty blood-soaked boxes lying in the middle of a seemingly endless road, which he titled *The Settlement*. The 36x30 inch acrylic on canvas depicted the conflict years.

"At that time, the only news was of death, even as entire communities fled their homes to escape the violence," recalls Madan. "There was a lot of fear and loneliness, which was what I conveyed through the painting."

These days, Madan paints mythical lions, using the animal as a medium to showcase emotions

of ferocity, peace, anger, mischief. There is a belief in the Newa community that drawing lions cures the body of ailments.

"There is still a lot of work to be done in modern art in Nepal, which is what I remind myself and other artists," he says. "We need to move beyond just painting different versions of Lord Buddha meditating."

Madan Chitrakar's skill and passion for art has deep inter-generational roots. He says: "Like my father, I will continue to paint until my hands stop working and my imagination no longer runs wild." 🇳🇵

Anita Bhetwal

Either too little, or too

Extreme weather, glacial lake bursts becoming more serious and frequent in eastern Nepal, affecting livelihoods

■ Mohan Mainali in Taplejung

In the first two episodes of this series, we looked at how climate breakdown has worsened the water shortage in eastern Nepal, with rains failing and springs going dry.

But there is a flipside. In the monsoon, there is also the curse of too much rain leading to destructive landslides, floods driving people out.

Analysing meteorological and hydrological data from the past half-a-century in eastern Nepal's Tamor River basin, the big floods of 1963 and 1968 stand out with other less destructive monsoons in between.

Nepal's monsoons usually last 112 days from mid-June to mid-September, and its clockwork arrival and departure has inspired Nepali poetry and song.

But climate breakdown has disrupted the timetable, and there have been years with highly unusual monsoons and floods. In 1968, the monsoon delivered more rain than usual in some places and less than normal in others, and the big floods came after the monsoon is supposed to have retreated.

The national news agency RSS reported a damaging flood in Sunsari, the district in the plains where the Kosi River discharges into the plains after confluence of the Arun, Sun Kosi and Tamor.

Three days later, RSS reported that 500 cattle and 1,500 goats had drowned in Sunsari, and a child's body had been found. Upstream in Leuti Khola, three people and seven houses were swept away.

A week later, RSS reported again that seven people and 14 livestock had been killed by floods, and bridges as well as paddy ready for harvest were swept away. Even upstream in Olangchung Gola, three people were killed.

Laxmi Prasad Siwakoti was a boy in 1968, and remembers enormous boulders thundering down rivers. One boulder the size of a house luckily was pushed to the banks before it could destroy a key bridge below Taplejung.

All this water created even more death and destruction in the inland delta of Sunsari, also washing down the bodies of people and livestock from upstream. The 1968 post-monsoon flow of the Kosi reached 23,106 cumecs – four times the volume in the 1963 flood.

Some researchers attributed the 1963 flood to the bursting of Tiptala Glacial Lake in the Kangchenjunga area, and that the 1968 flood was also caused by another moraine collapse on the same lake.

But analysis of precipitation data of the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology shows that the reason for the catastrophic floods of 1968 was unusually heavy post-monsoon rainfall in the Tamor basin. Archival records of rainfall at Mulghat below Dhankuta shows that there was 162mm of rain on 3 October and another 158mm on 4 October. This meant that one-third of the total rainfall during four monsoon months fell in just two days.

Never had Mulghat recorded so much rain in such a short time, and

in the 55 years since there has been that much rain only twice.

On 4-5 October 1968, Dhankuta received 300mm of rain. It had never received so much rain in the autumn before or since. Similarly, Taplejung recorded 231mm of rain in the same two days – it has never received so much rain in the post-monsoon since.

Hydro-meteorological stations across eastern Nepal in Panchthar, Taplejung, Dhankuta and Sankhusabha all show data of record-breaking post-monsoon precipitation on 3-4 October 1968. In fact data shows that except for northwestern Nepal, there was heavy unseasonal rain all over.

Dhulikhel near Kathmandu recorded 221mm rain that day, and even Jomsom in the trans-Himalayan rainshadow got 58% of its annual rainfall in just one week.

In a paper titled Heavy Monsoon Rainfall in Nepal, J L Nayava dug up an archival weather map from 1968 that showed a cyclone develop in the Bay of Bengal a week after the official retreat of the monsoon from Nepal in conjunction with a low pressure area over southern India. Both systems moved northwards, and it could have been the combination of the two that dumped the record rainfall in Nepal.

Nayava notes: 'On 29 September, a small low appeared over the Bay of Bengal at about 10°N, 90°E. During the next two days, the circulation of this low expanded as it moved north-eastwards into central India and intensified into a depression. By 3 October, Nepal and much of India had come within the circulation of this depression... During the next two days, a sharp 500mb trough passed through Nepal and central India and as the polar westerlies at 200mb intensified and moved equatorwards, bringing the subtropical westerly jetstreams ever closer to Nepal. As the depression moved north, the anticyclonic circulation at 200mb over the depression intensified and became orientated in a south-west-north-east direction. Associated with these developments, widespread rain fell in most parts of Nepal...'

It was not just eastern Nepal that suffered destruction, many people were killed in Bhojpur, Khotang and Solu to the west. If this was indeed a glacial lake outburst flood, the destruction would not have been so widespread.

The hydrological data of the Tamor of 3-5 October 1968 are also not commensurate with a flash flood triggered by a glacial lake burst. The Mulghat hydrological station showed that on 4 October, there was 3,060 cumec of flow (volume of water never recorded before) which decreased only slightly over the next few days and returned to a more normal 636 cumecs only on 9 October.

By the time the rains stopped that October, 60 people were dead in Kosi zone alone, thousands of livestock were killed and houses swept away. The new bridge over the Tamor and other suspension bridges were destroyed.

But that was not the end of the story. On 29 October 1968 came news that 91 people had been killed in Taplejung, 60 in Terathum, 30 in Panchthar and three in Dhankuta. Just in the Tamor watershed, 184 people were killed and thousands made homeless.

Nepalis have learnt over the years to be prepared for disasters during the monsoon, and to breathe a sigh of relief when the rains end. But the 1968 floods hit after the monsoon, when people felt safer.

Floods were nothing new in the Tamor. There was an unimaginable



much water



ALL PHOTOS: MOHAN MAINALI

pinpoint the flood to the bursting of Tiptala glacial lake at 4,900m.

“The gunpowder smell and the wind preceded the arrival of the debris flow,” remembers Nil Limbu of Chhiruwa of Taplejung, an eye witness of the 1963 event. “It destroyed everything, took away all the trees, left just rocks and boulders.”

The flood washed away the mule trail along the Tamor, and swept away the flat meadow along the river that used to have a weekly market. Today, the trail is higher above the river, but for years, there used to be rockfalls from above.

The debris flow raced downstream, destroying houses, trails, bridges, farms, livestock. The flood made national news, and RSS reported that below Dhankuta, the Tamor destroyed the trail to Taplejung and washed away seven bridges.

The glacial lake outburst flood on the Tamor met the Arun and then the Kosi where the river flow spiked to 6,371 cumecs. Further downstream in the plains, the flood destroyed the western embankment of the Kosi Barrage, inundating villages in more than 1m of water.

A month later, the government released the death toll: 32 killed, unknown number of livestock, standing crops, and causing damage equivalent to 1.6% of Nepal’s annual budget that year. Nepal’s famous eye doctor Sanduk Ruit’s family also had to leave their home in Olangchung Gola after that flood and settled down in Dhankuta.

The combined result of the record rainfall-induced floods of 1968 as well as the glacial lake outburst flood of 1963 could have been early examples of climate-induced floods, which have become more frequent in recent years.

On 17 June 2023 Memeng station in Panchthar recorded 230mm rainfall in a 24 hour period, the highest rainfall ever recorded in that station (second highest was 148mm in July 2002). Nearby Dovan of Taplejung experienced 106mm on 18 June and 102mm on 19 June.

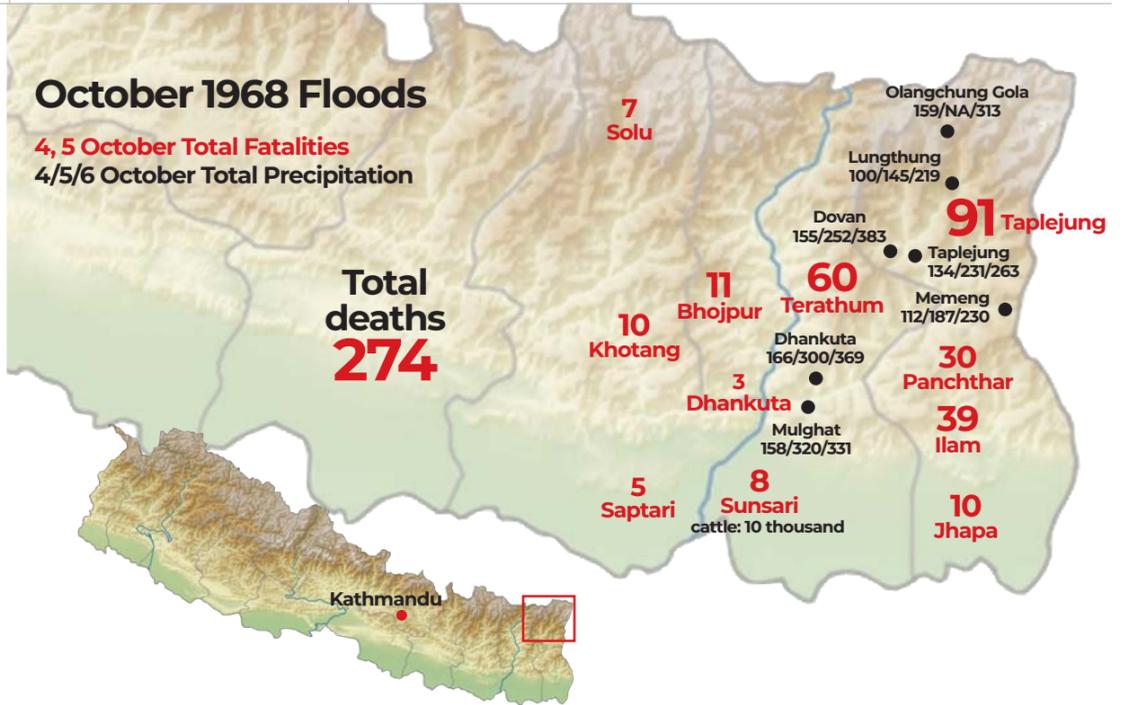
The basin-wide floods on the Tamor and its tributaries caused damage worth at least Rs8.5 billion on 30 hydropower plants in Sankhuwasabha, Taplejung and Panchthar, killing 18 workers.

Half of these schemes were under construction, but plants

one five years earlier on 15 August 1963 that swept away 16 houses in Olangchung Gola.

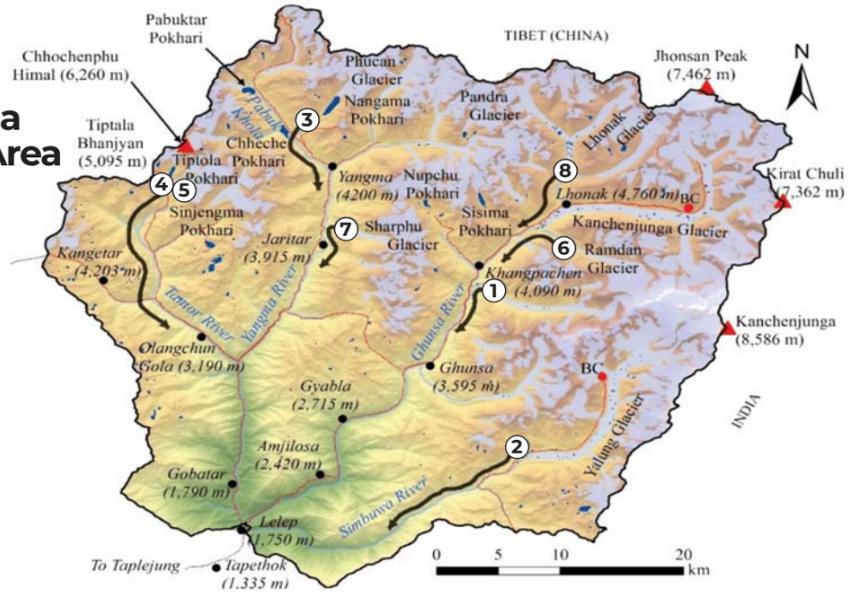
Locals remember an air blast preceding the flash flood, and an approaching roar that shook the mountains like an earthquake. Houses shook, cattle covered and goats ran for cover. Upstream, villagers saw clouds of dust and spray, and there was a smell of gunpowder in the air as enormous boulders collided with each other.

Although this was the monsoon period, the precipitation in the day preceding the debris flow was normal. This could not have been caused by a cloudburst. Alton C Byers, the American glaciologist who has researched historical glacial floods in the Kangchenjunga region, used satellite imagery and interviews with local villagers to



Kangchenjunga Conservation Area

- Legend**
- Glaciers
 - Glacial lakes
 - GLOF number
 - GLOF direction
 - Settlements
 - Trekking Trails
 - River
 - Elevation
 - High 8,856
 - Low 1,472



SOURCE: ALTON BYERS

generating 130MW were knocked out of action. Some, like the Upper Piluwa Khola 2 and Super Hewa Khola have still not been repaired.

While these were all caused by extreme rainfall events, on the Sikkim side of Kangchenjunga a post-monsoon disaster on 4 October 2023 washed away several hydropower plants on Teesta and its tributaries, and killed nearly 100 people downstream. The 1,200MW Chungthang Dam built at a cost of \$1billion was destroyed.

It was later revealed that extreme rainfall on the South Lhonak Glacial Lake, north of Kangchenjunga, caused the collapse of a lateral moraine which allowed

a wave to breach the terminal moraine. The lateral moraine could have been weakened by thawing permafrost, and collapsed during heavy rainfall on the night of 4 October.

The Sikkim disaster was an important lesson for Nepal, which has invested heavily in infrastructure on this side of the border. More than a dozen medium and large hydropower plants have been built or are under construction along the Tamor alone. The 1960 Tiptala and the 1980 Nangama glacial lake bursts are further proof that such disasters can happen again without warning because of climate breakdown.

Besides droughts and floods, landslides are also the reason many people from eastern Nepal have migrated to the relative safety of the plains. A huge landslide in 1946 in Hangdeva in Taplejung is still displacing many people. East of Hangdeva, another landslide in 1977 killed 25 people and the rest of the village just moved out.

It is clear that with the climate crisis, extreme weather events and glacial lake bursts will be more serious and frequent, affecting lives and livelihoods, contributing to outmigration. 🇳🇵

This is the final of a three-part series supported by the Barbara Foundation.

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Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance

A small bike repair shop in Hetauda with great philosophical wisdom on work and life itself

■ Sarita Dahal in Hetauda

Sudarshan Dhakal crouches next to a motorcycle, carefully runs his fingers over its engine, finds the faulty part and removes it.

He gets a spare and replaces the component. He tests the engine, which roars into life, emitting blue smoke from the silencer.

Sudarshan, 54, owns and runs Dhakal Motorcycle Workshop with his wife Kamala Aryal. The repair shop is like thousands of others along the highway. What makes this one different is that Sudarshan cannot see.

It was 1996 when Sudarshan was in a group ferrying brand new Honda motorcycles from the warehouse in Hetauda to the Dharan showroom. Near the Kosi Barrage, a car in front of him braked abruptly.

The last thing Sudarshan ever saw was the car's red brake light. He had managed to pull over by the side of the road by the time his friends came back to look for him.

"When they found me that day, I could just make out the white of the highway centreline,



and car lights," Sudarshan recalls. He can see only dimly during the day, and not at all at night. He bumps into things but has learnt to get around.

After the accident, doctors at Tilganga Hospital found his optic nerves were damaged. There was not much they could do.

But Sudarshan was not one to lose hope. He lost his eyesight, but not his passion for motorcycles.

He can tell what is wrong by just revving up the engine. In case the motorcycle does not start, he uses his tools deftly to figure out why. For electrical faults, he needs his wife or son to help identify the colours of the wires.



PHOTOS: SARITA DAHAL

He can also assemble small parts of motorcycles without help. "It might take me a few tries, but eventually, the parts fit how they are supposed to," he says.

As a young boy, Sudarshan realised that he was not interested in academics. So, at age 16, he taught himself to repair Japanese cars simply by looking at their catalogues.

Today, at his garage, Sudarshan handles maintenance while Kamala works with customers and sources faulty motorbikes. When there is a heavy workload, Kamala joins her husband and helps him out.

They have also trained their son Rajiv to do repairs and test runs. Rajiv is a priest, and is mostly away, officiating rituals. But whenever he is free he helps out at the shop.

"I wondered if this pandit in his white robes with his Sanskrit hymns and the smell of incense would want to work in a greasy, dirty garage that reeks of kerosene," says Sudarshan. "It took some time for him to adjust, but now he enjoys the work."

It has been 27 years since Sudarshan lost his eyesight, but he has not let this stop him from continuing his profession. The Dhakal family makes a decent living, and Sudarshan attributes this to his passion, skill and experience.

"No job is too big or too small," says Sudarshan, "what is more important is dedication, integrity and a sense of fulfilment from helping others." 🇳🇵

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