



SOUTHERLY WINDS

■ Akhilesh Upadhyay

Nepal and India are both Hindu-majority countries, but there is a difference between the Hindutva nationalism playing out in India's ongoing elections and the Hindu faith as practiced in Nepal.

Most Nepalis are too busy trying to get by in hard economic times to be too engrossed with elections across the border. Some do harbour strong views about Narendra Modi's brand of Hindu revivalism, and the RPP in particular seems to want to imitate the BJP's ability to set a national Hindutva narrative.

Still, a majority of Nepalis look at Narendra Modi with something between indifference and fondness. The Indian Prime Minister has visited Nepal five times since he was first elected in 2014, and many here still remember his address to Parliament which he began in almost accentless Nepali during his first state visit to Kathmandu.

There is a section in Nepal that supports a non-secular Hindu state, and Nepalis have noticed that every time Modi comes to Nepal he makes it a point to visit Hindu and Buddhist sacred sites. But in contrast to his BJP's Hindu exclusionist policies in India, Nepal has traditionally enjoyed a syncretic blend of Hindu and Buddhist traditions.

For most Nepalis, therefore, the affinity for BJP and Modi could be characterised as cultural rather than political. Most Nepalis still have memories of the hardships they suffered during the 6-month blockade that New Delhi imposed just after the 2015 earthquake because it did not like the contours of Nepal's new draft Constitution.

The poor showing of the Hindu-monarchist RPP in last month's by-elections in Ilam and Bajhang shows that at least in the mountains, Nepalis are not so impressed with the polarised electoral politics on display in India. Interestingly, Bajhang is close to the Indian state of Uttarakhand which has declared itself to be a Hindu-only 'Devbhumi' and with which it has close crossborder cultural ties.



VOTE BANK: Women voters queue up to cast their ballots in Madhubani in Bihar state, just across the Nepal border on 7 May.

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA / X

Although factions of the other four main parties in Parliament, the NC, UML, Maoist-Centre and the RSP, do flirt with the Hindu-monarchy line from time to time, there is not much public support for it yet and none of these four parties have officially voiced their support for such an agenda.

When (and if) Modi does win a third term in India's elections there could inevitably be ripple effects in Nepal — especially if the BJP's mentors in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) adopt an even more radical agenda, abolish secularism from the Indian Constitution, or push the Greater India idea of 'Akhand Bharat'.

Even so, rousing radical religious passions will not be as easy in Nepal, which is South Asia's oldest nation state and does not carry with it the historical baggage of Partition. Nepal's Muslim minority, which forms 5% of the population, has for the most part lived in harmony with Hindus and Buddhists,

although there are politically-instigated local flare-ups from time to time mainly along the southern border.

Though Nepal's Hindu population is more than 80%, Nepal as a whole is a country of minorities. The Hill-Brahmin and Chhetri may dominate the political and economic spheres, but they form less than 30% of the population. Nepal's ethnic and indigenous groups have been asserting themselves, as seen in the recent Ilam by-election, where the UML's Suhang Nembang comfortably beat the NC's Dambar Bahadur Khadka by close to 6,000 votes. However, an independent candidate, Dakendra Singh Limbu, with no political affiliation, but who campaigned on a platform of assertive Limbu identity, made a strong showing, finishing third with 11,457 votes.

Such identity politics is more a response to ethnic exclusion and a demand for regional autonomy than pushing a religious agenda. Indeed, Nepal's political parties have so far desisted from mixing religion with politics, even though some individual leaders in the parties sometimes seem to appear to be sorely tempted. Nepal's next general election is more than three years away, and India-style Hindutva politics could still be whipped up. For now, it seems more likely that it will be Nepali nationalism that will be a more potent vote-mobiliser.

This already seems to be happening, with the government minting Nepal's new 100 rupee note that depicts the country's 'pointy map' showing a 350 sq km strip of territory in its northwestern tip which is also claimed by India. 🇳🇵

Akhilesh Upadhyay is former Editor-in-Chief of The Kathmandu Post and a Senior Fellow at the think tank, IIDS.

**Climate,
Democracy
and Media**
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2

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Climate, Democracy and Media

■ Mohamed Nasheed

The climate crisis is upon us today, whether we like to believe it or not. It is going to destroy much of what humanity has built in the last few hundred years, as well as the biodiversity that nature has bestowed on the planet. It is going to wash away our livelihoods in our lifetime.

Freedom of expression and democracy are the most important adaptation mechanisms to climate breakdown. If we cannot freely express our views and elect leaders, we will continue to build the wrong dam, the wrong roads, the wrong embankments in the wrong place, at the wrong price.

We already see bridges bridging nothing. Roads to nowhere. Airports not used, and vanity projects of politicians all built through our debt. This is

because we are unable to speak out, because we do not have a say in what our governments do.

We take loans to build a bridge, a house, a school and bad weather destroys them. But the debt remains and we have to pay back the money without receiving the benefits from the loans we took.

The amount of money flowing out of our countries will amount to \$900 billion in the next two years, mainly for debt servicing and repayments. Many climate vulnerable countries are in debt distress, and more than 15 will go into default this year. These countries have lost 20% of their GDP because of extreme weather events.

The environment, therefore, is no more a dispatch from environment correspondents. It is a major financial story. The impact extreme weather due to climate change has on the economy is tremendous.

I now work for the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), an intergovernmental organisation of 68 countries established in 2009 initially with nine countries including Nepal. I quit as the Speaker of the Maldives Parliament last year to set up the secretariat in Accra in Ghana.

Among other things, the CVF develops what we call Climate Prosperity Plans which are low carbon development strategies that would give the same outcomes of GDP growth of high employment and low inflation, but without damaging the planet.

To become resilient you must be prosperous. Being poor makes you less resilient, reduces your choices. So we are looking at new methods of farming, irrigation, harvesting, fertilisers, transport, and building

cities and homes.

I have been attending COPs for nearly 30 years. We have been talking about Loss and Damage by using the ethical human rights argument of climate justice. But I do not think anyone ever listened, and nothing much has come out of the last 28 COPs. They are just talking shops.

The CVF wants to find solutions to the climate crisis, and one of the things we do is advise member countries on debt.

Sri Lanka is going into the IMF's 'Debt Sustainability Analysis' program for the 17th time and Bangladesh for 24th. Year after year, the IMF bails them out on condition that they increase taxes, fire half the civil servants and reduce spending. These austerity prescriptions are not our way out of the debt, we cannot do so by suppressing growth.

More and more countries now want debt-for-nature swaps wherein those who want to protect the environment are willing to guarantee the new bond which asks the government to do more on specific environmental issues such that there is a conservation agent with, for instance, a forest management plan. The money is paid per usual, but you are also protecting nature while doing it.

We also encourage countries to do carbon exchanges. Most of the forests are in climate vulnerable countries today, capturing most of the carbon the world is emitting. At the same time, if we do not have forests, our very survival will be jeopardised. But we need money to look after our forests and our natural assets. Carbon exchange, therefore, can also be a mechanism to finance development.

Simply because industrialised countries have taken us to the brink, we cannot do the same. If we do, it is going to be the end of us all. We must find sustainable development paths that will also deliver prosperity.

People in the Maldives perhaps feel I have abandoned them. But to save the Maldives, I had to leave it. The Maldives cannot be saved unless the planet is saved. We had to do something else so that island nations and climate vulnerable countries have a better chance.

This is an excerpt of the keynote address by Mohamed Nasheed, the former president of the Maldives, an ex-journalist and a climate campaigner, at the Himal Media Mela 2024 on World Press Freedom Day on 3 May. He is now the Secretary-General of the Climate Vulnerable Forum. Watch his complete speech on our YouTube channel.



Freedom of expression and democracy are the most important adaptations to the climate crisis.

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Climbing mountains

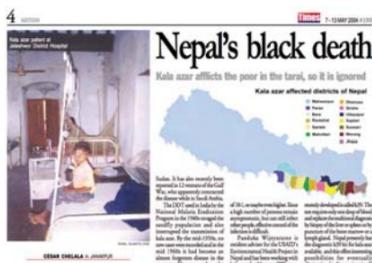
The heating up of the planet will cause the next mass migration of people worldwide. Millions will flee the tropics and move up the mountains to escape heat waves and rising seas.

Some of this is already happening. Insects like mosquitoes are moving to higher altitudes and bringing with them malaria, dengue and kala azar. These diseases are now widespread in Nepal's mountain towns.

Excerpts of a report on kala azar published in Nepali Times 20 years ago this week on issue #195 7-13 May 2004:

In the village of Juri near Janakpur, Ram Sewak Adhikari says half his extended family of 35 has kala azar. His wife died of the diseases, after he sold his plot of land to pay for her care, leaving him destitute. Unable to take care of his 10-year-old son and 8-year-old daughter, he sent them to live with a maternal uncle. Now he doesn't have a home and goes wherever work is available.

Kala azar is relatively unknown among Nepal's many diseases, and therefore may be the most neglected. It belongs to a disease group called leishmaniasis which has a wide range of clinical symptoms: cutaneous, monocutaneous



and visceral. These symptoms include highly undulating fever, weight loss, fatigue, abdominal pain, cough and diarrhoea. The local name means 'black sickness', because the skin of some patients darkens.

Of kala azar cases, 90% occur in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sudan. DDT used in India by the National Malaria Eradication Program in the 1940s ravaged the sandfly population and also interrupted the transmission of kala azar. By the mid-1950s, no new cases were recorded and in the mid-1960s it had become an almost forgotten disease in the country.

However, when the national malaria campaign was interrupted, kala azar reappeared in 1970 in Bihar. Soon, kala azar appeared in Bangladesh and shortly afterwards it entered Nepal's Terai and the disease is now present in 13 districts in Nepal bordering Bihar.

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

ONLINE PACKAGES



MOHAMED NASHEED
The climate crisis is upon us, and it is going to destroy much of what humanity has built in the last few hundred years, as well as the biodiversity that nature has bestowed on the planet. Read a guest editorial (left) by Mohamed Nasheed, this year's keynote speaker at Himal Media Mela 2024. Watch the video on our YouTube channel.



FLOOD OF RECRIMINATION
Every monsoon India accuses Nepal of releasing its rivers and unleashing floods. But there are no reservoir projects or sluice gates on the two border barrages on the Kosi and Gandaki, which are both controlled by India. The two countries must work together to prevent future flooding. Subscribe to our YouTube channel to watch the video and for more original multimedia content.

NEPAL WILDFIRES

The primary problem is that the Nepal government avoids what they are elected to do which is investing money for the benefit and welfare of the nation ('Smoke screen', Editorial, #1210). Sadly, the government is far too busy looting.

Gus Ferguson

■ Forest fires in Nepal are a burning issue. Thanks to a handful of media outlets like Nepali Times for highlighting what's causing this hazy weather now and why it's different this year.

Utsav Shakya

■ 'Any other accountable government would set aside everything else and go into fire-fighting mode on a war footing. Not here.' Totally agree, Nepali Times.

Lava Kaffe

HIMAL MEDIA MELA

Inspiring and entertaining speech from Mohamed Nasheed despite the serious topic.

Marty Logan

■ It's cyclical—everything has a direct bearing on climate change and climate change bears down on absolutely everything ('Ushering in the Anthropocene', nepalintimes.com). It is that ubiquitous and inescapable.

Tony Jones

KATHMANDU HIGH-RISES

The problem with construction today in Kathmandu is that the regulations are too strict. ('The rise of high-rises', Sonia Awale, nepalintimes.com) Kathmandu Municipality and other authorities are enforcing building codes that are too strict even by Japanese standards. It is their way of extorting builders.

Pranay Pant

UNPREDICTABLE MONSOON

Part of monsoon rains might be shared by Oman, UAE etc as we have just heard another round of rains there ('Either too little, or too much water', Mohan Mainali, nepalintimes.com). Hard to imagine what the consequences will be to our part of south Asia if southwest monsoon patterns are broken.

Hem Sagar Baral

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING

Nepal's 'Owl Sir' awarded

by Nepali Times
Nepal's Raju Acharya was one of the winners of the Whitley Award on 1 May for protecting owls in central Nepal. He spearheaded a government-backed ten-year plan to safeguard the birds which had been overlooked from conservation efforts. Read more at nepalintimes.com.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook



Kah Phu Che

by Hum Gurung
When Hum Gurung travelled to Kapuche in 2015, Kapuche Lake was constantly fed by avalanches and glacial melt flowing down from the cliffs above. Nearly 10 years later, the lake has grown dramatically bigger. Get the details on our website.

X Most popular on X

Smoke Screen

Editorial
Thousands of forest fires have been raging across Nepal for more than a month, doing incalculable damage to the economy, and the ecology. There are many reasons why this year has been particularly bad, but putting the blame solely on climate change misses the bigger picture. Join the discussion online.

66 Most commented

Press under Pressure

by Sonia Awale
When the other pillars of democracy fail to act as check and balance, the press has to step in to hold power to account. Which is why authoritarian and elected autocrats around the world who have co-opted the judiciary, legislature and executive are now targeting the media. Journalists are surveilled, threatened and even murdered for doing their job.

🔥 Most visited online page

QUOTES

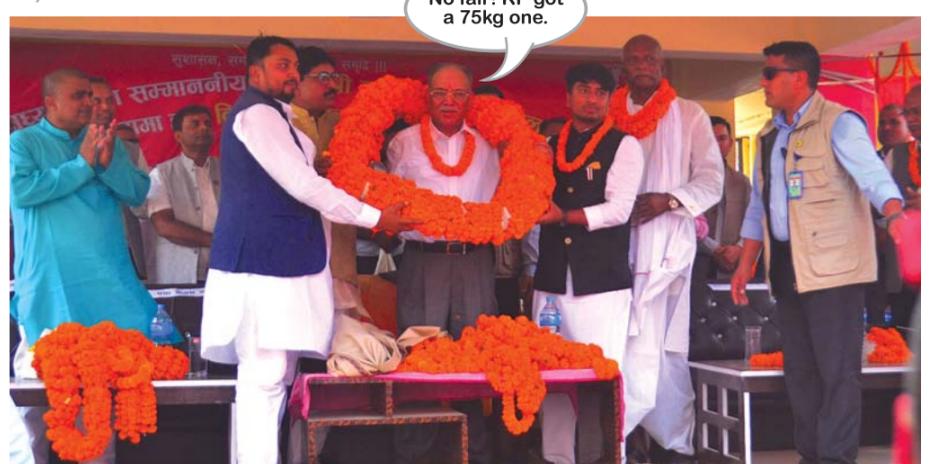
Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
In Jumla, Kalpana Budha, the sole female auto driver, stands out at the rickshaw stand. Her confidence and sari billowing in the wind turn heads—a stark contrast to the initial negativity she faced: disapproving looks, whispers, and gossip.

ShreeZna SinGh @jintoxicatedmice
Good story yet there is so much more we can do for the livelihood of family as a single mother.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
By-election results in Ilam and Bajhang show establishment parties are still the voter's choice. @santagaha

pigreen1 @pigreen1---
How much is 'choice' and how much patronage?

1,000 WORDS



PSYCHO-FANCY: Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal with a 51kg garland during the inauguration of Janata Namuna Secondary School in Balara of Sarlahi on 4 May last week.

SINGH BAHADUR THAPA/RSS

Times

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Kalpana's auto autonomy

Rickshaw operator in Jumla wants to encourage other women to take the wheel and gain independence

■ Maheshwor Acharya

At an auto rickshaw stand in Jumla, Kalpana Budha stood out among a crowd of male drivers as she strode confidently towards her three-wheeler, ready to face another workday ferrying passengers.

What is striking about Kalpana in this socially conservative region of northwestern Nepal is not just the self-assured attitude, but also that she is the sole female auto driver and proud of it. Many do a double take when they see her driving around, her sari waving behind her, and gaze at her in admiration.

Kalpana's first day on the job was quite the opposite. Other rickshaw operators gave her dark looks, whispering behind her back. Neighbours spread unkind gossip.

"In the beginning, people hated seeing me do what they told me was a man's job," the 32-year-old single mother recalls. At the time, people in this deeply patriarchal society would also bring up her separation from her husband to belittle and undermine her.

She adds, "Those were different times but now, most people tell me what a good of a job I am doing."

Kalpana was married off by her family when she was only 13, but it did not last. Her husband abandoned her to pursue another relationship merely 17 days after she had her baby, and she was left alone with the responsibility of raising a child.

The young mother then returned to her parents' house in Kalokholi village with a newborn, wondering how she would be able to support herself and her child. The stigma of single motherhood made it doubly



difficult, but it was her brother Subhash who suggested she take up rickshaw driving.

Kalpana went to Surkhet to learn how to operate an auto rickshaw and obtained her driving licence. She then borrowed Rs600,000 and bought her own rickshaw six years ago.

Daily earnings are modest, but business booms during the apple season in September when orchard owners hire her to haul fruit. Pilgrims to nearby Chandannath Temple, or those going to the hot springs in Tatopani are her main customers.

In the years since she bought her vehicle, Kalpana has paid half of her debt and has been able to enrol her son in private school.

She has now shifted her attention to teaching other women to operate rickshaws, and become self-sufficient economically.

"I have realised that women can make a living however they choose, be it operating a rickshaw, a convenience store, or a sidewalk food stall, you just have to not care what people say behind your back," she says. "All we need is determination."

So far, Kalpana has found little interest among the women in her community to take up rickshaw driving. Two women did initially commit to learning, but one of them did not show up for lessons and the other gave up halfway through training.

"When I asked around about

why she had stopped coming, I came to find out that her husband had reprimanded her for trying to learn how to drive," she recalls.

There are more than 500 women who drive electric Safa three-wheelers in Kathmandu, many of whom also own their own vehicles. Some have moved on to buy taxis and run driving schools.

Female three-wheel drivers in Kathmandu have dissuaded many Nepali women from migrating overseas for work by providing a self-sustaining alternatives at home.

"Even if there were just three more women rickshaw operators in Jumla, it would send the message that women can make their own way in the world," says Kalpana.

Indeed, despite patriarchy Jumla

was one of the few municipalities in Nepal after the 2017 elections where both the mayor and deputy were women.

Now, women like Kalpana are proof that societal norms and male discouragement does not have to be an obstacle.

"I spent many a day crying, questioning if it was worthwhile to live this kind of life," she recalls. "But I realised that everyone goes through their own hardships, but what is important is to not give up. As long as we women can work, we do not have to be ashamed of anyone."

Kalpana certainly did not give up. In fact, she is expanding her business and buying another three-wheeler. 🇳🇵

NMB BANK
एनएमबि बैंक

Turkish Golf Cup

Kanchan Basnyat won the Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup Kathmandu Qualifier at Gokarna Golf Club on 5 May, scoring 42 points at the tournament played under the stableford format. He secured a position for the Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup final in Antalya, Turkey in December.



René Vijay Shrestha Einhaus scored 41 gross points to get the best gross award while Tashi Tshiring took the nett runner-up prize after getting 40 nett points. Anil Sinha won the closest to the pin among male and Gita Gurung won the same prize among female golfers. Nawang Phinjo Sherpa made a hole-in-one for which he won a round trip to Istanbul. A total of 91 golfers took part in the tournament.



Ncell Awarded

Acting Ncell CTO Lena Keshari Kansakar received the National IT Excellence Award from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. Kansakar, who joined Ncell as an assistant engineer in 2005, leads a 140-person technical team and has been involved in implementing 2G, 3G, and 4G as well as connecting rural areas to the network.

No plastic IME

Global IME Bank is reducing plastic use in keeping with the 2024 Earth Day slogan, 'Planet vs. Plastics,' which aims to reduce the use of plastics by 60% by 2040. IME is implementing this long-term programme from its corporate



headquarters in Kathmandu. Global IME is to provide Badinalika municipality in Bajura easy loans to promote entrepreneurship, self-reliance and self-employment. The programme targets farmers and agricultural industrialists.



Salesberry Complex

Department store chain Salesberry has opened a new complex in Maharajganj with four basement floors for parking while the ground to sixth floors will be dedicated to retail. Offices, gyms, spas, restaurants, bars, cafés, and a view tower will be on floors seventh to thirteenth.



Sipradi school aid

Sipradi's nonprofit NGO Sipradian Sahayata Sanstha has donated Rs500,000 to Tulodaya School in Parbat for building repairs. It also provides scholarships to rural students and runs adult education programs.



Futsal on DH

ANFA is organising an intercollegiate futsal tournament from 8-14 May at the Army Centre in Lagankhel. Sixteen teams of higher-secondary and bachelor's students will compete in the tournament to be broadcast by Dish Home and Paradygm Sports Network.

BYD GM in Nepal

BYD Asia Pacific Auto Sales General Manager Liu Xueliang was in Nepal from 4-6 May visiting company showrooms and service centres around the valley. He lauded Nepal's rapid adoption of electric cars. BYD also held a growth summit and a gala at the Marriott Hotel during his stay.

TOEFL for Australia

Starting 5 May, applicants to Australian universities need to take the TOEFL test to demonstrate proficiency in the English language. Changes made to the test last year warranted a comprehensive review by Australian homeland authorities. There are currently over 53,000 Nepalis enrolled in Australian universities.



AMIT MACHAMASI / NT ARCHIVE

Hi-Hee and Haha-Hihi

Suddenly, I began doubting every English pronunciation I had ever learnt in school from teachers I had admired

In this episode of my series *Angrezi*, let me share two other interesting encounters I had with English before diving into Ryan's story. The saga of my own English learning experience.



ANGREZI
Anbika Giri

My uncle decided to open an English medium school in Madhesa of Sunsari district, which was the first of its kind in our village. The school was named Bright Future English School, and caused quite a stir even before it officially opened.

People were intrigued by the word 'Future', and the meaning of 'Bright' eluded them. One morning, while sipping tea at Bahadurni Thuli Ama's tea shop, my uncle's

friends could not contain their curiosity any longer, and asked him the meaning of 'Bright'.

Instead of giving a direct answer, my uncle gave them a clue by asking why the toothpaste brand at the time, 'Brighter' was so named. Suddenly, it all made sense to them, including the significance of 'a bright future'.

The next incident still gives me a good laugh whenever I remember it. Not far from our village was another English medium school called The Martyr School. We youngsters used to jokingly refer to it as "Damatar, Tamatar". It was only much later that I finally understood the meaning of 'martyr'.

The recent Hindi movie *12th Fail* tells the true story of Manoj Kumar Sharma, who passed India's UPSC (like Nepal's own Public Service Commission) exam and eventually became a police

officer on his fourth attempt. There is a scene in the movie where he confidently writes an essay about terrorism from memory during the English exam, only to find out later that the question was actually about tourism.

I can perfectly relate to that feeling. During one exam I remember composing an answer about 'The Mothers of Nepal' when the question was actually asking us to write about 'The Martyrs of Nepal'. Embarrassing.

Now, the story of Ryan. In Grade 9, our English teacher told us the sad story of Ryan who said bye to his mother and hopped on a motorcycle even though he was underage and did not have a driving license. The mother knew this, and told him to drive safely.

A few hours later, she got a call from the police. Ryan had been in an accident. She rushed to the hospital, but Ryan did not

make it. After his tragic death, the mother felt immense regret and blamed herself for not stopping him. She constantly thinks about him, imagining that one day he will step in through the door with a cheerful "Hi, Mom!"

The moral of the story: do not drive without a license. Our English teacher narrated the story in Nepali, and to add a touch of humour, he changed Ryan's name to Ram Bahadur. I can still vividly recall him narrating to the class: 'उस्कै आमालाई लागि रहन्छ कि राम बाहादुर घर आउँछ हाई मोम, म आएँ भन्दै' (His mother felt Ryan would come back, saying "Hi Mom, I'm home").

But when he said "Hi" he did not pronounce it /hai/, he said it like "hee". And guess what? Thenceforth we all copied the way he said "hee" when he meant "hi", repeating "हि मोम, म घर आएँ".

Back in school, we never greeted our friends, so I did not use the

word "Hi" to greet friends till college. If only we had the same chapter in Grade 10, then Thoo Sir would have taught us properly. I finally learned the correct pronunciation, but it did bring some embarrassment.

I enrolled at Janata Multiple College in Itahari for Proficiency Certificate Level, with English as one of my majors. Being the last student to join, I was new to everyone. As a major in English, when people approached me, they naturally said "Hi, I am phalano" or "Hi, I am dhiskano". I reciprocated in the same manner. The only difference was in how they pronounced "Hi" and my response was always "Hee, I am Anbika". I did not understand why they would always giggle when I said that.

A new friend of mine tried to correct me, but out of habit I continued with my "Hee" until our first-year English major teacher, Kedar Sir, overheard me one day in class saying, "Hee, I am Anbika". He corrected me in front of the entire class. "Anbika, it is /hai/, हि भन्नु कल्ले सिकायो?" (Who taught you to say Hee?) he exclaimed so loudly that even students dozing off at the back woke up.

To be honest, it had never occurred to me that even teachers could make mistakes till that moment. I was a little embarrassed. The embarrassment was manageable, but it led me to a state of utter confusion. Suddenly, I began doubting every English pronunciation I had ever learnt in school till then from teachers I had admired. I assumed that Kedar Sir, being an English major teacher at college, must have a stronger command of the language than my high school teacher. Thus, I decided to follow Kedar Sir to unlearn what I learnt in school.

That day, I did not tell Kedar Sir where I got the funny pronunciation from. I later discovered that all my friends had some issues with English since we all came from the same school background where English was taught in Nepali.

Back in the early 2000s, English was not as important as it is today. It did not open up job opportunities, or help navigate work abroad. People who tried to sprinkle English words while speaking Nepali were regarded as show-offs. Twenty years later, English proficiency is given much more importance and we have come a long way. 🇳🇵

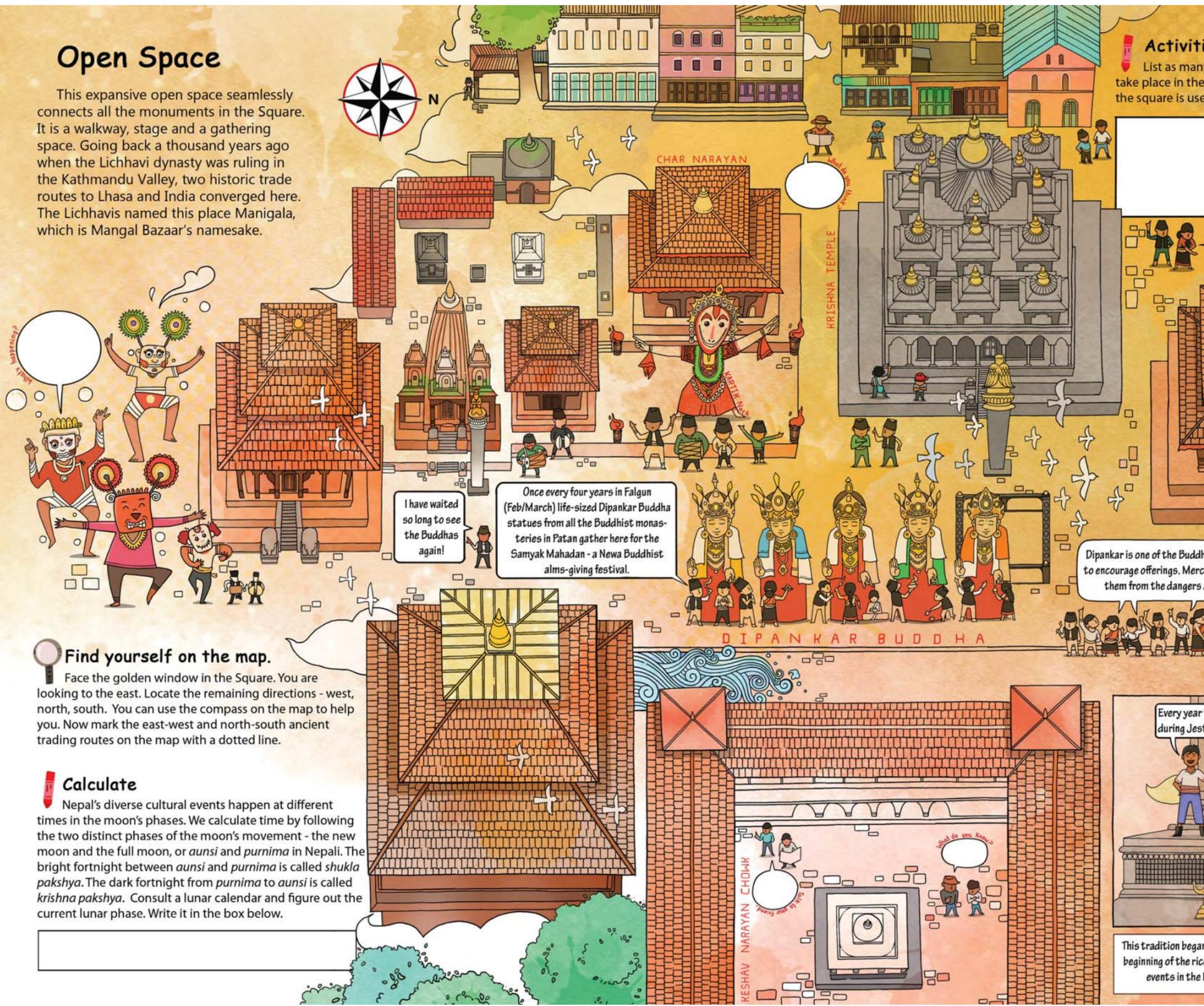
Anbika Giri is a novelist and author of children's books in Nepali. Angrezi is her monthly column in Nepali Times about learning English in Nepal. Her previous columns were Mai Commin, Sir and Thappad.

Experience Luxury

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Open Space

This expansive open space seamlessly connects all the monuments in the Square. It is a walkway, stage and a gathering space. Going back a thousand years ago when the Lichhavi dynasty was ruling in the Kathmandu Valley, two historic trade routes to Lhasa and India converged here. The Lichhavis named this place Manigala, which is Mangal Bazaar's namesake.



Activity
List as many activities that take place in the square as you can.

Find yourself on the map.

Face the golden window in the Square. You are looking to the east. Locate the remaining directions - west, north, south. You can use the compass on the map to help you. Now mark the east-west and north-south ancient trading routes on the map with a dotted line.

Calculate

Nepal's diverse cultural events happen at different times in the moon's phases. We calculate time by following the two distinct phases of the moon's movement - the new moon and the full moon, or *ausni* and *puṇima* in Nepali. The bright fortnight between *ausni* and *puṇima* is called *shukla pakshya*. The dark fortnight from *puṇima* to *ausni* is called *krishna pakshya*. Consult a lunar calendar and figure out the current lunar phase. Write it in the box below.

GO BANDIPUR

A scenic Himalayan trading town retains its charm to revive tourism

■ Sarita Dahal in Tanahu

The old Newa trading town of Bandipur, 145km west of Kathmandu, fell into a gradual decline after the Prithvi Highway was built in the 1970s. The town was bypassed, but that is probably what also saved its old world charm.

The capital of Tanahu district was then shifted from Bandipur to Damauli down the mountain next to the highway, further diminishing its importance. Local traders started moving to Bharatpur or Kathmandu, taking their business with them - leaving Bandipur in splendid isolation for decades.

Now, in a stunning comeback, Bandipur has been transformed from a Ghost Town to the Queen of the Hills.

Its quiet pedestrianised slate-paved streets are lined with traditional Newa buildings, their bougainvillea-draped facades intact. Dilapidated homes of traders have been renovated with locally available material.

The main Bandipur Bazar is vehicle-free, a decision welcomed by both businesses and locals alike. There is very little cement to be seen, at least in the core of the old town - although an eyesore of a highrise cable car terminal has sprouted on an adjoining ridge.

Credit for preserving the town goes to Bandipur Ecocultural Tourism Project launched 20 years ago to revive the once bustling town which served as a business centre in the region in the 18th and 19th centuries. Merchants went through the town to get to Kolkata in India, and for the trade between Kathmandu and Tibet.

"Before there was reliable local transport, people from western mountains of Kaski, Lamjung, Gorkha and Manang would come to Bandipur to exchange for goods from Chitwan," says Shanti Kunwar, who runs the Bindabasini Homestay in the heart of the bazar.

Locals have also added walking steps so that it is easier to climb up the scenic hills that Bandipur is famous for. Hiking trails offer panoramic views of



ASHIM TIMILSINA

the Himalaya to the north. Nearby Thani Mai hill with its shrine on the peak offers a bird-eye-view of the main bazar, the Marsyangdi Valley below and the mountains beyond.

For thrill-seekers, there is now paragliding and some of the best rock climbing in Nepal. Cave enthusiasts can go exploring in the Siddha and Pataleshwar Gufa. There is also a 13km long mountain

biking route between the nearby villages of Ramkot to Korikha via Bandipur Bazar.

"About 200 years ago, Newa people from Bhaktapur and Kirtipur settled in this area," explains local academic Dinesh Shrestha, "and they brought their architecture, culture and festivals with them."

Bandipur has its own Biska Jatra, at the same time as Bhaktapur celebrates the same chariot festival.

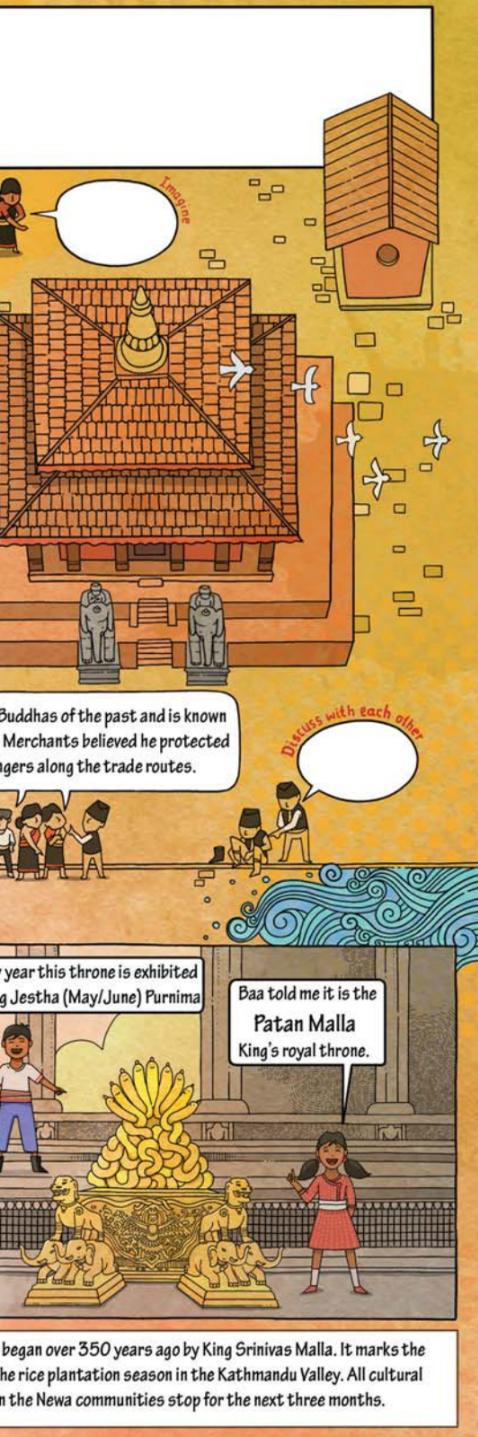
It also has Lakhey masked dance parades.

Bandipur today is a microcosm of Nepal with a diverse Magar, Gurung, Rai and Brahmin-Chhetri population. In fact, the name 'Bandipur' is a slightly Nepalicised word derived from Magar words for 'a place where water comes from the forest'.

In the summer, Shiva fanatics of the Bolbam type have a

Activities in the square

many festivals and cultural events that you know in the square throughout the year. Discuss how they are used for these events.



KVPT

PATAN FOR BEGINNERS

New bilingual interactive maps to help Nepali students rediscover the heritage of the historic kingdom

■ Vishad Onta

Kathmandu Valley may be consumed by urban sprawl, but the historic core of Patan has changed little in the last 400 years. Destroyed and rebuilt several times over the centuries, the former seat of the Malla kings is a living chronicle of Nepal's heritage.

Now, the next generation of Nepali school students have an exciting and fun way to learn about the history of the square.

The Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) has launched a series of three interactive maps in English and Nepali for students to be used on school excursions. The maps are titled 'Let's Discover Patan Darbar Square'.

The maps prompt students to draw what they see at the square, or create something new. One activity asks students to dream up a new monument in the square that would endure, while keeping in mind materials and cultural significance.

Another task asks students to hunt for an elephant in the carved pillars, so that they pay close attention to the detailed woodwork.

The creative activities are sufficiently complex and challenge the students to think. An activity in the second map asks students to imagine and create a diagram of the underground pipes and the main source of water at Manga Hiti.

The colourful maps come in A4-size booklets. The first edition was part of an Educational Outreach project started in 2017 by the art festival Kathmandu Triennale, and now taken over by KVPT.

"We hope that the maps will guide students' first-hand interaction with this historic cultural site," says KVPT's Sophia L Pandé. KVPT has spearheaded the restoration of the Valley's monuments, especially after the 2015 earthquake. The Trust hopes to inspire responsibility for conservation from a young age.

One of the challenges to making these maps is securing funding. The latest edition of the map project was supported by the US Embassy, and the one before that by the New Zealand High Commission. More funding would enable the creation of further maps and similar projects at other heritage sites. Rishi Amatya, who researched and wrote the text in the maps, says the open spaces in Patan Darbar - much like the open boxes in the maps - foster creativity and provide a platform to continue tradition. After every earthquake, the palace complex has also provided safety and shelter to the people of Patan.

"Around the year, the open spaces of Patan Darbar Square serve as the stage for traditional jattras," points out Amatya, "so it is not just the temples but also the courtyards that make the Darbar Square."

Amatya worked alongside editor Sharareh Bajracharya and illustrator Suman Maharjan on the maps. Maharjan has extensive experience drawing picture books, and his general work features introspective themes and Nepali elements. Even adults find his vibrant illustrations interesting and informative.

The drawings balance faithful detail with a playful, cartoon-like style in depicting people and activities on the

Square. The booklets are printed in high-quality that do the drawings justice. It is also convenient for students to have a physical copy they can pick up at the Patan Museum.

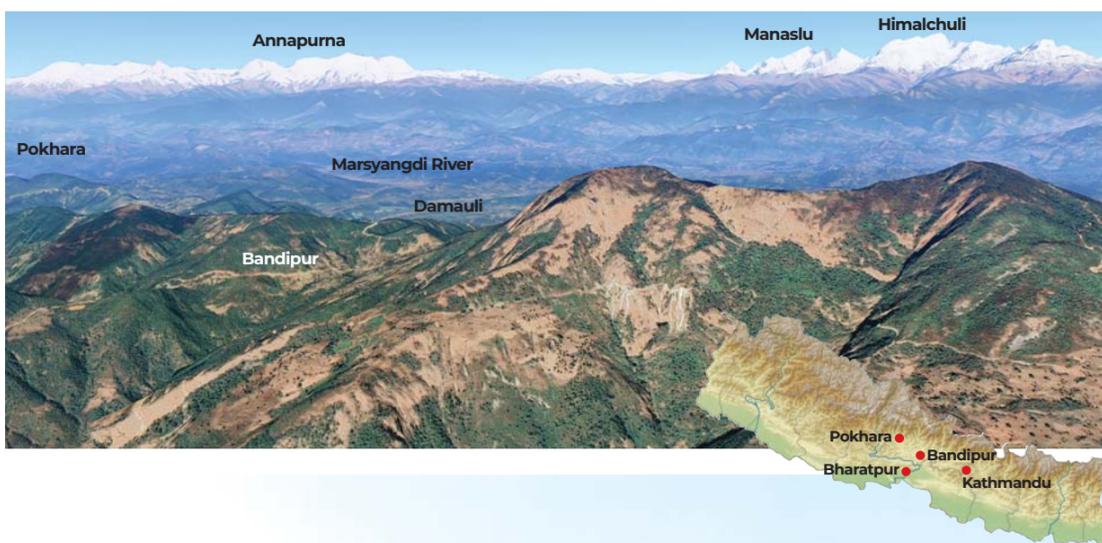
A lot of work goes into making each map and it all starts with Amatya's research. Being a local, he has been passed down a lot of first-hand knowledge and stories which he supplements with information from history books. He then chooses monuments and develops a narrative that fits a theme.

One theme of the latest map is about the layers of history in Patan Square. For example, the Keshav Narayan Chok hosts a Hindu god and also columns from when it was part of a Buddhist Vihar. There are Lichhavi-era stone columns and reminders of when the square was the seat of the Mallas. The domed roof structures come from post-earthquake Rana influences.

The project requires the writer, editor, and illustrator to work closely, and they have many conversations to decide what to include and what to leave out. "Rishi and I spent a lot of time walking around Darbar Square to get the drawings right," says Maharjan.

The effectiveness of the maps were obvious during a recent tour for students from Adarsha Kanya Niketan, a school adjacent to the museum. The Trust also provides transport for schools that come from further away. Amatya runs the tours, and is also training other guides. 🇳🇵

To book tours, contact Patan Museum or the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust.



WEWONDERWHY.COM

mela at Siddha Gufa. During Dasain, a similar mela is held in Pataleshwar Gufa on Ram Nawami.

Bandipur is also historically significant. Mani Mukundeshwari, Chandrakot, and Huslangkot Forts still stand in the town once ruled by the Sen dynasty. The ruins of Mani Mukunda's fort are still on a hillock nearby.

The Mani Mukunda Sen Wall (pictured right, below) which looks like and is known as the 'mini great wall,' at 1,100m was recently rebuilt to attract more visitors.

Like Kathmandu, Bandipur has its own Tundikhel which was used as a parade ground for the garrison here during the Rana regime. It is now a park from where visitors get a sweeping view of peaks from Dhaulagiri to the west to Langtang to the east and the sharp khukri-shaped icy ridge of Himalchuli straight ahead to the north.

Also visible across the Marsyangdi Valley is Gorkha, and the palace of the Shah kings, and with binoculars one can also see the historic Ligligkot Darbar, and Rainaskot village in Lamjung.

Inside Bandipur Bazar, one building in particular stands out. A fine, white structure designed by an architect from Kolkata, constructed by masons from Bhaktapur, and bankrolled by Chandragopal Pradhan in 1929. However, the Ranas thought the design of the building was a little too similar to that of their palaces. Pradhan was arrested and made to pay a fine for his audaciousness. The building is now one of

more than 70 heritage hotels in Bandipur. Most lodges are family-owned and is the main source of livelihood for locals.

The homestay culture really started in Bandipur 13 years ago with Chandeni Pipalthok Homestay, and its success inspired many others. Now, there are 12 homestays registered in the village, and four in the Bazar.

"They let you experience a culture authentically and the nearby villages of Korikha and Dharampani even have Gurung homestays," says Shanti Kunwar, "and to experience Magar hospitality, go to Ramkot."

After the pandemic Nepali visitors compensated for the lack of foreign tourists. But while domestic tourists tend to stay at homestays for one or two days, foreign tourists often stay much longer - some are there to research Bandipur's history and culture. Recently, the Gandaki Province made it mandatory for government officials to stay at homestays, on tour or on duty.

Bayberries काफल, raspberries ऐसेलु and millet pancakes कोदो को रोटी are part of the Bandipur diet in the summer, making for a stay that is delicious, healthy, and organically authentic.

Bandipur is now a five-hour drive from Kathmandu on the Prithvi Highway because of the bad roads. But with the tunnel and road upgrading, it should be a comfortable 2 hours soon.

Being halfway between Kathmandu and Pokhara makes Bandipur a perfect night-stop to recuperate from the rough road. It is a pleasant 30 minute steep uphill drive up hairpin bends from Damauli. 🇳🇵

EVENTS

**Art exhibition**

Featuring eminent artists of Bangladesh and Nepal, this painting exhibition shows the confluence of two countries and their shared social, cultural and civilisational backgrounds. 10 May, 11am-5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babermahal (01) 5318048

Bhajan Sanjh

Enter the realm of spiritual harmony and melodious rhythms this weekend. Indulge in experiencing the timeless traditional music. 11 May, 5pm onwards, Yagyashala Nepal, Thimi, 9812207651

**The Bet**

Based on the short story written by Russian writer and playwright Anton Chekhov, this play is about the discussion a banker and a lawyer have on death penalty and life imprisonment. Until 12 May, 5:30pm, Shilpee Theatre, Battisputali, 9749843632

From Heart to Art

Be part of this beginner friendly workshop on illustrating and zine making this weekend, and add something new and different to your skill sets this weekend. 11 May 10, 11am-2pm, Fee: Rs1,500, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Pulchowk

**Haat Bazaar**

This farmer's market at Bhanimandal will remind visitors of a traditional haat bazaar. Go get an experience with fresh produce to indulge at an affordable price. Tuesdays, 3pm-7pm, Bhanimandal basketball court

DINING

**Utopia**

Located away from the clamour of Jawalakhel's noisy streets, Utopia features Newa dishes, as well as French, Italian and other continental cuisines. Ekantakuna, 9849592412

MUSIC

Samir Shrestha

Sing along your favourite love songs from right beside your favourite person as Samir Shrestha & the Band take the stage this Friday. 10 May, Urlabari, Morang

**Rajesh Nepali**

Listen to Rajesh Nepali, whose music is a fusion of Himalayan traditional beats with modern western soul/rock singing. 11 May, 8pm onwards, Beers N' Cheers, Jhamsikhel

**Karma Band**

If you've grown up hearing the songs of Karma Band, this is your chance to indulge in some music-evoked nostalgia. 10 May, 8pm onwards, Club Platinum, Thamel, 9703260768

**Rota Prom Night**

Be a part of a night filled with music, dance and games. PanheloBatti Muni will also join the party. 10 May, 8pm onwards, Fee: Rs500 (General)/Rs900 (Couple), Fahrenheit Club, Thamel

Bahrasinghe Live Music

Immerse in Nepal's long forgotten traditional music with the Samundra band, who have been preserving the Gandharva community's music. 10 May, 7pm onwards, K Khaney, Jhamsikhel, 974-4385899

**Dip In Donuts**

At Dip In Donuts, let your eyes fall in love with each doughnut first, and then let its taste leave you craving for some more. Pimbahal, 9702600112/ 9851115976

Bungalow Bar and Kitchen

Get a taste of authentic Thai food at Bungalow Bar and Kitchen. Also try their asian-fusion dishes like the Pork Bamboo Shoot, Buff Lemon Grass and Fried Calamari, all with a side of refreshing cocktails. Naxal, Bhatbhateni, 9801068630

GETAWAYS

**Shivapuri Heights Cottage**

Shivapuri Heights Cottage is the ideal place for a weekend staycation. Enjoy healthy home cooked meals made with fresh locally grown ingredients. Budhanilkantha, 9846232271

Retreat at Damaar

Retreat at Damaar is a humble stay within the forestry of Kavre, perfect for those seeking peace of mind, scrumptious food and a home away from home. Bethanchowk, Kavre, 9851052442

**Dahlia Boutique Hotel**

A luxury hotel at the bank of Phewa Lake with panoramic mountain and city views, Dahlia Boutique Hotel is a good end to a memorable trek. Lakeside, Pokhara (061) 456505

Chhaimale Village Resort

Adorned with pear trees, the Resort Chhaimale Village Resort is the destination for anyone seeking to escape the madness of Kathmandu city without having to travel too far. Chhaimale (01) 4268121

**Peacock Guest House**

Housed in a World Heritage Site, this three-storied Newa-style building provides splendid views of the Dattatreya Square and the Bhimsenthana temple. Bhaktapur (01) 6611829

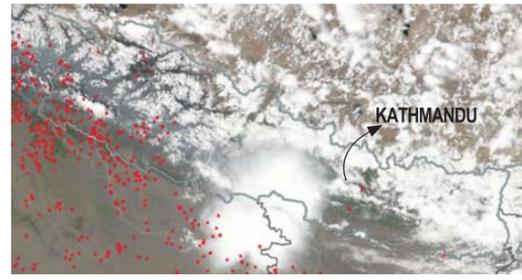
Cibo Bistro

With simple dishes and fresh ingredients, enjoy a wide variety of pastas, pizzas, sandwiches and mouth-watering desserts. Kid-friendly options are available as well. Pulchowk (01)5541940

**Kakori**

Discover celebrated flavours and recipes from Punjab and North India. Choose from a range of kebabs, biryanis and a variety of Indian breads and mouthwatering desserts from their revamped menu. Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal (01) 4273999

WEEKEND WEATHER

**Extinguisher**

This week's rain worked like a fire extinguisher dousing devastating forest fires all over the country. This NASA FIRMS satellite image on Thursday shows (left), there are still some wildfires smouldering in the west. These pre-monsoon showers are expected to continue over the weekend with moderate to heavy spells of rain at times accompanied by thundery activity across central Nepal. Afternoon storms will continue into next week, but will be less intense with snowfall down to 5,000m.

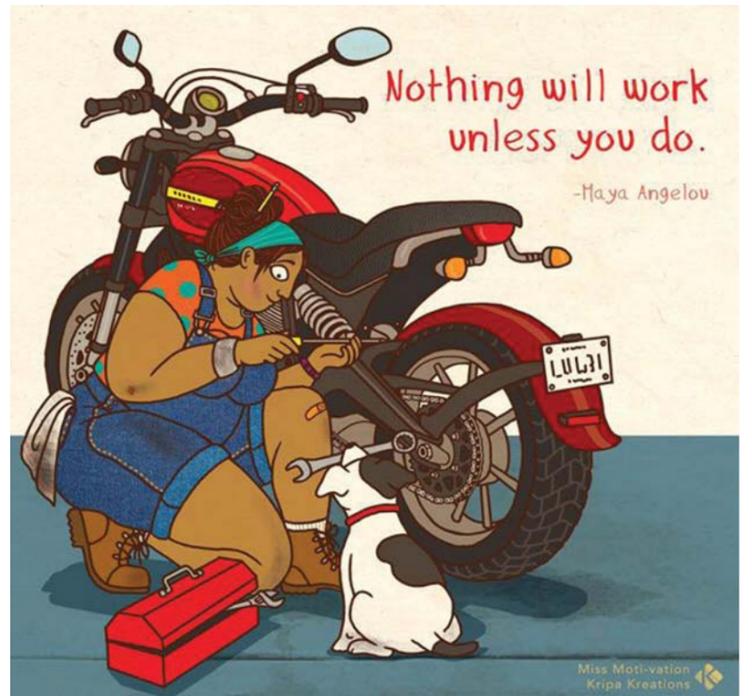
OUR PICK



Director Emma Seligman's 2023 satirical comedy Bottoms follows best friends PJ and Josie, who gain sudden popularity after they accidentally hit their high school's star quarterback with a car. In an attempt to maintain their newfound reputation and get closer to their cheerleader crushes, the two teenagers concoct a lie about having spent time in a juvenile correction facility over the summer, and start an after school self-defense club for women. Stars Rachel Sennott, Ayo Edebiri, Ruby Cruz, Havana Rose Liu, Kaia Gerber, and Nicholas Galitzine.

MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



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

From Goa to Thamel

The Goan Food Festival at Aloft is a culinary experience with Portuguese accent

The Goan Food Festival is a delicious experience, where seafood meets spices. There is a Portuguese influence ever-present in the food, reflecting Goa's history as a colony.

The second episode of the festival is happening 10-12 May at Aloft's in-house restaurant Nook in Thamel. The first session, from 3-5 May, hosted Chef Rhea Aaron (picture below, left), who owns and runs the Goan restaurant Klaa Kitchen in Bengaluru.

The decor in the lobby takes us straight down to this Portuguese enclave in the west coast of India. A boat with a fishing net is filled with the tropical fruit trio of pineapple, coconut and banana. Seafood and coconut are ubiquitous in the menu during this culinary extravaganza.

"While we have some signature vegetarian dishes, Goans love their meat," says Chef Aaron, who is making her way through the dining room passing out rissois, which are deep-fried bite-sized turnovers that are also popular in Portugal.

Goa was a colony of Portugal from 1505 to 1961 at a time when that sea-faring nation preceded other European powers in colonial conquest because of their mastery over maritime maps. One Goan city is named after Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama, who landed in India back in 1498.

These rissois have a crunchy exterior, are filled with either prawn or mushroom and served with balchao dip which is made from tamarind, tomatoes, and chillies. Accompanying them is a drink made from kokum and litchi. Kokum is a sour plant native to Goa



PHOTOS: ALOFT KATHMANDU THAMEL



and surrounding states. It is often used as a substitute for lemon. The drink is sour and sweet and vaguely similar to a Newa paun.

A grill has been set up outside on the balcony where diners can choose from a number of seafood options, including mackerel, pomfret, and trout. There is also snapper, lobster, prawn, and squid, all shipped into landlocked Nepal



from places like Vietnam.

The seafood is marinated in either a red or green paste. Aloft Executive Chef Rajeev Shrestha (picture above, right), who will run the festival this weekend, explains that the red marinade is called 'recheado' and gets its colour from peppers and kashmiri red chilli. The green masala is known as 'cafreal' and is made from green

chillies and coriander leaves.

To the left of the grill is a station that serves omelettes and the Indian bread roll pav, with a spicy gravy. This is a 'ross omelette' that Goans love for breakfast.

The plate from the grill is heaped with snapper, lobster, squid and prawns. The lobster is a little hard to get out of its shell but is well worth the effort. The squid has a chewy texture and a fleeting taste, and the prawns and snapper spring to life with lemon and tartar sauce.

While it is tempting to go back and place a second order there is a whole buffet left. Three out of the six excellent salads have meat: a chicken confit, a smoked trout, and a minced lamb. There is also a simple grated carrot relish that Goans have with meals.

Some of the buffet dishes are familiar, like Goan dal. There is a

pulao with chorizo, which is a pork sausage originating from the Iberian peninsula. The dishes are served in large, solid, vibrantly-coloured pots that are very hot. It is upon the diner to uncover the dish with great care, which adds to the experience

One dish that stands out is a creamy potato with coconut and onion, a satisfying combination of flavours. The Chorizo pulao is smoky and filling. There are also chicken dishes cooked in the marinades from earlier.

Most interesting is a crab dish called Crab Xec Xec, full of crab legs to be cracked with teeth for the meat.

The desserts are decadent and follow the theme: Pasteis de Nata, which is a Portuguese custard tart, and Serradura, a Portuguese 'sawdust' parfait. 🇮🇳

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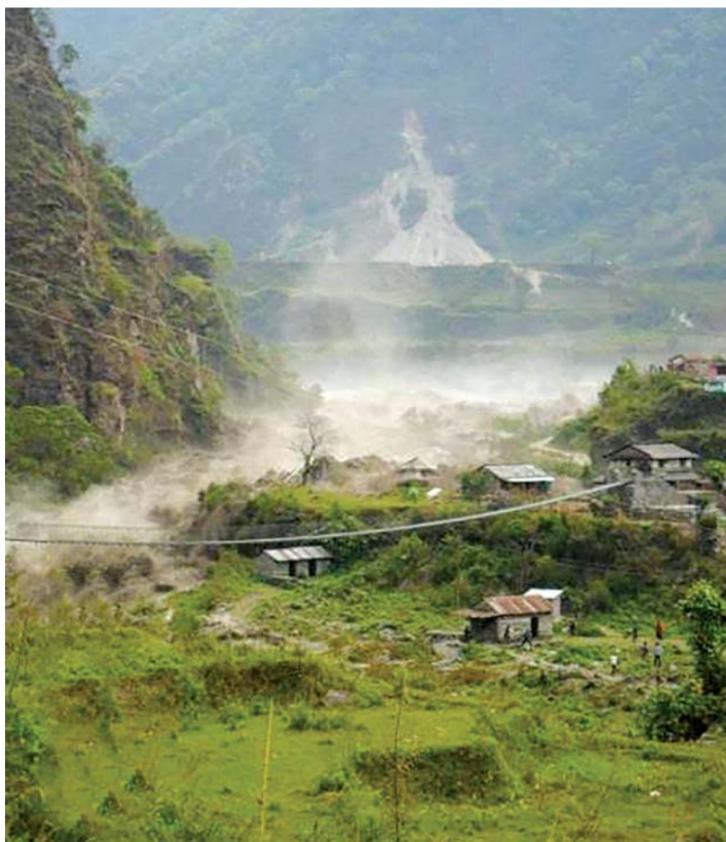
SIPRADI

REMEMBERING THE SETI DISASTER

12 years after the tragedy that killed 72 people, warnings that Pokhara is not prepared for another flood



Screenshot from video taken by remote camera of a plane piloted by Capt Alexander Maximov of Avia Club Nepal (right).



A photograph taken at 9:38AM on 5 May 2012 at the point where the Seti bursts into Pokhara Valley from its gorge.



- 1 At 9:10AM on 5 May 2012, a huge chunk of ice and rock breaks off the south ridge of Annapurna IV.
- 2 A remote camera on the wing of a sightseeing plane captures the dust cloud from the rockfall.
- 3 The debris fell 3,000m first into an ice shelf and then into a lake impounded by a smaller rockfall the previous week, preceded by an air blast that flattened trees down valley.
- 4 The Sabche Cirque contains eroded sediments from a possible collapse of Paleo-Annapurna IV 800 years ago.
- 5 The Seti gorge is hundreds of metres deep but only a few metres wide.
- 6 Possible location of impounded lake.
- 7 The combined force of the water and melted ice from the avalanche races downstream.
- 8 Kharapani



■ Durga Rana Magar in Kaski

It was a bright Saturday morning on 5 May 2012, and Capt Alexander Maximov of Avia Club was flying a tourist on a blue two-seater plane on a sightseeing flight of the Annapurnas.

Looking down at the Seti River, he noticed that the water was not its usual white. There was a wall of dark debris racing down the river trailed by a brown ribbon of floating logs. Maximov used to fly MiGs in the Soviet Air Force, and recognised it as a massive flash flood.

He radioed Pokhara tower, and the air traffic controller called up the security forces who immediately informed the city's FM stations. This early warning saved many lives, but 72 people were still killed 12 years ago this week in the Seti tragedy.

The plane had a remote video camera on its wingtip which had recorded the source of this flood: a massive rockfall near the summit of Annapurna IV that sent a

cloud of brown dust billowing up to the sky.

Scientists have since pieced together the sequence of events and found that ice and rock fell more than 5,000m causing a lake impounded in the Seti's canyon by a smaller rockfall the previous week to burst. This event set in motion a large debris flow 10m high racing down the river.

Geologists say the entire south face of the Annapurna massif is inherently unstable, so this was not the first flash flood to come down the rivers, and nor will it be the last. Climate breakdown may make such disasters even more frequent, with consequences for settlements and infrastructure downstream.

The latest study by geologist Narayan Gurung three years ago made a hazard map of the Seti in case a similar flood should happen again. The reason is that the 7,525m Annapurna IV is said to be the remnant of a 500m higher peak that collapsed probably during a mega earthquake in 1255CE.

Deposits of that mountain collapse trapped ice and water in the headwaters of the Seti called the Sabche Cirque, which periodically burst, unleashing a series of mega floods more than 100m high. Pokhara today is situated on the debris fan of that cataclysm that also blocked side rivers and created Phewa, Rupa, Begnas and other lakes.

Carbon dating of buried trees match historical records of a major earthquake in Nepal in 1255CE that also killed King Abhaya Malla of Kathmandu. Since then, there are geological signs of other major floods on the Seti, Madi, Mardi and Modi rivers that drain the southern flanks of Annapurna.

Scientists warn that future floods on the Seti pose a major risk to Pokhara city and reservoir projects like Tanahu Hydropower and Upper Seti that are under construction on the river.

"Another major earthquake in the region would easily mobilise the sediment in the Sabche Cirque and unleash another sudden flood," says geologist Krishna KC. "Pokhara must have a hazard map, and strictly enforce zoning laws."

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority has a district chapter in Kaski that has classified 10

DOWN AND OUT: Survivors at Kharapani. Only the elderly and children are left in the village.

of Pokhara's wards as well as Annapurna and Machapuchre rural municipalities being at high risk from floods and landslides. But urban pressure means that people are building houses in high risk areas along the Seti's terraces, and Pokhara metropolis has been unable to prevent it.

In the 2012 disaster, Pokhara's Annapurna FM was among the radio stations broadcasting urgent messages to people to move to higher ground. The station then worked with the government in search, rescue and relief.

"But we are not prepared for another disaster like this, in fact it could be worse next time because there are now more people living along the very river banks that were swept away 12 years ago," says Dipendra Shrestha of Annapurna FM.

The sheer west face of Annapurna IV is still highly unstable, and has constant rockfalls that block the Seti, of which the 2012 event was a particularly big one. Says Prithvi Narayan Campus geography professor Ramji Pokhrel: "The Seti is a permanent danger, we must be strict about allowing settlements along its banks. But that is not happening."

Climate breakdown makes the risk more real because of more frequent rockfalls, avalanches and extreme precipitation in the headwaters of the Seti. Geologist Krishna KC says all this does not mean that Pokhara is too dangerous to live in since there is no place on Earth that is without threat.

But he adds, "The idea is to minimise the threat, take measures to adapt to the risk factors."

It was Saturday, and downstream in Kharapani people were bathing in the hot springs, and washing laundry on the banks of the Seti. Many had not heard the warnings, or did not heed it.

Kharapani has been wiped off the map, and there is a memorial column here for those who died that day and those still missing. It is also a testimony to the tragedy that struck here 12 years ago, and a stark reminder that, given the topography of the Annapurnas, it is best to be prepared for another big flood.



PHOTOS: DURGA RANA MAGAR



Dilmaya Pun, who survived because of delays in cooking a meal.



Uttam Tamang who is still traumatised by what he saw 12 years ago as a boy.



Min Bahadur Bhujel's wife Rama Bhujel with a framed photo of her husband.



Kumari BK with a photograph of her 15-year-old son Anil who was swept away.

Lucky ones ...

The sun was shining that hot Saturday morning on 5 May twelve years ago, and families in the village of Sandal were on the banks of the Seti, bathing and washing. Children were swimming to cool off. The monsoon was more than a month away, and a flood was the last thing in the minds of people.

Sandal, 20km north of Pokhara, is a recent settlement, and the inhabitants are mostly from the Tamang and Magar communities. This is the last settlement along the Seti, upstream from here the gorge is narrow and wild.

Because they migrated here from outside, the inhabitants did not have inter-generational memory of floods, and the 11 households lived close to the river. Even 12 years after the deadly flood, Sandal still bears signs of the devastation with massive boulders strewn along the riverbed.

Dilmaya Pun runs an eatery, and food preparation was late that morning. Her customers were complaining, but it was this delay

that saved their lives.

"We were all preparing to go down to the river to volunteer in building a temporary log bridge, and if the food had arrived in time we would have been right there in the path of the flood," Dilmaya says.

A neighbour, Sanu Magar, still cannot believe her luck. "It was a weekend and the kids were joining the team putting together the bridge. Thank goodness the food was late."

The survivors remember the flood approaching with a thunderous roar in a wall of angry grey water that immediately swept away the logs for the bridge, corn fields and two houses. Dilmaya and Sanu gathered their children and ran to higher ground and watched their homes being washed away.

Relief agencies resettled them higher up at Khobang where they built small makeshift huts, and did odd jobs since the land there was not suitable for farming. But after four years, the fear subsided somewhat and they returned to Sandal. There is now a new metal suspension bridge, and better off residents have moved to Pokhara or gone abroad. Only the elderly and children are left.

In 2012, Uttam Tamang was 14 years old. He remembers watching in horror as the pasty sludge washed away the nearby market town of Kharapani. He says: "I will never forget that frightening day, it was just chance that saved me."

Since it was a holiday, he had walked from Sandal to the hot spring at Kharapani for a dip. He remembers some foreign tourists and many locals bathing in the sulphurous hot water. Suddenly, someone shouted "Flood (बाडी) coming!" But many heard "Tiger (बाघ) coming!" and thought it was a joke, but Uttam saw the wall of grey water approaching and ran back up the hill.

He was so traumatised that he was afraid even to go back to his home in Sandal, and went to live with relatives in Pokhara. He dropped out of school, and regrets not being in college by now.

"I am happy I survived, but the Seti took away my future, it took away everything," says Uttam, now 24.

During the monsoon, Sandal's families move together to higher ground in Khobang, but even there the Upper Seti hydropower is digging a tunnel and the dynamite blasts shake the whole area.

... and not so lucky

Twelve years ago, Kharapani was becoming a popular destination for visitors drawn by the hot spring. But in a matter of minutes that Saturday morning the entire market town was swept away. Of the 72 who perished that day, 69 were from Kharapani — three of them Ukrainian tourists.

Min Bahadur Bhujel worked as a labourer for a construction contractor at the Bhujrung Khola confluence upstream from Kharapani. His wife Rama and daughter Dipa had tried to convince him not to go to work that day because it was time to plant corn. "I'll go, at least I will earn some money," Min Bahadur had said. His family never saw him again.

Dipa is now 28 and married, her brother is 23 and works as a driver. Both dropped out of school. For Rama, her children are now her only hope. She looks at a framed photo of her husband and says, "All I have now is this picture of him."

Kumari BK also has a framed photo of her son, Anil who at age 15 was already aware of his responsibility towards his family. He worried about the hardship his

mother faced raising her children.

Anil saw no reason to go to school regularly. That Saturday he had gone down to the river to crush stones. "He went to earn a little daily wage so he could take care of us, but he left us for good," Kumari says. "By now he would have been earning enough to take care of us."

Even more than the bereavement of the families of those killed that day is the unending grief of the families of those whose bodies were never found. They know their relatives are gone, but there is still a sliver of hope.

Gopal Tamrakar, then 71, his son, and daughter-in-law owned a shop in Kharapani. That day, Gopal had come to meet his son Kalyan briefly, and headed down to the market. That was the last the family saw of Gopal. Now there is only a photo on Kalyan's mobile phone.

Kalyan's brother was also caught in the flood. He held on tightly to his wife, Basundhara, and daughter, but the force of the water took his wife away, and her body was never found. Kalyan's brother has not been the same since. 🇳🇵



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