

standard chartered



AAA

ISSUER RATING BY ICRA [NEPAL]

► Nepal's safest bank. Five times in a row. ◀



20th

Outsource Your Non-Core Staff Through Suvridha Staffing

Licensed Company by DOL, MOLESS
ISO 9001:2015 Certified
100% Statutory Compliance

+977- 9851247213
www.suvidhasewa.com.np



zen garden

Available at SalesBerry



New Orleans Cafe

THAMEL: 01-4700736



#1 in the world

eScan Anti-Virus

TOTAL PROTECTION for Computers, Mobiles & Tablets

An ISO 27001 Certified Company

Contact no.: 01-4330980

www.escanav.com



SUMAN NEPALI

Uncooperative politics

Nepal's politics is once again in disarray in the run up to the new budget, signalling a deepening crisis as Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's coalition and opposition Nepali Congress (NC) duel over Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane of the RSP.

Lamichhane's alleged role in the cooperatives scam has been given relentless front page coverage in Kantipur. During his first stint as Home Minister last year, Lamichhane was embroiled in a controversy over his US citizenship. Back as minister, he is using his position to go after Kantipur publisher Kailash Sirohiya over a citizenship charge.

What gives Lamichhane such power is that his RSP is a kingmaker party, and the current coalition needs its support to remain in power. Prime Minister Dahal does not seem to have opposed publisher Sirohiya's arrest on Tuesday (pictured) after a warrant by Dhanusha District Court for having multiple citizenships. Sirohiya said that his arrest was

instigated by Lamichhane as revenge on Kantipur for exposing the minister's reported role in the cooperatives scam.

Editors and civil society have expressed concern over the manner of Sirohiya's arrest after he was directly detained just on a complaint. Nepal's public sphere is also abuzz about how Lamichhane himself was never arrested for revelations about his own US citizenship last year.

Lamichhane's supporters praised him for 'holding the rich and powerful to account', and accused Kantipur of being a mouthpiece of politicians.

Editors of Nepal's mainstream media wrote to PM Dahal on Wednesday, stating that Sirohiya's arrest was driven by political vendetta and intended to put pressure on the press and silence criticism. Nepal's opposition politicians, press institutions, as well as the US Embassy in Kathmandu censured the decision to detain Nepal's most prominent publisher, calling it anti-democratic

and an attack on press freedom.

'We expect that as Nepal continues to shape its hard-won democracy, the Government and the people of Nepal also have a meaningful dialogue about how to ensure good governance, freedom of the press and people's fundamental rights,' the US Embassy X'ed.

The RSP responded justifying Sirohiya's detention. 'An investigation that has sufficient grounds and the permission of the court is not a violation of the freedom of the press,' a party statement read.

Many analysts do not buy that argument, saying it shows Lamichhane is thin skinned and could not stomach press exposés about his alleged involvement of cheating depositors. Although a former tv anchor himself, Lamichhane has lashed out at the 'dirty dozen' in the media.

Politicians in Dahal's own coalition have also criticised the handling by the government of Sirohiya's citizenship issue. "Arresting Sirohiya on

the basis of whether or not he is a citizen of Nepal is highly condemnable," said CPN-Unified Socialist chair Madhav Kumar Nepal, "the discrepancy in his citizenship documents is not his fault but of the administration that issued them."

Sirohiya's arrest has now deepened further the political chasm between the opposition NC and Rabi Lamichhane. The NC had finally allowed Lamichhane to speak to Parliament on Monday to defend himself. The main parties finally agreed to form a cross party parliamentary committee to investigate the cooperatives scam case, but have not decided on its terms of reference.

Disruptions in the legislature come as the Finance Minister is set to introduce the new budget in Parliament next week. If the NC obstruction continues, the budget may have to be passed through ordinance. There are no clear winners in this game, but the RSP's image of being an independent and alternative party has been tarnished. Its technocratic members are on the defensive, and say privately they have been forced to put their leader above party.  **Shristi Karki**

Mountaineering
rundup
PAGE 6-7

summer
solstice

As summer arrives, it beckons the perfect moment to indulge in the elegance of lightweight Natureknit cashmere and silk. Envelop yourself in the unparalleled softness and luxury of our finest garments, meticulously crafted to enhance your experience.



NATUREKNIT
CASHMERE REDEFINED

Protests of despair

These are crazy times. Biblical disturbances in nature, such as the repeated torrential rain in Dubai or the mass fish die-off in Vietnam's overheated reservoir, seem to mirror our overheated politics and social environment.

At such moments, it is crucial to keep a cool head and analyse all the weird phenomena as closely, objectively, and dispassionately as possible. And few phenomena nowadays are weirder than the protests surrounding Israel's bombardment and invasion of Gaza in response to Hamas's terrorist attack last October.

We should acknowledge the rhetoric from some politicised Muslims, such as those who recently demonstrated in Hamburg, Germany, chanting "Kalifat ist die Lösung" ("Caliphate is the solution"). And we should concede that, despite the massive presence of Jews among the protesters, there are at least a few true anti-Semites among them (just as there are some genocidal maniacs in Israel).

While many commentators have noted the parallel between today's pro-Palestinian demonstrations and the 1968 student protests against the Vietnam War, the Italian

month, 12 US senators sent a letter to the International Criminal Court threatening it with sanctions should it decide to issue an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Although this was strictly a Republican undertaking, President Joe Biden's administration also has pressured the ICC not to charge Israeli officials over war crimes committed in Gaza. Such threats signal nothing less than the demise of shared global values. Then on 4 May, France (complying with a German-issued visa ban) denied entry to Ghassan Abu-Sitta, a British-Palestinian surgeon who was scheduled to provide testimony to the French Senate on what he had witnessed while treating victims of the war in Gaza. With such crude acts of censorship and marginalisation happening before our eyes, it is no longer an exaggeration to say that our democracies are crumbling.

One way to help break the impasse in Gaza is to offer public support for the student protests. Let the images from Gaza speak for themselves. See the starving people in packed improvised tents, the children slowly dying as Israeli missile and drone strikes continue to reduce buildings to ruins, then to rubble, and then to dust.

What should the Biden administration do (aside from replacing Vice President Kamala Harris with Taylor Swift on this year's ticket)? For starters, the US can join the global initiative to recognise Palestine as a state.

Far from being an obstacle to peace in the Middle East, Palestinian statehood is a precondition for

any serious negotiations between the two sides. By contrast, rejecting (or endlessly postponing) such recognition will inevitably support the fatalistic conclusion that war is the only option.

Strange as it may sound, we are witnessing one of the downsides of America's loss of hegemonic power, as was also the case with the US withdrawal from northern Syria and then Afghanistan. Ideally, the US would simply invade Gaza from the sea, re-establish peace and order, and provide the population with humanitarian assistance.

But don't count on it. One can always rely on the US to miss an opportunity to deploy its remaining imperial power for a good cause.

© Project Syndicate

Slavoj Žižek, Professor of Philosophy at the European Graduate School, is International Director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities at the University of London and the author, most recently, of *Christian Atheism: How to Be a Real Materialist* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).



WIKIPEDIA

Ongoing pro-Palestinian student protests point to a wider sense of despair with the state of the planet

philosopher Franco Berardi points to an important difference. Rhetorically, at least, the 1968 protesters explicitly identified with the anti-imperialist Viet Cong position and a broader, positive socialist project, whereas today's protesters very rarely identify with Hamas, and instead are 'identifying with despair'.

As Berardi puts it: 'Despair is the psychological and also cultural trait that explains the wide identification of young people with the Palestinians. I think that the majority of the students today are consciously or unconsciously expecting the irreversible worsening of the conditions of life, irreversible climate change, a long-lasting period of war, and the looming danger of a nuclear precipitation of the conflicts that are underway in many points of the geopolitical map.'

It would be difficult to explain the situation any better than that. The authorities' obscenely repressive response to the protests supports Berardi's hypothesis. The harsh crackdowns are not motivated by any fear that the protests will launch a new political movement. Rather, they are expressions of panic – a futile refusal to confront the despair that pervades our societies.

Signs of this panic are everywhere. Last

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

A Royal Decree

Twenty years ago this week, our front page story delved into King Gyanendra's deep personal distrust of the political parties and what could be the possible outcome of this standoff. Unbeknownst to us all, he would go on to appoint Sher Bahadur Deuba as the prime minister one more time only to strip him of his position and declare him incompetent, ban all political parties and pull off a coup on 1 February 2005.

Now, after all these years, there is a call for the return of the same king by monarchists. Excerpts of a report published on issue #197 21-27 May 2004:

Suspicion holds the populace in limbo even as the polity dips into a tailspin: the economy, state activity and development work lie in tatters. The major road arteries are blocked, Kathmandu Valley and the business centres are cut off and the army and Maoists prepare for a confrontation that will extend far beyond the coming monsoon.

The political solution that could provide a nikas with the insurgents, which can only come from an all-party government coupled with the revival of the parliament,



seems to be remote as the king keeps the parties at arm's length.

The origin of the royal distrust is unclear, but it is obvious that King Gyanendra regards the parties as dens of venal politicians, both corrupt and inept. This belief jives with the conviction of certain sections of Kathmandu society, that the politicians ran the country to the ground after 1990.

Is the king focussing on well-publicised malfeasance of a few to tar the rank and file of the political parties?

Whether there was failure of democracy under parliamentary rule remains a matter for debate and not the basis on which an unelected entity can take decisions for the people. In the sliding scale of corruption and mal-governance, the politicians are asking where the parties stand in relation to the three-decade-long Panchayat system, as well as the 19 months of the king's rule-by-nomination (during which period there has been no accounting of public expenditure).

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

ONLINE PACKAGES



SWEET HERITAGE

The Shree Nanda Mithai Bhandar, a 150-year-old traditional sweet shop in Patan Darbar Square has survived earthquakes, upheavals and epidemics. Watch the fourth-generation Rajkarnikars and hear them talk about continuing their culinary heritage on our YouTube channel.



TOON TALK

Abin Shrestha started out as a cartoonist in 1993. Today, his editorial and single-column gag cartoons in Kantipur are widely recognisable, with their characteristic geometric political figures, sharp, witty one-liners, and his unique signature. Watch this video on Nepali Times' YouTube channel and subscribe for more original multimedia content.

LIFE EXPECTANCY

A few years ago, Nepal was one of only a few countries in the world where women had lower life expectancies than men (71.3, Editorial, #1212). It's good that that has now changed and is similar to most other countries.

Santosh Aryal

■ Nepal, despite existing in a difficult neighbourhood and having governments of varying standards, is moving forward with small steps at a time—particularly developing its tourism sector, healthcare, education, green energy, and women's rights. Infrastructure is probably the biggest issue now.

Markoju

MUSTANG

I was crossing a dry gully in Lo Manthang in the early 90s when an unexpected and forceful torrent of water rushed in front of me ('What is lost cannot be repaid', Wen Stephenson, #1212). My colleague said this was a routine occurrence. Of course, some flash floods are much more dangerous in or near inhabited areas. If people build in such flash flood prone lands and without adequate precautionary measures, the damage will continue. If local and governments permit construction, especially of critical facilities such as health centres, it should mandate location, type of construction, size, protective barriers, etc. But as we see around the world, even the best plans can be nullified with climatic change.

Iván G. Somlai

NEPAL & UK

The Nepal government should reconsider import restrictions it imposes on those who want to help the people with relief goods ('Sunak pledges more support for Nepal', nepalitimes.com). It is unacceptable that these have been at customs for more than two years and cannot be brought to those who urgently need them.

Sigrid Rohrer

JOURNALISTS AWARDED

Congratulations to all the journalists for the Barbara Investigative Journalism Awards. Amazing journalism that promote public accountability.

Bishow Parajuli

1,000 WORDS



UNITED COMMUNISTS: Pushpa Kamal Dahal with coalition partner K P Oli of UML after winning his fourth confidence motion in Parliament on Monday.



Nepali Times on Facebook
Follow @nepalitimes on Twitter
Follow @nepalitimes on Instagram

Editor Online: Sahina Shrestha Executive Editor: Sonia Awale Layout: Kiran Maharjan

Publisher: Kunda Dixit, Himalmedia Pvt Ltd | Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu

editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | www.himalmedia.com | Tel: +977 1 5005601-08 Fax: +977 1 5005518



Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING



Art and poetry in motion

by Shristi Karki

Colourful art and messages behind long-haul trucks and other public transport on Nepal's roads represent art and literature in motion, an outlet for their drivers and owners. Visit Siddhartha Art Gallery for the exhibit and read the review on page 12.



Most reached and shared on Facebook

Soon, monsoon

by Anita Bhetwal

Nearly one year after the August 2023 flash flood, Kagbeni is still in ruins and is bracing for another rainy season. The Mustang region has had successive snowless winters but experienced heavy monsoon downpours most characteristic of the southern foothills. Details on our website.



Most popular on X

71.3

Editorial

Sixty years ago, the average lifespan of Nepalis was only 28 years. It has now risen to 71.3 mainly due to a sharp decline in infant and child mortality rates, and improvements in health care and nutrition. Join the online discussion.



Most commented

Muktikot waiting for liberation

by Dhanu Bishwakarma

Two decades after Maoists promised prosperity, the only thing that has changed for the nearly 2,300 Dalits in Bajura's Muktikot is the name of their village. Visit nepalitimes.com for the full story.



Most visited online page

QUOTES



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Sixty years ago, the average lifespan of Nepalis was only 28 years. It has now risen to 71.3. How did this happen, despite poor governance, conflict and the upheavals of the past decade in the country?



Rita Thapa @bheribas

Despite suffering centuries of feudalism, poverty, illiteracy, & decade long internal conflict, Nepal's health gains & TRR reduction since '60s stand exemplary globally! Agreed that health is the outcome of several socio-economic factors. But evidence also shows that unless some proven basic primary health care are accessible at population level in continuum for a long time, such incredible health gains are not possible. Thanks to Nepal's Primary Health Care system reaching every ward through a network of more than 50,000 FCHVs for decades.



Sanjeevani @Sanjeev53104120

It has happened all over the world. Nepal is no exception.

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

A PERFECT MOMENT TO RELAX

Connect to peace and have a rest on
our fully reclining seats.



TURKISH AIRLINES

01-4538363 | 4538436 | ktmsales@thy.com

Products and services are subject to change depending on flight duration and aircraft.

Saving Lumbini's Sarus

Sacred cranes decline as urbanisation destroys their habitat at the Buddha's birthplace on his birthday



PHOTOS: DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION NEPAL

■ Maheshwor Acharya

Sarus cranes hold a unique place among all the other species of birds found in Nepal, owing to their legendary connection with Lord Buddha in his birthplace of Lumbini. Buddha Purnima this year was on 23 May.

It is believed that Prince Siddhartha was strolling in the palace garden one day when he came across a wounded crane. As he was taking the arrow out, his cousin Devdatta, who had shot the bird, demanded it back. Unable to establish who the rightful owner was, the two went to King

Suddhodhan who then declared that the bird belonged to the one who saved its life.

The bird mentioned in Buddhist scriptures is said to be the Sarus crane found in Lumbini and the wetlands of the Tarai plains of Nepal, which have possibly been living here for millennia.

The Sarus crane's cultural importance has been recognised by the local municipality which regards the bird as its mascot. But rapid urban spread in this part of Nepal has resulted in the destruction of its habitat.

A 2023 study by Nepal Zoological Society and Tribhuvan University's Central Department of

Biology funded by the International Crane Foundation and the World Wildlife Fund puts the population of these monogamous birds at only 690 in Nepal. Lead researcher ornithologist Hem Katuwal warns that cranes and other bird species could disappear from the Nepal Tarai if conservation measures are not urgently undertaken.

Among the 15 species of cranes found globally, Nepal is home to four, the Sarus (*Antigone antigone*), Karyangkung (*Demoiselle Crane*), Laxman (Common Crane), and Kalikantha (Black-necked crane). The Demoiselle, Common Crane, and Black-necked crane are migratory birds, flying down from the Tibetan Plateau across the Himalayan mountains to the plains of Nepal and India in winter. But

the Sarus prefers to stay put.

Like other wildlife, the survival of the Sarus depends on the availability of water in rivers, lakes and wetlands. But water is drying up due to over-extraction, pollution, invasive species and weather extremes caused by the climate crisis.

A dedicated Crane Conservation Area has been formed within the Lumbini enclave due to its sacred connection to the Buddha. Although wetlands are important, cranes tend to breed in open fields and avoid forests. The region has now been declared an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International.

Increasing construction activity in the Lumbini region worried researchers who felt it would lead to further habitat destruction and

water scarcity.

Another threat to cranes and other birds is the changing agriculture practice of burning harvest residue which reduces the availability of insects which are already impacted by pesticide use. Electric transmission lines also pose a threat, and at least 42 cranes have been killed in the past 12 years after colliding with wires. Stray dogs and people stealing eggs also pose additional danger.

As the habitat of cranes spans the Nepal-India border, many cranes fly back and forth, which points to a need for a trans-boundary conservation campaign by tagging birds to track their movement.

The local perception of cranes is largely positive with most residents regarding the presence of the birds in their fields as an auspicious sign. However, the Nepal Tarai is now home to more than half of Nepal's population and there is increasing migration of people from the mountains who may not share the same veneration for cranes.

Cranes are the world's tallest birds that can fly, and the Sarus stand 2m high and can be 3m wide when they spread their wings. They are light brown in colour and have red patches on the head and neck, with pink legs.

Cranes weigh from 6-12kgs and are omnivorous. They breed during monsoon and build their nests near wetlands and in fields with grass, roots, and stems of giant reeds.

Usually, they hatch one to two eggs in one nest. Both male and female cranes sit upon the eggs for 30 to 32 days and then hatch the eggs. They have been known to have a lifespan of 40 years in captivity.

The arrival of cranes indicates rain, and rice planting time. They are regarded as symbols of love because of their conjugal habit. 🇳🇵



Turkish to Kabul

Turkish Airlines has restarted flights to Kabul, and there will be four flights a week to the Afghan capital on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays from Istanbul. Round trip fares are available from Istanbul to Kabul starting from \$805 including taxes. The Turkish flag carrier also recently held the 'Connect to Türkiye' event in Istanbul, hosting hundreds of agents from around the world between 13-16 May with an aim of bringing 10 million tourists to the country.



The carrier is also marking its 91st anniversary by commissioning a handcrafted sculpture of the Curtiss King Bird D2 aircraft that launched the airline in 1933. The 'Wings of Türkiye' sculpture by Selçuk Yılmaz is of a reconstructed aircraft. Turkish Airlines and the World Tourism Organisation signed an MoU in Madrid to work closely on sustainable tourism and civil aviation initiatives.

Viber SOC Certified

Rakuten Viber earned SOC 2 Type 2 certifications for ensuring the safety of customer data. The company has implemented several measures on their messaging app to ensure information security, such as end-to-end encryption for chats and calls.



Climate meet

More than 200 delegates from 25 mountain countries concluded a two-day International Dialogue on Mountains, People and Climate from 22-23 May at Chandragiri Hills. Among the attendees were ministers from Bhutan, Bangladesh and scientists from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).



Ncell 'Sadhain On'

Ncell has launched 'Sadhain On' new data packs that will enable customers to leave mobile data on, targeting individuals who increasingly need their phones to commute and purchase. The plans range from Rs99 per week to Rs1,499 per month.

WB and GBV

The government and World Bank have launched a \$4.6 million project to strengthen response to gender-based violence. The three-year project aims to benefit 49,000 women and girls who have experienced violence and will provide them with legal aid, psychosocial counseling, and medical support in six municipalities in Kosi and Lumbini provinces.



BYD through IME

Global IME reached an agreement with BYD dealer Cimex to provide easy financing for EVs. The bank will give loans to qualifying customers within three business days. IME separately runs a 'Green Financing' program to provide low-interest EV loans.

Samsung Galaxy M15 5G

Samsung has launched the Galaxy M15 5G smartphone with a 'Super AMOLED Plus' display, a 6000mAh battery, and a 50MP triple camera. The model comes in Blue Topaz or Stone Grey and starts at Rs25,999, with financing options also available at stores across the country.



Laxmi Hyundai

Laxmi Motor held a media day at the Hyundai Assembly Plant in Ramagram, Parasi during which media representatives toured the facility and test drove the Hyundai Venue SUV, assembled on-site.

Sunak on Nepal-UK ties

During an event at 10 Downing Street this week to celebrate 100 years of the Nepal-Britain Treaty of Friendship signed in 1923, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak committed to helping Nepal to adapt to the climate crisis, enhance trade, investment and economic relations. Queen Elizabeth II, King Charles and Prince Harry have all visited Nepal multiple times, but no British prime minister has ever come to Nepal.

EV imports up

A total of 1,404 electric vehicles were imported in April-May this year which is more than double compared to the month before when only 658 were imported. The figure for the same time period last year was much less. The surge is due to an expected increase in taxes of electric vehicles in the upcoming budget to be announced 28 May.

How to win Nepal's first Olympic medal

With the Paris 2024 Summer Games two months away, is there a chance?

■ Vishad Raj Onta

Nepal has not won a single official medal ever at the Olympics. With the Paris 2024 Summer Games two months away, how might Nepal win its first bronze? Or silver, or even gold?

Technically, there are two Nepalis who have won medals at the Olympics. The first is mountaineer Tejbir Bura, awarded a gold during the 1924 Winter Olympics for his part in the 1922 British Mount Everest expedition. However, this was a joint honour given to a team of many nationalities.

The second was martial artist Bidhan Lama, who won a bronze in Taekwondo at the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics. However, this did not count as an official medal because taekwondo was only a demonstration sport back then.

Demonstration sports were unofficial events at the Olympics before 1992. They were included to promote sports popular in the host country. Baseball, for example, was a demo sport at the 1984 Los Angeles games. Calling them 'demonstration sports' is misleading, as the athletes were certainly competing to win.

There was another bronze awardee in Lama's event, Enrique Torroella Sánchez from Mexico. Even today, some sports give bronze medals to both losing semi-finalists.

While Bura and Lama's medals are significant achievements, the fact remains that Nepal has zero official Olympic medals.

To be fair, we have company. Seventy-one other countries, including Bangladesh and Cambodia, have never won a medal either.

To some governments, job creation, providing basic needs and economic development are higher priorities than achievement in sport.

"Doing well at the Olympics is all about how much you can invest. Sports is a business," explains Chaturananda Raj Vaidya, vice president of the Nepal Olympic Committee. "Equipment, coaching, venues, diet, family structure all need to be correct to develop a medal-winning athlete."

The countries that have been the most successful at the Olympics are the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France and



Germany. All are countries that have historically had the resources to pour into sports development. The US is the overwhelming leader in total medals.

"Countries like China and South Korea have started doing better because their economies got stronger, and India is going to start winning more too," says Vaidya.

Economic prosperity and investment are the obvious answers. But this seems some ways away for Nepal. However, it might still be possible for a Nepali athlete to somehow win their first medal.

The aim now cannot be 16 golds. Before that can happen, Nepal must win its first bronze, which is a lot better than zero. It clearly not easy to do, but Nepal can take inspiration from three types of countries:

1. Countries that have just one or two medals at the games. These likely face a lot of the same problems Nepal does, but have already won that elusive first medal.
2. Countries with small populations that still do disproportionately well at the Olympics.
3. Countries that share a lot of the culture, topography, problems and genetics with Nepal. If they have won, how have they done it?

Countries that have only one medal include Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guatemala and Iraq. Most singular medals are in individual sports such as athletics, martial arts, weightlifting, and sailing. The exceptions are Paraguay's silver for men's football in 2004, and Montenegro's silver for women's handball in 2012. Athletics include the 20km walk, marathon and 400m hurdles. The martial arts are boxing and taekwondo. The medal in taekwondo is for Gabon.

In two medal countries, athletics and combat sports still feature highly. These countries have won in triathlon, wrestling, judo, swimming and shooting.

One interesting case is Afghanistan, a war-torn South Asian country that has won two bronzes in Taekwondo by the same person, Rohullah Nikpai, at the 2008 and 2012 Olympics.

These are clearly not athletes who were produced by strong, established systems because there is only one or two of them in their countries. They are outliers who have succeeded despite the system and not because of it.

There is probably genetic luck, circumstance, family, and childhood at play in some of these cases, but they do show that struggling countries can still win a medal. Also, sport investment

should focus on individual sports to make that first podium happen faster.

Countries with small populations that produce exceptional results must have excellent systems to develop athletes, like Hungary, Netherlands, Romania, and Cuba. Hungary, with a third of Nepal's population, is ninth on the summer Olympics' all time list with 511 medals.

The Olympics must become a part of the country's culture, and to have many athletes pursuing sports wholeheartedly, there needs to be honor, money and security in doing so. It needs to become a credible career path.

One thing the four smaller high performing countries have in common is doing uniquely well in some sports. For Hungary it is fencing, although they also lead total medals in pentathlon and water polo. The Netherlands excel at cycling, Romania at gymnastics, and Cuba at boxing.

This outsized return must be the result of some combination of focused investment from the governments and the presence of exceptional coaches who established systems to develop medal winning athletes.

The lesson is that even as economic progress increases,

Nepal should focus on one particular sport.

Maldives, Bhutan and Bangladesh do not have any medals either. Sri Lanka has two silvers in athletics. Pakistan has ten, of which eight are in field hockey. India has 35.

Like Pakistan, India has done well at field hockey but its individual golds are interesting. One of them is in shooting, and the other was in Tokyo 2021 in javelin. Winner Neeraj Chopra trained for many years in India, before going abroad to polish his skills in Germany, Sweden and Turkey under the best coaches.

That could be another path to the first Nepali medal. A Nepali passport holder who is able to access high quality training abroad could work around the problem of a lack of infrastructure in Nepal.

Perhaps one path to the first medal is mountain biking, especially if races like Enduro Ratnange get Nepali kids to start biking at early ages.

Nepalis have been successful at trail running of late. Ultra-runner Sunmaya Budha recently beat the world number two in a 70km race in China. The problem is that trail running is not currently in the Olympics, although it was a sport 100 years ago, when the Olympics venue was also Paris.

With breakdancing now an official sport, surely there is an argument for trail running.

Last month, British runners finished running 455km, from London to Paris, to campaign for the inclusion of the sport.

There are different possibilities of winning at the Winter Olympics too. A lot fewer countries take part, and Nepal has the snow and terrain for athletes to practice winter sports year round.

"To make a winter Olympics medal a reality, it is necessary to have high quality training facilities," says Vaidya. "In the west, countries have skiing camps with air lifts solely used by athletes who can spend a lot of training time on the slopes."

So far, five athletes have been finalised to represent Nepal at the Paris 2024 summer games. They are Prince Dahal for badminton, Santoshi Shrestha for long distance running, Santoo Shrestha for table tennis, and Alex Shah and Duana Lama for swimming. 🇳🇵



SalesBerry



MG COMET EV PACE

BUMPER PRIZE



SEGWAY NINEBOT E 100

1st Prize



SAMSUNG LED TV-40INCH

2nd Prize



MILUX ELECTRIC OVEN

3rd Prize



TOSHIBA HOT POT

6th Prize



MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC FAN

4th Prize



PENSONIC ELECTRIC PRESSURE COOKER

5th Prize

SPEND Rs. 2,000. BE THE LUCKY WINNER

CAMPAIGN DURATION: BAISAKH 21, 2081 TO SHRAWAN 20, 2081

LUCKY DRAW WILL BE ON SHRAWAN 26, 2081

OFFER VALID IN ALL SALESBERRY STORE

Peak season in the Nepal Himalaya

Everest expeditions cope with a narrow weather window as pre-monsoon storms lash the mountains

■ Vishad Raj Onta

It is currently summit week on Everest, with strong pre-monsoon storms lashing the world's highest mountain. Climbers and their Nepali guides alike are making their way up the mountain in the hundreds.

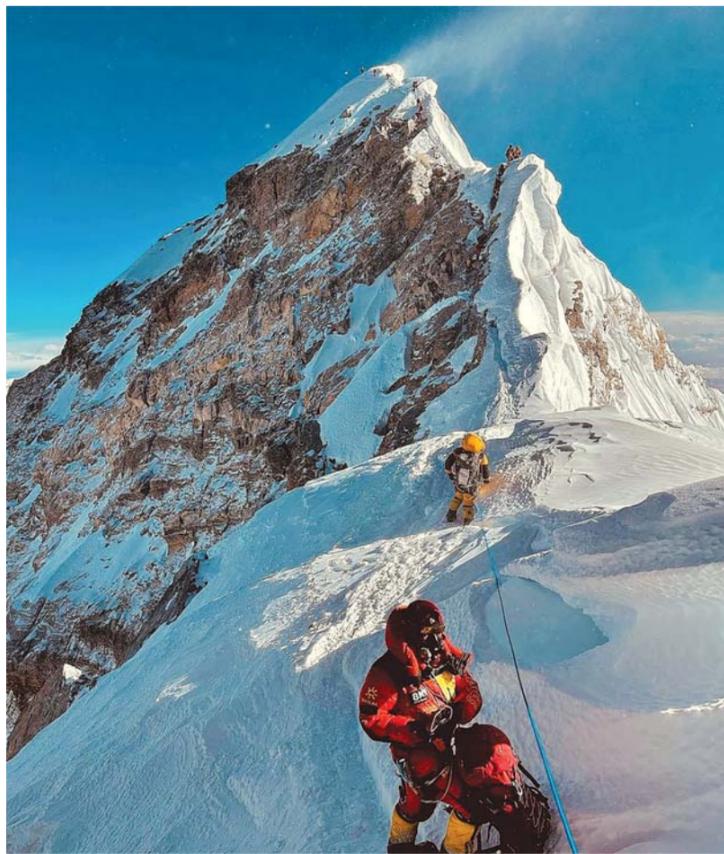
Although there have not been traffic jams seen in previous years, there could still be bottlenecks on the southeast ridge during weather windows on the last week of climbing in May. And now there is a cyclone heading towards the Bay of Bengal right before the end of the spring season. There have been some first ascents, ultramarathons, rescues and even wingsuit dives planned off Lhotse.

"When summits happen is absolutely dependent on the weather windows," explains Khim Lal Gautam, Chief Survey Officer at Everest Base Camp, who has summited the mountain twice.

Spring 2024 has seen fewer summits on Everest than previous years, but there have been some notable alpine style climbs on other Himalayan peaks with no bottled oxygen or Sherpa support.

Even as the climbing season draws to a close, came word that Apple's Tenzing Norgay biopic is set to star Willem Dafoe as John Hunt and Tom Hiddleston as Edmund Hillary. Tenzing's character has yet to be cast.

China has opened its side of the peak for the first time since 2021, although it has kept Cho Oyu and Shishapangma closed. In comparison to the Nepal side, the northeast ridge on Everest is usually less crowded, is open till mid-June and attracting 'flash' teams who go on very short expeditions of three-six weeks. Such expeditions require



Everest from the South summit.

members to acclimatise at home in tents that simulate low oxygen conditions.

The crowded south side route has some higher-end expeditions, willing to bear the cost of extra days at base camp to wait for traffic to clear up. Preliminary permit data showed that the number of expeditions was much lower than in 2023, but the total has climbed to 414. Till press time on Thursday, about 300 climbers and Sherpas had summited. Bhutan also put its

first climber on the top of Everest.

The 2023 season saw 18 fatalities -- a record. This season started out safer, but is slowly turning out quite deadly. There have been three deaths so far and four more are missing.

Two Mongolians climbing without guides or oxygen died after summiting last week, and a Romanian climber died at Camp 3 on Tuesday. A British national and a high altitude guide were swept away onto the Kangshung



Camp 2 below the Lhotse face. Photos: LAKPA SHERPA / 8K EXPEDITIONS

Face when a section of ice near the Hillary Step fell away on Wednesday. A Kenyan national attempting a no-oxygen summit and his Sherpa guide have gone missing close to the summit, also on 22 May. Video footage retrieved from the phones of the Mongolian pair showed that they did in fact reach the top, although it does seem that they did end up having to use bottled oxygen. Their families, devastated at the news, are waiting in Kathmandu. Many Mongolians,

however, have celebrated the pair for having accomplished what they set out to do.

"Most likely what happened with the Mongolian climbers was that they ran out of oxygen on the descent," said Alan Arnette, who has been covering Everest since 2004. "The Romanian death is, sadly, one of those expected that happen every season because of the harsh conditions and exertion."

Their story brings to mind the Mallory-Irvine expeditions exactly

Mountains of books

Reviews of 3 books to mark the centenary of the 1924 Everest expedition

■ Kunda Dixit



ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

Empirical climbing

There have been many books and even films made about George Mallory and Andrew Irvine (pictured, above) who disappeared below the summit of Mt Everest exactly 100 years ago.

But on this centenary of their expedition,

The Last Englishmen: Love, War and the End of Empire by the American biographer Deborah Baker (The Convert: A Tale of Exile and Extremism) puts the 1924 British attempt to climb the world's highest mountain in political, geopolitical and cultural context.

The Last Englishmen reads like historical fiction, but is actually a meticulously researched backgrounder on two main protagonists: a geologist and a surveyor, both

siblings of British poets of the era.

Geologist John Bicknell Auden is older brother of poet Wystan Hugh Auden and the map-maker Michael Spender is the brother of anti-Fascist poet Stephen Spender.

The cast of characters in Baker's book seem to suffer post-traumatic stress of World War I, and escape to the pristine Himalaya.

Badly bruised by the loss of so many young men, Britain itself needed healing, and the conquest of the world's highest mountain was a way to redeem some of the empire's tarnished glory.

Mt Everest had to be accessed through India (because Nepal then was closed off), so the British could use a successful ascent to prove that it was a civilisational force different from other European powers bent solely on exploitation of their colonies.

India was to be ruled differently, which is probably why Baker used Jawaharlal Nehru's quote ("I am the last Englishman to rule India") for the title of this book.

Other characters include British explorers Eric Shipton and Bill Tilman ('the terrible twins' of mountaineering) who between them have at least four high Himalayan passes named after them across Nepal.

Then there are the Bengalis in Calcutta, including the poet

Sudhindranath Datta (of Parichay Adda) who is caught between his Anglophilic disposition and the tug of Indian independence.

It is easy to get lost in Baker's story-telling because she multitasks — weaving so many strands into her tapestry. But at the epicentre of it all is Mt Everest and the British drive to get to the top first (before the Americans and especially the Germans) even amidst India's independence struggle and the aftermath of another world war.

Although The Last Englishmen came out in 2018, it is during the centenary of the most celebrated mysteries of mountaineering that it should be read because of Deborah Baker's effort to give us the state of affairs in the period between the world wars.

In one telling sentence, she summarises: '... (it was) the tortured conceit that Everest, a mountain that wasn't even in India, was a proxy for England's global domination.'



The Last Englishmen: Love, War, and the End of Empire by Deborah Baker Graywolf Press, 2018 358 pages, \$28 (paperback)



100 years ago on the northeast ridge of Everest. They were last seen alive only 240m below the summit, Mallory's body was located only in 1999 but there is no evidence that they reached the top.

Besides the two Mongolians, others have also done no-oxygen climbs. Sirbaz Khan, from Pakistan, is collaborating with the Imagine Nepal team to complete his 11th no-oxygen 8000er. Piotr Krzyzowski from Poland climbed Lhotse without oxygen, as did Hugo Ayaviri from

Bolivia. Ayaviri also climbed without guide support and was thinking about doing Everest too. Currently, he has returned to Base Camp, slightly frostbitten.

Jigme Pelden Dorje became Bhutan's first Everest summiteer this week. Bhutan was the only Himalayan country without someone who had reached the top.

Kami Rita Sherpa reached the top twice, beating his own record to notch up 30 summits – a record. Dawa Fonzok Sherpa is attempting

a fourth summit for the season, and photojournalist Purnima Shrestha is going for her third. Ukrainian guide Valentyn Sypavin scaled Everest twice, then climbed Lhotse, and now plans to do Everest again.

Questions have been raised as to whether one permit should allow for multiple summits. The government's stance seems to recognise the first climb and deem the others unofficial, but not illegal.

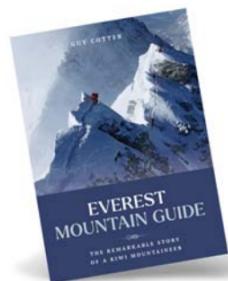
However, with Sherpa to client ratios growing, overcrowding is

the draw of the Himalaya that leads to overcrowding, and the media's obsession with everything to do with the highest mountain in the world.

In the meantime, foreign guides now have competition from Nepali-run companies like Nims Purja's Elite Exped, Tashi, Mingma, and Chhang Dawa's Seven Summit Treks, 14 Peaks Expedition of Kami Rita (who on 22 May climbed Everest for the 30th time), or Imagine Nepal of Mingma Gyalje.

Cotter writes about them: 'I have been amazed by the meteoric rise of many (Sherpa climbers) ... during this ascendancy they have maintained their spirit and grace and unique character.'

But Cotter is critical of the absence of Nepal government oversight, and says this presents an opportunity for local stewardship of the mountains.



Everest Mountain Guide: The Remarkable Story of a Kiwi Mountaineer by Guy Cotter Potton & Burton, 2023 260 pages, \$43.68 (hardcover delivery to Nepal)

Guiding Everest

Guy Cotter, a mountaineer and mountain guide whose father was a climbing buddy of Edmund Hillary, has been organising expeditions to the Himalaya for over 20 years.

He was at Everest Base Camp during the tragic spring 1996 season when 8 climbers died in a blizzard near the summit. Cotter was talking on the radio to Rob Hall high on Everest and patching him to his pregnant wife back in New Zealand.

The event was depicted in the 1989 film Everest and the 1997 bestseller by Jon Krakauer, Into Thin Air.

Everest Mountain Guide could be a guidebook on how mountaineering has changed (or not changed) since the military style assaults that began with the early expeditions 100 years ago. Cotter, now 58, took over the company Adventure Consultants after Hall died, and has himself climbed Everest five times.

The book is a memoir of Cotter's mountaineering career, from his first climbs in the New Zealand Alps to the Himalaya. Besides being a riveting story, it also gives us a behind-the-tent peek into the bureaucratic, technical and organisational challenges of leading expeditions to the world's highest mountains.

Cotter ends the book with self-reflection on the impact of large guided expeditions,

Alpine Style

In addition to non-oxygen summits, there have been other unique, trailblazing ascents. A Korean-Nepali team summited the unclimbed 6,591m Jugal I. The cluster of mountains around Jugal, located 35km north of Kathmandu, were only opened to climbers last year. The group is now planning to climb Jugal II.

Americans Patrick Johnson and Patrick Gephart climbed a new route on the Northeast Pillar of 6,487m Teng Kangpoche in Rolwaling Himal on 23 April. Climbing strictly alpine style, the pair rated the climb a WI3+, a Water Ice climbing grade given to climbs with a near vertical gradient but good places to rest and place screws.

Late last year, Tim Miller from Scotland and Paul Ramsden from the UK had completed a first ascent of Surma-Sarovar in Bajhang, having planned the summit with no more than images from Google Earth. It was an eight day climb, with four of the days dedicated to climbing the 2,100m north face.

In Spring 2022, the same duo also were the first to ascent Jugal Spire alpine style, a feat for which they earned the highest honour in mountaineering, the Piolet d'Or.

Other Adventures

FLEURY ROUX



Runners pass the 1,000km mark at Langtang.

Besides climbing, there has also been some running. The Great Himal Race, an west-to-east marathon along the Great Himalayan Trail, is on Stage 42 out of 51.

The runners are currently in Sagarmatha National Park at Chheplung, and are scheduled to finish at Kanchenjunga Base Camp on 31 May. A separate race, the Everest 135, was also held in early May. It is a gruelling 135-mile race that

starts at Jiri and ends at Everest Base Camp.

British alpinist and BASE jumper Tim Howell was attempting a wingsuit jump from Lhotse, which would be a record for the highest jump of its type. Howell and his team had been climbing new routes on Lhotse in order to find ideal launch and exit sites. Howell reached an unclimbed point on the Lhotse Ridge 8,200m high where he was to jump from, but he had to cancel as cloudy weather persisted.

"Climate change is having a large impact on Everest, especially on the Khumbu Ice Fall. I see a point in time where climbers are forced to take the north route or helicopter rides to Camp 2 become a routine part of the expedition," said Arnette.

already an issue on the routes to the summit, especially from Camp 3 and up during the narrow weather windows. This trend could jeopardise the safety of other climbers, especially those on no-oxygen climbs.

Nims Purja, the star of '14 Peaks', has faced accusations of taking clients with cheaper Lingtren permits to Camp 3 on Everest, and of faking a rescue to take a chopper to Camp 2 from Kathmandu via Lukla. Earlier, Purja mounted an expedition to Shishapangma with a special permit from the Chinese to recover the bodies of team members who died in an avalanche on the 8,000m peak last autumn. The rescue team cut new routes

to retrieve the bodies of American Anna Gutu and Mingmar Sherpa.

Purja, an ex-British Special Forces member famed for climbing all 14 8000ers in six months and six days, called the recovery mission one of his most challenging climbs.

Gutu had been competing with Gina Marie Rzuclidlo, who was accompanied by Tenjen Sherpa--both of whom were also killed in an avalanche half an hour earlier. Both had been trying to be the first American females to complete all 14 8,000ers and were on their last mountain. The competition led them to push for the summit too soon after a snowfall, when the snow isn't bonded yet and avalanche danger is high. 🇺🇸

Unsung heroes

Besides the pros and cons between siege ascents and pure alpine style climbing is the related contention that while Western climbers gain all the fame, local guides who help them get to the top remain anonymous.

Ice Fall Doctors and teams fixing ropes to the summits so clients can jumar up, go largely unmentioned. Their work is much more dangerous because of exposure to risky areas of the mountains for longer periods.

Now, Nepalis have started setting up their own expedition companies (see above) and many are not just high altitude guides but are world-class climbers themselves.

This historical injustice is set right by Canadian author Bernadette McDonald in her latest book, Alpine Rising: Sherpas, Baltis, and the Triumph of Local Climbers in the Greater Ranges.

McDonald digs into the history of mountaineering to find that behind every first ascent that made Western climbers celebrities is a Sherpa, Rai, Gurung, Balti or Hunza that made the climb successful.

McDonald goes back to the early German expeditions in the 1930s on Nanga Parbat when dozens of Gurung and Sherpa high altitude porters were killed.

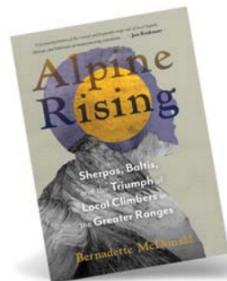
Maurice Herzog's ascent of Annapurna in 1951 is famous in mountaineering history, but not many know of Ang Tharkay Sherpa who ferried loads to the peak, and physically

carried the frostbitten Herzog down.

More recently, Alpine Rising recounts the fist fights on the Lhotse Face between Sherpas and Simone Moro; how Pakistani climber Ali Sadpara is sidelined in expedition chronicles; and the high altitude guide Muhammad Hassan who collapsed on K2 and climbers stepped over him for their summits.

But things are changing. In 2014 three Nepali women climbers, Pasang Lhamu Sherpa Akita, Dawa Yangzum Sherpa and Maya Sherpa climbed K2. Then in 2021, 10 Nepali climbers led by Nims Purja literally marched to the summit of K2 shoulder to shoulder singing Nepal's national anthem in the first winter ascent of the world's second highest mountain.

There is a tectonic shift in Himalayan mountaineering. The tragic, happy and funny details from the earliest expeditions to climbing in the age of Instagram are in the pages of Alpine rising.



Alpine Rising: Sherpas, Baltis, and the Triumph of Local Climbers in the Greater Ranges by Bernadette McDonald Mountaineers Books, 2024 272 pages, \$29.95 (hardcover, shipped to Nepal)

EVENTS



Kimff 2024

The 21st edition of the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (Kimff) will feature 60 selected films from across 22 countries. Get the details on page 9.
29 May-2 June, 11am-5pm, Rastriya Sabha Griha/ Nepal Tourism Board (01) 5318048

Art in Motion

Sawari Kathaharu, featuring photographs, digital illustrations, and visual media, celebrates the fusion of art, literature and the open road. Stop by the exhibition.
Until 27 May, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babermahal (01) 5318048



Marriage Proposal

Watch the Nepali adaptation of the play Marriage Proposal, written by Russian writer and playwright Anton Chekhov.
Until 9 June, 5:30pm (except Mondays), Kunja Natak Ghar, Thapagaun

Movie Screening: Close

Join fellow film enthusiasts this weekend and watch the critically-acclaimed coming-of-age movie Close, starring Eden Dambrine, Gustav de Waele, Emilie Dequenne and Léa Drucker.
24 May, 7pm onwards, Fee: Rs400, Music Art Gallery Cafe, Sanepa



Gardener Fest 2024

This week-long plant festival will have sessions on the beginner's guide to gardening, plant care and more. Put that green thumb to use.
Until 28 May, 10am-6pm, Ekata Basti, Mandikatar

DINING



Koto

Take a gastronomic tour of Japan at Koto, where the menu includes Maki sushi, cold or fried tofu, tempura, fried chicken, miso soup, chicken karaage, Katsu Don, and more.
Darbar Marg (01) 5320346

MUSIC

Summer Splash 2.0

Enjoy the weekend at this musical extravaganza that will feature musicians including Deepak Bajracharya and the Rhythm Band.
25 May, 1pm onwards, Ticket: Rs500, Matshya Narayan Recreational Centre, Machhegaun



Youthful Rhythms

Set to bring the most promising young artists together, enjoy an evening filled with energetic performances and vibrant beats from artists including Kumar Saga and the Khwopaa.
31 May, 6pm onwards, Ticket: Rs1,000, Turtle Club, Thamel



Tribute to AC/DC

Gear up in rock 'n roll attire and head to Hard Rock Cafe Kathmandu, where Mark Band and Rohit Bomjan will pay tribute to AC/DC. Also be part of trivia quizzes that test your rock knowledge. Call to book a table.
31 May, Hard Rock Cafe Kathmandu, Darbar Marg, 9801986771



Hip-hop night

Party it up this weekend with Nepali Hip-hop band Dong, and live act Earhead. Call to reserve tables.
Club Fahrenheit, Thamel (01) 4541220 /9841726830

SEBS Sandhya 2024

This cultural fundraiser by the Society of Ex-Budhanilkantha Students (SEBS) will involve an afternoon and evening full of music, nostalgia and unity. Swoopna Suman, Pahenlo Batti Muni and Salil Maharjan will join.
25 May, 11am onwards, Ticket: Rs599, Budhanilkantha School



Buingal

With a variety of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian options, Buingal has something for everyone. Give the vegetarian sekuwa a try.
Maitidevi (01) 4421393

Imago Dei

The menu Nourish by Imago Dei features a limited yet thoughtfully created menu every weekday. An ideal restaurant for those seeking healthier food options,
Narayan Chaur, 9803064809

GETAWAYS



Sapana Village Resort

At Sapana Village Resort, experience Tharu and Chepang culture, marvel at the beauty of the lush national park, witness elephants lumbering through the forests and getaway to the heart of Sauraha.
Sauraha, Chitwan (056) 580308

Waterfront Resort

Located just beyond the busy Lakeside and a glance away from the Peace Pagoda, Waterfront Resort offers easy access to nature as well as the bustling tourist hub, only a five-minute ride in the resort's shuttles.
Pokhara, 9801166303



Heranya Yala

At Heranya Yala, experience Newar heritage right in the middle of Maha Boudha. The hotel provides a complete tour package to immerse in the rich cultural heritage of Patan.
Gujibahal, Patan, (01) 5523168/9851067168

The Lapsi Tree

Escape the noise of the valley and experience a serene, peaceful stay at The Lapsi Tree with delicious food, comfortable rooms and mesmerising views.
Danda Gaun Marg, Nagarkot, 9761797014



Hotel Yukhang

Hotel Yukhang, built with Dachhi appa bricks from the Malla era and Bhaktapur's wooden crafts, adds a mediaeval touch to your stay.
Thamel (01) 4267358

Rain Restaurant

Grab a Thakali set, braised pork belly or an assortment of tacos at this restaurant and dine while taking in the expansive views of Patan and Jawalakhel.
Jawalakhel (01) 5448508



Everfresh

Perfect for brunch and breakfast lovers, Everfresh offers items including avocado toast, pancakes, brioche french toast and buckwheat crepes. Also try their baked goodies.
Panipokhari, 9702026438

WEEKEND WEATHER



Pre-monsoons

The southwest monsoon has arrived on the coast of Kerala, and will be making its slow progress northeastwards in the coming weeks. A low pressure circulation in the Bay of Bengal may turn into a cyclone by the time it hits the Bangladesh coast next week. Kathmandu and most of Nepal will continue to experience pre-monsoon showers, most of them accompanied by thunder and lightning towards afternoon and evening. But it is likely to be mostly sound and fury with only moderate precipitation. The storms are fueled by the heat wave in the Tarai which will continue unabated.

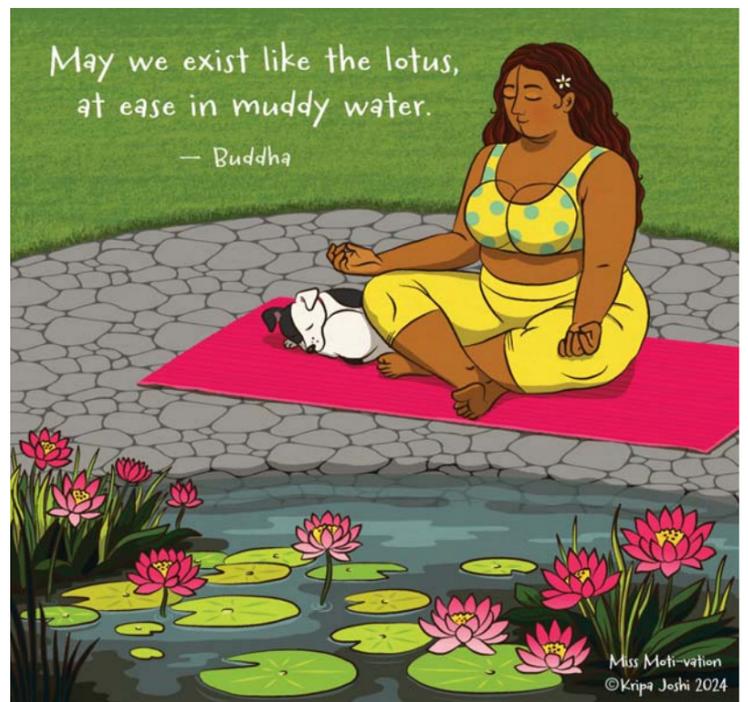


OUR PICK

American podcaster Gilbert Power travels to the Irish coastal town of Bodkin to make a true-crime podcast about three people who disappeared from the town more than two decades ago. Meanwhile, Dublin-born investigative journalist Dove Maloney is sent to Ireland by her editor despite her vehement protests to help Gilbert following blowback after the death of a government whistleblower, who was her source for her most-recently published story. The two butt heads even as they realise that the mysteries surrounding Bodkin go much deeper than the disappearances. Bodkin, the 2024 Irish dark comedy series, stars Will Forte, Siobhán Cullen, Robyn Cara, and David Wilmot.

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

KIMFF turns 21

The Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (Kimff) returns to town with films and documentaries on mountain adventure, livelihood and climate change

KIMFF 2024 is once again set to gather Nepali and international filmmakers, aficionados, scholars and mountaineers in a celebration of visual storytelling.

Given dire warnings of how climate breakdown is affecting the ice caps on the world's mountains, this year's festival offers a new sense of urgency under the theme 'Echoes of Change'.

The festival from 29 May-2 June will take place at the Rastriya Sabha Griha and Nepal Tourism Board, featuring over 60 documentaries, fiction, features, and short films from 22 countries, including Nepal,

Bhutan, India, Iran, South Korea, Colombia, and Tunisia. The festival's Nepal Panorama section will showcase almost 30 films about contemporary Nepal by local filmmakers, the largest number Kimff has featured yet.

"Kimff's objective has always been to provide a platform for local stories and talent," explains festival director Ramyata Limbu. "We hope the filmmakers and audiences will appreciate and enjoy this."

Kimff 2024 will kick off with the Asia Premiere of Italian director Brando Quilici's *The Tiger's Nest*. Filmed on location in Nepal, it follows a young boy embarking on a dangerous cross-country adventure to save a

tiger's cub from poachers.

"Hopefully, films like these will open up the space for and spark conversations about more co-productions and collaborations in Nepal," adds Limbu.

The closing documentary on 2 June is *No Monastery No Village* about mountain people fighting to preserve their community and cultural heritage from a climate-induced disaster.

The international jury includes director/producer Dina Mufti from the UK, Nepali anthropologist Suresh Dhakal, and film editor Regina Baertschi from Switzerland. They will pick winners from three shortlisted international feature films, 11 feature documentaries, and 16 fiction films for the Nepal Panorama section, among others.

Kimff will also celebrate a century since pioneering attempts on Everest with a film screening and a photo exhibition titled *Everest Revisited 1924-2024*. It will also mark half a decade of bilateral ties between Nepal and South Korea with the screening of films from Korea's Ulsan Ulju Mountain Film Festival.

This year's line-up will also include

a panel discussion on Women Behind the Camera, screenings and an interactive session titled *Championing Young Filmmakers*, and a Nepali documentary pitch session by the forum *Cut.Katha*. Participants can also participate in an editing masterclass with Regina Baertschi.

Kimff 2024 is co-hosted by Kathmandu Metropolitan City and promoted by Nepal Tourism Board with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the British Council, US Embassy, Film Development Board, Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA), Mila Productions, Pasang Lhamu Foundation, Daya Foundation, Voices of Women Media (VOW), Contemporary Art of Nepal Foundation, Toni Hagen Foundation, Bagmati Communications Registrar, Himalaya International Mountain Film of China (HIMF), GIZ, WWF, ICIMOD, North Face Nepal, and Sonam. 🇳🇵

21st Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival Rastriya Sabha Griha and Nepal Tourism Board, Pradarasani Marga, Kathmandu 29 May-2 June 2024
For the complete festival line-up, visit kimff.org

HIGHLIGHTS:



The Tiger's Nest

94 min | Italy/Nepal | 2022
Original Language: English
Director: Brando Quilici

This opening film is the story of a young orphan named Balmani, who has grown up hearing about the legend of a guru who once flew through the Himalaya on the back of a female tiger. Where he landed, a cave on a sheer cliff, now stands a

monastery called The Tiger's Nest. One night, Balmani saves a tiger cub from the clutches of evil poachers and makes for the Tiger's Nest, which he believes will be a safe haven. With the smugglers in hot pursuit, the boy and cub travel from the lush grasslands of central Nepal, through the chaos of Kathmandu, and into the high Himalaya, forming an unbreakable bond along the way.



Andro Dreams

63 min | India | 2023
Original Language: Manipuri
Director: Meena Longjam

This is the story of a love affair between the spirited Laibi and her all girls' football club in a village in rural northeast India. Laibi's club battles economic challenges, the patriarchy, and orthodoxy. *Andro Dreams* was the opening film for the non-feature section at the International Film Festival of India 2023.



Climbing For Gold

22 min | Belgium/ United States | 2024
Original Language: Dutch/ English
Director: Vincent Groos

Vincent Groos' documentary follows paraclimber Fré Leys as he trains for and competes in the 2023 Paraclimbing World Championships in Salt Lake City. *Climbing for Gold* explores Leys' unrelenting training regimen, the bureaucracy of sports, and his competitors. It is a celebration of hard work, determination, and the human spirit.



The Whispers of a Qareen

15 min | India | 2024
Original Language: Hindi
Director: Maaria Sayed

12-year-old Jahaan is visited by something strangely familiar in her Himalayan village. Her new companion gradually reveals its true identity. As the days blur, games played in wild playgrounds and trivial gossip passed back and forth among friends in the shadow of the holy tree near her home begin to feel distant. It is almost as if the world around her is disappearing.



My Radio My Life

68 min | India | 2023
Original Language: English/ Hindi/ Marathi
Directors: Bidit Roy, Makarand Waikar

Set in the 21st century, the film revisits the golden era of radio in India through people whose lives were shaped by the medium. Some of the cast of characters include a former announcer for Voice of America who broadcasted the Apollo 11 moon landing; a woman who found her calling, and later a life partner, through radio; an octogenarian who is determined to bring his treasured valve radio set back to life; a man who restores radios and displays them in his museum; and a woman who overcomes her conservative family through her passion for HAM radio.



A Childless Village

82 min | Iran | 2022
Original Language: Azerbaijani
Director: Reza Jamali

Two decades ago, an elderly filmmaker named Kazem made a documentary about women in a remote Azeri village, all of whom are childless. The women stole and burned the footage, but 20 years later, it emerges that it is actually the men in the village who are infertile. Determined to complete his project this time, Kazem heads back to ask new questions.

कुलें तौल कुछ नि जमदु (Nothing Grows Under The Pine Trees)

32 min | India | 2023
Original Language: Garhwali
Director: Sachin Rana

In the hills of India's Uttarakhand state live two sisters. The elder is pragmatic while the younger one is given to flights of fancy. When their parents deem that their firstborn daughter has crossed a line that would make her an outcast in society, they begin to make arrangements for her marriage. Her younger sister mistakenly comes to believe that she is the one whose wedding is planned. *Nothing Grows Under The Pine Trees* is the saga of a people who disguise their prejudice as tradition.



Arkesta

18 min | Nepal | 2023
Original Language: Nepali
Director: Safal Pandey

As a single father, Gokul's world tilts on its axis when one day, he sees his son dance in a feminine manner in public. Gokul then commits to changing how his child conducts himself in order to protect his reputation in his

community. In the process, Gokul learns more about the different facets of his son's personality.



No Monastery No Village

27 min | Nepal | 2024
Original Language: Tibetan
Director: Tashi Lhazom

Nestled in the shadow of a glacial lake in the Himalaya lies Halzi village, home to the ancient Halzi Rinchenling Monastery, the cornerstone of Humla's cultural heritage for centuries. It now faces a growing threat from a glacial lake upstream. A poignant exploration of faith, resilience and the fight to preserve a way of life in the face of climate change, the documentary follows villagers caught between deep devotion to their heritage and impending disaster.

Still learning lessons from COVID

Nepal is a contributor to an important recovery trial that discovered treatment for coronavirus disease

■ **Sonia Awale**

It was not long ago when families of hospitalised Covid-19 patients were frantically searching for a dose of remdesivir or hydroxychloroquine. These drugs were hard to come by, and their price surged.

Convalescent Plasma Therapy which uses blood from those who have recovered from an infection to treat new cases was similarly thought to be another effective regime for Covid patients.

Until that point during the Covid-19 pandemic, there were no working vaccines. Even when the first vaccines were produced, there were not enough doses for Nepal while the delta variant was sweeping India. Covid hospitalisation was at an all-time high, hospitals were running out of beds as even younger populations succumbed to the disease.

Today, these drugs and treatment regimes have been found to be completely ineffective.

A RECOVERY (Randomised Evaluation of Covid-19 Therapy) Trial started at Oxford University found that hydroxychloroquine was no good for hospitalised Covid patients. Surprisingly, trials in

Nepal showed that it was a widely available cheap steroid called dexamethasone was the most effective in some groups.

“Dexamethasone is the real winner by far, it is such an easy and cheap drug to use, followed by Tocilizumab and Baricitinib which are more expensive and difficult to access drugs but showed additional mortality benefits in severe patients,” said Peter Horby, infectious disease specialist and co-lead of the RECOVERY trial during a meeting in Kathmandu last month.

He added: “Aspirin, azithromycin, hydroxychloroquine, plasma therapy, colchicine and lopinavir-ritonavir had absolutely no effect on survival rates. In fact, there are potential harms of using hydroxychloroquine.” Hydroxychloroquine gained much momentum after then-US President Donald Trump endorsed the antimalarial drug for use in Covid patients.

The Oxford University RECOVERY trial with 49,051 patients enrolled and 189 sites with Nepal being the biggest only after the UK, is the largest randomised controlled clinical trial of Covid-19 treatments, more than twice as large as any other trial. It has so



Even younger populations in Nepal and South Asia succumbed to the Delta variant during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the summer of 2021.

far produced clear answers on 13 different treatments, and no other trial has determined international treatment guidelines in the way RECOVERY has.

The major finding of the RECOVERY trial that dexamethasone reduces mortality among patients admitted to hospitals with Covid-19 who

need oxygen therapy saved over 1 million lives globally just in 2021. But before the trial, there was uncertainty whether or not this treatment would work.

“Many well-known doctors actively discouraged the RECOVERY team against using a cheap steroid dexamethasone, but they had based their opinion on

much smaller studies,” explains Buddha Basnyat, physician with the Patan Academy of Health Science and the Principal Investigator for the RECOVERY Trial for Nepal.

He adds: “But Peter Horby decided we need to do a trial that was sufficiently large to be able to conclude if the drug works, he cut through the fog of confusion and

Saving more mothers and babies

How Nepal can revive stalled progress in improving maternal and child health

■ **Surya Bhatta**

Over the last two decades, Nepal has made notable progress in maternal and neonatal healthcare. The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has declined from 536 per 100,000 live births in 1996 to 151 by 2021.

Driving this process were the country's Safe Motherhood policy, an increase in skilled healthcare providers, free delivery services for expectant mothers, incentive schemes for antenatal care, as well as postnatal visits.

Other measures, such as birth preparedness packages along with systematic planning for managing potential complications during childbirth, amplified these achievements.

There has been a remarkable rise in institutional deliveries, an increase in antenatal visits, and an impressive 70% of women receiving postpartum care from healthcare providers within the first two days after giving birth.

Quality improvement initiatives such as the Maternal and Perinatal Death Review, minimum health facility assessment standards, routine clinical monitoring, and supportive onsite supervision visits, have been outlined in policy documents and guidelines to elevate the overall quality of care.

However, it is when analysing province-wise MMR that we still see significant disparities. Maternal deaths are still high in Lumbini Province (207 per 100,000 live



NARESH NEWAR

births) and Karnali (172). The MMR in Bagmati Province (98) correlates with better figures for higher education, awareness and access to health service and providers.

In contrast, 83% of women in

Karnali face challenges in seeking medical care, primarily due to financial constraints and long distance to healthcare facilities.

Half of the maternal deaths in Nepal are of mothers within the

age groups of 15-34. Despite the legal marriage age being 20, child marriage is still widespread and contributes to the highest number of pregnancy-related deaths.

The median age of marriage in

Nepal is 18.3 years, with the lowest median age in Madhes province at 16.6 years and the highest in Bagmati province at 19.9 years. The Muslim community reports the lowest at 16.5 years, while



PHOTOS: NEPALI TIMES ARCHIVE



Hospitals in Kathmandu ran out of beds during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021 and patients had to be treated outside the wards on the floor.



Peter Horby speaking about the RECOVERY trial in Kathmandu last month

the British review board went with it. It was science at its best.”

The trial also demonstrated that powerful antiviral treatments such as monoclonal antibodies when directed against the virus could reduce mortality in patients who have not developed their own antibodies, which many doctors doubted would work.

In Kathmandu, Horby recalled meeting a South American minister and found out that they still had aspirin in their Covid treatment guideline. He said: “There is still work to do to get this information through the policymakers about what works and what doesn’t.”

The Covid-19 pandemic was

an extraordinary global crisis, but in some ways it is similar to the tendency of governments to intentionally look for expensive and complex solutions to medical emergencies when proven cheaper solutions are available.

For example, Misoprostol is a cheap drug that can prevent maternal deaths from post-partum

haemorrhage. It was a part of the program launched in the mid-2000s to protect women who give birth at home but now it faces opposition, neglect and shortages in Nepal because it is so cheap.

“Tranexamic acid is another cheap drug for post-partum haemorrhage. The same steroid for Covid-19 called dexamethasone

is the most effective drug for the treatment of severe altitude illness,” says Basnyat, who specialises in mountain medicine. “There is a tendency to underutilise some of these affordable, simple and easily available lifesaving drugs at our disposal.”

The RECOVERY trial also turned out to help build medical research capacity in Nepal. The Infectious Diseases Hospital at Teku and the Armed Police Hospital were at the forefront while the Oxford University Clinical Research Unit Nepal spearheaded the campaign and convinced the Nepal Health Research Council to participate.

“Nepal played a crucial role in the expansion of the trial from the UK to the rest of the world,” Horby told Nepali Times. “Nepal recruited more patients than any other country outside the UK.”

Indeed, Nepal was the single biggest contributor to the trial and the research contributed to the global science, and it was a big boost for fledgling research culture in Nepal.

Says Basnyat: “We stood to gain scientifically from this but also showed young doctors and nurses in Nepal were randomising patients in a very standardised way, learning new things despite the tragedy that was Covid-19.”

The RECOVERY platform has now transitioned into finding treatments and better care for pneumonia and other influenzas which still kill hundreds of thousands of people worldwide.

Added Horby: “RECOVERY has shown the benefit of large, streamlined trials and how they could be applied to any common health problem. Trials are essential if we are to know what is effective and what is not, so ensuring we can deliver more trials is important for public health.”

the Janajati and Brahmin/Chettri communities have generally higher median ages for marriage.

In Madhes and Sudur Paschim Provinces, early marriages among girls under 15 contribute to heightened adolescent mortality, mainly due to difficulties accessing timely health facilities. Disparities persist among ethnic groups, particularly among doubly marginalised Madhesi Muslims, who face high mortality rates due to early marriages.

Health facility deliveries have improved from 10% in 2001 to 79% in 2021. But again, progress is uneven and these disparities need to be overcome to meet the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target of 90% institutional delivery rate by 2030.

Wealth inequality and provincial variations, especially in Madhes, pose challenges that need nuanced understanding of women’s reluctance to seek health services.

Despite Nepal’s success in maintaining population growth close to replacement levels, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is significantly higher among those without formal education. The proportion of postpartum family planning uptake is also lowest in Madhes and Sudur Paschim at only 0.2%.

Breastfeeding is in decline, with less than three out of five mothers following recommended practices. Regional variations highlight the need for targeted interventions, particularly in provinces like Bagmati, where breastfeeding rates are lower among well-educated city dwellers.

Anemia persists as another risk factor, with Madhes Province again carrying the highest burden.

Comparing Nepal with Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan shows that we are doing better in under-five and infant mortality rates. Nepal’s institutional delivery rate surpasses Bangladesh, but lags

slightly behind India.

Even so, alarming disparities persist in neonatal and maternal mortality rates within disadvantaged groups, reflecting inadequate coverage of routine maternal and neonatal health visits and suboptimal care.

This points to both limited access to recommended interventions for disadvantaged women and potential inefficiencies in delivering crucial interventions during these routine visits.

Nepal should prioritise rural pockets of the country and employ a comprehensive strategy that includes delivering antenatal care through primary health care outreach, home visits, distributing essential medicines, vaccinations, and identifying appropriate health facilities for birth preparedness.

The quality of antenatal care must be improved by talking about nutrition with pregnant women and families, emphasising awareness of danger signs that necessitate timely health facility visits, and ensuring local governments to efficiently refer complicated cases, with airlifting as a viable option for emergencies.

Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health with a targeted focus in provinces with early marriages and childbirths combined with education, awareness, and easy access to reproductive health services are imperative.

More effort is needed to meet the SDG target of reducing the MMR to 70 per 100,000 live births. Mitigating disparities among provinces demands political commitment, active local leadership, community engagement, especially leveraging the youth force, and fostering public-private partnerships at all levels.

Surya Bhatta is Executive Director of One Heart Worldwide that works primarily on maternal health in rural Nepal.

VIANET COMMUNICATION LTD. BROADBAND TELECOM COMPANY OF THE YEAR - NEPAL

VIANET COMMUNICATION LTD. TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION OF THE YEAR - NEPAL

For more information 01-5970644

sales@vianet.com.np | vianetnepal | vianetcommunications | vianetofficial | www.vianet.com.np | vianetcommunications | viber.com/vianet



Art and poetry in motion

Exhibition shows how Nepal's public transport is also a vehicle for creative expression



PHOTOS: SRAVASTI GHOSH DASTIDAR

her shoulders behind her which says, "कान्छा Love मा धोका खानु भन्दा आउ, मेरो बाइक पछाडी बसेर KTM को धुलो खाउ". (Kanchha, rather than be betrayed in love, come ride pillion in my bike and bite Kathmandu's dust.)

"Beyond the act of creation, what truly resonated with me was the ethos of the truck art itself, its spirit of fun, freedom and taking life in its stride," said Joshi.

The exhibition also includes a short documentary titled *Sawari Sahitya* made by Urza Acharya, Julin Rajbhandari and Sejal Pradhanang which has interviews with drivers, aspiring drivers and workshop staff. The exhibition also has an interactive puzzle which visitors can put together to form their own truck literature.

"Many of us look at this kind of art condescendingly but to the truck drivers, the truck owners or the artists, this is their livelihood, the trucks are their homes," said Ghosh Dastidar during the opening.

Indeed, angry travellers stuck on gridlocked highways may not find funny a painting of Lord Shiva smoking pot on the back of a truck (pictured), but for the drivers the truck is their canvas, their workplace, and a place of worship. Besides being their means of livelihood, the back of a bus is also a blank page for poetry and socio-political reflection. 🇳🇵

Sawari Kathaharu is open for viewing at Siddhartha Art Gallery till 27 May.

■ Shristi Karki

Buddha Was Born in Nepal
आमा बुबाको आशीर्वाद
उडायो कान्छो तिम्पो पछ्योरो मेरो रफ्तारले
पैसा बिनाको ATM र जब बिनाको KTM
उस्तै रहेछ
Don't Tich Your Father's How 2
Drive

These colourful messages behind trucks and other public transport on Nepal's roads represent art and literature in motion, an outlet for their drivers for creative expression and social commentary.

Tipper trucks and buses might advise fellow road users to 'Horn Please', or 'Speed Control' while others sport bumper art that

proclaim them to be 'Road King'.

Examples of truck art at the 'Sawari Kathaharu' exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery with photographs by writer-photographer Sravasti Ghosh Dastidar, London-based journalist Abhushan Gautam, and digital illustrations by graphic designer and artist Shubha Joshi.

The photographs showcase attempts by drivers and owners to breathe life and personality into the vehicles they spend so much of their lives on. But they also reflect the Nepali zeitgeist.

The 'Love and Death' and 'Philosophy' series feature images of vehicle literature, verses, messages, and commentary that are in turn humorous and profound.

The back of one truck

photographed by Gautam seems to be inspired by Nepal's high highway accident rate: 'Donate blood but not on the road'.

Other photographs from Ghosh Dastidar show vehicles embellished with bright and gaudy artwork. "Amidst all the dust and clutter of the roads and workshops, I tried to concentrate on the colours and figures painted, painstakingly, onto lacklustre metal bodies," said Ghosh Dastidar at the opening.

A lot of the art depict gods from the Hindu pantheon, but there are also images of the Buddha, king Birendra's family, international football players, Bollywood actors, and of late, Kathmandu Mayor Balen Shah in shades.

Ghosh Dastidar has also

documented work that goes on behind the scenes, with photographs of the materials involved as well as audio testimonies of artists who meticulously render images and text onto the bodies of vehicles. Gautam has similarly been documenting 'Sawari Sahitya' on his Instagram Account Literature on Wheels since 2013, taking photographs of vehicles featuring memorable quotes.

Artist Shubha Joshi for her part has created vibrant digital illustrations of some of the more witty and notable examples of vehicle literature, and has tried to undercut masculine narratives with feminine takes in some of her work. One such illustration includes a lady in traditional garb riding a motorcycle with a man holding onto

TATA MOTORS
Connecting Aspirations

TATA

NEXON EV MAX

MOVES YOU TO THE MAX



Now at Rs.

45.99

Lakhs*

For online booking



SIPRADI TRADING PVT. LTD.,

An ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 45001:2018 Certified Company

Toll Free No.: 16600155777, 9801575777

SIPRADI