

standard chartered



ISSUER RATING BY ICRA [NEPAL]

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

'GO AWAY'

Nepal is undermining international goodwill and losing revenue by driving out long-staying foreigners



KUNDA DIXIT

■ Sonia Awale

Since Nepal first opened its doors to the outside world in the 1950s, it has steadily gained goodwill and friends around the globe. The Nepal brand has remained strong despite political instability, conflict, corruption, poor infrastructure and pollution.

First came the high fliers of the sixties to this Shangri La, then the hippies and overlanders seeking Nirvana. Himalayan hikers and development volunteers travelled and worked in the remotest corners of Nepal. Scientists and academics made Nepal their adopted home, gave the country a global identity.

Many wanted to spend their last days here, and some did. But in the past year the state has made it more and more difficult for long-staying foreigners to remain. Many in their seventies and eighties have recently bid tearful farewells to Nepal.

Why is Nepal driving away its best friends? Most people interviewed for this report did not want to be named. Some teared up as they recounted the humiliation and dead-end at the visa office.

Countries like Thailand issue retirement visas to foreigners who pay a hefty annual fee. Nepal had been allowing retired foreigners to stay on 'residential visas' till recently, but this has been discontinued. No one seems to know why.

The Immigration Department, which falls under the Home Ministry, says in its website that foreigners aged 60 or above can get residential visas as long as they have \$20,000 in their bank, pay an annual visa fee, obtain a no-objection letter from a related embassy, and a health certificate.

But the Immigration Department has not granted any new residential visa for over a year. Expats can

extend tourist visas but only for up to 5 months during a calendar year.

We asked an officer at the Immigration Department why no new residential visas had been approved. His reply: "You will have to ask the Home Ministry, they stopped it." Three residential visas have been renewed in the past year.

After agreeing to speak anonymously, an official asked a rhetorical question: "We have to decide whether to make money from long-term visas, or turn Nepal into an old people's home for foreigners."

At the Immigration Department, some applicants were told the only way is to pay off a broker, or get a letter from the Prime Minister. One American who has spent 30 years in Nepal was bluntly told: "Sir, we don't care if you stay or not."

Earlier this year, British couple Wendy and Robin Marston who have lived in Nepal for over 45 years left the country after they were denied a residential visa. Robin was one of the pioneers of trekking in Nepal since 1978, and Wendy was involved in life-saving charities to help burns victims at hospitals in Kathmandu.

HIMALAYAN HIGHS



Mustang, the Kingdom within a Republic p5
Saving Humla p6-7
The Yak culture p6-7
On Leaving Nepal p9

Lt Col John Philip Cross of the British Gurkhas had to wait more than 32 years after applying to be granted honorary citizenship by King Birendra.

Foreigners can get long-term visas two ways: enrolling as students or investing in a business. The government is tightening the student loophole, and requires investments of Rs10 million or more for a business visa. This group is mainly made up of Chinese and Korean people with restaurants in Kathmandu or Pokhara.

"If the Nepal government is serious about foreign investment, it must clean up its act," a hydropower investor, who has to get a fixer to pay under the table to renew his business visa, told us.

Expats are puzzled why officials are undermining the country's global goodwill by being so nasty to Nepal's most devoted brand ambassadors.

There are theories: xenophobia, geopolitics, proselytisation. It may even be tit-for-tat for Nepalis being refused Schengen or US visas. Some think it could be pressure from China to control the activities of Westerners sympathetic to the Tibet cause.

"There is a larger xenophobia and suspicions at play here, especially with relations with the United States and the rise of India and China," explains one long-time resident. The Visit Nepal Year 2020 sign is still painted on the sides of Nepal airlines jets, the country's tourism promotion has lofty slogans like 'Guest Is God' or 'Visit Nepal: Once Is Not Enough'.

On the other hand, foreigners whose long-term visa fees and other expenses here could be a lucrative source of revenue for cash-strapped Nepal are being told they are not welcome. The snarling tiger on a poster at Kathmandu airport arrival seems to be an apt symbol (pictured left). Ironically, while Nepal is pushing away long-staying foreigners, Nepalis themselves are emigrating in droves to Western countries.

Says an American academic who first came to Nepal in the early 1990s: "We are definitely not a drain on the economy, we are happy to pay any fee, but it is a real shame that Nepal has made it so hard for us to stay. So many have left and gone to Thailand. They had no other choice."

Another 72-year-old resident who has lived in Nepal for 30 years is emotional when she says in a soft voice and with a faraway look: "Despite everything, I still wanted to live here for the rest of my days."

Her residential visa application was turned down, and she is leaving Nepal for good this week. 🇳🇵



20th Anniversary

Outsource Your Non-Core Staff Through Suvidha 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

eScan Anti-Virus

#1 Global Brand

TOTAL PROTECTION for Computers, Mobiles & Tablets

An ISO 27001 Certified Company

Contact no.: 01-4330980

www.escanav.com

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

Democracy's discontents

Populist right-wing parties made a strong showing in this week's EU parliamentary elections. Populism is spreading in democracies around the world.

Nepal was ripe for the rise of populism. The 2022 election saw the emergence of independent mayors like Balen Shah in Kathmandu, the RSP's Rabi Lamichhane, CK Raut's Janamat and the Tharu-dominated Nagarik Unmukti in the Tarai.

These parties came out of nowhere by campaigning mainly through social media to ride the wave of disillusionment against the three established parties and their alpha males who have monopolised Nepali politics for the past 18 years.

The mainstream media and established parties see populism as a threat — as they should. After all, populism is a revolt against complacent, non-performing kakistocracies that have forgotten why they were elected by the people.

Nepal's populists tend to lump the press together with discredited parties, since both have struggled together to restore democracy in the past. Populist leaders distrust corporate media, and have found an ally in the algorithm-driven social web.

This was manifested most glaringly last month after Home Minister Lamichhane masterminded the arrest of Kantipur Media Group's Kailash Sirohiya for his paper exposing the scamming depositors of savings cooperatives.

Lamichhane's supporters on social networking sites cheered Sirohiya's detention, echoing his hostility towards journalists. Lamichhane has built such a personality cult that facts do not matter for his supporters as they wilfully ignore his murky dealings.

Then they mercilessly trolled Nepal's most popular comedy duo Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bansha Acharya after they supported Sirohiya. The cyber-lynching was not funny anymore, so the satirists posted an abject apology and retracted their comments.

This is a familiar tactic of populists the world over: weaponise the web to silence critics. In Nepal, besides Lamichhane we see the same hubris and intolerance in the cyber persona of Balen Shah and Dharan Mayor Harka Sampang.

Lamichhane's political launchpad was his popular tv show in which he supported underdogs against an unresponsive state. Balen Shah is a rapper whose rebellious lyrics were his campaign platform against the capital's antiquated and feckless leadership. Harka Sampang, a migrant returnee, also branded himself as a rebel and social activist.

Populists need gimmicks to sustain support from voters, and fall back on social media. Balen Shah mobilises YouTubers as his bulldozers raze sidewalk structures, dig

up the asphalt on New Road (pictured) or string multi-colour LED lights on the airport road. He displays a map of Greater Nepal in his office, has banned Bollywood movies, and threatened to burn down Singha Darbar.

Sampang strong-arms his way into planting saplings on private property, and posts inflammatory statements on social media while fanning ethno-religious tensions in his constituency.

Lamichhane has continuously disparaged the media, resorting to whataboutery when confronted with his role in the cooperatives scam. As Home Minister, he has transferred officials who were assigned to investigate his involvement in various scandals.

To be sure, established party bosses are not averse to resorting to populism themselves. Former Prime Minister K P Oli still maintains that Lord Ram was born in Nepal, and was the hyper-nationalist architect of Nepal's pointy map.

Last week, he targeted RSP's Education Minister Sumana Shrestha for having a foreign husband saying in a video: "She came to visit Nepal, but became a Minister instead."

The royal right also rabble rouses, and its main exemplar is Gyanendra Shahi of the RPP who also burst into the public spotlight to be elected to the federal Parliament due

to his hyperbolic rhetoric magnified by the social web.

He is a vocal critic of the MCC, and last week

said the US Embassy's rejection of Sandeep Lamichhane's visa to play in the T20 Cricket World Cup was "a threat to Nepal's existence".

Populists do not necessarily threaten democracy unless they use violent means, as Trump supporters did on 6 January. In Nepal, as elsewhere, they are a warning to established parties and the neo-elite to shape up. After a meteoric rise to power, most populist leaders burn up on re-entry. Nationalism, persecution of minorities and migrants, hate speech and xenophobia do not work after a while, as we saw with Trump in the US, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines — and most recently Narendra Modi next door.

Modi won a third term but barely. He coopted the mainstream press, but it was the freedom of the Internet that kept the door of freedom ajar. The poorest and most persecuted Indians rejected the BJP's divisive religious extremism. This is a lesson for Nepali leaders: do not mistake populism for popularity.

YouTube stunts are no match for action in development delivery and improving living standards.

Shristi Karki



ARYAN DHIMAL

Populism is a wake-up call for Nepal's parties to mend their ways.

ONLINE PACKAGES



NEPALIS IN A FARAWAY WAR

Officially, 25 Nepalis have died fighting for the Russian Army against Ukraine but families say more have been killed in action. Nepali Times spoke to the families of some of those who had joined the war. Watch the video on our YouTube channel, and read about how the families of those killed are coping, on page 10-11.



HIGH ACHIEVER

After climbing all the world's 16 highest mountains, South Korean mountaineer Um Hong-gil is now helping Nepali children get an education. Given an honorary Nepali citizenship, the Korean climber says Nepalis are family and this is his second home. Watch this video on Nepali Times' YouTube channel.

HERITAGE

The Janaki Temple looks tacky ('Nepal's soft power is its heritage', Chandra Kishore, nepalitimes.com). And the fact that relevant departments authorise inexperienced contractors to drill holes or paint in heritage sites shows how inconsiderate they are.

Bibek Bhandari

■ In the name of beautification, the old marble of Janaki Temple has now been replaced with the new marble, which is very ordinary and commonly found.

Samarth Anand

■ Nepali authenticity is in simplicity, we should stop copying from India. Janaki Temple looks like some fools had a trip to Rajasthan and wanted to make a cheap copy.

Wanderer

AIR POLLUTION

Sadly, Kathmandu is polluted, because it's in a valley. Industry, brick furnaces, petrol or diesel vehicles contribute to it, so there is no quick and easy answer to improving air quality ('Poisoning children at school', Ramesh Kumar, #1214). Electric vehicles with pollution controls on industry will bring the air pollution down over time. Meanwhile, buy a good mask.

Alan Roadnight

■ Before coming to Kathmandu, I absolutely took good air quality for-granted.

Helen Hardy

LADY JUNE

I have strong memories of Lady June fixing her beady eye on me when I interviewed Ed Hillary at their home over 20 years ago ('Lady June Hillary 1931 - 2024', Lisa Choeygal, #1215). She didn't only support him, she had her own strong presence.

Ed Douglas

■ As Director of Auckland Museum, I was privileged to meet Lady June Hillary. Her keen eye, quiet modesty, twinkling laugh and knowing manner were characteristic. She lent items to our show 'From The Summit' in 2013, sharing the celebration of Sir Ed's achievements and legacies.

Roy Clare

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING



Lady June Hillary

by Lisa Choeygal
Lady June Hillary died on 1 June surrounded by her family in Auckland. A tireless friend of Nepal, June was a supportive wife to Sir Edmund Hillary and played a significant role in his life and work. Read Lisa Choeygal's tribute on our website.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook

MYOPIA

by Yugeshwor Koirala
A silent epidemic of nearsightedness is spreading among mainly urban youngsters in Nepal. But while myopia is often said to be an affliction of city-dwellers, the pandemic lockdowns led to a surge even in rural areas. Visit nepalitimes.com for details.

X Most popular on X



Heritage as soft power

by Chandra Kishore
While all the attention is on the stolen artefacts of the capital valley, Simraungad is suffering a second plunder of what remains of its heritage. Cultural preservation needs to move beyond Kathmandu Valley to hidden historical sites in the Tarai.

66 Most commented

Demodification of India

by Chandra Kishore
The main message of the 2024 Indian election result that should have relevance for Nepal is that voters in the world's largest democracy refused to wholeheartedly support the BJP's divisive religious extremism, and have given a nod to inclusion, tolerance and equality. Join discussion online.

7 Most visited online page

QUOTES

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
In a misguided effort to beautify the historical Janaki Temple, thousands of holes have been drilled into its stucco facade to fix multicoloured LED lights. Making a temple look like a casino cannot preserve a living faith, nor will it help get the site into the UNESCO listing.

Nirmal Ghosh @karmanomad
Please, say it ain't so..

pradeep.bhandari @PrdpBhandari
Whose destructive shameless idea is this?

1,000 WORDS



EMBASSY OF INDIA

NON-VIOLENCE AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE: Mahatma Gandhi looks on as Nepal's Maoist Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal shook hands with Narendra Modi after his third swearing in as prime minister of India in New Delhi on 10 June. During the meeting, Modi reaffirmed his 'Neighbourhood First' policy.

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The Other War

At the height of the Maoist insurgency there was infighting between the palace and the political parties. Armed robberies, looting and plunder were rife in Makwanpur. With the police too afraid to intervene or too preoccupied with the Maoist conflict, villagers took it upon themselves to defend their families with varying degrees of success.

An excerpt of the report published 20 years ago this week in issue #200 11-17 June 2004:

Every night in the Siwaliks, villagers arm themselves with bamboo sticks, sickles, spades, spears and khukuris to fight gangs of armed robbers who operate with impunity. The police are too afraid to come here, the army considers the matter of low priority and it falls in the government's blind spot. The Maoists have done little more than punish the few looters captured by villagers.

"We have to depend on each other," says 70-year-old Chandra Lal Khadka in Tongra village, a two-hour walk from Hetauda. He sharpens his sword every morning in



preparation for his night duty that ends at 3AM. With both sons working abroad, he is the only man in the house and considers it his duty to protect his family and property.

Khadka is part of a 100-strong volunteer group of men, women and children who banded together in April. Two months ago in Masiney, a gang of looters not only robbed a household but also raped a teenage girl and two daughters-in-law of the same family.

The case was never reported to the police for fear of social stigma against the victims.

Ram Krishna Gotame, a 69-year-old farmer, was among those robbed. With tears he recalls how the robbers burst into his house around midnight. They put a gun to his head, a khukuri to his neck and warned him not to call for help. All he had was Rs300, so they took his gold wedding ring and his wife's earrings and necklace.

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

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

WE'RE ALL CONNECTED: DENVER

Connecting more countries than any other.



TURKISH AIRLINES

Contact: KTMSALES@THY.COM / 01-4538363/01-4538436

USA

Leonardo and Drew

I discovered Tom before Leo, but somehow I completely forgot about Drew

Autograph books were popular at our school. They were diaries where friends could jot down something, creating a lifelong memory. It was customary for friends to stick photos in each other's autograph books, so we could look at their faces whenever we missed them.



ANGREZI
Anbika Giri

Back in the 2000s, we students knew that we would eventually have to part ways. Some of us, mostly girls, would get married, others would leave the village to pursue higher education, and some would start working.

We were convinced that after completing our SLC, it would be nearly impossible to reunite with school friends. This was before Facebook.

Filled with overwhelming emotions, we yearned for a tangible keepsake of our time together. Filling an autograph book and having one filled by friends was truly special. We poured our hearts out, expressing how our school life was coming to an end and how the new world awaiting us would never be the same.

We wished our friends the very best in their future endeavours and humbly asked for forgiveness if we had ever hurt them. We even included some heartfelt shayari verses, along with our favourite food, name, place, actor, actress, movie, dress, and even surnames.

In the initial trimester of Class 10 we were engrossed in writing for friends and requesting them to return to write in our autoboos.

The task of choosing the most captivating photo for the autograph book posed quite a challenge. After all, it was supposed to last a lifetime.

My elder sister only made her autobook when she was in her +2 and I was in Class 7. Since she had attended an English medium school until Grade 6, her English was good. Additionally, living in Biratnagar, the biggest city I knew back then, she naturally wrote the autobook in English.

Everything she wrote was original, she knew the meaning of every word. Following her example, my other sisters also wrote the autobook in English. Both had copied our elder sister. When my turn came, I naturally followed suit.

We not only copied the format

but also the best actor, actress, movie, and everything else. We used to believe that whatever our elder sister liked must be likeable and unique.

Her favourite actor was Leonardo DiCaprio, the actress was Drew Barrymore, and her best movie was Titanic. They became our favourites too, although we had no idea who the two were or what Titanic was all about. But we trusted her taste. If she admired them, they must be truly remarkable.

It seemed that my friends shared the same sentiment, as they too copied Leo and Drew as their favourite actor and actress. Although we had different preferences when it came to Nepali and Indian actors, Leo and Drew

were the common Hollywood choices in class.

I first learned about Titanic during my college years and saw the movie in 2008. Before that, I had already watched another film starring DiCaprio, Blood Diamond, in 2007. While I enjoyed both movies, my favourite actor at the time was Tom Hanks. I discovered Tom before Leo, but somehow I completely forgot about Drew.

I have a problem with English films. I can easily remember the plot, but I cannot put a name to the actors. The same goes for songs. I could recognise the tune, but could not remember the singer's name.

Five years ago, I googled Drew Barrymore, and can you believe it: I had actually watched two of

her movies multiple times on DVD, 50 First Dates and Charlie's Angels. I had even seen her in Music and Lyrics, but I had no idea that she was the Drew Barrymore who was my sister's favourite and through her mine, and of the entire class.

While moving flats in Kathmandu multiple times, I misplaced my autobook. It would be fascinating to revisit our autograph books, and to see how our preferences have evolved over time.

Some were altered as we discovered better options, while others were modified as our understanding improved. 🇳🇵

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.



NMB BANK
एनएमबि बैंक

Turkish to Denver

Türkiye's national flag carrier has launched its 14th destination in the United States with 3 flights a week between Istanbul and Denver starting 11 June. The frequency will increase to 4 flights a week from 9 July. Having started its operations to the Americas in 1988 with flights to New York, Turkish Airlines will be convenient for Americans and Nepalis with connections to destinations in the mid-west United States. The carrier has announced special launch prices for tickets. Turkish Airlines Chair Ahmet Bolat said: "We



are delighted to add a new route to our expanding flight network which will offer our passengers the opportunity to discover the historical and cultural richness of Istanbul and our country."

Turkish Airlines also announced its sustainability brand 'Tomorrow On-Board' on World Environment Day on 5 June and launched sustainable in-flight products. The launch event also featured an exhibition of art made from recycled aircraft materials such as seat fabrics and uniforms.

Sagarmatha Next

Sagarmatha Next Centre in Syangboche has been ranked among the world's best 40 stone buildings. Designed by Sustainable Mountain Architecture as a place to upcycle mountain waste, the centre is also a finalist for the Materia Architecture Award for having been constructed with sustainable local granite, pine, and yak wool.



IME for EVs

Customers buying Dongfeng EVs from official distributor Triveni Motors can now get low-interest loans from Global IME as part of its green financing program. Global IME's new 'Digital Universe' in Kamaladi offers automated check deposit, cash deposit and ATM services. IME also launched new capabilities to its website where customers can access more than 24 bank services such as replacing debit cards, issuing credit cards and opening trading accounts.

Nabil awarded

Nabil Bank received the Platinum Award at Infosys Finacle Innovation Awards 2024 in the Process Innovation Category. The bank attributes the honour to its commitment to digitising client onboarding, loan processing, and trade finance.



IDA in Kathmandu

The World Bank Group is holding its 21st International Development Association (IDA) Replenishment meeting in Kathmandu 18-21 June. Attending are World Bank president Ajay Banga, and more than 300 delegates from 90 countries, many of them finance ministers. Prime Minister Dahal will inaugurate the conference of the concessional loan arm of the World Bank.



Unilever Cleanup

Unilever supports Avni Ventures, the waste management and recycling partner for the Mountain Cleanup Campaign 2024 which has collected 11,000kg of trash, and recovered 5 bodies from Himalayan peaks. Since efforts began in 2019, 108 tons of waste have been brought down.

Samsung discounts

With the Euros coming up, Samsung is offering discounts of up to 38% on TVs and 50% cashback on select soundbars until 15 July. All Samsung TVs come with a three-year warranty and in some select models, customers get a soundbar for free. There is also a financing option with 0% interest for 18 months.

Samsung has also launched the Galaxy M35 5G with a 6000mAh battery, a microSD, a 6.6 FHD+ 120Hz AMOLED display, three back cameras, and stereo speakers. The model is available in dark blue, gray and light blue, and is priced at Rs44,999. Financing plans are available.



Green Hyatt

Hyatt Hotel is the recipient of the Green Hospitality Award at the Waste Management and Climate Conference in Kathmandu on World Environment Day. Hyatt sources its resources sustainably and has implemented practices to conserve energy and reduce waste.



Ncell in Damauli

Ncell inaugurated a new centre in Maharshi Chok in Damauli this week where customers can upgrade to a 4G SIM or change to an e-SIM, among other services.

The kingdom within a republic

Mustang's king grapples with the impact of climate breakdown and other challenges

■ **Durga Rana Magar**
in Mustang

On 28 May, as the rest of the Nepal was celebrating Republic Day, here in Mustang, King Jigme Singe Palbar Bista was being treated like the royalty he is.

The king (right) is deeply involved with many problems faced by this once-isolated finger of Nepal sticking out into the Tibetan Plateau. Although there is now a road linking Lo Manthang to the rest of Nepal, the district faces challenges of under-development, lack of jobs and outmigration, cultural preservation, and lately the impact of climate breakdown.

As the king travels around his district, the people of Mustang treat him with visible affection and respect. And the feeling seems to be mutual. The district survives mostly on income from tourism and remittances from Mustang people living in Japan, Korea and the United States.

The mostly elderly residents come out to greet their king and their main concern is about the lack of water due to the climate crisis. Winter snowfall has failed for several years, while there are torrential downpours during the summer in this usually arid region.

There have been destructive floods when glaciers collapsed in Kagbeni last year and in Lubra in 2021. Elsewhere, entire villages have had to relocate because springs and streams have gone dry.

The king was born in Thingkar village in Upper Mustang 67 years ago, and remembers there used to be much more snow in the mountains during his childhood. "The whole landscape has changed, the snow and the ponds are all gone," he tells us during a walkabout.

"In the past, the weather pattern was predictable, snow in winter, some rain during the monsoon and the winds would blow as expected," he adds. "Now everything is unpredictable. The future does not look good at all."

Data from the Jomsom station of the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology shows that average



annual temperature rose from 17.7°C in 2012 to 18.2°C last year. This trans-Himalayan region is in the rainshadow, but summer rain volume went up from 286mm in 2011 to 666mm in 2021, damaging traditional stone and mud houses. But in winter there has been no snow for several years.

The change in weather has also forced many to abandon traditional flat top architecture for tin roofs and cement walls. Warmer weather means new pathogens are moving up the mountains, but also apple orchards and vegetable patches are possible where it was too cold before.

"The climate crisis poses a threat to all traditionally built houses, including monasteries, and heritage structures," says the king who is actively involved in climate adaptation work through the Lo Gyalpo Jigme Foundation, named after his father. "We are now carrying out a comprehensive study of how climate change will affect Mustang, and will plan depending on findings."

The king fondly remembers his father, Jigme Dorje Palbar Bista, who died in 2016. He says he worked tirelessly for the development of Mustang and the welfare of its people.

During his reign, he focused on reconstructing and preserving dilapidated monasteries and shrines



ROYAL MUSTANG RESORT

and ensuring that Mustang was not affected by politics in Kathmandu, and by geopolitics.

"My father always kept the welfare of the community as his number one priority," says the king.

Jigme Palwar Bista owned 65 horses, but his son owns only 5 — an indication of the diminishing importance of horses after the road from Jomsom to the Chinese border was built ten years ago.

As a boy, the king used to travel three days on horseback from Jomsom, and the animals were integral to the culture and daily life of the Mustang people.

Last year, during the wedding of crown prince Jigme Dhindup

Phunchok Palwar Bista, Lo Manthang rural municipality declared a public holiday and residents brought their horses to the celebration — 250 of them altogether.

"I wanted to hold my son's wedding in Kathmandu, but the citizens insisted it should be here," the king confided. "We didn't ask them to bring their horses, but out of love and respect for the institution, they brought their own horses for the celebration."

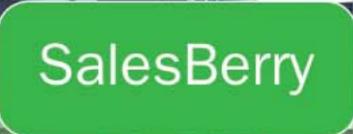
The king now spends part of his time in Kathmandu where he looks after his 92-year-old queen step mother. But the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu makes him homesick,

and he longs to be back, also to take care of his resort in Lo Manthang.

The eldest brother of the previous King Jigme Palbar Bista died at a young age, another brother became a monk in Dolpo. The former king's own son also died at a young age, and when his biological mother died, the current king was adopted as the heir to ensure continuity of the royal lineage.

The king says Mustang will need help from the international community to cope with the impact of climate breakdown.

He says, "We also need to understand the changing climate better, and unite to adapt to its impact." 🇳🇵



LUCKY DRAW

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



MG COMET EV PACE

BUMPER PRIZE



SEGWAY NINEBOT E 100

1st Prize



MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC FAN

4th Prize



SAMSUNG LED TV-40INCH

2nd Prize



MILUX ELECTRIC OVEN

3rd Prize



PENSONIC ELECTRIC PRESSURE COOKER

5th Prize



TOSHIBA HOT POT

6th Prize

■ Benjamin Zimmerman

Humla is in the remote northwestern corner of Nepal. And in a remote corner within Humla district is Limi Valley.

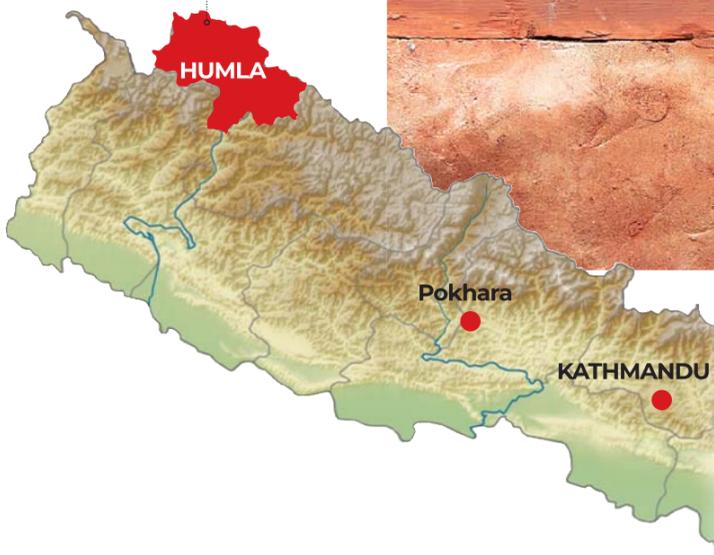
Culturally, linguistically and even geologically, this is the Tibetan Plateau, and Limi's 2,000 inhabitants are facing the threat of cultural erosion and outmigration of its young people.

Now, however, local schools are trying to change that by ensuring quality education not only so that local children do not have to go to faraway boarding schools, but also to attract students from other parts of Humla.

The Aatmiya Shree Sunkhani Basic School in the village of Halji has Tibetan language classes and tries to instil pride in students about their local culture. It has also invested in better dormitories and other facilities so the school does not have to close in the winter months because of the extreme cold there at 3,700m elevation.

Also under construction is the Limi Valley School that hopes to revamp the quality of instruction, and change the focus of curriculum to address the challenges of heritage

Limi Valley



Saving Humla from heritage loss

Schools in Nepal's remotest district hope to reverse youth outmigration and protect local culture



loss and outmigration.

Limi Valley is the location of the 1,100-year-old Rinchenling Monastery and represents the cultural soul of Upper Humla. It has enormous potential for pilgrim tourism because of the proximity to the sacred Lake Mansarovar and Mt Kailash across the border in China.

Limi has three villages: Til, Halji, and Zhang, and they each had a school till five years ago but they closed down because of lack of students. The valley is only accessible by crossing the 5,000m Nyalu Pass, and its extreme remoteness translates into isolation, lack of jobs and opportunities. Most

young people have migrated to Kathmandu, or to Purang across the border in China.

What is left in Limi are the elderly, and children separated from parents.

"Only grandmothers are left in the community," says Anjila Thapa of the Aatmiya school.

Yak herds decline due to lifestyle changes, the climate crisis and outmigration

■ Tanka Dhakal in Syangboche

Yaks that used to be the mainstay of the culture of Himalayan communities in Nepal have been in steady decline due to lifestyle changes, outmigration, inbreeding, and impact of the climate crisis.

The National Agricultural Census shows that the total number of yaks in Nepal went down from 53,000 to 48,000 in the past three years. There are now fewer than 10,000 households rearing yaks for a living across the mountains.

Yaks are the generic name for the long haired bison-like oxen that live at 4,000-5,000m in the Himalaya and the Tibetan Plateau.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development runs a Yak Genetic Resource Centre here in Syangboche at 3,885m. Established in 1973, the centre is supposed to ensure that the yak population of Khumbu remains robust, gives adequate milk, and maintains a healthy variation in its genotype.

The Centre has 155 yaks for research, but a lack of budget and priority means that it has not been able to fulfil its true potential to meet the challenges that this domesticated

When yaks go, so does culture



Yak in a Langtang pasture where the milk is used to produce the valley's famous Emmental cheese.



PHOTO: CITTA



Centre housing for teachers and a free hostel for students, parents can feel more confident in their children's education and accommodation year-round while keeping them in Limi.

"Earlier, people in surrounding areas used to say Limi was poor and backward," says Ward Chair Paljor Tamang. "Now, people say that if the school provides teachers and opportunities, children will come from other parts of Humla to study up here."

The new Limi Valley School, centrally located in Dalji, is set to be inaugurated in September, with the construction of the site's main building nearly complete (pictured left). Even so, the push factors driving young people away may be too strong to halt outmigration.

"Construction and hardware won't bring students back," admits Anjila Thapa, who wants to start additional teacher training before classes begin. The school is adding Tibetan language teachers, and Aatmiya also plans to introduce fellowships focusing on extracurricular activities and a holistic education.

CITTA Country Director Sanjeev KC says the school's success will not just be measured in maintaining student numbers, but increasing them by attracting those from the community currently studying in faraway Kathmandu.

"Within the next five years, we hope to have 70 or 80 students," says KC. "We identified the gaps in education and worked with the community to understand their needs. That is why we pooled our resources for a centrally located school."

There is now a need for a high school till SEE level, and the goal is to make its present Grade 7 the first graduating class.

Daube wants Aatmiya to be more than just a school, but an effort to preserve the culture and local economy. The organisation recently began working with local women to produce and internationally market shuktu, traditional woolen blankets.

When the new Limi Valley School opens in September, it aims to prove that modern education and cultural preservation can go hand-in-hand.

"Of those who have left Limi, many still own land and farms here", says Tamang. "With adequate facilities and opportunities, we may see them return".

Humla's children are growing up in Kathmandu or abroad and losing touch with their culture.

Aatmiya is a Nepal-based sister organization of CITTA, a non-profit seeking to bring healthcare, education, and economic development to the most remote and underserved communities in

Nepal and India. It was founded by American artist Michael Daube, whose love for anthropology and Buddhism led him to work in the region.

CITTA runs a Women's Economic Development Center, hospitals, and schools in Jaisalmer and Odisha in India, and also

manages a hospital in Sindhuli. Aatmiya (which means 'intimate' in Nepali) was started in 2011 as a public-private partnership under which there are government teachers as well as those supported by the project.

Earlier, schooling was not much more than "kids teaching

kids", says Daube, and government teachers were unwilling to travel to such remote parts of Humla and were mostly absent.

Their unfamiliarity with the local language and culture also meant that schools were actually the reason for cultural erosion.

Now, with its Community



PHOTOS: TANKA DHAKAL



cattle species faces.

"All we are doing is protecting the yaks we have, we do not have the resources to conduct genetic studies," admits technical officer Ramlallan Yadav who has been stationed at the centre for the past 24 years.

The high altitude cattle are all lumped together as yak, but there are specific types. Nak are female domesticated yak. Chauri (Dzo) are females born from mating of yak-nak with lowland cows. A Lang is a Tibetan bull, while a female calf born from a Lang is a Dimzo. A calf born from a Yak and a lowland mountain cow is a Urang. The dwarf Lulu found in Mustang and Manang is a mixture of lowland cattle with yaks.

A recent decline in the population of purebred yak-nak and the difficulty in accessing Tibetan bulls means that farmers now have more Urang than Dimzo. In addition, male calves known as Jopke or Tole born from crossbreeding cannot continue the generation, and are used only as pack animals

in the high Himalaya.

"A nak gives at most 2 litres of milk a day, while a chauri can produce as much as 6 litres daily," explains yak researcher Shanker Raj Barsila. "If we had facilities for genetic studies, we could improve the hardiness of the species. Yak milk has medicinal properties and is generally healthier than dairy milk."

Besides changing lifestyles of local populations, outmigration, and lack of access to traditional pastures in Tibet for the yak population, Barsila points to inbreeding as the main challenge facing Nepal's yaks. This is manifested in yak-naks being more prone to disease, a reduction in milk production, and yaks lacking horns.

The agricultural census mixes up different types of yak, and Barsila estimates that contrary to the census, there are only about 20,000 yak-nak, and 40,000 to 60,000 chauri.

These numbers are declining further due to climate breakdown which is warming the

mountains, and affecting pastures due to deficient snowfall in winter.

"The snow that should fall from October-November now falls in March-May, and the wind blows in January-February," Yadav says. "And all winter there is just dry cold wind."

Human outmigration is directly linked to declining yak herds. Young people leaving mountain villages for Kathmandu or abroad means the next generation is not following the ancestral occupation of pastoralism.

Fewer yaks mean the intangible heritage of yak rearing with a pastoral culture, festivals, local diet, vocabulary and an intimate knowledge about the habits of the animals is in danger of being lost forever.

Yak milk is hardened into chhurpi that preserves dairy protein for times when milk is not as plentiful. Yak milk is also used in brewing salty Himalayan tea favoured by people of the higher altitudes, and its butter is used for sacred lamps in monasteries. Yak hair is woven into woollen clothing and

blankets, and yak meat is consumed.

"The domesticated yak is now becoming an endangered species due to migration from the mountains and shrinking grazing areas due to environmental impact," says Prajwal Sharma of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) who recently researched the impact of migration on yak rearing in Helambu, north of Kathmandu.

The number of farmers moving to high pastures with their herds in the summer, and descending to lower elevations during winter has decreased, Sharma found. In Syangboche Yadav has observed changes in the pasture grass because of years of winter drought.

The mating season of the yak-nak has also been affected. Yadav explains, "Earlier, almost all nak conceived on time, but now there are seasonal changes. Mating season used to be July-August, now it is October-November."

The pastureland where grass used to grow in April was barren this time. In Yadav's experience, in recent years, grass and herbs have only started sprouting from May-June.

The Syangboche centre sells yak milk, but that is not even enough to buy potatoes for the yaks, let alone for conducting genetic studies. The National Animal Breeding and Genetic Research Centre is supposed to study indigenous and local animal breeds, but its chief Sagar Paudel says there has been no study of the yak-nak inbreeding problem.

The National Cattle Research Program in Rampur of Chitwan has surveyed yak-nak in Rasuwa and Mustang to find out their adaptability to climate change, but there is no detailed genetic study planned.

Further research could also help find ways for yak-nak and chauri to adapt to a heating Himalaya and weather extremes.

EVENTS



Movie Screening

Watch the documentary *Call me Dancer*, a story about a Mumbai hip-hop dancer torn between his parents' expectations and his artistic dreams.

14 June, 2pm, Aakriti Marg, Maharajganj

Hues and Treasures

For art lovers, the ongoing exhibition *Hues and Treasures* features artwork from five Nepali women artists.

Until 20 July, 10am-6pm, Classic Gallery, Chakupat, 984-1224753



Art Exhibition

From the private collection of Pratima and Prithvi Pandé, 'Examining the Line: Old and Young Masters' features art made by Birendra Pratap Singh and Prashant Shrestha.

Until 7 July, 11am-6pm, Kalā Salon, Chhaya Center, Thamel

Sabdakiri Sanjh

Set aside the evening for some literature. Enjoy recitals of poems and stories in both Nepali and English. Special performance by Mohit Joshi.

15 June, 5pm onwards, Cafe Arica, Baluwatar



Almost Weekend

Destress from the mundane weekdays by laughing it off with stand-up comedy every Wednesday at 7:30pm. Get tickets from the Khalti app.

Wednesdays, 7:30pm onwards, Ticket: Rs250-Rs500, Ivory, Thamel

DINING



Queens Eatery

Known for their delicious American food, Queens Eatery— which turned five recently—is just the place for good burgers. Enjoy a 25% discount on all items.

Sanepa (01) 5434260

MUSIC

Summer Music Fest

The Summer Music Fest will feature a live session by NS 1134. DJ Rolex and DJ Praize will be with the audience at the afterparty. 14 June, 7pm-2am, Ai-La Lounge, Kumaripati (01) 5408681/9801118683



Samir Shrestha

Be prepared for an evening of music. Enjoy live performances from Samir Shrestha and the Good Boyz, and dance to beats from DJ Kabin, DJ Loop and DJ Jyafu.

14 June, 6pm onwards, Club Fahrenheit, Thamel, 9841726830



Everest Echos

Everest Echoes will include live art, a pop-up market and a lineup of live performances from Kta Haru, Satish Ghalan, and Flying Spirits. Buy tickets via IME Pay.

15 June, Ivory above Karma, Thamel, 9826925146



Jazz Folk Night

Don't miss this Jazz folk night experience featuring Kāntā dĀb dĀb who give a contemporary twist to traditional Nepali music.

14 June, 7pm onwards, 4stories, Saat Ghunti, Thamel

Beer Festival

Join in for a day filled with beer, BBQ, music and games at the fourth beer festival. Create happy memories with your beer buddies this Saturday.

15 June, 12am-8pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel (01) 5428362



Jimbu Thakali

Not in the mood to cook? Head over to Jimbu and enjoy a traditional Thakali meal that is as healthy as it is delicious.

Jhamsikhel (01) 5544011

Mamagoto Nepal

Mamagoto is a Pan-Asian restaurant that serves a variety of Asian fusion dishes. Wash down maki rolls, satays, dumplings, and ramen with delicious cocktails.

Panipokhari, Lazimpat, 9802320960

About Town

GETAWAYS



Royal Palm Resort

An expansive resort where every guest has a luxurious view of the Annapurna range from the comfort of their beds.

Kundhara, Pokhara (061) 524701

Tiger Mountain Resort

The lodges at this resort are designed with bricks, rustic accents and woody undertones. The private rooms are tucked away in greenery while the common buildings are located on decks overlooking the Annapurna range.

Kandani Danda, Pokhara (01) 4720580



Hotel Country Villa

From the top of the Nagarkot hill, the hotel provides views of greenery, sunrise and sunset, and showcases the mountain range on clear days. A natural and relaxing retreat for those wishing to escape the pandemonium of the city.

Nagarkot (01) 4700305/ 9851192106

Kantipur Temple House

With its red brick walls, wood carvings, floor seating and traditional courtyard, Kantipur Temple House resembles the palaces of old Nepali kings right on the outskirts of Thamel.

Thamel (01) 4250131



The Last Resort

Bungee jump, Tandem swing, or raft the Bhoté Koshi white waters at The Last Resort.

Bhotekoshi, Sindhupalchok, 9801258675



Garden Terrace

The Garden Terrace has a wide selection of international cuisine including Nepali, Indian, Continental, Oriental, Japanese and Italian.

Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal (01) 4273999

Taza Treats

Taza brings Middle-Eastern flare to Kathmandu through Syrian cuisine: enjoy fresh shawarma, falafel, hummus, and kebab.

Pulchowk Lane, 9801114002

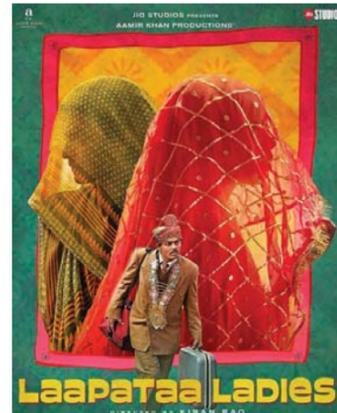
WEEKEND WEATHER



4-Month Forecast

Most monsoon models are forecasting normal total precipitation for June-September. It is important to remember that while total rainfall is important, much more critical for flood and landslide disasters is whether that rain falls in heavy bursts or is spread out. According to the Emergency Response Coordination Centre of the European Commission, most of eastern and central Nepal will receive between 1,400mm-2,400mm of rain in the next four months, which is about normal. (Map, left) But Far West Province shows a June-September anomaly of up to -400mm. This is worrying because the food-deficit region is heavily dependent on rainfed agriculture.

OUR PICK



Laapataa Ladies is a story of two brides and the journey they embark on when they get separated from their respective husbands while travelling on the same train. Set in 2001, the film adapted from Biplab Goswami's story *Two Brides* and directed by Kiran Rao is a satirical commentary on the patriarchy and misogyny deeply-rooted in our society. This highly acclaimed bitter-sweet tale is heartwarming and thought-provoking and stars Pratibha Ranta, Nitanishi Goel, Sparsh Shrivastava, Chhaya Kadam and Geeta Aggarwal.

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

Beyond pre-conceptions of Nepal

A Nepali Times journalism intern looks back at her time in the country

■ Aisha MacDougall

At the start of 2023 I was working in a bank, by the end of the year I was standing at the top of Gokyo Ri watching the last light of the day hit the top of Everest.

If you had told the January 2023 version of me what my life would be like now, I would have laughed. I have spent the last five months in Nepal, while this is my fourth time in Nepal, it has been the first time that I have properly lived in the country and my first time pursuing my passion for journalism and photography.

There is something magical about Nepal that is apparent from the moment you arrive - a sense of comfort and innumerable possibilities. It is a rare thing to visit a new country and immediately feel at ease. I never knew it was possible to be overcome with nostalgia for a place I had never visited before until I came to Kathmandu.

I wrote about Nepali botanical art, jazz festivals, profiled an ex-soldier and athlete, mobile phone legislation, climate change, and Nepali cuisine.

Journalism is a wonderful vehicle to develop a better understanding of the world and one's place in it, and, ultimately, learn and experience things that you would otherwise never have the opportunity to.

I have learnt more about Nepal, its culture, and its society. My articles for Nepali Times helped me join diverse fragments of Nepal that I have experienced into one cohesive tapestry.

The highlight has been meeting the people and having the



AISHA MACDOUGALL

opportunity to share their stories.

In October in the Annapurna Region, I met Captain Poon in Ghorepani who began his journey as a Gurkha soldier before becoming an international diving champion only to turn into a businessman, a politician, and a local hero.

Seeing the reaction to the profile allowed me to realise the power and impact that stories can have, and the ability of journalism to connect with the lives of those even in the most remote of places.

Next, I journeyed to Gokyo Ri, the spellbinding beauty of Nepal's

mountains was heightened by being alone on the trails.

The sheer scale of the towering mountains and the vast and expansive landscapes were overwhelming. I had never felt so small in my life.

I also witnessed the devastating impact that climate breakdown is already having on the Himalaya. Despite being in one of the highest places in the world and in the depths of winter, there was little ice and snow.

Another striking aspect was witnessing different attitudes

towards life and death in Nepal. Gai Jatra is a celebration of life in the face of death, for those who had lost loved ones the previous year, it is a chance to celebrate their honour.

Generally speaking, we in 'the West' shy away from death, refuse to speak of it and try to delay the inevitable. Through festivals like Gai Jatra, death became not a scary elephant in the room, nor a source of tragedy but an opportunity to celebrate life, to bring people together, to create a sense of hope. Life and death are not beginnings

and endings but part of the constant passage of time.

Pashupatinath is an embodiment of the refreshing Nepali attitude toward mortality: the exuberant evening prayer while pyres burnt nearby.

The more of Nepal I experienced, the more Anthony Bourdain's "travel is about the gorgeous feeling of teetering on the unknown" rang true. There is nothing more rewarding than getting to know a place, to slowly peel back the layers of expatriate separation, and begin the process of making a new place your home. There is truly no place easier to make your home than Nepal, the warm and welcoming country.

Journalism allowed me to unfurl my tourist pre-conceptions of Nepal and dive into the complexities of this magical country. Just when you think you have experienced everything that Nepal has to offer, a new, unexpected side of the country is serendipitously revealed.

I witnessed the sun setting on the world's tallest mountain, visited the holiest temples, tried the sweetest of foods, and most importantly, met the most incredible of people.

While a part of my heart breaks that this experience has come to an end, I do not feel bitter or forlorn, rather I am filled with immense gratitude. I have never experienced such kindness and joy as I have from the Nepali people and I hope to take some of that warmth back. 🇳🇵

Aisha MacDougall interned with Nepali Times from October 2023 to February 2024.

TATA MOTORS
Connecting Aspirations

TATA

go.ev with **Tiago.ev**

NEPAL'S HIGHEST SELLING
COMPLETE EV HATCHBACK

Nepalis dying in someone

The stories of these 22 Nepalis in the Russian Army killed in Ukraine have the same plot

■ Sagar Budhathoki

At least 25 Nepalis have officially died fighting for the Russian Army against Ukraine. But families say 39 have been killed in action.

Russian journalist Irina Kravtsova of Novaya Gazeta Europa (Новая газета Европа) who has been following the stories of the soldiers estimates there are about 1,000 Nepalis in the Russian Army.

We tracked down the families of the 22 Nepalis killed, and the thread running through most of their stories was the same — their sons and husbands were looking for jobs that paid better than the Gulf to pay off debts. They had been lured by recruiters who promised high salaries and citizenship. Many were attracted by TikTok videos. Most families now say they were duped by recruiters.

Some of those killed were already in Russia on student or work visas, while others had military backgrounds in the Nepal Army, Police and a few even were Maoist guerrillas.



Sanjay KC

Sanjay KC of Banke was Rs9 million in debt after his hardware shop went bankrupt due to the pandemic. His father, Amar, sold their land to pay the interest of the loan. Sanjay met a recruiter who promised a job in Romania. It was only after his son left in September that his father found out Sanjay had gone to Russia instead.

In November, during their last conversation, Sanjay tearfully told his father that he had joined the Russian Army and that conditions were bad. Sanjay's family, including his wife and teenage son, learned of his death on 23 January.

"Had I known where he was about to go, I would have called the police to stop him at Kathmandu airport," says Amar.



Khagendra Raika Magar

After returning from Malaysia ten years ago, Khagendra Raika Magar got divorced. He was unable to find a job, and a neighbour put him in touch with a man named Chiranjivi Basnet, who promised to send him to Russia. His two sisters tried to stop him, but Khagendra did not listen. He borrowed Rs1.4 million to pay the recruiter.

His last conversation with his family was on 1 March telling them he was being sent to the Ukraine front in three weeks. Khagendra's name was on the Foreign Ministry's list of KIA, but family members found out about it only after this reporter showed them the list last month.



Purna Bahadur Gurung

In Dhading, Purna Bahadur Gurung was a school van driver, but did not make enough to support his family. So, he borrowed Rs900,000 from relatives, friends and a savings cooperative to pay a recruiter for a job in Russia. He did not tell his family that it was a job in the Russian Army when he called in November. "He lied to us," his wife Lilu recalls.

When the call finally came, it was not her husband's voice, but a fellow Nepali soldier telling her that her husband had been killed. Lilu now has to take care of her 76-year-old mother-in-law, 11-year-old daughter and five-year-old son, as well as pay back the loan.

Sundar Moktan

Sundar Moktan spent four years in Malaysia before returning home to Rasuwa to become a contractor. But his business collapsed during the Covid lockdown. He told his wife Patali he was going to Croatia to work, but joined the Russian Army. After seeing terrifying videos of battles in TikTok, Patali grew increasingly apprehensive. On 30 December, the call came that he had been killed. Patali now has to take care of her mother-in-law and her two children, while trying to return the Rs1.8 million loan her husband took to pay his recruiter.



Nabin Shahi

Nabin Shahi left for Dubai after quitting his job with Nepal Army, while his wife Deepa worked in Oman. Back home in Jajarkot, their two children waited for the parents to come home.

Like the others, Nabin was lured to join the Russian military by a Nepali recruiter in Dubai who promised a high salary and permanent residency in Russia. "We were told that he would never be in any danger," says Deepa, who sent him Rs1.2 million from her savings to pay the recruiter.

Nabin left for Moscow on 9 October, and his calls to Deepa stopped after the first two weeks. In February, she learned of her husband's death on the news. Deepa came back to Nepal to perform her husband's last rites and is leaving for Oman again. "I have to go back because we have to pay back the debt," she says.



Jit Bahadur BK

Jit Bahadur BK returned to Baglung after having worked in Qatar and Saudi Arabia for almost a decade. He drove a second-hand Bolero, but could not earn enough to support his family of five. In September last year, a recruiter lured him with the promise of a job in Russia and did not say it was in the military. Jit borrowed Rs600,000 on top of the Rs2.5 million he already owed for his car, and left for Moscow.

Jit's wife Bishnu did not even know that Russia was at war with Ukraine. On 19 February, he was killed in action. Bishnu is now raising her three children by herself.

Sukra Bahadur Tamang

Shukra Bahadur Tamang of Kathmandu left Nepal after a failed real estate deal that left him Rs5 million in debt. The 48-year-old left in October, telling his family he had a job as a security guard in Qatar. His wife Buddhi Maya found out he was enlisted in the Russian Army. She told him to run away and come back to Nepal. They lost touch. The very next month, she saw his name on a list of KIA in the media. "This debt will also take us to our grave," says Buddhi Maya.



Somesh Sunar

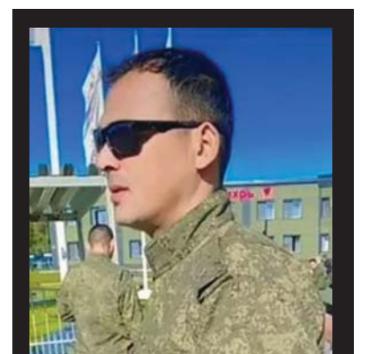
A broker approached Somesh Sunar in Qatar and promised him a job in Russia for a fee of Rs500,000. Somesh called his wife Bishnu Maya on 9 December to tell her he was being deployed to the frontlines in Ukraine. They spoke one more time before he went out of touch. Weeks later, she was informed that Somesh had been killed. "I am not able to understand why he agreed to go to such a dangerous place," says a tearful Bishnu Maya.



Ganga Ram Adhikari

A recruiter approached Ganga Ram Adhikari, 33, while he was working as a driver in Qatar and promised a high-paying job in Russia. He flew off to Moscow on 20 November, and trained for two months before being sent to the front. He last spoke with his wife Anuradha on 18 January, a day before he was sent to the Donbas.

On 26 January, Ganga Ram's villagers in Jhapa received word from fellow Nepalis in Russia that he had been killed in action. His family refused to believe the news even after the Foreign Ministry confirmed it. They consulted an astrologer, who told them Ganga Ram would return. But he never did.



Bharat Bahadur Shahi

When Dubai-based Kailali resident Bharat Bahadur Shahi decided to leave for Russia, his wife Bhadra told him it was too dangerous. He did not listen, and told her not to watch the news from Ukraine. Bhadra was pregnant, and had mortgaged their house to send Rs500,000 to her husband to pay the recruiter.

At first, Bharat sent lighthearted videos from training to ease his wife's worries. In November, just days after their daughter's birth, Bharat told Bhadra over the phone that he was going to desert. She never heard from him again.

A month later, fellow Nepali soldiers told Bhadra he had been killed on the Ukraine front. She is raising her two infants and struggling to pay back the mortgage.



Rupak Karki

Twenty-four-year-old Rupak Karki, an only child, joined the Russian Army after being unable to pay off the Rs1.5 million his family had borrowed. In November, Rupak told his mother Laxmi over a video call that he was going to join the military with his friends. "I was unaware that Russia was at war, and thought the job would be similar to the one in the Nepal Army," Laxmi recalls.

Rupak had gone out of contact, and weeks after his last call a friend phoned Laxmi to tell her he was dead. Rupak's father has been listless with grief.

else's war



Hari Prasad Aryal

Hari Prasad Aryal joined the Nepal Army like his father before him. He was not happy there and subsequently tried to go to Korea or Oman, but could not land a proper job. He left his home in Syangja to fly to Dubai where his two brothers already worked. From there he reached Moscow in October 2023. He was in contact with his family until 5 December, and they were informed of his death a month later.



Sandeep Thapaliya

Sandeep Thapaliya from Gorkha worked at the lab in Teku Hospital during the Covid pandemic and struggled to find work once his contract ended. In 2022, he left for Russia to become a lab technician, but joined the Russian Army instead.

"Out of the blue, he sent photos of himself in an army uniform," recalls Sandeep's sister Shanta. "Why he decided to do such a thing, we have still not been able to understand."

Sandeep spoke with his family for the last time on 24 May 2023. In October, his family finally received news of his death.



Ganga Raj Moktan

After serving five years in the Nepal Army, Ganga Raj Moktan was unemployed in his village in Ilam. He went to Dubai but was dissatisfied with his income. He paid a recruiter Rs600,000 for a job in Malta, but then met another broker who promised him a job in Russia for a Rs700,000 fee. His wife Yankila protested, but he ignored her.

Yankila spoke to her husband for the last time on Laxmi Puja on 12 October. She waited for the next call that never came. The Nepal Embassy in Moscow informed her in December that he had been killed just three days after their last phone call. Yankila has their 7-year-old son and is saddled with Rs1.4 million in debt.

Pritam Karki

Syangja native Pritam Karki was a Nepal Army soldier for 16 years and worked as a security guard after retirement. He guarded the UN office in Kabul, and sent money home regularly to support his parents, wife and two sons.



After the Taliban took over, Pritam met a friend who was going to Russia and was lured by the prospect of Russian citizenship. His family had no idea he had been enlisted into the Russian Army, and in November found out he had been killed in action.



Kundan Singh Nagal

A constable in the Armed Police Force, Kundan Singh Nagal lost his job in the Dubai Police five years ago and came back to build a house in Mahendranagar. Even though he owed Rs3 million for his house, Kundan, 36, took out an additional loan to go to Russia in October. He called his wife Pratiksha that he was being sent to the Red Zone, and was unsure if he could survive. News of his death came on 20 December.

Their house remains unfinished, and Pratiksha and her two young children are deep in grief and debt.



Anit Sah

Anit Sah of Mahottari helped his father run a pharmacy because he could not see any career prospects for himself as an overseer. He spent Rs600,000 to go to Russia two years ago after hearing that it would be easier to get an engineering degree there.

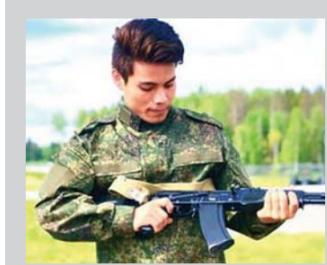
Five months into his studies, the 23-year-old called his family to tell them that he and his friends had joined the Russian Army instead. His family tried to dissuade him, but in vain. That was the last time they heard from him.

Anit was confirmed dead five months ago, and his family is still waiting until the Russian Embassy sends his remains.

Ghana Singh Pun

Ghana Singh Pun of Rolpa went to Dubai for two years after being unable to earn enough to support his family through his mobile phone shop in Dang. But his financial situation did not improve, and he had accumulated a debt of Rs1.1 million. The 45-year-old then began to look for brokers who could get him to Europe and met one who sent him to Russia for Rs1.3 million.

"He had been out of touch since he left in December," says his relative Tulsi Prasad. "On 23 February, we received news that he had died." Ghana Singh is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter.



Dewan Rai

Dewan Rai had passed his Korean EPS exam, but left to work in Russia after Korea halted the employment scheme during the pandemic.

The 26-year-old had been living in a hostel with 10 others in Moscow, struggling with the Russian language and work, when a recruiter enlisted him in the Russian Army.

Dewan told his parents and brother back in Pokhara not to worry, and sent Rs300,000 as his first salary. Then he was out of touch.

He was killed on 1 October, but his family only found out a month later. "We had no idea he would give up his studies to fight a war," says his brother Ashik, who is now planning to migrate himself to pay back his brother's loans.



Raj Kumar Giri

Raj Kumar Giri's work took him to different places from his home in Naubise to Kuwait and Dubai where he served as a security guard.

He paid a broker Rs800,000 to leave for Russia in September last year. His family was notified of his death on the frontlines three months later, but they held on to hope that he was alive until the Foreign Ministry confirmed the news a month later.

"We told him not to risk his life by joining a war, but he told us that life is not lived without risks," his wife Sharmila recalls.

Where they are from

Hometowns of 22 of the Nepalis who died fighting for the Russian Army in Ukraine



Raj Kumar Roka

Dolakha's Raj Kumar Roka, 35, ran a thriving furniture shop in Kathmandu until Covid brought his business to a halt. As losses and debts piled up, he decided to go to Russia to pay back Rs10.5 million in loans. He left in October, and within a month his family heard he was dead.

"We thought he had made the right decision in leaving for Russia," says Raj Kumar's brother Suman who did not know he was deployed on the frontlines. Raj Kumar's wife is raising their two children on her own.

vianet

AWARDED

BEST ISP OF THE YEAR

INTERNET क्षेत्रको लागि प्रसिद्ध

Asian Telecom Awards 2024,

SINGAPORE बाट सम्मानित



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
www.vianet.com.np

vianetnepal
vianetcommunications

vianetcommunications
viber.com/vianet

vianetofficial





Grab a friend and double the delight

BOGO



BUY 1 GET 1 LUNCH OFFER

Date: 3rd June - 28th June
Monday - Friday

Time: 12pm - 3pm

For RSVP & Enquiries
977-9801976054

*T&C Apply



Rs.
3000
nett

