



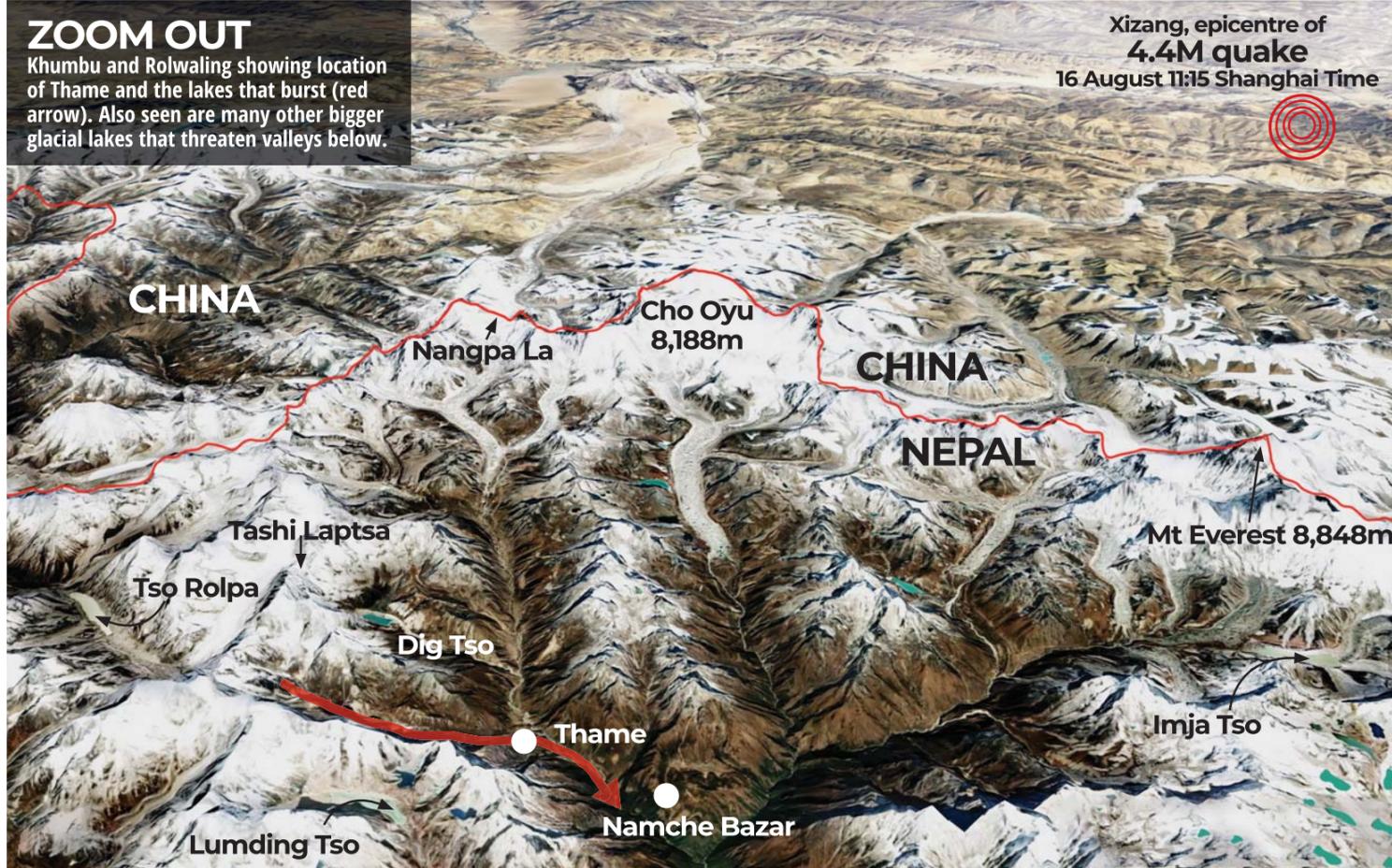
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ZOOM OUT
Khumbu and Rolwaling showing location of Thame and the lakes that burst (red arrow). Also seen are many other bigger glacial lakes that threaten valleys below.

Xizang, epicentre of 4.4M quake
16 August 11:15 Shanghai Time

ICIMOD, SCIENCE BULLETIN, NDRRMA



'As the Loss and Damage Fund begins its operation, events like the Thame disaster should inform its design. It must be tailored to address extreme events, where the conventional approach of adapting through a lengthy funding proposal process may not be effective or timely.'

Act Now on Climate
Manjeet Dhakal
Guest Editorial **page 2**



'Climate finance also needs to address non-economic loss of the rich history and intangible heritage of the village that lies on the ancient Khumbu-Tibet trade route across the Nangpa La.'

Measuring Climate Impact on Culture and Heritage
Rastra Raj Bhandari **page 10-11**

'As glaciers melt and lakes expand, disasters like Thame will be more frequent, we have to adapt. We need to tell our stories to the world, and at local levels we have to get back on our feet and prepare for what's coming.'

Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa quoted in **Lives on the Line in the Himalaya** by Sonia Awale **page 10-11**

HIGH ALERT

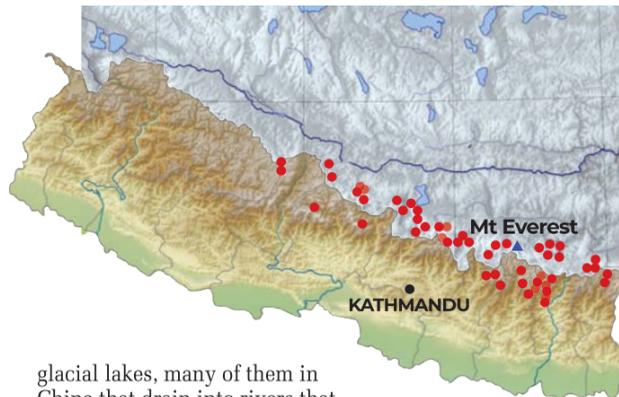
Was the 16 August flood in Thame set off by an earthquake 65km away in Tibet a few hours earlier? Did an avalanche fall into the lake causing it to overtop its end-moraine dam? Was it extreme rainfall that made the moraine, weakened by melted permafrost, to collapse?

The trigger event may not be as important as the root cause: climate breakdown melting the Himalayan ice cap. Thankfully, no lives were lost last Friday. But we may not be

so lucky next time in these fragile mountains in a seismically active region, where inherent risks are magnified by climate change.

Reducing Nepal's carbon footprint will not do much to address global warming, but it will lower our petroleum import bill.

Instead of waiting for adaptation grants or money from the Loss and Damage Fund which may never come, Nepal has to be prepared for calamities like Thame or Melamchi. There are at least 47 dangerous



TOP 47

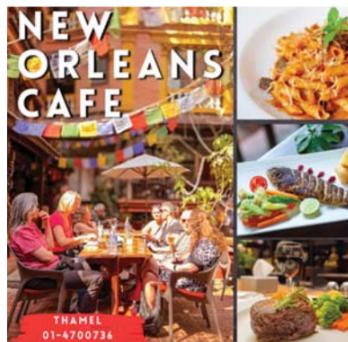
potentially most dangerous glacial lakes, of which 21 are within Nepal itself.

glacial lakes, many of them in China that drain into rivers that flow into Nepal. New lakes are emerging all the time.

Hazards need to be mapped, settlements and infrastructure moved higher, an early warning system installed, including a

crossborder mechanism with China.

And we need a multi-disaster preparedness plan to deal with the impact of extreme weather, heat waves and wildfires. 🇳🇵



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Act now on climate

As early as 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its fourth assessment report confirmed that the receding and thinning of Himalayan glaciers could be attributed primarily to global warming caused by the human-driven emissions of greenhouse gases.



GUEST EDITORIAL
Manjeet Dhakal

The 2014 IPCC fifth assessment report further confirmed that the Himalaya is experiencing some of the fastest rates of glacial retreat globally, contributing to the increased size and number of glacial lakes.

Above the village of Thame in Khumbu lie new glacial lakes. Five of them are located at about 4,760m elevation. Just after noon on 16 August, two of the lower lakes burst, triggering a massive flood.

Debris, including rocks and ice, were pushed downstream to Thame village, located about 960m below, destroying 20 houses, an elementary school, and damaging a 650KW hydropower station. It displaced 135 people, who have been evacuated to temporary shelters.

The IPCC projects that snow cover, glaciers, and permafrost will continue to diminish in almost all regions throughout the 21st century. These changes will likely trigger landslides, floods, and cascading events in areas where such disasters were previously unheard of.

Glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) are a regular occurrence in the Nepal Himalaya, and 26 such events have been recorded in the recent past. In fact, Thame was already hit in 1985 when the Dig Tso glacial lake burst on 4 August 1985 destroying the nearly completed Thame hydropower plant.

There are more than 3,800 glaciers in Nepal, and they are vital for sustaining river flows, supporting agriculture, promoting tourism, and generating hydropower. Various studies and glacier inventories have identified 330 of the 2,500 glacial lakes in Nepal are expanding steadily.

A 2020 study by ICIMOD and UNDP revealed that 1,400 of these lakes are bigger than or equal to 0.02 km², making them large enough to cause floods from overflow. Among these, 47 glacial lakes were identified as potentially dangerous, with 21 located in Nepal. There have been some attempts to respond to the impact of glacial lake floods. For instance, the water level of Tso Rolpa in Nepal was lowered by more than 3m in 2000, and Imja Tso by 3.4m in 2016. However, the estimated monetary value of the responses is enormous and far exceeds Nepal's regular development budget. This highlights the critical role of the international community to

step in and ensure that countries like Nepal do not have to divert resources allocated for health, education, and poverty eradication.

This week's flood in Thame could have threatened five major hydropower projects downstream on the Bhoté Kosi, Dudh Kosi and Sun Kosi Rivers, seriously impacting energy security in the region.

The increased frequency and intensity of glacial lake floods in the Himalaya in recent decades have caused significant economic and non-economic losses, including infrastructure damage, community displacement, loss of cultural heritage, and ecosystem degradation.

If climate change continues at its current pace, the rates of glacier mass loss, shrinkage, and the formation and expansion of glacial lakes will lead to more frequent GLOFs and other glacial hazards – impacting on water availability on which millions of people downstream depend.

Despite ongoing efforts, there are limits to adaptation. Some impacts of climate change, such as the loss of glacial ice and the resulting long-term changes in water

availability for agriculture and hydropower, are irreversible. These scenarios lead to loss and damage that require measures beyond traditional adaptation strategies.

As the Loss and Damage Fund begins its operation, events like the Thame disaster should inform its design. It must be tailored to address extreme events, where the conventional approach of adapting through a lengthy funding proposal process may not be effective or timely.

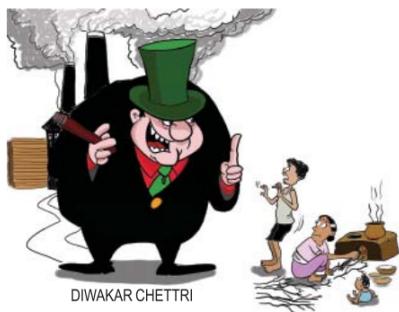
Countries must remain committed to curb global average temperature rise by reducing fossil fuel emissions, and mobilise

adequate finance for vulnerable countries like Nepal. Building on the existing recognition of mountains in multilateral processes, it is crucial to advance mountain priorities to address the needs of vulnerable communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

Nepal itself must establish systems for regularly monitoring glacial lakes, particularly those identified as potentially dangerous, and keep communities informed about their status. A robust mechanism must also be in place to provide immediate response, coupled with a longer-term plan to help affected communities.

The Thame disaster serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need for global action as vulnerable communities continue to bear the brunt of climate extremes. It is imperative that the international community commit to even stronger climate action aligned to the 1.5°C target, ensure sufficient climate finance for the most vulnerable, and protect the lives and livelihoods of those most at risk.

Manjeet Dhakal, PhD, is Head of the LDC Support Team at Climate Analytics (CA) and Director of Climate Analytics South Asia.



As if we needed a reminder, the Thame flood was proof of accelerated impact of climate breakdown in the Himalaya.

ONLINE PACKAGES



A flash debris flow just after noon on 16 August damaged half the village of Thame in the Everest region. Rapid melting of the Himalaya due to climate breakdown was the main cause, and experts warn of more serious floods on Nepal glacier-fed rivers. This video was taken from a helicopter overflight of the lakes that burst. Read stories on pages 1, 2 and 10-11 for in-depth analysis.



As Nepal's glacial lakes expand, there is a danger of them bursting due to water pressure, or because of earthquakes and avalanches falling into them. As the average temperature in the mountains rises, the threat of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) will only grow. Watch the video and read analysis on the Thame flood on pages 1, 2 and 10-11.

THAME FLOOD

The devastating flood in Thame demonstrates the impact of climate change in the Nepal Himalaya ('Climate breakdown linked to Thame flood', nepalintimes.com, in-depth analysis on pages 1, 2 and 10-11). Melting glaciers increases flow into glacial lakes, putting their integrity at risk. When they collapse, the impact downstream can be catastrophic. The threat of climate change is now being felt by these remote and vulnerable communities.

The Glacier Trust

■ This is water that should gradually flow down the rivers to feed agriculture in lower lands. When glaciers are gone, so are the rivers.

Chubby Roots

■ The Himalayan belt is prone to earthquakes, GLOFs, landslides and flashfloods. A similar disaster took place in October 2023 Sikkim, and on the Teesta river in 1968, so we must not allow settlements along the riverside.

Pranesh Dahal

■ Increasing activity around Mt Everest might have led to a change in the nature of ice and the surrounding area.

Tshering Dorje

STUDENT OUTMIGRATION

Nepalis have big heart. We see foreign countries suffering due to lack of manpower to ('Brain gain into brain drain', Sonia Awale, #1224). Their universities lack students to sustain the higher education system. So we produce and supply able-bodied manpower and talented students free of cost to them.

Hari Krishna Shrestha

DAPCHA TOURISM

We have wreaked enough havoc on the Kathmandu Valley of the old days ('Dapcha's old world charm awaits', Kanak Mani Dixit, nepalintimes.com). However, there is enough heritage remaining if we show and respect for antiquity and make use of the serious opportunity for the preservation of the valley's traditional towns instead of trying to make a quick buck off of them.

Tony Jones

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING



Parks plus people

by Birendra Mahato
Chitwan's jungles were historically the home of the Tharu and other indigenous groups who sustainably managed the jungle, grassland, and wetland habitats for generations. When national parks were defined as wilderness areas, they were relocated. Details at nepalintimes.com.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook

Geopolitics of politics

by Shristi Karki
India and China are in overt competition for influence in South Asia, and regional upheavals have a long history of impacting Nepali politics. While Sri Lanka and the Maldives are strategic because of their maritime location, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan, are buffers. Follow up for the latest updates.

X Most popular on X

Climate breakdown

Nepali Times
A flash debris flow just after noon on 16 August damaged half the village of Thame in the Everest region. Rapid melting of the Himalaya due to climate breakdown was one of the causes, and more frequent flash floods on glacier-fed rivers are predicted. Read pages 1, 2 and 10-11 for in-depth analysis.

46 Most commented

Medication, Meditation and Mountains

by Durga Rana Magar
Thousands of 'meditation tourists' are now visiting Pokhara during what used to be the monsoon off-season. Many yoga retreats have sprung up in and around this scenic city, and instructors advertise private meditation classes in hotels. Visit our website for the full story.

7 Most visited online page

QUOTES

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Climate breakdown linked to Thame flood
Suspected glacial collapse damages half of the settlement of Thame in the Everest region. Details in the report:

Aashis Joshi @aashisjo
A glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) swept away half a village in the Nepal Himalaya. These GLOFs & the devastation & displacement they cause are likely to be recurring events over the coming years and decades as glacier melting creates more of these lakes.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
India and China are now in overt competition for influence in South Asia. While Sri Lanka and the Maldives are strategic because of their location astride Indian Ocean maritime routes, Nepal, Bangladesh and to certain extent Bhutan, are important buffers.

Loyalist Nepali @LoyalistNepali
Nepal also must develop its foreign policy strategy to increase influence in South Asia as well as globally.

1,000 WORDS



S JAISHANKAR / X

SHAKE ON IT: Minister for Foreign Affairs Arzu Rana Deuba with Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in New Delhi on Monday.

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Kill messengers

Journalists often find themselves in crossfire during the times of war, and since 1990, 2,658 journalists have been killed in various conflicts, 681 just in the Asia-Pacific. At least 129 journalists have been killed in the Gaza war, mostly by Israelis. Nine journalists were killed during the Maoist insurgency in Nepal.

Excerpts of a report on the killing of journalist Dekendra Raj Thapa in Dailekh by Maoists published 20 years ago this week in issue #210 20-26 August 2004:



threatened to exterminate 10 other journalists because of news they say is critical of them. The Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) has deplored Thapa's murder and decided to organise a series of protest programs all over the country to oppose what it says is a systematic attack on the freedom of press. The federation has demanded that the Maoist leadership make a public apology for Thapa's death and commit themselves to not repeating such acts. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) issued a statement and Amnesty International wrote

an open letter to Prachanda condemning the killing and expressing alarm at the increasing Maoist violence against journalists. The International Federation of Journalists called for international action against the Maoists for the killing and for threatening to kill journalists.

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

Human rights activists, legal practitioners and journalists made common cause to express their outrage at Maoist violence with a street demonstration on Wednesday in Kathmandu. The silent procession protested the killing of journalist Dekendra Raj Thapa, in Dailekh and the Maoists' threat to kill 10 other journalists in the midwest.

Thapa was killed earlier this month by rebels who accused him of 'spying' against them. The rebels have

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ENGLAND

WHY NEPAL'S POVERTY RATE IS STUCK

After a dramatic drop in the past decade, poverty is now static despite remittances and state intervention

■ Ramesh Kumar

- India announced recently that it was 'close to victory in its fight against poverty', with only 2.2% of its population living below the World Bank-defined extreme poverty line. Ten years ago, it was 12%.
- In China, President Xi Jinping announced three years ago that the country had eliminated absolute poverty, after lifting 800 million people out of poverty in four decades.
- Nepal, sandwiched between the Asian giants, however, has not been able to match the pace of its two neighbours in reducing extreme poverty despite notable progress since 1990.

Using the previous poverty threshold, Nepal's absolute poverty rate theoretically fell from 25.16% in 2011 to only 3.6% in 2023.

However, the threshold for per capita expenditure has since been raised from Rs43,000 per year (factoring increased consumption and inflation) to nearly Rs73,000, which means the new 2023 poverty rate rose to 20.27%.

This means one in every five Nepalis lives in extreme poverty, and the state's intervention in poverty reduction, international development assistance, and private sector investment have made little difference in improving living standards. Which begs the question: where has all the money gone?

"Those who have opportunity, knowledge and access to resources have benefitted greatly,

while farmers and underserved communities have been left further behind," explains economist Keshav Acharya.

The flatline in poverty reduction also raises doubts about the government's investment in poverty alleviation. In the last 11 years, it has allocated more than Rs11 trillion in budget but only a third was spent on capital expenses which helps create jobs, and kickstart the economy.

Domestic and international non-governmental organisations have spent more than Rs300 billion in Nepal's social sector in the last six years. The international community has also poured in \$1.5 billion in the past decade, with USAID alone

providing Rs200 billion in aid to Nepal over the last 20 years. Private banks and financial institutions have disbursed another Rs4 trillion in loans in the last decade.

All this investment should have made a dent in poverty reduction even if the cash was distributed directly to households. But the money and its intended use has rarely benefitted the people who need it the most – driving an increasing number of young Nepalis abroad in search of work.

Critics say that much of the foreign aid is tied to international consultants, most of it is channelled through INGOs or local NGOs which have high overhead costs and very little of it trickles down to

the grassroots.

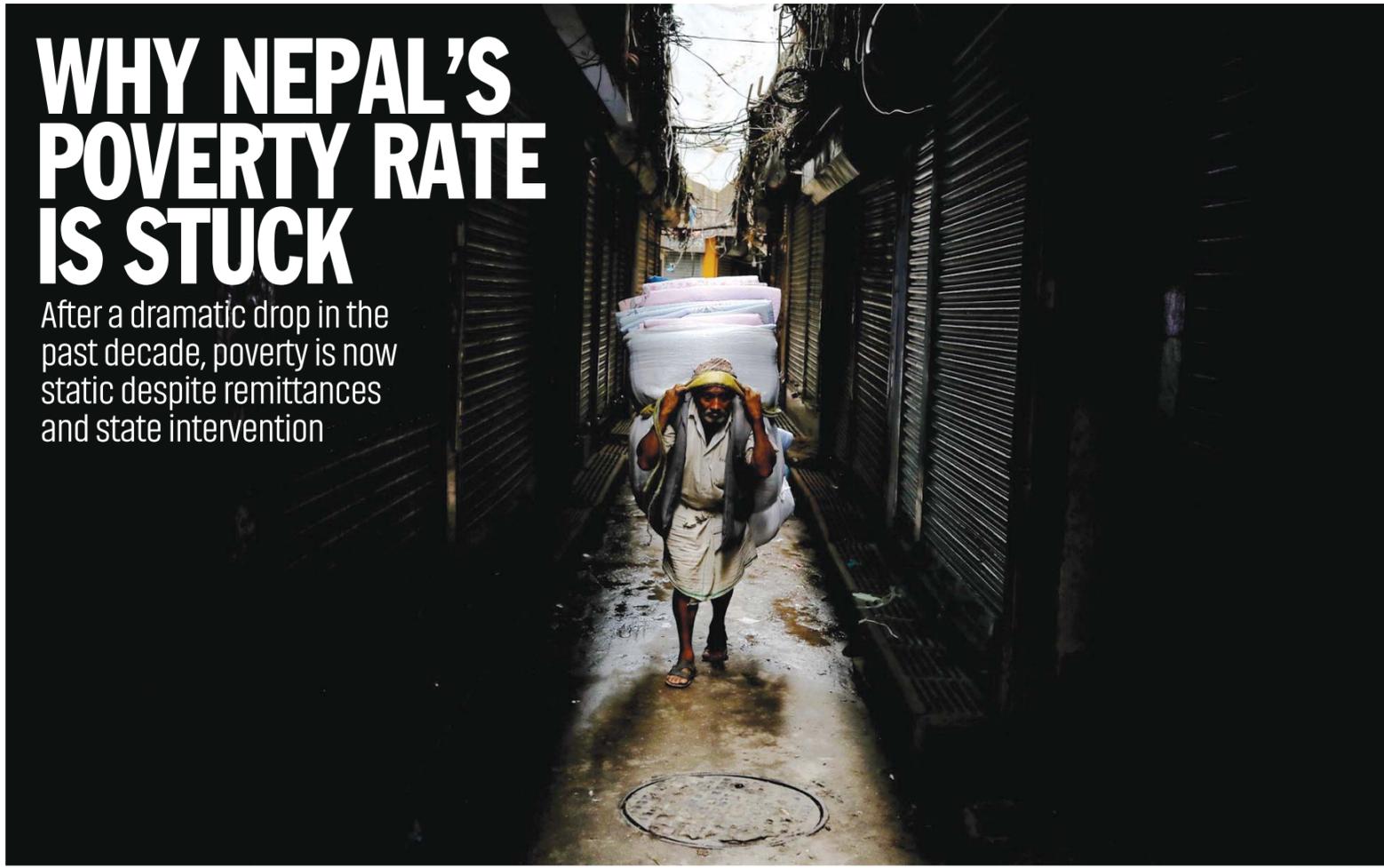
Most of the poorest families in Nepal are trapped in poverty because they rely on subsistence agriculture and cannot work the system to access state services. Non-governmental efforts, on the other hand, mostly have local impact with little upscaling and replication.

"The actual hard cash very rarely makes it to the hands of the people who need it the most," says economist Dilli Raj Khanal. "And the economy has not expanded in proportion to the investment in poverty alleviation. In particular, credit expansion has contributed little to economic growth and poverty reduction."

The 2021 census showed that 57% of Nepali families still depend on agriculture, and the Fourth Nepal Living Standards Survey last year showed that 38% of Nepali families whose primary earner is engaged in farming lives in poverty.

This means the household income of farming families in Nepal has not increased due to persistently low productivity, and the agricultural sector has remained stagnant despite the government spending Rs100 billion in subsidies and farm loans over the last five years.

Despite studies after studies by the government itself showing that the subsidies do not reach most small-scale farmers, the



SUMAN NEPALI

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JICA Country Rep



Matsuzaki Mizuki has been appointed the new Chief Representative of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Nepal Office. Over his 26-year career, Matsuzaki has contributed

to various departments and country offices, including those in Laos, Egypt, and Yemen. This year marks the 70th anniversary of Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) globally.



Test-drive Punch

Sipradi is holding test drives for the Tata Punch EV in Sauraha for employees. The Punch EV, which will be launched at the NADA auto show later this month, is selling more than 18,000 units per month in India. Tata Punch EV is a micro-SUV with 190mm ground clearance, and 380 litres boot.

Guess the Kaiyi

Kaiyi Automobiles distributor Laxmi E-Mobility launched a social media challenge to guess the three new models to be unveiled at the NADA Auto Show starting on 27 August. Participants can post their guesses on the company's Facebook or Instagram posts until 26 August for the chance to win a Bosch mixer grinder.



Kyoko Yokosuka

Japan's Kyoko Yokosuka is the new UNDP Nepal Resident Representative. Prior to this, she was the deputy executive coordinator at United Nations Volunteers based in Bonn. With 25 years of experience in international development, Yokosuka has been deputy country representative of UNDP in Bangladesh, Laos and Uzbekistan.

IME CEO

Surendra Raj Regmi has been elected as the new CEO of Global IME Bank. He has over three decades of banking experience, starting his career at Rastriya Banijya Bank before joining IME sixteen years ago.



Barahi Lodge

Barahi Jungle Lodge in Chitwan National Park has been certified by the World Travel and Tourism Council Hotel's Sustainability Basics program, a global standard designed to help hotels become more eco-friendly.



Asian Paints winner

Asian Paints Nepal announced the winners of Kaleidoscope, an architecture and interior design student competition that received 39 designs for a proposed Centre for the National Academy of Music and Drama. Participants were judged by a panel of Nepali architects, and the first prize winner, Aayusha Koirala from IOE Pulchok, received Rs70,000.

Ncell social

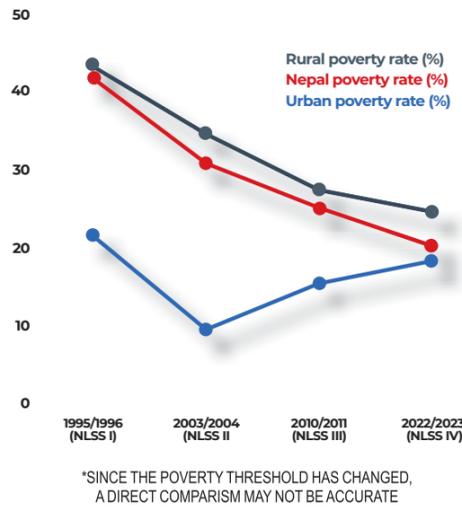
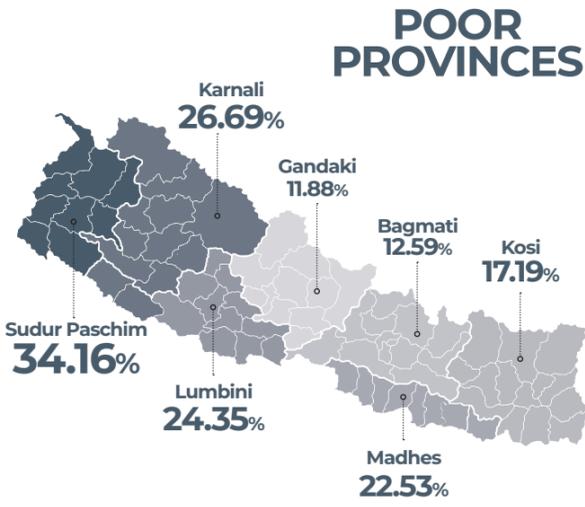
Ncell has implemented 18 social development projects across Nepal to commemorate its 18th anniversary. Projects include cervical cancer screenings in Kosi, STEAM education in the Far West, and a solar plant in Karnali. Ncell is giving each project Rs 1million each.

Let's Get Lucknowi

Aloft Kathmandu Thamel is holding the Let's Get Lucknowi food festival showcasing Lucknow cuisine at the hotel's in-house restaurant Nook from 23-25 August featuring Indian chef Mujeeb Ur Rehman.

Power to India

India is importing an additional 251MW of electricity from Nepal, up from 690MW. India. Nepal has agreed to sell 10,000MW to India in the next 10 years. Nepal's generation capacity exceeded 3,200MW this monsoon. Nepal earned Rs17 billion from power export to India in the past year, and NEA expects it to double by 2025, and grow to Rs300 billion a year by 2030.



money keeps being allocated and evaporating along the way. The 2021 census showed that only 7% of farmers received government subsidies.

Persistent poverty in Nepal is also linked to skewed land ownership. Over 23% of families who own less than 0.2 hectares of farms live in poverty, while 11.4% of families who have more than two hectares of land are poor. The percentage of landless Nepalis in rural areas is about 16%, and one-third of them live in poverty.

In the last decade, Nepal's economy has been shifting away from farming. Agriculture now accounts for less than 25% of the economy, while the service sector has grown to 63%. This also means the income gap has widened between farmers and others.

The poverty rate is calculated based on the cost of the calories intake per day of a person to lead a healthy and active life. Nepalis require 2,236 calories per day on average, which costs around Rs35,000 annually. But consumption expenditure also has

to be factored in non-food costs which include lodging, clothing, and household items, and added up these costs equals the expenditure on food. By this measure, Nepalis who are unable to spend more than Rs200 a day, or Rs72,908 a year fall below the poverty line.

The main reason for less-than-expected decrease in poverty is poor delivery and governance failure. Other factors include the 2015 earthquake and the Covid-19 pandemic. The 16th Periodic Plan (2024-29) cites 4% of Nepalis being pushed below the poverty line due to Covid-19.

The poverty rate would have been much higher if it was not for money Nepalis working overseas send home. Studies have shown that remittances have led to an increase in household income, access to better education and health services.

The 2024 Living Standards Survey showed that 77% of Nepali households receive remittances, two-thirds from relatives working in India or overseas.

"No doubt, remittances play

a major role in lifting people out of poverty in Nepal, and the state's economic initiatives have not contributed meaningfully to poverty reduction," says Khanal.

Nepal is soon graduating to middle-income status, largely because of remittances, even though this is not a sustainable long-term insurance against poverty.

"Policy-wise, Nepal is moving in the opposite direction in reducing poverty," says Pushkar Bajracharya, a former member of the National Planning Commission. "Programs and budgets directly meant for poverty reduction like the Poverty Alleviation Fund have been abandoned. And the most significant failure is in job creation."

Bajracharya argues that the government must extend the social safety net to the neediest population to ensure sustainable results in poverty reduction. And since the poorest people are subsistence farmers, that is where efforts must go. 🇳🇵

Relying on remittance

A new report published by the Nepal Rastra Bank has once again reiterated what we all knew — the role of remittances sent by Nepalis working abroad does not just help Nepali households but the national economy as well.

What is new in the central bank report is just how much more dependent we as a nation are becoming on remittances every year. In the absence of investment in productive, job-

of Nepalis moving abroad for employment. More than 741,302 Nepalis went overseas to work last year. Among them, 460,103 obtained first-time approval for foreign labour, while 281,199 renewed their permits.

The most pronounced impact of the increase in remittances is on Nepal's macro-economic indicators. It helped make up for Nepal's Rs1.44 trillion trade deficit last year, and in fact remittance income is almost

exactly equal to the trade deficit.

Nepal's foreign reserves have also held strong, standing at \$15.27 billion, which is a 30.4% increase from last year and sufficient to cover 13



NTARCHIVE

months worth of imports. The central bank's usual target is to hold enough foreign currency to cover imports for seven months.

The reason for the growth of hard currency reserves is also the drop in imports due to belt-tightening measures, as well as fall in demand due to sluggish domestic economy.

The current account also remained at a surplus of Rs221.3 billion during the 2023-24 review year, compared to a deficit of Rs.46.57 billion in 2022-23. A current account surplus means that there is more money coming into Nepal than going out.

creating sectors, the remittances are mostly used to pay for burgeoning imports of food, fuel and consumer goods.

The report, 'Current Macroeconomic and Financial Situation of Nepal' for the financial year 2023-24 published on Sunday shows that remittance inflows increased 16.5% to more than Rs1.45 trillion during the past fiscal year. Remittances now make up a quarter of the country's economy.

The record rise in remittances is proportionate to the increase in numbers

HBL

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Toyota RAV4

Type of hybrid: Conventional
 Mileage: 15-19km/L
 Fuel Tank Capacity: 55L
 Price: Rs19,500,000



REV YOU (and charge)

Hybrids re-emerge as the ideal compromise between EV and petrol

■ Vishad Raj Onta

Transportation globally accounts for 7 billion metric tons of CO₂ every year, and 75% of that comes from vehicles on the road. Replacing gas-guzzling vehicles is the shortcut to reducing a country's carbon footprint.

Nepal's per capita petroleum consumption is so low that nothing we do is going to help much to save the planet. But reducing petrol, diesel and LPG use can save the country's economy, since petroleum products make up nearly 25% of our imports.

Nepal is hardly responsible for the buildup in atmospheric carbon leading to global warming, but is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate breakdown.

In the past year, 14% of all vehicles sold around the world were battery-powered – up from only 4% four years ago. China is the biggest EV manufacturer,

accounting for 60% of all EVs sold worldwide.

One of the most remarkable shifts has actually happened here in Nepal. Of the nearly 18,000 vehicles imported in the past year, official records show that 12,000 were battery-powered.

One big reason was the zero excise duty and only 10% custom duty in 2022, and last year the taxes were even less on EVs below 50kW. This was drastically lower than the 30-80% taxes on petrol and diesel cars. Taxes are higher on more powerful (and expensive) battery-powered SUVs.

The Finance Ministry has always been ambivalent about EVs, fearing rising sales will eat into revenue from car and gas station taxes, forgetting that in the longterm battery vehicles will reduce petroleum imports.

In a classic case of one step forward, two steps back, the budget by the previous government in June reinstated hefty taxes on EVs, despite a national commitment to make 20% of all vehicles electric by 2025. EVs use domestically-generated hydroelectricity of which there is a surplus, yet are punished.

Despite the rapid rise in EV sales worldwide, growth has slowed. Mainly, this is because of range anxiety and long charging

times, as well as the comparatively low resale value of battery-powered vehicles. A recent survey in the US and India of EV owners had more than half of them saying they were switching back to petrol.

EVs use lithium ion batteries, and there are questions about the environmental cost of mining lithium, the difficulty in recycling and disposal of the cells, and the delays in using substitutes like sodium. Lithium is also seen as a stepping stone to solid state batteries, and green hydrogen fuel.

HYBRID FUTURE

This is where hybrids come in, as a compromise between fully battery-powered cars and those with internal combustion engines. Hybrid technology has been around much longer than modern EVs, and do not have the disadvantages mentioned above. Hybrids use a mixture of fossil fuels and electricity to power the vehicle, providing almost unlimited range.

Hybrids have batteries to store regenerated energy and different hybrids obtain power in different ways. 'Plug-in' hybrids can be charged like an electric vehicle, while a conventional hybrid can use the vehicle's kinetic energy while braking, or route unused engine power to charge the battery.

Most hybrids sold in Nepal are conventional.

Worldwide, hybrids make up about 10-12% of all cars sold. They are especially popular in Japan, with manufacturers like Toyota and Honda which pioneered the technology refusing to join the EV bandwagon 20 years ago.

Toyota has a 1:6:90 study in which its engineers calculated that the raw materials and energy used to make one fully-electric vehicle could make six plug-in hybrids, or 90 conventional ones -- leading to drastically less emissions in the whole manufacturing and operational cycle.

Despite the growth in EV sales, hybrid cars are rare in Nepal. Even Toyota's popular Prius model never made inroads. Of the over 12,000 EVs Nepal imported last year, only 36 were petrol-electric or diesel-electric hybrids – despite the fact that hybrids are actually cheaper than full electric cars elsewhere.

The main reason for this is that successive Nepali finance ministers in the past decade have put hybrids in the same tax bracket as petrol cars, slapping an 80% tariff on them.

Price tags of hybrid SUVs available in Nepal are already high, and the tax pushes them into the high end of the market. The other reason is that the manufacturers themselves have in the past not trusted after-sales service for hybrids in Nepal, and not pushed them as much.

The Chinese company BYD has the largest market share among EVs in Nepal. However, in China and globally, half the cars BYD makes are hybrids.

We asked BYD Nepal's Yamuna Shrestha why she is not promoting hybrids here. She answered simply: "Taxes." 🇳🇵



Yaris Cross Hybrid

Type of hybrid: Conventional
 Mileage: 20-25km/L
 Fuel Tank Capacity: 36L
 Price: Rs12,500,000





SUBARU

THE 2024 CROSSTREK HYBRID

When it comes to choosing the right hybrid vehicle in Nepal, the 2024 Subaru Crosstrek offers 20% more efficiency, Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive, and EyeSight® Driver Assist Technology – the ideal choice for adventure, safety, and a sustainable future.













SCAN HERE

20%

more efficient

UR CAR rge it, too)



Subaru Crosstrek hybrid

Type of Hybrid: Conventional (not a plug-in)
Mileage: 13.9km/L
Fuel Tank: 63L
Price: Rs14,000,000- Rs16,900,000
Other: All Wheel Drive system, Max speed 198 km/h, ground clearance: 220, Eyesight

SUBARU Crosstrek

Subaru recently launched its Crosstrek Hybrid, and most of those who have bought it are doctors, businessmen, politicians, generals and traders who need to drive down to the border a lot.

"We frequently hear from customers that they simply do not get tired driving our vehicles," says Annie Gardner Vaidya of Vijay Motors, which sells the Subaru Crosstrek at its showroom in Gyaneswor. "Subaru has the highest customer retention rates of any car brand with owners getting their second or third Subaru, even couples buying them for their

marrying kids."

The main selling point of all Subaru models are its safety features, which makes it the preferred family car. The hybrid Subarus come with features present in its petrol models – with All Wheel Drive and 'EyeSight' technology that uses radar and cameras to alert drivers of possible hazards and collisions.

"Our customers do their research well, and know what they want," adds Vaidya, who has tales of Subarus that have climbed inclines where even tractors fear to tread.

Tarun Onta was one of the first

customers of the Crosstrek and was at the launch event to receive his keys. He wanted an eco-friendly vehicle because he was not fully satisfied with EVs.

He says, "My top priority is safety. I have been driving the Crosstrek and other than a faint jolt when switching between electric and fuel, it has been a top-class car so far."

Despite all this, Subarus are so rare in Nepal that when two of them pass on the road, drivers wave at each other. It only sells three models, only one of them hybrid, and is too expensive for most first-car buyers.

Toyota Camry Hybrid Electric

Type of hybrid: Conventional
Mileage: 15-19km/L
Fuel Tank Capacity: 50L
Price: Approx Rs20,000,000



TOYOTA

Corolla, the Camry, the RAV4, and the Yaris



Toyota has been a pioneer in hybrid transmission, and decided early on not to bet on full-electric cars. In fact its Prius hybrid predated full-electric cars when it was launched back in 1997 as 'a car for the 21st century'. In Nepal, Toyota sells four hybrid models: the Corolla, Camry, RAV4, and Yaris.

Toyota Nepal's Suryansh Vaidya is convinced that despite the surge in EV sales, Nepal is "not in a place financially and

infrastructure wise where there would be mass market for EVs". Essentially, it boils down to prices. If the taxes on hybrids were brought down, they could be competitive with full-electric vehicles, and definitely score over petrol cars.

"Reducing the tax on hybrid cars would actually increase government revenue because hybrids would be more popular and more would be sold than presently," Vaidya argues.

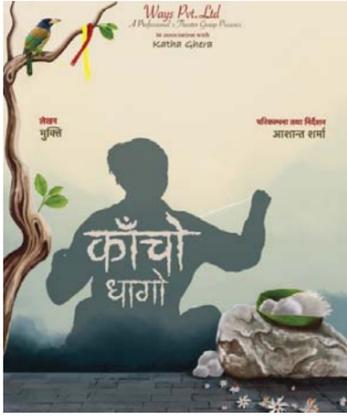
Toyota Corolla Cross Hybrid Electric

Type of hybrid: Conventional
Mileage: 15-20km/L
Fuel Tank Capacity: 36L
Price: Rs18,100,000

strek Hybrid stands out with
 nology for safety, making it



EVENTS

**Kaancho Dhago**

Inspired by real events, the drama Kaancho Dhago directed by Aashant Sharma delves deep into human behaviour, relationships and emotions.

Until 14 September, 5:15pm, 1pm (also on Saturday), Kausi Theatre, Teku, 9860360109

Mithila Art

Nepal Art Council ongoing exhibit that will feature Mithila artwork from acclaimed Nepali and Indian women artists.

Until 19 September, 11am-5pm (Sundays to Fridays), Nepal Art Council, Babar Mall, 9863790910

**Silent Whispers**

Stop by Muna Bhadel's ongoing exhibition of acrylic on canvas paintings that pays homage to her grandmothers. Read our review on page 9.

Until 18 September, 11am-5pm (Sunday to Friday), 12pm-5pm (Saturdays), Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal

TEDxDWIT 2024

Don't miss out on Deerwalk Institute of Technology's TED event this weekend, which will feature Nepali technology experts and entrepreneurs.

24 August, 10:45am, Deerwalk College, Sifal

**Rota Gai Jatra 2024**

The Rotary Club of Bhaktapur's Rota Gai Jatra 2024 honours the historic festival and Bhaktapur's age-old cultural heritage.

24 August, 1pm onwards, Taumadhi Square, Bhaktapur, 9851136541

DINING

**Lucknow Food**

Get ready for a gastronomic adventure at the Lucknow Food Festival that will bring flavours of the city's royal cuisine to Kathmandu.

23-25 August, Nook, Aloft Kathmandu Thamel, 9801976054

MUSIC

Pokhara music fest

If you happen to be in Pokhara this weekend, you might want to fit this music fest happening on Lakeside into your schedule. 24 August, 8pm onwards, Ticket: Rs500, Catwalk, Lakeside

**Friday live**

Enjoy live music with affordable food amid the greenery in Godawari. Take family and friends along to double the fun.

23 August, The Burger House and Crunchy Fried Chicken, Taukhel (01) 5560144

**Traditional Night**

Don't miss the chance to dance to the beats of the Dhimay Khala, a traditional Newa drum, at this traditional extravaganza.

30 August, 8pm onwards, Hard Rock Cafe, Darbar Marg

**Byastha Chha**

Catch Suski live this weekend as she releases her 'Byastha Chha' music video, made in collaboration with Yorika Rai.

24 August, 7pm onwards, 4Stories, Thamel

Friday Night Party

Get ready to party this Friday with girlfriends, with drinks flowing free after 11pm. Make sure to hit the dance floor.

23 August, 6pm onwards, The Ai-La Lounge, Kumaripati

**Kunga**

Kunga Hotel has one of the best Chinese restaurants in Kathmandu. Grab some hot pot, peanut chicken and shredded potatoes in a cosy and casual setting.

Boudha (01) 4915117

Haadi Biryani

Haadi Biryani's slow-cooked biryanis are seasoned with a secret spice blend and are served in the traditional clay pots, making for a memorable culinary experience.

Dilli Bazaar (01) 4438444

GETAWAYS

**Raniban Retreat**

Relax and enjoy the sounds of rain this monsoon at this environmentally-friendly boutique hotel located on a hillock in the Raniban forest.

Pokhara, 9802855466

Grand Norling

The Grand Norling with its lush gardens, large balcony and sights of the golf course is secluded from the noises of the outside world, making it ideal for a calm and relaxing getaway.

Gokarna (01) 4910193

**Mystic Mountain**

Stay indoors and enjoy rainy days at Mystic Mountain in Nagarkot, a hotel built exquisitely for world-class comfort in an ultra-modern setting.

Nagarkot (01) 6200646

Heranya Yala

Immerse in the rich cultural heritage of Patan and get a genuine feel of authentic Newari heritage at Heranya Yala. Check out the hotels' complete tour package of Patan.

Gujibahal, Patan, 9841259445

**Chhaimale Village Resort**

Adorned with pear trees, the resort is a perfect destination for anyone seeking to escape the madness of Kathmandu city.

Chhaimale, 9860676495

Le Sherpa

With a focus on seasonal and local vegetables and fruits, Le Sherpa's chef creates a seasonal menu that whets the appetite. The food cannot get healthier than this.

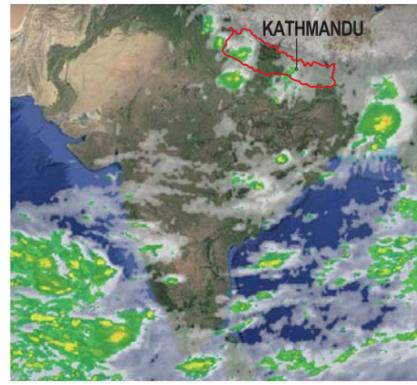
Maharajgunj (01) 4428604

**The Patisserie**

Get a variety of sweets and all kinds of baked items at The Patisserie. Their mousse jars are packed with intense flavour.

Kathmandu, 9803368875

WEEKEND WEATHER

**Sick of the Rain? There is More.**

August is emerging as one of the wettest on record, with the 300mm precipitation so far already exceeding the monthly average. Wait. There is more to come. Weather models are forecasting more rain till midweek next week. The showers are expected to be particularly heavy on Sunday and Monday, with some torrential localised downpours. There could be thundery buildups in the afternoon next week. Expect flight delays and diversions, and take care not just on the highways but also on Kathmandu's roads, especially ones along river corridors.

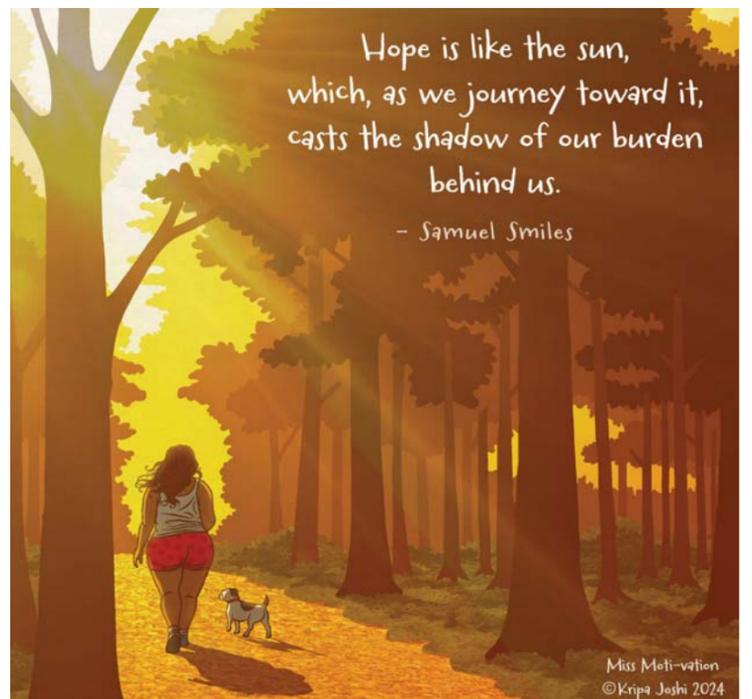


OUR PICK

In the 2024 American drama Ghostlight, construction worker Dan Mueller is recruited to join the local theatre after one of the actors witnesses him assault a motorist. Dan is struggling in his personal life with his daughter's behavioural problems as well as a legal battle he is fighting against the ex-girlfriend of his son Brian, who died by suicide. As he joins the theatre's production Romeo and Juliet, the lines between the drama and his real life begin to blur. The film is directed by Kelly O'Sullivan and Alex Thompson and stars Keith Kupferer, Dolly de Leon, Katherine May Kupferer, Deanna Dunagan and Francis Guinan.

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

The unbearable lightness of being old

Art that explores youth, ageing, and unfulfilled longings with a visual amalgam of artistic motifs

■ Vishad Raj Onta

Wise and wrinkled grandmothers dressed in vividly patterned dresses lounge elegantly against Mughal backdrops, and are attended to by young women, lovers, and deities.

The paintings depict traditional grandmothers in non-traditional settings, and Muna Bhadel in her ongoing exhibition *Silent Whispers* at Siddhartha Art Gallery forces us to do a double take.

Bhadel, a recipient of the 2022 Australian Himalayan Foundation Art Award, explains: 'This series a tapestry woven with threads of emotional bonds, captures the poignant experiences of grandmothers as I have felt them. Their journeys through time are uniquely their own.'

In a painting titled *Mute Melodies*, an elderly woman reclines on a pillow with her hair down, frowning into the distance while surrounded by three young women. One fans her face, another presents her with a box of jewelry, and the third anoints her feet in a 'sora singar' wedding ceremony representing a bride's transformation from girl to wife.

The juxtaposition of the grandmother's wrinkled face and veined arms with the smooth-skinned attendants painted like a fantastical Mughal mural, is a recurrent motif in Bhadel's exhibition. The paintings contrast images of youth and age, and explore longing and unfulfilled dreams, with nautch women and girls amidst Kathmandu landmarks.



Bhadel trained at the Lalitkala Academy of Fine Art, then joined the MFA program at Tribhuvan University while doing a residency at Taragaon Museum. Her works were also exhibited at the Himalayan Art Festival in 2022 and the Dalai-La gallery in 2023.

Uncharted Desires (pictured above) shows a woman clad in a dhaka-patterned cholo, a golden shawl and a flowery black gunyo, while someone who looks like a Mughal emperor combs her hair.

All elderly women seem to be reminiscing about romance

or fantasies from younger days with a dotting man sometimes in attendance.

Bhadel does not want to give it all away, and just says, "This is how I imagined they would like to be with their past companions."

Most of the paintings at the exhibition are acrylic on canvas, but some are done in coloured pencils on the walls, studies or sketches before working on her final pieces. The drawings show two hands, one often visibly aged, and the other smooth and young.

"These are memories of



my grandmother and how we are connected despite our age difference," says Bhadel. "It reminds me of a time when she pinched the skin on her hand and then the skin on mine."

Perhaps some of Bhadel's reflections on the passage of time comes from the recent birth of her child, and the passing of her grandmothers who lived simple lives, nurturing their families, yet trapped by duty and society.

These bittersweet emotions are expressed in colours that are either bright and saturated, or dull and subdued, but both enveloped in warm vermillion.

Explains Sangeeta Thapa of Siddhartha Art Gallery: 'Muna Bhadel's paintings are an observation about the cycle of life -- of birth and death, youth with its beauty and seductions, about loss, ageing, nostalgia, and isolation.'

Silent Whispers
Paintings by Muna Bhadel
Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited
Till 18 September

KATHMANDU TRIENNALE 2026

Although it is still almost two years away, the organisers of the Kathmandu Triennale are not waiting till the last moment to start preparations. Siddhartha Art Gallery and Nepal Academy of Fine Arts are poised to unfurl a vibrant canvas in February 2026 with the theme 'Coexistence, Kinship and Care'.

The venues will be at the Patan Museum, Siddhartha Art Gallery and Nepal Art Council, and will be curated



by Australian artist Natalie King and Sujun Chitrakar of the Kathmandu University School of Arts. It will feature at least 40 Nepali and international artists.

The Kathmandu Triennale evolved out of the first event in 2009, and was repeated in 2012, 2017 and 2022. Says Sangeeta Thapa of Siddhartha Art Gallery: "Like in previous years, the Kathmandu Triennale 2026 will project Nepal into the international art map, and also provide Nepali artists and audiences with international exposure."

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NEPAL'S HIGHEST SELLING
COMPLETE EV HATCHBACK

Lives on the line in the

The Thame flood showed climate risk is a given, and Nepal has no choice but to be prepared

■ Sonia Awale

At exactly 9AM Nepal Time on 16 August, a 4.4M earthquake hit Xizang on the Tibetan Plateau. Four hours later, 65km away in Nepal, a glacial lake burst, unleashing a cascade of destruction downstream.

It is not certain if that tremor so nearby caused the lake to burst — either because an avalanche on the south ridge of Mt Tengi Ragi Tau fell into it, or heavy monsoon rain led to the collapse of a moraine.

Either way, the snowmelt emptied into another lake below and unleashed a debris flow that roared down the valley to the village of Thame. Fortunately, children at a school had gone home early that Friday and inhabitants had time to climb to safety when they heard the approaching roar. There were no fatalities.

Thame was not as lucky on 4 August 1985, when a bigger lake



The Dig Tso glacial lake outburst flood on 4 August 1985.

in an adjacent valley, Dig Tso, burst after an avalanche fell on it. Twelve people were swept away by the ensuing flood, a newly built hydropower plant was destroyed, and a section of the Everest trekking trail was washed away.

Glaciologist Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa remembers his mother telling him that their home in Namche Bazar was spared because it was on higher ground.

“But she told us that with trails destroyed, food and supplies couldn’t reach us. At one point, her family had to survive on rotten potatoes,” recalls Sherpa, who works at the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated

Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and uses remote sensing to map climate-induced hazards in the Himalaya.

He says the Thame flood this week was a reminder of the inherent risk of living in the mountains which are magnified by climate breakdown. And the region is still very much at risk.

“To the south, we have Lunding Tso, a potentially dangerous glacial lake that also empties into the Dudh Kosi, and to the west in Rolwaling is Tso Rolpa, a lake that is now 3km long. And to the north is Dig Tsho, which burst in 1985,” says Sherpa.

“We are facing one of the worst

disasters since the Dig Tso flood. This is a wake-up call, not just for us in Khumbu, but for the entire Himalaya to rethink our ways, find alternatives to reduce the risks, and explore measures to protect ourselves,” he adds.

The Thame flood was a minor disaster compared to the flood that

destroyed the Melamchi headworks in 2021, the massive Sikkim flood last year, or the debris flow that ravaged Kagbeni. All were caused by glacial lake bursts or moraine collapses due to extreme rainfall.

Anil Pokhrel of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA)



Measuring climate impact on culture a

Conversations on climate loss and damage must also consider the impact of climate breakdown on intangible assets

■ Rastra Raj Bhandari

Nepal has already received the monthly average of precipitation for August in the first two weeks of the month. This year’s monsoon has so far killed nearly 200 people in landslides and floods across the country.

On 16 August, a flash debris flow from a suspected glacial collapse damaged half the village of Thame in the Everest region. All this comes after a full scale national emergency due to record-breaking wildfires in March and April that ravaged the country’s forests.

Climate breakdown was partly the culprit in most of these calamities. The impacts of climate change are increasing, both in frequency and magnitude, outpacing slow progress in mitigating its causes, and in building resilience.

The conversation around loss and damage due to the climate crisis is becoming ever so important for vulnerable countries like Nepal. However, despite COP28 in Dubai last year seeing a historic agreement on a ‘Loss and Damage Fund’, the idea that climate-induced destruction can in practice be compensated still seems far-fetched.



SAME STORY: A monk looks at an approaching glacial lake outburst flood in Halji of Humla’s Limi Valley in 2011 that destroyed the monastery. The flood was caused by a hidden glacial lake in the mountains above much like what happened in Thame last week.

The Fund is still in its early stages and few details are known as its operational elements are being worked on. The World Bank is the interim host of the fund for four years, and as of March \$661 million had been pledged. This is negligible compared to what is required, with calculations by the Loss & Damage Collaboration estimating a need for \$671bn annually by 2030.

It is important that the foundation to operationalise the fund be laid soon with stable funding sources. A resource allocation system with guidance on eligibility needs to be devised, and questions on who, how and for

what countries can access funds remains crucial.

Within the ‘for what’ conversation, climate-induced loss and damage can have both economic losses such as the loss of infrastructure (which are easy to quantify) and non-economic losses such as loss of biodiversity and cultural heritage (which are difficult to quantify). One must also note that tangible economic assets such as buildings, monuments, archaeological sites can also hold intangible values.

After the Thame flood this week, the little coverage the incident has received still focuses

on the economic losses and possible fatalities. These are important, but what about non-economic loss of the rich history and heritage of the village that lies on the ancient Khumbu-Tibet trade route across the Nangpa La? Artefacts passed on from generations in families carry indigenous knowledge and wisdom, the memories and spirituality associated with infrastructure have formed the lived experiences of the Sherpa people.

These aspects are as important as economic ones, especially because they are rooted in the core ideas and norms that shape our communities and inspire collective

aspiration to achieve climate justice.

The importance of incorporating cultural and societal aspects when we talk about the non-economic impacts of climate loss and damage is uncontested. However, despite the recognition of the significance of non-economic losses, they have been under-represented in climate negotiations as well as in climate research. How do we quantify these losses and compensate for them?

It is true that doing so is not straightforward, but it is a false premise that such losses cannot be quantified. Rather, we must first admit that we have not come up



PHOTOS: ASTRID HOVDEN

Himalaya



Friday afternoon, 16 August, as the flash debris flow hit Thame and destroyed half the town.

flew to Thame on Saturday morning to inspect the glaciers above the village. He confirmed that two of five small glacial lakes below Tashi Lapcha pass had caused the flood. Satellite data shows that till two years ago, there were only four lakes.

Across the Himalaya, there are now thousands of new glacial lakes that do not even have names. In Nepal, a majority of the 21 most dangerous ones are located in the centre and east of the country, but there are dozens of enlarged lakes in China which drain into tributaries of rivers that flow into Nepal like the two Bhote Kosis, Arun and Tama Kosi.

Some of these lakes are infamous because of their volume, the rate at which they are expanding, and the potential danger they pose to populations downstream — like Tso Rolpa, Imja Tso and Thulagi.

But the Thame flood, and others like the Nare Lake outburst below Ama Dablam in 1977, show that even smaller lakes can cause massive damage.

In fact, it does not even take a lake burst to cause destructive debris flows. The Melamchi and Kagbeni floods appear to have been caused by moraines that collapsed in unusually heavy rain because they were no longer cemented by

permafrost.

Even a relatively small flood like the one in Thame can be damaging far downstream. The debris flow moved swiftly downstream, destroying a Rs80 million bridge on the Dudh Kosi in Okhaldhunga. Most villages downstream had been evacuated, so there were no casualties. If the flood had been bigger, it would have threatened major hydropower projects on the Dudh Kosi.

“We cannot ignore smaller lakes anymore,” warns Pokhrel of NDRRMA. “We often think and plan from a hazard perspective, how big a disaster can be. But we must also look at risk, possible

cascade damage on downstream communities.”

Thame is at 3,840m elevation, but Pokhrel says he was surprised by how warm it was up there this week. “It felt like Kathmandu,” he says. “And satellite imagery shows accelerated melting of the upstream in the past month which could have led to the cascading collapse of the two lakes.”

Glacial lake outbursts and debris flows are going to be more destructive and frequent in Nepal in the coming years, making them a fact of life. Seismic risk in the Himalaya adds to the dangers posed by the climate emergency.

Local communities and governments have no option but to adapt by installing early warning systems, planning smaller decentralised hydropower schemes, moving settlements and infrastructure higher, and conducting detailed hazard mapping.

“Thame showed us we cannot only rely on satellite mapping, and why in-situ observation is so important in a country with such a diverse topography and climate as ours,” says Sherpa. “There are more than 50,000 glaciers in the Himalayan region and we haven’t even studied 1% of them.”

Despite the scarcity of field data, there have been considerable advances in remote sensing technologies that have helped fill this gap in data and help understand the changing cryosphere. ICIMOD’s recent report shows that glacier mass loss has increased by 65% in recent decades. The report also warns that the risk of flooding could increase much more in the coming century.

Because so many of Nepal’s rivers are transboundary, a bilateral early warning mechanism with China is also urgent. Because of the

scale of the danger, Nepal needs resources from the international community for adaptation, as well as loss and damage repair to cope with future risk.

“We should get in touch with the Chinese government to conduct a study of glacier lakes located near Tibet, which are the source of glaciers in Nepal. We should collaborate on early warning system and implementing risk reduction measures,” says Anil Pokhrel.

Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa co-founded a global advocacy campaign called #SaveOurSnow last year to provide local communities with agency to deal with climate induced risk. Supporters of the campaign include former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, celebrity mountaineers like Reinhold Messner, Chris Bonington, Kenton Cool and the descendants of Tenzing Norgay.

Says Sherpa: “As glaciers melt and lakes expand, disasters like Thame will be more frequent, we have to adapt. We need to tell our stories to the world, and at local levels we have to get back on our feet and prepare for what’s coming.”



THAME FLOOD

A flash debris flow just after noon on 16 August damaged half the village of Thame in the Everest region. Rapid melting of the Himalaya due to climate breakdown was the main cause, and experts warn of more serious floods on Nepal glacier-fed rivers. This video was taken from a helicopter overflight of the lakes that burst.

and heritage

with and agreed on ways to put an economic value to them.

Environmental economists have for long devised models and frameworks to put a price on environmental goods such as clean air, water and access to nature. And yet, the global community is far from putting a right price on nature and quantifying nature loss as an economic loss.

It is naïve to think we cannot put a price on culture and heritage. There has always been a market for expensive arts and artefacts, and there is enough precedence on pricing non-tangible assets.

In an abstract sense, putting a price on any asset is derived from its utility. It is important to build on existing knowledge as well as ideate innovative ways to price non-tangible cultural and heritage loss, and incorporate that in the Loss and Damage Fund. This should be a key agenda item both for its secretariat as well as global climate negotiators, researchers, grassroot organisations, and development partners.

The question and challenge, however, is not just to incorporate these things in the Loss and Damage fund. The premise of loss and damage rests on the fact that something has already been lost. After all, flow of finance cannot be the substitute for loss of culture and heritage.

The important question is what can we do to prevent such loss, and preserve culture and heritage from the climate crisis before they are lost? This requires integration of culture and heritage components in the design of

climate mitigation and adaptation projects and policies. Working with indigenous communities, religious leaders and faith groups, and civil society will be critical in achieving this.

In a recent trip to Lahore, I was told that it is almost impossible to elicit behavioural change to climate action in certain areas of Pakistan without working closely with the imams and mosques. Religion plays an important aspect in many of the world’s climate vulnerable communities, and needs to be incorporated in climate action.

Needless to say, measuring the climate impact on culture and heritage must go beyond climate loss and damage and be an integral component of any climate intervention.

This should also be a priority for Nepal whose culture, history and tradition is closely linked to the lived environment and nature. Forests with cultural significance to local communities, shrines and important pilgrimage are located along the confluence of holy rivers, and the Himalaya holds profound cultural and religious significance to Hinduism, Buddhism, Bon and other faiths.

We must act now to ensure that we preserve and are compensated for climate loss and damage of not just physical infrastructure but also the intangible heritage that is often left out of broader financial calculations.

Rastra Raj Bhandari is a co-founder and fellow at the Himalayan Water Project, where he leads the research on climate finance opportunities for the Himalaya. He contributes regularly to Nepali Times on climate change.

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