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Bad air and polluted politics

Parliamentary proceedings were brought to a halt on Wednesday in Kathmandu after a heated exchange between the UML and opposition MPs over the use of the word 'violence' to describe the Maoist conflict.

The real peacetime violence being perpetrated on Nepalis is actually political failure to control lethal air pollution.

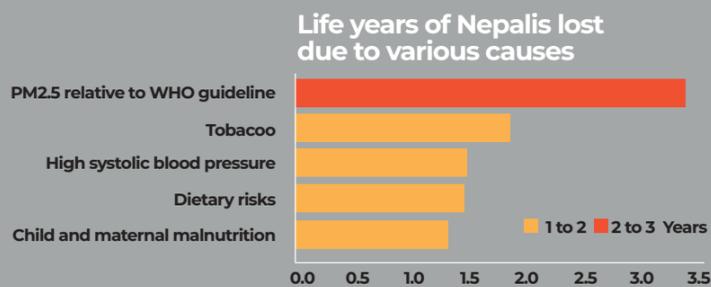
Figures from the Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) survey released this week, and the State of Global Air (SOGA) in June, show just how dirty the air is. Any government accountable to the people would act, after all, the prime minister breathes this same air.

Summary from the reports:
 ■ Nepal's 30.7 million people are exposed to air much worse than the WHO threshold.

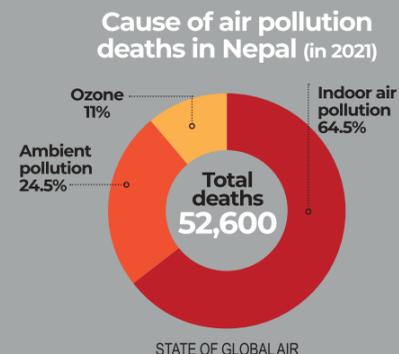
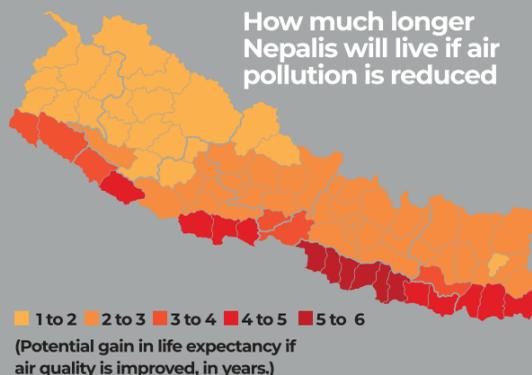
- 19% of deaths in 2021 were due to contaminated air.
- Bad air cuts the average lifespan of Nepalis by 3.4 years. Tarai residents live 5 years less. For comparison, heavy smokers lose just 1.9 years of their life.
- Sooty indoor air will kill nearly 34,000 Nepalis this year, and 12,700 will die from ambient air pollution.

- More than 6,000 deaths, mainly in the cities, were linked to ozone exposure.
- 75% of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) in Nepal is caused by breathing bad air. Air pollution is also the cause of 39% of all lung cancer cases.

MORE ON PAGE 10-11



ADAPTED FROM AIR QUALITY LIFE INDEX (AQLI)



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Nepal should recognise Palestinian sovereignty

With the ongoing war, innocent death and destruction in Palestine by Israel, the recognition of the state of Palestine stands out as the most complicated issue in the history of state recognition.

Both Israel and Palestine have their own history and geography as well as their



GUEST EDITORIAL
Katak Malla

supporters and opponents. Israel's war in the region is escalating, as the air strikes on Lebanon on Sunday shows.

Israel and Palestine have equal rights to statehood, to exist, to defend, and to live in peace. Israel and Nepal both applied for membership of the UN at the General Assembly in 1949. Israel's application was approved by the Security Council.

Nepal's membership was blocked until 1955 by a Soviet veto. In 1960 Nepal was the first South Asian country to recognise Israel.

Nepal then supported Palestine statehood both at the Non-Aligned forum in the 1980s, and the UN General Assembly. Nepal should now make a formal declaration in support of full recognition of the State of Palestine.

This should be a unilateral declaration similar to what Nepal issued vis-a-vis Israel decades ago. A new declaration is especially warranted because of the misuse of the veto power by the United States, blocking Palestine's full membership of the UN. Nepalis are reminded of being similarly blocked from UN membership for five years by the Soviet Union.

The Palestine question has become a part of 'politics of international law'. In May, the General Assembly referred a proposal calling for the admission of Palestine as a full member of the UN to the Security Council. The United States vetoed it. But Norway, Ireland, Spain and several European countries declared Palestine statehood unilaterally.

Informed debate on Palestinian statehood is a rare subject in the Nepali media. Hamas terror on 7 October 2023 in Israel in which 10 Nepali students were killed and one Nepali citizen is still being held hostage, was rightly condemned by the Nepal government and media. But they seem to be silent about acts of genocide in Gaza. This is despite the International Court of Justice acknowledging 'plausible genocide' by Israel that is not a proportionate response to terrorism.

The Nepal government should declare

Palestine statehood in the same manner that Prime Minister B P Koirala's government recognised Israel in 1960 – a bold, unilateral and formal recognition – even though Nepal also voted in favour of Palestine in resolutions at the UN General Assembly and Non-Aligned countries' conferences.

Of 193 UN member states, 146 have voted for and 94 countries have established formal diplomatic relations with Palestine. Nepal should make an official endorsement with other countries like Norway and Spain to strengthen the de jure status of Palestine.

Nepal's expressed solidarity with Palestine is noteworthy, but voting in UN resolutions is not enough for de jure recognition without Security Council approval. The UN General Assembly only gave de facto recognition of Palestine, which helped to upgrade its non-state observer status to a UN member.

Under the UN hierarchy, its five permanent members (US, UK, France, Russia and China) have the authority to block any substantive decision. UN records show that the United States has used its veto 42 times in favour of Israel. General Assembly resolutions are only

recommendatory, lacking binding force. The weakness of the Assembly resolutions, lamentably, is that they usually form so-called 'soft law', but which can still be seen as binding law. The Security Council and supporters of 'hard law' do not perceive Assembly resolutions as

binding law.

Israel is defying not only the International Court of Justice's rulings but also the orders of the Security Council. As a response to a recent request by the General Assembly, the International Court of Justice on 19 July gave an advisory opinion in which it declared that Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967 was unlawful. Israel and the United States did not recognise the Court's opinion on this issue.

Palestine has some weaknesses to fulfil statehood: it does not have full control over its territory since it is under occupation.

Some are calling for an Israel-Palestine 'bi-national state', a homeland for both Jews and Palestinians, but only de jure sovereign Palestine may be helpful for future peace in West Asia.

Nepal's unilateral declaration will not by itself be enough to make Palestine a sovereign state. It will, nonetheless, make history. Or at least Nepal will be standing courageously on the right side of history.

Katak Malla is a Senior Fellow at the Stockholm Centre for International Law and Justice at Stockholm University.



AYAAN INSTITUTE

That will not by itself be enough for de jure sovereignty, but at least Nepal will be on the right side of the history.

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Killings in Iraq

On 19 August 2004, the *Ansa al-Sunna* took 12 Nepalis working at a US base hostage in Iraq. Less than two weeks later, they were all killed, the executions captured on camera and aired on international tv. Organised riots broke out in Kathmandu, with labour recruiters and the Muslim community targeted.

20 years later, there are now 2.5 million Nepalis working in West Asia and at risk being caught up if the Israel-Iran war spreads. Ten Nepali students were killed in the 7 October 2023 Hamas attack, and there are over 1,000 Nepalis fighting for the Russian Army in Ukraine.

Excerpt of the report published in issue #211 27 August – 2 September 2004:

When news came last week that 12 Nepalis had been kidnapped in Iraq, it was no big surprise for the Ministry and Department of Labour. Officials had known all along that Nepalis have been sneaking into Iraq from Kuwait



and Jordan.

"It has been an open secret that thousands of Nepalis are in Iraq," admitted Labour Minister Raghujii Panta.

The insurgency, unemployment and poverty back home have made young Nepalis so desperate for jobs that they are willing to take the risk of working in a war zone like Iraq. Government officials admit the push factor is just too strong. "What can we do when the state of the country compels people to go to such places?" one senior

Department of Labour official asked.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Prakash Sharan Mahat, has appealed for the hostages' release through Al Jazeera television in Doha. But so far there has been no response from the kidnapers who belong to the shadowy Ansar al-Sunnah group.

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

ONLINE PACKAGES



YARSA GOLD RUSH

Travel with us to the rough terrains of Upper Dolpo where locals and people from western Nepal had set up camps to harvest Yarsagumba which is prized in Chinese traditional medicine. They tell us they are now struggling to collect this lucrative Himalayan fungus and how the yarsa gold rush has become riskier. Watch video on our YouTube channel. Read story on page 6-7.



EASY RIDER

In this 2021 video, Saurabh Jyoti talks about his obsession with motorcycles and superheroes which inspired him to open the SJ Moto gallery in Kathmandu. Jyoti shows us his favourite bikes, and the ones that have nostalgic value from his childhood. Watch the video on our YouTube channel.

BUS ACCIDENT

For long distance travel, it is necessary to select drivers and co-drivers wisely, and train them in a way that is compatible with Nepal's roads and geography ('Poor safety to hit Nepal tourism', Sonia Awale, nepalitimes.com).

Prabina Raut

■ Although neither the vehicle nor the driver involved in the tragic accident were Nepali, Nepal's poor safety record is not exactly undeserved.

Tony Jones

■ Unfortunately, Nepal's roads are terribly unsafe.

Claudia Quiroga

THAME FLOOD

The science of climate has finally shifted from the shelves to people ('Act now on climate', Manjeet Dhakal, #1226). But society is not fully aware of this yet, and policymakers only think of actions that cover the horizon of their electoral term.

Aisha Khan

■ I don't disagree with Manjeet Dhakal, but there are so many reports of such disasters, current and pending, that it would be beneficial to see some concrete action by the government. Not every potential action requires foreign funds.

Iván G. Somlai

JOURNALISTS MURDERED

Along with the journalists killed during Nepal's armed conflict ('Kill messengers', 20 Years Ago This Week, #1226), hundreds more were thrown in jail on fictitious charges for rightfully trying to inform the public of what was really going on outside of Kathmandu.

Gary Parkinson

PALESTINE SOVEREIGNTY

Nepal is pusillanimous in not coming strongly against Israeli genocide in Gaza ('Nepal should recognise Palestine sovereignty', Katak Malla, guest editorial, left). Instead it wants to grovel to Israel to get employment for women care givers.

Forester

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING



Nepal's poverty rate is stuck

by Ramesh Kumar

One in every five Nepalis lives in poverty. State intervention, international assistance and private sector investment have not helped improve living standards. So where has all the money gone? Details at nepalitimes.com.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook

Act now on climate

Guest Editorial

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, wrote Manjeet Dhakal, Director of Climate Analytics South Asia, in last week's Guest Editorial. Go online to join the discussion.

X Most popular on X

Poor safety may hit tourism

by Sonia Awale

The death of 27 Indian pilgrims in a bus en route from Pokhara to Kathmandu last Friday got prominent coverage in the Indian media, sparking concerns that headline-making aviation and highway crashes will dampen Nepal's tourism prospects. Join the discussion online.

66 Most commented

Lives on the line

by Sonia Awale

The Thame flood last week was a reminder of the inherent risk of living in the mountains which are magnified by climate breakdown. The disaster showed that since climate risk is a given, Nepalis have no choice but to be prepared. Full story with photos and maps online.

🔥 Most visited online page

QUOTES



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Only 2.2% of Indians live below the extreme poverty line. 10 years ago, it was 12%. In four decades, China has eliminated absolute poverty, lifting 800 million people out of poverty. But why is Nepal unable to match the pace of its neighbours?



Bishow Parajuli @BishowParajuli

Too much talk and little related action. Moreover, most of the budget gets diverted to self-interest activities and non productive sectors.



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Capt Bhogendra Kathayat did his PhD on decades of visibility data from Nepal's airports to come up with policy-level solutions to improve aviation safety as well as public health.



AirlineGuy @GuyAirline

Great story and seems to be a very humble gentleman.



HARIRAM BHETUWAL / RSS

DRUM BEAT: Prime Minister K P Oli and Nepali Congress Chair Sher Bahadur Deuba during Gaura festival celebration in Tundikhel on Monday. Two people in the audience were arrested for shouting slogans against the leaders.



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How to reboot Nepal-India relations

Former Indian ambassador in new book says a new 'revolutionary resolve' is needed on both sides

■ Akanshya Shah

KV Rajan, India's ambassador to Nepal from 1995 to 2000, and Atul K Thakur, a respected Nepal-watcher in India, have jointly published the book, *Kathmandu Chronicle: Reclaiming India-Nepal Relations*.

This is an earnest attempt to relive Rajan's personal experience during his tenure in Kathmandu at a tumultuous time, combined with research by Thakur. It makes for interesting and meaningful reading.

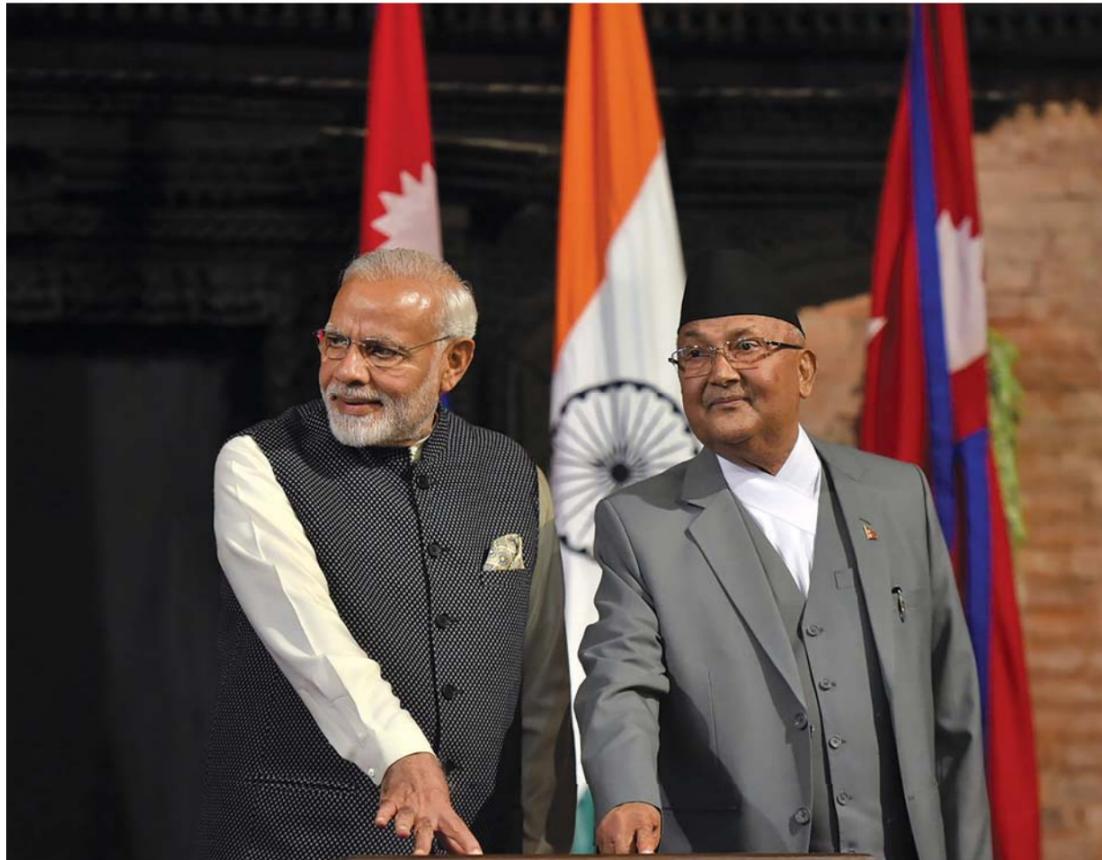
The methodology is simple: aligning both formal and informal which projects the right tone to guide people-to-people connections between the two asymmetric neighbouring countries.

The book starts with a first-person account by Rajan, moving on to analyse a complicated political transition in Nepal, and concludes with an elaboration on future challenges.

Unlike many other such works penned by former Indian bureaucrats, this one is honest, unbiased and more balanced -- all much needed to move India-Nepal relations forward, at least from the Nepali perspective.

Rajan cites his personal rapport with King Birendra with whom he built the trust needed to guide bilateral ties. When Rajan landed in Kathmandu, back home Delhi India's Nepal policy was in the hands of veterans like Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Foreign Secretary Salman Haidar. Their line was to build relations with the palace as well as the political parties, known as the 'twin pillar doctrine'.

Rajan quotes Prime Minister Rao as advising him, 'The King seems to have learnt his lessons. So have we. Let him know we take him



MEAINDIA/X

seriously, we are not taking him for granted ... Make all political leaders feel that they are equally important for us, whether they are supposed to be pro or anti-India. I will not give an inch more to the pro-India prime minister, and not an inch less to the anti-India one.'

Then, of course, Birendra was killed in the massacre at the royal palace on 1 June 2001. Pranab Mukherjee apparently warned him after an earlier meeting with Birendra that the king 'felt a certain threat' and was 'very worried' before the killings.

Rajan makes the rather far-fetched connection between Crown Prince Dipendra and Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) and the underworld, thereby hinting at a conspiracy that he does not expound on. We have to remember that these undercurrents followed the hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC 814 from Kathmandu on 24 December 1999.

The plane was forced to fly to Kandahar in Afghanistan via Lahore and Dubai, and finally released at the turn of the millennium on 31 December. The hijacking itself

affected Nepal-India ties for years.

Rajan takes us on a flashback of Nepal's recent history in which the shadow of King Mahendra looms large, and Gyanendra's effort to emulate his father after his coup on 1 February 2005 when he assumed total state power.

It is quite clear from the book that India was not in favour of the move by Gyanendra, who was regarded as being more friendly towards China. Rajan does provide an honest analysis of the dilemma India faced in dealing with Gyanendra and the political forces

at a time when Nepal was in the throes of the Maoist conflict.

'Tactical U-turns and transactional compromises would leave lasting perceptions in Kathmandu of Indian inconsistency, unreliability and insincerity, and in Delhi, of Nepal's ingratitude, deviousness and how easily it could be led astray,' Rajan writes, referring to India's twin-pillar policy of supporting both the constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy post-1990.

The authors urge India to fashion a new twin-pillar policy of 'strengthening democracies as well as civil society engagement for regional good'.

The second section of the book retells the long political transition of Nepal from Panchayat system of absolute monarchy right up to turning itself into a secular federal democratic republic, and India's role in these changes. The authors argue that the aspirations of Nepalis have since been thwarted by the power struggle among the ruling elite, which have prevented the peace dividend after the conflict to be fully realised.

The authors are critical of Nepal's foreign policy as being 'chaotic and lacking vision', but also advise Indian policy makers on how to provide space and support to Nepal. They hark back to the role of statesmen like Prime Minister B P Koirala, a polished and respected leader, whom the Nepali public should follow to revive his glory.

The book touches upon the Tarai-Mountain division in Nepal, and controversial bilateral issues like the 1950 Treaty, the Limpiyadhura border dispute and the 'China factor'. The book tries to untangle the political, socio-economic and even psychological factors affecting Nepal's quest for

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Punch EV launch

Tata Motors and Sipradi launched Punch.ev at the NADA Auto Show 2024, the sub-compact eSUV with a range of 280km and a ground clearance of 190mm. It had 100+ bookings on the first day at discounted price of Rs3.4million.



BYD ATTO 3

BYD dealer Cimex has launched ATTO 3 electric SUV in which the digital input screen has grown from 12.8 to 15.6 inches. An app allows BYD owners to monitor range levels. Prices start at Rs5,690,000.

Nepathya concert

Nepathya held its biggest ever concert in Dallas, Texas during its ongoing US tour with 4,000 attendees at the Toyota Music Factory venue. Nepalis flew in from as far



as Oregon and Washington DC. The band will close out the tour by performing in Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland.

IME Lab Discounts

Global IME credit and debit card holders and mobile banking users can get a 25% discount at the Crown Laboratory and Referral Center branches in Naxal and Boudha. The lab offers a range of services including immunology and food sensitivity testing.

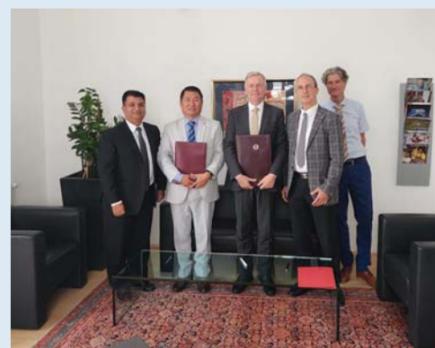
KAT and dog

The Kathmandu Animal Treatment (KAT) Centre held a campaign to spay and neuter stray dogs and vaccinate them against rabies at a newly-constructed clinic in Godavari. KAT works to maintain a healthy urban dog population and reduce their suffering.



JICA volunteers

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Nepal announced the addition of nine volunteers to their Nepal team who will be deployed in agriculture, traffic safety, and education, living locally to understand problems and work towards solutions.



Sustainable mountains

The Austrian Development Agency and ICIMOD are partnering to advance sustainable development in the mountains, especially to adapt to the impact of climate breakdown in the Himalaya.

Daddy's Drunch

For the upcoming Father's Day, Holiday Inn is introducing 'Daddy's Drunch,' a brunch event with unlimited sushi, dim sum, and grills, as well as cocktails and other beverages. The event will start at noon on 2 September. There is also a buy 2 get 1 free offer available.



SHG milestone

The Sherpa Hospitality Group marked three milestones: the first anniversary of the Shinta Mani Mustang, an upgrade to Kasara Chitwan, and the launch of a new Mountain Lodge in Manang, one of 14 family-owned premium lodges in the Himalaya.

Marriott Food fest

Fairfield by Marriott is holding a biryani and kebab festival till 31 August at the Lava, the hotel's in-house restaurant. Guests can choose from a variety of dishes--including plenty of vegetarian options--and get a drink for Rs1,999.



Soaltee GATE

Soaltee Enterprises is set to invest in the Global Academy of Tourism and Hospitality Education (GATE) College, helping the institution offer high quality hospitality management education and work opportunities. The college will now be rebranded as 'Soaltee Gate College'.



K V Rajan



Atul K Thakur

Nepali perspective.

The authors are unnecessarily brutal in criticising Amish Raj Mulmi's All Roads Lead North which is actually a cogent analysis of how China came in to Nepal in a big way post-2015.

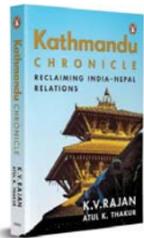
It would also have been useful if Ambassador Rajan could have elaborated on the relations he built during his posting with members of Nepal's business community, civil society and media.

Rajan was well known at the time for promoting India's soft power, the mention of which is limited to just one event in the book. That India is an important player in Nepali politics is a given, what the book falls short on is explaining why India has not been able to show greater magnanimity in its dealings with a much smaller neighbour.

Socially and also psychologically, there are changing perceptions among citizens of both Nepal and India regarding each other. The book could have elaborated on how real change can be brought about in an era of social media magnification of opinion and emotion.

Nevertheless, this can be good reference material for those interested in the recent history of Nepal-India relations as well as those concerned about its future, as told by an insider with a researcher. 🇳🇵

Akanshya Shah is a Nepali journalist and researcher based in New Delhi.



Kathmandu Chronicle: Reclaiming India-Nepal Relations
by K V Rajan and Atul K Thakur
Penguin, 2024
Paperback, 280 pages
INR 499
ISBN-13 : 978-0143463375

being a true democratic country.

The last section of the book looks at ways to repurpose India-Nepal ties by strengthening cooperation in various fields, especially water resources and trade. A 'revolutionary resolve' is needed from both sides, they say, to meet the aspirations of the Nepali people in the decades to come.

Structural reforms and an alternate development paradigm are a must for Nepal, they argue, and this can be achieved by strengthening bilateral, regional as well as sub-regional cooperation.

The book quotes Nepali authors like Manjushree Thapa, Sanjay Upadhyay, Prashant Jha, Lok Raj Baral, Hari Bansh Jha, Aditya Adhikari, among others, to add a




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A local woman prepares cooking fuel at 4,500m in Upper Dolpo.

The human cost of Ne

Climate change and overharvesting reduces earnings of villagers from a lucrative Himalayan fungus

■ Shrijan Pandey in Dolpo

Chandra Basnet started walking from Jajarkot and five days later after climbing passes more than 5,300m high, she reached the desolate tent camp of yarsagumba harvesters in Upper Dolpo.

The 21-year-old joined the seasonal migration with 40kg of supplies on her back and a baby daughter (pictured, right) wrapped around her front with a shawl. Her husband carried an additional 20kg of supply.

“Bringing my baby was the toughest part, it is hard to carry her,” says Chandra, who is on the third week of her stay. “There are no hospitals around here, so if she falls sick we have to pack up everything and walk back.”

The Basnet family is among tens of thousands who move to the high mountains on the Tibet border in the pre-monsoon yarsa gold rush every year. Yarsagumba (Cordyceps fungus) is a fungus that grows on caterpillar larvae at between 3,500-5,000m elevation, and is prized in traditional Chinese medicine fetching up to \$110,000 per kg in Shanghai.

The Shey-Phoksundo National Park in Dolpo issues harvest permits every year for a month starting mid-May. This year, there were 8,584 entries – double last year’s total. But climate breakdown and overharvesting means that yarsa pickings have fallen in quantity and quality.

The Basnet family spent Rs500,000 to come here, expecting high returns but were able to make only Rs200,000. Says Chandra, “We went through a lot of hardships, but hoped we could at least make up the cost of coming here to help raise our daughter, but it was not worth it.”

Until recently, yarsa was a lucrative albeit risky undertaking in Nepal’s highlands where



subsistence farmers depend on it to supplement their income. But it is a dangerous occupation. Just this season Karnali Province reported the death of 12 harvesters.

Conditions are tough. Most pickers cannot afford proper tents

and clothing to cope with the harsh weather. Most bring their children along, and they are the first to fall sick. The health post at Dho Tarap was open, but there was no staff.

Jamuna Bista, 22, died on her way back down to Rukum because she could not get medical care in

time. Her family cremated her by lighting a pile of shrubs and roots gathered from the arid slopes.

Apart from the difficult terrain, yarsa harvest is getting riskier because of higher temperatures, winter drought and unseasonal rain caused by climate breakdown.



ALL PHOTOS: SHRIJAN PANDEY



Harvesters look for yarsa in steep slopes of Upper Dolpo.



Easy pickings

Pratap Rokaya, 48, is a social studies teacher at Shree Shelri Drugdra School in Saldang in Upper Dolpo, and like his students, started collecting the fungus when he was 17. Despite having a government job, Rokaya says he needs the additional income.

Such is the economic significance of yarsa that schools in the region are shut during the harvest season, allowing children to tag along with their parents so that they can also help pick with their keen eye-sight and nimble fingers.

"Even though such long breaks are not good for students, their guardians are left with no choice," Rokaya adds. "We are heavily dependent on yarsa because traditional farming is not enough to support families."

Dhanbir Bista is in Grade 5 but has not been to school for more than a month because he is up here scouring the steep slope on his hands and knees. "I feel bad for leaving school but I have to come here to support my father," he tells us.

Dhanbir's father, Bhim Bahadur, adds, "It's very risky to bring young ones, especially after I heard that people from my own village have died. But we need the extra pair of hands."

Nepal's yarsa gold rush



This affects the yarsa which needs a temperature of between -15°C to -5°C during the winter and pre-monsoon rain to grow properly and emerge partially from the ground.

"Looking at the declining yarsa harvest and climate change, we are forced to question if yarsa will soon be extinct," says Bishwo

Babu Shrestha, warden of Shey Phoksundo National Park.

This means a major source of livelihood for underserved families in the lower valleys of western Nepal will be in jeopardy, exacerbating the outmigration trend. As more pickers return empty-handed or with losses that have driven them into debt, the families struggle to support their children.

Kunsang Dorje Gurung, 38, of Tinje in Upper Dolpo harvested his first yarsagumba when he was 12. "It was like finding a gold nugget,"

Dorje recalled. "I felt an intense energy."

However, in 26 years since, he has noticed a steep decline in the pickings, and the few yarsa that are collected are of poor quality. "I used to make up to Rs300,000 a season back in the day but now, I barely earn Rs30,000," he says.

Gurung blames this on a prolonged drought that also sparked wildfires across the mountains. Some families even performed rituals, praying for rain and a good yarsa harvest. "I don't have any other job," says Gurung. "The only thing I know is collecting yarsa. If I find enough, it's a good year. If not, I have nothing."

Researchers have also plotted the decline in yarsa harvests in the past five years. A kilogram of high-quality yarsa would have between 2,500-2,900 pieces, but now even 4,000 yarsa pieces do not make 1kg. "Yarsa has been a huge source of income, but its ecological, economic, and social impacts are far-reaching," says Suraj Upadhaya, of the School of Agriculture, Communities and the Environment at Kentucky State University.

There is also a tax of Rs31,000 for every kg of yarsa, which pickers often avoid paying. Shey Phoksundo National Park also collects a Rs500 yarsa fee from every resident and Rs2,000 from those outside, making it easy to

track the number of harvesters. Last year, Rs85,000 was collected in fees, whereas this year the figure jumped to Rs10.86 million, hinting at enormous overharvesting.

Trampling is also another cause of low harvests, researchers say, increased human activity on the slopes means the top soil is compacted, preventing the next cycle of growth.

All this means that the poorest Nepalis are losing an extra source of income that was allowing them to survive.

Warns Warden Shrestha: "This is going to unleash an economic crisis in the region, families will not have the money to buy food leading to starvation."

The desperation is already apparent in the rise in crime. Robbers loot pickers on their way down from the mountains, stealing their yarsa or money, or both. There are also territorial disputes between locals and pickers from outside. In 2009, seven people were killed in Manang in a fight.

Overharvesting of yarsa also impacts on many other species in the Shey Phoksundo National Park's fragile high altitude ecosystem where plants take a lot longer to grow. The endangered animals here like the snow leopard, Tibetan wolf, and

blue sheep are also affected by the human impact on their food chain, as well as poaching.

"We have not been able to manage this systematically," admits Shrestha, adding that despite funding from the government, royalties, and tariff collection from locals, many of the security posts lack staff to enforce regulation.

"Dolpo used to be a self-sustaining barter economy, but now everything has to be bought," says Upadhaya whose research suggests that alternative crops like olives can provide a good source of income in the region. Yarsa's instant reward, however, means local people cannot wait for returns from such long-term investment.

Worryingly, much of the income generated from yarsa hasn't been diverted to productive sectors either. Most of the locals have spent their money on renovating their houses and on consumer items.

As Nepal's road network expands and snakes up through Dolpo, the remotest corners of the Himalaya are being connected. This can open up new opportunities including the region's potential for religious and eco-tourism that can provide an alternative livelihood for yarsa pickers. 🇳🇵

EVENTS



NADA 2024

Stop by to look at different models of vehicles and products of the automobile industry at the NADA Auto Show 2024. The exhibition will showcase dozens of EV brands.
Until 1 September, 10am onwards, Ticket: Rs150 (For students), Rs200 (For general), Bhrikuti Mandap

Mithila Art

Nepal Art Council's ongoing exhibition features Mithila artwork from renowned Nepali and Indian women artists.
Until 19 September, 11am-5pm (Sundays to Fridays), Nepal Art Council, Babar Mall, 9863790910



Nugdha

Nugdha (The Inner Soul) is a drama about a young man's pursuit to compete in the World Dance Competition despite his father's disapproval.
Until 3 September, 5:30pm (except Mondays), also 1:30pm (on Saturdays), Mandala Theatre, Thapagaun (01) 5245147

Boudha Farmer's Market

If you want a detour around Kathmandu on the weekend, then this weekly market might be your stop. Get fresh produce, and support local businesses.
Every Saturday, 8am-3pm, Utpala Cafe, Boudha



Kanchho Dhago

Inspired by real events, this drama directed by Aashant Sharma delves deeper into human behavior and emotions, as well as sensitivity in relationships.
Until 14 September, 5:15pm, 1pm (also on Saturday), Kausi Theatre, Teku, 9860360109

DINING



Attic

Enjoy Attic's signature Chicken chop including other tasty dishes and refreshing drinks amid the relaxing ambience. Or, order from the comfort of home.
Gyaneshwar, 9801138788

MUSIC

Chiya Sangeet

Chiya Sangeet session is the place to go for tea and performances, and a place where artists and audiences come together for the love of music.
31 August, 1pm onwards, Fee: Rs300- Rs500, En space, Chundevi



Rendezvous Carnival

This carnival festival mixes the spirit of pop culture, and will bring together music with Nepal's diverse culture and art.
31 August, 12pm onwards, Ticket: Rs999, Hotel Annapurna, Darbar Marg



Charity Musical

Take friends and loved ones to this charity event where singer Deepak Bajracharya will perform live.
31 August, 6pm onwards, Ticket: Rs1,000- Rs3,000, LOD, Thamel



Bollywood Night

This Bollywood disco themed party is a charity event happening this weekend. Dance the night away for a good cause.
31 August, 6:30pm onwards, Ticket: Rs. 1,000, Hard Rock cafe, Darbar Marg

College Carnival

Pahelo Batti Muni along with Sabin Rai and the Pharaoh will join the Prime College Carnival next weekend that promises to be full of music, entertainment, and food.
7 September, 10am onwards, Ticket: Rs499, Prime College, Khusibun



4Stories

At 4Stories, instagrammable aesthetics meet impeccable food. The Sexy chicken dumplings, Bang bang Shrimp and Satay Chicken 450 are a must-have for any visitor.
Thamel, 9808790813

Baan Thai

Baan Thai serves generous portions of healthy Thai dishes. The restaurant's food and space is perfect for a family dinner, or a lunch with friends.
Battisputali, 9828797496

About Town

GETAWAYS



Atithi Resort & Spa

Immerse in some recreational activities this week at Atithi Resort and spa, where services range from Ayurvedic Massages to steam and sauna.
Lakeside, Pokhara (061) 1466760

The Inn Patan

What was once a traditional brick and timber Newari house has been transformed into a beautiful heritage hotel that showcases the beauty of authentic Newari culture.
Patan, 9851066897



Himalayan Deurali

At Himalayan Deurali, you'll feel like you can reach out and touch the mountains right from your room. The expansive property offers everything from its in-house restaurant to its relaxing spa.
Nagdada, Kaski, 9852660250

Marriott Kathmandu

Stay in any one of their 200 rooms and enjoy the luxury amenities of this global brand. Dine at Edamame, Thamel Kitchen, or Raksi Music Bar.
Naxal (01)4443040



Dhulikhel Lodge Resort

The lodge is nestled amidst the beautiful terraced hills of Dhulikhel. Try their rooftop restaurant, where Nepali, Continental, Chinese and Indian food are served.
Dhulikhel (01) 4991353

Octave

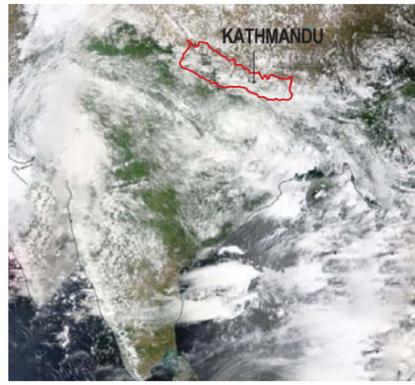
Known for its sushi and ever-present live music, Octave is one of Kathmandu's most happening places.
Darbar Marg (01) 4220569



Belgian Waffles

Belgian Waffles' mouthwatering variety of waffles is perfect for those with a sweet tooth. Drop by—or get the waffles delivered to your doorstep.
Jhamsikhel, 9851279690

WEEKEND WEATHER



Not Finished Yet

Forecasters are expecting a slight let-up in the monsoon showers on Friday-Saturday, but the rains may pick up again with a vengeance on Sunday and till midweek as a new low pressure trough carries over Central Nepal. The maximum temperature was already on its way down, but overcast skies and downdrafts from convection systems may cool things down considerably Tuesday and Wednesday. All this is good news for agriculture, but settlements along steep mountainsides and roads may be at more risk. The top soil is already saturated, and the heavy top soil may lead to more slope failures.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
29° 19°	30° 20°	28° 20°

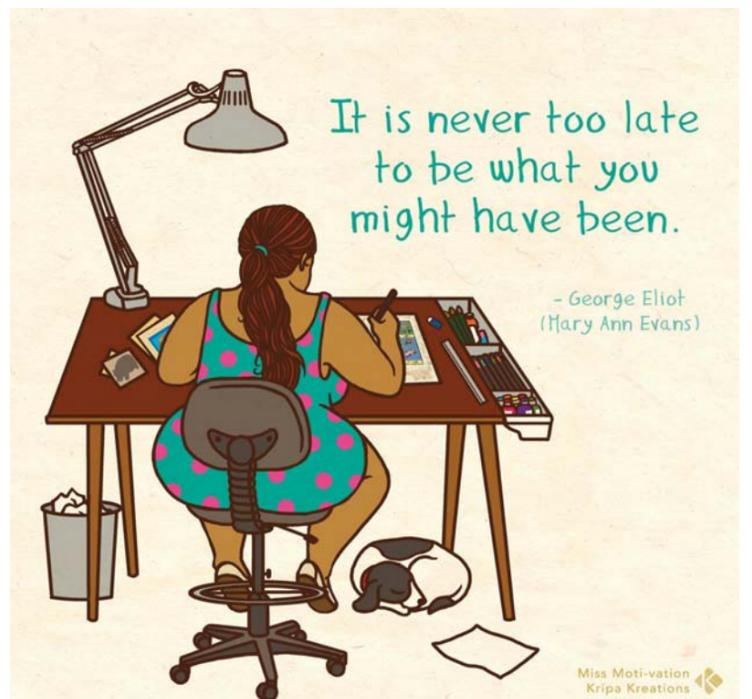
OUR PICK



Charles Sun has just begun to settle into his life as a ruthless gangster in Taipei when he gets news of an assassination attempt on his father. Realising that his mother and younger brother are in danger, he prepares to fly to LA—where they live—to protect them. Meanwhile, Charles' younger brother Bruce, who is completely unaware of his family's criminal history, is forced to adapt to his new circumstances when his brother comes into his life. Created by Brad Falchuk and Byron Wu, the 2024 action comedy drama series The Brothers Sun stars Michelle Yeoh, Justin Chien, and Sam Song Li.

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

Nepal's star shines in Locarno

For Thinley Lhamo, winning the best acting award for Shambhala has been a journey of self-discovery

■ Pinki Sris Rana

Min Bahadur Bham's latest feature *Shambhala* was the first Nepali film to be selected for the main competition at the Berlinale and Locarno film festivals this year, ushering in a new era for Nepali cinema.

Last week, Thinley Lhamo (pictured) won the Boccacino d'Oro Prize for Best Acting Performance at the 77th Locarno International Film Festival in Switzerland for her role as Pema. This was a first not just for Nepal but for South Asia.

Shambhala was shot in Dolpo and is the story of Pema, who is married to Tashi and is also an accompanying spouse to her monk brother-in-law Karma. Tashi leaves for a trip to Lhasa, and Pema finds out she is pregnant. The legitimacy of the child is questioned, so Pema travels to find Tashi, an ultimate journey of self-discovery and liberation.

"I didn't believe I had done enough work to be called an actor, but the award definitely gives me confidence and assurance to be one," Lhamo, 27, told *Nepali Times* on return from Switzerland.

Polyandry used to be common among Nepal's Himalayan communities, and is also a familiar theme in Hindu mythology. A woman taking on brothers as spouses was traditionally seen as a sensible way to keep small land holdings intact and save women from the stigma of widowhood.

Like Pema, Thinley Lhamo's personal life has also been a journey of self-discovery. An artsy child, she always took part in extracurriculars at boarding school in Boudha, and once dreamt of being a flight attendant—but she had a more creative bend.

Her passion for dancing and singing led to her affiliation with the Nepal Tibet Opera Association (NTOA), and she also did modelling gigs. This exposure



GOPEN RAI

brought her roles in the Nepali films 'Naka' and 'Hari' in 2018.

"I had no stage presence before joining the Opera Association and I used to make a lot of weird expressions while performing," laughs Lhamo. "It all helped me adapt to the world of film."

There was a lull in film-making and Lhamo did a stint at an NGO, but was on the lookout for a more meaningful acting role. When she heard about *Shambhala*, she signed up for Anup Baral's acting workshop to hone her skills.

That helped in the audition but working with a perfectionist like Min Bahadur Bham where her character carried the entire film on her shoulders was tough.

She quips: "The movie starts with Pema, continues with Pema and ends with Pema."

It is a star-studded cast with Tenzing Dalha, Sonam Topden and Karma Shakya, but Lhamo soon got over the initial nervousness to give her character her best. Switching between Nepali and English, she

said, "I was mostly worried about portraying Pema earnestly, and to do justice to her character."

Despite early success, Lhamo is down-to-earth and also self-deprecating about her horse-riding ability. The crew spent two months acclimatising to the terrain and culture in Dolpo before actual filming started. And part of Lhamo's training was to learn to ride her co-star horse properly.

Some of the film crew got altitude sickness and had to be medevaced. But all this was not as

difficult as the emotions she had to muster in some of the more gut-wrenching scenes in *Shambhala*.

Director Bham is thrilled with the recognition his film has got in Berlinale and now in Locarno. He said: "The best actress award means international recognition for Nepali cinema, and is inspirational for intelligent and aspiring young Nepali actresses from the Himalaya like Thinley Lhamo." 🇳🇵

The film will be in theatres in Kathmandu from 13 September. View the trailer online.



SHAMBHALA / FACEBOOK



Streaming the Himalaya on film

Mountaineering gains prominence on movie streaming sites, opening opportunities for Nepali filmmakers

Pasang Lhamu Sherpa was the first Nepali woman to climb Mt Everest, but she died on the descent. She is a national icon, but few have heard of Lhakpa Sherpa, the first Nepali woman to scale the world's highest mountain and get back down alive.

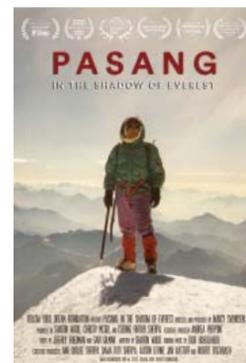
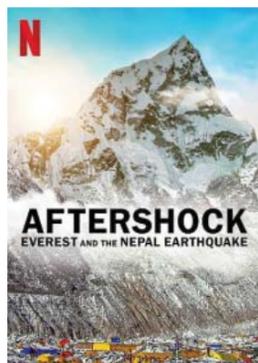
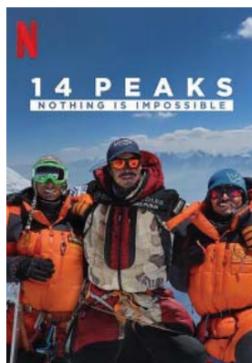
Both Pasang and Lhakpa were enduring, resilient women who defied the patriarchy, struggled, and triumphed. Their compelling stories are the subjects of two international documentaries.

The 2024 Netflix film *Mountain Queen: The Summits of Lhakpa Sherpa* recounts her career from porter to a mountaineer who scaled Mt Everest for the 10th time in 2022, and then her hard life as an immigrant in the United States.

That film follows the 2022 documentary *Pasang: In the Shadow of Everest* which breathes life into a celebrated national hero whose climb and tragic death every Nepali knows by heart. The film is available on Amazon Prime Video in the UK and the US.

The recent trend of making documentaries about mountaineering for streaming sites was kicked off by *14 Peaks: Nothing Is Impossible* featuring Nepal-born Nims Purja, in 2021. *14 Peaks* was on Netflix's top ten list for months after its release.

This was followed by another Netflix production, the docuseries *Aftershock:*



Everest and the Nepal Earthquake about the earthquake-triggered avalanche at Everest Base Camp in 2015 that killed 18 climbers.

Biopics about mountaineers or dramatised adaptations of real-life expeditions have an even longer history with Hollywood's 1998 IMAX film *Everest* and the 2015 movie, also titled *Everest*, about climbers killed by a storm on the mountain in 1996. A biopic on Tenzing Norgay is currently being produced by Apple Original Films starring Tom Hiddleston and William Dafoe.

"The West had always seen Nepal from the set narrative of exotic Shangri La or Shambhala, and mountaineering adventure

has always pulled them," explains Ramyata Limbu of the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (KIMFF).

More rare have been films about Nepali mountaineers made by Nepali producers. But as Nepali mountain guides move from being porters for hire to expedition leaders and accomplished mountaineers in their own right, this may be changing.

Says filmmaker Shanta Nepali: "It is only now that the extraordinary stories of Nepali mountaineers are being recognised." Her 2023 documentary *Climbing Temperatures* features the Sherpa struggle to adapt to the impact of climate breakdown in the Himalaya.

The 2024 documentary *Girls Rewriting Destiny* by Lawa Pyakurel is another example of Nepali filmmakers telling the story of Nepali mountaineers. Pyakurel's documentary stars mountaineer Maya Gurung and explores the lives she has touched over the years.

As Nepalis gain fame and respect for their mountaineering feats, this has concurrently opened up opportunities for local filmmakers to chronicle their adventures on streaming channels.

"It is ten times harder for Nepali filmmakers to take equally deserving Nepali stories to a global platform like Netflix," says Nepali. "It's not that we cannot come up with good stories, we just cannot afford it."

Lack of exposure and a talent gap means some Nepali productions have not been of sufficient quality for streaming sites to take interest. Co-production can be a way out for films on mountaineering, and some have opted for this. But it is equally important for international filmmakers to use local expertise where available so the stories ring true.

Says Nepali: "If local filmmakers are hired just as fixers, they don't have much say. But if it is for creative input in cinematography, production, or their cultural understanding, the production has an authentic voice." 🇳🇵

Pinki Sris Rana

We have the solution to

Political resolve to improve air quality will add 3-5 years to the lives of Nepalis

■ Sonia Awale

Air pollution is now the biggest threat to human health in Nepal, shortening lives by 3-5 years in Kathmandu Valley and the Tarai with the worst concentration of particulate matter.

A new report by Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) released this week ranks Nepal as the third most polluted country in the world with its entire 30.7 million people living in areas where the annual average particulate pollution level exceeds the WHO guideline.

Even where outdoor air is clean in the high mountains, families are exposed to excessive indoor pollution due to soot from burning firewood, especially in winter.

The State of Global Air (SOGA) Report published in June has even more shocking figures: more than 50,000 Nepalis died from air pollution in 2021, accounting for 19% of all mortality, just behind high blood pressure.

The study also linked 75%



KONSTANTINOS SOFIKITIS

Nepal's flying doctor

An airline captain who is also a physicist, now with a PhD in atmospheric science

■ Kunda Dixit

Bhogendra Kathayat defended his PhD thesis at Tribhuvan University, and the very next night he was at Tribhuvan International Airport.

No, not to emigrate, but to captain a Nepal Airlines Airbus A330 on a seven-hour flight to Narita. Capt Kathayat, 41, is now the only PhD airline pilot in Nepal, and one of only a handful actively flying internationally.

Born in a tiny village in Morang to a farming family, it was a hard life. Money was always short, and the four siblings went to a school with mud floors.

Kathayat excelled in studies, earning a scholarship after topping the entrance exam out of 1,000 students for admission into Tri Chandra College in Kathmandu. Always good in maths, he passed MSc in Physics with flying colours – which is why flying was next.

This was 2006, the conflict had just ended, and Nepal Airlines announced a scheme for pilot training. Kathayat's parents did not have the collateral for the Rs3.4 million loan to pay for flight school, but he borrowed from relatives, and was off to Kota Bharu in Malaysia.

When he returned after a year to join Nepal Airlines, Kathayat was flying Twin Otters but did not even have a driving license because he could not afford a car or motorcycle. For the next seven years, he flew as a Himalayan bush pilot in challenging weather and terrain to remote airfields.

In 2015, Nepal Airlines bought two Airbus A320s, and Capt



Kathayat was off to Toulouse – leaping straight from Twin Otters to twin jets. It was easier for him than for 757 pilots, because Boeing and Airbus have wholly different philosophies of flying.

After being on 320s for three years, Kathayat upgraded to the bigger Airbus A330s, but still does not have a car license and arrived for this recent interview in his Honda Unicorn.

“Although I felt like aviation

was in my blood, there was this nagging sense that my education was incomplete,” Kathayat recalls.

Meeting Nepal's foremost atmospheric scientist Arnico Panday on a flight, he was convinced that Nepal needed more scientific research into the causes of air pollution and ways to reduce it.

Since Panday is an aviation buff himself, together they devised a way to use decades of visibility data from Nepal's airports to come

up with policy-level solutions to improve aviation safety as well as public health.

Capt Kathayat used his long layovers in Dubai, Doha and Tokyo to pore over historical airport data from Bhairawa and Kathmandu to analyse how domestic and crossborder pollution sources, humidity, or aerosols affected the optical property of suspended particulates, and correlated them to seasonal and time of day variations.

The results were predictable: the number of days with heavy smog in Kathmandu increased steeply after 2000. The days when planes could land under visual flight rules (VFR) had gone down in Bhairawa, especially as winter fog had become thicker, more frequent and long-lasting.

Kathayat's PhD thesis also carries recommendations. Bhairawa may not always be useful as an alternate airport for big jets in winter because it is fogged up when Kathmandu visibility is also below minima. Bhairawa will need a Cat II Instrument Landing System (ILS) to accommodate big jets in low visibility.

The long-term solutions are to control pollution at the source, and in Kathmandu that means vehicular emission, open garbage fires, cross residue burning, and in Bhairawa reducing industrial and crop burning. But for both airports, visibility will remain marginal unless pollution is controlled in north India (see story, above).

Capt Kathayat's PhD adviser, Arnico Panday, who is also a member of the opposition RSP, is a proud mentor. He says: “Capt Bhogendra is the hardest working student I have ever supervised, and his topic is very relevant for aviation safety and efficient flight operations.”

At a time when most Nepalis are cynical about the country's future, Kathayat is an example of how, given the opportunity, even Nepalis from the humblest beginnings can take wing and fly.

Says Capt Kathayat, PhD: “It is fashionable nowadays to be negative about the government, but I keep reminding myself that I would not be where I am today without government subsidies, government scholarships and the opportunity that a government-owned airline provided me.”

Yes, and plus a lot of hard work and perseverance. 🇳🇵

pollution, but no action

of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and 39% of lung cancer deaths to dirty air.

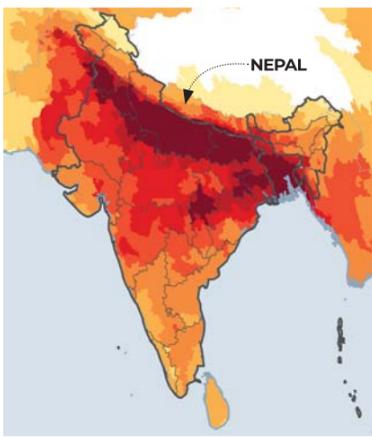
Levels of surface ozone and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) are also increasing due to vehicular emissions, triggering development of childhood asthma.

Appalling as these figures are, they should come as no surprise. What is more appalling is the lack of political will to clean up.

"The political apathy to prioritise action against air pollution is the crux of the problem,"

SMOG WITHOUT BORDERS

The most polluted part of India is right across Nepal's southern border.



AQLI

states environmentalist Bhusan Tuladhar, adding that solutions like stopping open garbage burning, and cutting vehicular and brick kiln emissions are easy to implement solutions.

Just as the media and public call for action against floods and landslides after the monsoon starts, air pollution also becomes a topic when winter has already set in. Action on both should be a year-round effort.

Prashant Khanal works on air pollution and climate mitigation and was recently in Paris, where the mayor is pedestrianising streets to curb emissions and improve health.

He says: "We simply do not have that kind of leadership nor political will. Awareness and

individual action are all well and good, but we need regulatory measures to improve air quality."

Vehicular and industrial emissions, open burning, wildfire smoke and crossborder transport of pollution are the main culprits. Most can be reduced by strictly enforcing national air quality measures, while we have to wait for India and Pakistan to clean up their act for transboundary pollution to go down.

Madhes and Lumbini provinces have even higher pollution levels than Kathmandu, especially when prevailing winds are from the south. This has worsened in recent years by longer-lasting winter fog.

If Nepal were to reduce particulate pollution to meet the WHO guideline, residents in the

Tarai would gain 4.8 years of life expectancy, Kathmandu residents would live 2.6 years longer, and tens of thousands of lives would be saved every year (map, left).

The SOGA report puts deaths linked to household air pollution due to cooking with solid fuels at 33,900 compared to 12,700 by ambient suspended particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5).

More than 6,000 other deaths have been linked to exposure to toxic ozone, mainly coming out of the tail pipes of motorcycles.

Climate breakdown and biodiversity loss are now getting more media attention, but the air pollution crisis does not seem to be waking politicians to the dangers although its impact on citizens is more immediate and localised.

Says Khanal, "Air pollution is not just a public health or environmental issue but has huge social and economic implications, the government needs to allocate money for its mitigation just as it is now doing for climate change."

Electrification of public transport and cooking are common sense solutions to improving air quality and public health in Nepal, with the country now generating more than 3,000MW of hydropower. This is set to double in the next five years.

Instead of prioritising export of surplus energy, increasing domestic

demand in transportation and household appliances would yield greater dividends in terms of public health, and reducing the petroleum import bill.

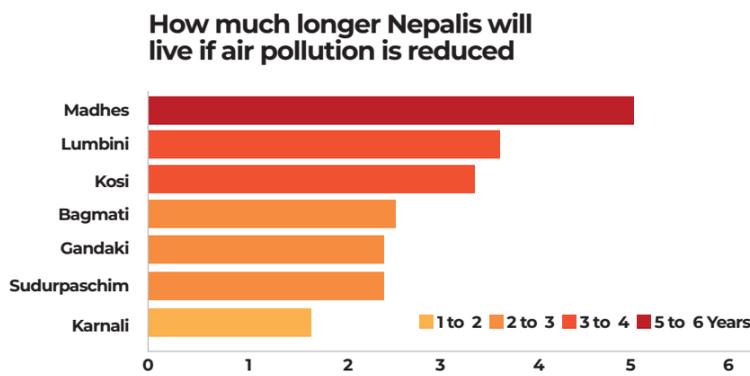
As the ongoing NADA Auto Show in Kathmandu proves, there has been a spurt in the sale of electric vehicles. Of the nearly 18,000 vehicles imported in Nepal last year, 12,000 were battery-powered. These are mostly private electric vehicles, but it is public transport and in electric stoves where the focus should be.

"Air pollution ranks as a huge concern to people living in Nepal, and the country also has some of the most open data for air quality information across South Asia," Christa A Hasenkopf of the Clean Air Program at the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago told Nepali Times.

But she added, "It is challenging to make progress on long term levels of air pollution when there is not a long-term goal in place, like a national annual standard for PM2.5."

Despite shortcomings, there have been notable local initiatives. Lalitpur has been promoting itself as a 'cycle city' while Hadigaon has been working on pedestrianisation. Changunarayan has come up with an Air Quality Management Plan while Chandragiri wants to invest in controlling wildfires to reduce pollution levels.

Says Bhusan Tuladhar, "Local leadership and community ownership is what's missing from a lot of our government initiatives. That is why pedestrianisation of Hadigaon worked and not Mayor Balen's New Road expansion which was a top down directive with little community participation." 🇳🇵



Transcontinental contamination

There is an anomaly in the new Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) report released this week. Particulate pollution in Nepal and South Asia in 2022 was 18% lower compared to 2021.

Scientists are not sure why, but it is probably due to more rain that year which washed down pollutants from the air. If this decline is sustained, an average Nepali could live 10 months longer than what they would have if they were exposed to the 2021 particulate pollution levels.

"True progress on air pollution can't be measured from one year to the next, it must be measured over several years," says Christa A Hasenkopf of the Clean Air Program at the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago.

Indeed, longer-term pollution trends

suggest that Nepal's average annual particulate matter concentration in the air increased by 49% from 1998 to 2022.

Warns Tanushree Ganguly of AQLI: "Despite the 18% decline in South Asia's PM2.5 levels relative to 2021, people in South Asia are still likely to lose more than 3.5 years of their life as a result of breathing polluted air. This reinforces the need for sustained regionwide action."

In addition to vehicular and industrial emissions, farm stubble burning after autumn harvest in India and Pakistan is now emerging as a major source of suspended particulates that are carried by prevailing winds to Nepal and Bhutan.

When deposited on ice and snow, the soot particles add to the melting of glaciers caused by global warming. Some studies suggest that

30% of glacier thaw in the Indian Himalaya is caused by pollution-related loss of albedo effect on snow.

"Air pollution is a transboundary issue, and at least in South Asia, a coordinated regional approach can move the conversation towards joint solutions," Pallavi Pant of the Health Effects Institute, which publishes the annual State of Global Air report, told Nepali Times.

Joint efforts to strengthen local technical and scientific capacity can help countries in the region establish and run advanced air quality monitoring systems, and use the data for decision-making.

Pant adds: "We can leverage available data and expertise to identify relevant solutions that can lead to cleaner air and better health. Air pollution can be related to policies

addressing prevention and control of non-communicable diseases."

Back in 1998, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka came together to sign the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia. That collective is now mostly dysfunctional, but reviving it would be in the mandate of regional organisations like ICIMOD and SAARC, both headquartered in Kathmandu and working in a geopolitically volatile but seriously polluted region.

Ganguly has an idea about where to start: "South Asian countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan have similar PM2.5 levels, but different PM2.5 standards. Harmonisation of PM2.5 standards could be one way to foster regional collaboration."

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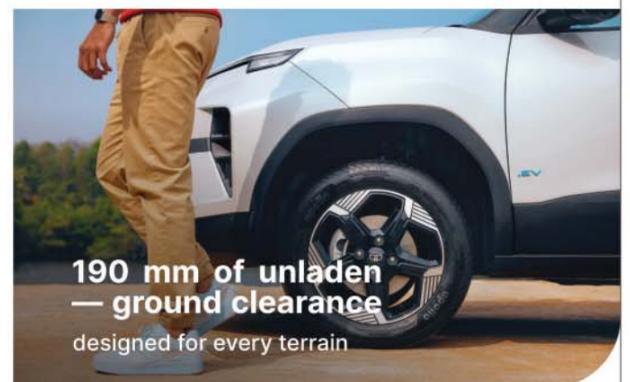
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— seats
comfort takes centre stage



voice assisted
— electric sunroof
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— digital cockpit
with in-built navigation



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— ground clearance
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