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## PEAK SEASON

**D**asain is here, the festival of family and travel. The spirit is dampened this year because of the flood disaster, and many highways are still blocked.

But Nepali Times takes the occasion of this ten-day festival to present Top Ten Peaks that are off the beaten trek, and offer stunning views. They are not too demanding but take you far from the madding crowd. Escape.

**1 KORI PEAK**  
Most visitors to Siles are en route to Kapuche, the lowest glacial lake in Nepal (2,450m). But for better views hire a local guide, and cross the Madi Khola to climb to Kori (3,800m), a ridge-top summer pasture. There will be no trekkers on this little known jewel of the Himalaya. Lamjung Himal is dead ahead, and the adventurous may want to continue on to Namun La, the old trading route to Manang.

**2 PANCHASE HILL**  
This long ridge walk can be stretched as long as you want. Start at the Peace Stupa above Pokhara, and hike the forested ridge overlooking Phewa Lake with spectacular 120 degree panoramas of Dhaulagiri to Himalchuli. Along the way are villages untouched by the trekking industry. The highest point at Panchase Hill is 'only' 2,500m. Binoculars are a must for bird-watching.

**3 KHUMAI PEAK**  
Directly north of Pokhara is this 3,245m peak that is becoming popular since a road to Hemja now cuts short the trek for a two-day-up-one-day-down hike. At the top you look up to the imposing south face of Machapuchre. The trail is not well trodden yet (that is why you are there) but lodges have sprung up. Hike further up to Korchan Danda (3,710m) for the magic of a Himalayan sunrise.

**4 MULDE PEAK**  
If you have been there and done that on Poon Hill, then Mulde (3,637) is higher, wilder and quieter. The trail branches off at Tadapani from the Ghandruk-Ghorepani route and climbs steeply through thick forests draped with lichen and orchids. There is a lodge at the base for overnight stay. Next morning ascend for one hour to the top for a breathtaking sunrise over the Annapurna ramparts, Machapuchre and Dhaulagiri. For more, trek on to Khopra Ridge and Hidden Lake.

**5 PIKEY PEAK**  
The must-climb in Solukhumbu is Pikey (4,065m) that none other than Edmund Hillary described as one of the best lookouts in the Himalaya. On a clear day you see eight eight-thousander peaks all in a row: (east-west) Kangchenjunga, Makalu, Lhotse, Everest, Cho Oyu, Shishapangma, Manaslu and Annapurna. If the highway to Phaplu is not repaired by Dasain, fly to Phaplu from where it can be three days and two nights up and down.

**6 PATHIBHARA PEAK**  
Combine pilgrimage with a hike to climb up to Pathibhara (3,794) after either driving or flying to Taplejung. Nepal's most scenic peaks all have temples on top. The view from Pathibhara of Kangchenjunga, Jannu, Makalu and Lhotse-Everest feels sacred even if you are not religiously minded. It is one day up, and half-day down. Good idea to strike Pathibhara off your bucket list before the cable car gets there.

**7 GOKYO RI**  
Everest Base Camp is crowded and desolate, with no view of the highest mountain in the world. Head off, instead, from Khumjung to the Gokyo Valley and along the Ngozumba (Nepal's longest glacier) to a village by the lake that is the highest all-year human settlement in the world. Charge your head torch, and head off on a 2-3 hour climb up to Gokyo Ri (5,357m) to watch the sun set with all its glory on Mt Everest, Lhotse, Makalu, Kangchenjunga, and Cho Oyu. The trek can be extended up Renjo La to Thame, or Cho La to Everest Base Camp.

**8 SAILUNG PEAK**  
Take a right turn on the Jiri Highway at Mude along a rough road till Lamche Ahal and then hike the next morning to Thulo Sailung Peak (3,146m). This is one of the highest points in Dolakha district and the view is spectacular with everything from Manaslu to Numbur, a 200km sweep of the horizon. Dominating the horizon is Gauri Shankar (Chomo Tseringma). Nepali hikers have started going to Sailung to shoot YouTube videos.

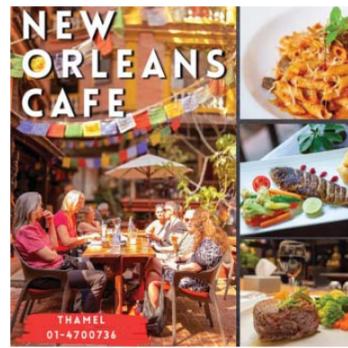
**9 PANCH POKHARI**  
This is one of the nearest and most accessible treks from Kathmandu, starting after a five hour drive to Okhareni via Chautara to five sacred lakes dominated by a ridge (4,250m) with full frontal views of Dorje Lakpa and Phurbi Ghyachu of the Jugal Himal Range. You have the trail mostly to yourself. The path climbs through forests of dwarf rhododendron teeming with birdlife.

**10 KYANJIN PEAK**  
Langtang National Park is the closest real wilderness area near Kathmandu that also offers culture and adventure. Start walking from Dhunche, one night stop and we are in Langtang Valley passing the village that was buried in the avalanche after the 2015 earthquake. Kyanjin Gumpa (3,835m) is now called 'Thamel on the Hill', and that is not a complimentary description. But it is a good base camp to explore the Valley, including climbing Kyanjin Ri (4,773) for a grandstand view of Langtang Lirung (7,234m).

### SAFE & HAPPY DASAIN

Nepali Times and Himalmedia wish readers and partners a safe and happy Dasain. Let us bring out the best in us as Nepalis to be kind, compassionate, and to help each other this festival season. The Nepali Times editorial team is taking a Dasain break, so there will be no print editions on 11 and 18 October. The next hardcopy issue will be on Friday, 25 October. But readers can follow daily online coverage throughout the holidays on [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)

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# When it rains it pours

This late monsoon storm was not a surprise. Weather forecasts had warned of heavy precipitation on 27-28 September a week before.

We knew what was coming, and did not do enough to prepare. An accurate weather forecast made no real difference on the ground. When it started raining on Thursday morning and did not stop till Saturday, there was no sense of the scale of this emergency.

More than 225 people lost their lives, dozens are still missing. Thousands of homes were swept away, Nepal lost nearly half its electricity generation capacity because of damage to power plants, Kathmandu is cut off.

Yes, this was primarily a natural disaster. Kathmandu Valley and its surroundings got half the average annual precipitation in just 40 hours, the heaviest rainfall measured since records started being kept in 1972. But the high death toll was totally manmade.

Three buses were buried by a mudslide in Dhading, killing at least 35 people. This was an eerie reminder of the Simaltal accident on 12 July when two intercity buses were swept by a mudflow into the Trisuli River at night, killing 62. The buses have still not been found.



1972



2022

SOCIAL MEDIA

**GIVE THE RIVER BACK TO THE RIVER:** The confluence of the Manohara and Bagmati in Kathmandu in 1972 (left) and in 2022, showing the urban settlements encroaching into the floodplain.

In both cases, heavy rainfall on a poorly engineered local road up the mountain triggered the initial landslide that swept debris to the highway below. This was manslaughter, not an 'accident'.

We said it then, and we are saying it now: most mountain roads follow no reason or science. It is a corruption-fed activity in which local governments and their cronies plan roads ad hoc, and rent out their own bulldozers. Debris accumulated during construction is dumped over the edge, where monsoon rains wash them to settlements, farms and highways below.

Last weekend's disaster is a warning that accurate weather early warning is just the first step, it is not enough to prevent a huge loss of life. After the warnings, there should have been door-to-door miking along hazardous river banks urging people to move to higher ground, shelters should have been in place, rescue equipment and rafts pre-positioned, and live monitoring of precipitation in the catchments.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) was just posting situationers on social media. The Home Ministry became a Ministry of Condolences and Empty Promises.

**It was a natural disaster but the high death toll was a testament to criminal state negligence.**

fragile mountain range on Earth, Nepal has always had either too much or too little water, and climate breakdown is making this contrast more extreme.

Put together, this means we in Nepal live in a multi-disaster prone

country with seismic, hydrological and climate risks.

After multiple floods, a Japanese grant helped set up the Disaster Prevention Technical Centre (DPTC) in Pulchok, which was later renamed Department of Water Induced Disaster Management. We have not heard much from them lately.

With the government AWOL, it is ordinary Nepalis who have shown extraordinary courage in saving those being swept by flood water, rescuing babies on canoes, or digging for passengers trapped in buses buried by landslides. Individuals and civil society are knee-deep in mud, distributing relief (page 4). As in 2015, there has been an initial lack of coordination.

Now, the attention must focus on urgent relief and rehabilitation. But that might be a tall ask just before everything shuts down for Dasain, and when there is governance failure, lack of accountability and transparency is the norm even when there are no holidays.

**Sonia Awale**

## ONLINE PACKAGES



OLD NEPAL TOKYO

Ryo Honda is a Japanese chef who specialises in authentic but innovative Nepali cuisine using ingredients and spices that he has explored in Nepal, infusing it with local knowledge and nature. Watch Honda and his wife Mari as they talk about their restaurant Old Nepal Tokyo and plans to expand in Nepal. Read profile on page 6 and watch video on our YouTube channel.



KITE RUNNER

Nepal's kite-flying season is here. Meet a Nepali family making and selling kites for four generations, and watch how Kathmandu gets ready for the Dasain kite-flying season. Watch the 2020 video on Nepali Times' YouTube channel, and subscribe for more multimedia content.



PING

From choosing the best bamboo, spending hours to cut it clean and tying it up with jute ropes, it takes a day to set up a linge ping. There is a belief that one must leave the ground at least once a year by riding on the swing during Dasain to obtain salvation. Join Changunarayan locals as they spend their day on a swing-making spree. Watch the video on our YouTube channel.

### NEPAL FLOODS

We need not to reach far back into our history, we should have learnt from the 2015 earthquake and prepared for natural catastrophes ('112 dead, 65 missing in Nepal floods,' nepalitimes.com). But neither our political leadership nor the people of Nepal seems to have had the time to learn these lessons.

**Kamal Gaha Magar**

■ It is shocking to hear news of lives lost in Nepal due to heavy rain-related calamities. Bhutan received similar amounts of rain during the same period and not a single life was lost. We are on the same belt, have similar topography and landscape.

**Shiva Raj Bhattarai**

■ The tragedy in Nepal last weekend highlights the gap between having accurate early warning systems and translating them into actionable disaster prevention measures ('When it rains it pours', Editorial, page 2). As Nepal faces increasing risks from climate change and fragile infrastructure, better coordination and proactive disaster management are urgently needed.

**Suyog Raj Chalise**

■ The photos that have come out of the floods look devastating. We are behind in urban planning and management.

**Bibek Koirala**

## 1,000 WORDS



RADHIKA BUDHATHOKI / RSS

**DO OR DIE:** Locals attempt to venture across a severely damaged bridge across the Sun Kosi connecting Sindhuli to Ramechhap. The bridge was damaged during last week's heavy rainfall in Central Nepal.

## 20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

### State with no governance

By 2004, many Nepalis were fed up with the war, but peace talks were going nowhere. The public did not trust political parties, the Maoists or even the Palace to bring about real peace. The Peace Accord was finally signed in 2006 but 18 years later, there is peace but no stability. Last week's deadly floods showed governance neglect and failure.

Excerpts of the editorial published 20 years ago this week in issue #216 1 - 7 October 2004:



chief executive in June.) The NC-led opposition alliance is trying ever so hard to re-align its street mischief to pressure the government to get serious about peace, but everyone knows the only peace process it will support is one in which it is involved.

The Maoists are bombarding the government with statements, online interviews, and rapid-fire rhetorical questions. But how can they be taken seriously when they ambush vehicles carrying international activists campaigning for peasants' rights, or kidnapping UNICEF workers and

bombing hospitals while calling for UN mediation?

One could say that even if the calls for peace are hollow, at least it proves the powers-that-be respect public opinion that totally rejects a prolongation of the conflict. The Nepali people hear the sound of knives being sharpened, and will not tolerate warmongers.

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

## Times.com WHAT'S TRENDING

### Tenzing Rigdol

by Kashish Das Shrestha  
Kathmandu-born artist Tenzing Rigdol's installation 'Biography of a Thought' is a powerful centrepiece at The Met in New York, and a historic moment for Himalayan art. Visit nepalitimes.com to read the review.

**f Most reached and shared on Facebook**

### Banning banishment

by Dhanu Bishwakarma  
National outrage forced the Home Ministry to launch a menstrual hut demolition drive across the Karnali and Sudurpashchim provinces. But the practice of chhaupadi, and the stigma around menstruation has been harder to destroy than huts. Details on our website.

**X Most popular on X**



### Nepal floods

Nepali Times  
More than 219 people have died in across Nepal as three days of record-breaking rainfall caused rivers to burst their banks and triggered landslides. Kathmandu Valley was hit the hardest, having experienced half the annual average rainfall in just two days. Follow us for the latest developments.

**Most commented**

### When it rains it pours

Editorial  
Last weekend's floods and landslides across Nepal was a natural disaster, but the high death toll was a testament to criminal state negligence. The disaster is a warning that accurate weather early warning is just the first step – it is not enough to prevent a huge loss of life. Join the discussion online.

**Most visited online page**

## QUOTES

**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**  
More than 60 people have died in Central Nepal as three days of record-breaking rainfall caused rivers to burst their banks and triggered landslides. Kathmandu was hit the hardest, more than 700mm of rain fell in just the past 30 hours. Details here:

**Bijay Bashyal @bijay\_eco**  
More resources for disaster preparedness and emergency actions, alongside a critical analysis of our development actions are immediate for Nepal.

**Nepali Times @NepaliTimes**  
#EDITORIAL It was a natural disaster but the high death toll was a testament to criminal state negligence. #NepalFloods

**Prajwal @prajwalpanday**  
It was not a natural disaster in any sense. It was an extreme weather event resulting from anthropogenic #climatechange (largely the West to blame), which was further exacerbated by failure of the #Nepal government, institutions, & land mafia. Calling it natural shifts the blame.

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

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# Flood of despair

As in previous calamities, there is hope in individual Nepalis and communities helping each other

I was a teenager when I was first exposed to the impact of climate breakdown, while staying with a family in Phakding in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake.

The communities living along the river were so scared of the Imja Tso glacial lake bursting that they hiked a few hours up the mountain



## COMMENT

Rastra Raj Bhandari

every night for safety. During the day, they came back down to run their tea houses for volunteers and tourists still up in the Khumbu.

There is a clear correlation between livelihoods and the climate crisis. Seeing first hand, ten years ago, how the impact of climate change deepens poverty profoundly shifted my perspective, and motivated me to take up a career on climate finance.

I learnt everything about the subject, worked on projects to mobilise millions of dollars for climate action so that those most vulnerable would be safe.

Yet, this weekend's floods have shown me that on the ground, absolutely nothing has changed. Those most at risk from climate hazards are at even more risk.

It is dreadful to realise that the worst is yet to come. We in the climate finance sector are lost in words, actions and false promises of organisations purporting to help vulnerable countries, communities and families.

There are lofty climate targets and hopeful speeches on net-zero ambitions prepared by people who have no idea of the ground reality. Young people I used to respect proudly demonstrate their saviour complex and exoticise the poor to advance their brand image on social media to gain brownie points.



GOPEN RAI

This week, early-rising trail runners, youth groups, and local communities became first responders on the muddy banks of rivers in Kathmandu Valley for rescue and recovery. From agencies claiming to work on 'disaster risk reduction', we heard only words and media campaigns.

Am I the only one losing hope in us collectively responding to what the future requires us to do?

Disasters are now increasingly normalised as Nepal crosses the tipping point on climate breakdown. Elitism and inequality has never been more apparent.

This week's tragedy showed how the high and mighty were safe, and the lowly forced to live along river banks were not. Those who are thinking of moving away from flood-prone areas, buying

home insurance and protecting themselves from future impact are perhaps the very people abetting the destruction of the natural environment.

The two rivers that saw the most devastation this week, Rosi Khola and Nakkhu Khola, had unregulated sand mining and rampant quarrying upstream — all happening in the name of 'development'.

I spoke with a dairy farmer in Hatiban whose home and 13 cows were swept away by a stream that had turned into a raging mudflow. He is out in the streets now, with just the one cow that survived. He teared up telling me this. So did I.

A carpenter who lives in a small tin hut near the Karmanasa River told me he has had enough and is now headed back to his village. A neighbourhood garbage recycler

has spent the past week living inside a stack of large concrete pipes (pictured) meant to improve Kathmandu's drainage.

A decade after starting to work on climate change, I know nothing about what to actually do to adapt to the impact of the climate crisis like this one. The 800mm of rain in two days was caused by global warming, but the death toll was higher because of corruption and state negligence.

There are thousands of tragic stories from this flood, most of them will never be heard. Many are already forgotten.

The guilt coming from the privilege of even being in a position to help in times like these eats me up from the inside. I have spoken to many friends this week working tirelessly, without recognition or

organisational support, to help with relief and rescue. Many share the same sentiment: the disaster swept away what little optimism we had.

Yet, there is also hope in the way we have all come together knee-deep in mud, carrying relief supplies and cash to those marooned, destitute and homeless. It is clear that top-down response from the government or large relief organisations is always too little, too late and too ineffective. Those who lost everything do not know how to work the system.

In such situations, we must take matters into our own hands. We need to be aware of the impending impact of climate change, and make our own decisions to build and rebuild resilience among those forced to live in harm's way.

The passion to tackle the climate crisis will not come if we do not have personal stories of how we ourselves are affected. Almost everyone in Kathmandu Valley, Kavre, Dhading and elsewhere now has a personal experience of this climate-induced calamity. The question is, what are we going to do about it?

As I write this on Thursday morning on 3 October, it is raining heavily again. 🇳🇵

*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. rastrarajbhandari@gmail.com*

## HOW TO HELP

Civil society action is filling gaps in relief and rehab until bigger players take over. **9858000000**

**Sudan Gurung**, Hami Nepal  
<https://www.haminepal.org/>

**Saurav Rimal**, Karmayog Foundation  
<https://karmayogfoundation.org/>  
**9851139412**



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## TK-British Council

Turkish Airlines and British Council Nepal are collaborating for the second edition of their IELTS Upahar Campaign. Two winners will be selected to receive one-way tickets to the UK and the USA, courtesy of the Turkish flag carrier. Eligible participants have to book and pay for the IELTS with the British Council. The offer is valid for all IELTS on paper and IELTS on computer registrations paid between 26 September-30 November, for any test dates starting from October 2024 onwards.



"We hope to contribute to the dreams of many Nepali students and professionals aiming to reach international destinations like the UK and the USA," says General Manager of Turkish Airlines Nepal Serkan Basar. Adds Pratistha Thapa Rayamajhi of British Council Nepal: "The dedication of our partners and stakeholders to empowering young Nepalis open doors to transformative opportunities, and together, we are building a brighter future."

## IME FLASH

Customers can apply for loans of Rs500,000 to Rs25 million under Global IME Bank's Fast Loan Against Share (FLASH) platform. The process can be completed online.



## Sipradi Relief

Sipradi, through its Sahayata and Auto Parts branches, is distributing relief materials to survivors of recent floods, especially mechanics with shops that were directly impacted. With many travellers leaving Kathmandu for Dasain, Sipradi has also set up passenger help desks at 15 busy locations in the Valley with route information and safety.

Sipradi will also check, for free, the condition of all Tata buses leaving with Dasain travellers from Gongabu bus park. Sipradi also runs a 24 hour Highway Breakdown Assistance service.

Tata is also providing an emergency service for cars damaged in the recent floods. Customers can call a hotline to have a service team come to their house. The team will take the car to a Tata service centre and deliver it after repairs.

## Free Ncell data

Ncell is providing free data to customers affected by floods and landslides so that they can stay in contact and access vital information and help. Ncell is also supporting agencies with immediate rescue and relief efforts. The company also held a free health camp in Niglhawa in Kapilvastu with focus on heart health.

## Hyundai milestone

Hyundai delivered its 100 millionth and first vehicle, celebrating the milestone at a ceremony at its Ulsan plant in Korea, where operations began 57 years ago. Hyundai has opened production facilities around the world, including Nepal.

## StanChart x ADB

Standard Chartered and Asian Development Bank are partnering with microfinance institution Chhimek Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha in an unfunded risk participation agreement. The partnership aims to increase access to finances in rural Nepal, especially for female micro borrowers looking to create self-employment.



## Deepal in Pokhara

Changan dealer MAW Vriddhi launched Deepal EVs in Pokhara and organised an exchange camp, allowing buyers to get the cars at cheaper pre-budget prices.

## Yamaha Biggest Dasain

Customers can get guaranteed cash prizes on buying Yamaha scooters and motorbikes under the company's Biggest Dasain scheme. A Rs1 million cash prize is still available, as well as on-the-spot exchange and zero-interest financing options.



## NMB scholarship

The NMB NextGen Banking Leaders Scholarship will sponsor one undergraduate from each of Nepal's seven provinces with an aim of developing future banking professionals and leaders. NMB also organised free health camps on 29 September to mark World Heart Day at the bank's branches in Baber Mahal, Dharan, Milanchook and Mahendranagar, with free checkups and counselling on heart health.

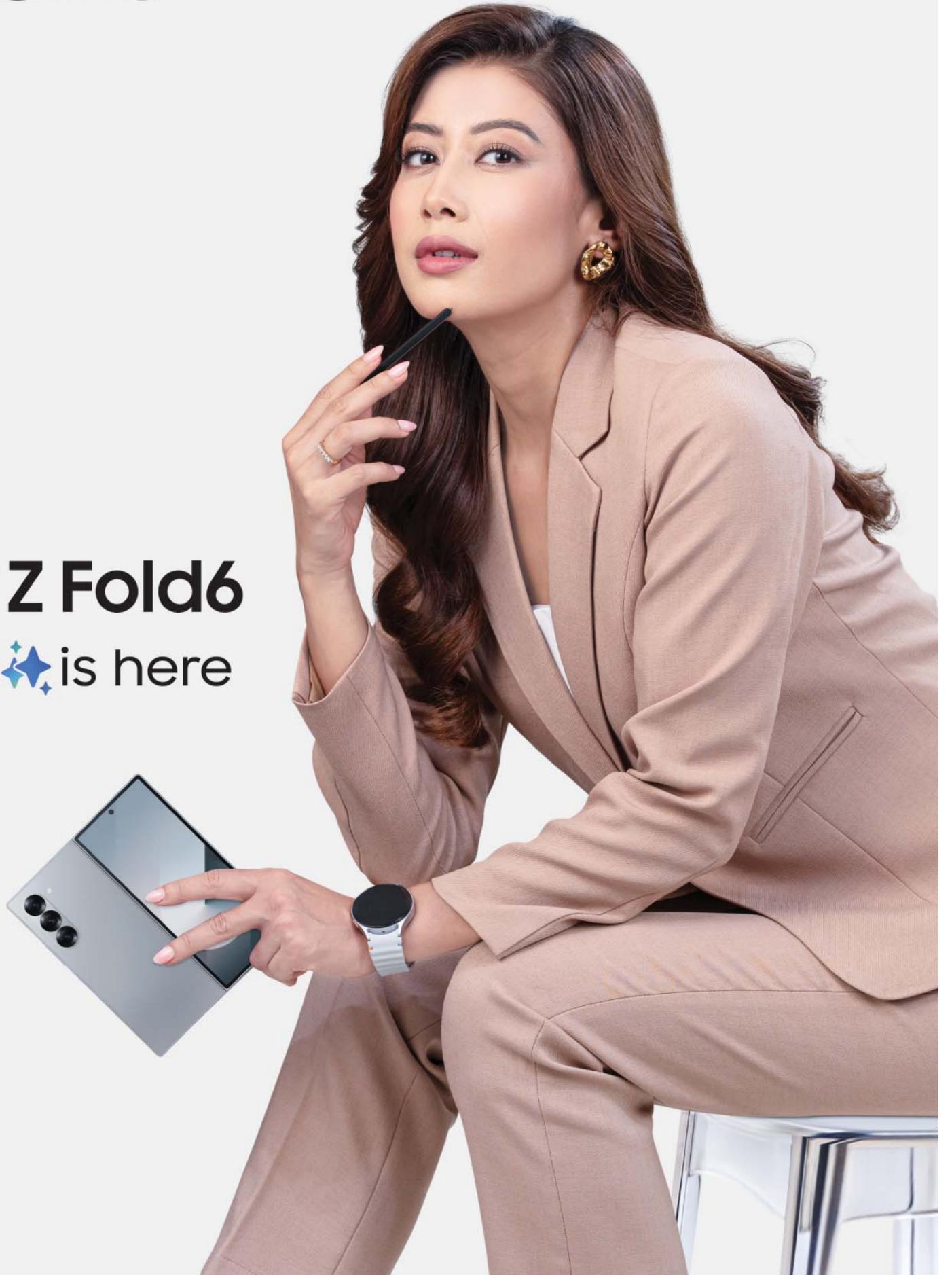


## Holiday Inn

Each drink ordered at Holiday Inn Express Kathmandu in September will support a fund to buy stationery for underprivileged and orphaned children at Tri-Padma Vidyashram. The event Table of Hope was hosted where Rs295,000 was donated to Balmindir.

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ALL PHOTOS: OLD NEPAL TOKYO



Ryo Honda

## A TASTE OF OLD NEPAL IN TOKYO

Serving authentic, innovative Nepali cuisine in the Japanese capital



Dhok dok, Tsampa

### ■ Sonia Awale

“अलि अलि अमिलो  
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अलि अलि गुलियो  
अलि अलि टरो  
अलि अलि तिलो  
तेसैले त दालभात यति मिठो !”

(‘A bit sour, a bit spicy, a bit sweet, a bit astringent, a bit bitter, that is what makes dal bhat so tasty.’ Inscription at the entrance of the Old Nepal Tokyo restaurant.)



Alooko Achar

Right in the heart of Tokyo’s shopping district of Gotokuji is Old Nepal, a world away from Kathmandu.

With an unassuming entrance lit with a dim lamp to read the restaurant’s name, one is immediately transported to the dark, narrow cobblestone alleys of Patan or Bhaktapur.

Inside, it is pitch dark with no windows, evoking a traditional Nepali eatery during load-shedding. A narrow corridor reminiscent

of Kathmandu’s backstreets leads visitors to an intimate but spacious dining room (main picture).

The design is sparse, with earthy tones and enveloped in the scent of धूप incense. There is a घ्याम्पो clay vessel next to a wall filled with खोपा alcoves, just like in the brick and mud houses of old Nepal.

The restaurant is the life’s work of Ryo Honda, a chef who specialises in authentic but innovative Nepali cuisine with ingredients that he has explored in Nepal.

“Each plate is inspired by Nepal’s diverse culture and landscape, even the colours,” explains the Kobe-native in accented Nepali. Each dish in Honda’s Mustang-themed menu is based on the colours of the rugged landscape of the trans-Himalayan region.

The colour-coded dishes include ‘Shyau’ (red, like Mustang’s apples), ‘Alooko Achar’ (grey, like the pebbles on the banks of the Kali Gandaki), sautéed rock trout with green soup called Ghandhau Macha (green), Thukpa (jet black buckwheat noodles, mixed with bamboo charcoal), Bangur Ko Sekuwa (brown,

like the rice) and Dal Bhat and Chamalko Kulfi (yellow desert).

“I love Nepal because the country does not have only one kind of people and food culture,” explains Honda, 41, during one of his annual visits to Nepal. On this trip, he was exploring Tharu cuisine in Kanchanpur.

Honda and his wife Mari also visited Dhankuta, sampling local mushrooms and other ingredients. Old Nepal sources a lot of its ingredients, especially spices like cumin, turmeric, cilantro, jimbu, timur, and pink Tibetan salt direct from Nepal. Some of these items are also sold separately in a spice shop called Sunya one floor above the restaurant.

“Nepali food is what it is because of its distinctive aroma,” says Honda, “and much of this has to do with spices unique to Nepal like jimbu and timur.”



Nepali spices in Old Nepal Tokyo

Honda’s love affair with Nepal began in Kobe in 2007 when he started working at a Nepali restaurant. He got so passionately involved that he wanted to dive deep into the diverse cuisine of this Himalayan nation that he hadn’t even visited yet.

“If I were to cook Nepali food better, I decided I had to visit the country,” Honda recalls. “I did, and returned to Kobe with new inspiration.”

Fast forward a few years and he found himself in Osaka, working at a friend’s restaurant called Dal Bhat Shokudo, where most customers were Nepali students. Ryo and Mari continued visiting Nepal often, traversing the mountains and plains from Dolpo to Bardia, in search of special local ingredients and cooking methods.

The trips also gave them crucial insight



Chamalko Kulfi

into Nepali society, and how cooks, many of them women and children, are looked down upon.

That is how the idea of Old Nepal Tokyo developed – treating Nepali cuisine with dignity and respect by building a fine dining experience around it.

“In many ways, Nepal is my business and I was wondering what I could do to give back to the country that has given me so much,” muses Honda, sitting in the Juneli Chiyabari tea room in Patan.

“Nepali cooks are not generally considered skilled, and do not make much money. Nepali high-end dining would change that.”

Old Nepal Tokyo is a reservation-only, set-menu restaurant, with each course costing upwards of ¥13,000 (\$90), and it is listed in the Michelin Guide.



Thukpa

“Most customers here do not know much about Nepal and have never been there,” says Honda, “but after eating here, they cannot wait to visit Nepal.”

Ryo and Mari eventually want to open a fine-dining Nepali restaurant in Nepal itself. They have published a Nepali recipe book in Japanese. One of the items in it is of a festival-themed dessert, called Tihar, that uses marigold, juju dhau and methi syrup.

Honda also experimented with making timur beer, and is now selling it in cans at the restaurant. The reviews are good.

Newari cuisine is Honda’s favourite among Nepal’s cuisine. “It has similarities to the food from Kobe. We also use a lot of internal organs,” he laughs. 🇳🇵



Ghandhau Macha



Shyau

# The pizzaz of Fire and Ice

Kathmandu's beloved pizzeria will soon be celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary

■ Sonia Awale

Lovers of all things pizza must have tried Kathmandu's very own Fire and Ice Pizzeria at least once. They will, now that the restaurant was featured recently in The New York Times' 15 of Our Readers' Favourite Pizza Places Around the World.

It's their Pepperoni and Mozzarella pizzas that made the cut. A comment in NYT reads: 'Italian pizza by Italian owner using local ingredients in just about the last place you'd imagine. An expat's treasure.'

Fire and Ice founder and long-time Kathmandu resident Annamaria Forgione (right) disagrees: "It is not just expats. Fire and Ice is what it is today because of our Nepali guests. And tourists are here only for two weeks."

Forgione came to Nepal from Napoli via Venezuela and Britain, and her popular pizzeria has been at the same spot in Thamel for three decades. Nepali five-year-olds who used to accompany their parents to the pizzeria in the 1990s now come with their own children.

Loyal customers say the quality and taste of the pizzas have remained consistent for 30 years in the original Thamel spot and at new outlets in Sanepa, Kolkata and Colombo.

Forgione says three-fourths of her guests in Thamel and Sanepa are Nepalis, but one recent evening every table was taken up by trekkers devouring slices.



UN TAVOLO PER DUE: Annamaria Forgione at the pizzeria she opened 30 years ago, and with the original staff (below, right) in 1995 in Thamel.



There have been celebrity customers: Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulla Al Thani of Qatar who summited Mt Everest in 2013, Italian climber and helicopter rescue pilot Simone Moro, and Hollywood actor Richard Gere.

Even former Crown Prince Dipendra used to walk over from Narayanhiti Palace in the evenings, sit at a corner table, and have his gelato.

Forgione's family is originally from Napoli but migrated to Venezuela when she was young. Her father later took the young Annamaria to her aunt in Milan

who ran a hotel and casino.

She then worked with the Italian Embassy in London, but soon got bored. Her husband got a job as a teacher in Kathmandu, and asked her to join him. She did not know where Kathmandu was.

"I will never forget 16 September 1988, getting off the plane in Kathmandu," Forgione recalls. "The mountains were all out. I just stood there on the stairs and stared, blocking the other passengers. This country was like heaven, I want that Nepal back."

She started selling Italian tomato sauce at the Summit Hotel Sunday market in Sanepa. That eventually led to Fire and Ice Pizzeria and Ice Cream Parlour where Forgione kneaded the dough for pizzas and worked the Carpigiani herself.

Some of the more popular pizzas over the years have been Margarita, Ettore (chicken mushroom topping named after a friend) and the colourfully-anointed Rompipalle (spicy meat sauce).

But why are pizzas so popular around the world? "Pizza is such a welcoming, comfort food which you can share and eat in a group," Forgione explains.

Fire and Ice has also been an excellent training ground for Nepali chefs and waiters, many of whom have gone overseas. One chef now earns \$1,000 a month in a pizzeria in Saudi Arabia.

Forgione's next project is to open a Fire and Ice outlet in her tiny village in Essex. "My neighbourhood there is quiet, no tall buildings, just people walking their dogs. But it doesn't have a good pizza place," she says.

And after that? "I can't see myself not working. Perhaps a Fire and Ice in Pokhara or Khumbu?" 🇳🇵



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# JAZZING UP KATHMANDU AGAIN



The 20<sup>th</sup> Surya Nepal Jazzmandu annual music festival kicks off later this month

## SCHEDULE

### Jazz for the Next Generation

Thursday, 24 October  
11AM–1:30PM  
Closed Invitation  
St Xavier's School, Jawalakhel

### Groovin' at Upstairs

Thursday, 24 October  
7PM – 9PM  
Rs1,000  
Jazz Upstairs, Lazimpat

### Valley Jams

Friday, 25 October  
6:30PM – 9PM  
Rs800  
Simultaneously at:  
Jazz Upstairs, Lazimpat  
Electric Pagoda, Thamel  
Eden, Jhamsikhel  
La Terrasse, Chundevi  
Hard Rock Cafe, Durbar Marg

### Jazz Bazaar

Saturday, 26 October  
3PM – 10PM  
Rs1,600  
Gokarna Forest Resort

### Sounds of Flamenco Jazz and Afro-Beat

Monday, 28 October  
7PM – 9PM  
Rs2,000  
Lawn by Nanglo, Jhamsikhel

### Jazz at Patan

Tuesday, 29 October  
7PM – 9PM  
Rs2,000  
Dhokaima Cafe, Patan

### Jazzmandu Finale

Wednesday, 30 October  
5:30PM - 10PM  
Rs1,800  
The Malla Hotel, Lainchaur

## ERIK TRUFFAZ SWITZERLAND

Jazz trumpeter Erik Truffaz's music has pushed the boundaries of what trumpet-led jazz can do. In his decade-long career, Truffaz has seamlessly blended hip hop, rock and roll and dance music with jazz. Truffaz entered into the jazz scene in the early nineties but it was the 1998 album 'The Blackbird' that gave him his breakthrough—establishing him as a pioneering force in contemporary jazz. Following his recording in India on the banks of the Ganga, and his collaborations with indie rockers, Truffaz has showcased his ability as a peerless all-round musician and ceaseless innovator. He has given scores to symphony orchestras, and has also written and composed music extensively for cinema. Truffaz is in the vanguard of European jazz royalty, continuing to inspire a new generation of musicians and music lovers.

**Erik Truffaz** – Trumpet  
**Alexis Anérilles** – Keyboard  
**Marcello Giuliani** – Bass  
**Raphael Chassin** – Drums

With Dasain underway, one cannot escape the Malashree Dhun tune when out and about. But right after the ten-day festival, Kathmanduites will be humming a different tune. Surya Nepal Jazzmandu is back in town from 24-30 October, and this time is celebrating two decades of the jazz festival.

Known as Kathmandu Jazz Festival when it started in 2002, Jazzmandu has established itself as a premier international jazz event, pioneering and cultivating a taste for jazz in Nepal. (And starting the trend of attaching the 'mandu' affix to everything).

"Jazzmandu is an act of love for our city, our audiences, and for the genre," says organiser Samir Chettri.

This year's five-day musical symposium features a lineup of celebrated artists from across the globe. They specialise not just in jazz, but fuse it with other forms. Eastern Classical featuring Jonisha Paudel, Santosh Bhakta, Roshan Putwar, Nimesh Kapali as well as Gandharbha music will be playing. 🇳🇵



**AFRO DIZZI ACT**  
**AUSTRALIA**

Born as an adventurous jam band in Brisbane in the late 1990s, Afro Dizzi Act is known to be one of the best fusion bands to ever come out of Australia, and is celebrated as one of the country's premier festival bands. From an early sound that blended in hip-hop as well as drum and bass, the band took on influences from jazz and world music as its growing reputation took the musicians to new places, arriving at World Beat Festival that comprises a dizzying variety of musical traditions and a mind-opening global perspective.

Afro Dizzi Act has headlined top Australian festivals such as the Big Day Out and the Byron Bay Bluesfest, performed in Dubai, toured the Northeast of India, and played at the first edition of Jazzmandu in 2002. This year, to celebrate Jazzmandu's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the band will be performing alongside Navin Chettri of the Cadenza Collective to revive early days of the annual jazz festival.

**Nick Aggs** – Saxophone | **Shannon Sol Carroll** – Guitar |  
**Oj Newcomb** – Bass | **Navin Chettri** – Drums | **Matt Ledger** – Percussions



**ALMA NAIDU**  
**GERMANY**

Described as "one of the most promising singers on the German scene" by Süddeutsche Zeitung, a daily newspaper in Germany, Alma Naidu is a singer, composer and lyricist based in Munich. Naidu boasts an enviable collection of top prizes honouring rising German jazz artists, and has also appeared in various musical theatre and opera productions.

Her debut album, Alma, was released in 2022 and comprised almost entirely of her own compositions and arrangements. Relatively an emerging artist among the Jazzmandu's lineup, she has previously performed across Germany, the Czech Republic and France with her touring quartet, which features her on the keys as well as vocals.

**Alma Naidu** – Vocals and piano | **Andreas Dombert** – Guitar |  
**Ferdinand Schwartz** – Bass | **Florian Stierstofer** – Drums

**SHEROES**  
**USA**

This all-female band is an anomaly in the jazz scene where women still remain underrepresented. Sheroes was the brainchild of pianist, composer and arranger Monika Herzig who wanted to bring women jazz musicians together and provide powerful role models on stage and break the lingering gender stereotypes in jazz.

The band is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The Sheroes ensembles over time have brought together an extended network of talented women jazz musicians. Together, the musicians create music as they navigate their individual skill and style while showcasing an undeniable chemistry.

Sheroes continues to elevate some of the top composers and players in jazz.

**Monika Herzig** – Piano | **Jamie Baum** – Flute | **Reut Regev** – Trombone |  
**Gina Schwarz** – Bass | **Rosa Avila** – Drums



**CADENZA COLLECTIVE**  
**NEPAL**



Cadenza Collective, spearheaded by drummer and composer Navin Chettri, has been blending jazz, Afro-funk, and Nepali folk into an irresistible sound. Formed in 1998, Cadenza was one of the first bands to experiment with jazz in the Kathmandu Valley, at a time when rock and pop music dominated the music scene. Cadenza broke the mould and has evolved into a mature and experienced collective of musicians and music educators.

Their music has pumped vitality into the improvised music scene in Nepal and beyond through regular performances with both classical and western musicians. With five albums to date showcasing their original music, their latest, Back to the Roots, won Best Pop/Rock Composition for their song Namaste, and Best Pop/Rock Album of the Year at the 2014 Nepal Hits FM Music Awards.

**Navin Chettri** – Vocals and Drums | **Rajat Rai** – Guitar | **Samir Chettri** – Bass |  
**Inap Raj Shrestha** – Tenor Sax | **Pravin Chhetri** – Alto Sax

**SAMUNDRA**  
**NEPAL**



Samundra is a band of musicians and sarangi players known for their performances of Nepali folk fusion music. Formed in 2004, the band stays true to the age-old traditional folk music of the Gandharba community. They recompose authentic Nepali tunes in new forms, updating the cherished old minstrel music for contemporary taste.

They also educate people on traditional music through a YouTube channel, making it accessible for all. Anil Gandharba also teaches how to play the sarangi on the channel. Samundra is passionate about promoting and preserving the rich cultural heritage of Nepal through music.

**Anil Gandharba** - Sarangi | **Arbajo Buddha Gandharba** - Sarangi | **Ramkrishna Gandharba** - Flute/Arbajo | **Samsher Gandharba** - Madal | **Arjun Gandharba** - Madal | **Raju Gandharba** - Percussion

**ANTONIO LIZANA QUINTET**  
**SPAIN**



Antonio Lizana is a jazz saxophonist and flamenco singer and composer who has blended jazz with flamenco and is one of the most celebrated representatives of new flamenco jazz. Lizana's quintet has performed in more than 30 countries – including at festivals in London, New York, San Francisco, Shanghai, Madrid, Barcelona and beyond – and has worked on Grammy-winning works with artists such as Arturo O'Farrill and Alejandro Sanz.

Lizana's live shows have been described as a "breathtaking journey from flamenco roots to contemporary jazz", with his soulful lyrics carrying messages of optimism and sincerity to his audiences across the globe.

**Antonio Lizana** – Vocals and saxophone | **Adriano Lozano** – Guitar and backing vocals | **Ismael Alcina** – Bass and backing vocals | **Vincent Thomas** – Drums | **El Mawi** – Flamenco dancing and backing vocals

## EVENTS

**Fulpati**

Fulpati is the seventh day of Dasain, devoted to Kalratri, the seventh form of Goddess Durga. A ritual will be carried out in Tundikhel followed by a military parade. 10 October, Tundikhel

**Grasslands Carnival**

This Coachella-like musical festival in Kathmandu this weekend will feature national and international artists from around the globe.

5 October, 1pm onwards, Ticket: Rs1,500-Rs2,500, Gokarna Forest Resort

**Maha Ashtami**

This time, the eighth and ninth day of the Dasain have fallen on the same day. On the eighth day, animals are sacrificed to appease Goddess Kali.

11 October, Basantapur Durbar Square

**Maha Nawami**

Hanuman Dhoka's Taleju Mandir is open to the public only on the ninth day of Dasain. Devotees worship Bishwakarma, the divine architect and craftsman, and offerings are made to vehicles, machines, and tools for safety and well-being.

11 October, Taleju mandir, Hanuman Dhoka

**Bijaya Dashami**

The tenth day of Dasain is the main event that celebrates the victory of goddess Durga over the demon Mahisasur and Lord Ram over the demon Ravan. On this day, people receive tika, jamara and dakshina from their elders.

12 October

## MUSIC

**Oktober Fest 2024**

Be part of the Oktober Fest before it ends this Saturday. Sit in the garden, sip chilled beer, and play beer games with live music. Until 5 October, Lavie Garden, Boudha

**Waterfront Resort**

Located just beyond the busy Lakeside and at a glance away from the stunning Peace Pagoda, Waterfront Resort offers the best of both worlds.

Pokhara (061) 420004

**Trio no Treble**

Norwegian band 'Trio no Treble' is in Kathmandu for the second time. Don't miss out on the chance to hear the trip perform music live.

6 October, 6pm, Walnut Bistro, Panipokhari  
7 October, 4pm, United School, Gwarko

**Ekaadeshmaa Tour**

Sajjan Raj Vaidya's Nepal tour starts from Chitwan next week. Plan ahead to see him perform live. The schedule and tickets are available on Khalti app.

10 October, Ticket: Rs1,299- Rs2,799, Chitwan

**Jazzmandu 2024**

The twentieth edition of Jazzmandu happens later this month. Look up the artist line up online. (More on page 8-9)

24 October- 30 October

**Authentic Dasain Flavours**

Taste the perfect blend of festive flavors this Dasain—savour crispy selroti, spiced mutton, and tangy aachaar, complemented by fresh salads.

9 October- 13 October, Price: Rs1,800 nett per person (Veg), Rs2,000 nett per person (Non-Veg) Hotel Barahi, Keshar Mahal, Thamel, 9851346873

**Dragon Momo**

If the weather gets gloomy, go for a soupy treat at Dragon Momo. Try their pork momo and get complimentary soups to cope with the chilly wind brought on by the rain.

Pulchowk (01) 5409088

## GETAWAYS

**Chandragiri Hills**

Just 10 kilometres southwest of Kathmandu, get an unforgettable festive experience amidst stunning panoramic views of the valley and Himalayan ranges.

Chandragiri, Thankot, 9802084005

**Kasara Resort**

With activities for everyone, from cycling to wildlife viewing, Kasara Resort is a fantastic getaway for families amid the lush greenery in the heart of Chitwan's National Park.

Patihani, Chitwan National Park, Chitwan (01) 4437571

**Hotel Country Villa**

Atop the Nagarkot hill, this natural and relaxing retreat is for those wishing to escape the pandemonium of the city without travelling very far.

Nagarkot (01) 4700305 / 9851192106

**Dusit Thani Himalayan Resort**

The resort's captivating vistas of rolling hills and majestic mountains create a scenic canvas, making it the perfect place to relax and rejuvenate.

Dhulikhel, 9851373755

**Garden Terrace**

Choose among the wide selection of international cuisine including Nepali, Indian, Continental, Oriental, Japanese and Italian to relish this festive season.

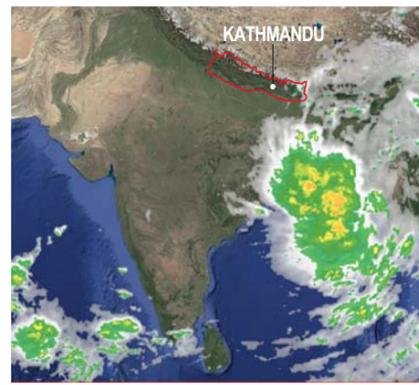
Sooltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal (01) 4273999

**Kharayo Bakes**

This online bakery shop delivers your favourite gourmet brownies and other baked items to your doorstep. Their fudgy brownies are a must-try.

9851132172

## WEEKEND WEATHER

**Exit: Monsoon**

With a last gasp of a few scattered localised showers in eastern Nepal, this year's deadly monsoon is finally making an exit. Kathmandu Valley received as much rain on 27-28 September as the annual average, and the destruction was exacerbated by illegal sand-mining, quarrying and unauthorised settlements along floodplains. This is a lesson for the next rainy season, but given the state of governance it may not be heeded. Weekend on, it will be sunny Dasain-like weather with max temp rising to only 25.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
23° 19°	24° 18°	25° 18°

## OUR PICK



This Dasain, in between rounds of marriage, masu, and Malibu, Mad Men is worth a re-binge. This drama follows ad-man Donald Draper, creative director at ad agency Sterling Cooper, as he tries to keep his professional and personal life from spilling into each other. Created by Matthew Weiner, the show is intelligent, witty, and dense, and the flawed characters are easy to fall in love with, as is 1960s New York. In between the cheating, lying, selling, drinking, and smoking, the show also comments extensively on the era's attitudes towards women, Jews, and Negroes - especially in the workplace. Most of all, the show is a study on the ideals and realities of the American dream and the self-made man.

## 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

## DINING

**Fire and Ice**

One of the first pizzerias in Kathmandu, Fire and Ice offers genuine Napolitana pizza and dozens of variants to choose from. Try their equally delicious lasagne. (More on page 6-7)

Thamel (01) 4250210

# WATCH NEPAL LIVE

Go to all the places you always want to visit in Nepal through a new live-streamed webcam service



■ Vishad Raj Onta

It is all dark with stars twinkling in the night sky. A waning crescent moon rises slowly from behind the silhouette of Ama Dablam. Soon, the outline of the Nuptse-Lhotse ridge and summit pyramid of Mt Everest are etched against a lightening eastern sky, as clouds float lazily by. Then, the sun rises with a blinding flash from behind Lhotse Shar.

No, you do not have to be at the Hotel Everest View in Syangboche to see this scenery unfold, you can watch it all on a laptop from the comfort of the living room sofa, or on a mobile device.

The YouTube Channel Webcam Nepal Live has installed cameras in 21 locations around Nepal which stream live video round the clock. Not only is this a unique moving homescreen, but it also provides useful information on weather conditions along trekking routes.

The brain behind the channel is Mani Gurung (pictured, right). He says his only purpose is to showcase the stunning beauty of his homeland for people around the world who cannot be here in person. He has not monetised the YouTube channel, which has 39 videos, 32,000 subscribers, and more than 3.3 million total views.

"I try to find like-minded people and approach them with the idea of putting up a camera that will stream 24/7," explains Gurung who lives in the UK and sets up the cameras during frequent visits to Nepal, and also gets all necessary permits from the local government, and the installation site.

The service also uploads spectacular timelapse of sunrise videos like the one from its webcam at the EV-K2-CNR Pyramid International Observatory at 5,050m in Lobuje below Mt Everest that are not live. The footage is of sunlight creeping up Mt Taboche and Mt Cholatse on the morning of 9 June 2024 (pictured, top).

The tops of the mountains catch the first rays of the sun, turning into a bright gold. The shadow



- Lukla Airport
- Kagbeni, Mustang
- Dharara Tower, Kathmandu
- Live pond cam, London featuring a lonely goldfish

At the time of writing, it is 1AM in Kathmandu, so the Lobuje stream is dark. But playing back the livestream to 6PM the day before, a colourful sunset appears with salmon coloured clouds. While most of the streams are of nature, the Kagbeni webcam shows the market area with a few lights on.

"As long as there is power and they are connected to the internet, the webcams are good to stream," explains Gurung, who is an expert in IP (Internet Protocol) CCTV and security solutions. He is a sales engineer at Axis Communications in London, which makes video surveillance, intercom, access control and audio systems supported by intelligent analytical software.

Gurung's job involves finding the product that best fits the

customer's need, and for these livestreams from Nepal he has chosen particularly rugged models that can operate in temperatures as low as -40°C and up to 65°C.

Some of the cameras are capable of high optical zoom, making it possible to see climbers with head torches moving slowly up the southeast ridge of Mt Everest. The video of climbers near the summit of Ama Dablam conveys the sheer scale of the peak with high winds blowing spindrift off the ridge.

Of all the livestreams on his channel, Gurung says the Lukla airport one is the most popular: "There are always viewers on that stream, especially if the weather is bad." He has also put up a video of a massive forest fire on the opposite slope from the airport in 2022.

Some separately uploaded clips also feature animals, like yaks outside Hotel Everest Inn, monkeys near Sundhara, and even a flying

squirrel in Harrow, UK.

The first videos and streams on the channel show the Dharara in ruins after the 2015 earthquake (pictured above), as well as documenting a year of the rebuilding process in timelapse. Gurung plans to expand his project along the Annapurna Circuit and in Western Nepal.

"Webcams, and the intelligent software they come with, could be used to monitor and trigger early warning systems in the case of glacial lake outburst floods, and show wildfires," Gurung says.

They could also be used to monitor real time weather and help pilots flying to remote airfields or on Mt Everest sightseeing flights so they can make go-no-go decisions before takeoff.

After this WhatsApp interview with Mani Gurung in London, Nepali Times hung up. Two seconds later, he called back to ask: "What's the view like from your office?" 🇳🇵



SURYA NEPAL  
PRIVACY LIMITED



20th **JAZZMANDU** 2024  
Kathmandu Jazz Festival

**Oct. 24~30**

MUSIC FOR UNITY, PEACE & COMPASSION

**ARTISTS 2024**

**ERIK TRUFFAZ SWITZERLAND**

**ANTONIO LIZANA QUINTET FEAT. EL MAWI SPAIN**

**SHEROES USA**

**AFRO DIZZI ACT AUSTRALIA**

**ALMA NAIDU GERMANY**

**CADENZA COLLECTIVE NEPAL**

**DHRUPAD GURUKUL KATHMANDU NEPAL**

**SAMUNDRA NEPAL**

[www.jazzmandu.com](http://www.jazzmandu.com)

EVENT PARTNERS



















# The present meets the past

■ Pinki Sris Rana

The Imadol neighbourhood of Kathmandu Valley was among the worst hit by last weekend's devastating floods. The Manohara River, swollen by incessant rainfall, overflowed into the settlements along its banks.

A photograph taken by French anthropologist Corneille Jest in monsoon 1972 shows the Manohara meandering across a wide plain, its banks lush with ripening paddy. Two farmers cross the field carrying a kharpan, a sturdy traditional bamboo basket carried on shoulders, that has almost vanished from the Valley today.

It is a tranquil view of a once-emerald Valley and its unique civilisation that blended urban living with intense agriculture on the fertile topsoil. Gazing at these images shows us the life and times of Old Nepal.

This and other photographs taken by Jest during his research in Nepal's Dolpo and Kathmandu 60 years ago are a reminder of how much in Nepal has changed, and what remains the same.

Jest visited Nepal every other year since 1960, and the exhibition itself shows us the passage of time -- it is aesthetic and evocative, a lament and sometimes deeply nostalgic.

The exhibition is organised by Mémoires de l'Himalaya, a French association that works to preserve works on the trans-Himalayan region. Jest was a



ALL PHOTOS: MÉMOIRES DE L'HIMALAYA

prolific photographer and out of the 45,000 negatives in his collection, almost 100 black and white and colour prints were selected for this exhibition at the Patan Museum.

"The data researchers collect rarely helps the community being

studied.. So, it was Jest's idea and ours as an organisation to give back, what we can, to the local community," says Rémi Chaix of Mémoires de l'Himalaya, who is also one of the curators. "The field notes taken by Jest can also be

accessed."

Curated by Fernand Meyer, Kunsang Namgyal-Lama and Chaix, the first floor of the museum showcases photographs of Kathmandu Valley and the second floor is dedicated to Dolpo,

especially Tarap Valley where Jest spent most of his time.

This curatorial choice of placing the photographs of a place in a specific floor is important, allowing viewers to keep the two worlds separate.

## Karmarong in Karmarong

Talented artist from Mugu weaves the story of his people into unique thangka paintings

■ Vishad Raj Onta

At age five, Dorjee Karmarong (pictured) fell sick and a local healer-slash-thangka painter cut him a deal: in exchange for treatment, the young patient promised to become a painter.

The shaman may have been joking, but 38 years later Karmarong is indeed an artist of international repute. He has a solo exhibition currently showing at the Siddhartha Art Gallery.

'Karmarong: Hidden Valley in the Himalayas' is a collection of 27 paintings spread across two floors that give the viewer a comprehensive feel for life among the Karmarong community in the remote Mugu district of Karnali.

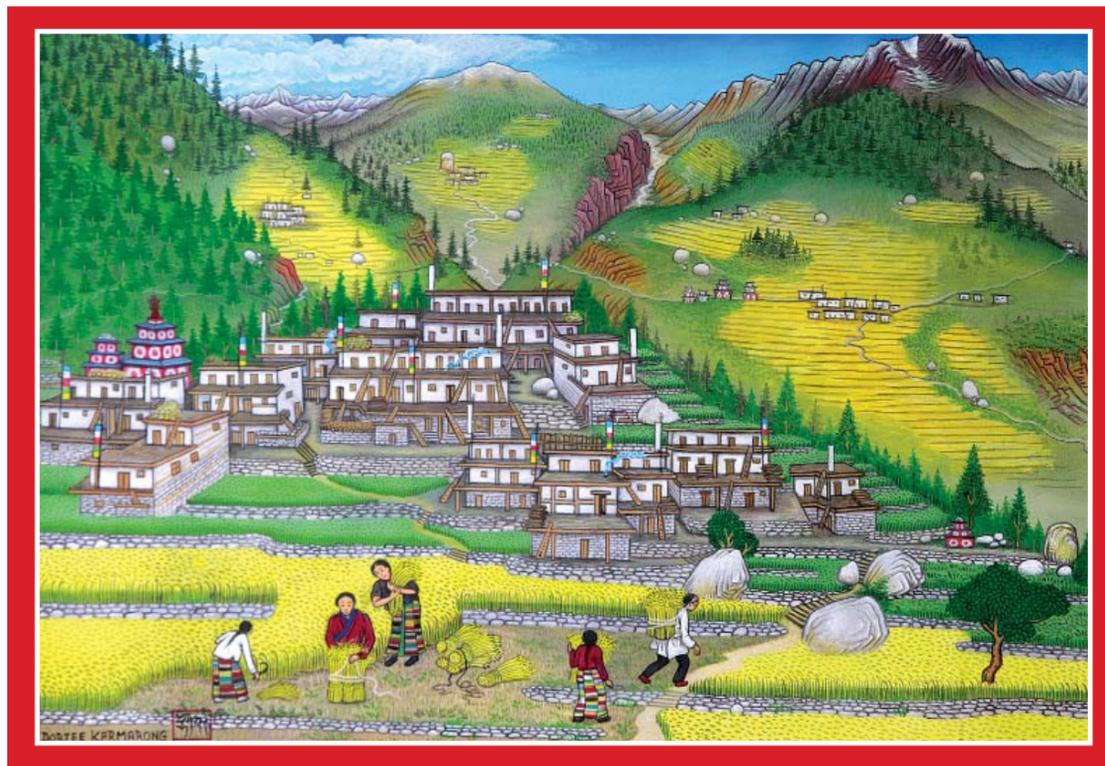
Karmarong has a distinctive style featuring clean outlines, vibrant colours and detailed natural landscapes. It is a style built on 20 years of training in thangka, teaching in monasteries in Bangladesh, India, Singapore and Vietnam.

Mugu is one of the most remote districts in Nepal. The Karmarong community of about 3,000 people speak their own dialect and live in settlements in the northern corner of the district near the Chinese border.

Some of the paintings show general goings-on in Karmarong. Others show traditions. 'The Hospitality of Karmarong' shows residents gathered to formally welcome an important guest.

"In front is someone who has both parents, because they are lucky" explains the painter.

'Magic of Milarepa' is a closeup



of a grey, cracked yak horn. There is water on the ground and inside is the green-skinned meditating monk, and retells a legend of the saint who shrank himself in a storm.

Yaks appear frequently in the paintings, and the artist has endowed them sentient eyes, with emotions like anger, introspection, suspicion, and even surprise.

"I was once told to study as voraciously as a yak grazes," says Karmarong.

Behind Karmarong's extraordinary skill and output is

a rare life lived in harmony with fate. Even his birth was auspicious: He was born in a cave to parents returning from work in Himachal Pradesh, India on the eve of Buddha Purnima, on a Thursday.

At age seven Karmarong's father, a village lama, took him to a cave to learn Tibetan, and at 13 sent him to a monastery in Kathmandu. After six years in the monastery, Karmarong decided that he was going to pursue art, and started an apprenticeship with the master thangka artist, Palden.

Karmarong trained intensively under the rigid rules of thangka painting. He then met Tenzin Norbu from Dolpo, who helped develop his spiritual connection to art.

A visit with a lama who sensed Karmarong's artistic tendencies led to hints of a past life of a poet-singer-yogi, who struggled to find an artist to build a monastery and hence became reborn as one. Karmarong found records of such a Yogi, named Jinpa Tharchin, who fit the description.

Like his supposed past life,



Karmarong also sings, and has written 'Turquoise Mountain: A Folk tale of the Karmarong' and the deeply researched 'Karmarongs: people, places and stories'. He is also a YouTuber and his channel has singing performances, rap songs and travel vlogs.

Karmarong has depicted his village as a religious, harmonious Shangri-La, although it leaves the viewer a little curious about the darker realities of the place, like Milarepa's own murky past.

Karmarong has woven his own life into the paintings: stories, destinies and journeys that inform how one lives. 🇳🇵

'Karmarong: Hidden Valley in the Himalayas' Dorjee Karmarong Siddhartha Art Gallery Till 21 October



**THE WAY WE WERE:**

As Kathmandu Valley recovers from floods, a reminder of the Bagmati floodplain at Gokarna in 1960 with a farmer wading his ducks across the river (far left).

Terraced maize and paddy fields during the 1972 monsoon at Imadol, which has been built over and was submerged on 28 September (left, below).

Members of the Tarap community at Dolpo's Drolma Pass during their pilgrimage to the Buddha-ri sacred mountain in 1960, and offering a prayer flag at a pass above Tukuhe in 1963 (left).



The photographs on the first floor are exclusive and published for the first time. There is also an 11 minute documentary on loop that captures the 1970 Seto Machhindranath festival. One does not just get to see this era but even hear its sounds.

Photos of Dolpo on the second floor show how little the landscape and dwellings of this remote region has changed in the past decades, although with the

road now reaching the district it will inevitably undergo rapid transformation.

Some of the Dolpo photographs have already been published in Jest's books like 'Tales of The Turquoise: A Pilgrimage in Dolpo'. "Jest had a habit of clicking the same image twice. One would be in black and white and the other would be in colour," explains Chaix who along with other two curators had to decide which would be a



**Lalita Niwas 60 years ago**

The Lalita Niwas Land grab scandal is making headlines today, and has implicated the high and mighty of the land. But few know what the original palace of Subarna Shumsher Rana looked like. Corneille Jest's aerial photograph in 1963 of the neoclassical palace gives us an idea of the grandeur and size of the complex that spread over a 7 hectare plot in Baluwatar.

After the property was nationalised during the Panchayat, it has been fragmented, bought and sold numerous times. The scandal has put 18 of the 310 individuals charged behind bars. The building now houses the Nepal Rastra Bank.

better fit for the exhibit.

Jest's photos of Dolpo are intimate and let the audience peek into the Himalayan lifestyle at the time. Researching about the Himalayan people and the culture while living in Tarap Valley, Jest developed a particular affinity for Dolpo, shares Guillaume Jest, one of Cornielle's sons, who was here at the inauguration of the exhibition.

"I think that my father's fondness for the population of Dolpo and their religion and culture comes from the fact that they build their way of life in a very harsh but breathtaking world of the high

valleys of the Himalayas," says Guillaume.

Being an anthropologist, Jest's focus is always on the people he encounters and the landscape or architecture being props. This is a rich visual documentation of what people wore, what they ate, what the houses looked like, their daily work in the fields, the harvest process, cultural rituals and celebrations.

"Corneille Jest's photographs give us a rare insight into the everyday life, culture, and landscapes of Nepal during a pivotal period in the country's

history, just after its opening to the rest of the world. They reveal the depth and diversity of Nepali culture," says Virginie Corteval, French Ambassador to Nepal, who opened the exhibition last week.

She adds: "These represent a testimony of the important work by pioneer French researchers such as Corneille Jest or Sylvain Lévi, in studying the diversity of the Nepali civilisation." 🇳🇵

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# Prosperous Gandaki is thriving



Rural areas of Nepal's best performing province are better off than its towns

■ Durga Rana Magar in Kaski

Masking in a golden sunset reflected off Machapuchre (pictured), guests gather in the courtyard of Hita Sharma's house in Ghandruk for a party.

In the kitchen, Sharma is sorting through a nanglo filled with freshly picked niguro fern as strips of mutton sizzle away in a pan. Cucumber, radish, and greens from her vegetable garden have been chopped neatly, and laid out.

Sharma (pictured, overleaf) lost her husband when she was 23, and overnight became a single mother raising two children and an elderly father-in-law. All she knew was how to farm the terraces on the steep slopes nearby.

Her family has lived here in the Gurung village on the Annapurna trekking trail for generations, she speaks the local language and is familiar with the community's customs. But unlike her Gurung neighbours, she was not involved in the tourism industry in a town that gets 175,000 Nepali and foreign trekkers every year.

"Everyone ran hotels, homestays or businesses, while I was alone with two young children," says Sharma, who was also convinced by her neighbour Harimaya Gurung to start a homestay. Ghandruk had just been connected to Pokhara by road in 2016, and the flow of tourists was increasing.

A decade later, Sharma's homestay is a thriving. The loans are paid off, her son is a chartered accountant in Pokhara, and her lab technician daughter is settled in Japan.

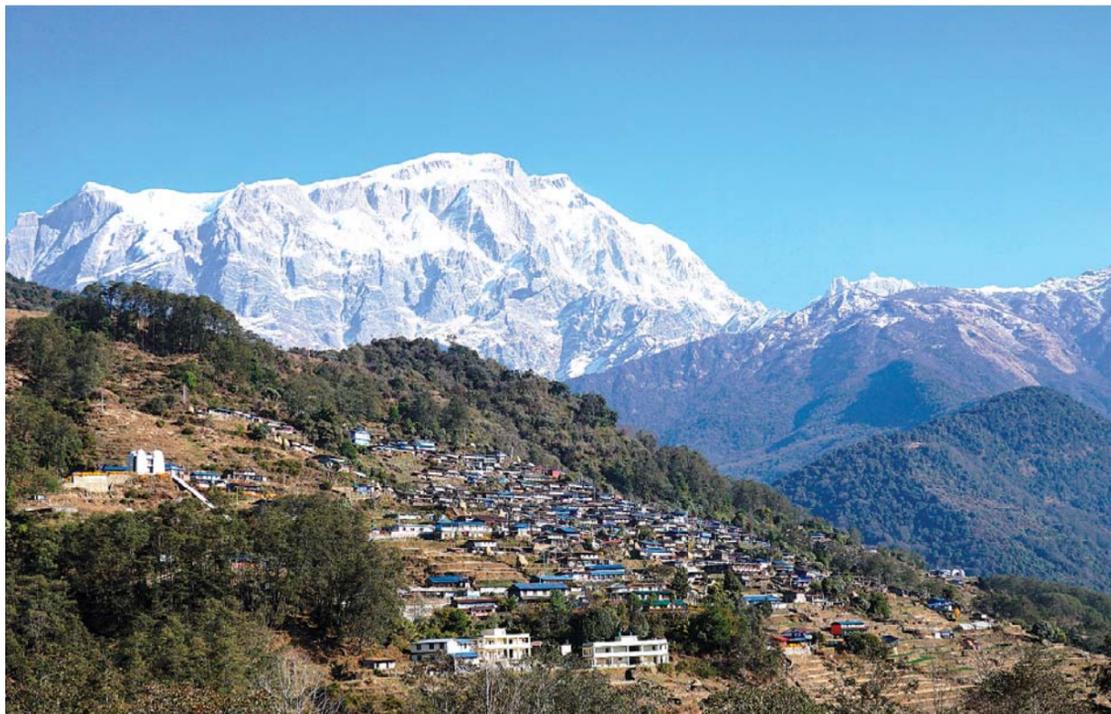
"They have made me forget all the hardships I faced to get here," beams Hita Sharma.

Gandaki is number one among Nepal's seven provinces in the Human Development Index, even higher than Bagmati, where Kathmandu is located. But even more surprising is that rural parts of the province, like here in Ghandruk, are even more prosperous than towns like Pokhara.

Only 12% of the population of Gandaki is below the poverty line, much lower than the national average of 21%. In total, Gandaki has only 5% of Nepal's poor, lowest among the seven provinces.

Just a decade ago, the story was different. In 2011, the poverty rate in Gandaki was higher than the national average at 28%.

"We recalculated the results of the survey to see if there was a mistake, but the data was sound," says Hem Raj Regmi of the National Statistics Office. "The rural areas of Gandaki province have leapt ahead in prosperity."



## TOURISM

Tourism and remittances from those abroad are the main factors. The incoming cash has had a multiplier effect on downstream sectors like vegetable and poultry farming, manufacturing and schools.

"The villages of Gandaki have always been more prosperous than elsewhere," notes Nepal's former finance secretary Rameshore Khanal. "But tourism definitely played a prominent part."

Apart from 656 hotels in cities

like Pokhara, there are 342 rural homestays across Gandaki, and the provincial government provides Rs1 million subsidy to open new homestays benefiting many families who have rooms empty because so many members are abroad.

More than half of Gandaki's tourism-centered businesses are in rural areas like Ghandruk, Ghorepani and other villages along the trekking trails. Nearly three-fourths are female-owned.

"The villages of Gandaki

are famous tourist destinations, and domestic visitors kept most homestays in business when foreign arrivals fell during and after Covid. This has maintained employment and income levels," says Krishna Chandra Devkota of the Gandaki Province Policy and Planning Commission.

Although tourism has now become the main source of income, the backbone of Gandaki's rural economy has always been farming.

"Agricultural prospects were always good in Lamjung, Tanahun, Kaski and Syangja districts because of community irrigation systems," explains Khanal.

Indeed, while a little over 60% of Nepali households are engaged in agriculture, in Gandaki it is 64%.

A robust irrigation system means that Gandaki's farms are insulated from droughts and the impact of climate breakdown. Unlike other provinces Gandaki produces enough rice, maize, and wheat to wholly meet its own demand.

## REMITTANCE

Gandaki's literacy rate is 83.4% (nationally it is 77%) and has always been historically higher

than elsewhere in Nepal, except Bagmati. Better education has increased employment prospects both domestically and abroad, and higher earnings means greater inflow of remittances.

Gandaki Province has always been the recruitment centre for soldiers in the British and Indian Armies, and many families of Gurkha veterans have settled down in the UK and send money home to their villages.

Maya Timsina, a member of the Provincial Planning Commission in Pokhara, says: "I would put remittances as main factor in reducing poverty in Gandaki."

On average, each household in Gandaki receives Rs215,000 in remittances every year, compared to the national average of Rs145,093. Villages in other provinces are far behind Gandaki in inflows.

Former Finance Minister Surendra Pandey says that Gandaki's 'Lahure' tradition of joining foreign militaries has contributed greatly to higher remittances. "Today, soldiers have been largely replaced by migrant workers, but even they earn more than workers elsewhere because of better education and skill sets."

Daily wages are also higher in Gandaki at Rs711, when in the rest of Nepal the average is Rs511 per day. The province has traditionally been more entrepreneurial because of its location astride the Kali Gandaki trading route.

Residents of Gandaki went to India for seasonal jobs until the 1990s, after which industries evolved in cities like Birganj, Butwal, Bhairawa, Nepalganj, Kathmandu, and Biratnagar.

But while there is an industrial park in Pokhara, Gandaki province still does not have a major manufacturing sector. Experts say people living in the province have been able to achieve poverty reduction despite a lack of industrial development because of the importance of the service sector.

## COMMUNITY

Homestays have not improved living standards in other parts of Nepal as much as it has in Gandaki Province. For example, only few of the Tharu homestays in the Tarai have done well because of the lack





PHOTOS: DURGA RANA MAGAR



“Private sector investment must be encouraged in the mid-hills, and tourism, agriculture and water resources should all be developed.”

Nepal was a country of villages until a decade ago, but the categorisation of local units including the introduction of new municipalities has made it mostly urban, at least on the paper.

In 2021 a third of Nepal’s population lived in rural municipalities, and 66% in urban areas. In comparison, 83% of Nepalis lived in rural areas, and only 17% lived in municipalities in 2011.

However, there has been no infrastructure development in many newly-announced municipalities, which means such local units are essentially still villages. One way to curb the high outmigration rate would be to improve basic facilities in rural municipalities.

Some of this is already happening in Gandaki. Because of added income from tourism, and better connectivity, many youth are returning to their villages. This model could easily be replicated elsewhere in Nepal and reduce the outmigration of young people.

Meanwhile in Ghandruk, Hita Sharma’s son urges her to join him in Pokhara, but she has no desire to leave her scenic village where the air and water are clean, and the food is fresh. She tells us: “I have lived here all my life through joys and hardships. Now that things are finally looking up, I will not leave. In fact, it is time for all those who have left their villages to return.”

of facilities and promotion. Gandaki has thrived because it has a cohesive community spirit in rural areas. Explains Khanal: “The tradition of coming together, exchanging pleasantries, and discussing problems of the

community to find solutions is much more pronounced here.” True, few other places in Nepal are endowed with such stunning scenery as the mountains near Pokhara and that is the main draw for homestay guests.

“While individual and community efforts have played important roles in lifting people out of poverty in Gandaki, the state must do its part to help,” says Devkota of the Gandaki Province Policy and Planning Commission.






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