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SUMAN NEPALI

Nepalis not so unhappy

Despite contemporary narrative that Nepalis are giving up on their country to migrate overseas in droves, a recent public opinion poll shows that nearly half of those interviewed are still positive about the direction the country has been headed towards since the 2022 election.

Asked if they feel that the situation has worsened, improved, or remained the same in the past two years, 45.4% of the respondents in the nationwide survey said they were satisfied about the way Nepal is headed (graph).

Of them, 14% said they were 'significantly positive', while 31.5% felt 'somewhat positive' about the situation in Nepal.

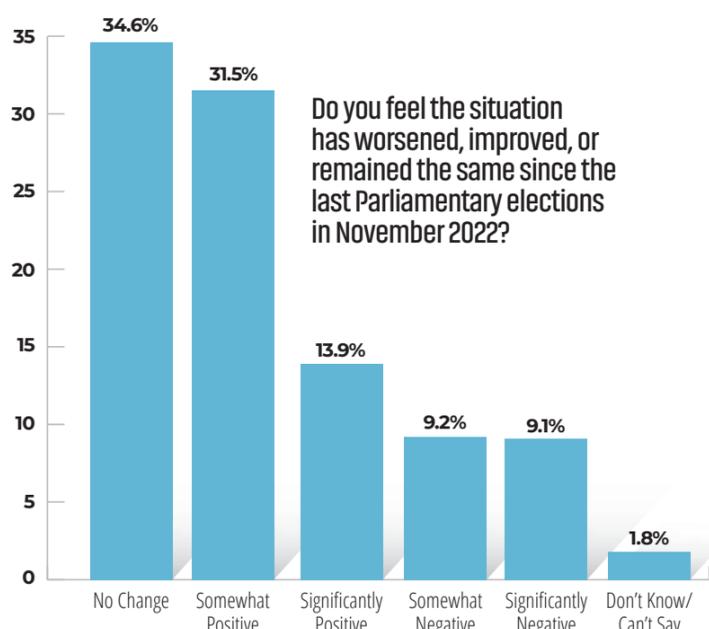
Although 34.6% of those answering the question believed that the socio-political situation in the country was unchanged since 2022, Sharecast Initiative in its analysis of the results said there was 'a notable sense of optimism about the current state of affairs'.

Even so, about 18% felt the situation was either 'significantly negative' or 'somewhat negative'. And the third of the respondents whose answer was that there had been 'no change' could also be construed to mean they are not entirely happy with the way things have been going since 2022.

"Those who say 'no change' are not so satisfied, and even 'somewhat positive' can be taken to mean things are not as good as they could be," explains Madhu Acharya of Sharecast Initiative Nepal, which conducted the poll.

"Add that to those who had a negative view then we have 55% of the people not happy," he adds.

Still, 45% of the people feeling



SHARECAST DATA INITIATIVE AND THE STORY KITCHEN NATIONWIDE SURVEY 2024 AMONG 4,267 RESPONDENTS.

positive means the national mood is not as pervasively hopeless as Nepal's public sphere believes it is.

Also contrary to prevailing perceptions is that the level of optimism seems highest among younger Nepalis, especially women. It was also higher among those in the higher income brackets.

More female respondents (15.6%) thought Nepal's current situation was 'significantly positive' while only 12% of males felt that way. More men (11.5%) also had a 'negative' view of the past two years, compared to only 7% of women feeling the same way.

Province-wise, most of those surveyed in Bagmati and Gandaki

said there had been 'no change', while in the Madhes both positive and negative responses were higher than any other province.

Because Nepal's migration pattern is blurring the lines between rural and urban, the level of positivity was equal, with nearly half the respondents in both areas feeling 'somewhat' and 'significantly' positive about their circumstances.

Literacy appears to play a significant role in determining satisfaction with the state of affairs. Generally, those with higher education were happier than those with less education. Illiterate respondents had the most negative

view about their status.

Even though the understanding among media commentators is that Nepali youth are frustrated and cannot wait to leave the country, the survey showed that 54% of those in the 18-24 age group were either 'somewhat' or 'significantly' positive about the state of the state.

In general, the older people are, the less happy they seem to be about how things have gone since the last election.

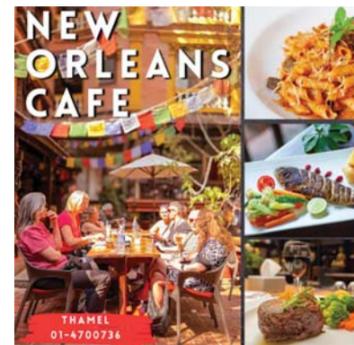
The survey results showed that even though those with higher incomes are generally more satisfied, one-tenth of richer people felt 'significantly negative' about the way things are going in Nepal.

This question in the nationwide survey was part of Sharecast's 'General Perceptions of Gender Issues in Nepal' of which the responses on gender equality are summarised on page 4-5. But even there, results show a high satisfaction level with constitutional and legal safeguards for women.

The scientific poll was conducted face-to-face earlier this year among 4,267 respondents from all seven provinces and three ecological zones. Nearly 70 supervisors and enumerators fanned out across the country to interview Nepalis selected by domicile, gender, walks of life, socio-economic strata and ethnicity in the ratio of their representation in the population. 🇳🇵

Most Nepalis see progress in gender equality, but cite problems

MORE PAGE 4-5



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Beijing +30

Beijing is in the news in Nepal because of Prime Minister K P Oli's forthcoming visit to China next week. But this year also marks nearly 30 years since 189 countries signed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to advance equality for women.

Next March in New York, the 69th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will review progress since 1995. Since then, women have taken great strides in achieving equality, but these achievements are now being undermined by the climate crisis, the rise of populism, increasing political polarisation, and the double-edged sword of algorithm-driven online content.

"Beijing was a platform that we would not get in this day and age, what was agreed to in 1995 was unparalleled," admitted Regional Director of UN Women Christine Arab during a Beijing +30 ministerial review in Bangkok last week. "If we held the same meeting today, we simply wouldn't get the agreement we did then. It is a different world order today."



UN WOMEN

The Asia-Pacific region has taken major strides in female literacy and access to health, including reproductive rights for women and girls. For example, the adult female literacy rate in 1995 in South Asia was just 36%. Today, it has nearly doubled at 69.5%, and even better at 91.47% for females aged 15–24. Nepal went from 25% in 1991 to 69.4% in 2021.

However, women are bearing the brunt of climate breakdown in the most vulnerable countries like Nepal. Harvest failures and disasters risk reversing gains in poverty reduction, and have even slowed progress in preventing child marriage, and led to an increase in girls trafficking.

Climate change-induced water scarcity has increased the drudgery of rural women. And too much water in monsoon puts everyone at risk, and as we saw with the floods in September, women and children are disproportionately affected.

Sharmeen S Murshed, adviser to the Bangladesh government, told the Bangkok meeting that the climate crisis has "feminised families", further jeopardising the lives of women and children.

Women's participation in the labour force is not highlighted enough, although the expansion of small and medium enterprises as well as microfinance in Nepal and South Asia has helped at the grassroots. Of the 71.5% of Nepal's 30 million population who are of working age, 11.53 million are female as opposed to 9.2 million males. Most of the women are in the informal sector or engaged in unpaid household work.

The Covid pandemic exposed the limitations of the informal sector while also bringing the focus on the care economy, and increasing the burden on women as they try to balance both home and work, and in some cases miss out on opportunities as a result. Colloquially called household chores, from cooking, washing, and cleaning to child and elderly care, they are not even considered 'real work'.

Last year on Women's Day, Nepali Times set out to put a monetary value to the work homemakers do daily. We calculated that if women were to be paid based on current market rates, they would be the highest earners in an average Nepali family.

Every year, 25 November marks the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV), concluding on International Human Rights Day on 10 December. As a nationwide public opinion poll shows (page 4-5) most Nepalis say the biggest challenge for women is safety and security in society and within the home.

The legislation around violence against women and girls has improved, but new challenges have emerged with cyber bullying and online abuse. Also concerning is the pushback from governments in women's representation in politics and the civil service. While Nepal's Constitution mandates that women should make up 33% of MPs and 40% of local representatives, electoral alliances in the 2022 polls meant those numbers were not met.

The ruling coalition now wants to do away with proportional representation, even though they were using this quota provision by nominating token women. Women with disabilities and those from marginalised communities are further down when it comes to their participation in politics and civil service.

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are supposed to be met by 2030, and there is too much left to do in light of new global challenges. Although only Goal 5 directly addresses gender justice, it is also true that no other goal can be met without achieving true equality and equity.

Sonia Awale in Bangkok

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals should be met by 2030 but none of them can be achieved without gender equality and equity

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Arun III

In 1995, World Bank President James Wolfensohn cancelled the Arun III project "in agreement with the government of Nepal" following pressure from activists in Nepal and abroad who objected not so much to its environmental impact as its cost. In 2017, India started work on the Arun III, now expanded to 900MW.

Excerpts of the report commemorating 10 years since Arun III was cancelled, published 20 years ago this week in issue #223 26 November – 2 December 2004:



activists who killed the project that they thought would have transformed eastern Nepal. The World Bank itself was badly burnt, it has kept off hydropower ever since and only recently hinted at taking a new look at potential projects. It was on 5 August 1995, after a year of mounting international protests that the World Bank's newly-appointed president James Wolfensohn announced he was pulling out of Arun. The Japanese and German governments were under fire pressure at home too.

Arun III was one of the first examples of internet-based international activism. The International Rivers Network, Friends of the Earth Japan and German green groups joined Nepali activists opposed to the project to successfully lobby against the Bank and bilateral donors.

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

ONLINE PACKAGES



Ram Dhani Yadav was the first migrant to leave for the Gulf from his village in 1992. Times were different back then. There were no mobiles, calls were expensive, and those overseas communicated with family in Nepal through cassette tapes sent back and forth. Watch this video online and read the story on page 10-11.



A Nepali footballer's lifestyle is not lavish, players do not get the opportunity to train, the games are not played all year round, and training isn't all year round either. Players do not get offered millions of dollars and are signed into clubs which lack adequate funds. Watch A-division League players speak about their experiences on our YouTube channel. Subscribe for multimedia content.

CARBON TRADING

Nepal, like Costa Rica, protects its environment ('Greenbacks for greenery', Ramesh Kumar, #1236). It also protects its wildlife. Its future prosperity will be guaranteed when the right infrastructure is in place such that they do not disturb the country's valuable natural assets.

Alan Roadnight

CLIMATE IMPACT

The strategy to increase the use of electricity must be to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and increase renewables like solar, wind and water, and wood from sustainable forest sources (Bad COP, Editorial, #1235). Electric vehicles and human powered transport in urban areas should be promoted and encouraged

David Seddon

LANGUAGES

This was an interesting exchange between Mark Turin and Lava Deo Awasthi, highlighting issues that are analogous in many similar multi-cultural and multi-linguistic contexts ('Languages are both software and hardware' nepalitimes.com).

Iván G Somlai

KABIR KHAN

The interview with Kabir Khan is really interesting ('From The Forgotten Army to Bajrangi Bhaijaan', Abishek Budhathoki, #1236). I am sure his address to the Film SouthAsia audience will help people appreciate his contribution to Indian cinema over the years.

Bharat Koirala

LEARNING ENGLISH

To be sure, the ability to speak English shouldn't lead to elitism ('English is not the be-all and end-all,' Anbika Giri, #1236). However, whether we like it or not, English is the global language of work and commerce—it'll only help Nepalis to become more fluent in it.

AirlinesGuy

POKHARA TOURISM

The Nepal government is beyond incompetent. In its 'wisdom' it invariably make decisions that hurt the tourism industry and in this case also inconvenience so many others ('Pokhara's tourism woes', Vishad Raj Onta, nepalitimes.com). This type of bad decision-making has been going on for years. Hopeless.

Roger Ray

Times.com WHAT'S TRENDING

Level up tourism with electricity

by Bikash Pandey
Nepal currently has a surplus from hydropower, and it is expected to keep growing for the foreseeable future. Harnessing this electricity to boost tourism can enhance local livelihoods and reduce the outmigration of youth. Visit nepalitimes.com for details.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook



Right climate for an energy transition

by Ramesh Kumar
Nepal now generates surplus renewable hydropower. Nearly half the country is under forest cover. Despite meeting these decarbonisation goals, Nepal's hydropower plants are threatened by climate risk. Read the full report on our website.

X Most popular on X

Greenbacks for greenery

by Ramesh Kumar
Nepal has received its first paycheck for protecting its forests as a carbon sink, becoming the first country in South Asia to be recompensed for increasing forest cover. What comes next? Join the discussion online.

💬 Most commented

Khukri's new rum

by Vishad Raj Onta
Khukri Rum is one of Nepal's most iconic brands, and is now launching a new Cask Series premium product to sell in Nepal and abroad. Each bottle is numbered and will mention the cask from which it is derived.

🔥 Most visited online page

QUOTES

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Nepal has received Rs1.6 billion from the World Bank as part of its Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), rewarding the country for increasing its carbon sink capacity. Nepal is the first in South Asia to benefit from this facility.

Mahavir Sherpa @SherpaMahavir01
I'm really impressed by Nepal's innovative approach to carbon trading. Protecting forests and transitioning to clean energy not only benefits the environment but also supports economic growth. Truly inspiring!

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Gandaki is number one among Nepal's seven provinces in the Human Development Index, even higher than Bagmati, where Kathmandu is located. More surprisingly, rural parts of the province here are even more prosperous than towns like Pokhara.

M.E. Smaeker @Mesmaeker
Just that view every single day would make me feel prosperous. Unfortunately Nepal does not do 'retirement' visas...

1,000 WORDS



K P SHARMA OLI/ FACEBOOK

ELON-OLI:
Prime Minister K P Oli in a virtual conversation with tech mogul Elon Musk to discuss expanding his satellite-based telecommunications provider company Starlink in Nepal. Musk is also in the Department of Government Efficiency in President elect Donald Trump's new administration.



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TURKISH AIRLINES

ENGLAND

Most Nepalis see progress in gender equality,

1. Violence against women 2. Lack of say within households 3. Political representation 4. Societal restraints



SUMAN NEPALI

As the world marks 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence from 25 November–10 December, a recent public opinion poll in Nepal has shown that both men and women respondents place security and 'safety from violence' as their number one concern.

Asked 'What are the primary issues facing women in Nepal today?' more than one-third of the respondents felt it was safety and protection from violence. Both genders – and especially younger respondents – identified protection from violence as the main problem facing Nepali women. Geographically, people in Bagmati, Sudurpaschim and Madhes

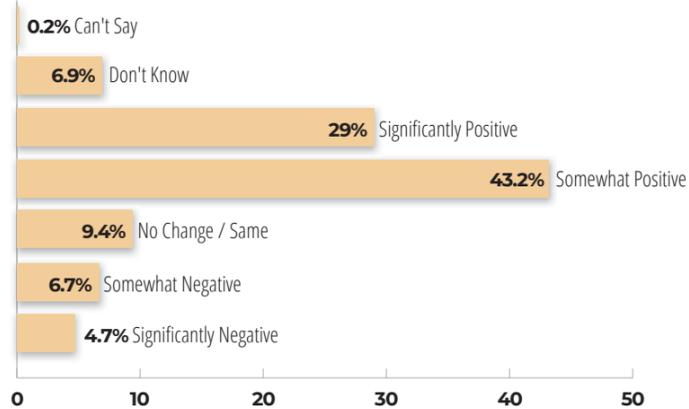
prioritised safety of women as their main concern.

Societal restraints against women was seen as the second-most important problem, especially in regions of the country considered to have more entrenched patriarchal norms like the Karnali.

'Lack of household decision-making' was the third main issue respondents said women in Nepal face, and this was especially pronounced in rural areas. It could be a significant pointer to the feminisation of Nepal's hinterland, with the outmigration mainly of young men from households.

This was among seven questions asked in a recent nationwide survey 'General Perceptions of Gender

How have recent constitutional and legal changes in Nepal impacted women's rights and gender equality?



Issues in Nepal' by Sharecast Data Initiative and the Story Kitchen. The poll was conducted by enumerators in face-to-face interviews with 4,267 respondents selected for a balanced representation of Nepal's population.

In answer to questions if Nepal has been making progress on gender equality, most respondents had a positive outlook about female representation, constitutional and legal safeguards, and cultural norms.

Asked about Nepal's socio-political and cultural changes affecting women, nearly 62% had a positive response while about 15% said they had noticed no change and about 16% said the country was moving in a negative direction.

NMB BANK एनएमबी बैंक



Turkish award

Turkish Airlines has received the 'Leverages Loan Deal of the Year' Award from Global Banking and Markets for using innovative financial strategies that reduce costs and risk while expanding its fleet. The award recognised a \$235 million loan Turkish Airlines took from BNP Paribas and the Development Bank of Japan to finance an Airbus A350 and two Rolls Royce jet engines.

Minutes = Data

Ncell has introduced a feature to convert minutes to data and vice versa, valid for the Rs399, 499 and 599 Sadhain ON packs, through the Ncell App. For example, 50 minutes of talk time converts to 1.2 GB of data.

ASCoN Star Award

The Asian Spinal Cord Network (ASCoN) has awarded this year's Star Award to Esha Thapa, Executive Director of Spinal Injury Sangha Nepal (SISN). Initiated in 2015, the award recognises outstanding contribution to the advancement of spinal cord injury services and support. Thapa has fostered transformative rehabilitation services and empowering persons with spinal cord injury in Nepal.

Pokhara to Lhasa

Himalaya Airlines will be operating regular international flights from Pokhara airport to Lhasa starting 5 December. Pokhara airport came into operation in January 2023 but has seen only a handful of international flights.

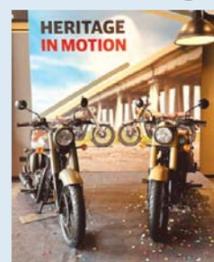
Royal Rajasthan

Holiday Inn is holding a 'Royal Rajasthan' themed unlimited dinner buffet until 30 November for Rs1,595 per person. Dishes include Dal Baati Churma, Laal Maas, and Gatte ki Sabzi.

100 BYDs delivered

As BYD celebrates 30 years and its 10 millionth EV, its authorised dealer in Nepal Cimex marked the completion of the deliveries of 1,000 units of BYD models across the country.

Enfield Signals Edition



Alpha Automotive launched the Royal Enfield Classic 350 Signals Edition, which is inspired by a classic post war G2 model. It is available in Desert Sand and Matte Gray and can be viewed and test-rode at all 24 Royal Enfield showrooms across Nepal.

NPL on DishHome

DishHome will broadcast the Nepal Premier League 2024 through its DishHome Go app and on its Action Sports HD channel. Read more about the league on page 6-7.

Tata Battery Meet

Laxmi Group held the Tata Green Battery Channel Partner Meet, where Home UPS systems and industrial batteries were introduced with 150 dealer partners attending.

Child Marriage

ZONTA, Ncell, UNFPA and UNICEF came together to discuss collective solutions towards ending child marriage. Nepal has the third highest rate of child marriage in South Asia with 37% of Nepali women aged 20-24 married by the age of 18 whereas one in three are married before they turn 18.

Nabil SSE turns 3

The Nabil School of Social Entrepreneurship marked its third anniversary this week. In this time, the school's different programs have resulted in 1,200 jobs through 117 new businesses.

BYD 30

BYD marked 30 years by rolling off its 10 millionth EV at its Xiamo production base in China. Chairman Wang Chuanfu attributed the company's success to a 'deeply embedded engineering culture'. BYD started as a 20-person start-up and is now a multinational corporation with nearly 1 million employees.

New ADB Chief

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) Board of Governors elected Masato Kanda its 11th President. Kanda, 59, currently serves as Special Advisor to Japan's Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, and will assume his new office in February.

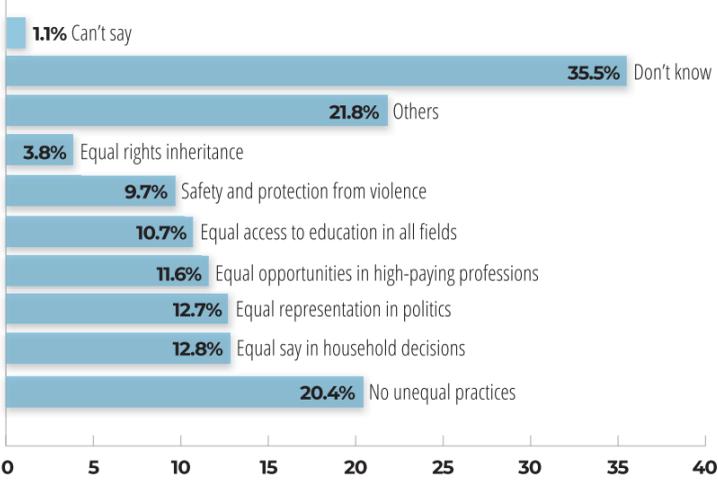


Nepal-Japan trade

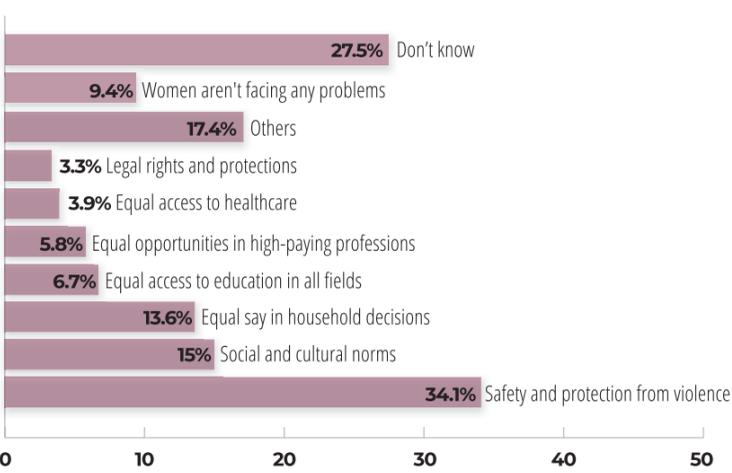
Nepal and Japan this week launched the Nepal Nippon Chamber of Commerce and Industries, a non-profit project to facilitate business and relations between the countries.

but cite problems:

What are the areas Nepali women have not received equal opportunities compared to men?

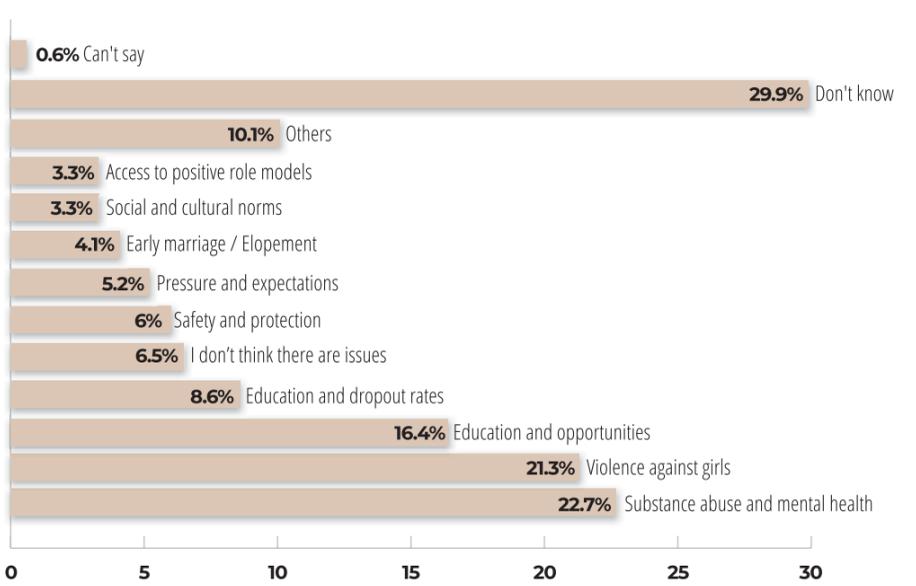


What are the primary issues facing women in Nepal today?



GRAPHS: SHARECAST DATA INITIATIVE, THE STORY KITCHEN

What significant issues do adolescent girls and boys face in Nepal today?



Younger respondents of both genders, urban residents and those with higher education and income levels tended to have a more optimistic view about socio-political and cultural changes that affected women.

In response to another question about new constitutional and legal provisions safeguarding women's rights and gender equality, nearly three-quarter of respondents (both men and women) felt the laws had benefited women. Only about 10% felt they had negatively affected women.

Again, it was younger men and women, city-dwellers and better educated people who were more optimistic. In its analysis of the results, Sharecast says: 'However, there are areas of concern, particularly among less educated and lower income groups, indicating a need for targeted interventions to address these disparities.'

In response to the question about which areas Nepali women have not yet received equal opportunities with men, a surprising 35% said they could not answer, while 20% felt there was no inequality anymore.

But among those who said there was

inequality, the highest number (12.8%) said it was within the household. Almost as many cited unequal representation in politics, while education, high-paying jobs and protection from violence were also of concern to respondents.

More men (16.3%) cited unequal political representation, while only 9.5% of women respondents felt that was an issue and they pointed to not having enough say within the household (13.7%) as their main concern.

Asked about the problems faced by Nepal's men, the highest number of respondents (27%) said men had 'no problems', and a significant number (14.4%) said they had no idea if there were problems or not. Most of those who chose to answer (15.4%) said it was a lack of jobs and wages.

To a question about the problems faced by adolescent girls and boys, substance abuse and mental health topped the list (22.7%), while violence against girls (21.3%) and education came next. Nearly 30% said they didn't know or couldn't say.



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NEPAL'S WOMEN EXCEL IN SPORTS IN 2024

Female athletes represented Nepal on the world stage this year despite lack of investment and government support

■ Shristi Karki

Ahead of the final SAFF Women's Championship game between Nepal and Bangladesh in October, the All Nepal Football Association (ANFA), had to take over sale of tickets after turnout exceeded the stadium's 15,000 capacity.

Thousands queued up for hours to see the match, and more than 1 million people tuned in to watch the game live on YouTube, marking most viewership ever recorded in Nepal's sports history.

The women's team lost that final match to Bangladesh, but the spirit and skill the Nepalis displayed shined a belated spotlight on Nepal's female athletes.

In 2024, athletes in other sports besides football showed notable performances on the world stage, and fans attended the events in record numbers to cheer them on.

In March, para-taekwondo player Palesha Goverdhan won gold during the Asian Paralympics qualification rounds, advancing to the 2024 summer Paralympics games in Paris, where she won the bronze in September.

Goverdhan is Nepal's first-ever

Paralympic medalist, and the first athlete ever from Nepal to bring home a competitive medal in the history of the Olympic Games.

In August, Nepal hosted the 2024 CAVA Women's Volleyball Challenge Cup where the national volleyball team was placed second, losing the final match to India.

Then in November, the Nepal U-19 women's cricket team defeated the UAE at the Asia Qualifiers, advancing to their first-ever ICC U-19 Women's T20 World Cup beginning in January next year.

This year, ultra-marathoner Sunmaya Budha ran seven races, most recently placing first among women at the 105km Tsaigu Trail in November (page 12).

"Nepali women have been performing exceptionally well across many sports events both individually and as teams," said national volleyball player Saraswati Chaudhary. "And as our games get better, our quality of life has also begun to improve."

Most Nepali athletes attribute their success to teamwork, dedication and drive than government support. The Ministry of Youth and Sports is the least coveted portfolio whenever a new government is formed because it is



Bangladesh won 2-1 against Nepal to claim the SAFF Women's Championship title in Kathmandu in October.

among those that have the smallest annual budget.

In fact, Nepal's leaders have been too busy with their own power play to pay attention to the development of sports in Nepal.

The latest example is the 10th Nepal National Games, planned for 17-24 November in Karnali Province but could not be held. Officials have been mum about the reasons.

Senior officials are quick to take credit for outstanding performances, but do not provide athletes with adequate support, and there is even less of that for female sportspeople.

What is surprising is that Nepali women athletes have performed well despite poor state backing.

The national budget this year allocated Rs3.5 billion to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Rs600



Para-taekwondo player Palesha Goverdhan celebrates after winning bronze at the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games.

PARALYMPIC GAMES / X

Here comes the Nepal Premier



Exciting month ahead with Nepal's most thrilling cricket tournament

■ Vishad Raj Onta

The Nepal Premier League T20 men's cricket tournament is the culmination of progress in the sport over the past decade, and a thrilling first step into higher level sports events in the country. Adding to the excitement is international talent.

The NPL features eight teams made up of Nepali and international cricketers, including Shikhar Dhawan, one of India's greatest ODI batsmen over the 2010s, and an IPL stalwart for the Delhi and Mumbai franchises. Dhawan is playing for the Karnali Yaks.

Other imports are Kiwi batsman Martin Guptill, Indian-American Unmukt Chand, and Trinidad fast bowler Anderson Phillip.

Besides the Yaks, there are the Biratnagar Kings, Chitwan Rhinos, Janakpur Bolts, Kathmandu Gurkhas, Lumbini Lions, Pokhara Avengers, and Sudurpaschim Royals.

The franchises have a wide variety of

backers, including Kantipur Publications behind the Gurkhas, Chitwan Medical College sponsoring the Rhinos, and Himalayan Builders for the Yaks. They are paying foreign players salaries rumoured to be in the Rs5 million range (\$37,000) for the 21-day contest.

The teams will first play in a round-robin league, then progress to playoffs. There are 32 games in total, all at the Tribhuvan University International Cricket Ground (overleaf) which is being spruced up with expanded boundary, digital scoreboard, sight screens, and practice pitches.

"Holding all games at the same stadium makes sense logistically," says Chhumbi Lama of the Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN). "Future editions will see matches happen across Nepal."

Another benefit is that it may expedite the completion and upgrades of stadiums across the country, such as Mulpani Cricket Stadium in Kathmandu, the Gautam Buddha International Stadium in Bharatpur, and the



Fapla Cricket Ground in Kailali.

The benefit of the NPL is the development of Nepal's cricket talent. The rules are also made to favour this, with each 16-player squad having no more than four foreign players. One Nepali 'marquee' player was selected by lottery, and others were signed

through auctions for as high as Rs1.5 million.

"Each team will have the marquee player from the province they represent," says Lama, although this does not seem to be the case in practice. The 24-year-old leg spinner Sandeep Lamichhane, for example, is captaining the Biratnagar Kings, although he comes from



SUMAN NEPALI

million of which was set aside for the National Games.

While sports in general gets the short end of the stick, female athletes are even more left out. Some of Nepal's notable athletes in cricket, football, volleyball, and karate came together in a panel to talk about the state of women's sport in Nepal at the Kantipur Conclave earlier this month.

They discussed what has prevented women from performing better. Regardless of the sport, their concerns were similar: lack of infrastructure, investment, and training for female athletes. While the men's teams have league, club, and other domestic games and tournaments, the women do not.

The Nepali women's football team ranks 99th in the world, much higher than the men's national football team,

which is ranked an inglorious 176th. Even so, the women footballers do not get the opportunities their male counterparts have to participate in competitive domestic leagues and club games to gain exposure.

The same is the case for women in cricket. Nepal's national women's team captain Indu Barma has commented on the lack of domestic matches and league tournaments for female cricketers in the country, even as men can now play in the upcoming Nepal Premier League (see below).

This comes as other South Asian nations expand investment into sports, and women's sports in particular. After Nepal lost the SAFF Women's cup, striker Preeti Rai highlighted the difference between training regimen in Nepal



The Nepali national women's volleyball team won silver at the 2024 CAVA Women's Volleyball Challenge Cup in August.



Krishma Gurung's four-wicket spell during the Asia Qualifier match against the UAE helped the Nepal team qualify for the 2025 ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup.

equal pay in 2021. At present, contracted players from both the men's and women's team receive a monthly salary of Rs30,000 per month.

When the Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN) announced its contracts in 2020, male players earned more than thrice the female cricketers. A new annual contract was announced this year for 30 male and 19 female cricketers, with players divided into five 'grades' including a category for emerging players.

But although salaries for players were increased, female cricketers still earn half of what their male counterparts make.

The remuneration of volleyball players is even less. Players receive a measly Rs5,000 monthly salary, that too not from the government but from former players based overseas who have taken the initiative to contribute.

Money for sports tends to come only in the form of rewards and cash prizes after (and only if) players win important matches. They are also garlanded and welcomed with a parade around Kathmandu in open pickups, but not if they lose.

Palesha Goverdhan was awarded Rs6.5 million by the government, and got more cash prizes from the private sector for her bronze at the Paris Paralympics. Women's volleyball players who won silver at CAVA received Rs300,000 each as prize.

These rewards are well-deserved, but female athletes say investment in women's sports needs to be sustained, and before they win matches.

There is also pressure from the Nepali public to perform better, and unending criticism when athletes, especially women, fail to meet expectations in crucial matches.

"We've heard claims that the Nepali women's team is going to play the 2027 World Cup," Anjila Tumbapo Subba, captain of the Nepali women's national football team, remarked sardonically at the Kantipur panel. "We might as well say that our team is going to play on the moon next."

And as with most career paths for women, there are societal constraints. Many national female athletes say they are discouraged from playing because "it is something boys do".

"Just as women athletes begin to peak in their sport, there is pressure to settle down and get married, and discontinue their career," said Saraswati Chaudhary. "I have seen many great female athletes migrate overseas because of this." 🇳🇵

and neighbouring countries.

"I learned in Bhutan they have months of intensive training, and even get homework. We did not even know you could get homework in football," Rai mused on tv.

A silver lining, especially for Nepali women footballers, is that this has led them to play for international clubs, where they are gaining income and experience they would not get at home.

Currently, 10 players from the national women's football team roster play for international clubs. Striker Sabitra ('Samba') Bhandari joined the French Division 1 club En Avant Guingamp, playing her first match for the team in February.

Team captain Anjila Tumbapo Subba signed up with the Greek A Division Women's football club

Nees Atromitou in September.

Seven more national team members play for Indian clubs, and one for club in Abu Dhabi.

Rai's impassioned post on social media after the team's loss, in which she introspected on her team's performance, her future in the sport, as well as the future of young Nepali girls who hope to become footballers, garnered much attention on social media, and opened discussions about the state of women's sports in the country.

What also rankles women athletes is discrimination with their male counterparts over the issue of pay.

Male football players used to earn more than twice the amount than their female compatriots before ANFA decided to introduce

League



PHOTOS: NPL / FACEBOOK

Syangja district in Gandaki Province.

"NPL's goal is to support the development of cricket and our players," says ex-national captain and CAN secretary Paras Khadka. Players who are not usually selected for the national team will have the chance to show their cricketing skills. This has proved

beneficial in domestic leagues elsewhere.

The Indian Premier League led to the discovery and improvement of players like fast-bowler Jasprit Bumrah and batsman Suryakumar Yadav, who have not only become regular starters for the Indian national team, but are also now top-ranked cricketers in the world, contributing to India being the best team in both T20s and ODIs.

Nepal's excellent run at the T20 World Cup this summer, with stellar performances against The Netherlands, South Africa and Bangladesh, showed that the country can compete at the highest level in cricket. This has added legitimacy to the NPL and also promises its longevity: the titular sponsor of the tournament, Siddhartha Bank, has committed to this role until 2029.

Ncell is the 'Powered by' sponsor, and BYD is supporting the Kathmandu Gurkhas. Adding weight to the NPL is that it is being broadcast live on Star Sports, giving it a global audience. The world's eyes on the tournament could have the added benefit of discouraging match fixing, which has been a problem in past.

The 2022-23 Nepal T20 league, sold to Indian sports management company Seven3Sports by CAN, saw individual cricketers approached by sports bettors to 'spot-fix' by getting out quickly or conceding a lot of runs when bowling. The large sums of money offered to the athletes by fixers is tempting, especially considering that salaries are not only low but sometimes unpaid.

This led to an investigation by the International Cricket Council, and cases filed



against cricketers by the District Attorney's Office in Kathmandu. The much wider coverage of this tournament should do better at discouraging corruption.

Ticketing partner Khalti reports that the opening game is quickly selling out. The winning trophy was revealed at a ceremony on top of Dharara on Saturday. Marquee Players including Lamichhane, Rohit Paudel, Dipendra Singh Airee and Sompal Kami flanked Prime Minister KP Oli as he presented

the cup: a large silver piece with an engraving of Mt Everest, topped by a stone from Kala Pattar (pictured, left).

The tournament kicks off at 12:15PM on Saturday 30 November, with a game between the Biratnagar Kings and the Janakpur Bolts. Two games are scheduled almost every day until 16 December, with the first starting at 9:15AM and the second at 1:15PM.

Playoffs start on 18 December with teams that end up third and fourth playing first, with the loser eliminated. The first and second play next, with the winner advancing to the final. The loser then plays the winner of the first match for a place in the final.

This format rewards teams for having done better in the group stages, as teams 1 and 2 have multiple chances at reaching the grand finale on 21 December.

A team to look out for is the Sudurpaschim Royals which has the most Facebook followers. Captained by popular national team all-rounder Dipendra Singh Airee, the Royals also have batsman Aarif Sheikh, bowler Abinash Bohara and Scottish all-rounder Brandon McMullen. 🇳🇵

EVENTS

**Sustainable Market**

This market is more than just a shopping destination— it's a day out for the whole family, and has a children's area with pottery sessions, a magic show, and more.
30 November, 11am-5pm, The Baha, Sanepa

Book Launch

Dr Chandra Gurung's Caring for the Annapurna will be launched on the occasion of his birthday to honor his contributions to people-centered conservation.
1 December, 2pm onwards, Hotel Ambassador, Lazimpat

Spirits in Transition

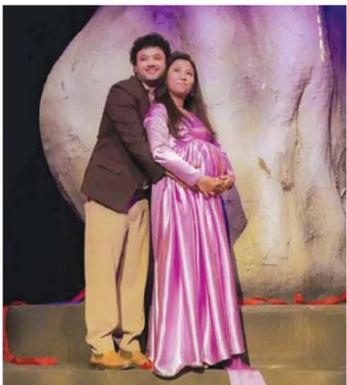
Spirits in Transition, an exhibition featuring new artwork from Tsherin Sherpa, opens this Saturday.

30 November- 29 December, 11am-7pm (Friday to Sunday), 11am-6pm (Tuesday to Thursday), Takpa Gallery, Lazimpat

**Transitioning Tradition**

The exhibition Transition in Tradition features paintings by Martin Travers that document evolving cultural heritage within the chaos of urbanisation.

Until 30 November, 10am-6pm, Nepal Art House, Thamel

**Dhukdhuki 72 Megahertz**

This play captures the essence of the emotional tides and how they stir and shape our choices, relationships, and inner landscapes.

Until 1 December, 5:30pm (except on Mondays), 1pm (also on Saturdays), Ticket: Rs300 (For students), Rs500-1,000, Mandala Theatre, Thapagaun

DINING

**Pizzahood**

If you want to try flavourful pizzas at affordable prices, then Pizzahood is the place for you. Choose from 9-inch or 12-inch options.
Jhamsikhel, 9841704566

MUSIC

Mongolian Heart

Keep an eye out for the band Mongolian Heart, who will perform live this Friday in Chitwan.

29 November, 4pm onwards, Ticket: Rs350, Sauraha Chowk, Chitwan

**Rockmania**

Attend this rock concert happening in Bhaktapur. Mt 8848, Mantra Band and The Summit Nepal are playing.
7 December, 12pm onwards, Sallaghari Ground, Bhaktapur

Rock 'N' Roll

Get your black clothes ready for Hard Rock Cafe's Rock N Roll themed night. The Heartbreakers will be live.

29 November, 7pm onwards, Hard Rock Cafe, Darbar Marg

**Livewire Session**

Planning for a musical night? Naren Limbu is live this Friday at Titos. Only a few seats are available—book via the Khalti app.

29 November, 8:30pm onwards, Ticket: Rs700, Titos Pub, Thamel

**Kuma Sagar**

Join in to sing along and shake a leg with friends as Kuma Sagar & The Khwopa Band perform live.

30 November, 8pm onwards, Club Nexus, Darbar Marg

About Town

GETAWAYS

**Chandragiri Hills**

Enjoy a scenic ride on the Chandragiri Hills cable car that offers stunning views of the valley and Himalaya. Visit the peaceful temple, thrilling amusement park, and delicious food court, and relax at the luxurious resort for an unforgettable experience.

Chandragiri (01) 5970796/ 9802326541

Lake View

Escape to this four-star resort's cosy wooden huts for a weekend of rest at one of Lakeside's oldest establishments.

Lake Side, Pokhara (061) 451477

**Mount Princess**

Surrounded by mountains and forestry, Mount Princess is a haven for city-dwellers. Spend the morning sipping a warm cup of tea while enjoying the breathtaking views.

Dhulikhel (011) 490616

**Mithila Yatri Niwas**

Located just a stroll away from the Janaki Temple and Dashrath Lake, Mithila Yatri Niwas accommodates visitors amid a harmonious fusion of modern luxury and cultural elegance.

Maharaj Sagar, Janakpur, 9820113410

Park Village Resort

Take a moment to respite at a quiet corner of Kathmandu and enjoy the services of Himalayan wellness centre- a one-stop centre to relax your mind and body.

Himalayan Peace and Wellness Center, Park Village Resort, Budhanikantha (01) 4370286

Yala Cafe

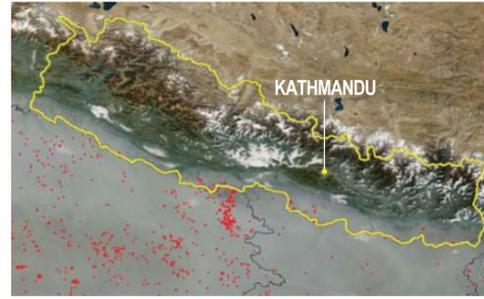
Grab a stack of fluffy pancakes, eggs benedict or a country breakfast at Yala Cafe. With its cosy ambience and soul-warming food, Yala is the best way to kick start cool winter mornings.

Thamel (01) 4249602

**Belgian Waffles**

For sweet teeth, get mouthwatering waffles from the Belgian Waffles Co. If you are feeling lazy, get it delivered to your doorstep.
Durbar Marg, 9843108194

WEEKEND WEATHER

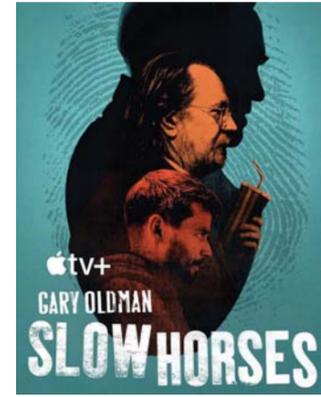


FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
20° 9°	20° 9°	21° 10°	20° 9°	21° 9°

Cooler, Sunnier

There is a large low pressure circulation over southern India that is moving northwest. The winds associated with this system will hopefully move some of the smoke we see in this NASA FIRMS image taken on Thursday (left) away from Kathmandu. Industrial and vehicular emissions mixed with winter fog is creating dangerously poor air quality conditions over north India. Post-harvest burning has moved to northern Uttar Pradesh, which affects Chitwan and the Tarai directly. Kathmandu will see sunny, cooler weather till next week.

OUR PICK



British spy thriller *Slow Horses*, based on a series of novels by author Mick Herron, follows a team of agents for the MI5 who have been sent to a unit known as Slough House after making mistakes at their jobs that are serious, but not enough to get them fired. Nicknamed slow horses, the team of disgraced agents are expected to be relegated to a life of administrative drudgery, yet find themselves involved in matters that are a threat to national security. Starring Gary Oldman, Jack Lowden, Kristin Scott Thomas, and more.

MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



सामाजिक सञ्जाल प्रयोगमा सचेतता अपनाऔं

- सामाजिक सञ्जालमा अपरिचित व्यक्तिको साथी बन्ने अनुरोधलाई विश्वस्त भएर मात्र प्रतिक्रिया जनाऔं ।
- अपरिचित व्यक्तिलाई जथाभावी साथी बन्न अनुरोध नपठाऔं ।
- सामाजिक सञ्जाल तथा अन्य विद्युतीय माध्यमबाट चिठ्ठा पुरस्कार जस्ता आर्थिक प्रलोभनका प्रस्तावको भरमा नपर्ौं ।
- आफूले प्रवाह गरेका सन्देश वा सूचनाबाट समाजमा पर्नसक्ने नकारात्मक प्रभावको ख्याल गरौं ।
- आफ्नो सन्देशले कुनै व्यक्ति वा अन्य कुनै समुदायको आत्मसम्मानमा चोट नपुऱ्याऔं ।



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड

“Sooner or later, everyone comes home”

Non-resident actors, musicians and directors return to inject new talent into Nepali cinema

■ Anita Bhetwal

A 2018 Nepali romcom *Intu* Mintu Londonma introduced a new talent, Dhiraj Magar. Since then, he has starred in a string of films as protagonist, establishing himself among contemporaries of a new generation in Nepali cinema.

For Nepal's outbound youth leaving the country in droves, Magar travelled in the opposite direction to his motherland. But he is not alone, as there has been a recent spurt in Nepalis returning to work in the country's film industry.

“Acting is both my passion and skill, which is why I want to keep working in Nepal,” says Dhiraj, who used to be a YouTube vlogger based in the UK.

Adds Nawal Khadka, a film director who also chairs the Film Director's Guild of Nepal (FDGN): “Returnees do not just bring filmmaking skills and craftsmanship but also investment.”

Three commercial films released this year starred actress Miruna Magar, who was born in Hong Kong and grew up in the UK. She has acted in hit films like *Jaari*, *Gharjwai*, *Kabbadi 4*, *Mansarra* and *Nango Gaun* over the past six years.

“I intentionally came back to hone my acting skills and explore different characters,” Miruna says. “I want to continue working here for the rest of my life.”

Filmmakers Suyog Gurung and Milan Chams have also returned to direct films in Nepal. Gurung's latest *Pharkipharki* starred another returnee actress Jassita Gurung. Chams, based in the UK, has directed several movies including *Bir Bikram*, *Lily Bily*, *Bobby*, and *Gurkha Warrior*, most of them targeted at Nepali-speaking diaspora.

“Chams has taken his films to the global audience. And Nepali films going beyond our borders to other countries is a good thing for the whole of the industry,” says Khadka of FDGN.

As for musicians, Bartika Eam Rai, Sajjan Raj Baidya, Bikki Gurung and Jay Author are all based abroad but primarily make Nepali-language songs and music videos that have gained quite a following among global Nepalis.

It was not always like this. Many established and emerging actors, musicians and directors, uncertain



Miruna Magar



Dhiraj Magar



Diya Pun



Fidel Devkota



Jassita Gurung



Milan Chams

of the future of the industry, left Nepal and moved to completely unrelated fields.

“Back then, it seemed impossible to financially sustain oneself doing music. We spent more out of our pockets to play in a band,” recalls Bhim Poon, one of the founding members of the folk rock group Nepathya.

Poon played percussion, but left for Hong Kong. He says now: “If the scope in Nepal had been what it is today, I don't think I would have ever left.”

Stage and film actor Saroj Khanal left for America in 1997 despite being a household name, shocking many fans. Khanal had played lead roles in more than a

dozen movies, including classics like *Prem Pinda*, *Janma Janma*, *Dushman*, and *Mankamana*.

Khanal was equally successful as his contemporaries Rajesh Hamal and Bhuwan KC. But he explains his decision: “The country's situation was really bad due to the Maoist conflict. I didn't want my children to grow up in that environment. Furthermore, the earnings then were not as good.”

But now, in addition to young diaspora talent coming back to Nepal, older artists are also heading home at last. Khanal has made his move to return, as have actors like Richa Ghimire, Dilip Rayamajhi and Ramesh Upreti.

“Regardless of circumstances

that made me leave, if I get a role that suits me, I will do it. Acting is what I know best,” said actress Jal Shah in an online interview during a visit to Nepal last year. Once an acclaimed actress, Shah too had moved to the United States.

But both older and new artists who have come back to work in Nepal's film industry say it is for one reason only: it is finally financially viable to do so. Veteran actress Basundhara Bhusal who was featured in Nepal's first movie *Aama*, says: “You can now actually make a living by acting.”

Director Renasha Bantawa Rai agrees that it is relatively easier now for Nepali-origin artists to have a meaningful career in Nepali films.

She says: “They are financially secure which means they can come and contribute to the industry and establish themselves, rather than having a second job.”

It is too early to tell if the new crop of diaspora talent returning to Nepal are in it for the long haul, but it has elevated the industry and the quality of Nepali mainstream cinema.

Says Fidel Devkota, director of *The Red Suitcase* who is based in Berlin and Nepal: “Seeing these artists return is a reminder that sooner or later everyone returns home. This will broaden the talent pool in Nepal's entertainment industry and make it more competitive.” 🇳🇵

WEATHERCOAT
LONG LIFE
EXTERIOR EMULSION WITH PU & SILICON

**घाम-पानी छेक्छ,
१० वर्ष टिक्छ**

चर्को घामबाट बचाउँछ

मुसलधारै वर्षाबाट जोगाउँछ

१० वर्ष वारेन्टी

A 34-year-old migrant story

Before mobile phones, Nepali migrants sent cassettes back and forth to communicate with home



DIASPORA
DIARIES 53

■ Ram Dhani Yadav

This is the 53rd edition of Diaspora Diaries, a regular column about migration in Nepali Times.

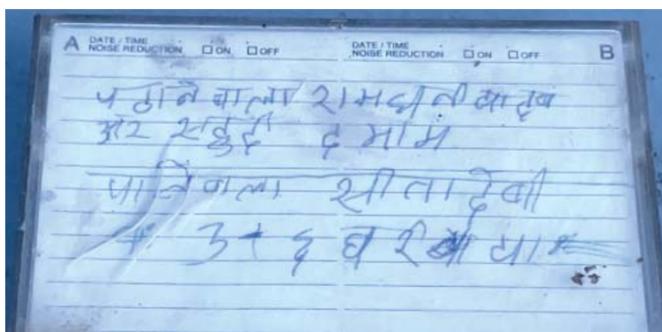
I was the first migrant to the Gulf from my village of Chagariya of Dhanusha district. We had heard of people who had gone to Saudi Arabia from neighbouring villages and done well for themselves.

There were five children to feed and raise, and we did not have much land, so foreign employment seemed like a good choice. After I left in 1992, many others from my village also migrated.

I have vivid memories of the day I left home. The whole village showed up to drop me off at the bus station. It was like a wedding. My family members wept, they did not



Barbers' tools that Yadav used after he got a job as a company barber in Saudi Arabia.



The cassette tape sent home from Dammam in Saudi Arabia 34 years ago.



Not just financial, but social remittances

Nepal's migrant workers need better guidance to make the most of their time overseas for career growth

"I am headed to Atlantis the Royal to advance my career ... it is my dream to work there," said Kanchan Rai. She passed her apprenticeship



LABOUR MOBILITY
Upasana Khadka

interview at one of the most luxurious properties in the UAE, and credits it to her late mother.

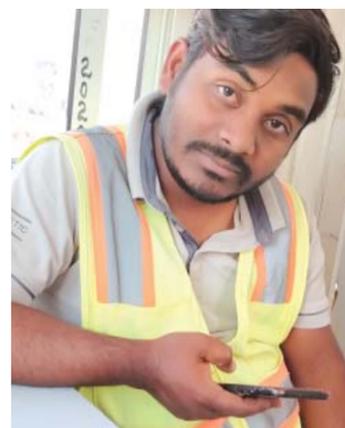
She says, "I can feel my mother watching over me. After returning to Nepal, I want to start a restaurant in her name."

Other young Nepalis recruited recently by the company Vision and Value shared similar excitement about star chefs at Atlantis they would work with, the multinational colleagues, and opportunities to learn new skills.

Migrating out of 'compulsion' is a common theme in Nepal's public discourse. But बाध्यता as a driver for migration is not always the case. Upward mobility during migration merits more attention. Reputable employers offer cross-training and career advancement.

Bikash Tripathi went to the UAE seven years ago to work in packing. A year into his contract, he used his month-long break to cross-train, and five promotions later, he works as a pastry chef managing a multinational team of eight.

"I was always preparing for the



SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS: Returnees Rudra Gurung and Shiva Khatri (above and below, left) who have set up businesses back home in Nepal.

Lifting supervisor Dharmendra Sah and pastry chef Bikash Tripathy (above) who trained and upskilled while abroad.

next job at work, even if it meant using my holidays or covering for colleagues when they were absent. My supervisors took notice," says Tripathi, who wants to open a restaurant on return to Nepal.

"Besides saving money, my parents now have financial freedom and don't have to worry like they used to," he says.

Some motivated workers invest in their own upskilling. Dharmendra Sah went as a labourer to Qatar at a salary of 700 Riyal. When he left seven years later, he was a lifting supervisor and earning 6000 Riyals because he followed his colleague's advice to take a training course.

"I did not know what work I would be doing overseas," he recalls. "I paid 1000 riyals from my own pocket for the training, but it was worth it because it opened up better opportunities."

The perception that Nepalis are loyal and hard-working works to their advantage. But also important is the role of a trusted labour mobility industry to attract the best employers.

Ultimately it is recruiters who matchmake workers and employers. While the internet and more awareness among workers may gradually decrease reliance on agents, for now recruitment is heavily intermediated.

Under-the-table commissions help recruiters bag job demands from overseas employers. These costs are eventually passed on



because they were expensive.

We had more detailed communications through cassette tapes that we sent each other. Whenever I felt homesick, I listened to the voices of my wife and children over and over again – especially the girls who were always loud and chirpy.

When I missed my family, I would play the tapes on a Sony that I bought for 60 riyal. When I was alone in my camp dorm, I would record whatever I wanted to tell my family, replay the recording and if it was good enough. I sent it to Nepal with some cash, wrapping it all in layers of cello tape.

Every night before going to sleep, I would re-listen to the voices of my family. I kept the player close to my ears at a very low volume as I shared the room with five others. Even hearing about mundane everyday things from the village over and over again in the voices of my wife and daughters filled me with joy. Today, I can make video calls with my son in the Gulf.

One day, I got a call from Nepal. It was news of my youngest son's death. He was just 18 months old. In a tape that followed, my family filled in the details: he had died of measles. I responded by recording my own feelings on tape and consoled them.

My company offered to send me home on mourning break for a month. What was the point? My son was already gone, I could not bring him back. Instead, I grieved on my own in Saudi Arabia.

When I left for Saudi Arabia after my third vacation, I wept as my mother was in poor health. I just could not stay away, so I returned to Nepal on a one-way ticket. I brought back my barbershop mirror, and it still hangs on my wall. 🇳🇵

Diaspora Diaries is a Nepali Times collaboration with Migration Lab.



Yadav with one of the cassettes he sent 30 years ago from Saudi Arabia to his family in Nepal (left) and holding the mirror he used for his side-job as a barber at his Saudi workplace.

know if I would come back alive. There was so much uncertainty. Nowadays migrating has become so common that people come and go without anyone even knowing. The plane was scary, and I had a window seat. The flight attendant helped us with our seat belts and offered us food. I chose the vegetarian meal, and even though they offered beer, I stuck to Dew. Someone from the company was

waiting for us at Dammam airport. And the heat! It burned the hair on my head, and it was impossible without AC. But even in Nepal the heat now is suffocating, and it is hard working on the farm. Seems like we imported not just money, but also the heat from Saudi Arabia. After a couple of months as a labourer, I was lucky to get a job as the company barber. I cut the hair of fellow workers from

Nepal, India, Pakistan, Korea and the Philippines. They did not have to pay, but tipped me. I chatted in Hindi with the Indians and Pakistanis. Those working in scaffolding earned more and tipped better. Low paid workers left less tips, but I did not mind. The company's hair salon had a fancy revolving chair and big mirrors. For off hours and holidays, I had my own makeshift barber

corner in camp as my side hustle. I bought my own mirror, hung it on a rod and my clients sat on a stool. I would also drop by one of the salons in the market to earn some extra cash on our days off. Times were different back then. There were no mobiles and my wife had to travel a long way to receive calls on a CDMA phone from Ram Dayal's shop at a pre-arranged date and time. The calls were brief

to workers as recruitment fees. The competition can be unhealthy. Standing out as good actors and responsible businesses can be difficult in this race-to-the-bottom. Strong credentials are needed, including international licenses and accreditations, marketing and research skills, thorough audits, references from previous clients, capacity to screen and mobilise the right candidates, among others. These aspects of building a strong labour mobility industry have not received adequate policy attention in Nepal. The government also needs to engage more proactively with host country industry associations, employers, and government counterparts. Recruiters often struggle to have a direct approach to employers and rely on intermediaries. Interviews with workers in senior positions in the hospitality sector overseas show that Nepal's recruitment process is rife with bureaucratic hurdles that dissuade employers looking to hire in small numbers. For example, a hotel looking to hire a chef or operation manager would rather not hire from Nepal as it is significantly easier and quicker to do so from the Philippines or India. This becomes a major obstacle for smaller recruitment efforts, or vacancies that need to be filled quickly even when employers are willing to cover all costs. Attracting good employers is not only helpful for migrants' financial and career growth, but is a way to prevent abuses in the first place. The risk of wage theft or contract infringement is reduced when reputable companies hire directly, and in the event of such incidents, the likelihood of corrective action is higher. Setting up migrants for success overseas also means preparing them for success upon return. After working abroad as a rope access cleaner, Rudra Bahadur

Gurung established the Asset Integrity Group in Kathmandu, providing internationally accredited training and licensing to both Nepali and non-Nepalis. Shiva Sharan Khatri returned to Nepal after working in hotels in Qatar, the UAE, and The Seychelles to set up Sankalpa Management Facilities Service, a cleaning company that employs 80 Nepalis. Both Rudra and Shiva began their migration journeys in low-paying positions and leveraged their overseas experiences to create successful enterprises at home. Unfortunately, this 'continuum' is lacking in many migrant workers. Take Gyanendra's story. His father was the first to migrate to Qatar, and villagers called him 'Arabe Kafle' because he has moved across Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and is now headed to Dubai. Gyanendra had to start from scratch each time, and as a cleaner in his new job in the UAE will work for the same basic salary as younger peers migrating for the first time. Remigration is common, but many workers like Gyanendra struggle to build on previous experiences. While they can still use earnings to meet household expenses back home, professional growth takes a backseat with each migration. The bar is currently set low, and many workers worry if they will get the promised job, or be able to pay off recruitment loans. Nepalis need reliable employers and recruiters so 'good migration outcome' is not just simply about workers getting the promised job or wages, but about attaining their full potential. Besides pre-departure orientation, they need career guidance to improve job readiness with advice on cross-training. Exposure, work ethic, learning, skills, technology transfer, and networks are 'social remittances' and can be positive gains for Nepal besides financial remittances. 🇳🇵

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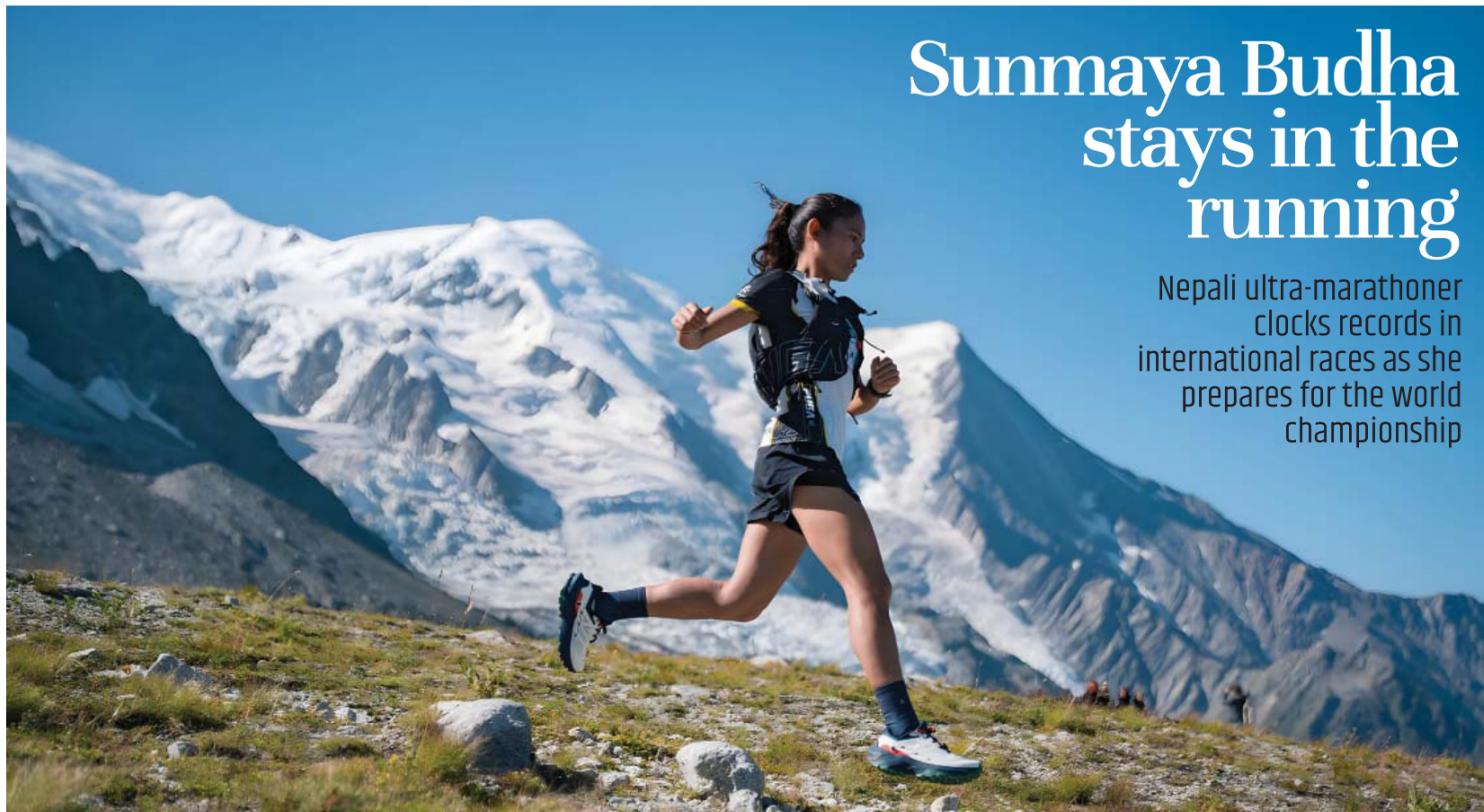
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Sunmaya Budha stays in the running

Nepali ultra-marathoner clocks records in international races as she prepares for the world championship

Sunmaya Budha during a race in Chamonix, France.

SUNMAYA BUDHA / FACEBOOK

■ Vishad Raj Onta

Nepal's ultra-marathoner Sunmaya Budha just won two races in China: the 60km Ultra Trail Ninghai, on 19 October, and the 105km Tsaigu Trail, on 2 November – setting course records in both.

A professional trail endurance runner from Jumla, the 26-year-old has been racking up wins around the world. Budha comes from a farming family and defied

the wishes of her parents and expectations of a patriarchal society to pursue a running career.

Between August and her two wins in China, Budha had competed in Europe. In September she became the first female, and second overall, at the SwissPeaks Trail Marathon. A week later, Budha finished as first female, fifth overall, and set a course record at the TORX 2024 30k in Courmayeur.

Budha has her sights now on the 2025 World Mountain and Trail Running Championships

in Canfranc-Pirineos, Spain, in September. To qualify, runners have to accumulate 'Running Stones' by completing trail running races organised under the UTMB banner. Budha's first race in China earned her two Stones, and she is planning to participate in the Chiang Mai Thailand by UTMB in December, where she will run 100k.

"Running in China is different from Europe," Budha told us in Kathmandu. "There are a lot of small mountains, although the actual routes are close to sea level,

and the climate is mildly hot."

Budha had to deal with an injury after her win in the Ninghai race. With only 13 days before she raced 105km in the Tsaigu Trail, she was training for one and a half hours a day. With four days to go, her ankle hurt so bad that she could not run at all.

"My confidence for the next race took a hit, because pain in my ankle has been a recurring problem," says Budha. "My coach thought it was because I pushed too hard immediately after a race."

Budha stopped running and even walking, and used alternating hot and cold baths and massages to treat her injury. A physiotherapist determined that her ankle was fine, and it was just muscle tightness.

Although expectations were low because of her injury, Budha and her team went ahead with the race. The Tsaigu route was designed such that runners were back at the finish line after their first 5km, and then they would run the last 100.

"We decided that I would run the first five and assess whether I could continue. I felt a little pain at the beginning, and some at the tail end, but I was quite comfortable for most of the race," recalls Budha.

Budha ended up not only winning, but her time of 9:32:47 set a course record, more than half an hour faster than second place female, Tang Jinyan from China.

Budha earned the ability to train full-time through sponsorships first from North Face and now from Chinese outdoor brand Kailas FUGA. Her endurance running coach is Australian Andy DuBois. Her accomplishments in China have gained Budha another sponsorship with Nitecore, a company that makes headlamps for night-time running.

After Thailand next month, Budha is planning another race in Hong Kong in January.

"Hopefully, Nepal will be able to send four or five runners to the world championships if the government helps out," says Budha, "otherwise only sponsored athletes will be able to go."

Budha is now training and living in Kathmandu, with her sister. The rest of her family is still in Jumla. "I talk to them once in a while. I call my parents when I win," she says. 🇳🇵




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