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BLACK, WHITE and GREY



■ Ramesh Kumar

The Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG) has put Nepal at risk of being placed on the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global money-laundering watchdog.

A final decision on this will be made during the FATF plenary next week in Paris, but it is sure Nepal will get a failing grade.

The country was previously greylisted from 2009-2014. FATF had advised on reforms, but while some laws were amended, implementation is another story.

"Nepal's FATF rating has deteriorated due to the inaction against major cases of corruption, tax evasion, and abuse of financial institutions," explains former Director General of the Department of Money Laundering Investigation Rup Narayan Bhattarai.

Prime Minister KP Oli has blamed the delay in legal reforms on the previous Pushpa Kamal Dahal government.

Cooperatives and real estate transactions have also long been used to conceal and legitimise ill gotten wealth. "International authorities have taken issue with

the absence of strong legal and structural measures against money laundering in real estate and cooperatives," says a government insider. "They are well aware of the absence of political will to monitor these sectors."

In 2023, while banks and financial institutions reported details of 6,255 suspicious transactions to the Financial Intelligence Unit, cooperatives reported only two.

Following an objection by the APG last year regarding large amounts of black money circulating in cooperatives, legislators introduced a proposal to amend the Cooperatives Act to set an individual deposit limit of Rs2.5 million in cooperatives, but it was rejected after political pressure.

Meanwhile, real estate agents in Nepal do not require a licence, and the government's flexibility to accommodate wealthy businessmen has meant there are no institutions to keep track of land and property dealings and investigate suspicious financial activity.

"There is no monitoring of real estate transactions, and no legal framework to prevent money laundering," the official said.

There has also been international attention on scams like the Nepal Airlines Airbus 330

purchases. The APG has pointed out delays and ineffectiveness of investigations and prosecutions.

The Department of Money Laundering Investigation was hastily set up in 2011 after the FATF warned that Nepal would be blacklisted. So far, it has not moved beyond appeasement and whitewashing.

"Money laundering investigations should probe senior politicians and their cronies," a former government official who worked at the department told us.

The Home Ministry has also been slow to prepare a list of people suspected of terrorist activities and make such a list available for monitoring even though it is an international requirement.

Nepal's grey list will impact on the country's global reputation and hurt foreign investment. Nepal's banks may bear the brunt and find it difficult and costly to conduct international transactions, which will make imports more expensive and hinder exports.

Nepal will also find it more difficult to obtain concessional loans. Interest rates will go up.

Banks will begin to closely monitor transactions made by Nepali diaspora, affecting Nepali students and migrant workers opening accounts and sending

money home.

"Any obstacles in the flow of remittance through official channels will spell disaster for the economy," one official said.

The FATF and APG will give Nepal a year to get off the list, failing which the country would be further downgraded to a blacklist.

Says Bhattarai: "It is not enough to have made laws, we need results. Nepal must be committed to acting against leaders, lobbyists, and those with access and connections involved in criminal financial dealings." 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

A longer version of this report is online.



India's border trains that connected Nepal

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Bihari Krishna Shrestha, 88

Bihari Krishna Shrestha transformed the physical, economic, gender and social landscapes of Nepal as a civil servant and anthropologist of the highest order.

Throughout his highly productive career, Bihari-ji's belief in, and dedication to, local communities formed the bedrock of his work.



GUEST EDITORIAL
J. Gabriel Campbell

Through policy initiatives, implementation programs, scholarship, and advocacy, Bihari played a leading role in the greening of Nepal through Community Forestry, the empowerment of women's groups, and the fostering of rural economic development.

During his years as a Member of the National Planning Commission and Secretary of various government ministries, he spearheaded catalytic Parliamentary Acts for User Groups, Decentralisation, and Rural Development.

Along with Prachanda Pradhan, Chandni Joshi and a host of other amazing Nepali and foreign colleagues, Bihari's work directly provided the basis for Elinor Ostrom's Nobel Prize in Economics in 2009. She explicitly acknowledged this debt during her celebratory visit to Nepal in 2010.

I was privileged to know Bihari-dai for over 51 years. We first met in 1972 when he was with the Royal Nepal Academy where he wrote his first ethnography on the Karnali region as one volume in the Karnali Lok Sanskriti series.

As I was headed to Jumla to conduct my PhD research under the auspices of the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, I had the pleasure of presenting him with a personally sponsored translation of his book Jan Jivan (People's Lives).

This introductory offering to my future guru and lifelong friend was a complete surprise and gratefully accepted. We clicked intellectually and personally.

Tribute to Nepal's pioneer in community forestry and anthropologist from a former colleague

Our five decades of collegial partnership began in earnest during my work from 1980 to 1985 with the Community Forestry in Nepal program that was supported by the World Bank and UN.

In an email only a month ago on 7 January 2025, Bihari wrote, 'I cannot forget the day when you, Gabriel, had brought the whole team of consultants to my office in NPC that eventually led to change the face of Nepal in greenery, the grand resurrection of our forest wealth. Thank you.'

Bihari Krishna Shrestha - ji, it is you that the nation, the world, and I thank. When we came to your office, we, including World Bank anthropologist consultant Augusta Molnar and Community Forestry Chief, Prahlad Manandhar, documented how communities only related to forests they considered their own -- and how these did not coincide with the existing Panchayat boundaries and forestry law.

This so resonated with your own experience, and that of pioneering forest officers such as Tej Bahadur Singh Mahat, that you ran with the results in your typically impatient fashion. You instigated new policies and laws to establish User Groups as legal entities that empowered them to take management control of their own natural resources.

Fast forward to Nepal today. Hundreds of inspired forestry officials, international development workers, and NGOs have devoted years to fostering the success of Community Forestry. Now, there are over 23,000 federated community forestry user groups consisting of about 320,000 households and 16 million members managing 2.4 million hectares of forest area. As Bihari continued to document and champion to his last day, these user groups empower women and local communities economically and socially and are remarkably resilient despite many challenges.

Bihari Krishna Shrestha, it is a true honour to have known and worked with you. May your legacy continue to inspire us. May your sense of humour and love of life continue to infect us. We will miss you.

J. Gabriel Campbell, PhD, is former ICIMOD Director General, retired. gcampbell@mountain.org

ONLINE PACKAGES



YARSA GOLD RUSH

Travel with us to Upper Dolpo where yarsagumba hunters find that the quality and quantity of the lucrative Himalayan fungus is declining, putting their professions at risk. Watch the video on the Nepali Times' YouTube channel.



LEARNING SPACES

Patan Museum is more than just one of the most popular of Kathmandu's destinations. It also serves an educational function. The carefully curated bronze, stone and wooden figures span Nepal's religions, historical periods and geographical zones, providing a striking mixture of art and learning. Watch this video about it on our YouTube channel and subscribe for multimedia content.

ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Pairing Pump Storage Hydro with solar photovoltaics is a worthy approach benefiting Nepal's interest ('Pump water, store energy', Dipak Gyawali and Sudhindra Sharma, #1247).

Rita Thapa

With dramatic discoveries in tech, newer sources of power could show up beyond hydro, solar and wind. However, the most precious natural resource to sustain all life also happens to be water and air.

Netashwa

BIHARI KRISHNA SHRESTHA

We did good work together back in the day. May Bihari Krishna Shrestha rest in peace ('Bihari Krishna Shrestha, 88', J. Gabriel Campbell, Editorial).

Laura Allen

Rest in peace, Bihari sir.

Nabina Shrestha

SOCIAL MEDIA BILL

For a country trying to cement its democratic identity, the Social Media Bill not only limits freedom of expression but also hampers the healthy debate required for accountability and progress of the government ('No comment', Shristi Karki, #1247). Constructive criticism and diverse opinions are crucial to true democracy. By hampering these basic rights, Nepal is going backward instead of forward.

Aashma Neupane

APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY

Appropriate technologies contribute little to total energy output but remain vital for rural innovation and locally appropriate solutions ('Small is still possible', Alton C Byers, #1246).

Pro Chaudhary

MATSYENDRANATH SYMPOSIUM

It's thrilling to see that more people are recognizing the significance of Bundaya Jatra for climate resilience ('Nepal-Assam connection revived', nepalitimes.com).

Shangrila Joshi

1,000 WORDS



RATNA SHRESTHA / RSS

SUE THEM:

Shoddy construction of underground electricity networks has been blamed for the Melamchi mains water pipe bursting and inundating several government buildings, including the Kathmandu District Court and the Special Court that adjudicates on high level corruption cases.

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The Melamchi Mirage

Twenty years ago this week, a new Chinese contractor was hired to work on the Melamchi project, and we wrote then that when completed in 2010, the \$500 million water supply project would bring 170 million litres of snowmelt to Kathmandu through a 26km tunnel. It took till 2021 to complete, and cost \$300million more. A flash flood nearly destroyed the project, and this week its water mains burst in Kathmandu, flooding the central administrative district (right). Excerpts of the report published on issue #234 11 - 17 February 2024:

The much-delayed Melamchi project designed to boost Kathmandu Valley's drinking water supply is set to roll again with the appointment of a new Chinese contractor.

The project had faced uncertainty and delay ever since the Korean contractor, Haniel Koneko demanded cost over-runs due to Maoist threats and walked out without finishing even five percent of the work on the access road. Koneko was demanding Rs 100 million extra as compensation while its bid amount was



Rs 450 million.

Negotiations between Koneko and the Melamchi Water Supply Project (MWSP) were deadlocked for over a year and construction ground to a halt. The government finally terminated the contract with Koneko last year, seized its performance guarantee of Rs 50 million and called for new bids. The China Civil Engineering Corporation (CCEC) was chosen over five Chinese, Indian and Japanese bidders...

...But whether CCEC will live up to expectations remains to be seen. For one thing, Sindhpulchok is a heavily Maoist-affected area and it is accepted wisdom

that construction can only resume with the blessings of the rebels... Progress has been delayed because the access road to the headworks is not finished yet. Only once the road is ready can foreign engineers come for the tunnelling phase.

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Reporters: Sudiksha Tuladhar, Vishad Raj Onta | Layout: Kiran Maharjan

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editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | www.himalmedia.com | Tel: +977 1 5005601-08 Fax: +977 1 5005518



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Lofty goals for Nepal's tourism

Aloft Kathmandu opened just before the pandemic, but the hospitality business is back on track

Aloft Kathmandu, a part of Marriott International, opened just before Covid-19 wrecked the Visit Nepal 2020 campaign. But occupancy is now nearly back to pre-pandemic levels, says its General Manager Vikram Singh.

Nepali Times: When Aloft opened 5 years ago, many were skeptical about the location. How has it been so far?

Vikram Singh: Back then there were doubts about whether a high-end hotel could succeed in Thamel, a neighbourhood traditionally known for budget travellers. Five years later, Aloft has not only proved the skeptics wrong but has become a key part of Thamel's evolving hospitality scene.

We attract a diverse mix of international tourists, business travellers, and even local guests. Thamel itself has also changed over the years, with more upscale establishments opening, making Aloft a perfect fit for the area's transformation.

Being part of the Marriott group has given the hotel a strong brand identity, bringing in loyal guests who appreciate the consistent quality and service that comes with the name. Aloft has also actively engaged with the local community by hosting events, collaborating with businesses, and building a strong presence in Kathmandu's social and corporate circles.

Is Nepal's hospitality industry back to pre-Covid numbers?

It has made a remarkable comeback, but it hasn't fully reached pre-



Covid numbers just yet—though it is getting very close. The country has seen a steady rise in tourist arrivals, with over a million visitors in 2024. Some months have even surpassed the figures from 2019, which is a strong indicator of recovery.

The outlook is positive. Nepal remains a top destination for adventure seekers, cultural enthusiasts, and nature lovers, and with increasing air connectivity

and a growing interest in sustainable travel, the industry is expected to continue its upward trend.

The resilience of Nepal's tourism sector has been impressive, and it won't be long before the numbers surpass pre-pandemic levels. The country's unique natural beauty and cultural heritage continue to draw travellers from around the world, keeping Nepal firmly on the global travel map.



Aloft Kathmandu is the venue for Hi AiM this week, an international conference of the hospitality industry itself. What is the significance?

For the second year in a row, Aloft Kathmandu is the venue for the Hi AiM conference. This is a major achievement, not just for Aloft but for Nepal's hospitality industry as a whole.

Having Hi AiM return to the same venue signals that Aloft Kathmandu reinforces Nepal's position as an emerging destination for global hospitality events and strengthens the country's credibility in the tourism and business sectors.

The conference brings together top industry professionals, including hotel owners, architects, and designers from around the world. This means more international exposure for Nepal, increased tourism revenue, and more opportunities for knowledge-sharing and networking.

What does obtaining ISO 14001:2015 entail for your hotel?

It is a major milestone reflecting the hotel's commitment to sustainability and responsible business practices. It means the hotel follows an internationally

recognised environmental management system, minimising the impact on the planet.

We have taken proactive steps to reduce energy consumption, conserve water, and manage waste more efficiently. By optimising resources and preventing pollution, the hotel not only benefits the environment but also improves operational efficiency and reduces costs in the long run. This certification helps strengthen Aloft's reputation as an eco-conscious hotel.

How exactly are you integrating green energy and sustainability into daily operations?

Energy efficiency is a top priority, with LED lighting, smart thermostats, and energy-efficient appliances helping to minimise power consumption. We have taken steps to conserve water by using low-flow fixtures and encouraging guests to participate in towel and linen reuse programs.

Aloft has implemented a recycling program, and switched to refillable bathroom amenities to cut down on waste. The hotel also uses locally grown organic produce and eco-friendly products whenever possible.

These efforts align with Marriott International's broader sustainability vision, which emphasises responsible hospitality, carbon footprint reduction, and community engagement. Aloft Kathmandu also actively engages in educating visitors on conservation efforts and providing eco-conscious options, the hotel ensures that sustainability is not just a policy but a shared responsibility.

NMB BANK
एनएमबि बैंक



Turkish to Benghazi

Turkish Airlines resumed flights to Benghazi on 14 January, its 64th destination in Africa. The carrier will operate three flights a week to Libya's second-largest city. The Istanbul-Benghazi route is available at \$349 before 15 February.

HydroNepal

NEA, the French Embassy, and Blue Water Intelligence are launching the HydroNepal Project to digitise basin data and provide insights about river discharge, flow duration and frequency.

CAN InfoTech

The 30th annual CAN InfoTech show was held 6-10 February at Bhrikutimandap with 155 stalls and 200,000 visitors, including students, IT entrepreneurs, and government officials. Fin-tech, e-commerce, and AI were some of the themes.

Nepal Agritech Expo

The 7th Nepal Agritech and Food & Beverages International Expo 2025 organised by Media Space Solutions, Futorex Trade Fairs and Events, and Exhibition and Trade Services India at Bhrikutimandap from February 14-16 will bring together leading agricultural businesses, innovators, and experts from Nepal and around the world. The exhibition will also showcase latest technologies and services suitable for Nepal's agricultural sector. Entry to the event is free.



Coke trees

The Coca-Cola Foundation is working with Sahara Nepal and Varaha ClimateAg to teach farmers across 11 districts how to improve soil health, better manage water, and diversify crops. The program also has a carbon credit system that compensates farmers for planting trees.

Wildfires

A fire in the Timang forest in Chame, Manang has burned 10 hectares of forest since 1 February, fueled by a dry winter and fast winds. Fires destroyed over 82 hectares of forests across Sindhupalchok, allegedly sparked by welding at the Liping Khola Hydro Project.



Danfe e-van

The three GO group of companies has introduced financing plans for Danfe, an 11-seater electric school van. The model has 188mm clearance and a range of 300km, and comes with a 300,000km or five-year warranty. It is now available at Rs449,500 with upto 80% financing.

Kickboxer wins

Nepali kickboxer Abiral Ghimire won the K1 World Max 2025 Tournament in Tokyo. Ghimire had also won an international kickboxing competition in October 2024.



Nabil SSE

Nabil Bank concluded two sessions of its School of Social Entrepreneurship program conducted with support from the TU School of Management to develop entrepreneurs who solve social problems. The program has resulted in 45 new enterprises and 1200 jobs.

Dharara open

Sightseers can now buy tickets for Dharara until 4:15pm and be on the tower till 5pm, one more hour than before. The entrance fee is Rs200 for Nepalis, with discounts for



students and senior citizens. Tourists pay Rs500-1,000. Since its reopening on 24 November, the rebuilt tower has attracted 1,200 daily visitors and collected Rs15.2 million in revenue.



Businesswomen in UK

Fifty women-led businesses from ten countries in Africa and Asia including Nepal met with UK companies to explore business opportunities in Manchester. The Nepali delegation included entrepreneurs Reshma Shrestha, Nabina Dhakhwa Shakya, Geeta Shrestha, Lumbina Shrestha, Sushma Shrestha, and Sapna Bajracharya Lama. They were accompanied by Shova Gyawali of the Federation of Woman Entrepreneurs' Associations of Nepal (FWEAN).

Missing out on Nepal's tourism potential

The government could be more proactive in increasing visitor numbers and earnings from the travel industry

While Nepal's tourism numbers have rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, domestic incompetence and regional geopolitics are holding back numbers for the coming year.

International media coverage of frequent aviation and highway disasters in 2024 also dampened arrivals, and not much was done to restore confidence in neighbouring China and India as well as make Nepal's presence felt in international travel markets.

The Indian pilgrim bus that killed 27 on the Pokhara-Kathmandu route, or the helicopter crash in which four Chinese nationals died, both in August, led to cancellations.

The reality is that Nepal sells itself because of its unique attractions: the world's highest mountains, adventure sports, cultural heritage. International visitors come to Nepal despite high ticket prices, complicated visa processes, poor domestic connectivity, and bad press about high pollution levels in Kathmandu.

Ticket prices are inflated because of the high price of refuelling airliners and expensive handling charges at Kathmandu airport. Most countries have gone for e-visas, and Nepal should just reciprocate and stamp passports for visitors from countries that give Nepalis visas on arrival.

Horror stories about the condition of Nepal's highways



RSS

have spread through social media posts, as have tales of notorious air pollution levels. It is surprising that tourists still come in the numbers they do despite knowing this.

Those problems need longer-term solutions, but there are low-hanging fruit: facilitate easier arrival formalities at airports and land borders. Pilgrims have posted on social media about having to wait six hours for visas trying to travel overland from India to Lumbini on the Buddhist circuit.

Geopolitics can be blamed for

Bhairawa and Pokhara airports not taking off -- India's refusal to grant air routes for flights from the west and descent over its territory, as well as linking Indian cities to Pokhara because its international airport was built by the Chinese.

But that does not absolve the Nepal government and its agencies from blame for not marketing Lumbini and Pokhara in East Asian markets during the delayed construction of the airports, and even three years after completion.

Most existing promotion is

done by private sector companies involved in mountaineering and trekking, hotels and conference organisers. The government's role has been restricted to junkets by officials, ministers giving speeches and hand-wringing about India not allowing flights.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) literally arm-twisted airlines to fly to Bhairawa by using the upgrading work at Kathmandu airport till end-March as an excuse. The airlines are not happy about it, and complain of inadequate facilities there.

But for some reason Nepal's own carrier Himalaya Airlines faced no such pressure to fly to Bhairawa or Pokhara. Bhairawa is not even used as an alternative airport by Nepal Airlines when Kathmandu airport is closed due to poor visibility.

Lack of permission by India on the westbound L626 airway has no bearing on connecting Pokhara and Bhairawa to flights from China, Thailand, Singapore or Malaysia. Thai Air Asia is finally operating one flight a week from Bangkok's Don Muang, bringing Buddhist pilgrims directly to Lumbini, and Sichuan Air has flown charters to Pokhara from Chengdu (pictured).

Given the popularity of Pokhara and Lumbini in China, and the advantage for Chinese tourists who want to avoid

Kathmandu, there should have been more proactive promotion by Nepal of flights from Lhasa, Kunming or Chengdu.

Nepal is already a preferred destination for international and regional conferences because of its neutrality and ease of entry. Most conferences are conducted by international agencies, the private sector and involve the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) with little government help.

The Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA) Nepal chapter is hosting the tri-nation Nepal India China Expo (NICE) in Pokhara 24-26 February. Originally planned for 2020, it was postponed because of Covid, and organisers hope it will promote better connectivity for Pokhara in 2025 and beyond.

Instead of promoting Pokhara, government officials have made unsubstantiated claims that its airport is not suitable for Boeing 737s and Airbus320s, planes that operate without difficulty in airports with even more challenging terrain like Paro or Leh.

The government needs to work on a long-term strategy to promote quality tourism, but government decisions are ad hoc, lack coordination and are not followed through.

Helicopter flights to Everest Base Camp were banned, lifted and banned again -- the confusion ridiculed on social media. 🇳🇵

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India's border trains that connected Nepal

Once upon a time, Nepalis had to travel through India by railway to reach another part of Nepal

India has the British to thank for its extensive nationwide rail network. China is now foremost in the world for fast trains. In between, Nepal is stuck in the slow track, and has let its historical railway lines in the Tarai rust away.

An interesting subject for research by students of history can reveal how railway lines linking Nepal to British India shaped the political economy and social life of the day.



BORDERLINES
Chandrakishore

The British built tracks to log Nepal's Tarai forests for teak sleepers needed for new railway lines across India. But the train tracks also opened up Nepal to the world. And to itself.

Nepal helped build India's rail network with raw material, but only built two short lines of its own. Railways were introduced to India in 1886 by the British, not long after the invention of the steam locomotive. The rail network spread rapidly till 1914, a time when the demand for railway sleepers soared and the Tarai forests were mined for logs.

The border town of Raxaul inaugurated its railway station on 1 March 1899. Once Raxaul was connected, it became easier for people from Kathmandu travelling to various parts of India, or even to other parts of Nepal, to take trains. India's railways therefore also connected Nepal.

When the Rana regime finally built train tracks, they were limited to the Raxaul-Birganj-Amlekhganj and Jayanagar-Janakpur-Bijulpura tracks for goods and passengers. Much later, train tracks were also built to ferry stones and logs during the construction of the Kosi Barrage in 1958-1962.

It was only after the completion of the East-West Highway in the 1980s that the reliance of Nepalis on Indian trains was reduced. Until as recently as a decade ago, there was no alternative to taking an Indian train to get from one Tarai district to a neighbouring one, or even to travel within a district in Nepal.

Indian narrow gauge train stations near the border became everyday names in Nepali conversation because of their importance to domestic connectivity: Gaigaliya, Jogbani, Katihar, Nirmali, Kunaili, Bairgania, Dheng, Ghodasahan, Thutibari, Nautanwa, Badhani, Gorakhpur, Sunauli, Gonda, Bharach, Murtiya, Tiukunia, Gauriphanta...

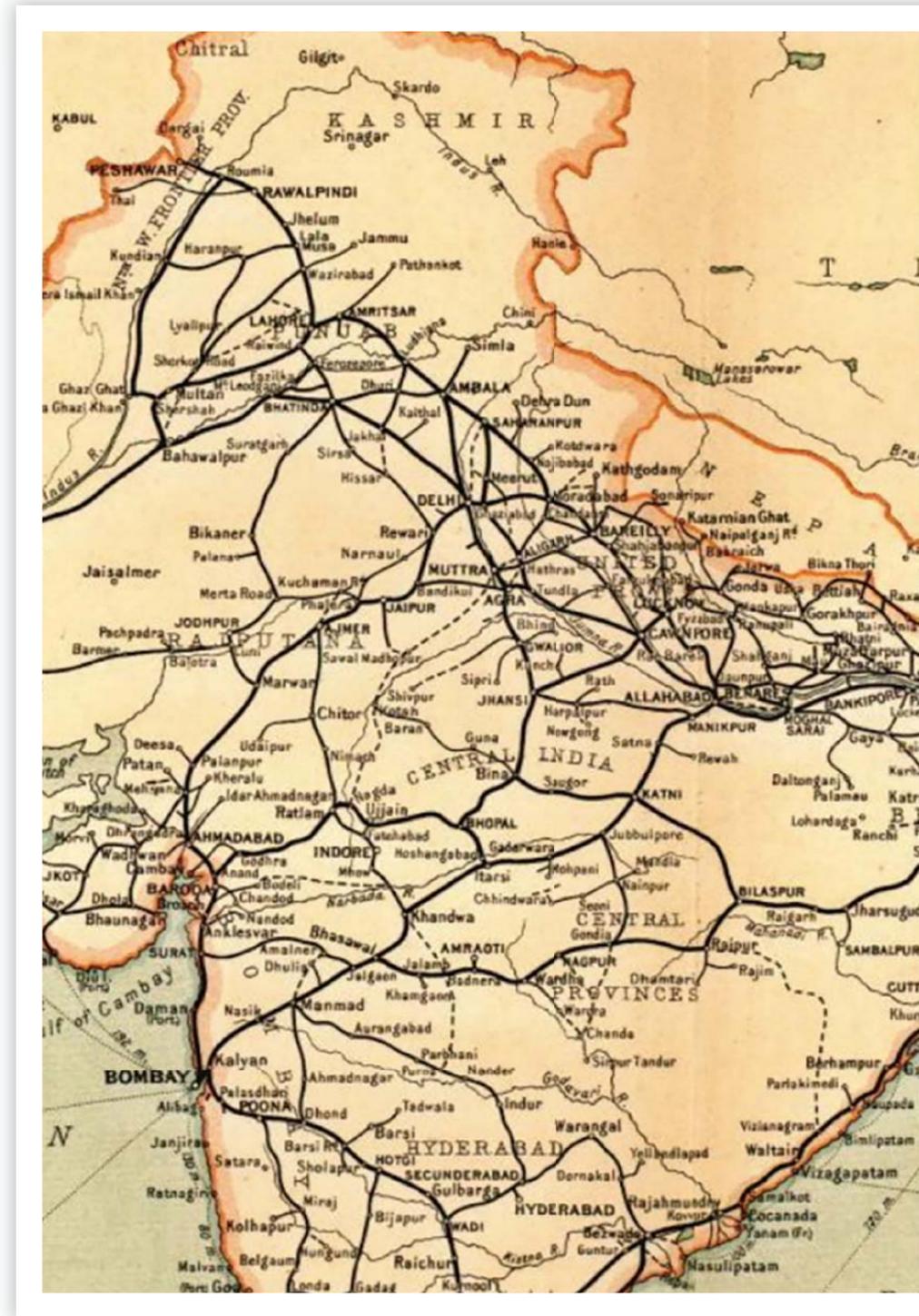
Even today, as feeder roads join Tarai towns, some of these stations are still used extensively by Nepalis. One of them is the border village of Thori on the west of Parsa district.

People in Thori used to take an Indian railway train at the Bhikhna-Thori to travel to the district capital of Birganj via Raxaul. In fact, the station catered almost exclusively to passengers from Nepal, and once the road joined Thori with Birganj, Bhikhna-Thori railway station fell into ruin.

The Bhikhna-Thori station was built in 1906, and British royalty and the Governor General from Calcutta used to take it for hunting expeditions organised by Nepal's Rana rulers in their honour.

Similar rail links joining the Nepal border to the Indian rail network were built in Gauriphanta to connect Dhangadi (1914) and Kanchanpur to Tanakpur (1912). Gauriphanta was closed because Dudhwa became an Indian national park, and Tanakpur was converted to broad gauge.

The importance of Nepali travelers to Indian railways can be gleaned from the



name of Rupediya station, which is still officially called 'Nepalganj Road' Station.

Similarly, there is a 'Janakpur Road' Station along the Samastipur-Narkatiaganj line in Bihar state, even though the name of the town itself is Pupari. The reason for this could be so Indian pilgrims headed to Janakpur would know where to get off.

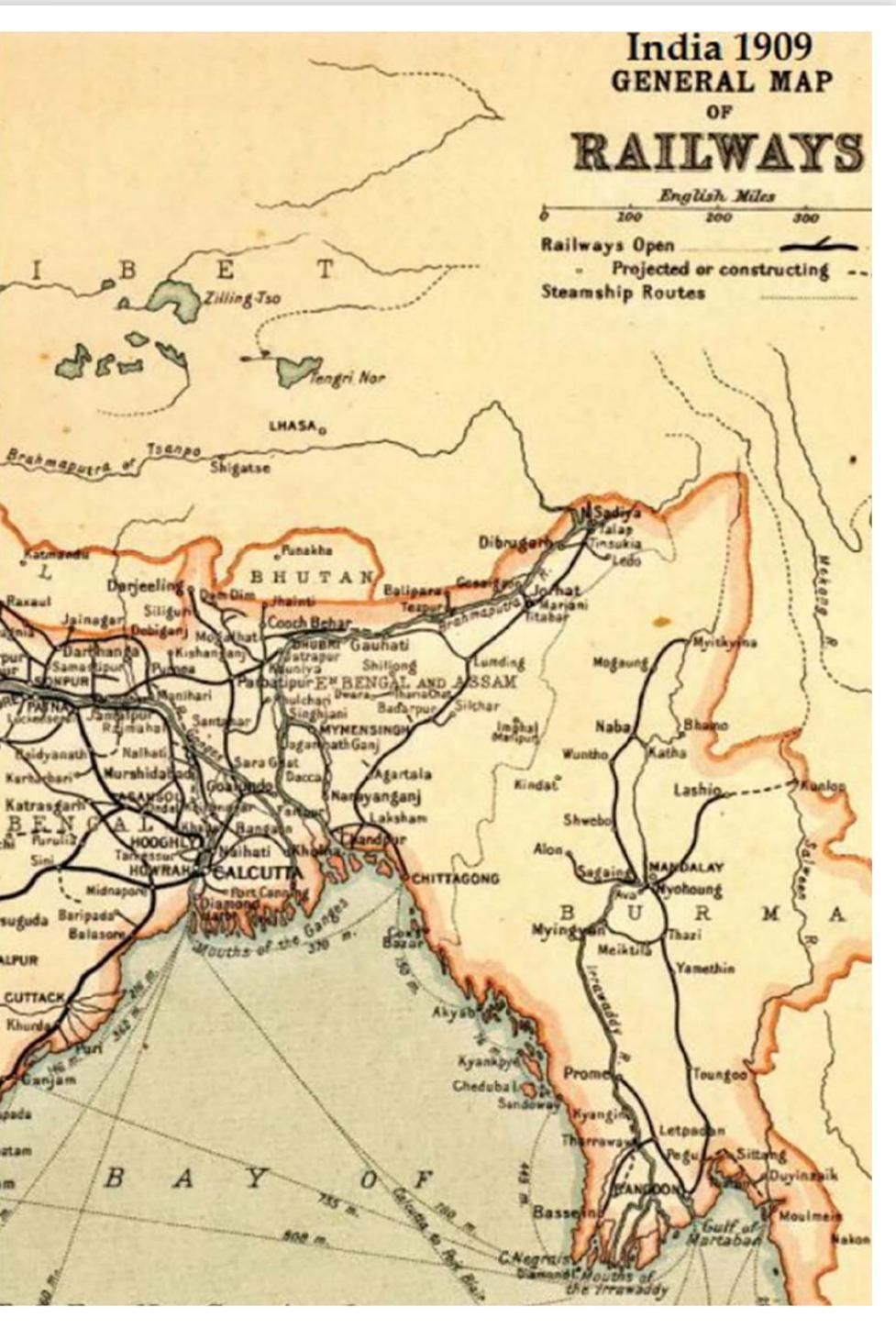
The crossborder railway was essential not just for passengers but also Nepal government administrative work. Not only were the mountains roadless, but even Tarai towns

were not connected by motorable roads.

After Maurice Herzog and Louis Lachenal became the first to climb an 8,000m peak when they summited Annapurna in 1950, they walked from Base Camp for weeks to the Indian border at Sunauli, took the Indian trail to Raxaul, connected to the Amlekhganj train and then trekked up the mountains to Kathmandu to meet Prime Minister Mohan Shumsher Rana.

Herzog made the journey in the heat of





MADAN PURASKAR PUSTAKALYA



DIRGHA MAN CHITRAKAR



CHANDRAKISHORE



CHOO-CHOO: (clockwise from above) British India's railway map of 1909.

A luxury carriage that brought British hunting royalty at Bhikhna-Thori station in the early 1900s.

Photo of the Nepal Government Railway in Amlekhganj in 1927.

Bhikhna-Thori station today is a desolate place with the fare board still stuck to the wall.

Closeup map showing how Nepalis travelling from Chitwan to Birganj had to go via Indian railway before the road through Nepali territory.

The steam engine of the Janakpur Railway that was commissioned in 1929.

the Indian summer. His frostbitten toes and fingers were turning gangrenous and had to be amputated in the train.

Lack of connectivity in Nepal and the presence of Indian train stations at the border meant that Nepal's socio-economic life and political orientation was to the south. It was only after connectivity within Nepal improved starting in the 1970s that the periphery could go directly to Kathmandu without routing via India.

This change had a profound impact on education, health, trade, and even in the mindset of Nepalis. In his book, Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal, American scholar Frederick H Gaige says that the basis of the early industrialisation of the Nepal Tarai towns was that they were connected to the Indian rail network.

Gaige argues that the expansion of its railway network to the Nepal border was also linked to India's own economic growth trajectory northwards in the 19th century as markets for agriculture surplus from the Nepal Tarai. Traders from the Madhesi community prospered because of the

presence of these stations, and some invested their profits in property there. It was a sign of great prestige for traders from Nepal to own assets in Indian railheads.

India's railways even influenced Nepal's political awakening, starting with the 1950 anti-Rana movement. Being able to coordinate protests across Nepal was only possible because of the ease of travel by rail via India. Even during the 1980 referendum, anti-Panchayat reformists found refuge in rail stations across the border.

Finally, there was also the social impact. Connecting various parts of Nepal, even the mountain districts, with each other made it possible for families from eastern Nepal to marry their children to those from the west – something that would have been difficult, if not impossible, had they not been able to travel on Indian trains.

Nepal was a closed kingdom in those days, but Indian trains also opened the eyes of Nepalis to the world outside: Calcutta, Banaras, Bombay and beyond. 🇮🇳



CHANDRAKISHORE

EVENTS

**Speed Fest**

An adrenaline-fueled experience awaits at Speed Fest 2025, where motorcycle enthusiasts, music lovers, and thrill-seekers come together to celebrate speed and passion.

15 February, 12pm onwards, Tickets: Rs700+, Alice Receptions, Baluwatar

Art exhibition

The ongoing exhibition I am rooted, but I flow, curated by Pratima Thakali, showcases unique contemporary artwork of eight female artists who explore the fluidity of identity, culture, and transformation. Read review on Page 9.

8 February – 8 March, Tuesday – Thursday: 11am – 6pm / Friday – Sunday: 11am – 7pm. Takpa Gallery

**Playback theatre**

Katha Ghera's February Playback Theatre will mark Valentine's Day. The interactive session will invite audience members to share their stories, which will get enacted on the spot. Book seats beforehand.

15 February, 2:45pm, Katha Ghera Studio

Funny Mondays

Join in the laughter, or participate during the open mic stand up comedy sessions every Monday at Jhamel.

17 February, 7pm onwards, Tickets: Rs300, Jhamel Pub

**Women in art**

Nepal Art Council's exhibition Women in Art features 14 prominent women artists. Stop by the Bagmati Gallery on the top floor to view the artwork.

14-28 February, 10:30am-5pm, Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal

Karnali photos

Nabin Baral presents photos from Nepal, India, and China, documenting a journey of 1080km along the Karnali River in 45 days.

14 February, 10pm onwards, Nepal Tourism Board

**Weekend hike**

Join Hike for Nepal's Machhegaun - Bhashmasur Danda - Matatirtha hike this Saturday. The hike duration is 6 to 7 hours. Those interested must arrive at Bhrikutimandap exhibition hall by 6:45am.

15 February, 9841178536 / 9828054244, hikeformnepal@gmail.com

MUSIC

Echoes of Love 2

The second instalment of the Echoes of Love music festival will include artists like The Elements, Purna Rai & Dajubhaiharu, Kehar & Joy, and more.

14 February, 4pm onwards, Tickets: Rs700, Bouddha Townplanning Ground

**Rohit John Chettri**

Rohit John Chettri takes the stage this Valentine's Day, with guitarist Semil Lama, bassist Pau Leboski, Vibek Lama on the drums, and Nishant Shakya on the keys.

14 February, 7pm-10pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

Lovescape

Head to Organic Lounge & Club to hear Bimala and Prakash play live this weekend. Take a loved one with you.

14 February, Organic Lounge & Club, Durbar Marg, 9761660069

**Rockheads**

Groove with friends to live music by Rockheads at Supper Club this weekend.

14 February, 7pm onwards, Tickets: Rs500, Supper Club, Thamel

**Mt.8848**

A night of love, music, and vibes await the audience as Mt.8848 take the stage on Valentine's Day, with opening band Magic Mushrooms and house DJs Bessol, Andy, Rocky, Amu, and Niuzina

14 February, Turtle Lounge & Club, Narsingh Chok, Thamel

DINING

**Hankook Sarang**

Enjoy a variety of Korean dishes like Tteok-bokki, Gimbap and Bibimbap at Hankook Sarang, and also try various Banchan (Korean side-dishes) with some flavourful Korean BBQ.

Thamel (01) 5908711

GETAWAY

**Valentine's @ Chandragiri Hills**

Celebrate Love at Chandragiri Hills this Valentine's Day. Enjoy a romantic getaway with a private gondola ride, a candlelit dinner with wine, live music, and a deluxe stay paired with a heart-shaped cake and rose. Offers also include 25% off a couple's massage, exciting prizes, and more.

14 February, Rs18,000, Chandragiri, 9802069900

Lapsi Tree Resort

Escape the noise of the valley and experience a serene, peaceful stay at Lapsi Tree with delicious food, comfortable rooms and mesmerising views of Nagarkot.

Nagarkot, 9844888116

**Gokarna Forest Resort**

Gokarna Forest Resort is a paradise, thick with century old trees rustling out natural tunes, great restaurants for fine dining, a premier golf course, and a rejuvenating wellness experience.

Rajnikunj, Kathmandu (01) 4451212

**Hotel Dolmaling**

Escape the rush of the city and enjoy peace and quiet at this unique boutique hotel located only a few minutes from Boudhanath Stupa.

Kathmandu, 9765964209

Dhulikhel Lodge Resort

Relax on the rooftop, take meals at the Stupa Restaurant, stop by the spa, or go for an excursion at this lodge nestled in the beautiful terraced Dhulikhel hills.

Dhulikhel (01) 490494

WEEKEND WEATHER



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
☀️ 22° ☁️ 4°	☀️ 21° ☁️ 5°	☀️ 22° ☁️ 5°	☀️ 22° ☁️ 6°	☀️ 22° ☁️ 6°

Pray for Rain

There is no westerly on the horizon till next week, which means the drought conditions in the Himalayan foothills will continue with the accompanying danger of wildfires. The maximum temperature in Kathmandu Valley will be slightly below normal because of a cold front and sunlight filtered by pollution haze, much of it being transported from across the border (NASA image on Wednesday, left). Nights will still be chilly and in the single digits. Slight chance of precipitation on Tuesday in the central mountains.



In director Walter Salles' 2024 political biographical drama I'm Still Here, former congressman Rubens Paiva is kidnapped following a raid on his house in Rio de Janeiro during the military dictatorship in Brazil. Rubens' wife Eunice sets out to learn the truth behind the disappearance of her husband, and is arrested and tortured during the process. Twenty-five years later, Eunice receives Rubens' official death certificate from the now-democratic Brazilian state. I'm Still Here is based on the 2015 memoir of Rubens Paiva's son, Brazilian journalist and author Marcelo Rubens Paiva. The film became the first from Brazil to be nominated for Best Picture at the 97th Academy Awards, also earning a Best Actress nomination for its lead Fernanda Torres.

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 नपरौं ।
- आफूले प्रवाह गरेका सन्देश वा सूचनाबाट समाजमा पर्नसक्ने नकारात्मक प्रभावको ख्याल गरौं ।
- आफ्नो सन्देशले कुनै व्यक्ति वा अन्य कुनै समुदायको आत्मसम्मानमा चोट नपुऱ्याऔं ।



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विज्ञापन बोर्ड

**Jalpa Coffee Club**

Need a place to catch up over breakfast? Make your way to Jalpa for the finest handpicked coffee and pick favourites from their carefully curated breakfast menu.

Bakhundal, 9862166751

Cafe de Tukche

Skip cooking lunch at home and get some authentic Thakali food at Cafe de Tukche. Order the Thakali Khana set, or try out the Thakali Dhedo set if you're feeling adventurous.

Lazimpat, 9810291323

Frenzie Fries

Frenzie Fries is the go-to spot for the best fries in town. From classic salted fries to sour cream, spicy cheese, or peri-peri: make your pick and enjoy.

Pimbahal, 9768874336

**Aqua by Karma**

Aqua by Karma, with its standout Asian fusion food, is offering visitors a unique dining experience and specially curated drinks this Valentine's Day. Head there this weekend with your loved one.

Gairidhara, 9762875464

**Lavie Garden**

Indulge in a four-course Valentine's Day meal at Lavie Garden's serene garden setting, with a bonfire and live music.

Boudha, 9808996175

Chez Caroline

Tucked away from the hustle and bustle of the streets, Chez Caroline offers authentic French and continental cuisine. Try their Profiteroles au Chocolat and Choux pastry filled with vanilla ice cream and hot chocolate sauce.

Baber Mahal Revisited (01) 5363070

Reimagined roots

Eight female artists probe the interaction of cultural identity and personal evolution

■ Sangya Lamsal

A new generation of Nepali artists is exploring bold narratives and experimental themes, pushing boundaries, and redefining societal conventions.

That is evident in the exhibition 'I Am Rooted, But I Flow' at Takpa Gallery. Curated by Pratima Thakali, it showcases works by eight female artists who explore the interplay between identity, culture, and personal evolution.

Anmari Tamang, Kripa Shakya, Kripa Tuladhar, Krisha Tamrakar, Pooja Duwal, Priyanka Singh Maharjan, Sony Rai, and Sumitra Baral bring fresh thinking to Nepal's cultural landscape.

Their works force us to look at the coexistence of tradition and transformation in an ever-shifting cultural terrain. The title, drawn from Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, reflects the core theme: balancing the stability of our roots with the fluidity of our evolving selves.

Krisha Tamrakar of Artudio is inspired by her hometown of Patan, where familiar landmarks are disappearing.

"Traditional brass utensils have begun to blend seamlessly with modern, colourful clothing," she says, explaining her series 'Between Colors and Spaces XXI' (pictured, right).

Tamrakar notes how metal brass utensil shops that once lined the streets have now been replaced by clothing and shoe stores.



PHOTOS: SANGYA LAMSAL



KAILASH K SHRESTHA

Despite the surrealist images, she thinks viewers can relate to everyday aspects of their lives.

The founder of Artudio Kailash K Shrestha reflects on the inspiration behind his space

in 2010: "Back then, there were no accessible platforms for local, young, and emerging artists. There was a lack of open spaces where artists could come together to collaborate, exchange ideas, inspire

one another, and offer mutual support."

Priyanka Singh Maharjan's 'To All The Women Who Came Before Me' (left, top) is another series that stands out. Using embroidery on fabric, she represents the often-overlooked and unacknowledged work of women, particularly mothers and grandmothers.

The 'Watts of Steam' series by Pooja Duwal shows a local momo shop, Na: pasa: in Bhaktapur. The ambience outweighs the food itself for customers for whom familiarity and warmth are more important.

Kripa Shakya uses fabric, nails, and string along with other mixed media to represent shared experiences of interpersonal conflicts and acceptance. And Sony Rai presents intricately woven threads through aquatint to find beauty in simplicity.

Sumitra Baral's sculptures (left, below) interpret fashion not just as outward beauty but as an expression of inner creativity and heritage. Her art label reads, 'Fashion is not just about attire; it is a symbol of identity, a definition of personality, and a living story of culture.'

'I Am Rooted, But I Flow' gives a voice to fluid, multifaceted experiences of how our identities are shaped by both deep-rooted traditions and the transformative forces of personal growth. 🇳🇵

I Am Rooted, But I Flow
Takpa Gallery
8 February - 8 March
[More images online](#)



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Ban on female migrant workers

Nepal must recognise and protect its undocumented female domestics in West Asia while legalising migration

■ **Ayushman Bhagat**
and **Sunita Mainali**

Nepal is set to lift its ban on domestic workers migrating to West Asia, starting with a pilot agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This decision marks a major victory for advocacy groups, human rights organisations, the ILO, activists, media, and scholars who have campaigned against the restriction, saying it increases the vulnerability of workers to exploitation.

This legally binding agreement with a country that employs hundreds of thousands of Nepali domestic workers should be a cause for celebration, but lifting the migration ban on a pilot basis raises pressing questions.

How will the government select the 5,000 domestic workers? How will it reach prospective workers?



NOW, WHAT?

A returning migrant worker finds that starting a business and creating jobs in Nepal has its rewards



**DIASPORA
DIARIES 57**

This is the 57th edition of *Diaspora Diaries*, a regular column about migration in *Nepali Times*.

■ **Shiva Sharan Khatri**

I worked overseas for 16 years in Qatar, Dubai and Seychelles in housekeeping. I have even been involved in the pre-opening of seven 5-star properties abroad.

In 1996, I had to pay Rs35,000 to the recruiter for my Qatar job. Back then that was a lot of money, which my family could not afford. No one was able to help, perhaps because I could not convince them that I would pay them back.

Eventually, it was my father's friend who sold his buffalo to loan the money. I vividly remember that kind gesture. Had he not helped, I probably would not be where I am today.

Everyone faces challenges in life, but there are very few who are pillars of support during tough times. I told my father from Qatar to let his friend pick the buffalo of his choice to repay him.

I had flown out of Kathmandu, all excited, wearing a suit and tie. But the minute I got off the plane in Doha, the heat hit me and the coat came off, and the tie-knot was loosened. I immediately



started thinking that I had made a mistake to go there.

But I was lucky to get a job indoors in a hotel that had good facilities, not like many Nepalis who had to toil in the heat. I was one of the first cohorts, the first Nepali, at the Sheraton in Doha.

Within a couple of years, there were 76 Nepalis working at the hotel. As test hires, we left a good impression on management and won their trust, which subsequently

opened doors for more Nepalis.

To be born as a Nepali means to be born to work hard and struggle. And that is what I did all those years abroad. I also wanted to advance in my career by earning a higher salary, get promoted. Now, what (अब के?) was the question I often pondered.

While working as an attendant, I took up cross-training in my free time which prepared me for my role as a supervisor. This made

me ready for the position when the right time came. I was promoted in the following years in hotels across the Gulf.

The highlight was to get a chance to serve King Birendra and his family who stayed at Doha Sheraton on their way back to Nepal from the UK in 1999. The royal couple chatted with us casually and asked us about our wages and job facilities, life overseas and families back home.

It felt like they were our guardians. I was in Dubai when I learnt of the royal massacre in 2001, and the memories of serving our king and queen three years previously came rushing back.

When I first went to Qatar, I was raw clay, but I fell into the right hands that shaped me into a beautiful vase. The training I received along with colleagues from over a hundred nationalities gave me exposure and helped me grow. This is not just my story but the story of many migrants who have returned to Nepal, to use the skills we gained abroad.

With my savings I could build a brick house, afford better food and clothes, and invest in cars. These are tangible benefits. But as you earn more, your needs grow. Had I known better, I would have invested more wisely.

But the skills I learnt enabled me to run Sankalpa, a facilities management business in Nepal that specialises in cleaning jobs, and provides employment to 85 workers. I had dreamt of starting something like this, but there were always reasons to postpone taking the leap.

I was abroad for financial reasons, and there were personal challenges such as deaths in the family. But I finally decided to come back to Nepal 12 years ago and start this business.

Initially, I had regrets about my decision to return. I had left behind a cushy Senior job with a handsome salary of AED7,500 (\$2,000). After 16 years abroad, it was difficult adjusting to Nepal because working here requires you to knock at many doors, and you need connections.

This can lead to much

to be lifted



GOPEN RAI

And what provisions will be made for those migrating to the UAE without permits?

We also need to look at how the government plans to reintegrate returnee workers, and engage rights organisations, activists, and scholars in the consultation and negotiation process, and recognise unrecognised Nepali migrant domestic workers already in the UAE.

The lack of information on Nepali domestic workers abroad stems from long-standing migration bans imposed by the government as a protectionist policy. For

years, Nepal has imposed various degrees and forms of bans on domestic workers' mobility, mainly affecting women, culminating in a blanket ban since 2017. This was eased in 2020 with the introduction of seven preconditions, but it only reinforced barriers instead of offering a solution.

Despite the restrictions, Nepalis continued migrating for domestic work, both through formal and informal channels. Many resort to illicit routes, making it nearly impossible to count their

numbers. Some reports estimate between 60,000-100,000, but anecdotal evidence suggests that the figure could be as high as 500,000. This scale reflects the immense vulnerability of Nepali domestic workers abroad.

Many feel abandoned by those meant to protect and fight for them. Nepal embassies in destination countries fail to support them after they flee abuse and exploitation, especially as they are undocumented.

In many cases, employers confiscate passports or documents of the workers. Stripped of their identity, they rely on the Nepali diaspora or agents to navigate the host country as 'illegal immigrants' facing risks of raids, criminalisation, and further exploitation. Many returnee Nepali women have spent months in jail in Gulf countries before being deported back to Nepal.

The vulnerabilities and exploitation of migrant domestic workers are discussed in the media, policy, and academic circles, but their deaths are consistently overlooked. Migrant worker fatalities have become synonymous with just male workers, and there is a troubling silence surrounding the deaths of systematically disadvantaged women who are domestic workers.

They often die by suicide, due to exploitation, or from work-related illnesses. Yet, migration bans and the lack of political will to acknowledge the lives, labour, health, and deaths of these women prevent justice for them and their families in the face of

tragedy. Many who die never have their bodies returned to Nepal. For those who are repatriated, it is often due to the intervention of domestic worker organisations in Nepal or the diaspora.

Migration bans worsen this tragedy, making it nearly impossible for families to report missing or deceased loved ones for fear of being criminalised as "traffickers".

The exploitation and deaths of migrant female domestic workers are ignored due to the grip of patriarchy, class, and caste on Nepal's labour and migration policies. These policies control their mobility, devalue their labour, and fail to provide dignified, sustainable jobs, making their bodies disposable.

As a result, many Nepali women feel abandoned by their state, society, and families. Yet, despite this, they never abandon Nepal or their loved ones.

Many Nepali women migrate to break the cycle of caste-based discrimination and gender-based violence by sending remittances for their children's education. Hence, when a female domestic worker dies, it's not just their family that suffers, the impact extends to their children and the nation's future.

The sacrifices of these women, crucial to Nepal's socio-economic progress, must be acknowledged, valued, and protected. The government must prioritise unconditional recognition of all domestic workers abroad to address the impact of exploitation and deaths of Nepali female migrant domestic workers.

It must inform the

Nepali diaspora that it will unconditionally recognise all migrant domestic workers, regardless of documentation status: perhaps the only way to count them abroad.

As Nepal prepares to lift the migration ban on domestic workers, it must not abandon its most vulnerable citizens. This neglect heightens their vulnerability to exploitation and death, and threatens their families in times of tragedy.

We urge the government to raise this issue during the negotiations with the UAE, request immunity for these workers, and take the crucial step of counting domestic workers through Nepali embassies and consulates.

Once this step is taken, the government must expand its welfare net, such as providing insurance coverage, to safeguard workers and their families in worst-case scenarios. Insuring hundreds of thousands of Nepali domestic workers is not just protection, it is an investment in the well-being and future of Nepal.

We hope the pilot program leads to the full lifting of migration bans. But before we celebrate, we must not forget the hundreds of thousands of undocumented Nepali migrant domestic workers already in the Gulf. They are citizens too, and it is the duty of the state not to abandon them. 🇳🇵

Ayushman Bhagat, PhD, is a lecturer in Political Geography at the Brunel University of London, and Sunita Mainali is the Executive Director of WOREC, Nepal.

“You must be having so much fun there!”

Nepali student-workers juggle jobs to afford living costs and school fees in Japan

■ Sujata Dhungana in Kyoto

At 5pm on Christmas Eve, Swarnim clocked out of his eight-hour shift at a bento line in Nara Prefecture. Around him, the city was alight with holiday cheer, but he scarcely noticed as he hurried to catch a train to Takasaki for another job from 9pm. He had only got an hour-long break for lunch.

By 8am on Christmas morning, he was in Kyoto, an 11-minute train ride away. The graveyard shift had ended two hours earlier, and he grabbed a meal and a nap before boarding his train.

“Tonight I have plans to go see Purna Bahadur Ko Sarangi,” said Swarnim. The Nepali film was being screened at Kyoto City International Exchange Hall.

“It's good to post a picture of yourself smiling, it makes you forget you're stressed,” he continued, tallying up the likes and comments on his recent Facebook post. “It will also be a relief to those back home who will see my photo and think that I am happy here.”

What the Facebook posts of tens of thousands of other Nepali student-workers in Japan do not show is how hard they work to afford living costs and school fees.

Ramhari, another Nepali on a student visa, cuts a frail figure as he wields a vacuum cleaner in one hand while holding up the belt of his loose-fitting pants with the other. He has lost 12kg since arriving in Japan three months ago.

The 25-year-old had been earning Rs35,000 a month at his banking job in Nepal, and the



RUSH RUSH: Nepali students pack the Sakura Nepali restaurant in Shinjuku for a quick lunch.

KUNDA DIXIT

prospect of earning more in Japan had drawn Ramhari here.

Nepali students earn more than Rs100,000 a month in Japan cleaning hotel rooms or in food packaging, but the pay is less than half of what is required for room rent, food and school fees. They also have to service loans they took back home to come to Japan.

With some exceptions, Japan is not the land of riches that many Nepalis imagine it to be. It is relentless hard work, and the savings are not what they expected for the estimated 200,000 Nepali student-workers here, the largest South Asian group in the country. Milan Karki works as a supervisor in Kyoto and says Nepalis in Japan face problems because they do not understand the importance of punctuality.

“Being one minute late for work is equivalent to being 15 to 30 minutes behind, which means one person can reduce the efficiency of an entire company,” said Karki.

At the meat factory where

Rakesh works, the clock chimes every hour to let workers know how much time has passed since they punched in. On a recent visit to his workplace, as the clock announced the passing of an hour, the 27-year-old grinned. “That's another thousand yen in my pocket.”

Rakesh is a vegetarian, even the whiff of meat was off-putting, but now he has jobs at a fish and beef packing company.

Unique, 22, from Lamjung has been in Japan for just over a year, and works in Kyoto at the Yamato company, Japan's largest logistics and courier service. Many Nepalis work there at its loading docks or warehouse, cataloguing and packaging goods.

“I had to carry things heavier than my body weight on my first day,” he said. “I told myself I just had to survive that one night, then I would never be back here again.”

But the prospect of earning 1,700 yen (\$11) every hour was too good to pass up. Japanese law allows students to work only 28

hours a week.

Bringing in Nepalis and other nationals as 'students' is also Japan's way of calibrated migration to fill service sector jobs which local people do not want. Most places where students from Nepal work have Nepali 'haken' temporary employees who serve as interpreters between Nepali students and their Japanese counterparts and superiors.

“Nepalis here do not look like students, they are working like mules,” said Milan Karki. “If they put a bit more effort into learning Nihongo (Japanese), they could be getting much better jobs.”

Nepalis in Japan on student visas barely have enough time to study, let alone learn the language. Those who have lessons in the morning, work during the evenings, and those who go to school in the evening work day shifts.

Students mostly fall into exhausted sleep in their classrooms, or on public transport. Many students fake sick leave from school to work extra shifts, but are not allowed time off from their jobs when they actually fall ill.

All the while, they will be too busy to pick up calls from home, and when they do get a chance to talk to family, they find themselves making things up about their health and well-being.

Many back home are envious of the students posting photos of themselves playing in the snow, walking by the beach. The comments from folks back home are: ‘You must be having so much fun there!’

Little do they know. 🇳🇵

Names of some students have been changed.

frustration, but even then I persevered. Now, I am happy with where I am at. Cleaning is not just magic, as it is often perceived; it is a science. Different chemicals and methods are required to clean various surfaces. We are raising awareness and creating demand for professional cleaning services across Nepal.

It is important to invest in proper cleaning, not just for the longevity and cleanliness of marble, sofas, or carpets, but also for hygiene and health reasons.

In my first year and a half, I did 24,000km on my bike in Kathmandu on marketing trips, knocking on door after door. It has not been easy but has its rewards, especially as I am able to provide jobs to over 80 workers.

It is not like there are no opportunities in Nepal. There are. But it requires lots of discipline and patience, and you need to renew your energy every day. You have to have the faith that even if things don't work out today, they will tomorrow.

When I was in Doha Sheraton, there was a Bangladeshi staff who at 60 years old was working at the company canteen to sustain his family back home. I remember my friend looking at him and commenting: “Our future.”

In my mind, this stayed as a warning because I wanted to come home to my wife and children and did not want that future for myself. I had always planned to return home, the sooner the better. Sankalpa had been brewing in my head for a long time. I had to make it work here at all costs. 🇳🇵



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